Beyond Stalemate: The Second Indochina War as a Genocidal War System.
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REFERENCES.
ABBREVIATIONS.

CIA – Central Intelligence Agency.

ComIntern – The Communist International.

COMUSMACV – Commander of the United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam.

DCI – Director of Central Intelligence; head of the CIA.

DK – Democratic Kampuchea; the name of the former Cambodia during the reign of the 'Khmer Rouge', 1975-1979.

DRV – Democratic Republic of Vietnam; 'North Vietnam' in the period of the 2nd IW.

FANK – *Forces Armées Nationales Khmer*. The Cambodian Armed forces under Sihanouk and Lon Nol.

GDP – Gross Domestic Product.


ICP – Indochina Communist Party.

IMF – International Monetary Fund.

JCS – Joint Chiefs of Staff.

MAAG – Military Assistance Advisory Group; title changed to MACV in February 1962.

MACV – Military Assistance Command Vietnam.

NIE – National Intelligence Estimate; a comprehensive multi-agency intelligence report.

NLF – National Liberation Front.

OSS – Office of Strategic Services; a comparatively small World War II fore-runner to the CIA.

ROE – Rules Of Engagement; the rules governing the use of force by US personnel.

RVN – Republic of (South) Vietnam.

RVNAF – Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam.

SNIE – Special National Intelligence Estimate.

US – United States of America.

USMC – United States Marine Corps.
USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

INTRODUCTION.

My subject is the Second Indochina War, which began in 1954 and ended in 1975. This subject has for many acquired an extra relevance in the years since the US invasion of Iraq. For me it seems unlikely that the similarities between these two conflicts are coincidental, circumstantial nor, least of all, that they are the result of the US repeating the same 'mistakes.'

The subject is not the 'Vietnam War' per se for three reasons. The first and foremost reason is that the conflict occurred in all three countries of Indochina (as they are now) and was suffered by the populations of each. The second is that Indochina was truly treated as a 'single strategic unit'. This is not an endorsement or defence of US or Vietnamese actions in Laos or Cambodia, but an acceptance of reality. The third reason, and for the specific purposes of this work the most important reason, is that US actions can only be understood in the context of the whole 'theatre'. I write of 'US actions' because that too is the focus of this essay. As I will explain below, I consider the US to have been the driving force behind events in Indochina. Where I refer to the US, I refer not to given individuals or institutions, but rather to whomever is able to utilise the resources of that polity in order to achieve their ends, which is to say, by definition, those who wield the collective power of the state.

The essay is divided into two parts, each consisting of four chapters. The first part deals with the historiographical, the theoretical and the conceptual. There are weaknesses across all schools of thought with regard to the the Second Indochina War. In fact, though there is a supposed division between orthodox and revisionist scholarship, this essay will show that in reality they fall within the same boundaries on fundamental intellectual stances, and have in common the a priori exclusion of certain possibilities and, in particular the seemingly ineradicable insistence that events were driven by US mistakes, misapprehensions, and miscalculations. Some of this is quite understandable – much of the inconclusive and unsatisfactory nature of the historiography of the Second Indochina War stems from misapprehensions about the nature of the Cold War doctrine of 'containment' and the mistaken, if natural, tendency to view the 'Vietnam War' as a contested matter of between antagonists with diametrically opposed aims. There is also, perhaps, a psychological imperative to avoid the conclusion that individuals of one's own culture, society and class might knowingly, and with ample foreknowledge, have taken actions which in the final analysis encompassed so much suffering and death.

Although there is an overarching orthodoxy, which extends even to the Vietnamese historiography of the Second Indochina War, which paints the US decisions ill-considered, unwitting or completely unwilled, interpretations are also highly contested in some very basic elements. Areas where one would expect, in the normal course of events, some sort of common-knowledge consensus are contrary to expectation, diverging rather than moving towards any degree of true agreement. For example, the issue of who won the war, (or rather whether the US won or lost) is by no means settled. But this is not the only moot point – also up for debate are questions such as when the war occurred, why the war occurred, how the war was fought and naturally, what sort of war it was. Also at issue, who, if anyone, started the war. In short, as will be shown, the 'controversies' of this conflict, because of the extent of possible permutations, are qualitatively different from normal historical controversies.

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1 William S. Turley, The Second Indochina War. Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 1986, p 8. Turley gives this as a reason for his choice of title. As with the present work, Turley's work is dominated by Vietnamese events (reflecting the available scholarship) but even a token such contextualisation serves as a reminder – if only of the glaring absences and what purpose they might serve.
The lack of a robust framework for interpreting the Second Indochina War derives largely from the pervasive belief in 'inadvertence', or the lack of intentionality. By this I mean the belief that the US did not enter a conflict of such magnitude with wilful intent. The term 'inadvertence' comes from a 1966 work by Arthur Schlesinger, an historian who, as a member of John F. Kennedy's administration, had helped create US policy in Indochina. Two years later another former official, Ralph K. White wrote *Nobody Wanted War: Misperception in Vietnam and other Wars* which, as its title suggests, is based on the assumption that war is universally undesirable due to its horrific nature, and hence does not examine any other possibility. These interpretations, and others of the like, were shaping the historiography of the War even as events were unfolding. For this reason historians tend not to seek discernible patterns to US behaviour, and instead struggle to find consistent logic among the fictions of political rhetoric. Nevertheless, in this case, and perhaps more generally, it is easy to establish that the question of intentionality is a red herring. US actions were wilful and informed. There is ample documentation that the consequences of every major decision were understood, and therefore it must be accepted that those consequences were desired.

The first part of this essay ends with a discussion of alternative ways of characterising some conflicts. With regard to the Second Indochina War I propose the adoption of David Keen's concept of a 'war system', in conjunction with the view that US actions were *primarily* an act of genocide, crucially but incidentally facilitated by the war which, was vigorously nurtured for that purpose. Keen's 'war system' concept derives from his observation of recent civil wars where protagonists act in 'counterproductive' ways, or at least ways which would be counterproductive if their actions were designed to defeat their opponents militarily. This is conjoined with the concept of genocide. Though the term is inevitably weighed with connotations, its meaning, as defined by its originator and by international law, is an apt and highly useful way of examining US behaviour.

Thus, by viewing US behaviour not as an attempt to coerce or defeat through the use of force, but as a genocidal war system, it is easier to understand the logic in US behaviours, particularly if one discards the rhetorical veils of public relations and of self-justification cast over political and military decision making. The way, in short, to understand US policy is to seek the logic in their actions not their words.

Once it is established that almost by definition US policy is as US policy does (at least when its consequences are clearly foreseen) then it is possible to reinterpret US motives in a way more fitting with US actions. The second part of this essay will be an examination of actions which will show that although individuals in the US may have made mistaken or misinformed choices, the 'war system' as a whole was managed with accurate intelligence and judgement and many of the individual 'mistakes' were themselves the product of conscious misdirection of putative policy makers.

This examination of as US actions as intentional, and revealing in and of themselves, will broadly reinforce 'imperialist' interpretations of US actions, but only within a milieu of Manichean geopolitics (wherein the Communists are cast as the forces of Evil, while the US fights for freedom and Good) chosen not out of conviction, but as a strategy for maintaining dominance. This is entirely in fitting with the doctrine of 'containment' if it is understood, as revealed by the history of its development, as being exactly the strategy of dominance mentioned above.

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4 David Keen, *Endless War? Hidden functions of the 'War on Terror'.* London, Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2006, p 51. Keen notes that as with the contemporary civil wars he normally studies, the 'War on Terror' involves predictably counter-productive actions – actions which strengthen the enemy.
It will be argued that the only conclusion with regard to US actions in Vietnam is that, fearing the possible economic and political success of an independent nationalist DRV, the US cultured a conflict in South Vietnam. Pre-emptively ceding, for their own internal planning, the entirety of Indochina to the enemy they provoked, intensified and prolonged a conflict in order to inflict as much damage as possible. Knowing that intervention inevitably provokes hostility and desires for independence, US planners clearly felt that an enfeebled 'enemy' would be more compliant than a strong 'friend'. The conclusion of this essay will begin by outlining, in a brief manner, the events that most clearly show the way in which the US employed force in the Second Indochina War, and to what ends. Those events are the Civil War in Cambodia from 1970 until 1975. Here the case is all too clear, the US did not try to win or even make the pretence, it merely made sure that as much destruction and death occurred as its deep pockets could buy.
PART ONE: CONTEXT.

1. Who Won the War? And Other Debates.

The accepted interpretation of the historiography is that there is a rift between competing 'orthodox' and 'revisionist' schools. Revisionist historian Mark Moyar describes the orthodoxy as generally seeing 'American involvement in the war as wrongheaded and unjust, while revisionists see a 'noble but improperly executed exercise.' According to this division a writer who holds the position that the entire war was the result criminally murderous, or even genocidal, aggression by the US in pursuit of imperial domination belongs in the same 'school' as someone who believes that it was the result of US traditions of Wilsonianism, liberal enlightenment and evangelical idealism. Confusingly some in the putatively opposed 'revisionist' school seem to agree totally with the latter 'orthodox' interpretation. Norman Podhoretz, who is considered an early revisionist, writes of 'an act of imprudent idealism'. Harry Summers, also a founder of the 'revisionist school' describes American 'overinvolvement' stemming from 'arrogance' and a desire 'to act not so much as the World's Policeman as the World's Nanny.' Many who are put in the orthodox category, therefore, do not see the US role in the war as unjust, while many revisionists see it as wrong-headed. By the same token virtually any truly 'orthodox' writer will ascribe considerable significance to how 'improperly executed' the US involvement was.

Moyar's orthodox/revisionist split therefore conceals more differences and more agreements then it reveals, both within and between schools. Marc Jason Gilbert gives a better if somewhat impressionistic view by tracing their origins. Gilbert also indicates three general areas of agreement among revisionists. The first is that civilian bureaucrats, politicians, journalists and/or antiwar protesters were responsible for crippling the US military effort – referred to as the 'stab-in-the-back' thesis. The second is that the US was right to intervene or had no choice but to

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6 Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*. New York: The Viking Press, 1983, pp 12-14. Karnow is careful to distinguish between the idealistic expansionism of the United States and the imperialism of European powers; Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky quote the 'dovish view' of David Fromkin and James Chace, "the American decision to intervene in Indochina was predicated on the view that the United States has a duty to look beyond its purely national interests [and must] serve the interests of mankind." 'As a moral matter we were right...’...but on the 'practical side' it was 'wrong' because 'our side was likely to lose.' (Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media. London: Vintage, 1994 (1988), p 174).
9 The one notable exception is Noam Chomsky, whose ideas in this respect will be discussed in the conclusion. A significant partial exception are 'stalemate' theorists such as Leslie Gelb and Daniel Ellsberg. Their ideas, which will be discussed at varying points in this essay, deny the possibility of significant 'mistakes' at the bureaucratic level but do not concern themselves with occurrences in field.
11 Gilbert shows how the pattern closely follows that in Germany after World War I, 'based on the postwar exculpatory writings of the commanders who presided over their nation's defeat in war,' (ibid p 21). Others, however, place its inception with an article by journalist Robert Elegant ('A Reporter Looks Back at the Vietnam War', *Encounter*, August 1981). Elegant accused his colleagues of having turned the US public against the war and fatally undermined its military and political efforts. Another cited origin is the statement by President elect Ronald Reagan that the war was a 'noble cause' lost due to 'self-imposed restraints' (James William Gibson, The Perfect War: Technowar in Vietnam. New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 2000 (1986), p 5.) Reagan's speech is also cited with condemnation in a contemporaneous work (John Pilger, *Heroes*. London: Vintage, 2001, (1986), p xvi) which is of particular interest because Pilger also mentions Harry Summers, although not in connection with revisionism,
intervene. The third agreement, a corollary to the first, is that the US could have, should have, would have and/or did win the war. Again, however, these are not very useful as definitive characteristics. None of these three contentions are universal among revisionists, and they are far from exclusive to revisionists. In the first instance, it is perfectly commonplace to ascribe to the US antiwar movement, and the 'GI's revolt' that it inspired, a degree of responsibility for ending the war, which, on a theoretical level, is the same assertion as is made by many of the 'stab-in-the-back' theorists. Likewise, many outside of revisionist circles embrace the logic, if not the morality, of the domino theory. Finally, there are the many variations of interpretation with regard to who won. Stanley Karnow characterised it as 'The War Nobody Won'. Increasingly the postwar economic situation of Vietnam, and its adoption of doi moi 'Renovation' (economic liberalisation) causes people to suggest that in geopolitical terms the Vietnamese lost.

One can actually make very strong prima facie cases for both of the abovementioned possibilities who he considered to be plainly 'a man of honour and compassion' (p 223). Harry Summers claimed that '[a] stab-in-the-back syndrome never developed after Vietnam,' (On Strategy, p 11). He made this extraordinary statement under what seems to be the rather wilful misapprehension that if the 'American People' per se are not blamed then there is no resemblance to the original thesis. Having thus given himself prior absolution, he happily espouses viewpoints eerily similar to the German thesis. German proponents of Dolchstoss emphasised a lack of full militarisation (Philip Morgan, Fascism in Europe, 1919-1945. London and New York: Routledge, 2003, p 24) which caused the defeat of an army which had not lost on the battlefield (Sally Marks, The Illusion of Peace: International Relations in Europe, 1918-1933 (2nd ed.), Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003, p 39). Summers wrote of the decisive effect of a failure to mobilise reserves and declare war (On Strategy, pp 17, 21-24, 25-31, 119) and claimed that the US not only won the war in the field (ibid pp 1, 183) but in the foreword of the 2nd edition he also endorses former DCI William Colby's claim that the US had won the 'People's War' for the 'hearts and minds' of the South Vietnamese (ibid p xiii). The last word in being stabbed must go to former COMUSMACV (1964-68) and Army Chief of Staff (1968-72) William C. Westmoreland who wrote of this of the US government's actions 'It was like two boxers in a ring, one having the other on the ropes, close to a knock out, when the apparent winner's second inexplicably throws in the towel,' (A Look Back) (1988). Retrieved 6 January 2007 from http://members.aol.com/USAHeroes/wcw5.htm.

Of particular note are works which assert the validity of the 'domino theory', despite it being considered by most to be a piece of disingenuous political rhetoric. Foremost amongst these is Michael Lind, Vietnam, The Necessary War: A Reinterpretation of America's Most Disastrous Military Conflict. New York: The Free Press, 1999; but also see Moyar, Triumph Forsaken, p xxi; Summers, On Strategy, pp 97-8. An unusual example would be Triumph Forsaken, the forsaken triumph of Mark Moyar's title actually refers to the US decision to overthrow RVN dictator Ngo Dinh Diem whom he sees as a great nationalist leader. More common, however, is the assertion that from 1968 onwards the United States was winning the war (Summers, On Strategy, p 99). Robert R. Owens (America Won the Vietnam War: How the Left Snatched Defeat from the Jaws of Victory. Xulon Press, 2004) goes further, suggesting that in the Paris Peace Agreement of 1973, the US achieved all of its stated goals, and thus was the 'winner', but that, due to pressures from the 'left', the US abandoned its ally in Saigon and allowed an easily prevented communist takeover.

with regard to who won. Each of the Indochinese states, and the people therein, have suffered immensely, whereas the US has no loss that is even remotely comparable. In deaths, for example, the US losses relative to population are less than 0.4 per cent of Cambodian losses (that is excluding the losses after 1975); 18 less than 0.5 per cent of Vietnamese losses; 19 and less than 0.3 per cent of Laotian losses. 20 If we estimate total Indochinese deaths as 4.5 million, of an estimated population of 42 million we get a figure of well over 10 per cent of the population killed, equivalent to 20 million US deaths. Then there is the economic situation. The US GDP more than doubled in constant dollar terms between 1954 and 1975 and continued strongly afterwards, doubling again by 1997. 21 By contrast, Cambodia didn't really have an economy by 1975. In fact it had been largely destroyed by the end of 1970, primarily this was caused by a massive influx of US 'aid'. 22 By 1973, of less than 7 million Cambodians, an estimated 3,389,000 had been made refugees. 23 The bombing and civil war had reduced the capacity for growing food to such a level that the 'sources close to the U.S. government' calculated that if the US government cut all food aid (which they did) 1 million deaths would result. 24 Whatever chances Laos had for development, they were surely crushed by a destructive and divisive war, and Laos remains one of the poorest places on the planet. 25 As for the Vietnamese, the war and subsequent US economic sanctions were devastating. By 1990 the per capita GDP was only $114. 26 Under doi moi, Vietnam has achieved much greater formal economic activity (GDP), but only by submitting to the 'Washington Consensus', which means no price supports for staples such as rice, which in turn means that the real income of the poorest urban

18 Estimates of Cambodian deaths resulting from the 1970-75 war range from Vickery's 500,000 killed (Herman and Chomsky, Manufacturing Consent, p 263) to a credible 1 million excess deaths Sorpong Peou, Intervention & Change in Cambodia: Towards Democracy? Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000, p 54. Given that the Cambodian population was an estimated 6 or 7 million in the period of the Second Indochina War, this gives us a figure of between 1 in 6 and 1 in 14 of all Cambodians killed. The US lost around 59,000 (Gibson, A Perfect War, p 9) out of a population around 200,000,000; or 1 in 3390. This gives a range of between 0.18 and 0.41 per cent.


20 Laos is extremely problematic in terms of counting the lives lost. The New York Times gives an estimated figure of 350,000 (Herman and Chomsky, Manufacturing Consent, p 260). That is around 1 in 9, but the figure may be too low when one considers that, in addition to civil war, the Laotians in this period were subjected to 500,000 bombing missions which dropped over 2 million tons of bombs (Willson, 'Bob Kerrey's Atrocity..., p 168).


22 Shawcross, Sideshow, pp 220-1.


24 Herman and Chomsky, Manufacturing Consent, p 264.


dwellers has dropped 27 Westmoreland characterised don moi as proof of US victory. 26 He also famously said, 'We'll just go on bleeding them until Hanoi wakes up to the fact that they have bled their country to the point of national disaster for generations. They will have to reassess their position.' 29 Perhaps that is what happened. The one asset the Vietnamese gained from the war, massive scrap metal resources, was privatised causing government steel mills to stand idle (banned by law from importing scrap) while Vietnam's scrap steel was exported at 'substantially below world-market values'. 30 Further food for thought is given by economists Adam Fforde and Suzanne Paine who suggested that the DRV's 'neo-Stalinist' economic approach was highly suitable for a united Vietnam in the 1950s, but not so for North Vietnam alone and not, after the destruction of the war and two decades of separate development, suitable for a reunified Vietnam. 31

The seeming infeasibility of a US defeat in Indochina, given the material circumstances, provides another prima facie case for a US victory. Their main antagonists, the DRV, had in the order of one thousandth of the US economic production in 1965. At peak levels (1969) the US and allies had 1.5 million troops in the RVN, facing a grand total of around 450,000 enemies, or, if militias are excluded, 1.2 million against 250,000. 32 That 4:1 or 5:1 numerical superiority was maintained right until the end of the war. 33 Over and above that, it barely even seems possible to contemplate the disparity of fire-power, given the US air capabilities and the superiority of US and allies ground artillery pieces and shells. To the best of my knowledge the full degree of fire-power disparity has not been quantified, but even that would not begin to give a complete picture of the advantages that US forces (in particular) enjoyed because of their unprecedented and unrivalled mobility. These are not circumstances in which one would reasonably expect a US defeat. The fact is that such a defeat requires a lot of explaining, and the reasons given, for example in Gilbert's Why the North Won the Vietnam War, are not so robust as to end the debate.

If it seems, thus, that the burden of proof may be on those that claim victory for the Vietnamese, perhaps it should be noted that they too have a strong case. Gilbert puts it succinctly, 'In 1975 Vietnamese opposed to the American intervention occupied the capital of the Republic, accepted its surrender, [and] absorbed it into the DRV.' 34 This emphasis on physical control of disputed territory could be taken as a definition of victory. Interestingly, it is thus that Clausewitz defines a

27 Nicholas Minot; Francesco Goletti, 'Export Liberalization and Household Welfare: The Case of Rice in Vietnam' in American Journal of Agricultural Economics, Vol. 80, No. 4. (Nov., 1998), p 743. Minot and Goletti actually (to their own evident surprise) projected a slight overall drop in poverty, but they do so on the basis of changes in real income which do not take into account that rural persons are better able to acquire food without income expenditure. They also slightly underestimate the level of urbanisation - they use the 1990 figure of 20 per cent, when by the time of their writing the figure was over 23 per cent (Michael DiGregorio, A. Terry Rambo, Masayuki Yanagisawa, 'Clean, Green, and Beautiful: Environment and Development under the Renovation Economy' in Hy V. Luong (ed.), Postwar Vietnam: Dynamics of a Transforming Society. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003, p 189.) and do not account for future urbanisation. Michel Chossudovsky suggests that the Vietnamese did, in the actual event, become considerably poorer (Michel Chossudovsky, The Globalisation of Poverty and the New World Order. Shanty Bay, Ontario: Global Outlook, 2003, p 168).


29 Cawthorne, Vietnam: A War Lost and Won, pp 77-8.

30 Some of the metal was actually sold back to Vietnam by a Japanese conglomerate at market rates (Chossudovsky, The Globalisation of Poverty..., pp 172-3).


32 For Communist forces the estimate is for 1967, but 1969 levels would, if anything, be substantially lower because of the massive losses sustained in 1968 (Allen, None So Blind, p 246). For US and allied forces see Turley, The Second Indochina War, pp 65, 129.

33 By 1974 there was still a 4:1 ratio, although if only regulars are counted the ratio had dropped to 2:1 (Turley, The Second Indochina War, pp 162-3).

tactical victory – possession of the field of battle.\textsuperscript{35} Gilbert, however, continues somewhat less convincingly ‘...and, when its efforts to normalize relations with the United States failed, rented one of its best ports to the naval forces of America's then archenemy, the Soviet Union.’\textsuperscript{36} In other words, the victor is rebuffed by the vanquished. Gilbert then makes the point that stated US war aims were contravened by the reunification of Vietnam under the DRV regime. He continues, however, by making a totally specious, if not pathetic, comparison between the US and Japan after World War II. Perhaps he did not notice that the US was not occupied and disarmed, its leaders were not hanged, and it was not forced to adopt a new constitution written in Hanoi.\textsuperscript{37} Some, particularly those on the left-wing who believe in the domino theory, would disagree,\textsuperscript{38} as will be discussed further, but in the final analysis we don't know if all, or even the most important war aims were made public. I would also question the utility of the convention of measuring victory with regard to war aims. Clausewitz himself denied that there was even such a thing as a strategic victory\textsuperscript{39} (a fact which Harry Summers somehow failed to notice in \textit{On Strategy} despite basing his book so closely on Clausewitz). The conception is, it think, valid. At the end of a war there is peace, the peace has certain conditions which may or may not be desirable to each side, but life, in many ways, does not admit of absolutes such as 'victory'. Victory can only be ascribed to the more manifest, more physical realm of tactical contestation.

In the case of the Second Indochina War the people and the governments of Indochina paid an incredible price for their victories, enough to qualify as Pyrrhic victories. If a belligerent deliberately manoeuvres their opponent into fighting and 'loses' at no great cost to themselves, but inflicts massive damage on the 'victor' it must surely make the issue of who won largely irrelevant. As we shall see, the US went to considerable effort to entangle the various IndoChinese peoples in a conflict that their leaders were at all times desperate to avoid. Oddly enough, no one wanted to risk taking on the might of the US including the vaunted, but comparatively puny, USSR, as will be explored further.

There are further disputes about the Second Indochina War, all of which cross the revisionist/orthodox barrier – although one camp may be more inclined to take any given stance. For example the question of whether the war was an insurgency or a conventional war, whether the US was conducting a counter-insurgency or a conventional campaign, and therefore which they ought to have fought.\textsuperscript{40} The greatest confusion, however, is over the question of why the US intervened at all, without which there would never have been a war. Jeffrey Kimball, borrowing from Pieter Geyl, referred to this as 'an argument without end.'\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{35} Carl Von Clausewitz, \textit{On War}, 2.2.29. Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1997, p 93.
\textsuperscript{36} Gilbert, 'Introduction', p 26.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{38} These people suggest that the overweening concern of the US was preventing the fall of the 'Superdomino' – Japan, see n 15 above. Some of these people themselves (for example Neale, \textit{A People's History of the Vietnam War}, p 72), admit that events in Indonesia obviated this concern, but do not seem concerned to answer why, if the crux of the matter was Japan, the greatest escalations, the greatest killing, the greatest expenditure and the greatest divisiveness all happened after the main reason for such very momentous actions had been removed.
\textsuperscript{39} Clausewitz, \textit{On War}, 6.3 (p 283).
\textsuperscript{40} Harry Summers castigates the MACV for following a doctrine of counter-insurgency as the central thesis of his work, (\textit{On Strategy}, pp 71-6, 83, 90, 173-5). Others characterise this as 'rewriting history' (Jeffrey Record, \textit{Beating Goliath: Why Insurgencies Win}. Dulles, Virginia: Potomac Books, 2007, p 124). The more prevalent view is that the US was mistakenly attempting to fight a conventional war with an enemy that wouldn't reciprocate (typical of these is Neil Sheehan's \textit{A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam} (New York: Vintage 1989 (1988), p 558) which attributes Westmoreland's strategy to a complete lack of imagination). Some, however, defend the attrition strategy as an appropriate response (Carter Malkasian, 'Toward a Better Understanding of Attrition: The Korean and Vietnam Wars'. \textit{The Journal of Military History}, Vol. 68, No. 3. (July, 2004), p 930).
\textsuperscript{41} 'Introduction: An Argument without End' in Jeffrey P. Kimball (ed), \textit{To Reason Why: The debate about the causes of US involvement in the Vietnam War}. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990, p 1. It should be noted, however, that
2. Intentionality.

*Argument Without End: In Search of Answers to the Vietnam Tragedy* is also the title of a later work by former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara in conjunction with numerous major and minor co-authors (also citing Geyl as inspiration).\(^{42}\) This work takes as its departure point the *a priori* supposition that the war occurred due to mistakes and misunderstandings. It details the results of meetings between wartime US, DRV and NLF leaders, arranged in the 1990s. Attention has been drawn to a passage wherein Vo Nguyen Giap responds to McNamara's characterisation of the conflict, 'Maybe it was a tragedy for you, but for us the war was a noble sacrifice. We did not want to fight the United States, but you gave us no choice.' Christian Appy comments that this 'revealed a fundamental difference in their historical views.'\(^{43}\) I think that this too readily accepts that what McNamara espouses constitutes an 'historical view', which implies, at least, internal coherence as well as implying a meaningful degree of honesty. In another section of *Argument Without End* McNamara concedes (refering to the first 'Tonkin Gulf incident') that the DRV did not, as he believed at the time, intentionally commit an act of war against the US – he admits his miscalculation, his error.\(^{44}\) Ignoring, for the time, the manifold specific facts which McNamara must conveniently forget in order to make such a characterisation, it is worth putting this in the context of the general situation. McNamara is suggesting that he believed that a small impoverished state would attack the most powerful state on the globe; one with 25 times the population, and a Gross National Product many hundreds of times higher;\(^{45}\) and that they would do so at just the time that McNamara and his colleagues were looking for just such an occurrence to facilitate escalation.\(^{46}\) Some few may call McNamara a liar, but most accept McNamara's belief (even if some consider him deluded).\(^{47}\) Noam Chomsky suggests that McNamara's rather selective way of thinking (in which, he suggests, US success or failure is the only moral concern) is not unique to him, but rather symptomatic of a specific shared world-view which, by implication, has a productive value in an imperial system.\(^{48}\)

There are problems with accepting mistaken or deluded statements as having been given in earnest. One is that it is *never* possible to be certain that someone is not lying. A second is that,

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\(^{44}\) McNamara, et al., *Argument Without End*, pp 166-7. In this section it is actually written, 'The details of the complex tale need not concern us here, where our objective is to trace the *two-sided* escalation of the war,' [my emphasis]. Thus matters of historical fact are put squarely in their place as disposable and irrelevant where they might conflict with the pre-supposed narrative. The facts of the Tonkin Gulf incidents, as will be revealed, support only a conclusion of unilateral escalation.

\(^{45}\) Turley, *The Second Indochina War*, p 89.


\(^{47}\) Gibson writes of 'the assumption of an attack by the North Vietnamese' which he attributes to a more widely-held 'mechanistic anticommunism' (*The Perfect War*, p 89). Even Noam Chomsky accepts that McNamara is genuine in his beliefs. There is a passage in McNamara's *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York, Toronto: Times Books, 1995, p xvi) 'We... acted according to what were the principles and traditions of this nation. ... Yet we were wrong, terribly wrong. ... I truly believe that we made an error not of values but of judgment and capabilities.' Chomsky responds, 'I assume he's telling the truth. The book has a ring of honesty about it.' (Noam Chomsky interviewed by David Barsamian, *Class Warfare: Noam Chomsky in Conversation, 1992-1996*. Vancouver: New Star Books, 1997, p 200).

\(^{48}\) Ibid pp 200-5.
notwithstanding concepts of systematic ideological bias, accepting an earnestness of belief also accepts that in a given instance the calculus of decision making may be based on a wilfully distorted world-view in which certain facts are excluded. This is untrue. Known facts remain known at some level.\(^49\) If an individual succeeds, in some circumstance, in deluding themselves by suppressing facts of which they are fully appraised it may be of concern to a therapist, or sentencing judge, or someone interested exclusively in the psychological aspects of decision making, but for normal historical purposes the individual makes decisions consonant with the information which they have. If they frame those decisions deceptively, even to themselves, it is presumably an act of moral self-justification. To put it plainly, McNamara did not in any meaningful way believe that the DRV had attacked the US because, on some level, he simply knew better.

On an institutional level a very similar rule applies. Ideology may distort a decision making process, but it must be reapplied to each piece of information by wilful human agency. An institutional system may be pathological, but it nevertheless functions on the data available to it, with any omissions or distortions only occurring through human action. In the case of the Second Indochina War, it is quite easy to establish that not only the intelligence, but the analyses available to US decision makers were as accurate as could reasonably be expected.\(^50\) The only exceptions to this were the result of deliberate and systematic distortions of intelligence.\(^51\) In fact the US had highly sophisticated intelligence and strategy formulation systems. They applied psychosocial and anthropological disciplines rigorously. The US produced large 'Psychological Operations' reports on each of the three Indochinese nations in the late 1950s (note well that they produced one report for Vietnam) which the material, social, cultural and psychological milieu of each nation and how to exploit it. However parochial the viewpoint may have been, the US was therefore working with complex and highly informed rather than ignorant and simple-minded premises.\(^52\) The US was also able to bring considerable anthropological acumen to bear when it came to working with the Hmong of Laos\(^53\) and the Montagnards of Vietnam.\(^54\) And yet, so it is said, they managed to remain fundamentally ignorant of the majority peoples in Indochina.

In the military/strategic area US actions were similarly informed by sophisticated analyses and remarkably accurate forecasting.\(^55\) Perhaps the best illustration of this was the Omega wargame,

\(^49\) Unless unwillingly forgotten, which is not a likely factor in the decisions discussed in this essay.
\(^50\) Prados (The Hidden History of the Vietnam War) shows on many occasions that CIA intelligence was accurate and detailed except on two occasions where they succumbed to MACV pressure to accept false intelligence (NIE 58-1963 pp 32-3 and SNIE 14.3-1967, pp 125-6); this overall assessment, with the same caveats, is repeated in Harold P. Ford's CIA and Vietnam Policymakers: Three Episodes, 1962-1968. (Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, 1998.) and George Allen's None So Blind: A Personal Account of the Intelligence Failure in Vietnam (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001) lays the blame completely on those who chose to 'ignore' the CIA and adds that even when they went elsewhere they usually got the same unwelcome news (p 285). Schulzinger describes the CIA as 'having consistently proven to be accurate' (A Time for War, p 163).
\(^51\) The widespread distortions of intelligence will be discussed below.
\(^54\) Prados, Hidden Histories, p 74.
\(^55\) Ford writes of how a 'prescient' CIA received 'little receptivity' ('Preface' in CIA and Vietnam Policymakers), as early as 1962 they characterised the war as 'a slowly escalating stalemate' and predicted its future course with great accuracy (Ang Cheng Guan, The Vietnam War, 1962-64: The Vietnamese Communist Perspective in Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 35, No. 4. (Oct., 2000), p 607). The CIA were not the only ones, George Ball predicted major troop commitments some four years in advance (Daniel Ellsberg, Cycles of Optimism and Pessimism', in Jeffrey P. Kimball (ed), To Reason Why: The debate about the causes of US involvement in the Vietnam War. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990, p 170); by 1964, it appears that no-one of those formulating US policy 'talk[ed] about winning a victory' but '[e]ven as they advocated escalation, virtually all of them were predicting a war on the scale of Korea,' (Fredrik Logevall, 'Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam,' in Presidential Studies Quarterly, Vol. 34, No.
run by the RAND corporation in 1962. Omega predicted a growing US commitment, eventually as one participant put it 'bogg[ing] down 500,000 troops in the quagmire' causing 'great expenditure', 'great agitation and unrest in the American population' and driving 'the US Congress to the brink of revolt over the seemingly endless war.'\(^5\) In the 1962 Omega scenario, by 1972, the simulation's end, the communists had taken over most of Indochina. They \textit{had} sustained very heavy casualties, but were otherwise intact. However General Curtis LeMay insisted that they had underestimated the Air Force's ability to bomb the DRV into submission and in 1963 they ran a sequel, Omega II, which achieved virtually the same results as the first.\(^5\) In addition to ignoring their own people, the US ignored the 'prescient' Charles DeGaulle, who grew increasingly vocal in the matter-of-fact warnings and criticisms he made from 1961 onwards.\(^5\)

There are several principles which can profitably be applied to US behaviour with regard to the choices made and the information on which those choices were based. Firstly, I would suggest that if all calculations suggest that action \(x\) will lead to result \(y\), then the decision to pursue action \(x\) indicates a desire to achieve result \(y\). Another principle, which I think applicable, is that if out of a range of options an actor continuously and steadfastly forecloses all possibilities but one, then regardless of any protestations to the contrary, that remaining option is intentionally chosen. It is inevitable that any steeply hierarchical system, such as an empire, is likely to have this occur frequently for two reasons. The first is that allows for deniability (the Pilate factor, if you will) and the second, a corollary, is that it works well where power is exercised primarily through veto rather than direct control. In the case of the Second Indochina War, it will be shown in Part 2 of this essay that the US made many alternative paths impossible, often overthrowing the governments they had only just emplaced themselves in order to prevent negotiations.

I would also suggest that a clever strategist, where possible, matches means and ends, thus making results more predictable. In a situation where there is a stated end and a given means are employed and continue to be employed despite continued demonstrable 'failure' and are then employed elsewhere under the same rationale with the same results — in such a situation it is possibly worth considering that the 'means' are themselves the end. In the case of the Second Indochina War, I will argue the means were widespread general destruction, employed on as many of the people and as much of the societal fabric or infrastructure as was physically and politically feasible. If those were the means, I will suggest, they were also the end. The results are predictable. The dead stay dead. As will be revealed, the US rejected the offered allegiance of the Viet Minh; the option neutralisation in Vietnam; the neutrality in Laos and Cambodia; and the possibility of negotiations between antagonists in South Vietnam. In doing so they showed clearly that they preferred the certainty of raining destruction down on an enemy, to the uncertainty of dealing with a friend who would not conform to US strategic desires.

I should be noted that there are questions hanging over the sanity of major participants (aspersions have been cast on Lyndon Johnson's rationality;\(^5\) suggestions of psychosis have been levelled at Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger;\(^6\) and William Westmoreland was involuntarily committed in

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59 Morton Halperin (who had served in the Johnson administration and had worked with Kissinger at Harvard before working under him as a senior official of the National Security Council), for example, considered him paranoid (Appy, \textit{Vietnam}, p 404)
60 Steven L. Jacobs, 'Indicting Henry Kissinger: The Response of Raphaël Lemkin' in Adam Jones (ed) \textit{Genocide}, War
the 1950s)\textsuperscript{61} but that does not mean that their irrationality (if true) is a decisive factor. These people have very long careers behind them before they reach the relevant levels of power, at each stage supported by many (including the powerful) who think, for whatever reason that they are right for the job. Take the example of Westmoreland. Allegations of his stupidity or irrationality are legion.\textsuperscript{62} Certainly his own writings indicate an extraordinarily developed ability to believe two mutually contradictory things at the same time.\textsuperscript{63} Westmoreland's own writings also reveal him to be a 'right-wing authoritarian' (i.e. an authoritarian follower), or perhaps, to some extent, what Robert Altemeyer describes as a 'double-high' in authoritarian terms — one who is also a 'social dominator'.\textsuperscript{64} He demonstrates a very well developed ability to accept and espouse patently spurious logic. In a similar vein Chalmers Johnson quotes Hannah Arendt's conclusion on Eichmann that he possessed 'not stupidity but a curious, quite authentic inability to think,' the main characteristic of what she referred to as 'desk murderers'.\textsuperscript{65} As we shall see, like Eichmann, Westmoreland engaged in meticulous planning for the killing of innocents by their thousands under a demonstrably specious military rationale. He even went so far as to encourage ground troops to kill civilians.\textsuperscript{66} But like Eichmann, Westmoreland later denied believing in the fundamental purpose behind his behaviour: 'I didn't make national policy, I carried it out. I was a professional soldier. I was quite aware that Vietnam was not a popular war because our national interest was not at stake.'\textsuperscript{67} In other words, Westmoreland was fundamentally lucid in many respects, enough that his judgement could be trusted in practical matters, but he was, seemingly, also capable of accepting the most irrational of premises and of ignoring the most patent of obvious truths. Like George Orwell's 'O'Brien' he seemed to possess 'an athleticism of the mind, an ability at one moment to make the most delicate use of logic and at the next to be unconscious of the crudest logical errors.'\textsuperscript{68} It is easy to see why such qualities might be valued — because he was someone who will not only obey orders but who will actually believe the disingenuous cover stories given by

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\textsuperscript{61} Westmoreland would have it that he was committed by a risible mistake, the psychiatrist in question committed him because of his avowed desire to jump out of aeroplanes, but given that Westmoreland was a paratrooper it does seem unlikely that an Army psychiatrist would have had him locked away for that reason (William C. Westmoreland, \textit{A Soldier Reports}. New York: Doubleday 1980 (1976), p 61.)

\textsuperscript{62} Sheehan endorses the view that he was 'self-deluded' (\textit{A Bright Shining Lie}, p 695); Record writes of 'utter obliviousness' (\textit{Beating Goliath}, p 121); Cawthorne suggests that after 4 years as COMUSMACV he was still ignorant of Vietnamese history (\textit{Vietnam: A War Lost and Won}, p 116; Gibson states with utter certainty (\textit{The Perfect War}, pp 99-100) that he cannot have bothered to read Mao's \textit{On Protracted War}, nor even Giap's writings including his manual on insurgency published in English in 1961 (\textit{Vo Nguyen Giap, The Viet Cong Insurrection Manual for Undeveloped Countries}. New York and London: Fredrick A. Praeger, Inc., 1962 (1961)). Gibson knows this because at one point in \textit{A Soldier Reports} (pp 277-8), Westmoreland describes the reading material by his bedside, and admits not having time to read much. But Westmoreland was in Vietnam for 4 years. Gibson states that Westmoreland 'could have learned much' from Bernard Fall's books, but even if Westmoreland never did finish those books, he would have been surrounded by people who had thoroughly digested them and thus have access to whatever perspectives they offered.

\textsuperscript{63} For example, Westmoreland, without seeming to be conscious of any irony, writes \textit{in a single paragraph} of how the GVN enjoyed complete independence which neither he nor any other US official would ever dream of transgressing before going on to describe how he forced, with bullying threats, that self-same government to completely reverse a policy that he and other US officials didn't like (\textit{A Soldier Reports}, p 112).


\textsuperscript{65} This is not from \textit{Eichmann in Jerusalem}, but is from a posthumously published essay (Chalmers Johnson, \textit{Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic}. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006, pp 21-2.)

\textsuperscript{66} Michael Sallah and Mitch Weiss, \textit{Tiger Force}. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2006, pp 29-30; he also approved the Phoenix programme which, as will be described below, would, by its inescapable nature, have involved the murder of civilians ('non-combatants' as defined in international law) even if it had worked more discriminately (Tucker, \textit{Vietnam}, p 151; John Prados, 'Impatience, Illusion and Assymetry' in Marc Jason Gilbert (ed), \textit{Why the North Won the Vietnam War}. New York: Palgrave, 2002, p 141).

\textsuperscript{67} Appy, \textit{Vietnam}, p 540.

\textsuperscript{68} George Orwell, \textit{Nineteen Eighty-Four}. London: Penguin, 1983, p 240. The description could also be applied to Robert McNamara whose 'athleticism of mind' has been touched on above.
superiors. Superiors thoroughly accustomed to automatically applying a public relations approach to informing the world of their actions, characterised by Edward Bernays, the inventor of public relations, as the 'engineering of consent' using 'necessary illusions'. Indeed the psychological state of decision makers is important, but it's systemic nature is subservient to other factors. One could, for example, argue that a the system of advancement within the military is such that most generals would share, if not to the same degree, a highly authoritarian personality, but the system which promotes (so to speak) such traits arose for functional reasons. The same can be said of advancement within financial, political or intellectual hierarchies, where an ability to earnestly parrot one's superiors is likely to be rewarded.

