

Canadian
Forces
College

Collège
des
Forces
Canadiennes



IRREGULAR WARFARE IN VIETNAM: THE AMERICAN DEBACLE

Maj C.D. Sykora

JCSP 43 DL

Exercise Solo Flight

Disclaimer

Opinions expressed remain those of the author and do not represent Department of National Defence or Canadian Forces policy. This paper may not be used without written permission.

© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, as represented by the Minister of National Defence, 2018.

PCEMI 43 AD

Exercice Solo Flight

Avertissement

Les opinions exprimées n'engagent que leurs auteurs et ne reflètent aucunement des politiques du Ministère de la Défense nationale ou des Forces canadiennes. Ce papier ne peut être reproduit sans autorisation écrite.

© Sa Majesté la Reine du Chef du Canada, représentée par le ministre de la Défense nationale, 2018.

EXERCISE *SOLO FLIGHT* – EXERCICE *SOLO FLIGHT*

**IRREGULAR WARFARE IN VIETNAM:
THE AMERICAN DEBACLE**

Maj C.D. Sykora

“This paper was written by a student attending the Canadian Forces College in fulfilment of one of the requirements of the Course of Studies. The paper is a scholastic document, and thus contains facts and opinions, which the author alone considered appropriate and correct for the subject. It does not necessarily reflect the policy or the opinion of any agency, including the Government of Canada and the Canadian Department of National Defence. This paper may not be released, quoted or copied, except with the express permission of the Canadian Department of National Defence.”

Word Count: 3253

“La présente étude a été rédigée par un stagiaire du Collège des Forces canadiennes pour satisfaire à l'une des exigences du cours. L'étude est un document qui se rapporte au cours et contient donc des faits et des opinions que seul l'auteur considère appropriés et convenables au sujet. Elle ne reflète pas nécessairement la politique ou l'opinion d'un organisme quelconque, y compris le gouvernement du Canada et le ministère de la Défense nationale du Canada. Il est défendu de diffuser, de citer ou de reproduire cette étude sans la permission expresse du ministère de la Défense nationale.”

Compte de mots: 3253

IRREGULAR WARFARE IN VIETNAM: THE AMERICAN DEBACLE

Introduction

Insurgencies and counter-insurgencies have been part of conflicts since the beginning of time, and both will continue to be prominent in future conflicts. The reality is not all adversaries have equal resources, and for this reason, an inferior force may choose to adopt tactics - strategic to tactical - to best accomplish their objectives. Due to painful past experiences and lessons learned from mistakes, the United States (U.S.) is perceived to possess the best counter-insurgency force today.¹

It is well documented that the might of the conventional U.S. military has struggled with counter-insurgency when faced with a sophisticated, cunning and determined adversary. The U.S. experience in Southeast Asia is a lasting depiction of a weakly crafted counter-insurgency strategy, overconfidence and an unclear understanding of the region.² These errors led to disastrous results, ultimately ending a decade-long effort in what many consider to be America's first lost war, a strategic defeat, costing 58 000 lives.³ The Americans would find it an insurmountable task to stave off the communist aggression in a prolonged war with an inadequate strategy, conscripted military, and divided public while keeping a pulse on Europe for potential Soviet aggression.⁴ The U.S. failure in Vietnam was not a foregone conclusion but a

¹ O'Hanlan, Michael. "America's History of Counterinsurgency." Brookings Institution, Counterinsurgency and Pakistan Paper Series, No.4, 21 June 2008.

² O'Malley, Michael. "The Vietnam War and the Tragedy of Containment." History 122. 14

³ Connable, Ben. "Learning from the Vietnam-Era Strategic Assessment Failure." 30

⁴ O'Hanlan, Michael. "America's History of Counterinsurgency." Brookings Institution, Counterinsurgency and Pakistan Paper Series, No.4, 21 June 2008.

result of strategic and leadership blunders that led to the mismanagement and misinformation of the war effort.

Thesis

This essay will explore how the U.S. commitment to contain the communist expansion in Southeast Asia led to a weakly-crafted strategy and a disastrous execution of a counter-insurgency campaign in Vietnam. I will examine how leadership at various levels were responsible for the strategy's development and implementation, as well as how it affected the tactics employed on the ground, specifically concerning pacification and border control.