The evidence exists to show that US actions were informed and wilful, at some level, as this essay will reveal. Obviously there are issues about who was really making the decisions on any given issue at any given time – not only was the US Congress denied its constitutionally mandated authority, but many, if not all, within successive administrations were mislead into making decisions at key points. In the case of the Second Indochina War the most important factor, as will be discussed, is the systematic falsification of the information on which successive administrations and the US Congress based their decisions. It should also be acknowledged, however, that those in the position of US Ambassador to the RVN had a extraordinary amount of power. It was they who, with some limitations, broadly decided what GVN policy was to be. At any given stage the Ambassadors may have been acting on instructions given in private by, say, the President, but the fact is that they would be on the ground making the decisions of what was allowable policy for the GVN, while the US government at all other levels would fiercely deny any ability to constrain the policy of the 'independent' GVN. This reached an almost comical level of irony when in 1967, as observed by Richard Holbrooke, Henry Cabot Lodge and his successor Ellsworth Bunker disingenuously used the mantra of 'non-intervention' to ensure that they, and not anyone in Washington (let alone the people of South Vietnam), would determine the result of the

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69 The first expression is perhaps best known through the paraphrase used by Walter Lippmann 'the manufacture of consent.' Lippmann who, like Bernays, believed that the average person ('Dumb Jack' in Bernays' terminology) was too stupid to be able to make important decisions, later became a leading advocate of US withdrawal and neutralisation. His phrase was used by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky (Manufacturing Consent, p xi) as the title for a book which, in part, poses significant challenges to revisionist and orthodox historiography of the Second Indochina War.

70 It is a common symptom of imperial systems that the periphery may usurp the policy making abilities of the centre by taking actions which commit the whole empire to a path not desired by the putative authorities. This is thought to have been the downfall of some Chinese dynasties and, in the Western tradition dates back at least to the Roman Republic, where ambitious proconsuls and generals would concoct wars without any recourse to the Senate or the people of Rome. Sometimes this ended in disasters like Carrhae, which also marked the beginning of implacable enmity with Parthia (Howard H. Scullard, From the Gracchi to Nero: A History of Rome 133BC to AD68 (5th Edition). London and New York: Routledge, 1982, pp 124-5), but mostly it was a functional driving engine of an expansion that evidently exceeded the wishes of even the oligarchs of Rome, let alone its people.

71 This is best demonstrated by the central role of Ambassadors Henry Cabot Lodge and Maxwell Taylor in the overthrowing of insufficiently compliant governments (Schulzinger, A Time for War, pp 120, 122, 162; Moyer, Forsaken Triumphant, pp 239-43, 255-62, 272-75, 318-9, 345-6; Neale, A People's History of the Vietnam War, pp 63-5; Turley, The Second Indochina War, pp 51, 53-4; Prados, The Hidden History of the Vietnam War, pp 26-7). Both of these ambassadors were exceedingly powerful. Taylor had been granted essentially proconsular power in that he controlled the conduct of the war directly and became the 'major power', deciding himself who was to be in the cabinet of the ostensibly independent GVN in late 1964 (Schulzinger, A Time for War, p 164).

72 Their most reliable clients (Nguyen Van Thieu and Nguyen Cao Ky, who 'ruled' from 1965 to 1975) even made a theatrical show of independence, in one instance calling the US 'a band of crooks' (Cawthorne, Vietnam: A War Lost and Won, p 137). I believe that Ngo Dinh Diem's 'independence' was (even if heartfelt) no less a deception, and part of what made him suitable for US purposes. Ultimately, as events were to prove, he had no independence and his actions, no matter what a show of protest may have emanated from Washington, had ultimately to conform completely to the exigencies of US strategy.
1967 elections in the RVN. 73

The fact that power is not always to be found where it is officially vested makes it even more crucial that US actions be the ultimate test for the validity of any imputed motive or strategy. As the second part of this essay will show, US actions had a consistent pattern fitting a coherent strategy, and I find it hard to believe that no single powerful person or group would have desired those particular outcomes. However, even if such a person or group did not exist, and it would be difficult to prove that they did, the US as an entity in itself can be said to have wilfully undertaken these actions due to the motives given because we know that given their foreknowledge of the outcomes of their actions, other imputed motives can be eliminated because they do not match what the US actually did.

The final reason for believing that US actions were fully intentional is the evidential weakness of the multiplicity of inadvertence theories that abound. Like the assertion that the British Empire was acquired in a 'fit of absent-mindedness' (or Michael Ignatieff's recent variant: 'If Americans have an empire,' he suggests, 'they have acquired it in a state of deep denial,') 74 exponents of inadvertence seem to feel that they need offer little in the way of real evidence. This is an abuse of the normal practice whereby if I assert that there is intent then the burden of proof is on me. In effect though, a claim of inadvertence is like a claim of an immaculate conception: the normal and commonly understood process has been bypassed – wars, for example, do normally not just happen by accident.

Arthur Schlesinger wrote 'The Politics of Inadvertence' in 1966, blaming successive administrations for stumbling blindly into incrementally greater commitments, "So once again, the demand arises for 'just one more step.' As past medicine fails, all we can apparently think to do is double the dose." 75 Schlesinger, an historian who had served in the Kennedy administration and described the war as 'a tragedy without villains', 76 thus launched a whole school of thought which attributed US involvement to a series of incremental steps, each involving a decision-making process which focussed on immediate rather than long-term concerns. These 'Quagmire' theories suggest that the US took the steps that it did unaware of the long-term consequences. As we have seen, this is not true but there is a variant which suggests that even knowing the disastrous long-term consequences, US administrations repeatedly chose, at each turning point, what was, from its perspective, the lesser of two evils. This is what is referred to as 'stalemate' theory, because the US, usually believing it could not win, sought at each point merely to avert a Communist victory. Stalemate theory can accord very closely with the revealed process of decision making process within Washington, but it does not account for the fact that people in Washington were making decisions

76 Quoted in Gibson, A Perfect War, p 5.
on the basis of false information. Despite protestations to the contrary, Stalemate theories suggest that the long-term results of US actions were unwanted and hence unwilled or, to put it another way, inadvertent. Because of its revelation of the mechanics of decision making I will return to stalemate theory below, but in terms of intentionality, stalemate theory is just another quagmire theory.

Quagmire theories tend to posit one or more given characteristics or motives that are the driving force for US actions—the obsession or predilection that caused them to unwittingly or unwillingly become involved in the Second Indochina War. I separate them into the following categories: the reluctance quagmire (which incorporates stalemate theory); the arrogance quagmire; and the credibility quagmire.

The reluctance quagmire involves a more or less well-informed reluctance, wherein, at a series of points in time, US leaders are forced to choose the lesser of two evils, which always just happens to be incremental escalation. In addition to the stalemate theorists mentioned above there are many who see this as a valid factor shaping US policy, especially with reference to Lyndon Johnson's decisions. The reluctance, however, might be more apparent than real. Johnson made a very vocal show of having his hand forced. He famously, after the fact, referred to the conflict as that 'bitch of a war.' In addition, he called it a 'god-awful mess', and himself as 'hooked like a catfish' and 'trapped'. He had a habit of thinking out loud with regard to the war, wondering “how he could maintain 'his posture as a man of peace’” and making it clear that all the options available to him were unpalatable. He would have frequent theatrical outbursts of indignation against hawkish advisers and, on one occasion, the constant changes of regime in the RVN (which, as we shall see, his own administration prompted).

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77 The originators of this theory, Daniel Ellsberg and Leslie Gelb, were thoroughly involved in the US policy/strategy apparatus. Gelb (and co-author Richard Betts) published a detailed account of the working of the 'Stalemate Machine' in which it was stated that decisions were not inadvertent but 'deductive'; that decisions 'never strayed very far from the center of opinion both within and outside the government'; and that 'virtually all important decisions were made without illusions about the odds for success.' Thus 'the foreign policy failed, but the domestic decisionmaking system worked.' (Leslie Gelb with Richard Betts, The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked. Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1979, p 2). Note that they are suggesting that a generally pessimistic outlook among bureaucrats is the same as being well-informed (which it is not) and seem totally unconcerned about the constant, massive deceptions of the public.


79 Schulzinger, for example, informs us that for the White House 'doing more, doing less, or doing the same all entailed enormous risks,' and writes of the 'slide towards Americanisation' during which 'the Johnson administration struggled to limit the U.S. Role' (A Time for War, pp 125, 154).

80 Schulzinger says of one escalation: 'Seeing no other real choice, Johnson approved the military courses of action...,' (ibid, p 159); Edward Cuddy suggests that after Harry Truman's choice to support the French in the First Indochina War, the only President who had the choice of 'a clean break' was Dwight Eisenhower. He suggests that Johnson is merely 'the fall guy' because things happened to come to a head during his presidency ('Vietnam: Mr. Johnson's Or Mr. Eisenhoower's?' The Review of Politics, Vol. 65, No. 4. (Autumn, 2003), pp. 351-374.)

81 Cawthorne, Vietnam: A War Lost and Won, p 64.

82 Cuddy, 'Vietnam: Mr. Johnson's War. Or Mr. Eisenhoower's?' pp 360-1.

83 Logevall, 'Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam' p 100.

84 Schulzinger, A Time for War, pp 146, 166.

85 According to Schulzinger, “The succession of military regimes drove Johnson nearly apoplectic. 'I don't want to hear any more of this coup shit,' he exploded to aides,” ibid, p 170. Johnson was not the only one to have the audacity to condemn the US brokered coups; Maxwell Taylor, who as US Ambassador to Saigon had first forced a change of Government on the US installed Nguyen Khanh, then had partaken in the destabilisation of Khanh's second government. When the utterly predictable coup resulted, Taylor is reported to have railed at the coup leaders 'we Americans [are] tired of coups,' (ibid, p 169). As to why the US went through so many government's, this will be discussed in detail below, but in essence the difficulty was in finding people who would keeping prosecuting a
The most bizarre Johnson outburst I have come across is an instance where a Major was, for no apparent reason, made to hold a map during a meeting between Johnson and the JCS, becoming 'an easel with ears'. Later he described the event to Christian Appy: First the JCS made some recommendations. “At that moment, Johnson exploded. I almost dropped the map. He just started screaming these obscenities. They were just filthy. It was something like: 'You goddamn fucking assholes. You're trying to get me to start World War III with your idiotic bullshit – your 'military wisdom.' He insulted each of them individually. 'You dumb shit. Do you expect me to believe that kind of crap? I've got the weight of the Free World on my shoulders and you want me to start World War III?' He called them shitheads and pompous assholes and used the f-word more freely than a marine in boot camp. He really degraded them and cursed at them. The he went back to a calm voice, as if he'd finished playing his little role....’

Logevall describes Johnson's behaviour as a 'charade' undertaken because 'Johnson wanted history to record that he agonised.' But Johnson was not the only one. Not only was John Kennedy also in the habit of thinking out loud with regard to Indochina, but so was Eisenhower. Kennedy would frequently profess peace whilst in the midst of making arrangements for escalation. This conscious and consecutive manipulation of public and historical perception makes any expression of reluctance at any level of US government or military of extremely dubious evidential value.

Anyone seeking to understand the US escalation in Indochina should bear in mind the small worth of professed reluctance when dealing with the idea that the US at key points would choose incremental escalation as the lesser of two evils. There is a certain amount of selection that goes into framing the decision before a given president or cabinet member. These decisions are nearly always framed as being taken with complete dispassionate and chauvinistic (if not completely amoral) 'realism'. The immediate need to prevent an imminent Communist victory, because of its domestic and international concerns, weighed against, as we have seen, a very pessimistic prognosis. But, given that ultimate 'victory' is not seriously entertained, the motives given tend to be ephemeral, contingent, shallow or insignificant where they are not demonstrably false. Against these very minor motives I would like to put forward two considerations that are, to my knowledge, war which could only guarantee the destruction of more and more of Vietnam, with no possibility of 'victory'.

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87 Logevall, 'Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam' p 101.
88 Schulzinger, *A Time for War*, pp 99, 111; Fred I. Greenstein and Richard H. Immerman, 'What Did Eisenhower Tell Kennedy about Indochina? The Politics of Misperception.' *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 79, No. 2. (Sep., 1992), p 584. These authors, I should point out, take the vocalisations and equivocating as a symptom of reluctance: “The events that culminated in United States military intervention in Vietnam were marked by continuing disagreement and ambivalence on the part of American policy makers, who sought to arrive at outcomes falling between what Eisenhower at one point described as the 'unattainable' and the 'unacceptable.'”
89 Schulzinger, *A Time for War*, p 111.
90 The normally cited domestic concern is the worry of being labelled 'soft on communism' (Turley, *The Second Indochina War*, p 17; Schulzinger, *A Time for War*, pp 124, 132; Owens, *America Won the Vietnam War*, p 98). Gelb manages to stretch this one concern into six different issues suggesting that additionally such charges would dissipate 'Presidential influence,' as well as 'alienating conservative leadership... thereby endangering President's legislative program;' and 'jeopardising election prospects;' not to mention “undercutting domestic support for a 'responsible' U.S. World role; and enlarging the prospects for a right-wing reaction – the nightmare of a McCarthyite garrison state,” (Gelb, 'How the System Worked', in Kimball (ed.), *To Reason Why*, p 155). As Logevall points out, it is hardly possible that domestic concerns could have pushed Johnson into escalation as the most momentous decisions came after he had secured a landslide electoral victory, in large part due to his disingenuous suggestion that he would not escalate the conflict or make a more major commitment of US ground forces (Logevall, 'Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam' p 107).
91 The predominant international concern cited in this context is the need to maintain US credibility. Although this is mostly linked to the idea of reluctance, it actually has a certain life of its own and I categorise it as a quagmire theory in its own right which is discussed below.
never mentioned as decision making factors: the moral and the legal. Few people would ever choose actions which they knew would bring agony, fear and death to even a single innocent, yet many decisions were taken in the full knowledge that they would cause such suffering on a massive scale. It was not, for instance, possible to order a bombing campaign against the DRV without the certain knowledge that children would suffer and die in substantial numbers. Furthermore, given that the only projected peace was through the Communist victory which they sought not to avoid but postpone, it cannot be said that these acts were done to prevent greater suffering in Indochina. There is also the legal concern. Johnson for one is said to have “predicted the future appearance of 'a brutal prosecutor’” in 1964.\textsuperscript{92} Also to be considered is the highly publicised Russell War Crimes Tribunal of 1967, a 'tribunal' created privately to investigate war crimes in Indochina, which revealed horrific details of civilian suffering;\textsuperscript{93} and the fact that the lead US prosecutor from Nuremburg, Telford Taylor, suggested that Westmoreland was prosecutable under the precedent of the case of General Yamashita.\textsuperscript{94} It seems to me that it is unlikely that anyone would choose to kill people and risk prosecution just to prevent 'the dissipation of Presidential influence'.\textsuperscript{95}

The conception of serial choices of the lesser of two evils effectively reverses reality. In fact, far from allowing an unwill or myopic commitment, the incremental implementation of US intervention in Indochina actually necessitated an unwavering determination, a repeated rededication to the use of violence and, as will be discussed, an adamant and active opposition to ending the conflict. The fact that there were so many opportunities to make other choices should be taken as evidence that a large-scale conflict was acutely desired.

Intricately linked to the reluctance idea is the credibility quagmire theory. Here the driving force is the desire to 'maintain credibility' on the world stage.\textsuperscript{96} Credibility is one of a number of reasons advanced in US rhetoric and, perhaps because it is so subjective, it is still fairly widely accepted as a motive. After all, even if it seems a stupid rationale, US policy makers might really have believed it, surely? There is, however, a difference between stupid and nonsensical. I don't personally believe that the US policy makers were individually or collectively stupid, but even if they were that would not be sufficient to give weight to these claims. That would be to suggest that they believed their credibility would be heightened by what Kissinger described as, ‘victory by a third class Communist peasant state.'\textsuperscript{97} That, after all, is what their most comprehensive analyses kept suggesting would be the outcome if they continued their escalating commitment, and so, logically, they chose this outcome (being 'defeated' by a small nation of peasant farmers) over any other options such as neutralisation or simple unilateral withdrawal and the disowning of the GVN.

The credibility quagmire idea also requires a belief in the highly exaggerated vulnerability of the US, as discussed above. The fact is that all other state actors were at all times very reluctant to offend or provoke the US. As will be explored below, the US no more needed to show a propensity to use its unparalleled might than a 200 kilogram gorilla would have to do so in order to induce

\textsuperscript{92} Schulzinger, \textit{A Time for War}, pp 154-5. It should be noted that for Schulzinger this is only one (very minor) further piece of evidence that Johnson did not want to go to war at all, but was forced to. I would offer the alternative explanation that fear of a 'brutal prosecutor' would be one good reason for him making such an elaborate pretence of not wanting to go to war.

\textsuperscript{93} Gibson, \textit{The Perfect War}, pp 369-73.


\textsuperscript{95} See above, n 89.

\textsuperscript{96} It is common to deny the validity of the claim that US credibility is at stake while, at the same time, accepting without question that it was a genuine, if mistaken, motive (Turley, \textit{The Second Indochina War}, pp 194-5; Tucker, \textit{Vietnam}, pp 154-5; Prados, \textit{The Hidden History of the Vietnam War}, pp 191-2; Neale, \textit{A People's History of the Vietnam War}, pp 68-9).

\textsuperscript{97} Shawcross, \textit{Sideshow}, p 90.
those nearby to be cautious. The sheer irrationality of this is perhaps most clearly shown by McGeorge Bundy's February 1965 memorandum suggesting that the US should bomb the DRV to demonstrate to everyone that the US was willing to bomb the DRV.98

The arrogance quagmire idea suggests that not only the policy makers, but the people of the US are conceited, parochial, ignorant of other cultures and convinced of their own invincibility.99 While often not very complementary, it does exonerate the US for its actions because at each point of decision they did what they thought right in their own conceited view of the world. Many present the US as being dominated by irremediably racist conceits and ignorance,100 a portrayal which in itself is racist and misleading, as we have seen, regarding the production and, where the US chose to adhere to its own advice, the application of US anthropological expertise and intelligence.101 At the other extreme, though, some even suggest that they were arrogantly good-hearted.102 None of these suggestions of arrogance accord with the objective analyses which informed the most important US decisions. Arrogance and racism were often prominent in US rhetoric, but there were obvious advantages to promoting such viewpoints in helping rationalise or excuse US actions.103

So strong are the attractions of inadvertence to those analysing US actions that even those seeking to negate the concept end often end up embracing it. The stalemate theorists were sucked into the

98 McGeorge Bundy, 'Memorandum for the President, February 7, 1965,' in Gareth Porter and Gloria Emerson (eds), Vietnam: A History in Documents (abridged). New York: New American Library, 1981 (1979), pp 295-9. This memorandum is a key document in the evolution of 'sustained reprisal' which in this essay is referred to as 'graduated response.' In this document Bundy states: 'We cannot assert that a policy of sustained reprisal will succeed in changing the course of the contest in Vietnam.... At a minimum it will damp down the charge that we did not do all we could have done....' Bundy also talks of showing 'U.S. willingness to employ this new norm in counter-insurgency....' It is worth remembering that this new norm in 'counter-insurgency' is not interdiction bombing of supply routes, it is strategic bombing of the DRV, guaranteed to bring massive suffering to the civilian population. This essay will return to the subject of the graduated response strategy.

99 A typical example would be Tucker, who wrote of the 'hubris that affected most architects of US Vietnam policy,' (Vietnam, p 155). In contrast Kolko, though he espoused an imperialist view of a US determined to neutralise the threat of a virus of succesful nationalist economic development (Vietnam: Anatomy of War, pp 7, 75-7), also presented a vision of an arrogance quagmire. After having discussed the DRV in rather complimentary terms he wrote, '...that the United States should have become embroiled with such formidable adversaries was a natural outcome of the logic and objectives of its role.... it is apparent that there existed two inmoveable forces, one of which had no conceivable option but to pursue the policy it had embarked on....' [emphases added] (ibid p 72). Thus he also suggests 'a tragedy without villains'.

100 America was involved in Vietnam for thirty years, but never understood the Vietnamese. We were frustrated by the incomprehensible behaviour of our Vietnamese enemies and bewildered by the inexplicable behavior of our Vietnamese friends. The problem was us, not them.... There was something about the condition of being an American that prevented us from understanding,' Loren Baritz, Backfire: A History of How American Culture Led Us into Vietnam and Made Us Fight the Way We Did. New York: Morrow, 1985, pp 20, 22; also see Warner, Shooting at the Moon, pp 6-7; Frances Fitzgerald, Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1972. Sheehan made the more nuanced point that racism was instrumental in forming US decisions: 'Had the Vietnamese been white Europeans, Roosevelt and Truman would not have consigned them so readily to the tortures of colonial conquest. Human considerations would have mitigated strategic ones. (A Bright Shining Lie, 154). Maybe so, but only because of the constraints of public opinion. The US did not mind consigning the Greek people (for instance) to the literal tortures of brutal military dictatorship (Blum, Killing Hope, 218-9).

101 See above, notes 52-4.

102 Summers wrote, '...we presumed that we knew what was best for the world... act[ing] not so much the World's Policeman as the World's Nanny,' (On Strategy, p 171). Warner's Shooting at the Moon is all about 'imprudent idealism', as is McNamara's In Retrospect. Also see Karnow, Vietnam: A History, pp 12-14; Schulzinger, pp ix, 98.

103 Dean Rusk opined that 'their very processes of logic are different' (Zinn, A People's History of the United States, p 476); Henry Cabot Lodge, after orchestrating the coup that overthrew Diem and supporting/encouraging the next coup 3 months later, opined that 'The traditional way of doing things here is by well planned, well thought out use of force.' (Schulzinger, A Time for War, p 137); Westmoreland, most infamous of all, wrote that for Asians life was 'plentiful, cheap' (A Soldier Reports, p 187).
historiographical quagmire of inadvertence. Gabriel Kolko saw no villains and no choice. Gibson railed against Schlesinger and Karnow for forgetting about cause and effect but in the final analysis, he suggests that US involvement was a mistake brought about by mental limitations. Logevall does a very good job of disproving the commonly advanced suggestions that Johnson was reluctantly forced into war, only to make a different suggestion to the same effect wherein the credibility at stake was Johnson's domestic credibility and, trapped though he was, the trap was 'of his own making'. Given that he doesn't advance any substantive proof (citing only his own expanded 'argument' in a longer work) I cannot help but think that having shown the Johnson was not forced by certain given factors, then it was necessary to deduce what remained that would have forced Johnson into war. That something forced him, is a given. It is simply unthinkable, despite his duplicity and his deceitful pretences of reluctance, that Johnson would have freely chosen to bring about such gratuitous destruction, horror and suffering.

The key to the persistent intrusion of inadvertence into the literature of the Second Indochina War seems to be a failure of imagination. Writers cannot imagine any motive that would warrant such behaviour, and therefore assume a mistake.

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104 See above n 76.
105 See above n 98.
106 Gibson, A Perfect War, p 5.

Many 'orthodox' scholars deny that the US involvement in Indochina stemmed from a global strategic imperative. They point to documents that show that the US was not in fact under the impression that the Communist bloc was some monolithic entity. They believe that if the US does not believe its own rhetorical characterisation of the situation as necessitating intervention because of wider (global or regional) concerns, then ipso facto the US must have been motivated by concerns (probably erroneous) that stem purely from Vietnam (Laos and Cambodia being largely incidental). Perhaps they feel on some level that any acceptance of broader concerns would play into the hands of those who would characterise US actions as noble and self-sacrificing. What they implicitly accept, however, is the US government's own characterisation of its containment policy as being a defensive posture against aggression – a characterisation which does not accord with the facts. In other words those that wish to oppose a specific act of imperialism feel that they must affirm the rightness of all other instances of similar behaviour undertaken according to the same rationale, and characterise the specific act as an aberrant exception.

The flaw in the debate over whether or not the global strategic concerns of the containment paradigm were the main factor behind US commitment is that the debate always accepts the rhetorical construction of 'containment' as an anti-communist strategy. 'Containment' was in fact only a public-opinion conscious characterisation of a self-arrogated hegemonic power over most of planet Earth. It meant that, without reference to sovereignty, democracy or local legitimacy, the US could over-ride any local attempts at economic nationalism because they defined that as being aggression. By defining an area of Soviet influence to be contained they, by inevitable implication, gave themselves certain rights with regard to everything else in the world.

Containment evolved out of the 'Grand Area Strategy' devised in the US during World War II. The 'Grand Area Strategy' was not about opposing communism, it was about US domination. It was intended to secure the 'limitation of any exercise of sovereignty' in 'an integrated policy to achieve military and economic supremacy for the United States.' George Kennan himself (whose 'Long Telegram' was so influential in creating the putative belief that the Soviet Union was inherently expansionist and must be confronted) revealed his belief that the main goal of US foreign policy was to maintain the 'position of disparity' between the US and other states, a project in which concerns for human rights and democracy were unaffordable. In other words the function of this hegemonic power was to prevent economic development. It is just as Friedrich List observed in 1841, '...when anyone has attained the summit of greatness, he kicks away the ladder by which he has climbed up....'

The creation of a bipolar system favoured both sides, facilitating the construction of a Soviet empire as well as that of US empire. Indeed, both Stalin and Churchill beat the Americans to the punch, both declaring implacable enmity for implicit or explicit ideological reasons in 1946. This was soon followed by Kennan's 'Long Telegram' where he concurred that the Soviet Union was by its

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110Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain a position of disparity... We should cease to talk about vague and... unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of living standards, and democratization.' 'Policy Planning Study 23', 1948. Quoted in Noam Chomsky, *What Uncle Sam Really Wants*, Berkeley: Odian Press, 1992, pp 9-10.
very nature an enemy. Of course, the Soviet Union had been severely battered by World War II and was not naturally as wealthy and powerful as the US so Kennan could not actually make any claims that such enmity constituted a military threat. Nevertheless he made the danger posed seem high and Dean Acheson commented that 'his predictions and warning could not have been better.' Acheson's emphasis should be seen in context of his later comment that he felt it necessary “to bludgeon the mass mind of 'top government' with the Communist threat.” He described this process in the following terms, recalling an address in 1947: 'In the past eighteen months, I said, US pressure on the Straits, on Iran, and on northern Greece had brought the Balkans to the point where a highly possible Soviet breakthrough there might open three continents to Soviet penetration. Like apples in a barrel... the corruption of Greece would infect Iran and all to the east. It would also carry infection to Africa through Asia Minor and Egypt, and to Europe through Italy and France....' Such hyperbole, as Chomsky points out, was patently disingenuous as Acheson was in a position to know that his threats were completely implausible. Fear of the Soviet threat began to make an impact in the US news media in 1948, at a time when Soviet society, and in particular the Red Army, was on the verge of total collapse.

The other key part of the containment paradigm under which the US was to operate was established by the passage of NSC-68 through Congress. The Soviet Union was officially designated as a

113 One author wrote, of the 'Long Telegram', "[w]ith all due skepticism, a careful reading and dispassionate interpretation of the Long Telegram, and especially of the last section of it, would help us not lose sight of the fact that Kennan stressed the obsolescence of war as an effective means in dealing with the Soviet power. The following lines, though drawn from a subsequent piece of work by Kennan, highlights more persuasively this argument: 'it is not Russian military power which is threatening us, it is Russian political power [...], the threat lay in the terrible truths which the Russians have discovered about the vulnerability of liberal democratic society [...], it is not entirely a military threat, I doubt that it can be effectively met entirely by military means.'" (Efstathios T. Fakiolas, 'Kennan's long telegram and NSC-68: a comparative theoretical analysis.' East European Quarterly, Vol. 31, No.4 (Jan 1998), p 420.)

114 Ibid.


117 Moyar writes, 'Truman was reluctant to embrace NSC-68, but events – especially the Korean War – led him to accept its main tenets by the middle of 1950.' (Triumph Forsaken, p 426 n 53). Brian Bogart has this to say: 'Along with then Secretary of State Dean Acheson, and without any expertise in Russian history or Soviet affairs, Nitze convinced -- some say coerced -- Truman into recognizing the Soviet Union as an evil and imminent threat, and into signing NSC-68 and launching the Cold War. After NSC-68 was signed, it needed the approval of Congress. Post-Cold War documents suggest that the Korean War was triggered by Americans and South Koreans for this purpose (Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao and the Korean War, by Sergei N. Goncharov, John W. Lewis, and Xue Litai; Stanford University Press).' (Brian Bogart, 'America Programmed for War', Zmag, 25 September 2005. Retrieved 29 December 2005 from http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?ItemID=8819.) If this seems somewhat out of kilter with the normal understanding of the beginning of the Korean War, it should be remembered that the Chinese and North Koreans have always claimed that the South Koreans attacked first and all of the available circumstantial evidence supports their contention. The US had a strong motive, and the timing (like that of the Tonkin Gulf incidents) entirely favored US purposes (not just for the passage of NSC-68, but also because the Soviet boycott of the UN allowed the US to get Security Council backing for a full-scale invasion). The North Koreans claim that they crossed the border on the 25th as a counter-attack after a 2 day bombardment by the South Korean forces was followed on the 25th by an attack on the town of Haegu. Their claims are greatly bolstered by the fact that on the 26th the South Koreans announced that they had captured Haegu, (William Blum, Killing Hope: U.S. Military and C.I.A. Interventions Since World War II (2nd ed.), Monroe: Common Courage Press, 2004, pp 46-7). A US instigated invasion (if it served the purpose suggested above) would constitute an important example of a policy being determined at the periphery as it would have taken only whatever personages were sufficient to secure the cooperation of the US installed ROK dictator Syngman Rhee, and it resulted in a war costing 4 million people's lives – mostly civilian (Richard Goff, Walter Moss, Janice Terry, Jiu-Hwa Upshur, The Twentieth Century: A Brief Global History (6th ed.) New York: McGraw Hill, 2002, p 350) – as well as inaugurating the entire Cold War. Something of the complexity of such relations, however, is indicated by the fact that although there may have been purposeful deception of Congress, there was no coercion, and like the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, NSC-68 could have
thoroughly essential enemy, eternally hostile and aggressive, who could never be negotiated with unless they completely renounced their ideology and embraced Western norms and systems of governance.\footnote{Paul Nitze, 'NSC 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security' (April 14, 1950). Retrieved 13 April 2006 from http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68.htm.} This established the preeminence of the military as the key economic consideration for US governments. It also enshrined a policy of the perpetual maintenance of US military supremacy.\footnote{Fakiolas, 'Kennan's long telegram and NSC-68: a comparative theoretical analysis.', pp 421-3.} In other words the US was to be put in an endless state of wartime economic functioning. The espoused ideological opposition to communism was merely a tool to facilitate a highly militarised interventionist global hegemony. Ironically, or perhaps revealingly, Kennan's famous 'X' article (an article published in \textit{Foreign Affairs} under the pseudonym 'X' which many consider the ideological basis of containment) about Soviet power made much the same observation of the instrumental motives behind the Soviet Union's show of adherence to Marxist-Leninist ideology.\footnote{Robert L. Hutchings, 'X + 9/11: everything I needed to know about fighting terrorism I learned from George F. Kennan', \textit{Foreign Policy}, 143 (July-August 2004), p 70.}

The \textit{policy} of containment is found in NSC-68 (\textit{not} Kennan's 'Long Telegram' nor his 'X' article). It is unambiguously premised on a zero-sum paradigm. Thus any gain by Us is an equal loss by Them and any gain by Them is an equal loss by Us. This logic creates a primacy of power over material wealth – if \textit{disparity} of wealth is the aim (rather than gains in wealth) then the wealth must only be of interest in its ability to confer power. This is one of the most subtle and confusing aspects of the functioning of US foreign policy – the US sought dominance under a security paradigm, as if genuinely imperilled; but, as Gareth Porter rightly notes, it was strategically invulnerable, and indeed its actions are of necessity founded on the knowledge of that fact.\footnote{Gareth Porter, \textit{Perils of Dominance: Imbalance of Power and the Road to War in Vietnam}. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2006.} This contradiction is even reflected in the public rhetoric which in one breath has the US as omnipotent, and in the other as desperately vulnerable, a 'helpless giant'. I am using Richard Nixon's phrase with a slightly different sense than he employed when announcing the invasion of Cambodia. His words were, 'If, when the chips are down, the world's most powerful nation, the United States of America acts like a pitiful, helpless giant, the forces of totalitarian anarchy will threaten free nations and free institutions throughout the world.'\footnote{Quoted in Neale, \textit{A People's History of the Vietnam War}, p 141.} In my sense he is saying that the US \textit{is} a 'helpless giant' because he is implying that the US needs to prove itself with violence or it will be threatened. A better example is Admiral John McCain, who claimed the war in Cambodia as \textit{his} war. He was known as 'The Big Red Arrow Man' for his 'lurid' illustrations of poised communist forces.\footnote{“His military briefings were legendary. He would talk very excitedly for forty-five minutes about a subject that might be dealt with in ten and illustrate his doom-laden message with lurid maps of Southeast Asia. Extended from the bright-red belly of China were gigantic red arrows or claws reaching all over that part of the free world for which McCain felt responsible. Sometimes his sermons on the 'Chicom' threat were so energetic, his cries of woe so violent, his passionate pleas for aid so draining, that at the end of a briefing he would drop into his chair, ask for questions, and fall fast asleep.” William Shawcross, \textit{Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia}. London: Fontana, 1980 (1979), p 136.} Those in the Pentagon and the press may have regarded McCain as a figure of fun, but this exact message of dangerous vulnerability was being promulgated to a largely earnestly accepting US public throughout the Cold War.

Gareth Porter gives a revealing overview of the 'strategic asymmetry' between the Soviet Union. With regard to economics he writes, 'the Soviet technological lag behind the United States was estimated to be twenty-five years on average across all sectors, which further increased the disparity been voted down if there was a real will to resist being gulled.'
between the economic bases of the two states. Thus an index of effective economic power, combining GNP with [labour and capital] productivity and technological prowess, would show the U.S. power base in the 1950s and 1960s to have been several times greater than that of the Soviet Union.124 Porter continues by citing a quantitative measure of military power which puts US power as 40 times that of the USSR in 1955, and more than 9 times greater in 1965. But as he points out the qualitative differences accentuate this imbalance incalculably: 'Only the United States had strategic and power projection capabilities to credibly threaten the use of force in developing regions of the world.'125 Porter shows not only that there was only one global superpower, but that this was understood by successive US administrations, the Soviets, the Chinese (Mao's 'paper tiger' comments notwithstanding),126 and the Vietnamese.127

Oddly, however, Porter claims that the US only came to know its own strength (as it were) between 1950 and 1952. He accepts that the astronomical exaggeration of Soviet capabilities before 1950 was simply an error of intelligence even though he reveals that the Soviet General Staff of the time, when shown the data many years later 'could not believe that such an estimate was seriously adhered to by their counterparts from the Joint Chiefs of Staff.'128 I find this naïve and misleading. It seems unlikely that US intelligence would have been so out of touch with reality that it would have mistaken the nigh-prostrated USSR for an immanent threat to Western Europe. Intelligence, by its nature, is based on evidence and it only departs from that practice when consciously manipulated. What is more, at the risk of over-simplifying somewhat, the reasons for distorting intelligence cannot be to make it conform to some ideological expectation, because an actual ideologue would expect the undistorted intelligence to confirm their beliefs.129

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126Ibid, pp 4-29.
127Ibid, p 32.
128Ibid, pp 1, 277-8 n 5.
129It should be noted that there were later examples of the distortion of US intelligence to exaggerate a threat. What may first spring to mind is the 'Downing Street Memo' (in which Tony Blair was briefed that the Bush administration was 'fixing' intelligence to facilitate their invasion of Iraq) and the conspiracy to deceive the public; the bureaucracy and those parts of the US Government which were not part of the deception (Elizabeth de la Vega, 'The White House Criminal Conspiracy', *TomDispatch*, 29 October 2006. Retrieved 30 October 2006 from [http://www.tomdispatch.com/index.mhtml?pid=32550](http://www.tomdispatch.com/index.mhtml?pid=32550)). More relevant, however, are the systematic attempts to exaggerate all threats such as the 'One-Percent Doctrine' under which any threat that can be imagined as possible must be treated as real (Tom Barry, "Mission Creep" in Latin America—U.S. Southern Command's New Security Strategy*, *Foreign Policy in Focus*, 1 July 2005). The 'One-Percent Doctrine' had a very strong precedent. In the 1970s the Cold War pretence of the Soviet threat became threatened by an increasing awareness of Soviet weakness which was increasingly unavoidable due to the improvements taking place in surveillance technology. The threat was averted by the advent of The Committee for the Present Danger, a neo-conservative fore-runner of the Project for a New American Century. They created 'Team B' a group of neoconservative ideologues who provided intelligence assessments based on openly fabricating Soviet capabilities for which no evidence existed (Chris Floyd, 'The Slander that Launched Donald Rumsfeld's Career', *Empire Burlesque*, 11 April 2006. Retrieved 13 April 2006 from [http://www.chris-floyd.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=archivecategory&id=3&Itemid=103](http://www.chris-floyd.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=archivecategory&id=3&Itemid=103)). Roger Morris, formerly an aide to Henry Kissinger who resigned over US actions in Cambodia, gave the following description:

"Let her fly!! -- OK, G.B." was the flourish with which the new [CIA] Director, George H.W. Bush, signed off on Team B, though later, when the episode became notorious, he would admit to an aide, "It wasn't my doing." Team B's right-wingers, including Paul Wolfowitz, were chaired, aptly enough, by Harvard's Richard Pipes. He had been handpicked by Richard Perle via Senator Jackson and came, like most of the others, with "little command of scientific [strategic weapons] matters," as Gary Wills put it. The group would form what even hard-line CIA analyst Ray Cl ine called "a kangaroo court of outside critics all picked from one point of view."

Predictably, their "findings" were a simplistic fantasy: The Soviet Union was intent on starting World War III and an American nuclear "window of vulnerability" made such a Russian attack plausible. This
if many local level decisions were conceived based on a defensive or competitive premise, it must be assumed that the overall strategic thrust of US policy was based on a knowledge of strategic invulnerability and global military hegemony extending at least as far back as the end of World War II.

The irony is that the greater US power, the more the people of the US had to be deceived into unreasonable fears in order to justify the exercise of that power. This is why Noam Chomsky describes the Cold War itself as 'a rickety structure indeed'.

The Manichean aspect of the Cold War, therefore, is a form of 'necessary illusion'. Some relate the US stance of enmity towards the USSR to the ideas of Weimar jurist Carl Schmitt, who considered enemies to be an essential mythic part of a group identity. Perhaps there were 'elites' who felt that indeed this was an essential part of managing the unruly lower elements of society. In addition it may be that, as Neale argues, 'inside America, anti-Communism was in practice a pretext for persecuting radical shop stewards and union representatives.'

Whatever the truth of the above domestic factors, I think they are greatly outweighed by foreign policy considerations which exist in two forms. The first is the material concern of those who own enterprises operating in other countries. Obviously this relates closely to Neale's point about the repression of unionists within the US, and anti-communist sentiment has been widely used in Latin America to justify repression, even the torture and murder, of unionists, intellectuals, indigenous leaders and human rights workers who in some way threatened a very profitable status quo. In addition, at the governmental level, the US was able to label any inconvenient government as communist or vulnerable to imminent communist takeover. The most obvious example is the overthrow of the nationalist Arbenz regime in Guatemala which occurred largely at the behest of the United Fruit Company whose major shareholders included Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his brother Allen Dulles who was Director of Central Intelligence (DCI). At the time that the regime change was being planned the Under-secretary of State, former DCI, Walter Bedell Smith, was seeking employment with the United Fruit Company.

Guatemala was no isolated incident. Fear of communist takeover or 'creeping socialism' was cited in the following instances of US backed or instigated regime change: Iran, 1953; Indonesia, 1965; British Guiana, 1964; Iraq, 1963; Ecuador, 1963; Congo, 1965; Brazil, 1964; Dominican Republic,
1963; Chile, 1973; Greece 1967; Grenada, 1983.\textsuperscript{135} That is not even counting the 6 Indocheinese instances where the US cited fear of eventual communist takeover as their reason for bringing about coups.

The simple equation of the protection and advancement of material interests, which I will refer to as material imperialism, is a seductively direct way of explaining US foreign interventions. It does not, however, explain even half of the interventions above, nor ultimately, the US interventions in Indochina. As mentioned above, the Cold War paradigm – containment – was a zero-sum formulation of relative power. In other words, while material imperialism was an important factor, the fundamental rationale of containment was power imperialism.

That material concerns were not the driving force behind the US hegemony of the Cold War era, is very well demonstrated by US actions in Indochina. Many have imputed a neo-colonial motive to the US in its intervention in Indochina,\textsuperscript{136} not least their Indocheinese enemies.\textsuperscript{137} On some level, however, the opponents of the US seemed able to escape the confines of such thinking. Although the Vietnamese insurgency began by targeting commercial interests,\textsuperscript{138} they soon desisted. Ironically a dogmatic exaltation of the ideology of socialism as something concrete that the US wished to crush, seems to have allowed communists to better understand US actions as being based on power imperialism.\textsuperscript{139} After all, the US never showed any particular inclination to protect the rubber resources which they were putatively there to exploit, while, by their actions, they showed a considerable inclination to destroy them with explosives, incendiaries and defoliants. I think that this, as much as the human cost, is part of the reason that the pro-war anti-communist French writer Bernard Fall became so distraught with US actions by 1967, when he wrote, as quoted by Chomsky, 'Vietnam as a cultural and historic entity... is threatened with extinction.......the countryside literally dies under the blows of the largest military machine ever unleashed on an area of this size.\textsuperscript{140} One of the striking things about the Second Indochina War, and here the reader may be reminded of more recent events, was the fact that the US disingenuously courted support from its own business community by promising immense possibilities for making profit.\textsuperscript{141} In the event, however, the US created an environment where profitmaking was impossible except for those who contracted to provide war related goods or services to the US government. Those companies that did make very handsome profits, included not only arms manufacturers, but infrastructure companies, such as Bechtel and Halliburton, and chemical companies such as Dow and Monsanto, and other civilian contractors who were allowed to operate under conditions which amounted to legalised corruption where 'money [could] be multiplied without producing anything.'\textsuperscript{142} Ultimately this money came not from the plunder of Indochina, but from the US taxpayer.


\textsuperscript{136}Neale, \textit{A People's History of the Vietnam War}, p 3; Willson, 'Bob Kerrey's Atrocity....', pp 169-70; Owens, \textit{America Won the Vietnam War}, p 65. Many proponents of a 'virus' theory (which postulates that the US was primarily fearful of the example of successful independent economic development which might occur in the DRV) put it in basically neo-colonial terms, referring either to regional resources or to the 'Superdomino' Japan: Kolko, Vietnam: \textit{Anatomy of War}, pp76-7; Schulzinger, \textit{A Time for War}, p 54; Chomsky, \textit{Rethinking Camelot}, p 40; Zinn, \textit{A People's History of the United States}, p 471.


\textsuperscript{138}For example, in 1958, when armed resistance to Diem's regime was in its infancy, 400 insurgents raided a Michelin plantation (Tucker, \textit{Vietnam}, p 89).


\textsuperscript{140}Chomsky, \textit{Rethinking Camelot}, p 26.

\textsuperscript{141}Ibid, p 29; Zinn, \textit{A people's History of the United States}, p 475.

\textsuperscript{142}Gibson, \textit{The Perfect War}, pp 245-6.
What I am suggesting is that at the most fundamental level the US was working on a global zero-sum strategy which made it perfectly rational to sacrifice its material interests in return for a more than proportionate loss for the enemy (remembering, of course, that the massive extant material disparity gives the US the luxury of a much greater material loss in absolute terms). In such circumstances it makes perfect sense to simply destroy a country without attempting to seize permanent control of it. Indeed, in Indochina, until after the end of the Second Indochina War, the US did not have any modalities of control that could have functioned without the ongoing conflict, but in contrast, after the US having 'lost', the US controlled Bretton Woods institutions (the IMF, the World Bank), are able to dictate or influence every economic policy decision in the Indochinese states. These issues, and the issue of using Indochina for demonstration purposes, will be returned to in greater detail in the conclusion to this essay.

The last point to be made about containment is that it confuses those who would analyse US foreign policy. The most obvious example of this is Harry Summers who, in On Strategy, based his whole analysis of US military practices in Vietnam on the premise that they were using offensive tactics and defensive strategy. This pre-supposes that the US has some title to South Vietnam, as if it were part of the US which needed to be defended. In fact, as we shall see, the people of Vietnam desired unification under Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh which, inevitably, meant that the majority accepted or actively desired communist rule. Broadly speaking (though there may have been changes over time), the Cambodians were happy with neutrality and the Laotians, if forced, would have undoubtedly chosen Neo Lao (left-wing nationalist) rule and neutrality or, again if forced, alignment with the DRV. In such circumstances both US forces and those paid for by the US (who regardless of natality are in such circumstances acting as mercenary or proxy forces) are strategically on the offensive. Having said that, however, I think that Summers was perspicacious in his observation that the US did not employ strategy so much as 'grand tactics.' In fact, I think there is a certain advantage in seeing US actions in the Second Indochina War as purely tactical – from the US perspective, it might be said, the Second Indochina War was a tactical contest in a global war.

4. A War System? Genocide?

143Summers, On War, p 88.
144This isn't, admittedly, purely because of the idea of containment, but also because of precedents in coalition warfare from the World Wars. These precedents are, however, completely specious because in, say, World War II, there was a very strong coincidence of interest between allies wherein a loss in any given theatre was a threat to all regardless of geographical disposition. Not coincidently, this is because World War II was an almost perfect zero-sum game and there is a seeming desire to replicate both this aspect and the mobilisation of the economy during the war which is embodied in NSC-68.
145There were significant divisions in Cambodia, but mostly because the rural population were far more left-wing than Sihanouk's government, which was neutral in foreign policy, but, although nationalist, not very socialist in domestic policy. The situation is perhaps best demonstrated by the fact that after Lon Nol's coup there was widespread rural revolt and, in Ben Kiernan's words: 'Ironically it was in rural areas where there had been a considerable leftist opposition to Sihanouk that revolt against Lon Nol's coup was greatest.' The leftists who had been repressed (often brutally) by Sihanouk's forces, were the first to demand his return rather than accept Lon Nol (Ben Kiernan, 'The 1970 Peasant Uprisings Against Lon Nol', in Ben Kiernan and Chantou Boua (eds) Peasants and Politics in Kampuchea, 1942-1981. London: Zed Press, 1982, pp 209-10.)
146The best indication of Laotian desires comes from the May 1958 election. The Neo Lao won only one-third of the votes, but they only fielded candidates in 13 of 21 constituencies (meaning that they had an outright majority in those constituencies), winning 9 of those seats. In addition 4 seats were won by leftist neutralists who made natural coalition partners fro the Neo Lao and the leader of the Neo Lao/Pathet Lao, Prince Souphanouvong (who had the biggest majority in his constituency), was made Chairman of the Assembly (Prados, The Hidden History of the Vietnam War, p 222; Herman and Chomsky, Manufacturing Consent, p 254). Interestingly, Roger Warner's entire book on the subject of US intervention in Laos (Shooting at the Moon) does not mention the 1958 elections once.
147Summers, On Strategy, p 89.
The very concept of war generally implies contestation. Clausewitz, for example, used analogies of duels and wrestling.\textsuperscript{148} Clausewitz actually recognized that there was no ‘true polarity’ between antagonists,\textsuperscript{149} but was still unable to escape the broader idea of contestation, perhaps because war seemed to him too serious to be undertaken except under the urgent desire to force another party to bend to one’s will – ‘a serious means for a serious object’.\textsuperscript{150} Lack of contestation is also one of the grounds on which Jean Baudrillard declared that ‘The Gulf War did not take place’.\textsuperscript{151} Perhaps so, but perhaps we need to broaden our understanding of conflict to incorporate ‘wars’ which are not primarily driven by contestation. One possibility is provided by David Keen, who in his book on the ‘War on Terror’ characterises it as a ‘war system’.

David Keen introduces the idea of a war system in the following words – their relevance to the Second Indochina War all the more striking for knowing that Keen is describing entirely different circumstances:

> To understand the ‘war on terror’, we need to look more closely at the notion of ‘war’. We may think we know what war is, but do we? Many contemporary civil wars can be better understood as systems than as contests. The normal assumption is that the aim is to ‘win’ - a position that assumes that there are ‘two sides’ with aims that are essentially military and set ‘at the top’. However, the aims in a war are likely to be numerous, with many of the most important actors being more interested in manipulating (and perhaps even prolonging) a declared war than they are in gaining a military victory. In contemporary civil wars in Africa and elsewhere, both government and rebel forces have repeatedly engaged in attacks on civilian populations that have predictably radicalised these populations and have predictably attracted support for the enemy. There have also been many instances of soldiers selling arms to ‘the other side’ as well as various other forms of co-operation between ostensible enemies, an example of the latter came in May 1997 when there was a joint military coup by Sierra Leonean soldiers and rebels who had ostensibly been fighting each other for most of the previous six years. Within a framework focused on ‘winning’, these behaviours seem incomprehensible or irrational (or perhaps appear to be ‘mistakes’). However, aims other than winning have often been important in civil wars. They include: carrying out abuses under the cover of war, enjoying a feeling of power, making money, and even creating or preserving some kind of ‘state of emergency’ so as to ward off democracy or provide cover for the suppression of political opposition. When it comes to war in other words, winning is not everything; it may be the taking part that counts. Indeed, as Orwell saw in his novel \textit{Nineteen Eighty-Four}, certain kinds of regimes may thrive off energies and perpetual war. The irrationality of counterproductive tactics, in short, may be more apparent than real, and even an endless war may not be endless in the sense of lacking aims or functions.\textsuperscript{152}

The second part of this essay will detail many ways in which the Second Indochina War conforms Keen’s descriptions of a war system. The key concept here is clearly the tendency of protagonists to take ‘counterproductive’ actions, or at least those that would be counterproductive if the conflict in question was primarily a matter of contestation. Among these counterproductive acts, which will be illustrated below, are recruiting for the enemy and provisioning the enemy. Keen divides ‘counterproductive’ activities into three categories, killing civilians, letting your enemy escape, and trading with the enemy.\textsuperscript{153} In many ways, the US went much further than this during the Second Indochina War, as will be detailed in the next section. The US also, despite a predictable tendency for its own personnel to attempt to find ways to ‘win’ the war, managed to ensure that the momentum of its actions were channeled in such a way as to ensure that it could \textit{never} win the

\textsuperscript{148}Clausewitz, \textit{On War}, 1.1.2 (pp 5-6).
\textsuperscript{149}Ibid, 1.1.15-7 (pp 16-7).
\textsuperscript{150}Ibid 1.1.23 (p 21).
\textsuperscript{152}Keen, \textit{Endless War}, p 51.
\textsuperscript{153}Ibid, p 58.
conflict.

In a chapter on 'Action as Propaganda', Keen has a section on 'Making your predictions and assertions come true.' This too can be seen in the Second Indochina War – in the initial generation of insurgencies and civil strife; in the destruction of democracy and reification of monolithic Communist rule; in the manipulation of the conflict into becoming an increasingly conventional struggle culminating in a Soviet backed North Vietnamese 'invasion' of the RVN; and in setting up Laos and Cambodia to inevitably 'fall' to Communism and DRV military hegemony. All of this will also be detailed in the second part of this essay.

There is, however, another way of viewing the events of the Second Indochina War which may also be applicable to the conflicts discussed by Keen (and Baudrillard for that matter). I would suggest that another way to understand these events is to view the war, meaning by definition armed contest, as incidental – a cover, if you will, for a more central activity or range of activities. In this manner it is possible to reconcile the fact that an armed contest did in fact occur, with the fact that one of the antagonists subverted their own performance in that contest because they were more interested in another activity. In the case of the Second Indochina War that activity can accurately and usefully be termed genocide.

'Genocide' is a term subject to a great deal of misapprehension, often applied where it should not be, and usually not applied where it should be. Genocide is most closely associated with the Nazi killings of European Jews and Gypsy (Roma and Sinti) peoples, yet this event is unique. In no other instance has there ever been such a large-scale, systematic attempt to actually physically annihilate such populous peoples. Though the method used hold a particular horror, it should be remembered that others also died in the gas chambers of Nazi death camps, victims of a far less unusual act of genocide, the German genocide of the Slavs. Here the bulk of the victims were killed not in the death camps, but in the process of fighting the war in the Eastern front, or in the war against partisans, or as slave labour, or as prisoners of war. The partisan war in particular, was consciously used as a vehicle for achieving Himmler's goal of reducing the Slavic population to 30 million. After giving considerable detail, Ward Churchill summarises the Slavic genocide as follows:

A gross estimate of the results of Nazi genocide against the Slavs thus comes to somewhere between 15.5 and 19.5 million in the U.S.S.R., between 19.7 and 23.9 million when the Poles, Slovenes, Serbs, and others are added in. Simon Wiesenthal, himself a survivor of Auschwitz, long ago observed, “the Holocaust was not only a matter of the killing of six million Jews. It involved the killing of eleven million people, six million of whom were Jews.” Wiesenthal spoke on the basis of what was then the best available evidence. Today, some fifty years later, the only correction to be made to his statement lies in the fact that we now know his estimate of eleven million was far too low. The true human costs of Nazi genocide came to 26 million or more, six million of whom were Jews, a million or more of whom were Gypsies, and the rest mostly Slavs. Only with these facts clearly in mind can we say that we have apprehended the full scope of the Holocaust, and have thereby positioned ourselves to begin to appreciate its real implications.

154 Ibid, pp 137-43.
155I am aware that there is some dispute over whether this was what was being attempted, but here I would refer the reader to my comments about intentionality above. The momentum of acts by Germany and many of its allies/subjects had a very clear direction and destination. In fact such was the determination of the system as a whole to finish the job of extermination that much needed rail capacity was diverted from the Third Reich's life and death struggle with the Allies in order to maximise the numbers of innocents who could be slaughtered at Auschwitz/Birkenau (Hannah Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil. London: Penguin 1994 (1963), p 34).
It should be noted that Churchill is here including 'combatants' in partisan warfare, but not those in conventional warfare unless they had surrendered. In the case of Jews, as he points out, this is accepted practice. After all in the circumstances of an ongoing genocide, armed resistance seems entirely defensive response, ethnically no different from spontaneously, but perhaps futilely, lashing out at one's murderer.\textsuperscript{158} I would actually advocate the inclusion of all combatants; firstly because the same logic can be applied to them; secondly because, in the circumstances of a genocide, they will always be a minority in any case; but mostly because from the perspective of the Nazis with regard to their reasons for committing genocide, a corpse in uniform is as good, if not better, than a civilian corpse – because the real key to understanding genocide, and why the term was even coined, lies in its \textit{utility to the perpetrator}.

When Polish Jurist Raphaël Lemkin invented the term genocide he was attempting to analyse the Axis powers behaviour in occupied Europe. In his work, \textit{Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress}, Lemkin is said to have applied the term genocide far more broadly than to just acts of killing. Ward Churchill highlights the attention Lemkin gave to the Luxembourgois who, under Axis rule, were having their bilingual identity forcibly replaced with a unilingual German identity by way of what he describes as 'genocide laws'.\textsuperscript{159} Church is at pains to point out that that Lemkin, himself a Jew, understood that the Jews (and Gypsies) were slated for complete extermination.\textsuperscript{160} Clearly Lemkin felt that there was a common thread between these actions and Churchill includes this quote:

> Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves [even if all individuals within the dissolved group physically survive]. The objectives of such a plan would be a disintegration of political and social institutions of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of personal security, liberty, health, dignity and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups. Genocide is directed at the national group as an entity and the actions involved are directed at individuals, not in their individual capacity but as members of the national group.\textsuperscript{161}

Genocide, therefore, while being an entirely condemnable crime in and of itself, is not meant, as it is often mistaken to be, to imply a greater order of brutality or criminality. In fact, what really distinguishes it is the identity of the intended victims. Article 2 of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide defines genocide thus:

> In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

\textsuperscript{158}Ibid p 47.
\textsuperscript{159}Ibid pp 67-8. Churchill adds: 'This is what Lemkin had to say about nazi [sic] genocide in Luxembourg and it's all he had to say.'
\textsuperscript{160}Ibid p 69.
• (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.  

Note that the convention twice uses the phrase 'in whole or in part', which once again brings us to the question of intended victims. If someone is targeted because, for instance, of their ethnic identity in order to bring about damage to the greater body of the group sharing that identity, then the act is one of genocide.

Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos all had distinct national identities (despite internal divisions) and there is clear evidence in each case the US went to great lengths to disrupt, damage or destroy those societies as such. In fact, as this essay will show, it is probably easier to deny the existence of these national identities (at least in the cases of Vietnam and Laos) than it is to deny the US desire to destroy them.

My purpose in using the term genocide is to bring light to US actions that the concept of a war system cannot. The US did not simply act to create a static situation of endless conflict, but rather prolonged a conflict to effect attacks on nations per se, not for the purpose of forcing a desired behaviour but for the purpose of destruction, in degree, of said nations. Keen's war system may explain much of US behaviour, but only the concept of genocide can explain the persistent and prolific targeting of civilian populations and the long-term destruction of infrastructure, resources and means of sustenance.

A question that must be asked is: Why would Lemkin create a category of human action that included both the Axis behaviour in Luxembourg and the unprecedented extermination programme occurring at the same time? My belief is that Lemkin knew that these actions shared a certain functionality. An attempt to impose one's will by force on a group will meet with resistance, but if that group is assimilated, exterminated or permanently debilitated by the destruction of its social cohesion, then it cannot effectively resist. Genocide is an act of power imperialism (to reuse a term from this essay); and Lemkin had the courage to make it clear that the Axis powers were acting in ways which had plenty of precedents and that, if the 'entire problem of genocide is not dealt with as a whole' would have plenty of antecedents.

It finally remains to be said that many have previously applied the word genocide to US actions in Indochina. A Finnish Inquiry Commission designated the years 1969 to 1975 in Cambodia – a time of massive aerial bombardment by the US and of bitter civil war wholly sustained by the US – as Phase 1 of the 'Decade of Genocide'. Herman and Chomsky further observe that due to its sheer scale the bombing of that country in 1973 'might truly merit the term genocidal.' After deserting en masse some US sailors explained their actions as follows: 'The only way to end the genocide...'

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163 The editor of Lemkin's posthumous autobiography, Steven L. Jacobs, denies genocidal acts on the part of Henry Kissinger, oddly enough with more of a focus on Vietnam than Cambodia, which only rates mention for the 'genocide' suffered under the DK regime (he doesn't explain how those particular events relate to Lemkin's concept of genocide). By making no effort whatsoever to find evidence of intentionality, Jacobs is able to confidently declare that there is no evidence of intentionality, so that rather than, as one might hope, making a serious case and weighing its merits before coming to a decision, on either side, Jacobs simply states a variety of presuppositions. In effect he is stating that there was no intentionality on Kissinger's part because there was no intentionality on Kissinger's part, and seems to find the proposition so self-evident that it requires no demonstration. He also suggests that since the US did not declare war, it cannot have committed war crimes, which is an outright lie (Jacobs, 'Indicting Henry Kissinger', pp 222-3).


165 Herman and Chomsky, Manufacturing Consent, p 260.

166 Ibid 273.
being perpetrated in South East Asia is for us, the actual pawns in the political game, to stop playing.\textsuperscript{167} Although initially sceptical, the panellists in the Roskilde session of the Russell War Crimes Tribunal were eventually unanimous in condemning the US under the Genocide Convention, and that was in 1967.\textsuperscript{168} Some people on the ground in Vietnam also came to the same conclusion. Magnum photographer Philip Griffiths said the following, 'The closer you got to the war, if you had a functioning brain, the more you objected to what you saw. Eventually I believed that what America was doing in Vietnam was genocide. There was no possible justification for what was going on....'\textsuperscript{169}

\textsuperscript{167}Neale, \textit{A People's History of the Vietnam War}, p 178.
PART 2 – WHAT HAPPENED.

1. Who Started It?

Just to be clear, the use of one's military forces to make a physical attack within the territory of another sovereign state against the citizens of that state is a clear act of war, to the extent that the phrase still has any meaning.  Actual US military personnel began conducting regular attacks within the DRV no later than the end of 1961. Technically, therefore, the US, which had not been attacked, was the initiator of hostilities in a war against the DRV. But the Second Indochina War was a far more complex and multifaceted conflict and, to gauge more accurately whence the impetus for war originated, I think it worth detailing a chronological background and narration of all of the relevant points at which it could be said that hostilities were originated or significantly escalated.

One of the things that attracts considerable attention with regard to US involvement in Indochina is their failure, often seen as tragic, to accept the friendship that Ho Chi Minh seemed anxious to create between the Viet Minh and the US. Some would have it that Ho Chi Minh was such a committed communist that any friendly overtures on his part were merely tricks. The most sophisticated such claim is made by Schulzinger: 'Both his nationalism and his communism made him so sure of himself he could afford to be patient. ...Ho's absolute certainty that his cause would prevail allowed him the luxury of adaptability.' Though he may have a point, Schulzinger is effectively saying that Ho's actions in an immediate sense were not necessarily determined by a desire to instigate communism in Vietnam, which might reconcile the claim that Ho was a dedicated communist with his actions, but it makes his presumed communism largely irrelevant historically. More to the point, perhaps, the most informed US intelligence and analysis (detailed below) indicated that Ho was far from irrevocably attached to the USSR, nor yet to the Communist International (ComIntern), and that Ho himself was the crucial political force in Vietnam. They were also of the belief that he was by no means ideologically rigid, with the Southeast Asia division of the State Department actually going so far as to say that they thought it unlikely that Vietnam would remain communist under Ho.

Ho Chi Minh, under the name of Nguyen Ai Quoc (Nguyen the Patriot) first came to political prominence when, in 1919, he presented a demand for colonial self-determination to the representatives at the Versailles Peace Conference and unsuccessfully attempted to gain an audience...
with US President Woodrow Wilson. Ho then became a prominent socialist in France before, disappointed with the lack of support for anti-colonial ideas, he read Lenin's 'Theses on National and Colonial Questions.' Ho was so inspired that he became one of the founding members of the French Communist Party. Duiker has the following to say: 'The key to Ho Chi Minh's attraction to Leninism was clearly the Bolshevik Lenin's uncompromising hostility to world imperialism.'

As much as Ho Chi Minh seemed to be in accord with Lenin and Leninism, he also seemed to be frequently at odds with Stalin and the ComIntern. Ho's was consistent in pressing for a more inclusive alliance with 'progressive bourgeois' factions (i.e. nationalists) and in wanting to prioritise the anti-colonial struggle in Vietnam over international revolution. Even Ho's recognition of the centrality of the peasantry in any future revolutionary movement, though perfectly in line with Lenin's theories, was considered incorrect. The Indochina Communist Party (ICP), which was formed by Ho, was almost exclusively concerned with Indochinese independence and launched itself with the following 10 point platform:

1) To overthrow French imperialism, feudalism, and the reactionary Vietnamese capitalist class.
2) To make Indochina completely independent.
3) To establish a worker-peasant and soldier government.
4) To confiscate the banks and other enterprises belonging to the imperialists and put them under the control of the worker-peasant government.
5) To confiscate all of the plantations and the property belonging to the imperialists and the Vietnamese reactionary capitalist class and distribute them to poor peasants.
6) Implement the eight-hour working day.
7) To abolish public loans and poll tax. To waive unjust taxes hitting the poor people.
8) To bring back all Freedom to the masses.
9) To carry out universal education.
10) To implement equality between man and woman.

Towards the end of World War II Ho Chi Minh worked with the US Office of Strategic Services (OSS). In 1941 he had formed the Viet Minh, an inclusive nationalist league which explicitly made independence a priority ahead of social revolution. The US understood the Viet Minh to be a very broad front, though under ICP leadership. The Viet Minh proved very useful to the OSS, and those from the OSS who worked with Ho were extremely impressed with him, if perhaps wary of his links to Moscow. His first OSS contact, Major Allison Thomas, cabled Washington with the following endorsement: 'Forget the Communist body, the Vietminh is not Communist. Stands for freedom and reforms from French harshness.' Ho was designated OSS Agent 19 and was considered to be an 'awfully sweet guy.' The most significant supporter of Ho Chi Minh was Archimedes Patti, who, from China, had headed the OSS Operation with the Viet Minh at the end of the war, and who was in OSS liaison in Hanoi from August 22, 1945 until September 30 (Ho declared Vietnamese independence on 2 September). He wrote, from his own experiences, to the effect that the US should have befriended Ho, and would thus have avoided a horrible war. Patti

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177Gibson, The Perfect War, pp 40-1; Young, The Vietnam Wars, pp 4-5. Also of note is the perspective that the ComIntern, under USSR guidance, actually sought to prevent successful revolutionary movements after 1926 (Neale, A People's History of the Vietnam War, p 17)
179Young, The Vietnam Wars, pp 3-4.
180Ibid p 6-8.
182Moyar, Triumph Forsaken, p 17.
183Schulzinger, A Time for War, p 18.
184Young, The Vietnam Wars, p 10.
had finished a manuscript in 1954 but by then 'it was too late' and he was threatened with disciplinary action if he published his work. In the event it was published in 1980.\(^{185}\) In 1983 he told John Pilger of the 'extraordinary pro-American spirit that was everywhere at the birth of Ho Chi Minh's Vietnam. ...[T]hey were desperate not to be associated with international communism, not with the Chinese or the Russians, but with us in America.'\(^{186}\)

Ho Chi Minh wrote at least 8 times to President Harry Truman, appealing for help and, above all, friendship from the US.\(^{187}\) One was co-authored by an OSS agent and outlined to Truman the sort of government that Ho wanted to organise.\(^{188}\) Another detailed British actions in suppression the press and releasing arms and ammunition to the French while simultaneously disarming Vietnamese police forces.\(^{189}\) Another, asking only for relief, referred to the horrific suffering of the Vietnamese during the 1944-45 famine in which around 1 million lives were lost because of French and Japanese policies. It, like all the others, was unanswered.\(^{190}\)

Ho Chi Minh's famous Declaration of Independence began with the first sentences of the US Declaration of Independence, which Patti had helped him translate: 'All men are created equal. The Creator has given us certain inviolable Rights; the right to Life, the right to be Free, and the right to achieve Happiness. [Ho stopped short here and asked his listeners: 'Do you hear me distinctly, fellow countrymen?'] The crowd roared back: 'YES!'] These immortal words are taken from the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. In a larger sense, this means that: All the people on earth are born equal; all the people have the right to live, to be happy, to be free.'\(^{191}\) While it is likely that on some level Ho was trying to gain the support of his people by disingenuously suggesting that he had the backing of the US, on the other hand he cannot lightly have decided to eternally associate the inauguration of his own nation's independence with a clear statement of alignment with the US. Whatever his private convictions, he must have been quite prepared to instigate a multiparty representative government with a degree of economic liberalism. Ho's speech was followed by a speech by Vo Nguyen Giap which was full of praise for the 'Great American Republic' which had 'paid the greatest contribution' to freeing Vietnam from the Japanese.\(^{192}\)

What is more, it was not only the US that Ho Chi Minh courted. Far from wanting to expel the colonial oppressor, Ho wanted the French to remain in Indochina because of their expertise.\(^{193}\) He travelled to France in 1946 to negotiate. Robert Shaplen reveals that Paul Mus, an Indochina scholar who was also a negotiator with the Viet Minh, believed that France had missed the chance of having a useful ally in Ho: “Because of the inbred economy imposed by the Bank of Indochina,

\(^{188}\)Appy, *Vietnam*, p 445.
\(^{192}\)ibid, p 251.
\(^{193}\)It is also worth noting the following 5 point plan sent by the Viet Minh to the French in July 1945:

1. That there be universal suffrage to elect a parliament for the governing of the country, that there be a French Governor-General as President until such time as independence be granted us, that he choose a cabinet or group of advisors acceptable to that parliament, Exact powers of all these officers may be discussed in the future.
2. That independence be given this country in not less than five years and not more than ten.
3. That natural resources of the country be returned to the people of the country by just payment to the present owners, and that France be granted economic concessions.
4. That all freedoms outlined by the United Nations will be granted to the Indochinese.
Ho knew that Vietnam could not stand on its own feet, either in terms of money or trade. He also knew he could not rely on the colonial French. His political approach was through Metropolitan France. ‘If we had supported him more strongly then’ Mus added, ‘we might have won . . . We thought we could crush him if it came to war. We did not appreciate how hard he could fight. ... That part of his motivation [to work with France] afterward died, of course, but we should understand that it existed at the time and that he was truly disappointed.’

Hostilities between France and the Viet Minh's DRV regime began at the end of 1946 after what Mark Moyar terms 'a series of small violent incidents.' Moyar neglects to mention that one of these 'small violent incidents' was the shelling of the city of Haiphong on the 20th of November by French naval vessels in 'retaliation' for the killing of 3 French soldiers in a clash that was quickly quelled. In the shelling of Haiphong, some 6000 civilians were killed. After a month of continuing clashes, on December 19 Defence Minister Vo Nguyen Giap and Ho Chi Minh ordered general hostilities, but only after Ho's fourth telegram in 5 days to the Socialist French Premier Leon Blum. This final telegram read in part: '… I have requested my compatriots to remain calm in the face of these provocations. But how long must I endure seeing my fellow-countrymen killed before my eyes? I send you this further urgent appeal. In the higher interests of our two countries. I beg you again to put an end to these provocations and this blood-shed. Even after the outbreak of hostilities, Ho tried, with another telegram, to get an agreement from Blum to return to a the provisions of the signed accords. These accords, incidently, were considered by many to be a near complete submission to France, so much so that, after signing, Ho commented to a friend 'I have just signed my own death warrant.'

US aid to France in its fight against the Viet Minh was immediately forthcoming. Despite announcing neutrality in the conflict, the US secretly gave direct military aid in 1947 (of parachute equipment) and in 1949 (of naval vessels). In reality, this was well outweighed by the support that France's war received from aid given to France that was not actual war material, but was available for the war, such as $160 million earmarked for 'reconstruction' in Vietnam but spent, without US objection on the war. Despite 'neutrality' the US gave no aid to the DRV, who had far greater humanitarian needs. As such, it should be surprising to note that a great deal of significance is still attached to the putative turning point in 1950 when the US openly avowed its support of France in the conflict and gave direct aid to that war effort. This was purely a matter of making public a policy that had been pursued already for several years. But, having dropped the pretence, they now proceeded to take over the war altogether.

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198Blum, whose caretaker government had only come to power on December 12, was supposedly keen to avoid conflict and, ironically, wrote on the 10th of December: 'Decision-making power does not belong to military authorities or civilian settlers in Indochina, but to the government in Paris.' At least one of Ho's telegrams, from the 15th, was held back from Blum by the 'Saigon Hawks' until after the outbreak of hostilities (Mark Atwood Lawrence, *Assuming the Burden: Europe and the American Commitment to War in Vietnam*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2005, pp 154-5).
201Gibson, *The Perfect War*, p 57.
204Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, p 22.
Gibson gives a wonderful description of the Americanisation of the 1st Indochina war: 'The $160 million grant from the United States to France in 1947 did not buy victory. Most roads in Cochinchina were held by the French, but they never won the allegiance of the peasantry. Major French offenses failed. Bernard B. Fall reports that by fall 1950 the French were defeated. … From 1950 through 1954 French colonial war progressively became an American war against communism utilizing French troops. The United States provided most of the funding and American generals and senior officials reviewed major strategic plans conceived by French high command. In 1950, U.S. financial aid totalled $150 million; the next year it increased threefold to nearly $450 million – 40 percent of the total cost. By 1953, $785 million was allocated. The French became instruments of American foreign policy, and their troops, mercenaries for hire.\textsuperscript{205} The joke current in France, at this point, was that the war in Indochina had become France's number 1 dollar earning export. Gibson continues by quoting a French Colonel's words to Bernard Fall: 'As long as we don’t give the Vietnamese the only program they could really be expected to fight for, we’re doomed to fight this war without any hopes for success and die here like mercenaries. I’m getting close to a thousand dollars a month in pay and allowances for fighting in the rice paddies, and my sector killed one thousand commies last month; that makes it one dollar per commie on my pay.'\textsuperscript{206}

From the standpoint of analysing the conflict as a war system, what is very interesting is that the US increased its commitment more and more as the the situation was less and less likely to result in 'victory', not only in Bernard Fall's eyes, but in the eyes of US policy-makers. Schulzinger gives an uncanny foretaste of his (and many others') analysis of the supposedly separate conflict, the Second Indochina War: 'Commitment arose despite the skepticism of some of the highest officials about the chances for success. Support for the government of Bao Dai and the continuation of a French position in Southeast Asia came in the face of even more profound misgivings of U.S. officials present in Indochina. Yet the government took fateful steps toward involvement because officials considered alternative courses of action even more perilous.'\textsuperscript{207} As with the same arguments when given with regard to the Second Indochina War, Schulzinger fails to explain how losing a war is more 'perilous' than negotiating with an enemy that is demonstrably eager for peace and willing to make substantial concessions.

What followed next was the Geneva Agreements of 1954. The United States, though it had become the driving force behind the First Indochina War, had the luxury of not signing. Eisenhower announced publically that the agreement was 'in no way binding the future actions of the United States.'\textsuperscript{208} Also, in Marilyn Young's words: 'Covert American subversion of the Geneva Agreements began simultaneously with their final signing....' Such subversion taking the form of a massive destabilisation, sabotage and disinformation campaign. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles saw the Agreements as a boon to the US – they could proceed with creating a 'clean base... without a taint of colonialism.'\textsuperscript{209} But the Geneva Agreements did not actually create that 'clean base'. There was never even the remotest suggestion that Vietnam was to be divided into 2 sovereign entities. The RVN was created as what Gibson rightly refers to as a 'fictional sovereignty'.\textsuperscript{210} The US used bribery and coercion to get their chosen client, Ngo Dinh Diem, installed as the prime minister under France's client, the Emperor Bao Dai.\textsuperscript{211} After this Diem effected a coup by plebiscite –

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205Gibson, \textit{The Perfect War}, p 59.
206Ibid, p 60.
207Schulzinger, \textit{A Time for War}, p 43.
208Gibson, \textit{A Perfect War}, p 67.
209Young, \textit{The Vietnam Wars}, pp 45-6.
210Gibson, \textit{A Perfect War}, p 253.
211Young, \textit{The Vietnam Wars}, pp 44-5. On the liberal use of US dollars to quell opposition see also Turley, \textit{The Second Indochina War}, p 14. Bao Dai's subservience to the French (or Japanese) is widely acknowledged, Diem had in 1949 turned down premiership under him because he was 'nothing but an instrument in the hands of the
\end{flushright}
rigging a referendum so blatantly that in Saigon he received 98 percent of 605,025 votes cast, when only 450,000 registered voters existed. The people of South Vietnam were thus made acutely aware that their wishes were of little import. None of this gave Diem even the remotest degree of political legitimacy, but it left him and the US in a position to prevent the national election/referendum on reunification that was intended to occur in 1956.

One might think therefore that in its long history of repudiating Ho Chi Minh that the US might have underestimated him. One would be wrong. In 1948 the State Department noted: 'Communist Ho Chi Minh is the strongest and perhaps the ablest figure in Indochina... any suggested solution which excludes him is an expedient of uncertain outcome.' In 1949 the CIA concluded that even most anti-communist Catholics supported Ho. President Eisenhower wrote in his memoirs: 'I have never talked... with a person knowledgeable in Indochinese affairs who did not agree that... 80 percent of the population would have voted for the Communist Ho Chi Minh as their leader.' Eisenhower may have seen that simply as a good reason to prevent any such election, but it cannot have escaped the notice of others what such a massive popular base of support would signify when it came to establishing a competing regime, or indeed when it came to a war.

The US response to the redoubtable Ho Chi Minh was Ngo Dinh Diem whose potential as a popular nationalist was inestimably lower. While legends and myths of heroic patriotism were being generated about the Viet Minh leadership during the last years of war against French colonialism, Diem was living in a seminary in the US, and what profile he had amongst the Vietnamese was fading. John Pilger quotes from a book by Ralph McGehee, a CIA officer who helped install Diem and perfom what he described as the 'master illusion' of creating a fictional sovereign state, the RVN:

To make the illusion a reality, the CIA undertook a series of operations that helped turn South Vietnam into a vast police state. The purpose of these operations was to force the native South Vietnamese to accept the Catholic mandarin Diem, who had been selected by U.S. policymakers to provide an alternative to communism in Vietnam. It was a strange choice. From 1950 to 1953, while Ho’s forces were earning the loyalty of their people by fighting the French, Diem... was living in the U.S. in Maryknoll seminaries in New Jersey and New York.

... Diem was opposed by virtually all elements of South Vietnamese society - Bao Dai’s followers, the pro-French religious sects, the Buddhists, the remnant nationalist organisations, and, of course, the followers of Ho Chi Minh. He had no troops, no police, no government, and no means of enforcing his rule. What he did have was the complete support of Colonel Lansdale and all the money, manpower, weapons, training, propaganda, and political savvy in the CIA’s covert-action war chest.

Diem, like Syngman Rhee before him and numerous others since (Hamid Karzai and Ahmed Chalabi being two recent examples), was flown directly from the US to his position of leadership. He was a mandarin and a chauvinistic Roman Catholic and is often considered to have had a very finite limit to his popular base – meaning that almost his only support was from fellow Catholics and landowners. Many from the CIA thought him a terrible candidate for leadership and on his arrival the US chargé d'affaires in Saigon said that 'his only present emotion, other than a lively

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appreciation of himself, is a blind hatred for the French.\textsuperscript{219} But, far from being a stupid choice, the choice of a leader who has a limited but reliable power base is a fairly normal choice for any intervening power, imperialist or no. The ideal comprador (meaning a member of a native elite whose actions are crucial in maintaining imperial power over a colony) is one whose interests are irrevocably different from those of the general population – an oligarch, hacien-dero, brahmin or other privileged minority – the intervening power is then able to play ‘divide and rule.’\textsuperscript{4} Catholics in the RVN became a more privileged class than they had been at the height of French favouritism, especially within the armed forces where conversion became a tool for advancement. This continued long after Diem’s murder. The make-up of the RVNAF gives some idea of the quasi-caste system in operation. Of senior officers only 5\% professed Buddhism, in a country where 80\% identify as Buddhist.\textsuperscript{220} Basing his findings on a 1972 survey, John Prados reveals that by that stage only 4 generals in the history of the ARVN had identified themselves as Buddhist. In 1972 only 3 ARVN Generals were the sons of farmers. ‘Fully a third of ARVN’s generals, in contrast, were the sons of landowners (and 17 percent of our entire sample the sons of large landowners). Another fifth of the generals were sons of officials, ….’ In addition 10 percent were from a military background.\textsuperscript{221}

In the situation that developed after 1954, one might expect an insurgency to break out fairly quickly, especially given that the Diem regime reversed Viet Minh land reforms, immediately causing considerable immiseration.\textsuperscript{222} The main thing preventing insurgency was the DRV. They were desperate to avoid any conflict, knowing that an insurgency would facilitate US attacks on them. The DRV was in dire economic straits due to the ravages of war and colonialism, which, ultimately, was the reason that they even allowed Vietnam to be divided at the Geneva Conference despite having shown they were capable, if the war continued, of winning a complete politico-military victory.\textsuperscript{223} The DRV leadership told the Viet Minh cadre that they expected the 1956 election would take place, even though they did not believe that it would.\textsuperscript{224} During this time they forbade the Southern Viet Minh to take up arms.\textsuperscript{225} This was a considerable sacrifice because at the end of 1954 Diem had begun political repressions in rural areas and the Viet Minh were fast being exterminated. The campaign (from 1954 to the early 1960) is said to have cost 75,000 lives,\textsuperscript{226} and though official numbers for political prisoners in 1956 was only 20,000, Gibson points out how low

\textsuperscript{219}Young,\textit{ The Vietnam Wars}, p 44.

\textsuperscript{220}Gibson,\textit{ A Perfect War}, p 278; Schulzinger,\textit{ A Time for War}, p 191.

\textsuperscript{221}Prados,\textit{ The Hidden History of the Vietnam War}, pp 64-7.

\textsuperscript{222}Gibson,\textit{ A Perfect War}, p 71.

\textsuperscript{223}Kolko,\textit{ Anatomy of War}, p 64. The Viet Minh occupied most of Vietnam and Laos and had won a major victory at An Tuc near the 14\textsuperscript{th} parallel. They wanted a temporary division at the 13\textsuperscript{th} or 14\textsuperscript{th} parallel and knew that by accepting a division at the 17\textsuperscript{th} parallel they were facilitating a partition (Gibson,\textit{ A Perfect War}, p 67). Douglas Pike, a US official as well as a scholar, puts it forthrightly: ‘Ironically the agreement in Geneva benefited all parties except the winners,’ (Douglas Pike,\textit{ Viet Cong: The Organisation and techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam}. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1968 (1966), p 51).

\textsuperscript{224}Neale,\textit{ A People's History of the Vietnam War}, pp 34-5.

\textsuperscript{225}Duiker,\textit{ The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam}, p 185.