Irregular Warfare Definitions and Background

Insurgency is defined as “an organized, protracted politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or political authority while increasing insurgent control.”⁵ Counter-insurgency is described as “a military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency.”⁶ The greatest strengths of an irregular force range from tactics employed, effective use of resources, charismatic leadership and support of the population. The greatest weakness of a counter-insurgency force is to maintain the status quo and not adapting strategy and tactics to deal with the emerging threat.

⁵ Millson, Christopher. “Comparing Counterinsurgency tactics in Iraq and Vietnam.” *Inquiries Journal – Social Sciences, Arts, & Humanities*, Vol. 3 NO. 05, 2011. 1

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1

Each insurgency possesses unique characteristics, and counter-insurgency campaigns require multiple initiatives to become successful. Counter-insurgency must have various supporting lines of operations, forces proficient in conducting multi-dimensional operations and prepared to fight at the military and political levels in unison.⁷ Unfortunately for the U.S., they were not strategically prepared to accomplish this as they were gearing up to fight the last war.

U.S. Context

During the Cold War, due to their financial and military prowess, the Americans were looked upon by others as democracy saviors to the emerging communist powers – the Soviet Union and China. The fear was that the Kremlin was steadfast in spreading the communist ideology around the globe, hoping for world domination.⁸ With this concern and the Soviets having developed their own nuclear arsenal, politicians were forced to seek strategies to hold back the communist threat. Under President Truman, the U.S. established and implemented a foreign policy called “containment”. Containment was the “national objective to defend the freedom of all independent nations worldwide,”⁹ and its goal was not to be directly engaged in a conventional war with the Soviets but rather confining the Soviets and communism within existing boundaries. The perception was that a patient but determined policy to contain the Soviets would frustrate them enough to abandon their goal of world domination.¹⁰

This doctrine would lead directly to two conflicts, first Korea and then Vietnam. Like Korea, Vietnam would become another Cold War proxy conflict to stop communist expansion,

⁷ RAND Corporation. “Key to Successful Counterinsurgency Campaigns Explored.” 19 July 2010. 2

⁸ Bright, James M. Maj. “A Failure in Strategy: America and the Vietnam War 1965-1968.” United States Marine Corp Command and Staff College, 12 April 2001. 3

⁹ Ibid., 3

¹⁰ Ibid., 4

specifically preventing the domino effect. Unfortunately, Vietnam bordering three countries - China, Laos, and Cambodia - and its unique and diverse terrain - plains, hills, jungles, and densely forested mountains - along with high temperatures and humidity, made it a formidable environment to conduct military operations.

U.S. Strategy

Internationally, Vietnam had limited strategic value to the U.S. but would soon become the chosen battlefield between ideologies, as no President wanted to appear to be spineless to the threat of communism.¹¹ As communism was effectively stopped on the Korea peninsula, this paved the way for containment in the newly threatened region of Vietnam. Unlike Korea, which is isolated from other countries other than the communist North, Vietnam borders numerous countries. The “Domino Theory” morphed from the containment policy argued that the fall of one country to communism would lead neighboring countries to follow suit, destabilizing the region.¹²

With the Domino Theory clearly at the forefront, the U.S. strategy was primarily to contain communism above the 17th parallel. What also assisted in shaping this poor strategy was the mistake of fighting the last war. Politicians wished to avoid past mistakes and recognized similarities in Korea and Vietnam – communist North endeavoring to invade the democratic South, Soviet and Chinese support in the North and American support in the South, and the Northern communist countries shared a border with China acting as a buffer state.¹³ It was the

¹¹ Crousore, D.M. Maj. “Vietnam: A Failure of Strategy and Leadership.” United States Marine Corp Command and Staff College, 30 April 2013. 4

¹² O’Malley, Michael. “The Vietnam War and the Tragedy of Containment.” History 122. 6