\textsuperscript{226}Turley,\textit{ The Second Indochina War}, p 32 n 6. Though old, Turley's figure is entirely consonant with descriptions in recent works that give no total figure. An interesting contrast is Duiker's ‘Communist sources claim that 25,000 suspected Communist sympathizers were arrested, more than 1000 were killed, and 4,231 [sic] injured,’ (Duiker,\textit{ The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam}, p 184). I'm not sure whether Duiker is being disingenuous, but these figures are well below improbably low even though they only cover the first, and less bloody, half of the campaign. That his 1974 Communist source could have been so ill-informed is in itself very suggestive. It could be that, as with later US operations, the trained Viet Minh were far better able to avoid the violence aimed at them than the other villagers were, which might explain the low figure. Elliott cites another, later, communist source which gives the total killed during 1954-59 as 68,000, but throws some doubt on the matter as it is clearly at odds with the particular region which he has studied in detail (David W. P. Elliott,\textit{ The Vietnamese War: Revolution and Social Change in the Mekong Delta 1930-1975, Volume 1}. London and Armonk, NY: East Gate, 2003, p 198).
this was with the example of 'one district with a population of 180,000, [wherein] some 7,000 people were known to be in jail and another 13,000 were missing.'\footnote{227} In 1956 pace was increased with the 'Denounce the Communists' (To Cong) campaign. In that year when merely talking to a communist was an offence and when anyone agitating for elections was liable to be arrested, 50,000 or more were gaolled and up to 12,000 were executed.\footnote{228} The campaign came to a head in 1959 with the notorious Decree 10/59 under which all forms of political opposition were made treason and any act of sabotage was punishable by death. Local officials could label anyone they wished 'communist' and thus secure summary sentences of death or life imprisonment.\footnote{229} There are two thing which should be borne in mind: The first is that the number of Viet Minh who remained south of the 17\textdegree{} parallel in 1954 is estimated at around 15,000.\footnote{230} The second is that the US did not merely acquiesce to this campaign of terror, but they paid for and organised it,\footnote{231} as well as training and equipping the Civil Guard who, in large part, carried it out.\footnote{232}

It is almost universally acknowledged that, in the words of French historian, the people of the South 'were literally driven by Diem to take up arms in self-defence.'\footnote{233} Somehow the emphasis given by most writers is on the Communist decision to take up arms, perhaps because of the ample documentation on the part of the Lao Dong (Workers Party) who felt forced into fighting back, and because of the historical significance of the decision, which began the ascendancy of Le Duan and other southern leaders within the Party.\footnote{234} Even Herman and Chomsky endorse Douglas Pike in his unabashed admission that, 'armed combat was a GVN-imposed requirement; the NLF was obliged to use counterforce to survive.'\footnote{235} But Devillers, rightly, is addressed the rural population of the south, not the as yet non-existent NLF nor the scattered remnants of the Viet Minh. Elliott's in depth study of the area around My Tho reveals that it was the fact that Decree 10/59 made everyone feel at risk, not merely the politically active.\footnote{236} The Pentagon Papers also show that even the official US account, prepared by the RAND corporation, accepted the judgement of captured cadre members, including one who said, 'The explanation is not that the cadre were exceptionally gifted but the people they talked to were ready for rebellion. The people were like a mound of straw, ready to be ignited.'\footnote{237}

It is worth noting here that if there is any truth to 'Virus' theories which suggest (and official documents do seem to confirm), that the US was fearful of a successful model of independent economic development in the DRV (as accepted by Kolko, Chomsky, Neale, Cawthorne and many others), then their basic interest was in attacking the DRV. Edward Lansdale wanted to consolidate a regime in the RVN, and clearly believed he could do it, and to then start destabilising and attacking the DRV, with a view to eventual regime change.\footnote{238} However, given that the DRV was not likely to give any excuse to the US, a stable RVN would actually make any attacks on the DRV impossible. Vietnamese sovereignty could be ignored in the South but even the US had to accept it within the DRV. This may be why Lansdale was marginalised and why he later became one of the legion of counter-insurgency enthusiasts who bemoaned the continued failure of the US

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\item 227Gibson, The Perfect War, 72.
\item 228Young, The Vietnam Wars, p 56.
\item 229Elliott, The Vietnamese War, pp 195-6.
\item 230Neale, A People's History of the Vietnam War, p 38.
\item 231Herman and Chomsky, Manufacturing Consent, p 180.
\item 232Pilger, Heroes, pp 185-6; Young, The Vietnam Wars, p 61.
\item 233Brigham, 'Why the South Won the American War in Vietnam' in Marc Jason Gilbert (ed), Why the North Won the Vietnam War, p 105.
\item 234Ibid pp 100-7, Langguth, Our Vietnam, p 100.
\item 235Pike, Viet Cong, p 101; Herman and Chomsky, Manufacturing Consent, p 180.
\item 236Elliott, The Vietnamese War, pp 197-9.
\item 238Prados, The Hidden History of the Vietnam War, pp 21, 36.
\end{itemize}}
to conduct its war in such a way as would give it any hope of winning.  

Laos was described by Secretary of State Dean Rusk as ‘the wart on the hog of Vietnam,’ but many see Laos as the place where US miscalculation saw them drawn unwillingly into the conflict in Vietnam. One of these is Roger Warner who, as we have seen, was capable of completely omitting any mention of the Laotian general elections of 1958 in his book about US intervention in Laos. The elections returned a government that the US did not like in the least, but they had already been having such troubles. When a right-wing government, after the 1954 Geneva Agreements, failed in its mandate to negotiate with the Pathet Lao/Neo Lao they resigned and the replacement government under Prince Souvanna Phouma successfully negotiated with the Neo Lao, headed by the Prince's half brother Prince Souphanouvong. The agreement was to legitimise the Neo Lao as a political party and give Laos a neutralist foreign policy. The US was aghast, it cut all aid, and forced Souvanna Phouma out of power for a period of several months. Elections, however, went ahead under Souvanna Phouma and the coalition agreements. The US concentrated on very visible aid projects and channelling funds to the candidates it favoured. As was detailed, the election was a victory for the Neo Lao. The US cut all aid and set about bringing down the government again. Souphanouvong and other Neo Lao leaders were imprisoned, but escaped by converting the prison guards to their side. New elections in April 1960 were held under patently unfair conditions under which only 20,000 people were allowed to vote and Neo Lao candidates were blocked from standing. US aid was running at $150 per capita, twice the average person's income, and it did nothing at all to help that average person. Much money went on buying politicians and voters, and more went to a currency scam similar to one later operated in Vietnam where, in Warner's words the 'tiny class of rich elite got rich, and the poor were not better off than before.' He continues:

The Royal Lao Army's entire budget was paid by the U.S. government, with much of the payroll going to nonexistent units. Graft was everywhere. Most Laotians were too apathetic to care, but a few lower-ranking officers were both angry at the generals for their corruption and angry at the Americans for appearing to encourage it. One of these disgruntled nationalists was a five-feet-two-inch captain who commanded the army’s elite Second Lao Paratroop Battalion.

In early August 1960, the captain’s American advisers, including a CIA paramilitary specialist, put him through a theoretical training exercise on occupying a city. The advisers then chose Vientiane to make their example concrete. They suggested he take over the radio station and the airport and then major street intersections, the post office, and so on. They offered him ingenious ideas, such as giving his soldiers little transistor radios, so he could give them instructions once the radio station was captured.

As to why Warner thought it more important to tell the reader Kong Le's height than his name (which remains secret until 20 pages on), I can only guess, although I cannot help but think that there is a racial dimension to this decision. Nevertheless, Kong Le did proceed, as one might guess, to do exactly what he had been trained to do by US advisers. It may be, as Warner suggests, that this was all some comical miscalculation on the part of the CIA, but it is worth considering that

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241See above n 145.
243See above n 145.
247Ibid.
under the current corrupt US clients, the Pathet Lao (denied a national political role) were flourishing, taking over and administering large swathes of the countryside with little effective opposition, while resentment of US interference was rife.\textsuperscript{248} Kong Le, probably a genuine patriotic neutralist, reinstalled Prince Souvanna Phouma, who some US officials came to consider the only realistic non-communist leader in Laos.\textsuperscript{249} But Souvanna Phouma continued to be a genuine neutralist, supporting a legitimised political role for the Neo Lao, so one again there was a coup. This time by US backed rightist Phoumi Nosavan with help from the US Programs Evaluation Office\textsuperscript{250} (an organisation which had been used since 1955 to supply military aid in complete contravention of the Geneva agreements).\textsuperscript{251}

In addition to its illegal military aid programme, in 1959 the US instituted the 'White Star' paramilitary programme, which recruited and trained Hmong tribes people for its 'Secret Army'.\textsuperscript{252} John Prados explains how the Hmong People became partitcularly crucial at the time of Phoumi Nosavan's coup, and recounts the unfolding of events:

These events made critical the loyalty of forces in Laotian Military Region II, the area between the panhandle and Vientiane which included the Plain of Jars…. Of the FAR [Royal Armed Forces] battalion commanders in this region, Lieutenant Colonel Vang Pao, was of the Hmong tribe as were most of the men in his unit. … Vang Pao’s Hmong lived in a key part of Laos, where the Pathet Lao had their headquarters…. 

... North Vietnam did in fact enter Laos about this time [Jan 1961], but the record establishes that, at best, the CIA intervention was simultaneous with Hanoi’s, while it may actually have preceded it.

... It has become fashionable to assert that the “secret war” in Laos was only a fiction - that American media or political opponents of the war called Laos a “secret” war to make it somehow seem dirty and vile. In fact, Laos was a true secret war and stayed so right through 1970, when Richard Nixon offered presidential assurances that “no Americans” were in combat in Laos, and journalists managed to travel overland to Long Tieng. During all that time the U.S. government did everything It could to preserve the secret. Money for combat and logistics support drew on accounts for Thailand and South Vietnam, as well as that for Laotian foreign aid. A typical subterfuge was that Agency for International Development (AID) budgets for 1966 and 1967 included the purchase of armoured vehicles for the Laotian army. Refugee assistance was also an AID function, and because Vang Pao’s army was fighting rather than growing food, Hmong villages whose men were in the field qualified for AID help, as did the fighters themselves….\textsuperscript{253}

In 1962 meetings in Geneva ended with a 14 nations (including the US) agreeing to the neutralisation of Laos. The Kennedy administration was very supportive, perhaps earnestly,\textsuperscript{254} but on the ground nothing changed, and the US kept fighting its 'secret war'. In order to maintain secrecy some CIA officers commuted every day from Thailand.\textsuperscript{255} From 1964 onwards the US dropped increasing tonnages of bombs in support of this war. The Plain of Jars was made a free-fire zone in 1964, and from 1967 villages were intentionally targeted. In 1968 to 1969 alone 230,000 tons of bombs were dropped on Northern Laos.\textsuperscript{256}

The US also acted in fairly open ways to ensure that no peaceful settlement could be found in South...
Vietnam. It has already been mentioned the the US government had a collective role in the overthrow of Ngo Dinh Diem. It remains to be noted, however, that although Diem was supposedly out of favour for a number of reasons, the last straw for the US government is generally held to be when, on September the 19th, it was learned that Diem's brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, was negotiating with the DRV. Both brothers were dead by November the 2nd. Diem had also threatened to prevent any increase in the number of US 'advisors' in South Vietnam.

Diem's replacement, General Duong Van Minh, had strong ties with the Buddhist community and good communication with the French. He began working with the French towards neutralisation. The Pentagon organised his overthrow. His replacement, General Nguyen Khanh, soon decided that the only reasonable solution for South Vietnam was a neutral coalition government and set up communications with the NLF. The US got hold of a letter written by him to a NLF central committee member in which Khanh declared opposition to US intervention. They overthrew him a month later. The replacements were General Nguyen Van Thieu and Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky. In Jonathan Neale's words, 'Both were corrupt in the usual bribery and export import ways. But both were also heavily involved in the heroin trade. Finally the American embassy had found someone at the bottom of the barrel who would do as they were told.'

It is worth remaining at this point, with Vietnam for a key event in the escalation of hostilities: The Tonkin Gulf incidents and the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which paved the way to 'Americanisation' and what many view as a completely new war. What became the Tonkin Gulf Resolution was drafted by Johnson administration and US military officials in Honolulu two months before any incidents took place. On August the 2nd the USS Maddox fired on Vietnamese torpedo boats in Vietnamese waters, who may or may not have retaliated by firing torpedoes. This is not usually the accepted version of events, so it is worth replicating John Prados' description, which is based on the US Navy's own records:

Now the records show that the Maddox commenced fire at 9,000 yards at precisely 4:08 p.m. local time, three minutes after firing initial warning shots.

…the navy’s official history shows that the Maddox made a positive identification of the PT boats at 9800 yards, but that the lead Vietnamese warship launched its first torpedo—unobserved by the Maddox—somewhere between 9,000 and 5,000 yards from the speeding U.S. destroyer.

… Captain Herrick’s messages to higher command make clear more-over, that he considered the Maddox threatened and expected to defend her. Mission commander and commander of Destroyer Division 192, Herrick had been warned by his NSA detachment of a probable attack, estimated the risk as unacceptable, and asked higher authority to cancel the patrol.

… All evidence indicates the Maddox opened fire based on the approach of the North Vietnamese vessels; initiation of engagement was thus on the basis of perceived intent, without reference to an actual attack.

In fact, Prados' speculation that there was 'perceived intent' seems very unlikely for much the same reason that McNamara's imputed belief that the DRV attacked the US is unlikely. Supposedly Captain Herrick of the Maddox thought that a couple of torpedo boats in Vietnamese waters were

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258 Neale, A People's History of the Vietnam War, p 63.
259 Ibid, p 64; Logevall, 'DeGaulle, Neutralization...,' pp 84-7.
261 Schulzinger, A Time for War, p 151; Zinn, A People's History of the United States, p 476.
attacking his destroyer because they were moving towards it from 9800 yards away. After this unprovoked attack by the US it was announced that the DRV had attacked US vessels in international waters. Two days later the *Maddox* was joined by another destroyer, the USS C. *Turner Joy* which opened fire on non-existent torpedo boats on the basis of false radar signals.\(^{263}\) An engagement was briefly reported before being thrown into severe doubt within hours. Within an hour of the second 'incident' the DRV had denied any activity.\(^{264}\) Herrick sent the following about 4 hours after reporting the incident: 'Review of action makes many reported contacts and torpedoes fired appear doubtful. ... No actual visual sighting by Maddox. Suggest complete evaluation before any further action taken.' Nonetheless a 'furious' Lyndon Johnson ordered air strikes.\(^{265}\) Even more brazenly McNamara lied to congress, telling them that both destroyers had been attacked. This helped secure the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which had very broad provisions including the right to instantly respond with force in the case of attack on US forces and, on request by any Southeast Asian government, to use 'all measures including the use of armed force to assist that nation in the defense of its political independence and territorial integrity against aggression or subversion.'\(^{266}\) That was what facilitated the full-scale invasion of Vietnam; when the illegitimate government that the US had installed over the fictional sovereign state that the US created dutifully invited the 'assistance' of the US.

In Cambodia, before US intervention there seemed to be little threat of a communist takeover. The Cambodian Khmer Issarak (insurgents who had strong ties with, but formal independence from the Vietminh) had been unrepresented at the 1954 Geneva Conference and hence, unlike the Pathet Lao and the Vietminh, went unrecognised in the settlement.\(^{267}\) Most of the Khmer Issarak (over 2000) left Cambodia with Vietnamese anti-colonial forces (Vietminh) who had been operating in Cambodia and based themselves in North Vietnam until their return after 1970.\(^{268}\) Although thus not immediately threatened by armed and trained leftists, Prince Norodom Sihanouk (the head of State from 1955 until 1970) adopted, of necessity, a neutralist position as he could not afford to be enemies with the Vietnamese. Nevertheless, under Sihanouk there was one serious leftist rebellion after his refusal to endorse candidates in the 1966 election closed the doors of electoral struggle to the left wing. The 1967-68 'Samlaut Rebellion' resulted in perhaps 10,000 deaths; greater than those incurred in the First Indochina War against French rule.\(^{269}\) Although Sihanouk often viciously repressed the left of his own country, any concrete moves against the forces of the DRV or the NLF would have brought about his downfall. The US was, however, less than understanding of the delicate position – at least in its deeds. Although publicly supportive of neutralism, Washington worked hard to destabilise and cripple Cambodia, its actions driving Sihanouk into an ever closer relationship with Hanoi, Beijing and the NLF.\(^{270}\)

The US 'Studies and Operations Group' conducted attacks with US Special Forces personnel in Cambodia throughout the 1960s. In 1967 these were institutionalised as 'Salem House' (later known as 'Daniel Boone'). This programme was kept secret from the US congress and conducted a total of 1,835 missions. Their primary activity appears to have been the laying of 'sanitized self-destruct antipersonnel' mines anywhere up to 30 kilometers beyond the border. Their supposed mission was

\(^{263}\)Ibid, p 53.


\(^{268}\)Shawcross, *Sideshow*, p 238.


\(^{270}\)Shawcross, *Sideshow*, pp 52-3, 55-7
intelligence gathering, but throughout the whole programme they only captured 24 prisoners.\textsuperscript{271}
The Special Forces troops usually disguised themselves as PLAF fighters and sometimes attacked civilians in ‘false-flag’ operations.\textsuperscript{272}

In 1970 Sihanouk was overthrown by General Lon Nol\textsuperscript{273} and Prince Sirik Matak with tacit support from Washington and probable assistance by the CIA. Washington recognised the new regime within hours.\textsuperscript{274} So fast was recognition of Lon Nol's government that it must have precluded any possibility that the changes on the ground were being assessed, which strongly suggests that the US must have had detailed foreknowledge in order to have any confidence in its judgement. Sihanouk's overthrow made civil war unavoidable.

In 1969, before the above events, the US began bombing Cambodia in what was known as 'Operation Menu'. From Saigon, US General Creighton Abrams (COMUSMACV) insisted that he had 'hard evidence' that the Central Office for South Vietnam headquarters (COSVN HQ) had been located in the 'Fish Hook' salient of Cambodia.\textsuperscript{275} The problem was that no such place ever existed, though for years the US had mounted operations to crush it when they claimed it was located in South Vietnam.\textsuperscript{276} Once under way, Operation Menu spread to other areas. Despite the carpet bombing of area supposed to contain COVSN HQ, in April 1970 Abrams claimed that the headquarters still existed as a fortified underground bunker with 5000 personnel.\textsuperscript{277} In May US and RVN forces invaded Cambodia, the action justified in part as an attempt, yet again, to wipe out the COVSN HQ 'which had become the Holy Grail of the American war'.\textsuperscript{278} The US/RVN invasion simply, and predictably, drove communist forces deeper into Cambodia.\textsuperscript{279}

\textsuperscript{271}Ibid, pp 64-5.
\textsuperscript{272}Kiernan, \textit{The Pol Pot Regime}, p 18.
\textsuperscript{273}The US had developed ties with Lon Nol in the 1950s and by 1970, according to CIA officer Frank Snepp, he was one of two candidates being groomed by the CIA to take Sihanouk's place (Shawcross, \textit{Sideshow}, pp 114-5).
\textsuperscript{274}Ibid, pp 114-23; Blum, \textit{Killing Hope}, pp 137-8; Peou, \textit{Intervention & Change in Cambodia}, pp 125-6.
\textsuperscript{275}Shawcross, \textit{Sideshow}, p 19.
\textsuperscript{277}Shawcross, \textit{Sideshow}, p 140.
\textsuperscript{278}Young, \textit{The Vietnam Wars}, p 245.
\textsuperscript{279}Shawcross, 1979, p 151.
2. Creating the Enemy and Killing the Civilians.

As was detailed above, widespread political repression had primed the people of South Vietnam for revolt, however, this may have been only the beginning of a strategy of fueling insurrection, primarily by targeting civilians, that continued throughout the entire war. By 1962, with the war continually gaining momentum, US Colonel John Paul Vann observed an ARVN tactic of randomly shelling and bombing civilian structures which 'kills many, many more civilians than it ever does VC and as a result makes new VC.' When he and Colonel Daniel Boone Porter confronted COMUSMACV General Paul Harkins with an appeal 'to stop this self-defeating slaughter', in Neil Sheehan's words, 'he turned out to be as dense in his own way as the Saigon commanders. Instead of using his influence to put a halt to the bombardments he was furthering them.'

It should be noted here that with respect to major military policies, doctrines and significant recurrent tactics, the ARVN and Lon Nol's forces followed the dictates of the US military. For the most part this also applies to Laotian, Hmong and Montagnard forces supplied by the US. In all cases the US, because they were so essential a point of supply, exercised veto power. As Warner points out with regard to the Hmong, this gives the US complete power over strategy. In the case of the ARVN, Harry Summers quotes General Cao Van Vien from 1969: 'We Vietnamese have no military doctrine because the command of all operations in Vietnam is in the hands, is the responsibility, of the American side. We followed the American military doctrine.' The same situation applied in Cambodia, but more blatantly so. The fact is that the US simply dictated to both Lon Nol and the various GVN regimes what numbers and what kinds of forces it desired, and, as will be detailed below, when a regime was insufficiently compliant it was overthrown.

As it happened, despite further years of experience which confirmed Vann's prognosis that randomly killing civilians would increase the numbers of the NLF, the US armed forces and those of their allies employed a virtually identical method of employing artillery, which they termed Harassment and Interdiction (H&I) fire. This was completely unobserved artillery fire, usually employed every night on places such as cross-roads in designated free-fire zones. It was not until the US had been doing this for 3 more years that the new COMUSMACV General Creighton Abrams (who replaced William Westmoreland) urged his commanders to reduce the amount of H&I fire.

In fact, the H&I tactic was only one way in which the US either directly or indirectly assured that civilians would be injured or killed by US ordnance. The most obvious was an extraordinary institution known as the 'free-fire zone'. These were essentially identical, in terms of logic, to the way the Saigon commanders had justified their 'butchery and sadism' to John Paul Vann in 1962, by the assertion that geographical location was proof of sympathies, and sympathy with the 'Viet Cong' made for a legitimate target. Before the term free-fire zone was invented, the phrase used was 'solid VC areas' and by 1963 some US personnel had adopted the logic behind the characterisation:

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281 ibid, p 111.
the USAF 362nd Squadron began shooting civilians for sport in these 'de facto free-fire zones'.

The way free-fire zones worked was through the way actions were allowed under the US armed forces Rules Of Engagement (ROE). US troops on the ground were still bound, in theory at least, to respect civilian life, but any person who ran, regardless of age, was a 'VC', and hence was to be killed. Philip Caputo, a USMC Lieutenant who was later to become a reporter and antiwar activist, asked the obvious question at the time: 'Why should the act of running identify someone as a communist?'

But note that he is not questioning the rightness of killing someone unarmed because they had a particular political orientation. For those operating machine-guns in helicopters or boats, and for those able to strafe with aeroplanes, this rule became a license for mass-murder among those who wished to commit such an act. Gibson gives the example of testimony by a helicopter gunner:

We had another rule, the use of evasive action. Anyone taking evasive action could be fired upon. Evasive action was never explained to me. It normally entailed someone running or trying to evade a helicopter or any fire.

My unit, the gunships in my unit had installed MP sirens. Police sirens on the helicopter and we used these for psychological effect, to intimidate people.

There is one incident I recall where we new over a large rice paddy, and there were some people working in the rice paddy, maybe a dozen or fifteen individuals, and we passed over their heads and they didn’t take any action, they were obviously nervous, but they didn’t try to hide or anything. So we then hovered a few feet off the ground among them with the two helicopters, turned on the police sirens and when they heard the Police sirens, they started to disperse and we opened up on them and just shot them all down.

Gibson gives another such example before concluding: 'United States forces thus consciously created conditions specified by rules of engagement to open fire and produce a body count.' It would not take a lot of such behaviour before, predictably, the Vietnamese would run as soon as they saw a US helicopter or boat. Herman and Chomsky quote the 'pro-Western' Japanese journalist Katsuichi Honda who described machine-gunners 'firing away at random at farmhouses' and 'using farmers for targets as if in a hunting mood'.

In terms of the scale of suffering and death endured by the Vietnamese, let alone the Laotians and Cambodians, the actions of machine-gunners are nearly insignificant when compared with the consequences of aerial bombardment. For both air and ground artillery purposes anyone within a free-fire zone was a legitimate target. When a new free-fire zone was declared, leaflets were dropped on the villagers instructing them to assemble at certain points to be taken away by helicopter to a new life, generally in a camp or as a refugee. What followed the leaflet drop was known as the 'mad minutes' because after as little as an hour had elapsed since the leaflets were dropped, the US would begin artillery bombardment. After a leaflet drop, an area could be struck for an indefinite period of time. One reporter gave the following description:

At dusk the helicopters came, … Dropping thousands of leaflets….. Colonel William Kittennman said they were warning leaflets, urging the villagers to move out before dark….. No one came out. … Kitterman put down the glasses [binoculars] and looked at me. “Well, they had their chance. Now, we just assume they’re VC” …I finally asked a [marine] gunnery sergeant why the villagers hadn’t come out after the leaflets were dropped. He took a hard drag on his coffee. Looked around, then whispered to me,
The Vietnamese farmers had extraordinarily strong ties to their land and practiced a Confucian reverence for the shrines of ancestors. So, predictably, when a free-fire zone was declared many would remain behind, sleeping in bunkers and often living with the nightmare of nightly shelling. Those people faced the further risk of aerial bombardment. S. Brian Willson was assigned to guard Bin Tui, an airbase in South Vietnam, in which position he was given the duty of helping assess bombing missions, in April 1969, to ensure that pilots were not deliberately missing their targets. His description of the first such mission includes, '...a sea of bodies. Probably 100 to 120 corpses. A few of them were moving, most were still. This was 15 minutes after the bombing.' The village had been bombed in the middle of the day, when the healthy adults were at work in the fields, so the victims were all the children, the elderly, the infirm and childminders. The military situation was such that just two officers were able to arrive 15 minutes after the bombing without any endangerment to themselves. Willson's companion, an VNAF Lieutenant replied to Willson's protestations: 'They're communists, this is a victory,' and they left the wounded to die. Willson believed there was some mistake, but soon discovered that, because the entire province had been declared a free-fire zone, the villages were systematically being destroyed without reference to whether or not there was intelligence of enemy activity. Willson described this as 'a deliberate systematic plan to wipe out the civilian population.' Although less closely observed, the similar things were occurring in Laos and Cambodia, especially in the latter where nearly the entire country became designated a free-fire zone. Even in North Vietnam, many civilian facilities were targeted, particularly hospitals, schools and churches because they were more substantial structures. The Vietnamese in February 1967 reported 391 schools, over 80 churches and 30 pagodas, and 95 health institutions had been destroyed up to that point. One leprosarium was attacked 36 times in 1965 and 1966.

In South Vietnam the number and extent of free-fire zones kept expanding. By the beginning of 1967, according to Neil Sheehan: 'Free-fire zones proliferated so rapidly with new red lines on maps for laying waste that it was no longer possible to keep track of their number and the total area they encompassed.' The spread of free-fire zones was only made possible by the fact that US armed forces did not actually occupy or 'pacify' rural South Vietnam, a circumstance which will be examined below. By 1969 they encompassed 75% of South Vietnam. Though the Rules of Engagement officially specified otherwise, examples abound of the military authorities encouraging troops to consider all persons in a free-fire zone to be a legitimate target. In their expose of the

293Helen Emmerich quoted in Gibson, A Perfect War, p 141.
294This description is from a speech given in Los Angeles at the United Methodist Church in North Hills on July 20, 2003 which was recorded by the L.A. Sound Posse. S. Brian Willson, 'US Intervention in Korea'. Los Angeles: 20 July 2003. Retrieved 16 May 2007 from http://www.radio4all.net/index.php?op=program-info&program_id=7485. Willson also gives a written account on his own website: 'On one occasion in April 1969, in eerie safety, I witnessed the incredible destruction that had just been inflicted in daylight morning hours on a typically defenseless village about the size of a large baseball stadium. With smoldering ruins throughout, the ground was strewn with bodies of villagers and their farm animals, many of whom were motionless and bloody, murdered from bomb shrapnel and napalm. Several were trying to get up on their feet, and others were moving ever so slightly as they cried and moaned. Most of the victims I witnessed were women and children. At one dramatic moment I encountered at close range a young wounded woman lying on the ground clutching three young disfigured children. I stared, aghast, at the woman's open eyes. Upon closer examination, I discovered that she, and what I presumed were her children, all were dead, but napalm had melted much of the woman's facial skin, including her eyelids,' (S. Brian Willson, 'Biography'. Retrieved 13 February 2008 from http://www.brianwillson.com/bio.html).
295Shawcross, Sideshow, p 174.
296Gibson, A Perfect War, pp 372-5.
297Sheehan, A Bright Shining Lie, pp 617-8.
298Turley, The Second Indochina War, p 66.
atrocities committed by a US unit called 'Tiger Force' Mitch Weiss and Michael Sallah detail multiple instances where it is clear that the unit had been led to believe that 'free-fire' meant that they had complete discretion and could legitimately kill whoever they wanted. Eventually the Orwellian logic predominated to such an extent that Westmoreland, in 1969, was able to baldly claim that absolutely no civilians had ever been killed by the US in designated free-fire zones, because no-one in a free-fire zone was a civilian, by definition.

It should also be noted that free-fire zones were intricately linked with other efforts to blur the line between combatant and non-combatant. The very term Viet Cong was coined and employed to mean people of a given political affiliation. As was detailed above Diem's political repression meant that communist beliefs were potential grounds for summary execution. US forces and those of their allies were told repeatedly that the enemy was the Viet Cong. As Herman and Chomsky point out, Western journalists accepted without qualm or comment the US right to kill anyone who was merely in a village which showed a political affiliation to the NLF. US military personnel, however, were not necessarily as compliant as the press, possibly because they were largely led to believe that VC actually meant PLAF combatants. The US military then came up with another term – 'Viet Cong infrastructure'. Prados defines them as 'a shadowy network of Viet Cong village authorities, informers, tax collectors, propaganda teams, officials of community groups, and the like, who collectively came to be called the Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI). 'Sympathizers' were also counted. The language is typical of the dehumanising (even de-animating) terminology used by the US military (and others) facilitate attacks on civilians and their property. Harry Summers believes that the euphemistic language of the US armed forces was a way of sheltering the US public from the realities of war, but it is a far more immediately functional usage than that, allowing the decision makers, the executors and, also, the reporters to encompass the practical logistical elements of an activity without having to assess a human, ethical or moral dimension.

Another institution which promoted the killing of civilians was the body count. As Joanna Bourke said: “The 'body count' of the Vietnam War formalized psychological processes of dehumanisation....” It should be said at the outset that 'body counts' and 'kill ratios' are not some logical outcome of an attrition policy. Attrition is about destroying an enemy's forces and given the situation in South Vietnam it would have made far more sense to emphasise achieving this by the capture or destruction of weapons and supplies. But the body count in Vietnam was not just about facilitating violence against enemy combatants, but was also about creating an incentive and inclination to kill civilians. Marilyn Young concluded that 'logic seemed to have no end short of the progressive elimination of the population of the South.'

Philip Caputo's autobiographical A Rumor of War has the following expository remarks in its preface:

General Westmoreland’s strategy of attrition also had an important effect on our behavior. Our mission

300 Gibson, A Perfect War, p 135.
301 Herman and Chomsky, Manufacturing Consent, p 200.
305 This will be detailed below, but briefly put, the US was running a very expensive interdiction campaign in the air and supplies were very difficult to move South from the DRV. Though the southern forces needed very little in the way of supplies to continue an insurgency whose pace they determined themselves, it was nevertheless true that supplies and weapons were of inestimable value.
306 Young, The Vietnam Wars, p 187.
was not to win terrain or seize positions, but simply to kill: to kill Communists and to kill as many of them as possible. Stack 'em like cordwood. Victory was a high body-count, defeat a low kill-ratio, war a matter of arithmetic. The pressure on unit commanders to produce enemy corpses was intense, and they in turn communicated it to their troops. This led to such practices as counting civilians as Viet Cong. "If it’s dead and Vietnamese, it’s VC," was a rule of thumb in the bush. It is not surprising, therefore, that some men acquired, a contempt for human life and a predilection for taking it.

The practice of counting civilian dead as the enemy was known as the 'mere gook' rule, and was the direct result of 'pressure from on high for ever larger body counts'. 308 Jonathan Neale summarises the logic: “In effect, the American plan was to kill the Vietnamese until they gave up. The pressure for this was relentless. The Pentagon demanded statistics. In some rear unit’s the officers chalked the cumulative kills on a board. Officers knew their careers would depend on their numbers. And although the officers seldom said, 'Kill all the civilians you can,' they seldom criticized anybody for doing that, and often praised them.” 309 According to Gibson: “Producing a high body count was crucial for promotion in the officer corps. Many high-level officers established 'production quotas' for their units, and systems of 'debit' and 'credit' to calculate exactly how efficiently subordinate units and middle-management personnel performed.” 310 There were often rewards for kills as a former GI recalls: 'There was a real incentivizing of death and it just fucked with our value system. In our unit guys who got confirmed kills would get a three-day in-country R and R.' 311 Perhaps more significantly, a failure to meet a 'production quota' could sometimes mean being returned immediately to dangerous duty. 312

There was one further institution which promoted the killing of civilians – the 'search and destroy' mission. For the purposes of this essay, the search and destroy mission is mainly notable as an inherent part of of the 'Fire-power/Attrition' strategy discussed below, but such things are all interconnected. The significance of search and destroy missions in terms of killing civilians is very well summed up by Michael Bernhardt, who was present at the My Lai massacre: 'I think something like My Lai probably had happened many times before. It was just a matter of scale. Here’s the thing. The whole war effort was built on three pillars-the free-fire zone, the search-and-destroy mission, and the body count. The free-fire zone means shoot anybody that moves. The search-and-destroy mission is just another way to shoot anything that moves. I call it the portable free-fire zone - you tote it around anywhere you go. And the body count is the tool for measuring the success or failure of whatever you’re doing. When you’ve got those three things it doesn’t take a genius to figure out how it’s going to end up.' 313

In addition to these institutions, there were other circumstances which would predictably incline military personnel to kill civilians. The most significant went to form a complex of spatial and ideological alienation from the Vietnamese people which exacerbated the effects of the 'fire-power/attrition' strategy. The degree of informed intent that accompanied each circumstance is not necessarily possible to gauge but over the long-term a failure to address these circumstances as problems was itself an indication of the fact that they had some value because, as will be detailed,

307Caputo, A Rumor of War, pp xvi-xvii. I think it should be borne in mind that Caputo's time, place and role in the war – as a Marine in I Corps from mid-1965 to mid-1966 – was at one end of a spectrum which extended even beyond the experiences detailed by S. Brian Willson, into even less militarily justified bombing campaigns. Caputo's war was very clean and militarily rational by comparison.


309Neale, A People's History of the Vietnam War, p 85.

310Gibson, A Perfect War, p 112.

311Appy, Vietnam, p 365.

312Gibson, A Perfect War, p 120.

313Appy, Vietnam, p 350.
they uniformly worked in a 'counterproductive' manner, hindering US military efficacy and strengthening that of their enemy. These circumstances, along with the abovementioned institutions, created a situational predisposition to kill civilians which might be strongly at odds with the actual values of the individual serviceman. Gibson insists that 'atrocities against Vietnamese routinely resulted from the production logic in which the war was conceptualized and fought.\footnote{Gibson, \textit{A Perfect War}, viii.}

A very significant circumstance of relevance was the endemic racial animus amongst US troops, usually against East Asians as a whole. In training US military personnel were taught to hate their enemy in explicitly racial terms such as 'gook', 'slope', 'dink', 'gooner' and 'zipperhead'. These terms did not, of course, distinguish combatant status, nor political affiliation, nor even nationality and ethnicity. The result was that even Asian American's were in danger of being shot because in the belief that they were Vietnamese (one was advised to dye his hair blond and whistle dixie when it got dark).\footnote{Appy, \textit{Vietnam}, p 358.} Many, if not most, combat troops came to see all Vietnamese as the enemy, but ironically there was considerable respect for their actual armed opponents, the PLAF and PAVN.\footnote{Neale, \textit{A People's History of the Vietnam War}, p 94.} Contempt and hatred was particularly extended to their allies: 'Many [US Troops] now regarded the ARVN, indeed all Vietnamese, with open contempt. At the same time they came to think of the VC/PAVN as a resourceful and able foe.'\footnote{Tucker, \textit{Vietnam}, p 152.}

Adding to this was the sense of fear that derived from sense of being universally hated and the hysteria generated therefrom. Neale, before detailing the common ways in which US troops would commit serious acts of violence against children for sport, writes: 'The old soldiers told the new soldiers the truth [sic]: those children hate us. They know where the mines are. They want us to die.' Having established this 'truth' Neale goes on to detail the common practice of throwing full cans of c-rations at childrens heads to split them open.\footnote{Neale, \textit{A People's History of the Vietnam War}, p 96.} Other such 'truths' about the local population would spread amongst the troops, including the belief that Vietnamese children sold poisoned Coke,\footnote{Caputo, \textit{A Rumor of War}, p 107.} that the Vietnamese would rig their own babies with explosives to kill GIs, and that prostitutes would boobytrap their vaginas with broken glass.\footnote{Cawthorne, \textit{Vietnam: A War Lost and Won}, p 60.} These rumours are symptomatic of a larger sense of panic and insecurity, and their infantile nature should not distract from the deadly seriousness of the mental condition of the US troops. For example, if we return to the subject of children, Neale gives a further example of cruel violence where, as a form of joke, a small child is grabbed from a moving truck and act which causes him to fall under the wheels and be crushed to death.\footnote{Neale, \textit{A People's History of the Vietnam War}, p 97.} Such occurrences might not have been, as this one was, partly accidental. Former medic George Evans describes the circumstances under which two young boys had died: “I found out they’d been hit by an American military truck and chat there was this fund of game going on in which, supposedly, guys were driving through town gambling over who could hit a kid. They had some disgusting name for it, something like 'gook hockey'."\footnote{Appy, \textit{Vietnam}, p 452.} Such behaviours are both a result and a cause of an alienation, a massive gulf between Vietnamese and US servicemen, but one of the greatest reasons for that separation lay in the US policy of 1 year tours of duty. As a former ARVN interpreter explains: 'The GIs didn’t understand anything at all about Vietnam. They always talked about being here for just one year. Look at their calendars- XXX every day. Everywhere GIs lived they had their calendars, marking off every day, counting the days. By the time they had some

\footnotetext[315]{Gibson, \textit{A Perfect War}, viii.}
\footnotetext[316]{Neale, \textit{A People's History of the Vietnam War}, p 94.}
\footnotetext[317]{Tucker, \textit{Vietnam}, p 152.}
\footnotetext[318]{Neale, \textit{A People's History of the Vietnam War}, p 96.}
\footnotetext[319]{Caputo, \textit{A Rumor of War}, p 107.}
\footnotetext[320]{Cawthorne, \textit{Vietnam: A War Lost and Won}, p 60.}
\footnotetext[321]{Neale, \textit{A People's History of the Vietnam War}, p 97.}
\footnotetext[322]{Appy, \textit{Vietnam}, p 452.}
understanding, it was time to leave.'\(^{323}\) The whole culture of the US personnel was one in which Vietnam was not even real, while the US was the 'World'.

Just as soldiers of other nations have been, US military personnel were desensitised to violence, fear, pain, and death as part of their formal training. A sample of boot camp experiences is given by Gibson:

> We were told that “the only good gook is a dead gook, and the more gooks you kill, the more slant-eyes you can kill in Vietnam, that is the less you will have to worry about them killing you at night.”

Now in this training they referred to the Vietnamese as dinks or gooks. The impression was that they were something less than human. I had a drill sergeant in AIT [Advanced Infantry Training] reply to a question, “What is it like over there?”; and he told us, he said, “It is like hunting rabbits and squirrels.”

…the main word was, “Kill. Kill. Kill.” all the time, they then pushed it into your head twenty-four hours a day. Even before you sat down to eat your meals, you had to stand up and scream “Kill” before you could sit down and eat.\(^{324}\)

Gibson also prints some of the chants used in drill, such as: 'VC, VC, kill, kill, kill. Gotta kill, gotta kill, 'cause it's fun, 'cause it's fun.'\(^{325}\) Obviously desensitisation not only facilitates the killing of the enemy, but it is a blunt instrument which also promotes killing \(\textit{per se}\). One of the most famous of all boot camp chants from the Vietnam era had the refrain: 'Napalm sticks to kids!' Perhaps this particular desensitising phrase was relevant to the conditions that the personnel were about to face, but it has nothing whatsoever to do with combat and the ability to perform the role of a soldier. It is also a departure from common practice to induce unreasonable fear in the soldiers being trained. One former air hostess described the men \(\textit{en route}\) to Vietnam: 'These were boys destined for combat and they had been told in training what their expected mortality rate was. I remember an air force Blue Beret actually told me they were trained to die. He didn't expect ever to go home.'\(^{326}\) Actaully, US casualties were extremely light in the Second Indochina War with less than 2% of those who served in or over Indochina being killed. Naturally the burden was not even and some, such as those in the Marine Corps, faced a much higher risk. Nevertheless, in comparison with the odds faced, even by their own countrymen and women, in World War II, these were not in themselves figures which should have induced despondency. William Calley, who massacred civilians at My Lai, had this to say about his training: 'It was drummed into us, ‘‘Be sharp! On guard! As soon as you think these people won’t kill you, ZAP! In combat you haven’t friends! You have enemies!’” Over and over at OCS we heard this, and I told myself, I’ll act as if I’m never secure. As if everyone in Vietnam would do me in. As if everyone’s bad.'\(^{327}\)

The fear felt by US troops was increased by the failure or outright refusal of their commanders to create securely policed occupied territory. Instead massive base camps were constructed which were like small cities, such as one Long Binh which 'boasted movie theaters, slot machines, steam baths, restaurant complexes, lawns and flower beds....'\(^{328}\) This was another factor which kept the US personnel segregated from the local population (except in I Corps where the Marines referred to

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323Ibid, p 375.
324Gibson, \textit{A Perfect War}, pp 181-2.
325Ibid, p 182.
327Gibson, \textit{A Perfect War}, p 182.
their compatriots as 'ice-cream soldiers'), and created a situation where there were highly Americanised islands of safety in a sea of Vietnamese hostility and danger. In a section on booby-traps Nigel Cawthorne writes: 'Nowhere in Vietnam was safe.' Certainly it must have felt a little like that to US servicemen and servicewomen. At the same time, another effect of US tactics at this time was that when on patrol or Search and Destroy missions, ground forces were essentially being used as bait. They would walk until making 'contact' (which the US's own figures indicate was almost always a case of coming under fire from the enemy) and then radio in air and ground artillery strikes. Actually, this manner of emphasising fire-power may have been an effective way of minimising US casualties, but it led to a strong sense of spatial insecurity. That this is so is demonstrated by the prevalence of 'firebase psychosis' whereby commanders would fear to send troops beyond the range of artillery emplacement at firebases. As Spencer Tucker wrote: ‘The dominant idea was to locate its enemy using infantry as a reconnaissance force and then destroy him with artillery and air power. Notoriously wasteful of matériel resources, this indiscriminate method meant that innocent civilians often got caught in the crossfire. It also lead to 'firebase psychosis' whereby US commanders grew reluctant to commit troops beyond the range of firebase support. Firepower was substituted for aggressive small-unit tactics.’ All of this, for the actual ground troops, must have created a complete sense of demoralising powerlessness.

There was also a sense of futility generated. The author Tim O'Brien told Christian Appy: 'It was just a blur of going from village to village through paddies with no sense of destination, or mission, or purpose. You’d just wake up and go to a village, search it, and leave. Somebody might die or not, and you’d come back a month later to the same damn village and do it again. It was like going in circles and not really achieving anything. You weren’t winning hearts and minds and you weren’t winning ground. You didn’t know who to shoot unless they were shooting at you. The enemy seemed to be everywhere and nowhere. The result was that, in one former infantryman's words, ‘...slowly as fear mounted frustration and rode down a crippled confidence, as callousness started taking over from condescension in our attitude to the Vietnamese, our vision blurred, clouded over, and refocused. Where before we had found it difficult to see the enemy anywhere, now we saw him everywhere. It was simple now; the Vietnamese were the Viet Cong, the Viet Cong were the Vietnamese. The killing became so much easier now.

Of course, atrocities committed by troops on the ground contributed only a tiny part of the overall suffering in southern Vietnam, let alone Indochina as a whole. They must, however, have played a very significant role in encouraging people to take up arms against the US. They also give insight into the US military effort as a whole. What is striking about accounts of atrocities is that frequently there is no trigger as such, merely a momentary failure of will against ongoing pressures which effectively made murder the path of least resistance. Tiger Force (an elite unit) were pressured into being 'productive', through the usual means, but as their habitual killing of civilians became known to superiors they were actually consciously used as a death squad (I can think of no other term) by battalion commanders. Sallah and Weiss give considerable detail about this process which is too complicated to summarise here, but on at least 8 occasions they highlight the centrality of orders coming from those not in the field.

329 Caputo, A Rumor of War, p 65.
330 Cawthorne, Vietnam: A War Lost and Won, p 60.
332 Gibson, A Perfect War, pp 110-2.
334 Appy, Vietnam, p 543.
335 Neale, A People's History of the Vietnam War, pp 90-1.
Similarly, the massacre at My Lai followed intense and sometimes fairly explicit pressures from above, as Joanna Bourke relates:

In the briefing prior to entering My Lai, Colonel Henderson had taunted the officers for their poor performance in earlier attacks and their lack of aggression which enabled 'men, women, or children, or other VC soldiers in the area' to escape. Men left the briefing feeling resentful and furious. William Calvin Lloyd recalled 'we knew we were supposed to kill everyone in the village' and Robert Wayne Pendleton remembered that as they cleaned their weapons the night before the attack people were talking about killing everything that moved. Everyone knew what we were going to do. 337

The massacre began at about eight in the morning:

By the time Calley and his men sat down to lunch, they had rounded up and slaughtered around 500 unarmed civilians. Within those few hours, members of Charlie Company had ‘fooled around’ and laughed as they sodomized and raped women, ripped vaginas open with knives, bayonet civilians, scalped corpses, and carved ‘C Company’ or the ace of spades on to their chests, slaughtered animals and torched hooches. Other soldiers had wept openly as they opened fire on crowds of unresisting old men, women, children, and babies. At no stage did these soldiers receive any enemy fire or encounter any form of resistance save fervent pleadings. Yet, they were ‘only’ obeying orders, doing their duty, and - they reasoned - even little babies could be Viet Cong (‘I thought,’ Paul Meadlo testified, ‘they had some sort of chain or a little string they had to give a little pull and they blow us up’). 338

Calley's platoon began killing individually, before Calley ordered the first coordinated killing:

Vietnamese screamed as the bullets tore through their bodies and ripped into their heads. Meadlo kept his rifle on automatic. He reloaded a magazine of bullets, fired on semiautomatic and paused to reload again. Instead, he stopped. Tears running down his cheeks, he pressed his rifle on Conti. “You shoot them.” Conti shoved the rifle away and pointed at Calley. “Let him do it,” he said. By then, it hardly mattered. Only a few children had survived, sheltered by their mothers. As the dazed children tried to stand Calley picked them off one by one. When all were dead, he turned away. To Conti, he looked calm. “Okay,” Calley said, “let’s go.” 339

From that point the platoon began herding other villagers into a drainage ditch where they were to be shot. At one point a 2-year-old boy climbed out of the ditch and Calley threw him back in before shooting him. 340 Calley later explained his understanding of his actions: 'The old men, the women, the children – the babies – were all VC or would be VC in about three years. And inside of VC women, I guess there were about a thousand little VC now.’ 341

To understand the significance of the actions of Calley's platoon, and to a large extent those of the rest of the company who were committing similar atrocities, there are two crucial pieces of information. The first is that although most US personnel did not commit atrocities, they were by no means uncommon and the My Lai massacre was unusually large but otherwise in no respect could it be considered exceptional. Alje Venneman, who was director of a hospital nearby, described the massacre as 'not at all out of the ordinary.' 342 The second matter, somewhat disturbing in its implications, is that to this day it is still generally implied or stated that villagers, including children, were responsible for taking the lives of US soldiers. Some accounts make it seem more as if all of the booby traps were set by ordinary peasants, while the tens of thousands of PLAF regular and irregular troops did nothing. Neale, as was detailed above, talks of the 'truth' that Vietnamese children wanted to kill all US soldiers. 343 In fact, whatever their private political leanings, only a minority of Vietnamese were politically active, and like most people's, only a few had such strength

341Bourke, An Intimate History of Killing, p 162.
342Chomsky, For Reasons of State, p 27.
343See above, n 318.
of conviction that they would kill for it. The PLAF who would train and arm them. Another point often emphasised is that in guerilla war there is no way of distinguishing non-uniformed combatants from non-combatants. Indeed, although the vast majority of guerilla's were young adult men, there were also women and children (though it is unlikely that many would have been younger than teenage). The PLAF also had uniforms for regular units, and yet US personnel were told, and will repeat in their own defence, that the 'VC uniform' was 'black pyjamas', meaning the clothes worn by all of the Vietnamese farmers. This is not to deny that there might not have been isolated incidents of of attacks by children, Gibson explains that 'the children fought too,' giving an example recounted by a former marine, wherein an 8 or 9 year old child tries to throw a grenade into his Jeep. It is difficult to tell whether these stories are true or more myths, I imagine that there are some of each. What is certain, however, is that very, very few US personnel would have died at the hands of children. A passage from Caputo's *A Rumor of War* hints that some US troops were actually predisposed to seeing the local children as enemy combatants: "The teenagers are less mercenary. Like adolescent boys everywhere, they are fascinated with soldiers and armies. One of them shouts, 'Mahreene numbah one. Kill buku VC.' A marine who is not much older than the boy makes a pistol with his thumb and forefinger. 'You VC,' he says. 'Bang. Bang.'"

Returning to events such as the My Lai massacre, it is also completely specious to suggest that there is some difficulty in distinguishing combatant from non-combatant in such circumstances. Combatants are armed. They are most likely going to fight back or flee at the first opportunity. Calley knew he was killing non-combatants but he fervently believed that he was killing The Enemy. The US troops were only very mutedly, if at all, reminded that they were not permitted to kill non-combatants, and few seemed to think that the Rules of Engagement were actual rules. Gibson even goes so far as to suggest that in an Orwellian manner, the ROE facilitated the systematic killing of civilians by creating an official Truth that US soldiers do not kill civilians thereby making every such act, by definition, a mistake or aberration. In fact, as will be discussed further, US tactics – whether they be patrols, sweeps, H&I artillery fire, aerial bombardment, or search-and-destroy missions – were such that the PLAF and PAVN were in a much better position to evade US forces and ordnance than the normal farmers were.

It cannot be emphasised enough that US personnel were induced to view non-combatants as their enemy and a legitimate target. If only a minority of US troops committed atrocities it must certainly have had more to do with their socialisation in civilian life, or basic human feelings. Gibson describes how one officer made the choice not to kill the old men and women who sat next to trails saying hello to the US troops as they went past. In the officer's words, 'do you shoot an old man sitting by the side of the trail? Whether he's a trail watcher or not? Do you shoot him?' The officer decided not to kill them 'even though he realized it might lead to his unit's being ambushed.' Anyone would think that no other military had ever faced civilians who somehow aided the enemy, but the truth is that no military has ever existed without civilian support, that is why laws were invented to distinguish combatants and non-combatants. Even decades after the war

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344Elliott, *The Vietnamese Wars*, pp 184-9. Elliott is discussing the years 1954-59 and the hardening of attitudes that occurred in 1959. Nevertheless, the same distinction clearly, and inevitably continued.
345Neale gives an example of a 10 year old platoon messenger boy (*A People's History of the Vietnam War*, p 104), but I think this likely to be exceptional. The DRV would not accept volunteers under 16 even for its Volunteer Youth Corps, who were not combatants (Appy, *Vietnam*, p 103), and it is highly unlikely that the NLF would have been at odds with this policy and rather more likely that their stringency in applying policy might have been less uniform.
349Ibid, p 151.
a former battalion commander, some of whose men had massacred around 20 women and children told Christian Appy: 'We had routinely fired artillery and mortars and ran air strikes into this area because it had supposedly been cleaned out of all of the civilian population. All these people were VC families. But it's a little hard for lawyers to accept the fact that a VC family is part of the enemy.' Because of the way that 'VC' is defined by such people this is actually the equivalent, if using a World War II analogy, to contextualising the killing of women and children by saying, 'All these people were German families. But it's a little hard for lawyers to accept the fact that a German family is part of the enemy.'

It should also be noted that, historically, given that military personnel are subject to ongoing discipline, endemic atrocities are a result of policy. Take the example of rape, which is by nature a genocidal tactic, meant to damage the nation as a whole by inducing widespread psychological trauma. Rape by US personnel was unexceptional. As Neale points out, however: 'The rapes were part of an integrated policy of terror. Armies do not rape systematically unless the practice is permitted, and effectively encouraged from the top.' According to Joanna Bourke such encouragement began in training: "Numerous servicemen admitted that they had been told by their instructors that 'we could rape the women' and they were taught how to strip women prisoners, 'spread them open', and 'drive pointed sticks or bayonets into their vaginas afterwards.'" In fact she suggests that rape was used as an inducement 'to volunteer for Vietnam.' Bourke's sources are meagre and need corroboration, but even if those particular words were never used, and even if it makes little sense to 'instruct' people to drive pointed sticks into vagina's, I think there is a greater truth that the origin of these actions lay in the training and culture induced in the US military personnel. Certainly Bourke's contention that 'there was widespread endorsement of certain atrocities' is a sound one.

This question arises, however, why would there be such a strong institutional promotion of violence against civilians by ground troops. If the desired effect were simply the degradation of the nation through genocidal means then, at first glance, it would seem simplest to declare large areas free-fire zones and then use air-strikes or ground artillery to kill all the farmers or drive them out of their homes to become refugees. Indeed, this is exactly what occurred, but in order to facilitate those actions there had to be a plausible insurgency and lack of security. As David Keen points out, with numerous examples, it is a known and predictable effect that the killing of civilians drives people to take up arms, it is a 'counterproductive' counter-insurgency tactic which actually strengthens the enemy. It is worth reiterating that John Paul Vann made the same observation in 1962.

One of the most striking examples of generating an enemy by killing civilians, is what occurred in Cambodia from 1969 onwards. Ben Kiernan repeatedly cites evidence in numerous consecutive instances that US/RVN aerial bombardment strengthened the Khmer Rouge insurgency, and, more specifically the anti-Vietnamese faction of the Khmer Rouge under Pol Pot. In 1969, the Khmer Rouge consisted of perhaps 4000 – an ultimately unthreatening insurgency. By the end of 1972, they were able, with DRV logistical support, to 'hold their own' against Lon Nol's armed forces, which, at US instigation, had been enlarged to between 132,000 and 176,000 (not counting 'ghost' soldiers, who existed only on the books of the corrupt officers who collected their pay) and had

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350Appy, Vietnam, p 447.
351Neale, A People's History of the Vietnam War, p 121.
355See above, n 280.
356Kiernan, The Pol Pot Regime, pp 19-23. Also see Peou, Intervention & Change in Cambodia, p 128.
massive US/RVN air support. In William Shawcross's words, 'the new war was creating enemies where none previously existed' and by this stage, Lon Nol's regime was already reduced to the control of shrinking and fragmenting enclaves.

In Laot, US bombing and destruction of civilians and their property has been held to have acted as a recruitment campaign for the Pathet Lao. Gibson writes: 'When bombing escalated, so too did successful recruitment. Survivors estimate that by 1968, 95 percent of the combat-age men and women joined the Pathet Lao.'

As this essay details different institutions and tactics employed over time by US forces, it is worth noting here, it will return to the tendency to target civilians, not infrequently. But this was by no means the only manner in which the US nursed the Vietnamese insurgency to its full strength, nor aided the Khmer Rouge and Pathet Lao. Keen indicates two other common 'counterproductive' actions which typify war systems, in addition to killing civilians – the release of prisoners and trading with the enemy. In many respects the US and its proxies went a great deal further than these actions, although at first glance one might be forgiven for doubting the suggestion that they released combatant prisoners. Where the US excelled was in being the ultimate source for a considerable portion of their enemies' supplies and arms. Of course, this is part of the nature of insurgencies, part of asymmetrical warfare, that the insurgents should almost parasitically survive using the arms intended for use against them. In the case of the PLAF it is also true that the DRV tried to promote self-sufficiency, particularly early in the war, but this should not be allowed to obscure the fact that the DRV was more than a mere ally to the NLF, not only in geographic proximity, but sharing a language, culture and national identity. Indeed it could be argued that, despite knowing that it would provide the grounds for attacks against it, the DRV had no choice but to support the NLF insurgency, which they were aware was inevitable with or without their support, and thus that if they were not crucial for the logistics of the insurgency, it was only because the necessity was obviated by US actions.

An indication of how crucial the US was in arming the PLAF can be gotten from the figure given by investigative reporter I. F. Stone, who revealed estimates that in 1965 97.5 per cent of PLAF weapons were of non-communist origin. Some of these may have been captured weapons from the Korean War, transshipped via China, but this is nevertheless an eye-opening figure. As mentioned, insurgencies do tend to arm themselves by raiding, but the US MAAG, and the MACV after it, facilitated this inestimably. They maintained a series of easily over-run watchtowers which advisers such as John Paul Vann, believing them to be a result of ARVN stupidity, actually referred to as 'VC supply points.' These watchtowers were remnants of the First Indochina War and had been a disastrous burden on the French war effort, tying up 70% of French forces. By 1953 even the French knew that the towers were worse than useless. Bernard Fall described them as 'downright ridiculous' and yet they remained in place right through to the Americanisation of

357 Shawcross, Sideshow, pp 73, 180, 194-5, 261.
358 Ibid, p 249.
359 Ibid, p 254.
360 Gibson, A Perfect War, p 395.
361 Keen, Endless War?, p 58.
362 This began to change with the ascendancy of Le Duan and Nguyen Chi Thanh, who commanded the PLAF from 1965 until 1967 (Brigham, ‘Why the South Won the American War in Vietnam’ in Gilbert (ed.) Why the North won the Vietnam War, pp 109-110.)
364 Chomsky, For Reasons of State, p 44.
365 Sheehan, A Bright Shining Lie, p 101.
366 Gibson, A Perfect War, pp 61-2.
the war. Philip Caputo was astounded to see them in 1965: 'If this was a real war zone what were those anachronisms doing here? Their only conceivable us would be as registration points for VC mortar batteries.'

Trading with the enemy also played a very large role in supplying insurgents. US aid was often known to go directly to the enemy. Gibson asks the question, 'Why would the war-managers willingly acquiesce in the theft of so much American aid, especially when it sometimes ended in the grasp of the enemy?' The possible answers he provides are that it was either the price the US had to pay for GVN officials to co-operate or that the US could not intervene because to do so would belie the pretence of RVN sovereignty. Neither of these explanations comes close to sufficing because, as Gibson's own exposition reveals, the system was one created by the US from scratch. The US was also unconstrained by the pretence of sovereignty, and RVN sovereignty was only ever an excuse for not taking actions that were considered undesirable but which it behoved the US to evince support for. Finally it should be noted that GVN officials could have been bought off quite sufficiently without fostering an arms supply for the NLF. ARVN corruption was largely a result of pathetic pay rates – pay rates set by the US.

In Cambodia many, including US personnel, thought that part of the reason for overthrowing Sihanouk was the fact that he allowed arms to flow to the PLAF, yet the supply of arms coming from Cambodia to the PLAF was often conducted by pro-US officers, including Lon Nol, and continued unabated once Sihanouk was overthrown. US profligacy with fire-power also helped the PLAF – a Captain from the tunnel complex at Cu Chi said: 'We hardly received any... weapons from the North. ... We needed explosives and fortunately soon found them lying all around us on the ground.' Tucker, writing of the earlier parts of the war, summarises the situation with these words, 'new weapons that the US provided the ARVN merely meant that the VC would now capture newer, better American weapons....'

Not content with arming and supplying their enemies, it can be argued that the US contrived to provide them, rest, recreation and medical facilities which also provided sanctuary from the US military's own offensive operations. I refer here to the Chieu Hoi ('Open Arms') programme, putatively set up to facilitate defections from the PLAF. This programme was administered by the GVN, but designed, overseen and funded by the US. It consisted of centres spread around South Vietnam where defectors could safely go. It is generally considered to have been a great success because of the large numbers of defectors reported and because of its 'cost-effectiveness', reportedly only $125.12 per 'returnee'. But a social psychologist sent in 1966 to study US 'psywar' efforts later wrote, ‘there was no way to know if the so-called 'defectors' were what they claimed to be. Anyone who showed up at one of these centers and claimed to be a 'defector' was given a bed. We

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367Caputo, A Rumor of War, p 54.
368Gibson, A Perfect War, pp 258-60.
369Schulzinger, A Time for War, p 191.
370Partly because the MACV produced figures 5 times as high as the more likely CIA figure. The Central Intelligence Agency agreed there was a flow through Cambodia, but its National Intelligence Estimate in 1968 put the level at only two thousand tons. Pacific Command intelligence essentially accepted the CIA estimate. The State Department argued that “what reliable evidence is available does not suggest that the operation is of the magnitude MACV describes.” Even the Pentagon questioned MACV methodology. CIA analyst Paul Walsh conducted ‘quite a sophisticated’ study, arriving ‘at a figure of something like six thousand tons from 1967 to early 1970. By then MACV’s claims were up to about eighteen thousand.’ (Prados, The Hidden History of the Vietnam War, p 236.
371Shawcross, Sideshow, p 64.
372Ibid, pp 202, 221, 251.
373Neale, A People's History of the Vietnam War, p 100.
do know that some genuine VC moved into these centers whenever U.S. Army divisions began military operations in their area. Thus the centers became 'safe havens' when the heat was on and even provided medical treatment to those wounded in action...  

3. Crippling your own Forces, Ignoring Analysis, Faking Intelligence and Deceiving the Decision Makers.

While the US military, taken as a whole, acted in various ways which strengthened their enemies, they also acted in a number of ways, some rather extraordinary, which severely reduced the efficacy of their own forces and those of their clients. With regard to their client forces, the most obvious problem was that they were poorly equipped, armed and paid. The poor pay of the ARVN has already been mentioned, but they were also ill-equipped and ill-armed throughout most of the war, often using World War II era weapons far too large for their physiques. Things had not improved greatly even by 1970. A. J. Langguth recalled to Christian Appy that ARVN equipment was worn out. A truck he rode in broke down several times on a trip of only a few miles. The ARVN had only a little over a hundred helicopters at this time (compared with thirty-five hundred for US forces) and were unable to medevac their wounded. An ARVN Lieutenant's pay was about eighteen dollars a month. It should be remembered that the US was far from parsimonious in its prosecution of the war – the budgetary cost, at the time, of the war was between $112 and $155 billion (enough to pay around 500 to 700 million ARVN lieutenants for a year), but the total long term costs were estimated at $925 billion. Also interesting is the fact that it was the US which determined the numbers in the RVNAF and the Cambodian Armed forces under Lon Nol – and they made them huge. A sense of US priorities and methods can be gauged from their choices in Cambodia. Within a year of Lon Nol's coup, Kissinger and the JCS had decided to increase the FANK from less than 35,000 to 220,000 with 143,000 additional Cambodian paramilitary forces. They were forced to cut the cost from $350 million to $275 million and rather than cutting troop numbers they saved the difference 'simply by cutting back the ammunition that the United States would provide to the new Cambodian troops.' It should be noted that soon after 1970 both the FANK and the RVNAF became awash with fire-power. But, as this essay will note in it conclusion, this coincided with a reasonable certainty that neither force could hope to defeat its opponents.

If their Indochinese allies were crippled by deprivation, US forces were, if anything, burdened by excess. This essay has already detailed the luxurious base camp facilities available to many US troops – although not all, and not the Marines in I Corps. Jeffrey Record quotes Shelby Stanton's

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377See above, n 369.
381Sihanouk and Burchett, My War with the C.I.A., p 248.
382Saving $75 million, which is about 0.05 per cent of the budgetary expenditure for the whole war, or less than 0.01 per cent of the eventual cost to the US.
383Shawcross, Sideshow, p 195.
384This essay has already touched on the fact that US behaviour was different in I Corps (above, n 307). I Corps was a geographical area designated by the RVNAF/MAAG for operational purposes which covered the northern part of South Vietnam. In both I Corps and in the Marine Corps until 1968, the US used quite different tactics from those employed in the rest of the country. When taken as a whole however, the differences can be very simply characterised: Due to the proximity to the DRV, the US was forced to fight a contested war in I Corps in order to maintain the stasis that allowed them to pursue a genocidal war system elsewhere in the country. In part this involved a great deal more conventional engagement with PAVN forces, but more importantly it meant that the USMC had to make real efforts to secure territory and population against twin tides of porous boundaries and the counterproductive behaviours of US forces elsewhere. This later requirement was greatly lessened by the events of 1968. There is not enough space to detail every way in which the USMC differed from other US forces, but suffice
condemnation of 'stacks of paper plates, hot meals, ice cream, and mountains of beer and soft drinks in the forward areas' and 'insistence on large luxurious base camps with snack shops and swimming pools' which 'greatly eroded the soldier's willingness to forgo such comforts in extended field operations.'\textsuperscript{385} Morale, however, was probably less significant than the other disadvantages which are neatly summarised in another quote given by Record, this time by former commander of the US Army in Vietnam, General Bruce Palmer Jr.: 'The manpower it soaked up was appalling, not to mention the waste of material resources and the handicap of having to defend and take care of these albatrosses.'\textsuperscript{386} This was only one of the ways in which personnel were 'misused' to such a level that 'less than 10 percent of the total of 2.8 million Americans who served in what was first and foremost an infantry war served in line infantry units.'\textsuperscript{387} The Marine Corps had a much higher percentage of combat troops and if they were excluded the figure would be drastically lower.

Along with tying up personnel in non-combat roles, the US, on multiple levels, acted in ways which prevented the development of even modest levels of esprit de corps. As Tucker writes:

Soldiers were fresh out of training camps for the most part and served one-year tours in Vietnam. ... It is a truism in war that soldiers fight not for some abstract cause or even for country, but rather for their comrades. And Army personnel policies negated this because often soldiers in the same unit hardly knew one another.

'Much of this was self-inflicted. ... The standard Vietnam officer tour was 12 months, and those in command slots could serve only six months before being transferred. ... In a rather amazing statement, Westmoreland justified the policy by saying that the Army had “to look after its long-term interests”.'\textsuperscript{388}

In fact there were things that made the problem even worse than Tucker describes. For example, company commanders were transferred after only 3 months,\textsuperscript{389} and US troops were usually deployed individually, attached to platoons of complete strangers all with varying lengths left on their tours so that the departure and arrival of personnel was a constant.\textsuperscript{390} According to Record, by these policies, 'Westmoreland gravelly compromised small unit cohesion in combat. The constant rotation of officers and men in and out of Vietnam bred units of what were essentially strangers, men unfamiliar with and often distrustful of their comrades in arms.'\textsuperscript{391} The fast rotation of officers is unedifyingly explained as being due to careerism and a 'ticket-punching culture'\textsuperscript{392} which, in its tautological nature, is the equivalent of explaining a situation where every US military officer plucked out their left eye by ascribing it to an 'eye-gouging culture'. The reason that it is so unsatisfactory an answer is that there is no conceivable mechanism by which junior officers could pressure military policymakers into instituting measures to advance their careers at the expense weakening the war effort. Even if there was, there isn't actually anything for the junior officers as a whole to gain, given that quotas for promotion would remain unchanged. Andrew Krepinevich's verdict, quoted by Record, was that 'the Army in Vietnam instituted a personnel policy about as detrimental as if it had set out with the worst intentions in mind.'\textsuperscript{393} Destroying the cohesiveness of military units was not the only result, the inexperience of the men, and more particularly their

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\textsuperscript{386}ibid.  
\textsuperscript{387}ibid.  
\textsuperscript{388}Tucker, \textit{Vietnam}, p 132.  
officers, was predictably deadly. Morton Halperin, who was Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense in the last 2 years of the Johnson administration, recalls that 'the data was very clear that you could drastically cut American casualties by having two-year combat tours because the critical factor in U.S. casualties was how long the commissioned officer had been in command of the unit. There was no interest in fixing any of that stuff.'

This apparent lack of interest in a major cause of US casualties was not, by any means, the only time that the US ignored its own best advice, analysis or intelligence. This essay has already detailed some such instances, but there are many more. It is worth considering that where such matters are of such weight as to make it into the history books, any 'ignorance' is of necessity a wilful act. For example, Ho Chi Minh was not the only leader whose qualities the US studiously ignored: the US Ambassador to Laos made it clear to the State department that the non-communist neutralist leader was the most pro-US leader 'sustainable' so naturally they labelled him a communist and ousted him. The ambassador's claim was not contentious, it was not even contested. The only other leaders around were hopelessly corrupt military officers. At the other end of the spectrum, it was widely held in Washington in 1954 that Ngo Dinh Diem was unlikely to succeed in creating a stable regime in South Vietnam because of the insurmountably limited extent of his popular support.

A steadfast refusal to acknowledge intelligence, analysis and common knowledge was a crucial factor behind the US air campaigns against the DRV. A US study, in 1964, also showed that bombing the DRV would only act to strengthen the Hanoi regime but the US went ahead and did it anyway. The McGeorge Bundy's analysis of the results vindicated the study, but the bombing continued, but Bundy and others had already decided that bombing North Vietnam was good for the morale of the GVN and the RVNAF. As twisted as it may seem to justify massive bombing campaigns on such slender benefits, this too was contradicted by the best US analysis, with both Ambassador Maxwell Taylor and DCI John McCone stating that bombing North Vietnam actually increased dissatisfaction and dissent in the South. Two studies in 1967 confirmed that bombing the DRV only strengthened it, but the bombing continued. By 1969 reports showed that 'Hanoi's war making capacity had hardly been affected, that its will had been strengthened by the bombing its links to the USSR and China had been improved, and civilian morale had hardened.' All of this was eminently predictable from previous experiences, particularly in Korea, but bombing continued periodically until the notorious Christmas Bombing at the end of 1972, which took 2196 lives. By this stage there were no 'legitimate targets' in North Vietnam (bearing in mind that the air war had long been blatantly targetting the civilian population and infrastructure of North Vietnam) but even by these standards North Vietnam was already so devastated that, in the words of historian Earl Tilford: "The so-called 'Christmas Bombing' mostly just rearranged the rubble."
As significant as these, and other examples, of seemingly ignoring analysis are, they are less striking than the widespread and systematic fabrication and distortion of intelligence, and the withholding of analysis. Accurate intelligence is a very important tool for military operations, and normal practice would have it that a false report of success would be, where it has a negative outcome, would be punished many many times more stringently than a true report of failure, or mixed progress. The MACV instituted, instead, a system where false reports of success were, at all levels, generously rewarded, if not required. According to Daniel Ellsberg: “An American division commander told one of his district advisors, who insisted on reporting the persistent presence of unoccupied VC hamlets in his area: ‘Son you're writing our own report card in this country. Why are you failing us?’”

At this time, in the early 60s, the falsified intelligence was crucial in generating support for the Vietnam War in Washington, but those who disbelieved the unrealistic optimism were at first inclined to blame Vietnamese officers and their desire for self-promotion. In 1964, however, NSC staffer Mike Forrestal came to a different conclusion: ‘As you are aware, the great difficulties we had to live through last August and September resulted largely from a nearly complete breakdown of the Government's ability to get accurate assessments of the situation in the Vietnamese countryside. The more we learn about the situation today, the more obvious it becomes that the excessively mechanical system of statistical reporting which had been devised in Washington and applied in Saigon was giving us a grotesquely inaccurate picture.’

This emphasis on the mechanical is somewhat misleading because the mechanical part was only the framework. The fact is that US personnel made deliberately deceptive reports and were rewarded by superiors who knew that the reports were lies. As Noam Chomsky points out, it is clear that 'fraudulent reports' were responsible for policy makers optimism, adding later that, 'false reports from the military command continued to mislead the civilian leadership until Tet.' In fact the civilian leaders continued to be grossly misled with intelligence being both fabricated and withheld in order to get support for actions such as the invasion of Cambodia. The only thing that changed was that people stopped believing claims of imminent victory in South Vietnam, and as the bureaucrats became more canny, they were stripped of decision making power. Henry Kissinger actually openly advocated excluding 'from the decision making process all those who are theoretically charged with carrying it out,' and asked himself 'how do you get them to push papers around, spin their wheels...?'

Returning to the earlier stages of the war, one of the most visible, noteworthy and dramatic ways in which policy makers were deceived were the so-called 'magical mystery tours' which they underwent. These began with McNamara's first trip to Saigon in 1962. Although MAAG figures (which were lies) continued to support an optimistic outlook, McNamara was also hearing somewhat less encouraging things from the CIA and other intelligence specialists. Before he even arrived the officer in charge of producing an analysis of progress in time for tour began taking ever greater liberties with the truth, first exaggerating enemy casualties, then cutting estimates of regular PLAF forces from over 40,000 to 16,305. Finally, at MAAG head General Paul Harkins insistence, he falsified the estimates of territory held by the GVN and by the NLF. After being thus deceived, McNamara was given a two-day tour with an itinerary chosen entirely Harkins. He did not attempt to deviate from the itinerary or delve into anything which might show the falsehood of what was being showed to him. He was thus able to end his two days by truthfully telling the Saigon press corps, 'I've seen nothing but progress and hopeful indicators of future progress.'

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406Ellsberg, 'Cycles of Pessimism and Optimism' in Kimball (ed), To Reason Why, p 166.
407Ford, CIA and Vietnam Policymakers.
408Chomsky, Rethinking Camelot, p 71.
410Shawcross, Sideshow, pp 19, 137.
411Ibid, p 84.
At numerous points after that, whenever the clouds of doubt began to gather in Washington, people would be sent to find 'facts' with such tours, 'facts' which could soon be predictably relied on to dispel those doubts. In a particularly celebrated instance, Marine Corps Lieutenant General Victor 'Brute' Krulak was sent accompanied, despite McNamara's attempts to prevent his departure, by the State Department's Joseph Medenhall. The two reported back with diametrically opposed impressions. Of note was there characterisation of Diem, whom Krulak described as 'much loved', but Medenhall described as 'almost universally detested.' President Kennedy felt the need to ask them: 'You two did visit the same country, didn't you?' Sheehan ascribes Harkins deceptions to exactly the same sort of 'self-delusion' that he claims was behind Westmoreland's decisions. Logic, however, suggests that if Harkin's genuinely believed all that he said, he would have hardly felt the need to put so much effort into a systematic and elaborate falsification.

4. Against the Stated Objective.

In the introduction of the collection *Why the North Won the Vietnam War*, Marc Jason Gilbert describes the 1968 contents of a speech given before top policy makers in 1968 by 'America's foremost systems analyst' Albert Wohlstetter: 'Wohlstetter noted in frustration that so long as a gap remained between policy and the means employed to achieve it, no victory in Vietnam was possible.'\(^{416}\) Wohlstetter was noting that, among other tactics both the bombing of North Vietnam and the use of ordnance in South Vietnam worked against the 'stated objective' of an independent stable South Vietnam. He was only one of many, many exasperated voices that began when Diem was installed and have not yet ceased. Central to these complaints was the emphasis of the fire-power/attrition strategy over the counter-insurgency/pacification strategy. It seemed that almost everyone that claimed any expertise saw the only hope of victory as lying in a counter-insurgency/pacification strategy and yet it was the fire-power/attrition strategy that prevailed.\(^{417}\) Summers is quite right to suggest that these were not strategies but 'grand tactics', but for the sake of convenience they are referred to as strategies (note, however, that 'pacification' would have been a strategy if it had not been misapplied in the manner described below).\(^{418}\) One of the results of this is that, contrary to logic, the US can be spoken of as having pursued more than one different strategy. Naturally, in such a case, the reality is that what are labeled 'strategies' are in fact merely components of whatever strategy is really being followed, hence they are actually 'grand tactics'. The central thesis of this essay is that US behaviour, including the application of these 'strategies' actually followed a real strategy, global in extent, which for the Second Indochina War consisted of creating a genocidal war system.

This characterisation of a dichotomous choice between fire-power/attrition and counter-insurgency/pacification is problematic, not least because proponents of attrition may claim that it is a counter-insurgency strategy, and indeed tactics such as search-and-destroy can rightly be called counter-insurgency tactics and were certainly understood as such at the time; but also because the MACV at all times claimed to be pursuing a pacification strategy as well as a fire-power/attrition strategy. I propose to avoid such confusion by treating these two strategies as just some of a group which were all mooted and acted upon in some sense or to some degree, and which were in no sense mutually exclusive. Thus the divisions would be between 'fire-power/attrition', 'pacification', 'graduated response', and 'enclave strategies' (the latter including 'coastal pacification' ideas).

Numerous people, including Jeffrey Record\(^{419}\) and Harry Summers,\(^{420}\) have in effect suggested that the US lacked any winning strategy. In fact, what they had were three no-win strategies – strategies which did not, even in theory, have an end point at which a military victory would be obtained. These were the fire-power/attrition, the graduated response and the enclave strategies. The only strategy by which the US could have attained its stated objective was the pacification strategy, but this too was no threat because the pacification strategy was only weakly implemented while being misapplied, subverted, sabotaged and contravened – not least by the more vigorous application of the fire-power/attrition and graduated response strategies.


\(^{417}\)The amount of opposition to the fire-power/attrition strategy among political and military luminaries is astonishing, and will be further explored below.

\(^{418}\)See above, n 146.


The strategy known as 'graduated response' was not important as a military strategy so much as it was as a public relations strategy. Graduated response was an Orwellian construction – the rationale given was that by bombing North Vietnam the US would force them to negotiate. This was based on three completely specious assertions – the first being that the insurgency in the South was a result of 'communist aggression' which, because of the nature of 'communist aggression', was controlled by Hanoi; the second is that the US would itself have negotiated in good faith; the third, and most breathtakingly baldfaced, is that the US began small and got bigger, initially only bombing the DRV to show the DRV that they would bomb the DRV. The military objected strenuously to graduated response, under the misapprehension or pretense that the foregoing was all true. Summers gives a lengthy quote from Brigadier General Dave Palmer:

Civilian planners wanted to start out softly and gradually increase the pressure by precise increments which could be unmistakenly recognized in Hanoi. Ho Chi Minh would see the tightening pattern, the theory went, and would sensibly stop the war against South Vietnam in time to avoid devastation of his homeland. Assistant Secretary of Defense John T. McNaughton dubbed the strategy “slow squeeze”.... “The scenario.” he wrote, “would be designed to give the United States the option at any point to proceed or not, to escalate or not, and to quicken the pace or not.”

The Joint Chiefs of Staff did not like McNaughton’s tune. The generals argued that if force were to be used at all it should be applied hard and fast to obtain maximum impact with minimum loss. To start lightly and escalate slowly, they held, would be like pulling a tooth bit by bit rather than all at once and getting it over with.

President Johnson overrode the objections of his intelligence and military advisors. Indeed, it is not at all clear whether Secretary McNamara even even bothered to convey their arguments to him. Ambassador Taylor, still addressed as “General,” had given his blessings to their theory, approval which apparently cancelled the objections of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Thus was born the strategy of “graduated response.”

Palmer's telling has a compelling, if facile, verisimilitude which corresponds very well with preconceived notions of callous but pragmatic militarists and of concerned but naïve civilians who underestimate Hanoi's legendary willingness to sacrifice its own people. No doubt, also, many supposedly powerful figures debated earnestly in these terms. But they were debating the merits of one fiction over the merits of another. The air war in Indochina bore no resemblance in practice, to that which was espoused in theory. For a start, it could only be applied to the bombing of North Vietnam which was the recipient of less than one sixth of the bombs dropped by the US during the war. Secondly, what actually occurred bore no resemblance to the 'slow squeeze' described. Admittedly the 'tempo' did increase between the initiation of the bombing campaign 'Rolling Thunder' in April 1965 and the end of that year, but this was due to the US committing more and more resources to the air war: bombing in Laos and South Vietnam increased at a far greater rate

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421See above, n 97.
423Many authors are happy to suggest that the US was mistaken because it thought that Hanoi would not be so complacent about the deaths of its own people. By this means the whole public relations paradigm of graduated response reverses victim and perpetrator in the same manner as a large bully using a smaller child's hands to hit his face while saying, 'stop hitting yourself.' Jeffrey Record writes that the air campaign against the DRV failed because: 'As a fiercely nationalistic totalitarian state prepared to sacrifice entire generations of its sons to achieve Vietnam's reunification, North Vietnam was a very poor candidate for coercion through bombing,' (Record, 'How America's Military Performance...', in Gilbert (ed.), *Why the North Won the Vietnam War*, p 128). Cawthorne, referring to US use of fire-power more broadly reads into a Defense Department report that Hanoi calculatedly maintains a level of casualties just below its birth rate (Cawthorne, *Vietnam: A War Lost and Won*, p 114). This sort of 'analysis' relies on unexamined racial notions and also the unexamined presumption that the DRV leaders were presented with any choices in regard to either war on the ground or the air campaigns.
than in North Vietnam. Nor could the bombing campaign against North Vietnam be considered 'limited' by any standards other than those of the bombing of Laos and South Vietnam. The campaign ran for 3 years and dropped an average of one 500 pound bomb every 30 seconds. By the end 860,000 tons had been dropped, three times as much as was dropped on Europe, Asia and Africa in World War II. Whatever industrial capabilities that were not destroyed outright had to be decentralised at very high costs to efficiency. Agriculture was also affected and it is estimated that the campaign destroyed 10 to 15 years of economic growth. Three major cities and twelve of twenty-nine provincial capitals had been flattened. According to Robert McNamara's estimate, at one point in 1967 1000 civilians were being killed each week.

Nor can it truly be claimed that the US sought a negotiated settlement. Lyndon Johnson twice expressed a wish to negotiate, once offering 'unconditional talks', but these offers were not addressed to the DRV regime, but rather to US domestic audiences in speeches. Not surprisingly, Hanoi took these offers with a grain of salt, when they heard of them, and released a list of its aims, presumably hoping that the US would respond by saying that none of the DRV's desires were negotiable. Instead the US government held up the list of points as proof that Hanoi did not want to negotiate, and when Hanoi tried to clarify that it was in fact willing to negotiate, it was ignored by the US government and media. In fact Hanoi had made several moves to try an institute negotiations which the State Department and even the hawkish Ray Cline (at the time, acting DCI) agreed were probably real.

Because the US was not actually willing to negotiate, 'graduated response' is not really a strategy, and provides no actual rationale for US behaviour, however, it is included here as a 'no-win' strategy because it had no end point. By claiming to seek negotiations which the US would not itself allow, the US could continue bombing without any military strategic rationale, without having to give a reason. To maintain the illusion the Johnson administration would periodically cease bombing before any planned escalation. Gibson writes that the, 'sense in which the [bombing] pause was for political appearances only can be discerned in most memoranda.' He then gives the example of an excerpt from a John McNaughton memorandum which sets out the four US points required to prevent resumption of bombing:

a. The DRV stops infiltration and direction of the war.

b. The DRV moves convincingly toward withdrawal of infiltrators.

c. The VC stops attacks, terror and sabotage.

d. The VC stops significant interference with the GVN's exercise government functions over substantially all of South Vietnam.

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429 The four points were: recognition of the fundamental rights of the Vietnamese people to peace, independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity, accompanied by unilateral American withdrawal and the unconditional cessation of military operations in South and North Vietnam; American respect for the Geneva Agreement of 1954 settlement of South Vietnamese problems by the South Vietnamese people in accordance with the program of southern revolutionaries without outside interference; and no foreign interference in the peace process leading to the reunification of Vietnam,' (Pierre Asselin, 'Hanoi and Americanization of the War in Vietnam: New Evidence from Vietnam,' *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 74, No. 3, p 433, n 21.
The next no-win strategy is the 'enclave strategy'. Carter Malkasian gives the following explanation of the enclave strategy and its application:

Under this strategy, U.S. ground forces would protect the populated areas of South Vietnam, striking from these "enclaves" when necessary for self defense. Meanwhile, Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) units would be free to fight in the field. The first major contingent of U.S. ground troops, Marines, landed at Danang on 9 March 1965. Their initial role was simple base security, protecting Danang and its airbase from Viet Cong attacks. A National Security Council directive, NSM 328, issued in April, permitted U.S. ground forces to react to enemy activity and conduct counter-insurgency operations in the vicinity of the enclaves.  

What is not grasped by most commentators is that the enclave strategy remained in place in South Vietnam throughout the war. Advocates of the enclave strategy, such as Lieutenant General James Gavin, complained about what they considered to be the misguided policy of attempting to secure the entirety of South Vietnam, but, although this was the US government's stated policy, and the theoretical purpose of pacification, the MACV never pursued actions designed to secure territory. Westmoreland himself rejected the idea of gaining possession of territory, asking 'what point in continuing to hold the high ground...? Instead of changing the enclave strategy, the MACV merely added the fire-power/attrition strategy which entailed the building of a network of firebases which could shell most of the countryside, and the conducting of mobile offensive operations which had the express purpose of generating high body-counts. In and of itself an enclave strategy does not even purport to offer a route to victory. In fact it is highly suited for creating and maintaining a war system as this essay will detail in its conclusion.