¹³ Morelock, Jerry D. “Strategy for Failure: America’s War in Vietnam.” HistoryNet, 14 April 2017. 2

fear of Chinese intervention, as was the case in Korea, which influenced politicians when deciding on the strategy of U.S. ground forces. Not wanting to provide China with an excuse to intervene militarily as it did in Korea, U.S. ground forces were restricted only to the territories of South Vietnam, thereby ensuring the neutrality of neighboring countries would be respected, and North Vietnam would remain off limits.¹⁴ The overall strategy on the use of ground forces would prove costly as this limitation would not allow for the proper use of forces to win the war. This strategy “placed American forces permanently on the strategic defensive...America had surrendered the strategic initiative to North Vietnam.”¹⁵

One of the first political strategic errors made was when the Americans allowed the coup of South Vietnamese President Diem in 1963. Diem had been an ally and had implemented various initiatives to remove communist insurgents and influence from the South.¹⁶ The Americans began to distance themselves from Diem’s heavy-handed tactics and corrupt government. Unfortunately, the coup did not rally the South Vietnamese and the military replacements were not cut out for politics. In the end, Diem and his harsh anti-communist tactics may have proven to be useful in the years to come.¹⁷

America was ill-equipped for the conflict it was about to embark upon. It had fought a conventional battle in Korea and was preparing for one in Europe. General Westmoreland, the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) commander, had limited political direction and was left to his own devices to determine the military strategy to be employed. Instead of acknowledging the insurgents (Viet Cong) as the primary threat to South Vietnam’s stability, the

¹⁴ Ibid., 3

¹⁵ Ibid., 3

¹⁶ Stolyarov, G. II. “The Non-Inevitability of America’s Defeat in Vietnam.” *The Rational Argumentator*, Issue CXXVII, 30 November 2007.

¹⁷ Bright, James M. Maj. “A Failure in Strategy: America and the Vietnam War 1965-1968.” *United States Marine Corp Command and Staff College*, 12 April 2001. 13

emphasis was placed on the conventional North Vietnamese Army (NVA). A conventional approach was adopted, and the strategy of attrition was applied. The perception was that attrition warfare, to become known as “Search and Destroy” in Vietnam would allow U.S. forces the freedom of movement to engage the NVA in rural areas before inflicting damage on urban centers.¹⁸ The goal was to inflict so many casualties that the communist forces would realize that a “military victory was impossible and would not be willing to endure further punishment.”¹⁹ Although U.S. forces were tactically superior and won most battles, they failed to factor in the price North Vietnam was willing to sacrifice in lives to unify the country, no matter what the cost. It is estimated that the communist losses were close to 1 million and the willingness of the communist leadership to accept this clearly suggests that the attrition warfare strategy was doomed to fail.²⁰

As Western nations were preoccupied in Europe due to a potential Soviet threat, a draft was implemented, and conscripted soldiers were primarily employed in Southeast Asia. The average age of soldiers in Vietnam was 19, and most of them came from less privileged backgrounds causing further social divide on the home front.²¹ Not only was the morale of conscripted soldiers low, but they did not clearly understand the war’s objectives, were inadequately trained in counter-insurgency tactics, rotated constantly, and basically “fought a one-year war nine times.”²²

¹⁸ Cohen, Raphael S. “Beyond Hearts and Minds.” A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Georgetown University, 15 May 2014. 148

¹⁹ Ibid., 148

²⁰ Bright, James M. Maj. “A Failure in Strategy: America and the Vietnam War 1965-1968.” United States Marine Corp Command and Staff College, 12 April 2001. 23

²¹ O’Malley, Michael. “The Vietnam War and the Tragedy of Containment.” History 122. 10

²² O’Hanlan, Michael. “America’s History of Counterinsurgency.” Brookings Institution, Counterinsurgency and Pakistan Paper Series, No.4, 21 June 2008.

The final strategic blunder the Americans made came after they had withdrawn their forces from Vietnam. The 1972 Paris Peace Accords agreement stipulated continued financial support, a return of U.S. combat power if the NVA were to re-engage in hostilities, and replacing lost combat systems of South Vietnam.²³ Unfortunately for South Vietnam, none of these commitments were honored since the U.S. Congress declined further funding to conduct operations in Vietnam.²⁴ This sealed South Vietnam's fate, and it was only a matter of time before the North would seize the initiative and launch its final offensive.

U.S. Leadership

Leadership at the political and military levels took a blow for their actions during the Vietnam War. The perception is that Vietnam was a failure of leadership and was “the wrong war – at the wrong time, with the wrong army.”²⁵ Politicians were accused of deliberately distorting the facts, and routinely misleading the population on casualty rates and the enemy's ability to wage offensive action claiming there was “light at the end of the tunnel.”²⁶ Politicians mismanaged the overall war strategy which handcuffed the military by meddling in their affairs - interfering and micromanaging the air campaigns targeting priority as well the aversion in intensifying the war against the North.²⁷ Politicians failed to deliver clear strategic direction and guidance to the military. Even when military leaders presented politicians with strategic

²³ Stolyarov, G. II. “The Non-Inevitability of America's Defeat in Vietnam.” The Rational Argumentator, Issue CXXVII, 30 November 2007.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Darling, Brian C. “A Failure of Leadership: The Vietnam War as a series of Bad Decision.” Linkin.com, 19 December 2016. 1

²⁶ O'Malley, Michael. “The Vietnam War and the Tragedy of Containment.” History 122. 9

²⁷ O'Hanlan, Michael. “America's History of Counterinsurgency.” Brookings Institution, Counterinsurgency and Pakistan Paper Series, No.4, 21 June 2008.

proposals, their recommendations were not wholly accepted, and they were often left out of critical decisions.²⁸

President Lyndon B. Johnson

Since the Kennedy administration had already established the Americans' commitments to Vietnam, Johnson, a staunch anti-communist, determined this was the country and moment to implement containment. He used the Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty (SEATO) and the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which granted him military powers, as a launching point to escalate the U.S. commitments in Vietnam. Johnson was concerned that if he did not act and support both the treaty and resolution, there would be political implications and America would appear to be weak and lose credibility on the world stage.²⁹ "The integrity of the U.S. commitment is the principle pillar of peace throughout the world. If that commitment becomes unreliable, the communist world would draw conclusions that would lead to our ruin."³⁰ Johnsons' decisions resulted in the scope of America's commitment to Vietnam to rapidly escalate from a limited advisory mission to a conventional war.³¹

Some have argued that Johnson's greatest failure was not making a declaration of war when it was evident that the gradual and limited war he envisioned was deemed inadequate. A declaration of war most likely would have rallied the whole nation, ensuring a shared

²⁸ Crousore, D.M. Maj. "Vietnam: A Failure of Strategy and Leadership." United States Marine Corp Command and Staff College, 30 April 2013. 11

²⁹ Bright, James M. Maj. "A Failure in Strategy: America and the Vietnam War 1965-1968." United States Marine Corp Command and Staff College, 12 April 2001. 14

³⁰ Ibid., 14

³¹ Connable, Ben. "Learning from the Vietnam-Era Strategic Assessment Failure."

responsibility of the war effort between the government and public.³² This strategic error was never executed, partly due to his fear of potentially losing funding for his Great Society domestic program.³³

Secretary of Defence Robert S. McNamara

As the Secretary of Defence, McNamara failed to provide any clear concept on how to conduct the war. He also disregarded input from the Joint Chiefs of Staff and often excluded them from planning processes.³⁴ He was a huge proponent of using body counts as a performance measure metric: “while we may not be able to track...a frontline, we could find variables that would indicate our success or failure...loss of life is one when you are fighting a war of attrition.”³⁵ This allowed McNamara to develop measures of performance to solve and understand Vietnam and to inform policymakers and the public at the expense of listening to his military counsel.³⁶

President Richard M. Nixon

Nixon, like those before him, was committed to containment and escalated the war by allowing U.S. forces to invade the sanctuary areas of the NVA in Cambodia. This sparked even more protests and unfortunately led to the death of four Kent State students at the hands of the

³² Bright, James M. Maj. “A Failure in Strategy: America and the Vietnam War 1965-1968.” United States Marine Corp Command and Staff College, 12 April 2001. 30