The fire-power/attrition strategy was also a no-win strategy because its theoretical logic was similar to that of the 'graduated response' strategy – that the enemy had to be forced to bend to US will – but in practice it did not even provide a mechanism for that. Carter Malkasian quotes Robert McNamara's explanation of the strategy: 'The SV, US, and third-country forces, by aggressive exploitation of superior military forces, are to gain and hold the initiative – keeping the enemy at a disadvantage, maintaining a tempo such as to deny them time to recuperate or regain their balance, and pressing the fight against the VC/DRV main force units in South Vietnam to run them to the ground and destroy them. The operations should compel the VC/DRV to fight at a higher and more sustained intensity with resulting higher logistical consumption and . . . to limit his capacity to resupply forces in combat at that scale by attacking his lines of communications.' Malkasian continues the explanation with his own phrase, 'the North Vietnamese would supposedly be compelled to come to terms favorable to South Vietnam and the United States.' This sounds quite reasonable, but as we have seen from John McNaughton's memorandum, the US was not intending to offer practicable terms, and as we have also seen, the MACV did not aim to increase 'logistical consumption' but only to kill more people.

The problems with the fire-power/attrition strategy went beyond the mere fact that that the US seemed quite uninterested in actually gaining a victory in the manner described, it must also be recognised that in practical terms, the strategy never had any hope of succeeding anyway. As Jeffrey Record puts it it was based on 'palpably false premises.' He quotes a MACV General who bluntly explains what the underlying logic of an attrition strategy based on the application of fire-power: 'The solution in Vietnam is more bombs, more shells, more napalm till the other side cracks

433Summers, On Vietnam, p 100.  
434Westmoreland, A Soldier Reports, p 150.  
435At this point it is probably worth bearing in mind that these are not really strategies, as mentioned above.  
436Malkasian, 'Towards a Better Understanding of Attrition', p 934.  
and gives up. Westmoreland had a simple formula which was fire-power + mobility = attrition. The implication being that if sufficiently mobile you would be able to catch the enemy and apply fire-power to them. Even with all of the firebases and air support, this still necessitated that ground troops find them, but as we have already seen this was largely a matter of the ground forces being bait, waiting for the enemy to initiate contact. In fact US estimates put the frequency with which communist forces initiated contact at between 75 and 90 per cent of firefights. In other words, the tempo, which the US was supposed to be controlling, was almost entirely in the hands of the PLAF and PAVN forces. Westmoreland was insistent, in 1965, that the real enemy threat was from main force units. He wanted to build a massive US capability to fight this impending threat which would then conveniently arise just in time to be crushed. In other words, he claimed to believe that the enemy were going to do exactly what he wanted them to do. Instead, however, half of the regular communist forces in 1966 were guerilla's, and while General Thanh did not entirely abandon main force activities, he adapted them to the US arrival by developing hit-and-run tactics known as 'a tiger leaps at its prey.'

Naturally, the profligate use of fire-power would predictably cause a great deal of civilian death and suffering, and a great deal of 'collateral' destruction of non-military targets. At the same time, if they chose not to engage, PLAF and PAVN forces were generally in a better position to avoid destruction than were civilians. Intelligence would often forewarn them of large operations, otherwise they would at least be notified by the USA habit of creating helicopter landing zones by shelling an area. What followed in search-and-destroy operations has already been described in this essay as 'shoot anybody that moves' In addition, however, massive, indiscriminate, fire-power was applied, not excepting the use of B-52 bombers (initially flying from Guam and the Phillipines) as air support for ground troops.

The predictable communist ability to limit their losses to a level far far below their ability to replace personnel made the fire-power/attrition strategy a no-win strategy, but the killing of civilians entailed and facilitated by the fire-power/attrition strategy also acted to ensure that pacification could also never succeed as a strategy. There is no need to reiterate the obvious point that the killing of civilians fueled the insurgency, but this was not the only way in which the US obviated possible gains in pacification. Before Americanisation, this occurred because pacification programmes where misapplied or distorted to the point of clear counterproductiveness. The most obvious example of this is the Agroville programme which became the Strategic Hamlet programme. Putatively based on a programme, recommended by Sir Robert Thompson, which had provided security to a very small percentage of Malay farmers by relocating them, the programme when enacted in South Vietnam was, in fact, a fortified camp programme, intended for the entire rural population, which destroyed livelihoods and brought about great immiseration. By 1965 pacification was virtually abandoned 'in favor of a strategy that relied on fire-power alone.' This was to remain so until 1968, when the MACV took over pacification in conjunction with civilian authorities the by Robert 'Blowtorch Bob' Komer, a man who was actually chosen by

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440Gilbert, 'The Cost of Losing the Other War', p 166.
441Turley, The Second Indochina War, p 76.
443See above, n 313.
444Gibson, A Perfect War, p 330.
445Ibid, p 84.
446Young, The Vietnam Wars, p 85.
447Gilbert, 'The Cost of Losing the Other War', p 170.
Lyndon Johnson because of more than despite the fact that he wasn't an expert on Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{448} Pacification was now pursued with great energy, but in almost universally self-defeating fashions. In this instance the most obvious instance is the Phoenix Programme. Taking as its initial inspiration the NLF programme of assassinations of GVN officials, the pilot programme targeted the so-called Viet Cong Infrastructure. As this essay has already detailed, 'Infrastructure' meant non-combatant people, including those who were mere sympathisers.\textsuperscript{449} Those targetted were usually tortured and/or killed,\textsuperscript{450} so the programme was a war crime in any respect, but when it was expanded throughout South Vietnam, it was run in such a way that the vast majority of victims were not in any manner involved with the NLF. Instead of using specific intelligence to target people with at least some known connection to the NLF, lists of names were coerced from detainees physically. Cash incentives were also offered for informers, while President Thieu used the programme to kill political rivals.\textsuperscript{451} 'Neutralizations' resulting from the programme were about 20,000 each year. In 1969, out of a US figure of 19,534 'neutralizations' less than 150 were believed to be senior NLF cadres and only 1 (one) had been specifically targetted.\textsuperscript{452}


\textsuperscript{449}See above n 302.

\textsuperscript{450}Tucker gives figures which suggest that just less than one third: 'Between 1968 and 1972 it accounted for the deaths of 26,369 people; another 33,358 were captured and 22,013 surrendered,' (Tucker, \textit{Vietnam}, p 151). These overly precise figures, however, should in themselves arouse suspicion, and accounts of the functioning of the programme make it seem unlikely that any accurate count of those killed was kept, although sometimes, in the words of an officer helped oversee the programme, 'they'd come back to camp with ears to prove they'd killed people,' (Appy, \textit{Vietnam}, p 361).

\textsuperscript{451}Neale, \textit{A People's History of the Vietnam War}, p 116.

\textsuperscript{452}Prados, 'Impatience, Illusion and Asymmetry' in Gilbert (ed), \textit{Why the North Won the Vietnam War}, p 142.
CONCLUSION: ’JUST KEEP IT ALIVE.’

The US did a great deal at all stages of the Second Indochina War to ensure that the war would continue. Their determination is clearly demonstrated by their actions against GVN leaders who seemed to be wavering in their willingness to continue the war indefinitely. For the US, at least for those with real control of US policy, the real goal was not to ’win' a conflict in any conventional sense, and the logic of the behaviour is best understood be examining events in Cambodia. When the US generated a war in Cambodia they had already had a great deal of experience in Vietnam and Laos, and what occurred in Cambodia is, in many ways, a naked exposure of the logic behind the genocidal war system, less obfuscated because, ironically, Cambodia was a 'sideshow' where it was not the details but the whole war which was kept obscure from the public.

Within a year of Lon Nol's coup, as mentioned, the economy of Cambodia was virtually destroyed, not only by bombing, but also by US aid. Aid was channelled to the import of commodities and surplus US agricultural goods. It also underwrote the Cambodian government and armed forces: ’By the end of 1970, the government was spending five times its revenue and earning nothing abroad.’ Most of the population became reliant on US aid to eat, and rice supplies were kept at the minimum level needed to prevent food riots. By 1975, malnutrition was widespread and many children starved to death.

Less than two months after the coup that brought Lon Nol to power, the US invaded Cambodia, along with ARVN forces. They did not bother to forewarn Lon Nol who found out after Richard Nixon had announced the invasion publically. This invasion along US and RVN bombing and the civil war made refugees of around half of the Cambodian population. Lon Nol was outraged by the invasion and when later briefed by Alexander Haig (then military assistant to Kissinger) about US intentions he wept with frustration. According to Shawcross, ’He wished that the Americans had blocked the communists' escape route before attacking, instead of spreading them across Cambodia. ... The Cambodian leader told Haig that there was no way his small force could stop them. ... [Haig] informed Lon Nol that President Nixon intended to limit the involvement of American forces.... They would be withdrawn at the end of June. The the President hoped to introduce a program of restricted military and economic aid. As the implications of Haig's words for the future of Cambodia became clear to Lon Nol, he began to weep. Cambodia, he said, could never defend itself.'

As has been detailed, US actions, particularly in bombing, were directly responsible for creating the communist enemy which overthrew Lon Nol. The bombing between 1969 and 1973 took up to 150,000 lives. If averaged out, over 33 tons of ordnance were used to kill each Khmer Rouge insurgent. Despite the fact that Vietnamese pilots bombed any Cambodian they could, which
aided only the Khmer Rouge, Lon Nol acceded to a US demand that he request an increase in VNAF bombing in 1971.462

By May 1972, the Lon Nol regime had control of perhaps 10 per cent of the country and continued to lose territory which was thereafter fragmented into ever smaller enclaves.463 The result was by that stage foregone, and yet the war dragged on for three years with the greater part of the 1 million casualties occurring after that point.

In 1970, when Henry Kissinger briefed Jonathan 'Fred' Ladd, who was slated to conduct the war in Cambodia, he told him, 'Don't even think of victory; just keep it alive.'464

When the US Congress finally blocked aid to Cambodia and South Vietnam, it was with the belated realisation that such aid would not give any hope of victory or improve a bargaining position. Senator Mike Mansfield spoke out, 'Ultimately Cambodia cannot survive.... Additional aid means more killing, more fighting. This has got to stop sometime.'465

David Keen's concept of a war system is in many respects perfect as a lens through which to view the Second Indochina War. There are, however, two important caveats. Firstly there is the fact that his explanation of the institutional forces behind creating a war system out of the 'War on Terror' is, like Neale's version of US motivation in the Second Indochina War,466 rooted in the profit motive and the opportunity to extend domestic political power and enact repression of dissidents.467 The second is that his exposition of the War on Terror as a war system, is almost exclusively put in terms of mentality, wherein Keen synthesises psychoanalytical and Foucauldian analyses. The result reads as something like a self-propelling institution which spreads irrationality like a virulent infection. But reality is not some amorphous postmodern mass which can be arbitrarily framed, and the degree of irrationality which Keen describes cannot be self-sustaining. He describes the spread of 'magic thinking' and 'witch hunt' mentalities as being self-replicating and as being earnestly held by leaders such as George Bush and Tony Blair.468 Be that as it may, this does not explain how extant institutions would become thus affected, nor why it would be necessary to manufacture evidence to shore up such beliefs.469

I think there is an irrationality at work behind the exercise of power by the US in both the Second Indochina War and in the War on Terror. But it is a far more basic irrationality, less dramatic and, of necessity, not easily susceptible to factual disproof. It is an irrationality which must, by its nature, be able to face up the the real intelligence and the real analysis, if only to knowingly distort them. A simple premise, though behind it may be manifold fears, rages and weaknesses. An irrationality endlessly renewed by the conflict that it spawns of itself – the belief that only by violent domination can one be safe; the belief that if you don't grind others underfoot they will rise up to grind you down. This is not mere speculation but is in fact revealed by George Kennan's own words to be the underlying logic of US Cold War policy.470 This is the reason the US militarisation has, since World War II, far exceeded anything conceivably needed for defence, not because of the power of the military-industrial complex which was, as this essay has shown, created by Cold War

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462Shawcross, Sideshow, p 186.
463Ibid, pp 254-5.
465Cawthorne, Vietnam: A War Lost and Won, p 213; Westmoreland, 'A Look Back'.
466See above, p 32.
467Keen, Endless War?, pp 67-80.
469See above n 128.
470See above p 28.
Thus, while Keen's psychoanalytic insights are valuable, it is problematic to view them as causative. At base a war system must be able to process nearly every given datum rationally even if it lacks overall rationality. Ironically it must be able to do this in part to maintain the useful irrationality of those who enact policy at ground level, and here this essay is once again brought to the subject of 'necessary illusions'. To maintain an illusion of contestation wherein the 'enemy' actually constitutes a threat, real contestation must be avoided. In addition there must be a sufficient command of reality to allow some sort of balance to be maintained which sustains the war system. For obvious reasons this means that the power maintaining a war system cannot have blind hatred for the 'enemy'.

The Second Indochina War was anything but profitable for the US, though some in the US did very well out of it indeed. For the amount that the US spent, the US could probably have simply bought the loyalty of most Indochinese. In bombing the DRV it is estimated that for every $1 of damage caused, the US spent $96. Most US business interests, most political contributors, most 'elites' lost in material terms. It was they who were the believers in the 'maximal aim' that is highlighted by Noam Chomsky in NSAM 288 'we seek an independent non-Communist South Vietnam' by which is meant a subservient South Vietnam. The ultimate aim is, in the words of the Committee for Concerned Asian Scholars, the *Pax Americana Economicus* wherein, even at some cost in the short run, US business concerns can operate in a global environment of near unfettered access to resources and markets. The problem with this idea is that, as we have seen, the US did not pursue its 'maximal aim' at all. In fact it chose to act in such a way as to make it could never achieve that aim. The option it did pursue, the widespread bombing of South Vietnam was not reconcilable with its 'maximal aim, and the decision to pursue that course is one which, as Chomsky points out, there is no record of in the Pentagon Papers which he therefore concludes must have been taken with no deliberation. 'Just a casual decision: it doesn't cost us anything, why not just kill a lot of people.' There are, however, many decisions that must have gone into bringing this about, as this essay has already detailed, massive resources were poured into increasing air war capabilities which were not needed nor intended for bombing the DRV, but which could only be allocated with planning and effort and a great deal of spending. It should also not be surprising if nobody chooses to commemorate to history their part in such eminently prosecutable decisions, and somehow it seems to be often forgotten or overlooked that the Pentagon Papers were not some form of exposé, but a history commissioned by Robert McNamara himself.

In the final analysis, the pursuit of profit as an overarching aim cannot be reconciled with the use of immense resources to create weapons and poisons purely to destroy other resources. It can only make sense in a zero-sum formulation of relative gains in power terms. Hence I reiterate that US actions are best understood as imperialism operating in a milieu of power.

If the Second Indochina War is understood as a war system, and if its ultimate aims are to be

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471See above p 29.
472See above p 19 and n 69.
477See above, p 80.
understood in terms of zero-sum power imperialism, then given its costs the point of the war system should logically be to inflict greater losses on the other than one incurs for oneself. It is clear from US actions, as described throughout this essay, that the way in which this was enacted was by means of an almost completely generalised attack on the peoples of Indochina through their physical selves, their emotional well-being, their cultural and societal infrastructure, and their material means. This is an almost perfect match with the concept of genocide.478

Genocide should not be taken as a term distinguished by a moral significance, or a particular horror even if some of the most horrific event in human history were acts of genocide. It significance lies in the fact of its utility, especially as a tactic of the strong against the weak. An attack will often prompt a desire for retaliation and, given the resourcefulness of the human individual, even a weaker opponent should cause wariness. Genocide is an attack which degrades the ability to retaliate even to the point of debility, extermination or complete assimilation. Under a genocidal war system, retaliation or even armed resistance actually feeds the system itself and facilitates the genocide. The attraction for an expansionist power is obvious, and hence the need to collectively resist this behaviour, not because it is uglier than any other form of attack, but because it is more dangerous and more likely to become self-replicating. A genocidal war system may (in a global strategic environment) differ from the colonising assimilations, the cleansings and the killings which growing empires commit, but it too is dangerously functional and, perhaps, part of a different colonising process. I cannot help but believe that our intellectual and emotional failure to grasp the Second Indochina War as an act of genocide has led directly to the creation of a genocidal war system in Iraq, and that any further such failure can only invite further repetition.

478See above, p 39.
APPENDIX: NSC-68.

NSC 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security

(April 14, 1950)

A Report to the President
Pursuant to the President's Directive
of January 31, 1950

TOP SECRET

[Washington,] April 7, 1950

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TERMS OF REFERENCE

The following report is submitted in response to the President's directive of January 31 which reads:

That the President direct the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense to undertake a reexamination of our objectives in peace and war and of the effect of these objectives on our strategic plans, in the light of the probable fission bomb capability and possible thermonuclear bomb capability of the Soviet Union.
The document which recommended that such a directive be issued reads in part:

It must be considered whether a decision to proceed with a program directed toward determining feasibility prejudges the more fundamental decisions (a) as to whether, in the event that a thermonuclear weapon proves successful, such weapons should be stockpiled, or (b) if stockpiled, the conditions under which they might be used in war. If a test of a thermonuclear weapon proves successful, the pressures to produce and stockpile such weapons to be held for the same purposes for which fission bombs are then being held will be greatly increased. The question of use policy can be adequately assessed only as part of a general reexamination of this country's strategic plans and its objectives in peace and war. Such reexamination would need to consider national policy not only with respect to possible thermonuclear weapons, but also with respect to fission weapons--viewed in the light of the probable fission bomb capability and the possible thermonuclear bomb capability of the Soviet Union. The moral, psychological, and political questions involved in this problem would need to be taken into account and be given due weight. The outcome of this reexamination would have a crucial bearing on the further question as to whether there should be a revision in the nature of the agreements, including the international control of atomic energy, which we have been seeking to reach with the U.S.S.R.

ANALYSIS

I. Background of the Present Crisis

Within the past thirty-five years the world has experienced two global wars of tremendous violence. It has witnessed two revolutions--the Russian and the Chinese--of extreme scope and intensity. It has also seen the collapse of five empires--the Ottoman, the Austro-Hungarian, German, Italian, and Japanese--and the drastic decline of two major imperial systems, the British and the French. During the span of one generation, the international distribution of power has been fundamentally altered. For several centuries it had proved impossible for any one nation to gain such preponderant strength that a coalition of other nations could not in time face it with greater strength. The international scene was marked by recurring periods of violence and war, but a system of sovereign and independent states was maintained, over which no state was able to achieve hegemony.

Two complex sets of factors have now basically altered this historic distribution of power. First, the defeat of Germany and Japan and the decline of the British and French Empires have interacted with the development of the United States and the Soviet Union in such a way that power increasingly gravitated to these two centers. Second, the Soviet Union, unlike previous aspirants to hegemony, is animated by a new fanatic faith, anti-thetical to our own, and seeks to impose its absolute authority over the rest of the world. Conflict has, therefore, become endemic and is waged, on the part of the Soviet Union, by violent or non-violent methods in accordance with the dictates of expediency. With the development of increasingly terrifying weapons of mass destruction, every individual faces the ever-present possibility of annihilation should the conflict enter the phase of total war.

On the one hand, the people of the world yearn for relief from the anxiety arising from the risk of atomic war. On the other hand, any substantial further extension of the area under the domination of the Kremlin would raise the possibility that no coalition adequate to confront the Kremlin with greater strength could be assembled. It is in this context that this Republic and its citizens in the ascendancy of their strength stand in their deepest peril.

The issues that face us are momentous, involving the fulfillment or destruction not only of this Republic but of civilization itself. They are issues which will not await our deliberations. With conscience and resolution this Government and the people it represents must now take new and fateful decisions.

II. Fundamental Purpose of the United States

The fundamental purpose of the United States is laid down in the Preamble to the Constitution: "...to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity." In essence, the fundamental purpose is to assure the integrity and vitality of our free society, which is founded upon the dignity and worth of the individual.

Three realities emerge as a consequence of this purpose: Our determination to maintain the essential elements of individual freedom, as set forth in the Constitution and Bill of Rights; our determination to create conditions under which our free and democratic system can live and prosper; and our determination to fight if necessary to defend our way of life, for which as in the Declaration of Independence, "with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor."

III. Fundamental Design of the Kremlin

The fundamental design of those who control the Soviet Union and the international communist movement is to retain and solidify their absolute power, first in the Soviet Union and second in the areas now under their control. In the minds
of the Soviet leaders, however, achievement of this design requires the dynamic extension of their authority and the ultimate elimination of any effective opposition to their authority.

The design, therefore, calls for the complete subversion or forcible destruction of the machinery of government and structure of society in the countries of the non-Soviet world and their replacement by an apparatus and structure subservient to and controlled from the Kremlin. To that end Soviet efforts are now directed toward the domination of the Eurasian land mass. The United States, as the principal center of power in the non-Soviet world and the bulwark of opposition to Soviet expansion, is the principal enemy whose integrity and vitality must be subverted or destroyed by one means or another if the Kremlin is to achieve its fundamental design.

IV. The Underlying Conflict in the Realm of ideas and Values between the U.S. Purpose and the Kremlin Design

A. NATURE OF CONFLICT

The Kremlin regards the United States as the only major threat to the conflict between idea of slavery under the grim oligarchy of the Kremlin, which has come to a crisis with the polarization of power described in Section I, and the exclusive possession of atomic weapons by the two protagonists. The idea of freedom, moreover, is peculiarly and intolerably subversive of the idea of slavery. But the converse is not true. The implacable purpose of the slave state to eliminate the challenge of freedom has placed the two great powers at opposite poles. It is this fact which gives the present polarization of power the quality of crisis.

The free society values the individual as an end in himself, requiring of him only that measure of self-discipline and self-restraint which make the rights of each individual compatible with the rights of every other individual. The freedom of the individual has as its counterpart, therefore, the negative responsibility of the individual not to exercise his freedom in ways inconsistent with the freedom of other individuals and the positive responsibility to make constructive use of his freedom in the building of a just society.

From this idea of freedom with responsibility derives the marvelous diversity, the deep tolerance, the lawfulness of the free society. This is the explanation of the strength of free men. It constitutes the integrity and the vitality of a free and democratic system. The free society attempts to create and maintain an environment in which every individual has the opportunity to realize his creative powers. It also explains why the free society tolerates those within it who would use their freedom to destroy it. By the same token, in relations between nations, the prime reliance of the free society is on the strength and appeal of its idea, and it feels no compulsion sooner or later to bring all societies into conformity with it.

For the free society does not fear, it welcomes, diversity. It derives its strength from its hospitality even to antipathetic ideas. It is a market for free trade in ideas, secure in its faith that free men will take the best wares, and grow to a fuller and better realization of their powers in exercising their choice.

The idea of freedom is the most contagious idea in history, more contagious than the idea of submission to authority. For the breadth of freedom cannot be tolerated in a society which has come under the domination of an individual or group of individuals with a will to absolute power. Where the despot holds absolute power--the absolute power of the absolutely powerful will--all other wills must be subjugated in an act of willing submission, a degradation willed by the individual upon himself under the compulsion of a perverted faith. It is the first article of this faith that he finds and can only find the meaning of his existence in serving the ends of the system. The system becomes God, and submission to the will of God becomes submission to the will of the system. It is not enough to yield outwardly to the system--even Gandhian non-violence is not acceptable--for the spirit of resistance and the devotion to a higher authority might then remain, and the individual would not be wholly submissive.

The same compulsion which demands total power over all men within the Soviet state without a single exception, demands total power over all Communist Parties and all states under Soviet domination. Thus Stalin has said that the theory and tactics of Leninism as expounded by the Bolshevik party are mandatory for the proletarian parties of all countries. A true internationalist is defined as one who unhesitatingly upholds the position of the Soviet Union and in the satellite states true patriotism is love of the Soviet Union. By the same token the "peace policy" of the Soviet Union, described at a Party Congress as "a more advantageous form of fighting capitalism," is a device to divide and immobilize the non-Communist world, and the peace the Soviet Union seeks is the peace of total conformity to Soviet policy.

The antipathy of slavery to freedom explains the iron curtain, the isolation, the autarchy of the society whose end is absolute power. The existence and persistence of the idea of freedom is a permanent and continuous threat to the foundation of the slave society; and it therefore regards as intolerable the long continued existence of freedom in the world. What is new, what makes the continuing crisis, is the polarization of power which now inescapably confronts the slave society with the free.
The assault on free institutions is world-wide now, and in the context of the present polarization of power a defeat of free institutions anywhere is a defeat everywhere. The shock we sustained in the destruction of Czechoslovakia was not in the measure of Czechoslovakia's material importance to us. In a material sense, her capabilities were already at Soviet disposal. But when the integrity of Czechoslovak institutions was destroyed, it was in the intangible scale of values that we registered a loss more damaging than the material loss we had already suffered.

Thus unwillingly our free society finds itself mortally challenged by the Soviet system. No other value system is so wholly irreconcilable with ours, so implacable in its purpose to destroy ours, so capable of turning to its own uses the most dangerous and divisive trends in our own society, no other so skillfully and powerfully evokes the elements of irrationality in human nature everywhere, and no other has the support of a great and growing center of military power.

B. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of a free society are determined by its fundamental values and by the necessity for maintaining the material environment in which they flourish. Logically and in fact, therefore, the Kremlin's challenge to the United States is directed not only to our values but to our physical capacity to protect their environment. It is a challenge which encompasses both peace and war and our objectives in peace and war must take account of it.

1. Thus we must make ourselves strong, both in the way in which we affirm our values in the conduct of our national life, and in the development of our military and economic strength.
2. We must lead in building a successfully functioning political and economic system in the free world. It is only by practical affirmation, abroad as well as at home, of our essential values, that we can preserve our own integrity, in which lies the real frustration of the Kremlin design.
3. But beyond thus affirming our values our policy and actions must be such as to foster a fundamental change in the nature of the Soviet system, a change toward which the frustration of the design is the first and perhaps the most important step. Clearly it will not only be less costly but more effective if this change occurs to a maximum extent as a result of internal forces in Soviet society.

In a shrinking world, which now faces the threat of atomic warfare, it is not an adequate objective merely to seek to check the Kremlin design, for the absence of order among nations is becoming less and less tolerable. This fact imposes on us, in our own interests, the responsibility of world leadership. It demands that we make the attempt, and accept the risks inherent in it, to bring about order and justice by means consistent with the principles of freedom and democracy. We should limit our requirement of the Soviet Union to its participation with other nations on the basis of equality and respect for the rights of others. Subject to this requirement, we must with our allies and the former subject peoples seek to create a world society based on the principle of consent. Its framework cannot be inflexible. It will consist of many national communities of great and varying abilities and resources, and hence of war potential. The seeds of conflicts will inevitably exist or will come into being. To acknowledge this is only to acknowledge the impossibility of a final solution. Not to acknowledge it can be fatally dangerous in a world in which there are no final solutions.

All these objectives of a free society are equally valid and necessary in peace and war. But every consideration of devotion to our fundamental values and to our national security demands that we seek to achieve them by the strategy of the cold war. It is only by developing the moral and material strength of the free world that the Soviet regime will become convinced of the falsity of its assumptions and that the pre-conditions for workable agreements can be created. By practically demonstrating the integrity and vitality of our system the free world widens the area of possible agreement and thus can hope gradually to bring about a Soviet acknowledgement of realities which in sum will eventually constitute a frustration of the Soviet design. Short of this, however, it might be possible to create a situation which will induce the Soviet Union to accommodate itself, with or without the conscious abandonment of its design, to coexistence on tolerable terms with the non-Soviet world. Such a development would be a triumph for the idea of freedom and democracy. It must be an immediate objective of United States policy.

There is no reason, in the event of war, for us to alter our overall objectives. They do not include unconditional surrender, the subjugation of the Russian peoples or a Russia shorn of its economic potential. Such a course would irrevocably unite the Russian people behind the regime which enslaves them. Rather these objectives contemplate Soviet acceptance of the specific and limited conditions requisite to an international environment in which free institutions can flourish, and in which the Russian peoples will have a new chance to work out their own destiny. If we can make the Russian people our allies in the enterprise we will obviously have made our task easier and victory more certain.

The objectives outlined in NSC 20/4 (November 23, 1948) ... are fully consistent with the objectives stated in this paper, and they remain valid. The growing intensity of the conflict which has been imposed upon us, however, requires the changes of emphasis and the additions that are apparent. Coupled with the probable fission bomb capability and possible thermonuclear bomb capability of the Soviet Union, the intensifying struggle requires us to face the fact that
we can expect no lasting abatement of the crisis unless and until a change occurs in the nature of the Soviet system.

C. MEANS

The free society is limited in its choice of means to achieve its ends.

Compulsion is the negation of freedom, except when it is used to enforce the rights common to all. The resort to force, internally or externally, is therefore a last resort for a free society. The act is permissible only when one individual or groups of individuals within it threaten the basic rights of other individuals or when another society seeks to impose its will upon it. The free society cherishes and protects as fundamental the rights of the minority against the will of a majority, because these rights are the inalienable rights of each and every individual.

The resort to force, to compulsion, to the imposition of its will is therefore a difficult and dangerous act for a free society, which is warranted only in the face of even greater dangers. The necessity of the act must be clear and compelling; the act must commend itself to the overwhelming majority as an inescapable exception to the basic idea of freedom; or the regenerative capacity of free men after the act has been performed will be endangered.

The Kremlin is able to select whatever means are expedient in seeking to carry out its fundamental design. Thus it can make the best of several possible worlds, conducting the struggle on those levels where it considers it profitable and enjoying the benefits of a pseudo-peace on those levels where it is not ready for a contest. At the ideological or psychological level, in the struggle for men's minds, the conflict is worldwide. At the political and economic level, within states and in the relations between states, the struggle for power is being intensified. And at the military level, the Kremlin has thus far been careful not to commit a technical breach of the peace, although using its vast forces to intimidate its neighbors, and to support an aggressive foreign policy, and not hesitating through its agents to resort to arms in favorable circumstances. The attempt to carry out its fundamental design is being pressed, therefore, with all means which are believed expedient in the present situation, and the Kremlin has inextricably engaged us in the conflict between its design and our purpose.

We have no such freedom of choice, and least of all in the use of force. Resort to war is not only a last resort for a free society, but it is also an act which cannot definitively end the fundamental conflict in the realm of ideas. The idea of slavery can only be overcome by the timely and persistent demonstration of the superiority of the idea of freedom. Military victory alone would only partially and perhaps only temporarily affect the fundamental conflict, for although the ability of the Kremlin to threaten our security might be for a time destroyed, the resurgence of totalitarian forces and the re-establishment of the Soviet system or its equivalent would not be long delayed unless great progress were made in the fundamental conflict.

Practical and ideological considerations therefore both impel us to the conclusion that we have no choice but to demonstrate the superiority of the idea of freedom by its constructive application, and to attempt to change the world situation by means short of war in such a way as to frustrate the Kremlin design and hasten the decay of the Soviet system.

For us the role of military power is to serve the national purpose by deterring an attack upon us while we seek by other means to create an environment in which our free society can flourish, and by fighting, if necessary, to defend the integrity and vitality of our free society and to defeat any aggressor. The Kremlin uses Soviet military power to back up and serve the Kremlin design. It does not hesitate to use military force aggressively if that course is expedient in the achievement of its design. The differences between our fundamental purpose and the Kremlin design, therefore, are reflected in our respective attitudes toward and use of military force.

Our free society, confronted by a threat to its basic values, naturally will take such action, including the use of military force, as may be required to protect those values. The integrity of our system will not be jeopardized by any measures, covert or overt, violent or non-violent, which serve the purposes of frustrating the Kremlin design, nor does the necessity for conducting ourselves so as to affirm our values in actions as well as words forbid such measures, provided only they are appropriately calculated to that end and are not so excessive or misdirected as to make us enemies of the people instead of the evil men who have enslaved them.

But if war comes, what is the role of force? Unless we so use it that the Russian people can perceive that our effort is directed against the regime and its power for aggression, and not against their own interests, we will unite the regime and the people in the kind of last ditch fight in which no underlying problems are solved, new ones are created, and where our basic principles are obscured and compromised. If we do not in the application of force demonstrate the nature of our objectives we will, in fact, have compromised from the outset our fundamental purpose. In the words of the Federalist (No. 28) "The means to be employed must be proportioned to the extent of the mischief.' The mischief may be a global war or it may be a Soviet campaign for limited objectives. In either case we should take no avoidable initiative which would cause it to become a war of annihilation, and if we have the forces to defeat a Soviet drive for
limited objectives it may well be to our interest not to let it become a global war. Our aim in applying force must be to compel the acceptance of terms consistent with our objectives, and our capabilities for the application of force should, therefore, within the limits of what we can sustain over the long pull, be congruent to the range of tasks which we may encounter.

V. Soviet Intentions and Capabilities
A. POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL

The Kremlin's design for world domination begins at home. The first concern of a despotic oligarchy is that the local base of its power and authority be secure. The massive fact of the iron curtain isolating the Soviet peoples from the outside world, the repeated political purges within the USSR and the institutionalized crimes of the MVD [the Soviet Ministry of Internal Affairs] are evidence that the Kremlin does not feel secure at home and that "the entire coercive force of the socialist state" is more than ever one of seeking to impose its absolute authority over "the economy, manner of life, and consciousness of people" (Vyshinski, The Law of the Soviet State, p. 74). Similar evidence in the satellite states of Eastern Europe leads to the conclusion that this same policy, in less advanced phases, is being applied to the Kremlin's colonial areas.

Being a totalitarian dictatorship, the Kremlin's objectives in these policies is the total subjective submission of the peoples now under its control. The concentration camp is the prototype of the society which these policies are designed to achieve, a society in which the personality of the individual is so broken and perverted that he participates affirmatively in his own degradation.

The Kremlin's policy toward areas not under its control is the elimination of resistance to its will and the extension of its influence and control. It is driven to follow this policy because it cannot, for the reasons set forth in Chapter IV, tolerate the existence of free societies; to the Kremlin the most mild and inoffensive free society is an affront, a challenge and a subversive influence. Given the nature of the Kremlin, and the evidence at hand, it seems clear that the ends toward which this policy is directed are the same as those where its control has already been established.

The means employed by the Kremlin in pursuit of this policy are limited only by considerations of expediency. Doctrine is not a limiting factor; rather it dictates the employment of violence, subversion, and deceit, and rejects moral considerations. In any event, the Kremlin's conviction of its own infallibility has made its devotion to theory so subjective that past or present pronouncements as to doctrine offer no reliable guide to future actions. The only apparent restraints on resort to war are, therefore, calculations of practicality.

With particular reference to the United States, the Kremlin's strategic and tactical policy is affected by its estimate that we are not only the greatest immediate obstacle which stands between it and world domination, we are also the only power which could release forces in the free and Soviet worlds which could destroy it. The Kremlin's policy toward us is consequently animated by a peculiarly virulent blend of hatred and fear. Its strategy has been one of attempting to undermine the complex of forces, in this country and in the rest of the free world, on which our power is based. In this it has both adhered to doctrine and followed the sound principle of seeking maximum results with minimum risks and commitments. The present application of this strategy is a new form of expression for traditional Russian caution. However, there is no justification in Soviet theory or practice for predicting that, should the Kremlin become convinced that it could cause our downfall by one conclusive blow, it would not seek that solution.

In considering the capabilities of the Soviet world, it is of prime importance to remember that, in contrast to ours, they are being drawn upon close to the maximum possible extent. Also in contrast to us, the Soviet world can do more with less--it has a lower standard of living, its economy requires less to keep it functioning, and its military machine operates effectively with less elaborate equipment and organization.

The capabilities of the Soviet world are being exploited to the full because the Kremlin is inescapably militant. It is inescapably militant because it possesses and is possessed by a world-wide revolutionary movement, because it 'is the inheritor of Russian imperialism, and because it is a totalitarian dictatorship. Persistent crisis, conflict, and expansion are the essence of the Kremlin's militancy. This dynamism serves to intensify all Soviet capabilities.

Two enormous organizations, the Communist Party and the secret police, are an outstanding source of strength to the Kremlin. In the Party, it has an apparatus designed to impose at home an ideological uniformity among its people and to act abroad as an instrument of propaganda, subversion and espionage. In its police apparatus, it has a domestic repressive instrument guaranteeing under present circumstances the continued security of the Kremlin. The demonstrated capabilities of these two basic organizations, operating openly or in disguise, in mass or through single agents, is unparalleled in history. The party, the police and the conspicuous might of the Soviet military machine together tend to create an overall impression of irresistible Soviet power among many peoples of the free world.

The ideological pretensions of the Kremlin are another great source of strength. Its identification of the Soviet system
with communism, its peace campaigns and its championing of colonial peoples may be viewed with apathy, if not
cynicism, by the oppressed totalitarian of the Soviet world, but in the free world these ideas find favorable responses in
vulnerable segments of society. They have found a particularly receptive audience in Asia, especially as the Asiatics
have been impressed by what has been plausibly portrayed to them as the rapid advance of the USSR from a backward
society to a position of great world power. Thus, in its pretensions to being (a) the source of a new universal faith and
(b) the model "scientific" society, the Kremlin cynically identifies itself with the genuine aspirations of large numbers
of people, and places itself at the head of an international crusade with all of the benefits which derive therefrom.

Finally, there is a category of capabilities, strictly speaking neither institutional nor ideological, which should be taken
into consideration. The extraordinary flexibility of Soviet tactics is certainly a strength. It derives from the utterly
amoral and opportunistic conduct of Soviet policy. Combining this quality with the elements of secrecy, the Kremlin
possesses a formidable capacity to act with the widest tactical latitude, with stealth, and with speed.

The greatest vulnerability of the Kremlin lies in the basic nature of its relations with the Soviet people.

That relationship is characterized by universal suspicion, fear, and denunciation. It is a relationship in which the
Kremlin relies, not only for its power but its very survival, on intricately devised mechanisms of coercion. The Soviet
monolith is held together by the iron curtain around it and the iron bars within it, not by any force of natural cohesion.
These artificial mechanisms of unity have never been intelligently challenged by a strong outside force. The full
measure of their vulnerability is therefore not yet evident.

The Kremlin's relations with its satellites and their peoples is likewise a vulnerability. Nationalism still remains the
most potent emotional-political force. The well-known ills of colonialism are compounded, however, by the excessive
demands of the Kremlin that its satellites accept not only the imperial authority of Moscow but that they believe in and
proclaim the ideological primacy and infallibility of the Kremlin. These excessive requirements can be made good only
through extreme coercion. The result is that if a satellite feels able to effect its independence of the Kremlin, as Tito was
able to do, it is likely to break away.

In short, Soviet ideas and practices run counter to the best and potentially the strongest instincts of men, and deny their
most fundamental aspirations. Against an adversary which effectively affirmed the constructive and hopeful instincts of
men and was capable of fulfilling their fundamental aspirations, the Soviet system might prove to be fatally weak.

The problem of succession to Stalin is also a Kremlin vulnerability. In a system where supreme power is acquired and
held through violence and intimidation, the transfer of that power may well produce a period of instability.

In a very real sense, the Kremlin is a victim of, its own dynamism. This dynamism can become a weakness if it is
frustrated, if in its forward thrusts it encounters a superior force which halts the expansion and exerts a superior
counterpressure. Yet the Kremlin cannot relax the condition of crisis and mobilization, for to do so would be to lose its
dynamism, whereas the seeds of decay within the Soviet system would begin to flourish and fructify.

The Kremlin is, of course, aware of these weaknesses. It must know that in the present world situation they are of
secondary significance. So long as the Kremlin retains the initiative, so long as it can keep on the offensive
unchallenged by clearly superior counter-force--spiritual as well as material--its vulnerabilities are largely inoperative
and even concealed by its successes. The Kremlin has not yet been given real reason to fear and be diverted by the rot
within its system.

B. ECONOMIC

The Kremlin has no economic intentions unrelated to its overall policies. Economics in the Soviet world is not an end in
itself. The Kremlin's policy, in so far as it has to do with economics, is to utilize economic processes to contribute to the
overall strength, particularly the war-making capacity of the Soviet system. The material welfare of the totalitarian is
severely subordinated to the interest of the system.

As for capabilities, even granting optimistic Soviet reports of production, the total economic strength of the U.S.S.R.
compares with that of the U.S. as roughly one to four. This is reflected not only in gross national product (1949: USSR
$65 billion; U.S. $250 billion), but in production of key commodities in 1949:
Assuming the maintenance of present policies, while a large U.S. advantage is likely to remain, the Soviet Union will be steadily reducing the discrepancy between its overall economic strength and that of the U.S. by continuing to devote proportionately more to capital investment than the U.S.

But a full-scale effort by the U.S. would be capable of precipitately altering this trend. The USSR today is on a near maximum production basis. No matter what efforts Moscow might make, only a relatively slight change in the rate of increase in overall production could be brought about. In the U.S., on the other hand, a very rapid absolute expansion could be realized. The fact remains, however, that so long as the Soviet Union is virtually mobilized, and the United States has scarcely begun to summon up its forces, the greater capabilities of the U.S. are to that extent inoperative in the struggle for power. Moreover, as the Soviet attainment of an atomic capability has demonstrated, the totalitarian state, at least in time of peace, can focus its efforts on any given project far more readily than the democratic state.

In other fields—general technological competence, skilled labor resources, productivity of labor force, etc.—the gap between the USSR and the U.S. roughly corresponds to the gap in production. In the field of scientific research, however, the margin of United States superiority is unclear, especially if the Kremlin can utilize European talents.

### C. MILITARY

The Soviet Union is developing the military capacity to support its design for world domination. The Soviet Union actually possesses armed forces far in excess of those necessary to defend its national territory. These armed forces are probably not yet considered by the Soviet Union to be sufficient to initiate a war which would involve the United States. This excessive strength, coupled now with an atomic capability, provides the Soviet Union with great coercive power for use in time of peace in furtherance of its objectives and serves as a deterrent to the victims of its aggression from taking any action in opposition to its tactics which would risk war.