³³ Darling, Brian C. “A Failure of Leadership: The Vietnam War as a series of Bad Decision.” Linkin.com, 19 December 2016. 3

³⁴ Ibid., 5

³⁵ Blanken, Leo J. and Lepore, Jason J. “Performance Measurement in Military Operations: Information versus Incentives.” Journal of Defence and Peace Economics, Volume 26, Issue 5, 2015. 20

³⁶ Connable, Ben. “Embracing the FOG of War: Assessment and Metrics in Counter-insurgency.” RAND Corporation, 2012. 144

National Guard. The domestic fallout was significant from these actions and with no end in sight, Nixon sought to negotiate a “peace with honour”.³⁷ To create a favorable position at the bargaining table, he ordered an increase in the bombing of North Vietnam and the secret bombing of Cambodia. He implemented a new policy of Vietnamization with the primary responsibility of handing the war back over to the South to begin the withdrawal of U.S. forces.

General William C. Westmoreland

From a military perspective, the widespread perception is that Westmoreland should receive much of the blame for why the Americans performed so poorly. His lack of leadership and choice of unsuitable tactics in the early and formidable war years set in motion the road to failure.³⁸ Accustomed to manoeuvre and attrition warfare from experiences in the Second World War and Korea and with no clear link between policy and strategy, the comfort of firepower would become the way forward.³⁹ He was “given a wide latitude in determining how to run the war and independently developed a campaign plan centered on killing the enemy at the expense of all other missions.”⁴⁰ As Westmoreland felt the NVA possessed the larger threat at the time, instead of establishing a counter-insurgency strategy, he opted for conventional operations and attrition warfare. Killing the enemy and “body counts” became the focus and obsession of U.S. operations. Westmoreland claimed that “human life is cheap to the Asian, they don’t feel the same way about death as we do.”⁴¹ This attitude, along with the reliance on disproportionate

³⁷ Crousore, D.M. Maj. “Vietnam: A Failure of Strategy and Leadership.” United States Marine Corp Command and Staff College, 30 April 2013. 13

³⁸ Morelock, Jerry D. “Strategy for Failure: America’s War in Vietnam.” HistoryNet, 14 April 2017. 1

³⁹ Connable, Ben. “Learning from the Vietnam-Era Strategic Assessment Failure.”

⁴⁰ Darling, Brian C. “A Failure of Leadership: The Vietnam War as a series of Bad Decision.” Linkin.com, 19 December 2016. 6

⁴¹ O’Malley, Michael. “The Vietnam War and the Tragedy of Containment.” History 122. 9

firepower from all domains, unfortunately led to indiscriminate killings and unnecessary civilian deaths as it proved difficult to differentiate between insurgents who often blended into the population. To demonstrate strategic to tactical success, many felt the pressure to report high body counts. Due to the attention shown by McNamara and Westmoreland, units were specifically tasked on body count missions where soldiers' lives were being put at unnecessary risk. False reporting was rampant and field commanders "shudder to think how many of our soldiers were killed on a body-counting mission – what a waste."⁴² Westmoreland was simply uninterested in winning the population's support. He was focused on the search and destroy missions and left the pacification to the South Vietnamese and failed to adequately give counterinsurgency the attention it desperately needed.⁴³ He dismissed the successful Combined Action Program (CAP) which integrated Marines with local forces to offer security for villages as it did not follow his model.⁴⁴

Westmoreland's lack of synchronization of U.S. and South Vietnamese operations was another critical failure. Successful counter-insurgency campaigns place considerable emphasis on integrated management of all players involved – military, civilian and host nation.⁴⁵ In this case, there was a lack of coordination and a failure to establish a formal command system. According to Westmoreland, a combined command would "stifle the growth of South Vietnamese leadership and if the South Vietnamese forces fell under U.S. command, it would

⁴² Connable, Ben. "Embracing the FOG of War: Assessment and Metrics in Counter-insurgency." RAND Corporation, 2012. 106

⁴³ Darling, Brian C. "A Failure of Leadership: The Vietnam War as a series of Bad Decision." Linkin.com, 19 December 2016. 1

⁴⁴ Cohen, Raphael S. "Beyond Hearts and Minds." A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Georgetown University, 15 May 2014. 73

⁴⁵ Long, Austin. "On Other War: Lessons from 5 Decades of Rand-Insurgency Research." RAND Corporation, 2006. 43

give credence to the communist that the U.S. was a colonial power.”⁴⁶ This naivety allowed for an isolated structure, diminished economy of effort, and placed the South Vietnamese on a path of destruction when they faced the North Vietnamese alone after the U.S. withdrawal.

General Creighton W. Abrams

Abrams was a breath of fresh air when he took control of MACV. He recognized that “body counts does not have much to do with the war”⁴⁷ and replaced it with a counterinsurgency approach which included population control, training of South Vietnamese defence forces, and establishing people’s self-defence forces near villages. Abrams also developed an insurgent amnesty program named Chieu Hoi, which was quite successful despite the lack of re-integration tracking upon release.⁴⁸ He was an advocate of winning over the population by expanding security measures for the population and putting the onus on the Vietnamese to do their part. Unfortunately for Abrams, he was doomed to fail due to the shortcomings of Westmoreland.⁴⁹

Pacification

To successfully root out insurgent support, it is crucial to gain the control of the population. The type of conflict will often dictate the means used to control the population – coercive or rewarding. “Grab ‘em by the balls, and the hearts and minds will follow” was the

⁴⁶ Bright, James M. Maj. “A Failure in Strategy: America and the Vietnam War 1965-1968.” United States Marine Corp Command and Staff College, 12 April 2001. 25

⁴⁷ Stolyarov, G. II. “The Non-Inevitability of America’s Defeat in Vietnam.” The Rational Argumentator, Issue CXXVII, 30 November 2007.

⁴⁸ Long, Austin. “On Other War: Lessons from 5 Decades of Rand-Insurgency Research.” RAND Corporation, 2006. 47

⁴⁹ Darling, Brian C. “A Failure of Leadership: The Vietnam War as a series of Bad Decision.” Linkin.com, 19 December 2016. 6

sentiment amongst many during the war.⁵⁰ The initial focus on attrition warfare vice a true counter-insurgency approach placed the U.S. behind the curve. While Westmoreland was focused on destroying the enemy, Abrams was a huge proponent of the Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS), established in 1967 to integrate civilian and military endeavors.⁵¹ CORDS was one of the very few success stories the U.S. had in Vietnam. It was well-regarded and executed counterinsurgency initiative that lead to many successful programs.

CORDS began supporting various counterinsurgency programs to pacify the population and identify the Viet Cong (VC). The pacification campaign stepped up its intensity to establish hamlets and civilian security capacities in areas under VC influence. It also supported intelligence and armed action initiatives (Phoenix program) to stamp out VC infrastructure. The Phoenix program was extremely effective disrupting insurgent activities, and command and control. Unfortunately, it developed a bad reputation based on false reporting and misunderstanding back at home, and ultimately the controversial initiative was perceived to be a CIA-led assassination program.⁵²

Border Control

Although popular support is a key factor to insurgencies, tangible support in the form of replenishment of supplies and personnel, financing, and sanctuaries are determined to be of

⁵⁰ Cohen, Raphael S. "Beyond Hearts and Minds." A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Georgetown University, 15 May 2014. 149

⁵¹ Phillips, Rufus. "Counterinsurgency in Vietnam: Lessons for Today – Forty Years Later, the experience still offers valuable insights for effective expeditionary diplomacy." The Foreign Service Journal, April 2015. 7