Should a major war occur in 1950 the Soviet Union and its satellites are considered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to be in a sufficiently advanced state of preparation immediately to undertake and carry out the following campaigns.

a. To overrun Western Europe, with the possible exception of the Iberian and Scandinavian Peninsulas; to drive toward the oil-bearing areas of the Near and Middle East; and to consolidate Communist gains in the Far East;

b. To launch air attacks against the British Isles and air and sea attacks against the lines of communications of the Western Powers in the Atlantic and the Pacific;

c. To attack selected targets with atomic weapons, now including the likelihood of such attacks against targets in Alaska, Canada, and the United States. Alternatively, this capability, coupled with other actions open to the Soviet Union, might deny the United Kingdom as an effective base of operations for allied forces. It also should be possible for the Soviet Union to prevent any allied "Normandy" type amphibious operations intended to force a reentry into the continent of Europe.

After the Soviet Union completed its initial campaigns and consolidated its positions in the Western European area, it could simultaneously conduct:

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<th>U.S.</th>
<th>USSR</th>
<th>USSR and EUROPEAN ORBIT COMBINED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ingot Steel (million met. tons)</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary aluminum (thousand met. tons)</td>
<td>617.6</td>
<td>130-135</td>
<td>140-145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric power (billion kwh)</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crude oil (million met. tons)</td>
<td>276.5</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
a. Full-scale air and limited sea operations against the British Isles;

b. Invasions of the Iberian and Scandinavian Peninsulas;

c. Further operations in the Near and Middle East, continued air operations against the North American continent, and air and sea operations against Atlantic and Pacific lines of communication; and

d. Diversionary attacks in other areas.

During the course of the offensive operations listed in the second and third paragraphs above, the Soviet Union will have an air defense capability with respect to the vital areas of its own and its satellites' territories which can oppose but cannot prevent allied air operations against these areas.

It is not known whether the Soviet Union possesses war reserves and arsenal capabilities sufficient to supply its satellite armies or even its own forces throughout a long war. It might not be in the interest of the Soviet Union to equip fully its satellite armies, since the possibility of defections would exist.

It is not possible at this time to assess accurately the finite disadvantages to the Soviet Union which may accrue through the implementation of the Economic Cooperation Act of 1948, as amended, and the Mutual Defense Assistance Act of 1949. It should be expected that, as this implementation progresses, the internal security situation of the recipient nations should improve concurrently. In addition, a strong United States military position, plus increases in the armaments of the nations of Western Europe, should strengthen the determination of the recipient nations to counter Soviet moves and in event of war could be considered as likely to delay operations and increase the time required for the Soviet Union to overrun Western Europe. In all probability, although United States backing will stiffen their determination, the armaments increase under the present aid programs will not be of any major consequence prior to 1952. Unless the military strength of the Western European nations is increased on a much larger scale than under current programs and at an accelerated rate, it is more than likely that those nations will not be able to oppose even by 1960 the Soviet armed forces in war with any degree of effectiveness. Considering the Soviet Union military capability, the long-range allied military objective in Western Europe must envisage an increased military strength in that area sufficient possibly to deter the Soviet Union from a major war or, in any event, to delay materially the overrunning of Western Europe and, if feasible, to hold a bridgehead on the continent against Soviet Union offensives.

We do not know accurately what the Soviet atomic capability is but the Central Intelligence Agency intelligence estimates, concurred in by State, Army, Navy, Air Force, and Atomic Energy Commission, assign to the Soviet Union a production capability giving it a fission bomb stockpile within the following ranges:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By mid-1950</td>
<td>10-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By mid-1951</td>
<td>25-45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By mid-1952</td>
<td>45-90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By mid-1953</td>
<td>70-135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By mid-1954</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This estimate is admittedly based on incomplete coverage of Soviet activities and represents the production capabilities of known or deducible Soviet plants. If others exist, as is possible, this estimate could lead us into a feeling of superiority in our atomic stockpile that might be dangerously misleading, particularly with regard to the timing of a possible Soviet offensive. On the other hand, if the Soviet Union experiences operating difficulties, this estimate would be reduced. There is some evidence that the Soviet Union is acquiring certain materials essential to research on and development of thermonuclear weapons.

The Soviet Union now has aircraft able to deliver the atomic bomb. Our Intelligence estimates assign to the Soviet Union an atomic bomber capability already in excess of that needed to deliver available bombs. We have at present no evaluated estimate regarding the Soviet accuracy of delivery on target. It is believed that the Soviets cannot deliver their bombs on target with a degree of accuracy comparable to ours, but a planning estimate might well place it at 40-60 percent of bombs sorted. For planning purposes, therefore, the date the Soviets possess an atomic stockpile of 200 bombs would be a critical date for the United States, for the delivery of 100 atomic bombs on targets in the United States would seriously damage this country.

At the time the Soviet Union has a substantial atomic stockpile and if it is assumed that it will strike a strong surprise blow and if it is assumed further that its atomic attacks will be met with no more effective defense opposition than the United States and its allies have programmed, results of those attacks could include:

a. Laying waste to the British Isles and thus depriving the Western Powers of their use as a base;
b. Destruction of the vital centers and of the communications of Western Europe, thus precluding effective defense by the Western Powers; and

c. Delivering devastating attacks on certain vital centers of the United States and Canada.

The possession by the Soviet Union of a thermonuclear capability in addition to this substantial atomic stockpile would result in tremendously increased damage.

During this decade, the defensive capabilities of the Soviet Union will probably be strengthened, particularly by the development and use of modern aircraft, aircraft warning and communications devices, and defensive guided missiles.

**VI. U.S. Intentions and Capabilities--Actual and Potential**

**A. POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL**

Our overall policy at the present time may be described as one designed to foster a world environment in which the American system can survive and flourish. It therefore rejects the concept of isolation and affirms the necessity of our positive participation in the world community.

This broad intention embraces two subsidiary policies. One is a policy which we would probably pursue even if there were no Soviet threat. It is a policy of attempting to develop a healthy international community. The other is the policy of "containing" the Soviet system. These two policies are closely interrelated and interact on one another. Nevertheless, the distinction between them is basically valid and contributes to a clearer understanding of what we are trying to do.

The policy of striving to develop a healthy international community is the long-term constructive effort which we are engaged in. It was this policy which gave rise to our vigorous sponsorship of the United Nations. It is of course the principal reason for our long continuing endeavors to create and now develop the Inter-American system. It, as much as containment, underlay our efforts to rehabilitate Western Europe. Most of our international economic activities can likewise be explained in terms of this policy.

In a world of polarized power, the policies designed to develop a healthy international community are more than ever necessary to our own strength.

As for the policy of "containment," it is one which seeks by all means short of war to (1) block further expansion of Soviet power, (2) expose the falsities of Soviet pretensions, (3) induce a retraction of the Kremlin's control and influence, and (4) in general, foster the seeds of destruction within the Soviet system that the Kremlin is brought at least to the point of modifying its behavior to conform to generally accepted international standards.

It was and continues to be cardinal in this policy that we possess superior overall power in ourselves or in dependable combination with other likeminded nations. One of the most important ingredients of power is military strength. In the concept of "containment," the maintenance of a strong military posture is deemed to be essential for two reasons: (1) as an ultimate guarantee of our national security and (2) as an indispensable backdrop to the conduct of the policy of "containment." Without superior aggregate military strength, in being and readily mobilizable, a policy of "containment"--which is in effect a policy of calculated and gradual coercion--is no more than a policy of bluff.

At the same time, it is essential to the successful conduct of a policy of "containment" that we always leave open the possibility of negotiation with the USSR. A diplomatic freeze--and we are in one now--tends to defeat the very purposes of "containment" because it raises tensions at the same time that it makes Soviet retractions and adjustments in the direction of moderated behavior more difficult. It also tends to inhibit our initiative and deprives us of opportunities for maintaining a moral ascendancy in our struggle with the Soviet system.

In "containment" it is desirable to exert pressure in a fashion which will avoid so far as possible directly challenging Soviet prestige, to keep open the possibility for the USSR to retreat before pressure with a minimum loss of face and to secure political advantage from the failure of the Kremlin to yield or take advantage of the openings we leave it.

We have failed to implement adequately these two fundamental aspects of "containment." In the face of obviously mounting Soviet military strength ours has declined relatively. Partly as a byproduct of this, but also for other reasons, we now find ourselves at a diplomatic impasse with the Soviet Union, with the Kremlin growing bolder, with both of us holding on grimly to what we have, and with ourselves facing difficult decisions.

In examining our capabilities it is relevant to ask at the outset--capabilities for what? The answer cannot be stated solely in the negative terms of resisting the Kremlin design. It includes also our capabilities to attain the fundamental purpose of the United States, and to foster a world environment in which our free society can survive and flourish.

Potentially we have these capabilities. We know we have them in the economic and military fields. Potentially we also
have them in the political and psychological fields. The vast majority of Americans are confident that the system of values which animates our society—the principles of freedom, tolerance, the importance of the individual, and the supremacy of reason over will—are valid and more vital than the ideology which is the fuel of Soviet dynamism. Translated into terms relevant to the lives of other peoples—our system of values can become perhaps a powerful appeal to millions who now seek or find in authoritarianism a refuge from anxieties, bafflement, and insecurity.

Essentially, our democracy also possesses a unique degree of unity. Our society is fundamentally more cohesive than the Soviet system, the solidarity of which is artificially created through force, fear, and favor. This means that expressions of national consensus in our society are soundly and solidly based. It means that the possibility of revolution in this country is fundamentally less than that in the Soviet system.

These capabilities within us constitute a great potential force in our international relations. The potential within us of bearing witness to the values by which we live holds promise for a dynamic manifestation to the rest of the world of the vitality of our system. The essential tolerance of our world outlook, our generous and constructive impulses, and the absence of covetousness in our international relations are assets of potentially enormous influence.

These then are our potential capabilities. Between them and our capabilities currently being utilized is a wide gap of unactualized power. In sharp contrast is the situation of the Soviet world. Its capabilities are inferior to those of our allies and to our own. But they are mobilized close to the maximum possible extent.

The full power which resides within the American people will be evoked only through the traditional democratic process: This process requires, firstly, that sufficient information regarding the basic political, economic, and military elements of the present situation be made publicly available so that an intelligent popular opinion may be formed. Having achieved a comprehension of the issues now confronting this Republic, it will then be possible for the American people and the American Government to arrive at a consensus. Out of this common view will develop a determination of the national will and a solid resolute expression of that will. The initiative in this process lies with the Government.

The democratic way is harder than the authoritarian way because, in seeking to protect and fulfill the individual, it demands of him understanding, judgment, and positive participation in the increasingly complex and exacting problems of the modern world. It demands that he exercise discrimination: that while pursuing through free inquiry the search for truth he knows when he should commit an act of faith; that he distinguish between the necessity for tolerance and the necessity for just suppression. A free society is vulnerable in that it is easy for people to lapse into excesses—the excesses of a permanently open mind wishfully waiting for evidence that evil design may become noble purpose, the excess of faith becoming prejudice, the excess of tolerance degenerating into indulgence of conspiracy and the excess of resorting to suppression when more moderate measures are not only more appropriate but more effective.

In coping with dictatorial governments acting in secrecy and with speed, we are also vulnerable in that the democratic process necessarily operates in the open and at a deliberate tempo. Weaknesses in our situation are readily apparent and subject to immediate exploitation. This Government therefore cannot afford in the face of the totalitarian challenge to operate on a narrow margin of strength. A democracy can compensate for its natural vulnerability only if it maintains clearly superior overall power in its most inclusive sense.

The very virtues of our system likewise handicap us in certain respects in our relations with our allies. While it is a general source of strength to us that our relations with our allies are conducted on a basis of persuasion and consent rather than compulsion and capitulation, it is also evident that dissent among us can become a vulnerability. Sometimes the dissent has its principal roots abroad in situations about which we can do nothing. Sometimes it arises largely out of certain weaknesses within ourselves, about which we can do something—our native impetuosity and a tendency to expect too much from people widely divergent from us.

The full capabilities of the rest of the free world are a potential increment to our own capabilities. It may even be said that the capabilities of the Soviet world, specifically the capabilities of the masses who have nothing to lose but their Soviet chains, are a potential which can be enlisted on our side.

Like our own capabilities, those of the rest of the free world exceed the capabilities of the Soviet system. Like our own they are far from being effectively mobilized and employed in the struggle against the Kremlin design. This is so because the rest of the free world lacks a sense of unity, confidence, and common purpose. This is true in even the most homogeneous and advanced segment of the free world—Western Europe.

As we ourselves demonstrate power, confidence, and a sense of moral and political direction, so those same qualities will be evoked in Western Europe. In such a situation, we may also anticipate a general improvement in the political tone in Latin America, Asia, and Africa and the real beginnings of awakening among the Soviet totalitarian.

In the absence of affirmative decision on our part, the rest of the free world is almost certain to become demoralized. Our friends will become more than a liability to us; they can eventually become a positive increment to Soviet power.

In sum, the capabilities of our allies are, in an important sense, a function of our own. An affirmative decision to
summon up the potential within ourselves would evoke the potential strength within others and add it to our own.

B. ECONOMIC

1. Capabilities. In contrast to the war economy of the Soviet world (cf. Ch. V-B), the American economy (and the economy of the free world as a whole) is at present directed to the provision of rising standards of living. The military budget of the United States represents 6 to 7 percent of its gross national product (as against 13.8 percent for the Soviet Union). Our North Atlantic Treaty [NAT] allies devoted 4.8 percent of their national product to military purposes in 1949.

This difference in emphasis between the two economies means that the readiness of the free world to support a war effort is tending to decline relative to that of the Soviet Union. There is little direct investment in production facilities for military end-products and in dispersal. There are relatively few men receiving military training and a relatively low rate of production of weapons. However, given time to convert to a war effort, the capabilities of the United States economy and also of the Western European economy would be tremendous. In the light of Soviet military capabilities, a question which may be of decisive importance in the event of war is the question whether there will be time to mobilize our superior human and material resources for a war effort (cf. Chs. VIII and IX).

The capability of the American economy to support a build-up of economic and military strength at home and to assist a build-up abroad is limited not, as in the case of the Soviet Union, so much by the ability to produce as by the decision on the proper allocation of resources to this and other purposes. Even Western Europe could afford to assign a substantially larger proportion of its resources to defense, if the necessary foundation in public understanding and will could be laid, and if the assistance needed to meet its dollar deficit were provided.

A few statistics will help to clarify this point [Table 1].

The Soviet Union is now allocating nearly 40 percent of its gross available resources to military purposes and investment, much of which is in war-supporting industries. It is estimated that even in an emergency the Soviet Union could not increase this proportion to much more than 50 percent, or by one-fourth. The United States, on the other hand, is allocating only about 20 percent of its resources to defense and investment (or 22 percent including foreign assistance), and little of its investment outlays are directed to war-supporting industries. In an emergency the United States could allocate more than 50 percent of its resources to military purposes and foreign assistance, or five to six times as much as at present.

The same point can be brought out by statistics on the use of important products. The Soviet Union is using 14 percent of its ingot steel, 47 percent of its primary aluminum, and 18.5 percent of its crude oil for military purposes, while the corresponding percentages for the United States are 1.7, 8.6, and 5.6. Despite the tremendously larger production of these goods in the United States than the Soviet Union, the latter is actually using, for military purposes, nearly twice as much steel as the United States and 8 to 26 percent more aluminum.

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Table 1. Percentage of Gross Available Resources Allocated to Investment, National Defense, and Consumption in East and West, 1949 (in percent of total)
### Table 2. Comparative Statistics on Economic Capabilities of East and West

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>GROSS INVESTMENT</th>
<th>DEFENSE</th>
<th>CONSUMPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>60.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soviet Orbit</td>
<td>22.0 (a)</td>
<td>4.0 (b)</td>
<td>74.0 (a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>79.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European NAT countries</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>74.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) Crude estimate. [Footnote in the source text.]

(b) Includes Soviet Zone of Germany; otherwise 5 percent. [Footnote in the source text.]

Perhaps the most impressive indication of the economic superiority of the free world over the Soviet world which can be made on the basis of available data is provided in comparisons (based mainly on the *Economic Survey of Europe, 1948*) [Table 2].
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>149</th>
<th>173</th>
<th>322</th>
<th>198 (a)</th>
<th>75</th>
<th>273</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population (millions)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment in non-agricultural establishments (millions)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>31 (a)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross National Production (billion dollars)</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>65 (a)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National income per capita (current dollars)</td>
<td>1700</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>1040</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Production data (b):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coal (million tons)</th>
<th>582</th>
<th>306</th>
<th>888</th>
<th>250</th>
<th>88</th>
<th>338</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electric power (billion kwh)</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crude petroleum (million tons)</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pig iron (million tons)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steel (million tons)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cement (million tons)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor vehicles (thousands)</td>
<td>5273</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>5853</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>525</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) 1949 data. [Footnote in the source text.]

(b) for the European NAT countries and for the satellites, the data include output by major producers. [Footnote in the source text.]

It should be noted that these comparisons understate the relative position of the NAT countries for several reasons: (1) Canada is excluded because comparable data were not available; (2) the data for the USSR are the 1950 targets (as stated in the fourth five-year plan) rather than actual rates of production and are believed to exceed in many cases the production actually achieved; (3) the data for the European NAT countries are actual data for 1948, and production has
than are the free nations and, in significant components of military power, a greater unpreparedness of the free world for war. It is devoting a far greater

Several conclusions seem to emerge. First, the Soviet Union is widening the gap between its preparedness for war and the balance, neither side can claim any great advantage in this field over its relative position a year ago. The important

The last year has been indecisive in the economic field. The Soviet Union has made considerable progress in integrating the satellite economies of Eastern Europe into the Soviet economy, but still faces very large problems, especially with China. The free nations have important accomplishments to record, but also have tremendous problems still ahead. On balance, neither side can claim any great advantage in this field over its relative position a year ago. The important question therefore becomes: what are the trends?

With a high level of economic activity, the United States could soon attain a gross national product of $300 billion per year, as was pointed out in the President's Economic Report (January 1950). Progress in this direction would permit, and might itself be aided by, a buildup of the economic and military strength of the United States and the free world; furthermore, if a dynamic expansion of the economy were achieved, the necessary build-up could be accomplished without a decrease in the national standard of living because the required resources could be obtained by siphoning off a part of the annual increment in the gross national product. These are facts of fundamental importance in considering the courses of action open to the United States (cf. Ch. IX).

2. Intentions. Foreign economic policy is a major instrument in the conduct of United States foreign relations. It is an instrument which can powerfully influence the world environment in ways favorable to the security and welfare of this country. It is also an instrument which, if unwisely formulated and employed, can do actual harm to our national interests. It is an instrument uniquely suited to our capabilities, provided we have the tenacity of purpose and the understanding requisite to a realization of its potentials. Finally, it is an instrument peculiarly appropriate to the cold war.

The preceding analysis has indicated that an essential element in a program to frustrate the Kremlin design is the development of a successfully functioning system among the free nations. It is clear that economic conditions are among the fundamental determinants of the will and the strength to resist subversion and aggression.

United States foreign economic policy has been designed to assist in the building of such a system and such conditions in the free world. The principal features of this policy can be summarized as follows:

1. assistance to Western Europe in recovery and the creation of a viable economy (the European Recovery Program);
2. assistance to other countries because of their special needs arising out of the war or the cold war and our special interests in or responsibility for meeting them (grant assistance to Japan, the Philippines, and Korea, loans and credits by the Export-Import Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the International Bank to Indonesia, Yugoslavia, Iran, etc.);
3. assistance in the development of underdeveloped areas (the Point IV program and loans and credits to various countries, overlapping to some extent with those mentioned under 2);
4. military assistance to the North Atlantic Treaty countries, Greece, Turkey, etc.;
5. restriction of East-West trade in items of military importance to the East;
6. purchase and stockpiling of strategic materials; and
7. efforts to reestablish an international economy based on multilateral trade, declining trade barriers, and convertible currencies (the GATT-ITO program, the Reciprocal Trade Agreements program, the IMF-IBRD program, and the program now being developed to solve the problem of the United States balance of payments).

In both their short and long term aspects, these policies and programs are directed to the strengthening of the free world and therefore to the frustration of the Kremlin design. Despite certain inadequacies and inconsistencies, which are now being studied in connection with the problem of the United States balance of payments, the United States has generally pursued a foreign economic policy which has powerfully supported its overall objectives. The question must nevertheless be asked whether current and currently projected programs will adequately support this policy in the future, in terms both of need and urgency.

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Several conclusions seem to emerge. First, the Soviet Union is widening the gap between its preparedness for war and the unpreparedness of the free world for war. It is devoting a far greater proportion of its resources to military purposes than are the free nations and, in significant components of military power, a greater absolute quantity of resources.
Second, the Communist success in China, taken with the politico-economic situation in the rest of South and South-East Asia, provides a springboard for a further incursion in this troubled area. Although Communist China faces serious economic problems which may impose some strains on the Soviet economy, it is probable that the social and economic problems faced by the free nations in this area present more than offsetting opportunities for Communist expansion. Third, the Soviet Union holds positions in Europe which, if it maneuvers skillfully, could be used to do great damage to the Western European economy and to the maintenance of the Western orientation of certain countries, particularly Germany and Austria. Fourth, despite (and in part because of) the Titoist' defection, the Soviet Union has accelerated its efforts to integrate satellite economy with its own and to increase the degree of autarchy within the areas under its control.

Fifth, meanwhile, Western Europe, with American (and Canadian) assistance, has achieved a record level of production. However, it faces the prospect of a rapid tapering off of American assistance without the possibility of achieving, by its own efforts, a satisfactory equilibrium with the dollar area. It has also made very little progress toward "economic integration," which would in the long run tend to improve its productivity and to provide an economic environment conducive to political stability. In particular, the movement toward economic integration does not appear to be rapid enough to provide Western Germany with adequate economic opportunities in the West. The United Kingdom still faces economic problems which may require a moderate but politically difficult decline in the British standard of living or more American assistance than is contemplated. At the same time, a strengthening of the British position is needed if the stability of the Commonwealth is not to be impaired and if it is to be a focus of resistance to Communist expansion in South and South-East Asia. Improvement of the British position is also vital in building up the defensive capabilities of Western Europe.

Sixth, throughout Asia the stability of the present moderate governments, which are more in sympathy with our purposes than any probable successor regimes would be, is doubtful. The problem is only in part an economic one. Assistance in economic development is important as a means of holding out to the peoples of Asia some prospect of improvement in standards of living under their present governments. But probably more important are a strengthening of central institutions, an improvement in administration, and generally a development of an economic and social structure within which the peoples of Asia can make more effective use of their great human and material resources.

Seventh, and perhaps most important, there are indications of a let-down of United States efforts under the pressure of the domestic budgetary situation, disillusion resulting from excessively optimistic expectations about the duration and results of our assistance programs, and doubts about the wisdom of continuing to strengthen the free nations as against preparedness measures in light of the intensity of the cold war.

Eighth, there are grounds for predicting that the United States and other free nations will within a period of a few years at most experience a decline in economic activity of serious proportions unless more positive governmental programs are developed than are now available.

In short, as we look into the future, the programs now planned will not meet the requirements of the free nations. The difficulty does not lie so much in the inadequacy or misdirection of policy as in the inadequacy of planned programs, in terms of timing or impact, to achieve our objectives. The risks inherent in this situation are set forth in the following chapter and a course of action designed to reinvigorate our efforts in order to reverse the present trends and to achieve our fundamental purpose is outlined in Chapter IX.

C. MILITARY

The United States now possesses the greatest military potential of any single nation in the world. The military weaknesses of the United States vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, however, include its numerical inferiority in forces in being and in total manpower. Coupled with the inferiority of forces in being, the United States also lacks tenable positions from which to employ its forces in event of war and munitions power in being and readily available.

It is true that the United States armed forces are now stronger than ever before in other times of apparent peace; it is also true that there exists a sharp disparity between our actual military strength and our commitments. The relationship of our strength to our present commitments, however, is not alone the governing factor. The world situation, as well as commitments, should govern; hence, our military strength more properly should be related to the world situation confronting us. When our military strength is related to the world situation and balanced against the likely exigencies of such a situation, it is clear that our military strength is becoming dangerously inadequate.

If war should begin in 1950, the United States and its allies will have the military capability of conducting defensive operations to provide a reasonable measure of protection to the Western Hemisphere, bases in the Western Pacific, and essential military lines of communication; and an inadequate measure of protection to vital military bases in the United Kingdom and in the Near and Middle East. We will have the capability of conducting powerful offensive air operations against vital elements of the Soviet war-making capacity.
The scale of the operations listed in the preceding paragraph is limited by the effective forces and material in being of the United States and its allies vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Consistent with the aggressive threat facing us and in consonance with overall strategic plans, the United States must provide to its allies on a continuing basis as large amounts of military assistance as possible without serious detriment to the United States operational requirements.

If the potential military capabilities of the United States and its allies were rapidly and effectively developed, sufficient forces could be produced probably to deter war, or if the Soviet Union chooses war, to withstand the initial Soviet attacks, to stabilize supporting attacks, and to retaliate in turn with even greater impact on the Soviet capabilities. From the military point of view alone, however, this would require not only the generation of the necessary military forces but also the development and stockpiling of improved weapons of all types.

Under existing peacetime conditions, a period of from two to three years is required to produce a material increase in military power. Such increased power could be provided in a somewhat shorter period in a declared period of emergency or in wartime through a full-out national effort. Any increase in military power in peacetime, however, should be related both to its probable military role in war, to the implementation of immediate and long-term United States foreign policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, and to the realities of the existing situation. If such a course of increasing our military power is adopted now, the United States would have the capability of eliminating the disparity between its military strength and the exigencies of the situation we face; eventually of gaining the initiative in the "cold" war and of materially delaying if not stopping the Soviet offensives in war itself.

VII. Present Risks

A. GENERAL

It is apparent from the preceding sections that the integrity and vitality of our system is in greater jeopardy than ever before in our history. Even if there were no Soviet Union we would face the great problem of the free society, accentuated many fold in this industrial age, of reconciling order, security, the need for participation, with the requirement of freedom. We would face the fact that in a shrinking world the absence of order among nations is becoming less and less tolerable. The Kremlin design seeks to impose order among nations by means which would destroy our free and democratic system. The Kremlin's possession of atomic weapons puts new power behind its design, and increases the jeopardy to our system. It adds new strains to the uneasy equilibrium-without-order which exists in the world and raises new doubts in men's minds whether the world will long tolerate this tension without moving toward some kind of order, on somebody's terms.

The risks we face are of a new order of magnitude, commensurate with the total struggle in which we are engaged. For a free society there is never total victory, since freedom and democracy are never wholly attained, are always in the process of being attained. But defeat at the hands of the totalitarian is total defeat. These risks crowd in on us, in a shrinking world of polarized power, so as to give us no choice, ultimately, between meeting them effectively or being overcome by them.

B. SPECIFIC

It is quite clear from Soviet theory and practice that the Kremlin seeks to bring the free world under its dominion by the methods of the cold war. The preferred technique is to subvert by infiltration and intimidation. Every institution of our society is an instrument which it is sought to stultify and turn against our purposes. Those that touch most closely our material and moral strength are obviously the prime targets, labor unions, civic enterprises, schools, churches, and all media for influencing opinion. The effort is not so much to make them serve obvious Soviet ends as to prevent them from serving our ends, and thus to make them sources of confusion in our economy, our culture, and our body politic. The doubts and diversities that in terms of our values are part of the merit of a free system, the weaknesses and the problems that are peculiar to it, the rights and privileges that free men enjoy, and the disorganization and destruction left in the wake of the last attack on our freedoms, all are but opportunities for the Kremlin to do its evil work. Every advantage is taken of the fact that our means of prevention and retaliation are limited by those principles and scruples which are precisely the ones that give our freedom and democracy its meaning for us. None of our scruples deter those whose only code is "morality is that which serves the revolution."

Since everything that gives us or others respect for our institutions is a suitable object for attack, it also fits the Kremlin's design that where, with impunity, we can be insulted and made to suffer indignity the opportunity shall not be missed, particularly in any context which can be used to cast dishonor on our country, our system, our motives, or our methods. Thus the means by which we sought to restore our own economic health in the '30's, and now seek to restore that of the free world, come equally under attack. The military aid by which we sought to help the free world was frantically denounced by the Communists in the early days of the last war, and of course our present efforts to develop
adequate military strength for ourselves and our allies are equally denounced.

At the same time the Soviet Union is seeking to create overwhelming military force, in order to back up infiltration with intimidation. In the only terms in which it understands strength, it is seeking to demonstrate to the free world that force and the will to use it are on the side of the Kremlin, that those who lack it are decadent and doomed. In local incidents it threatens and encroaches both for the sake of local gains and to increase anxiety and defeatism in all the free world.

The possession of atomic weapons at each of the opposite poles of power, and the inability (for different reasons) of either side to place any trust in the other, puts a premium on a surprise attack against us. It equally puts a premium on a more violent and ruthless prosecution of its design by cold war, especially if the Kremlin is sufficiently objective to realize the improbability of our prosecuting a preventive war. It also puts a premium on piecemeal aggression against others, counting on our unwillingness to engage in atomic war unless we are directly attacked. We run all these risks and the added risk of being confused and immobilized by our inability to weigh and choose, and pursue a firm course based on a rational assessment of each.

The risk that we may thereby be prevented or too long delayed in taking all needful measures to maintain the integrity and vitality of our system is great. The risk that our allies will lose their determination is greater. And the risk that in this manner a descending spiral of too little and too late, of doubt and recrimination, may present us with ever narrower and more desperate alternatives, is the greatest risk of all. For example, it is clear that our present weakness would prevent us from offering effective resistance at any of several vital pressure points. The only deterrent we can present to the Kremlin is the evidence we give that we may make any of the critical points which we cannot hold the occasion for a global war of annihilation.

The risk of having no better choice than to capitulate or precipitate a global war at any of a number of pressure points is bad enough in itself, but it is multiplied by the weakness it imparts to our position in the cold war. Instead of appearing strong and resolute we are continually at the verge of appearing and being alternately irresolute and desperate; yet it is the cold war which we must win, because both the Kremlin design, and our fundamental purpose give it the first priority.

The frustration of the Kremlin design, however, cannot be accomplished by us alone, as will appear from the analysis in Chapter IX, B. Strength at the center, in the United States, is only the first of two essential elements. The second is that our allies and potential allies do not as a result of a sense of frustration or of Soviet intimidation drift into a course of neutrality eventually leading to Soviet domination. If this were to happen in Germany the effect upon Western Europe and eventually upon us might be catastrophic.

But there are risks in making ourselves strong. A large measure of sacrifice and discipline will be demanded of the American people. They will be asked to give up some of the benefits which they have come to associate with their freedoms. Nothing could be more important than that they fully understand the reasons for this. The risks of a superficial understanding or of an inadequate appreciation of the issues are obvious and might lead to the adoption of measures which in themselves would jeopardize the integrity of our system. At any point in the process of demonstrating our will to make good our fundamental purpose, the Kremlin may decide to precipitate a general war, or in testing us, may go too far. These are risks we will invite by making ourselves strong, but they are lesser risks than those we seek to avoid. Our fundamental purpose is more likely to be defeated from lack of the will to maintain it, than from any mistakes we may make or assault we may undergo because of asserting that will. No people in history have preserved their freedom who thought that by not being strong enough to protect themselves they might prove inoffensive to their enemies.

VIII. Atomic Armaments

A. MILITARY EVALUATION OF U.S. AND USSR ATOMIC CAPABILITIES

1. The United States now has an atomic capability, including both numbers and deliverability, estimated to be adequate, if effectively utilized, to deliver a serious blow against the war-making capacity of the USSR. It is doubted whether such a blow, even if it resulted in the complete destruction of the contemplated target systems, would cause the USSR to sue for terms or prevent Soviet forces from occupying Western Europe against such ground resistance as could presently be mobilized. A very serious initial blow could, however, so reduce the capabilities of the USSR to supply and equip its military organization and its civilian population as to give the United States the prospect of developing a general military superiority in a war of long duration.

2. As the atomic capability of the USSR increases, it will have an increased ability to hit at our atomic bases and installations and thus seriously hamper the ability of the United States to carry out an attack such as that outlined above. It is quite possible that in the near future the USSR will have a sufficient number of atomic bombs and a sufficient deliverability to raise a question whether Britain with its present inadequate air defense could be relied upon as an
advance base from which a major portion of the U.S. attack could be launched.

It is estimated that, within the next four years, the USSR will attain the capability of seriously damaging vital centers of the United States, provided it strikes a surprise blow and provided further that the blow is opposed by no more effective opposition than we now have programmed. Such a blow could so seriously damage the United States as to greatly reduce its superiority in economic potential.

Effective opposition to this Soviet capability will require among other measures greatly increased air warning systems, air defenses, and vigorous development and implementation of a civilian defense program which has been thoroughly integrated with the military defense systems.

In time the atomic capability of the USSR can be expected to grow to a point where, given surprise and no more effective opposition than we now have programmed, the possibility of a decisive initial attack cannot be excluded.

3. In the initial phases of an atomic war, the advantages of initiative and surprise would be very great. A police state living behind an iron curtain has an enormous advantage in maintaining the necessary security and centralization of decision required to capitalize on this advantage.

4. For the moment our atomic retaliatory capability is probably adequate to deter the Kremlin from a deliberate direct military attack against ourselves or other free peoples. However, when it calculates that it has a sufficient atomic capability to make a surprise attack on us, nullifying our atomic superiority and creating a military situation decisively in its favor, the Kremlin might be tempted to strike swiftly and with stealth. The existence of two large atomic capabilities in such a relationship might well act, therefore, not as a deterrent, but as an incitement to war.

5. A further increase in the number and power of our atomic weapons is necessary in order to assure the effectiveness of any U.S. retaliatory blow, but would not of itself seem to change the basic logic of the above points. Greatly increased general air, ground, and sea strength, and increased air defense and civilian defense programs would also be necessary to provide reasonable assurance that the free world could survive an initial surprise atomic attack of the weight which it is estimated the USSR will be capable of delivering by 1954 and still permit the free world to go on to the eventual attainment of its objectives. Furthermore, such a build-up of strength could safeguard and increase our retaliatory power, and thus might put off for some time the date when the Soviet Union could calculate that a surprise blow would be advantageous. This would provide additional time for the effects of our policies to produce a modification of the Soviet system.

6. If the USSR develops a thermonuclear weapon ahead of the U.S., the risks of greatly increased Soviet pressure against all the free world, or an attack against the U.S., will be greatly increased.

7. If the U.S. develops a thermonuclear weapon ahead of the USSR, the U.S. should for the time being be able to bring increased pressure on the USSR.

B. STOCKPILING AND USE OF ATOMIC WEAPONS

1. From the foregoing analysis it appears that it would be to the long-term advantage of the United States if atomic weapons were to be effectively eliminated from national peacetime armaments; the additional objectives which must be secured if there is to be a reasonable prospect of such effective elimination of atomic weapons are discussed in Chapter IX. In the absence of such elimination and the securing of these objectives, it would appear that we have no alternative but to increase our atomic capability as rapidly as other considerations make appropriate. In either case, it appears to be imperative to increase as rapidly as possible our general air, ground, and sea strength and that of our allies to a point where we are militarily not so heavily dependent on atomic weapons.

2. As is indicated in Chapter IV, it is important that the United States employ military force only if the necessity for its use is clear and compelling and commends itself to the overwhelming majority of our people. The United States cannot therefore engage in war except as a reaction to aggression of so clear and compelling a nature as to bring the overwhelming majority of our people to accept the use of military force. In the event war comes, our use of force must be to compel the acceptance of our objectives and must be congruent to the range of tasks which we may encounter.

In the event of a general war with the USSR, it must be anticipated that atomic weapons will be used by each side in the manner it deems best suited to accomplish its objectives. In view of our vulnerability to Soviet atomic attack, it has been argued that we might wish to hold our atomic weapons only for retaliation against prior use by the USSR. To be able to do so and still have hope of achieving our objectives, the non-atomic military capabilities of ourselves and our allies would have to be fully developed and the political weaknesses of the Soviet Union fully exploited. In the event of war, however, we could not be sure that we could move toward the attainment of these objectives without the USSR's resorting sooner or later to the use of its atomic weapons. Only if we had overwhelming atomic superiority and obtained command of the air might the USSR be deterred from employing its atomic weapons as we progressed toward the
In the event the USSR develops by 1954 the atomic capability which we now anticipate, it is hardly conceivable that, if war comes, the Soviet leaders would refrain from the use of atomic weapons unless they felt fully confident of attaining their objectives by other means.

In the event we use atomic weapons either in retaliation for their prior use by the USSR or because there is no alternative method by which we can attain our objectives, it is imperative that the strategic and tactical targets against which they are used be appropriate and the manner in which they are used be consistent with those objectives.

It appears to follow from the above that we should produce and stockpile thermonuclear weapons in the event they prove feasible and would add significantly to our net capability. Not enough is yet known of their potentialities to warrant a judgment at this time regarding their use in war to attain our objectives.

3. It has been suggested that we announce that we will not use atomic weapons except in retaliation against the prior use of such weapons by an aggressor. It has been argued that such a declaration would decrease the danger of an atomic attack against the United States and its allies.

In our present situation of relative unpreparedness in conventional weapons, such a declaration would be interpreted by the USSR as an admission of great weakness and by our allies as a clear indication that we intended to abandon them. Furthermore, it is doubtful whether such a declaration would be taken sufficiently seriously by the Kremlin to constitute an important factor in determining whether or not to attack the United States. It is to be anticipated that the Kremlin would weigh the facts of our capability far more heavily than a declaration of what we proposed to do with that capability.

Unless we are prepared to abandon our objectives, we cannot make such a declaration in good faith until we are confident that we will be in a position to attain our objectives without war, or, in the event of war, without recourse to the use of atomic weapons for strategic or tactical purposes.

C. INTERNATIONAL CONTROL OF ATOMIC ENERGY

1. A discussion of certain of the basic considerations involved in securing effective international control is necessary to make clear why the additional objectives discussed in Chapter IX must be secured.

2. No system of international control could prevent the production and use of atomic weapons in the event of a prolonged war. Even the most effective system of international control could, of itself, only provide (a) assurance that atomic weapons had been eliminated from national peacetime armaments and (b) immediate notice of a violation. In essence, an effective international control system would be expected to assure a certain amount of time after notice of violation before atomic weapons could be used in war.

3. The time period between notice of violation and possible use of atomic weapons in war which a control system could be expected to assure depends upon a number of factors.

The dismantling of existing stockpiles of bombs and the destruction of casings and firing mechanisms could by themselves give little assurance of securing time. Casings and firing mechanisms are presumably easy to produce, even surreptitiously, and the assembly of weapons does not take much time.

If existing stocks of fissionable materials were in some way eliminated and the future production of fissionable materials effectively controlled, war could not start with a surprise atomic attack.

In order to assure an appreciable time lag between notice of violation and the time when atomic weapons might be available in quantity, it would be necessary to destroy all plants capable of making large amounts of fissionable material. Such action would, however, require a moratorium on those possible peacetime uses which call for large quantities of fissionable materials.

Effective control over the production and stockpiling of raw materials might further extend the time period which effective international control would assure. Now that the Russians have learned the technique of producing atomic weapons, the time between violation of an international control agreement and production of atomic weapons will be shorter than was estimated in 1946, except possibly in the field of thermonuclear or other new types of weapons.

4. The certainty of notice of violation also depends upon a number of factors. In the absence of good faith, it is to be doubted whether any system can be designed which will give certainty of notice of violation. International ownership of raw materials and fissionable materials and international ownership and operation of dangerous facilities, coupled with inspection based on continuous unlimited freedom of access to all parts of the Soviet Union (as well as to all parts of the territory of other signatories to the control agreement) appear to be necessary to give the requisite degree of assurance against secret violations. As the Soviet stockpile of fissionable materials grows, the amount which the USSR might
secretly withhold and not declare to the inspection agency grows. In this sense, the earlier an agreement is consummated the greater the security it would offer. The possibility of successful secret production operations also increases with developments which may reduce the size and power consumption of individual reactors. The development of a thermonuclear bomb would increase many fold the damage a given amount of fissionable material could do and would, therefore, vastly increase the danger that a decisive advantage could be gained through secret operations.

5. The relative sacrifices which would be involved in international control need also to be considered. If it were possible to negotiate an effective system of international control the United States would presumably sacrifice a much larger stockpile of atomic weapons and a much larger production capacity than would the USSR. The opening up of national territory to international inspection involved in an adequate control and inspection system would have a far greater impact on the USSR than on the United States. If the control system involves the destruction of all large reactors and thus a moratorium on certain possible peacetime uses, the USSR can be expected to argue that it, because of greater need for new sources of energy, would be making a greater sacrifice in this regard than the United States.

6. The United States and the peoples of the world as a whole desire a respite from the dangers of atomic warfare. The chief difficulty lies in the danger that the respite would be short and that we might not have adequate notice of its pending termination. For such an arrangement to be in the interest of the United States, it is essential that the agreement be entered into in good faith by both sides and the probability against its violation high.

7. The most substantial contribution to security of an effective international control system would, of course, be the opening up of the Soviet Union, as required under the UN plan. Such opening up is not, however, compatible with the maintenance of the Soviet system in its present rigor. If the control system involves the destruction of all large reactors and thus a moratorium on certain possible peacetime uses, the USSR can be expected to argue that it, because of greater need for new sources of energy, would be making a greater sacrifice in this regard than the United States.