⁵² Phillips, Rufus. "Counterinsurgency in Vietnam: Lessons for Today – Forty Years Later, the experience still offers valuable insights for effective expeditionary diplomacy." The Foreign Service Journal, April 2015. 9

greater importance to a successful outcome.⁵³ The North Vietnamese were provided with extensive external support by both the Chinese and Soviets in the form of weapons, financial assistance, and military advisors.⁵⁴ The North Vietnamese established the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos and Cambodia as an effective means to transport supplies into South Vietnam to support its war effort. It also provided sanctuaries from American and South Vietnamese ground forces who were not authorized to cross the borders. Successful insurgencies are those who can secure external aid and possess freedom of movement. This is exactly what the communist forces achieved as the U.S. were unable to isolate the battlefield and effectively seal off the border regions.⁵⁵ Due to the limitations placed on the U.S. by the strategic defensive posture, they had limited means and resorted to bombing to disrupt the supply movement on the Ho Chi Minh trail network with limited effect.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Vietnam has been viewed by many military historians as the most complex and irregular war the U.S. has ever waged and a disaster waiting to happen. Not only did it have to confront a conventional force with a battle-tested insurgency which received external support from the world's two communist powers (Soviets and Chinese), it had to deal with an unpopular and unstable government in the South.

These factors, coupled with an imperfect containment policy, a lack of a clear political strategy and numerous strategic and leadership blunders, paved the way for what would be at the

⁵³ RAND Corporation. "Key to Successful Counterinsurgency Campaigns Explored." 19 July 2010. 2

⁵⁴ Stolyarov, G. II. "The Non-Inevitability of America's Defeat in Vietnam." *The Rational Argumentator*, Issue CXXVII, 30 November 2007.

⁵⁵ Long, Austin. "On Other War: Lessons from 5 Decades of Rand-Insurgency Research." RAND Corporation, 2006. 49

time the U.S.'s longest and most divisive war. Ultimately, when South Vietnam fell to the North in 1975 after a conventional force invasion, the domino theory did not come to fruition, as countries did not fall to communism as had been predicted. Had the politicians fully committed and not made it a limited war, the perception is that the Americans would have prevailed. By not declaring war and embracing a strategic defensive, the U.S.'s ability to properly gain the initiative was hampered.

Bibliography

- Blanken, Leo J. and Lepore, Jason J. "Performance Measurement in Military Operations: Information versus Incentives." *Journal of Defence and Peace Economics*, Volume 26, Issue 5, 2015.
- Bright, James M. Maj. "A Failure in Strategy: America and the Vietnam War 1965-1968." United States Marine Corp Command and Staff College, 12 April 2001.
- Cohen, Raphael S. "Beyond Hearts and Minds." A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Georgetown University, 15 May 2014.
- Connable, Ben. "Embracing the FOG of War: Assessment and Metrics in Counter-insurgency." RAND Corporation, 2012.
- Connable, Ben. "Learning from the Vietnam-Era Strategic Assessment Failure."
- Crousore, D.M. Maj. "Vietnam: A Failure of Strategy and Leadership." United States Marine Corp Command and Staff College, 30 April 2013.
- Darling, Brian C. "A Failure of Leadership: The Vietnam War as a series of Bad Decision." Linkin.com, 19 December 2016. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/failure-leadership-vietnam-war-series-bad-decisions-darling>
- Long, Austin. "On Other War: Lessons from 5 Decades of Rand-Insurgency Research." RAND Corporation, 2006.
- Millson, Christopher. "Comparing Counterinsurgency tactics in Iraq and Vietnam." *Inquiries Journal – Social Sciences, Arts, & Humanities*, Vol. 3 NO. 05, 2011.
- Morelock, Jerry D. "Strategy for Failure: America's War in Vietnam." HistoryNet, 14 April 2017. <http://www.historynet.com/strategy-failure-americas-war-vietnam.htm>
- O'Hanlan, Michael. "America's History of Counterinsurgency." Brookings Institution, Counterinsurgency and Pakistan Paper Series, No.4, 21 June 2008.
- O'Malley, Michael. "The Vietnam War and the Tragedy of Containment." History 122. <http://chnm.gmu.edu/courses/122/vietnam/lecture.html>
- Phillips, Rufus. "Counterinsurgency in Vietnam: Lessons for Today – Forty Years Later, the experience still offers valuable insights for effective expeditionary diplomacy." *The Foreign Service Journal*, April 2015.

RAND Corporation. "Key to Successful Counterinsurgency Campaigns Explored." 19 July 2010.

Stolyarov, G. II. "The Non-Inevitability of America's Defeat in Vietnam." The Rational Argumentator, Issue CXXVII, 30 November 2007.