The principal immediate benefit of international control would be to make a surprise atomic attack impossible, assuming the elimination of large reactors and the effective disposal of stockpiles of fissionable materials. But it is almost certain that the Soviet Union would not agree to the elimination of large reactors, unless the impracticability of producing atomic power for peaceful purposes had been demonstrated beyond a doubt. By the same token, it would not now agree to elimination of its stockpile of fissionable materials.

Finally, the absence of good faith on the part of the USSR must be assumed until there is concrete evidence that there has been a decisive change in Soviet policies. It is to be doubted whether such a change can take place without a change in the nature of the Soviet system itself.

The above considerations make it clear that at least a major change in the relative power positions of the United States and the Soviet Union would have to take place before an effective system of international control could be negotiated. The Soviet Union would have had to have moved a substantial distance down the path of accommodation and compromise before such an arrangement would be conceivable. This conclusion is supported by the Third Report of the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission to the Security Council, May 17, 1948, in which it is stated that "... the majority of the Commission has been unable to secure ... their acceptance of the nature and extent of participation in the world community required of all nations in this field.... As a result, the Commission has been forced to recognize that agreement on effective measures for the control of atomic energy is itself dependent on cooperation in broader fields of policy."

In short, it is impossible to hope than an effective plan for international control can be negotiated unless and until the Kremlin design has been frustrated to a point at which a genuine and drastic change in Soviet policies has taken place.

IX. Possible Courses of Action

Introduction. Four possible courses of action by the United States in the present situation can be distinguished. They are:
The Kremlin will have three major objectives in negotiations with the United States. The first is to eliminate the atomic
agreement widens.

In the second place, assuming that the United States in cooperation with other free countries decides and acts to increase
program and to minimize the immediate risks of war. It is urgently necessary for the United States to determine its
behaviors and such participation in a world organization. The fact that such conduct by the Soviet Union is impossible
result of the Kremlin's unwillingness to accept such terms or of its bad faith in observing them.

Clearly under present circumstances we will not be able to negotiate a settlement which calls for a change in the Soviet
system. What, then, is the role of negotiation?

In the first place, the public in the United States and in other free countries will require, as a condition to firm policies
adequate programs directed to the frustration of the Kremlin design, that the free world be continuously prepared to
negotiate agreements with the Soviet Union on equitable terms. It is still argued by many people here and abroad that
equitable agreements with the Soviet Union are possible, and this view will gain force if the Soviet Union begins to
eround up of the Soviet Union and such evidence in other ways of its good faith and its intent to co-exist in
peace as to reflect or at least initiate a change in the Soviet system.

The problem is to create such political and economic conditions in the free world, backed by force sufficient to inhibit
Soviet attack, that the Kremlin will accommodate itself to these conditions, gradually withdraw, and eventually change
its policies drastically. It has been shown in Chapter VIII that truly effective control of atomic energy would require
such an opening up of the Soviet Union and such evidence in other ways of its good faith and its intent to co-exist in
peace as to reflect or at least initiate a change in the Soviet system.

A negotiator always
defend ourselves in the event that the free world is attacked.

The role of negotiation. Negotiation must be considered in relation to these courses of action. A negotiator always
attempts to achieve an agreement which is somewhat better than the realities of his fundamental position would justify
and which is, in any case, not worse than his fundamental position requires. This is as true in relations among sovereign
states as in relations between individuals. The Soviet Union possesses several advantages over the free world in
negotiations on any issue:

a. It can and does enforce secrecy on all significant facts about conditions within the Soviet Union, so that it can be
expected to know more about the realities of the free world's position than the free world knows about its position;
b. It does not have to be responsive in any important sense to public opinion;
c. It does not have to consult and agree with any other countries on the terms it will offer 'And accept; and
d. It can influence public opinion in other countries while insulating the peoples under its control.

These are important advantages. Together with the unfavorable trend of our power position, they militate, as is shown in
Section A below, against successful negotiation of a general settlement at this time. For although the United States
probably now possesses, principally in atomic weapons, a force adequate to deliver a powerful blow upon the Soviet
Union and to open the road to victory in a long war, it is not sufficient by itself to advance the position of the United
States in the cold war.

The free countries must always, therefore, be prepared to negotiate and must be ready to take the initiative at times in
seeking negotiation. They must develop a negotiating position which defines the issues and the terms on which they
would be prepared--and at what stages--to accept agreements with the Soviet Union. The terms must be fair in the view
of popular opinion in the free world. This means that they must be consistent with a positive program for peace--in
harmony with the United Nations' Charter and providing, at a minimum, for the effective control of all armaments by
the United Nations or a successor organization. The terms must not require more of the Soviet Union than such
behavior and such participation in a world organization. The fact that such conduct by the Soviet Union is impossible
without such a radical change in Soviet policies as to constitute a change in the Soviet system would then emerge as a
result of the Kremlin's unwillingness to accept such terms or of its bad faith in observing them.

A sound negotiating position is, therefore, an essential element in the ideological conflict. For some time after a
decision to build up strength, any offer of, or attempt at, negotiation of a general settlement along the lines of the
Berkeley speech by the Secretary of State could be only a tactic. 'Nevertheless, concurrently with a decision and a start
on building up the strength of the free world, it may be desirable to pursue this tactic both to gain public support for the
program and to minimize the immediate risks of war. It is urgently necessary for the United States to determine its
negotiating position and to obtain agreement with its major allies on the purposes and terms of negotiation.

In the second place, assuming that the United States in cooperation with other free countries decides and acts to increase
the strength of the free world and assuming that the Kremlin chooses the path of accommodation, it will from time to
time be necessary and desirable to negotiate on various specific issues with the Kremlin as the area of possible
agreement widens.

The Kremlin will have three major objectives in negotiations with the United States. The first is to eliminate the atomic
capabilities of the United States; the second is to prevent the effective mobilization of the superior potential of the free
world in human and material resources; and the third is to secure a withdrawal of United States forces from, and
commitments to, Europe and Japan. Depending on its evaluation of its own strengths and weaknesses as against the
West's (particularly the ability and will of the West to sustain its efforts), it will or will not be prepared to make
important concessions to achieve these major objectives. It is unlikely that the Kremlin's evaluation is such that it would
now be prepared to make significant concessions.

The objectives of the United States and other free countries in negotiations with the Soviet Union (apart from the
ideological objectives discussed above) are to record, in a formal fashion which will facilitate the consolidation and
further advance of our position, the process of Soviet accommodation to the new political, psychological, and economic
conditions in the world which will result from adoption of the fourth course of action and which will be supported by
the increasing military strength developed as an integral part of that course of action. In short, our objectives are to
record, where desirable, the gradual withdrawal of the Soviet Union and to facilitate that process by making negotiation,
if possible, always more expedient than resort to force.

It must be presumed that for some time the Kremlin will accept agreements only if it is convinced that by acting in bad
faith whenever and wherever there is an opportunity to do so with impunity, it can derive greater advantage from the
agreements than the free world. For this reason, we must take care that any agreements are enforceable or that they are
not susceptible of violation without detection and the possibility of effective countermeasures.

This further suggests that we will have to consider carefully the order in which agreements can be concluded.
Agreement on the control of atomic energy would result in a relatively greater disarmament of the United States than of
the Soviet Union, even assuming considerable progress in building up the strength of the free world in conventional
forces and weapons. It might be accepted by the Soviet Union as part of a deliberate design to move against Western
Europe and other areas of strategic importance with conventional forces and weapons. In this event, the United States
would find itself at war, having previously disarmed itself in its most important weapon, and would be engaged in a
race to redevelop atomic weapons.

This seems to indicate that for the time being the United States and other free countries would have to insist on
concurrent agreement on the control of nonatomic forces and weapons and perhaps on the other elements of a general
settlement, notably peace treaties with Germany, Austria, and Japan and the withdrawal of Soviet influence from the
satellites. If, contrary to our expectations, the Soviet Union should accept agreements promising effective control of
atomic energy and conventional armaments, without any other changes in Soviet policies, we would have to consider
very carefully whether we could accept such agreements. It is unlikely that this problem will arise.

To the extent that the United States and the rest of the free world succeed in so building up their strength in
conventional forces and weapons that a Soviet attack with similar forces could be thwarted or held, we will gain
increased flexibility and can seek agreements on the various issues in any order, as they become negotiable.

In the third place, negotiation will play a part in the building up of the strength of the free world, apart from the
ideological strength discussed above. This is most evident in the problems of Germany, Austria, and Japan. In the
process of building up strength, it may be desirable for the free nations, without the Soviet Union, to conclude separate
arrangements with Japan, Western Germany, and Austria which would enlist the energies and resources of these
countries in support of the free world. This will be difficult unless it has been demonstrated by attempted negotiation
with the Soviet Union that the Soviet Union is not prepared to accept treaties of peace which would leave these
countries free, under adequate safeguards, to participate in the United Nations and in regional or broader associations of
states consistent with the United Nations' Charter and providing security and adequate opportunities for the peaceful
development of their political and economic life.

This demonstrates the importance, from the point of view of negotiation as well as for its relationship to the building up
of the strength of the free world (see Section D below), of the problem of closer association--on a regional or a broader
basis--among the free countries.

In conclusion, negotiation is not a possible separate course of action but rather a means of gaining support for a program
of building strength, of recording, where necessary and desirable, progress in the cold war, and of facilitating further
progress while helping to minimize the risks of war. Ultimately, it is our objective to negotiate a settlement with the
Soviet Union (or a successor state or states) on which the world can place reliance as an enforceable instrument of
peace. But it is important to emphasize that such a settlement can only record the progress which the free world will
have made in creating a political and economic system in the world so successful that the frustration of the Kremlin's
design for world domination will be complete. The analysis in the following sections indicates that the building of such
a system requires expanded and accelerated programs for the carrying out of current policies.
1. Military aspects. On the basis of current programs, the United States has a large potential military capability but an actual capability which, though improving, is declining relative to the USSR, particularly in light of its probable fission bomb capability and possible thermonuclear bomb capability. The same holds true for the free world as a whole relative to the Soviet world as a whole. If war breaks out in 1950 or in the next few years, the United States and its allies, apart from a powerful atomic blow, will be compelled to conduct delaying actions, while building up their strength for a general offensive. A frank evaluation of the requirements, to defend the United States and its vital interests and to support a vigorous initiative in the cold war, on the one hand, and of present capabilities, on the other, indicates that there is a sharp and growing disparity between them.

A review of Soviet policy shows that the military capabilities, actual and potential, of the United States and the rest of the free world, together with the apparent determination of the free world to resist further Soviet expansion, have not induced the Kremlin to relax its pressures generally or to give up the initiative in the cold war. On the contrary, the Soviet Union has consistently pursued a bold foreign policy, modified only when its probing revealed a determination and an ability of the free world to resist encroachment upon it. The relative military capabilities of the free world are declining, with the result that its determination to resist may also decline and that the security of the United States and the free world as a whole will be jeopardized.

From the military point of view, the actual and potential capabilities of the United States, given a continuation of current and projected programs, will become less and less effective as a war deterrent. Improvement of the state of readiness will become more and more important not only to inhibit the launching of war by the Soviet Union but also to support a national policy designed to reverse the present ominous trends in international relations. A building up of the military capabilities of the United States and the free world is a pre-condition to the achievement of the objectives outlined in this report and to the protection of the United States against disaster.

Fortunately, the United States military establishment has been developed into a unified and effective force as a result of the policies laid down by the Congress and the vigorous carrying out of these policies by the Administration in the fields of both organization and economy. It is, therefore, a base upon which increased strength can be rapidly built with maximum efficiency and economy.

2. Political aspects. The Soviet Union is pursuing the initiative in the conflict with the free world. Its atomic capabilities, together with its successes in the Far East, have led to an increasing confidence on its part and to an increasing nervousness in Western Europe and the rest of the free world. We cannot be sure, of course, how vigorously the Soviet Union will pursue its initiative, nor can we be sure of the strength or weakness of the other free countries in reacting to it. There are, however, ominous signs of further deterioration in the Far East. There are also some indications that a decline in morale and confidence in Western Europe may be expected. In particular, the situation in Germany is unsettled. Should the belief or suspicion spread that the free nations are not now able to prevent the Soviet Union from taking, if it chooses, the military actions outlined in Chapter V, the determination of the free countries to resist probably would lessen and there would be an increasing temptation for them to seek a position of neutrality.

Politically, recognition of the military implications of a continuation of present trends will mean that the United States and especially other free countries will tend to shift to the defensive, or to follow a dangerous policy of bluff, because the maintenance of a firm initiative in the cold war is closely related to aggregate strength in being and readily available.

This is largely a problem of the incongruity of the current actual capabilities of the free world and the threat to it, for the free world has an economic and military potential far superior to the potential of the Soviet Union and its satellites. The shadow of Soviet force falls darkly on Western Europe and Asia and supports a policy of encroachment. The free world lacks adequate means--in the form of forces in being--to thwart such expansion locally. The United States will therefore be confronted more frequently with the dilemma of reacting totally to a limited extension of Soviet control or of not reacting at all (except with ineffectual protests and half measures). Continuation of present trends is likely to lead, therefore, to a gradual withdrawal under the direct or indirect pressure of the Soviet Union, until we discover one day that we have sacrificed positions of vital interest. In other words, the United States would have chosen, by lack of the necessary decisions and actions, to fall back to isolation in the Western Hemisphere. This course would at best result in only a relatively brief truce and would be ended either by our capitulation or by a defensive war--on unfavorable terms from unfavorable positions--against a Soviet Empire compromising all or most of Eurasia. (See Section B.)

3. Economic and social aspects. As was pointed out in Chapter VI, the present foreign economic policies and programs of the United States will not produce a solution to the problem of international economic equilibrium, notably the problem of the dollar gap, and will not create an economic base conducive to political stability in many important free countries.

The European Recovery Program has been successful in assisting the restoration and expansion of production in Western Europe and has been a major factor in checking the dry rot of Communism in Western Europe. However, little progress has been made toward the resumption by Western Europe of a position of influence in world affairs.
commensurate with its potential strength. Progress in this direction will require integrated political, economic, and military policies and programs, which are supported by the United States and the Western European countries and which will probably require a deeper participation by the United States than has been contemplated.

The Point IV Program and other assistance programs will not adequately supplement, as now projected, the efforts of other important countries to develop effective institutions, to improve the administration of their affairs, and to achieve a sufficient measure of economic development. The moderate regimes now in power in many countries, like India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and the Philippines, will probably be unable to restore or retain their popular support and authority unless they are assisted in bringing about a more rapid improvement of the economic and social structure than present programs will make possible.

The Executive Branch is now undertaking a study of the problem of the United States balance of payments and of the measures which might be taken by the United States to assist in establishing international economic equilibrium. This is a very important project and work on it should have a high priority. However, unless such an economic program is matched and supplemented by an equally far-sighted and vigorous political and military program, we will not be successful in checking and rolling back the Kremlin's drive.

4. Negotiation. In short, by continuing along its present course the free world will not succeed in making effective use of its vastly superior political, economic, and military potential to build a tolerable state of order among nations. On the contrary, the political, economic, and military situation of the free world is already unsatisfactory and will become less favorable unless we act to reverse present trends.

This situation is one which militates against successful negotiations with the Kremlin--for the terms of agreements on important pending issues would reflect present realities and would therefore be unacceptable, if not disastrous, to the United States and the rest of the free world. Unless a decision had been made and action undertaken to build up the strength, in the broadest sense, of the United States and the free world, an attempt to negotiate a general settlement on terms acceptable to us would be ineffective and probably long drawn out, and might thereby seriously delay the necessary measures to build up our strength.

This is true despite the fact that the United States now has the capability of delivering a powerful blow against the Soviet Union in the event of war, for one of the present realities is that the United States is not prepared to threaten the use of our present atomic superiority to coerce the Soviet Union into acceptable agreements. In light of present trends, the Soviet Union will not withdraw and the only conceivable basis for a general settlement would be spheres of influence and of no influenced "settlement" which the Kremlin could readily exploit to its great advantage. The idea that Germany or Japan or other important areas can exist as islands of neutrality in a divided world is unreal, given the Kremlin design for world domination.

B. THE SECOND COURSE--ISOLATION

Continuation of present trends, it has been shown above, will lead progressively to the withdrawal of the United States from most of its present commitments in Europe and Asia and to our isolation in the Western Hemisphere and its approaches. This would result not from a conscious decision but from a failure to take the actions necessary to bring our capabilities into line with our commitments and thus to a withdrawal under pressure. This pressure might come from our present Allies, who will tend to seek other "solutions" unless they have confidence in our determination to accelerate our efforts to build a successfully functioning political and economic system in the free world.

There are some who advocate a deliberate decision to isolate ourselves. Superficially, this has some attractiveness as a course of action, for it appears to bring our commitments and capabilities into harmony by reducing the former and by concentrating our present, or perhaps even reduced, military expenditures on the defense of the United States.

This argument overlooks the relativity of capabilities. With the United States in an isolated position, we would have to face the probability that the Soviet Union would quickly dominate most of Eurasia, probably without meeting armed resistance. It would thus acquire a potential far superior to our own, and would promptly proceed to develop this potential with the purpose of eliminating our power, which would, even in isolation, remain as a challenge to it and as an obstacle to the imposition of its kind of order in the world. There is no way to make ourselves inoffensive to the Kremlin except by complete submission to its will. Therefore isolation would in the end condemn us to capitulate or to fight alone and on the defensive, with drastically limited offensive and retaliatory capabilities in comparison with the Soviet Union. (These are the only possibilities, unless we are prepared to risk the future on the hazard that the Soviet Empire, because of over-extension or other reasons, will spontaneously destroy itself from within.)

The argument also overlooks the imponderable, but nevertheless drastic, effects on our belief in ourselves and in our way of life of a deliberate decision to isolate ourselves. As the Soviet Union came to dominate free countries, it is clear that many Americans would feel a deep sense of responsibility and guilt for having abandoned their former friends and
allies. As the Soviet Union mobilized the resources of Eurasia, increased its relative military capabilities, and heightened its threat to our security, some would be tempted to accept "peace" on its terms, while many would seek to defend the United States by creating a regimented system which would permit the assignment of a tremendous part of our resources to defense. Under such a state of affairs our national morale would be corrupted and the integrity and vitality of our system subverted.

Under this course of action, there would be no negotiation, unless on the Kremlin's terms, for we would have given up everything of importance.

It is possible that at some point in the course of isolation, many Americans would come to favor a surprise attack on the Soviet Union and the area under its control, in a desperate attempt to alter decisively the balance of power by an overwhelming blow with modern weapons of mass destruction. It appears unlikely that the Soviet Union would wait for such an attack before launching one of its own. But even if it did and even if our attack were successful, it is clear that the United States would face appalling tasks in establishing a tolerable state of order among nations after such a war and after Soviet occupation of all or most of Eurasia for some years. These tasks appear so enormous and success so unlikely that reason dictates an attempt to achieve our objectives by other means.

C. THE THIRD COURSE--WAR

Some Americans favor a deliberate decision to go to war against the Soviet Union in the near future. It goes without saying that the idea of "preventive" war--in the sense of a military attack not provoked by a military attack upon us or our allies--is generally unacceptable to Americans. Its supporters argue that since the Soviet Union is in fact at war with the free world now and that since the failure of the Soviet Union to use all-out military force is explainable on grounds of expediency, we are at war and should conduct ourselves accordingly. Some further argue that the free world is probably unable, except under the crisis of war, to mobilize and direct its resources to the checking and rolling back of the Kremlin's drive for world dominion. This is a powerful argument in the light of history, but the considerations against war are so compelling that the free world must demonstrate that this argument is wrong. The case for war is premised on the assumption that the United States could launch and sustain an attack of sufficient impact to gain a decisive advantage for the free world in a long war and perhaps to win an early decision.

The ability of the United States to launch effective offensive operations is now limited to attack with atomic weapons. A powerful blow could be delivered upon the Soviet Union, but it is estimated that these operations alone would not force or induce the Kremlin to capitulate and that the Kremlin would still be able to use the forces under its control to dominate most or all of Eurasia. This would probably mean a long and difficult struggle during which the free institutions of Western Europe and many freedom-loving people would be destroyed and the regenerative capacity of Western Europe dealt a crippling blow.

Apart from this, however, a surprise attack upon the Soviet Union, despite the provocativeness of recent Soviet behavior, would be repugnant to many Americans. Although the American people would probably rally in support of the war effort, the shock of responsibility for a surprise attack would be morally corrosive. Many would doubt that it was a "just war" and that all reasonable possibilities for a peaceful settlement had been explored in good faith. Many more, proportionately, would hold such views in other countries, particularly in Western Europe and particularly after Soviet occupation, if only because the Soviet Union would liquidate articulate opponents. It would, therefore, be difficult after such a war to create a satisfactory international order among nations. Victory in such a war would have brought us little if at all closer to victory in the fundamental ideological conflict.

These considerations are no less weighty because they are imponderable, and they rule out an attack unless it is demonstrably in the nature of a counter-attack to a blow which is on its way or about to be delivered. (The military advantages of landing the first blow become increasingly important with modern weapons, and this is a fact which requires us to be on the alert in order to strike with our full weight as soon as we are attacked, and, if possible, before the Soviet blow is actually delivered.) If the argument of Chapter IV is accepted, it follows that there is no "easy" solution and that the only sure victory lies in the frustration of the Kremlin design by the steady development of the moral and material strength of the free world and its projection into the Soviet world in such a way as to bring about an internal change in the Soviet system.

D. THE REMAINING COURSE OF ACTION--A RAPID BUILD-UP OF POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND MILITARY STRENGTH IN THE FREE WORLD

A more rapid build-up of political, economic, and military strength and thereby of confidence in the free world than is now contemplated is the only course which is consistent with progress toward achieving our fundamental purpose. The frustration of the Kremlin design requires the free world to develop a successfully functioning political and economic
system and a vigorous political offensive against the Soviet Union. These, in turn, require an adequate military shield under which they can develop. It is necessary to have the military power to deter, if possible, Soviet expansion, and to defeat, if necessary, aggressive Soviet or Soviet-directed actions of a limited or total character. The potential strength of the free world is great; its ability to develop these military capabilities and its will to resist Soviet expansion will be determined by the wisdom and will with which it undertakes to meet its political and economic problems.

1. Military aspects. It has been indicated in Chapter VI that U.S. military capabilities are strategically more defensive in nature than offensive and are more potential than actual. It is evident, from an analysis of the past and of the trend of weapon development, that there is now and will be in the future no absolute defense. The history of war also indicates that a favorable decision can only be achieved through offensive action. Even a defensive strategy, if it is to be successful, calls not only for defensive forces to hold vital positions while mobilizing and preparing for the offensive, but also for offensive forces to attack the enemy and keep him off balance.

The two fundamental requirements which must be met by forces in being or readily available are support of foreign policy and protection against disaster. To meet the second requirement, the forces in being or readily available must be able, at a minimum, to perform certain basic tasks:

a. To defend the Western Hemisphere and essential allied areas in order that their war-making capabilities can be developed;
b. To provide and protect a mobilization base while the offensive forces required for victory are being built up;
c. To conduct offensive operations to destroy vital elements of the Soviet war-making capacity, and to keep the enemy off balance until the full offensive strength of the United States and its allies can be brought to bear;
d. To defend and maintain the lines of communication and base areas necessary to the execution of the above tasks; and
e. To provide such aid to allies as is essential to the execution of their role in the above tasks.

In the broadest terms, the ability to perform these tasks requires a build-up of military strength by the United States and its allies to a point at which the combined strength will be superior for at least these tasks, both initially and throughout a war, to the forces that can be brought to bear by the Soviet Union and its satellites. In specific terms, it is not essential to match item for item with the Soviet Union, but to provide an adequate defense against air attack on the United States and Canada and an adequate defense against air and surface attack on the United Kingdom and Western Europe, Alaska, the Western Pacific, Africa, and the Near and Middle East, and on the long lines of communication to these areas. Furthermore, it is mandatory that in building up our strength, we enlarge upon our technical superiority by an accelerated exploitation of the scientific potential of the United States and our allies.

Forces of this size and character are necessary not only for protection against disaster but also to support our foreign policy. In fact, it can be argued that larger forces in being and readily available are necessary to inhibit a would-be aggressor than to provide the nucleus of strength and the mobilization base on which the tremendous forces required for victory can be built. For example, in both World Wars I and 11 the ultimate victors had the strength, in the end, to win though they had not had the strength in being or readily available to prevent the outbreak of war. In part, at least, this was because they had not had the military strength on which to base a strong foreign policy. At any rate, it is clear that a substantial and rapid building up of strength in the free world is necessary to support a firm policy intended to check and to roll back the Kremlin's drive for world domination.

Moreover, the United States and the other free countries do not now have the forces in being and readily available to defeat local Soviet moves with local action, but must accept reverses or make these local moves the occasion for war--for which we are not prepared. This situation makes for great uneasiness among our allies, particularly in Western Europe, for whom total war means, initially, Soviet occupation. Thus, unless our combined strength is rapidly increased, our allies will tend to become increasingly reluctant to support a firm foreign policy on our part and increasingly anxious to seek other solutions, even though they are aware that appeasement means defeat. An important advantage in adopting the fourth course of action lies in its psychological impact--the revival of confidence and hope in the future. It is recognized, of course, that any announcement of the recommended course of action could be exploited by the Soviet Union in its peace campaign and would have adverse psychological effects in certain parts of the free world until the necessary increase in strength has been achieved. Therefore, in any announcement of policy and in the character of the measures adopted, emphasis should be given to the essentially defensive character and care should be taken to minimize, so far as possible, unfavorable domestic and foreign reactions.

2. Political and economic aspects. The immediate objectives--to the achievement of which such a build-up of strength is necessary though not a sufficient condition--are a renewed initiative in the cold war and a situation to which the Kremlin would find it expedient to accommodate itself, first by relaxing tensions and pressures and then by gradual withdrawal. The United States cannot alone provide the resources required for such a build-up of strength. The other free countries must carry their part of the burden, but their ability and determination to do it will depend on the action the United States takes to develop its own strength and on the adequacy of its foreign political and economic policies. Improvement in political and economic conditions in the free world, as has been emphasized above, is necessary as a
basis for building up the will and the means to resist and for dynamically affirming the integrity and vitality of our free and democratic way of life on which our ultimate victory depends.

At the same time, we should take dynamic steps to reduce the power and influence of the Kremlin inside the Soviet Union and other areas under its control. The objective would be the establishment of friendly regimes not under Kremlin domination. Such action is essential to engage the Kremlin's attention, keep it off balance, and force an increased expenditure of Soviet resources in counteraction. In other words, it would be the current Soviet cold war technique used against the Soviet Union.

A program for rapidly building up strength and improving political and economic conditions will place heavy demands on our courage and intelligence; it will be costly; it will be dangerous. But half-measures will be more costly and more dangerous, for they will be inadequate to prevent and may actually invite war. Budgetary considerations will need to be subordinated to the stark fact that our very independence as a nation may be at stake.

A comprehensive and decisive program to win the peace and frustrate the Kremlin design should be so designed that it can be sustained for as long as necessary to achieve our national objectives. It would probably involve:

1. The development of an adequate political and economic framework for the achievement of our long-range objectives.
2. A substantial increase in expenditures for military purposes adequate to meet the requirements for the tasks listed in Section D-1.
3. A substantial increase in military assistance programs, designed to foster cooperative efforts, which will adequately and efficiently meet the requirements of our allies for the tasks referred to in Section D-1-e.
4. Some increase in economic assistance programs and recognition of the need to continue these programs until their purposes have been accomplished.
5. A concerted attack on the problem of the United States balance of payments, along the lines already approved by the President.
6. Development of programs designed to build and maintain confidence among other peoples in our strength and resolution, and to wage overt psychological warfare calculated to encourage mass defections from Soviet allegiance and to frustrate the Kremlin design in other ways.
7. Intensification of affirmative and timely measures and operations by covert means in the fields of economic warfare and political and psychological warfare with a view to fomenting and supporting unrest and revolt in selected strategic satellite countries.
8. Development of internal security and civilian defense programs.
9. Improvement and intensification of intelligence activities.
10. Reduction of Federal expenditures for purposes other than defense and foreign assistance, if necessary by the deferment of certain desirable programs.
11. Increased taxes.

Essential as prerequisites to the success of this program would be (a) consultations with Congressional leaders designed to make the program the object of non-partisan legislative support, and (b) a presentation to the public of a full explanation of the facts and implications of present international trends.

The program will be costly, but it is relevant to recall the disproportion between the potential capabilities of the Soviet and non-Soviet worlds (cf. Chapters V and VI). The Soviet Union is currently devoting about 40 percent of available resources (gross national product plus reparations, equal in 1949 to about $65 billion) to military expenditures (14 percent) and to investment (26 percent), much of which is in war-supporting industries. In an emergency the Soviet Union could increase the allocation of resources to these purposes to about 50 percent, or by one-fourth.

The United States is currently devoting about 22 percent of its gross national product ($255 billion in 1949) to military expenditures (6 percent), foreign assistance (2 percent), and investment (14 percent), little of which is in war-supporting industries. (As was pointed out in Chapter V, the "fighting value" obtained per dollar of expenditure by the Soviet Union considerably exceeds that obtained by the United States, primarily because of the extremely low military and civilian living standards in the Soviet Union.) In an emergency the United States could devote upward of 50 percent of its gross national product to these purposes (as it did during the last war), an increase of several times present expenditures for direct and indirect military purposes and foreign assistance.

From the point of view of the economy as a whole, the program might not result in a real decrease in the standard of living, for the economic effects of the program might be to increase the gross national product by more than the amount being absorbed for additional military and foreign assistance purposes. One of the most significant lessons of our World War 11 experience was that the American economy, when it operates at a level approaching full efficiency, can provide enormous resources for purposes other than civilian consumption while simultaneously providing a high standard of living. After allowing for price changes, personal consumption expenditures rose by about one-fifth between 1939 and 1944, even though the economy had in the meantime increased the amount of resources going into Government use by
$60 \text{ to } $65 billion (in 1939 prices).

This comparison between the potentials of the Soviet Union and the United States also holds true for the Soviet world and the free world and is of fundamental importance in considering the courses of action open to the United States.

The comparison gives renewed emphasis to the fact that the problems faced by the free countries in their efforts to build a successfully functioning system lie not so much in the field of economics as in the field of politics. The building of such a system may require more rapid progress toward the closer association of the free countries in harmony with the concept of the United Nations. It is clear that our long-range objectives require a strengthened United Nations, or a successor organization, to which the world can look for the maintenance of peace and order in a system based on freedom and justice. It also seems clear that a unifying ideal of this kind might awaken and arouse the latent spiritual energies of free men everywhere and obtain their enthusiastic support for a positive program for peace going far beyond the frustration of the Kremlin design and opening vistas to the future that would outweigh short-run sacrifices.

The threat to the free world involved in the development of the Soviet Union's atomic and other capabilities will rise steadily and rather rapidly. For the time being, the United States possesses a marked atomic superiority over the Soviet Union which, together with the potential capabilities of the United States and other free countries in other forces and weapons, inhibits aggressive Soviet action. This provides an opportunity for the United States, in cooperation with other free countries, to launch a build-up of strength which will support a firm policy directed to the frustration of the Kremlin design. The immediate goal of our efforts to build a successfully functioning political and economic system in the free world backed by adequate military strength is to postpone and avert the disastrous situation which, in light of the Soviet Union's probable fission bomb capability and possible thermonuclear bomb capability, might arise in 1954 on a continuation of our present programs. By acting promptly and vigorously in such a way that this date is, so to speak, pushed into the future, we would permit time for the process of accommodation, withdrawal and frustration to produce the necessary changes in the Soviet system. Time is short, however, and the risks of war attendant upon a decision to build up strength will steadily increase the longer we defer it.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The foregoing analysis indicates that the probable fission bomb capability and possible thermonuclear bomb capability of the Soviet Union have greatly intensified the Soviet threat to the security of the United States. This threat is of the same character as that described in NSC 20/4 (approved by the President on November 24, 1948) but is more immediate than had previously been estimated. In particular, the United States now faces the contingency that within the next four or five years the Soviet Union will possess the military capability of delivering a surprise atomic attack of such weight that the United States must have substantially increased general air, ground, and sea strength, atomic capabilities, and air and civilian defenses to deter war and to provide reasonable assurance, in the event of war, that it could survive the initial blow and go on to the eventual attainment of its objectives. In return, this contingency requires the intensification of our efforts in the fields of intelligence and research and development.

Allowing for the immediacy of the danger, the following statement of Soviet threats, contained in NSC 20/4, remains valid:

1. The gravest threat to the security of the United States within the foreseeable future stems from the hostile designs and formidable power of the USSR, and from the nature of the Soviet system.

15. The political, economic, and psychological warfare which the USSR is now waging has dangerous potentialities for weakening the relative world position of the United States and disrupting its traditional institutions by means short of war, unless sufficient resistance is encountered in the policies of this and other non-communist countries.

16. The risk of war with the USSR is sufficient to warrant, in common prudence, timely and adequate preparation by the United States.

a. Even though present estimates indicate that the Soviet leaders probably do not intend deliberate armed action involving the United States at this time, the possibility of such deliberate resort to war cannot be ruled out.

b. Now and for the foreseeable future there is a continuing danger that war will arise either through Soviet miscalculation of the determination of the United States to use all the means
at its command to safeguard its security, through Soviet misinterpretation of our intentions, or through U.S. miscalculation of Soviet reactions to measures which we might take.

17. Soviet domination of the potential power of Eurasia, whether achieved by armed aggression or by political and subversive means, would be strategically and politically unacceptable to the United States.

18. The capability of the United States either in peace or in the event of war to cope with threats to its security or to gain its objectives would be severely weakened by internal development, important among which are:

a. Serious espionage, subversion and sabotage, particularly by concerted and well-directed communist activity.

b. Prolonged or exaggerated economic instability.

c. Internal political and social disunity.

d. Inadequate or excessive armament or foreign aid expenditures.

e. An excessive or wasteful usage of our resources in time of peace.

f. Lessening of U.S. prestige and influence through vacillation of appeasement or lack of skill and imagination in the conduct of its foreign policy or by shirking world responsibilities.

g. Development of a false sense of security through a deceptive change in Soviet tactics.

Although such developments as those indicated in paragraph 18 above would severely weaken the capability of the United States and its allies to cope with the Soviet threat to their security, considerable progress has been made since 1948 in laying the foundation upon which adequate strength can now be rapidly built.

The analysis also confirms that our objectives with respect to the Soviet Union, in time of peace as well as in time of war, as stated in NSC 20/4 (para. 19), are still valid, as are the aims and measures stated therein (paras. 20 and 21). Our current security programs and strategic plans are based upon these objectives, aims, and measures:

19.

a. To reduce the power and influence of the USSR to limits which no longer constitute a threat to the peace, national independence, and stability of the world family of nations.

b. To bring about a basic change in the conduct of international relations by the government in power in Russia, to conform with the purposes and principles set forth in the UN Charter.

In pursuing these objectives, due care must be taken to avoid permanently impairing our economy and the fundamental values and institutions inherent in our way of life.

20. We should endeavor to achieve our general objectives by methods short of war through the pursuit of the following aims:

a. To encourage and promote the gradual retraction of undue Russian power and influence from the present perimeter areas around traditional Russian boundaries and the emergence of the satellite countries as entities independent of the USSR.

b. To encourage the development among the Russian peoples of attitudes which may help to modify current Soviet behavior and permit a revival of the national life of groups evidencing the ability and determination to achieve and maintain national independence.
c. To eradicate the myth by which people remote from Soviet military influence are held in a position of subservience to Moscow and to cause the world at large to see and understand the true nature of the USSR and the Soviet-directed world communist party, and to adopt a logical and realistic attitude toward them.

d. To create situations which will compel the Soviet Government to recognize the practical undesirability of acting on the basis of its present concepts and the necessity of behaving in accordance with precepts of international conduct, as set forth in the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.

21. Attainment of these aims requires that the United States:

a. Develop a level of military readiness which can be maintained as long as necessary as a deterrent to Soviet aggression, as indispensable support to our political attitude toward the USSR, as a source of encouragement to nations resisting Soviet political aggression, and as an adequate basis for immediate military commitments and for rapid mobilization should war prove unavoidable.

b. Assure the internal security of the United States against dangers of sabotage, subversion, and espionage.

c. Maximize our economic potential, including the strengthening of our peacetime economy and the establishment of essential reserves readily available in the event of war.

d. Strengthen the orientation toward the United States of the non-Soviet nations; and help such of those nations as are able and willing to make an important contribution to U.S. security, to increase their economic and political stability and their military capability.

e. Place the maximum strain on the Soviet structure of power and particularly on the relationships between Moscow and the satellite countries.

f. Keep the U.S. public fully informed and cognizant of the threats to our national security so that it will be prepared to support the measures which we must accordingly adopt.

In the light of present and prospective Soviet atomic capabilities, the action which can be taken under present programs and plans, however, becomes dangerously inadequate, in both timing and scope, to accomplish the rapid progress toward the attainment of the United States political, economic, and military objectives which is now imperative.

A continuation of present trends would result in a serious decline in the strength of the free world relative to the Soviet Union and its satellites. This unfavorable trend arises from the inadequacy of current programs and plans rather than from any error in our objectives and aims. These trends lead in the direction of isolation, not by deliberate decision but by lack of the necessary basis for a vigorous initiative in the conflict with the Soviet Union.

Our position as the center of power in the free world places a heavy responsibility upon the United States for leadership. We must organize and enlist the energies and resources of the free world in a positive program for peace which will frustrate the Kremlin design for world domination by creating a situation in the free world to which the Kremlin will be compelled to adjust. Without such a cooperative effort, led by the United States, we will have to make gradual withdrawals under pressure until we discover one day that we have sacrificed positions of vital interest.

It is imperative that this trend be reversed by a much more rapid and concerted build-up of the actual strength of both the United States and the other nations of the free world. The analysis shows that this will be costly and will involve significant domestic financial and economic adjustments.

The execution of such a build-up, however, requires that the United States have an affirmative program beyond the solely defensive one of countering the threat posed by the Soviet Union. This program must light the path to peace and order among nations in a system based on freedom and justice, as contemplated in the Charter of the United Nations. Further, it must envisage the political and economic measures with which and the military shield behind which the free world can work to frustrate the Kremlin design by the strategy of the cold war; for every consideration of devotion to our fundamental values and to our national security demands that we achieve our objectives by the strategy of the cold war, building up our military strength in order that it may not have to be used. The only sure victory lies in the
frustration of the Kremlin design by the steady development of the moral and material strength of the free world and its projection into the Soviet world in such a way as to bring about an internal change in the Soviet system. Such a positive program—harmonious with our fundamental national purpose and our objectives—is necessary if we are to regain and retain the initiative and to win and hold the necessary popular support and cooperation in the United States and the rest of the free world.

This program should include a plan for negotiation with the Soviet Union, developed and agreed with our allies and which is consonant with our objectives. The United States and its allies, particularly the United Kingdom and France, should always be ready to negotiate with the Soviet Union on terms consistent with our objectives. The present world situation, however, is one which militates against successful negotiations with the Kremlin—for the terms of agreements on important pending issues would reflect present realities and would therefore be unacceptable, if not disastrous, to the United States and the rest of the free world. After a decision and a start on building up the strength of the free world has been made, it might then be desirable for the United States to take an initiative in seeking negotiations in the hope that it might facilitate the process of accommodation by the Kremlin to the new situation. Failing that, the unwillingness of the Kremlin to accept equitable terms or its bad faith in observing them would assist in consolidating popular opinion in the free world in support of the measures necessary to sustain the build-up.

In summary, we must, by means of a rapid and sustained build-up of the political, economic, and military strength of the free world, and by means of an affirmative program intended to wrest the initiative from the Soviet Union, confront it with convincing evidence of the determination and ability of the free world to frustrate the Kremlin design of a world dominated by its will. Such evidence is the only means short of war which eventually may force the Kremlin to abandon its present course of action and to negotiate acceptable agreements on issues of major importance.

The whole success of the proposed program hangs ultimately on recognition by this Government, the American people, and all free peoples, that the cold war is in fact a real war in which the survival of the free world is at stake. Essential prerequisites to success are consultations with Congressional leaders designed to make the program the object of non-partisan legislative support, and a presentation to the public of a full explanation of the facts and implications of the present international situation. The prosecution of the program will require of us all the ingenuity, sacrifice, and unity demanded by the vital importance of the issue and the tenacity to persevere until our national objectives have been attained.

Recommendations

That the President:

a. Approve the foregoing Conclusions.

b. Direct the National Security Council, under the continuing direction of the President, and with the participation of other Departments and Agencies as appropriate, to coordinate and insure the implementation of the Conclusions herein on an urgent and continuing basis for as long as necessary to achieve our objectives. For this purpose, representatives of the member Departments and Agencies, the Joint Chiefs of Staff or their deputies, and other Departments and Agencies as required should be constituted as a revised and strengthened staff organization under the National Security Council to develop coordinated programs for consideration by the National Security Council.

NOTES

1. Marshal Tito, the Communist leader of Yugoslavia, broke away from the Soviet bloc in 1948.

2. The Secretary of State listed seven areas in which the Soviet Union could modify its behavior in such a way as to permit co-existence in reasonable security. These were:

   1. Treaties of peace with Austria, Germany, Japan and relaxation of pressures in the Far East;
   2. Withdrawal of Soviet forces and influence from satellite area;
   3. Cooperation in the United Nations;
   4. Control of atomic energy and of conventional armaments;
   5. Abandonment of indirect aggression;
   6. Proper treatment of official representatives of the U.S.;
   7. Increased access to the Soviet Union of persons and ideas from other countries. [Footnote in the source text. For the text of the address delivered by Secretary Acheson at the University of California, Berkeley, on March 16, 1950, concerning United States--Soviet relations, see Department of State Bulletin, March 27, 1950, pp. 473-478.]
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