

MEDIA TO HELP EXPLAIN THE MORAL INJURY FROM VIETNAM

That there are men in all countries who get their living by war, and by keeping up the quarrels of Nations, is as shocking as it is true; but when those who are concerned in the government of a country, make it their study to sow discord and cultivate prejudices between Nations, it becomes the more unpardonable. - Thomas Paine - *Rights of Man I*, English Preface 1791 -

Leaders lied and millions died. They did not win World War 2¹ and no one was held accountable for Vietnam. Who makes a living by war: who gains, who loses? It is understandable that those in power sometimes choose between evils but it is not forgivable if they initiate the evil. The leaders hope that taxpayers will forget their former incompetence but, if we take international law seriously, then all the presidents since Truman have sometimes acted criminally. They upheld Nixon's view, "*When the President does it, it's not illegal.*" Simple dictionary definitions, however, show *war is war* and *murder is murder* and juries won't usually forgive the latter. After the Nazis rejected their constitution, even a Holocaust was "legal"- but what lessons do American children learn when murdering leaders walk free?

Most of these films refer to *ground combat* in South Vietnam but it was also a brutal air war.² Bombs or incendiaries did most of the slaughter. Airdropped chemicals poisoned the food supply for a slower death. The fact Vietnam prevailed even after Nixon tried to "bomb them back into the stone age" provides lessons that our people and selected leaders refuse to learn. If killing civilians was evil when Nazis did it (Guernica, Warsaw, Rotterdam, London, Belgrade, etc.), why would it be less evil if we do it? Again - *where is the accountability?*



Note: This *work in progress* is compiled from film and book reviews or otherwise edited from YouTube descriptions.³ Films are listed by date, books by title. If a book was later made into a film it is only listed here under the film.

***In the Year of the Pig* (1968, 103m, Emile de Antonio)** >www.youtube.com/watch?v=5xdMiKYnCSQ<

De Antonio (1919-1989) was born in Scranton PA and attended Harvard with John F. Kennedy. He served in WW2 as an AAF bomber. Most of his films are now on YouTube. As a documentary director, he detailed 1950-80s political events, starting with *Point of Order* (1964) that compiled segments of the Army-McCarthy hearings. *Rush to Judgment* (1967) was about Kennedy's assassination. *Year of the Pig* was his favorite film and a tutorial on early U.S. involvement in Vietnam. After being nominated for best documentary (1968) it premiered soon after the Tet Offensive to meet hostility, even vandalism. Showings were most often at college campuses. Its historical record has a Marxian slant that portrays Ho Chi Minh as a patriot trying to reunite his nation. There is an almost unbroken flow of personal testimonies by those who went those who led (including Johnson & Nixon), and those who fought. Using ironic music and contradictory statements by the military brass, troops, and politicians, De Antonio makes a scathing indictment of the US role. He made two more powerful films: *Underground* (1976) and *In The King of Prussia* (1982 anti-nuclear protest near Philadelphia) that exposed judicial failure in PA. His last film was *Mr. Hoover and I* (1989) revealed how the FBI had documented his activities in 10,000 pages.

***Greetings* (1968, 88m, de Palma)** > www.youtube.com/watch?v=eD5ZO2__f54< honored at 1969 Berlin Film Festival.

An early DePalma film satirizing the 1960s (LBJ, Greenwich Village counterculture, Vietnam, draft resisting, JFK assassination, etc).

***Noam Chomsky vs. William F Buckley on the Vietnam War* (1969, 52m, Firing Line)** >www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbTxLmbCoo4<

Complete interview for Chomsky's *American Power and the new Mandarins*. It was his first political book, followed by several dozen.

***Winter Soldier* (1972, 93m, VHS 1992 110-130m, 2005, as hoc)** contrasts Paine's "summer soldier and sunshine patriot"

See >www.youtube.com/watch?v=ucY7JOfg6G4< for John Kerry Testimony in Congress- VVAW (1971, 42m)

This documentary of the *Winter Soldier Investigation* (31 Jan.-2 Feb. 1971) by Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) publicized war crimes. The gathering took place in Detroit and 125 witnesses testified about crimes they had witnessed or committed during the years of 1963-1970. It's a time capsule of once-proud military men admitting their wrongs and destroys a myth that only hippies protested. Testimony of 30 witnesses appears in the Congressional Record (6-7 April 1971). The mostly B&W footage shows the visible anguish and could just as well have been about Iraq. Despite reviews at two European film festivals, this powerful film was nearly banned after the 1972 NYC release. It got very little distribution or national support and had to be archived by its creators. The mainstream media rejected *Winter Soldier* as an overly emotional, if not unpatriotic, criticism of the Vietnam fighting and its war crime details.

This public forum, however, marked a pivotal shift in the anti-war movement. It was clear that young vets from around the country were also opposed to U.S. policy, including the young John Kerry. Their courage in testifying and investigation in Congress forever changed things. The film had limited re-release across the U.S. in 2005 (see >wintersoldierfilm.com<) with mostly positive reviews. A rare showing of this documentary at University of Washington (Seattle, 29 Jan. 2014) was followed by a panel discussion of Vietnam with experts Bill Turley and Mike Dedrick with Nick Turse. Their video "Revisiting War Crimes During the War in Viet Nam" starts with Turse speaking on his controversial book, *Kill Anything That Moves* (2013) about US war crimes. It was sponsored by the Southeast Asia Center, UW Center for Human Rights, UW Bookstore, and Seattle chapter of Veterans for Peace. >www.youtube.com/watch?v=kSYoOIRlWIA<

***FTA* (1972, 97m, Francine Parker)** trailer at >www.youtube.com/watch?v=FS6NHyeJrk<.

A documentary about a political troupe headed by Jane Fonda and Donald Sutherland which traveled to towns near military bases in the US in the early 1970s. They put on shows called "F.T.A.", which stood for "F**k the Army", aimed at convincing soldiers to voice their opposition to the Vietnam War. Various entertainers performed antiwar songs and skits during the show.

***Hearts and Minds* (1974, 112m, Peter Davis)** ><http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1d2ml82lc7s>< **Best Feature Documentary**

This exposé of U.S. involvement in Vietnam takes its title from President Johnson's statement that ultimate victory in Vietnam would depend on the "*hearts and minds of the people who actually live out there.*" The documentary explores the attitudes surrounding the conflict by using archived footage of news reports with interviews on all sides of the issue. It allows Vietnamese voices to say how the war impacted their lives and why they fought against Western interests. It shows their basic humanity. Its major themes are US racism and the combination of arrogance and militarism that prolonged the war. General William Westmoreland,⁴ Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford, National Security Advisor Walt Rostow, and Daniel Ellsberg are among many others interviewed. The stylistic technique intersperses pictures of soldiers destroying villages and visiting brothels, with images of troops being fitted with prosthetics because of their injuries. Such truthful juxtaposed imagery caused some critics to call it anti-war propaganda. The landmark release of the film was also delayed by Rostow's legal challenges that caused Columbia Pictures to refuse distribution. The producers purchased back the rights and showed it for a week (in LA) to be eligible for consideration for 1975 Awards and it won for the **Best Feature Documentary**.

***Decent Interval* (1977, 616p) Mike Wallace on 60 Minutes w/ Frank Snepp (33m) & Description of CIA Torture (28m)**

Based on book *Decent Interval: An Insider's Account of Saigon's Indecent End* (1977, 616p) >www.youtube.com/watch?v=9zLHeLmPwHM< (33m) and >www.youtube.com/watch?v=k62_vQlj_c< 28m

¹ China and the Soviet Union did the heavy lifting in WW2. Our separate paper shows that Germany was decisively beaten before the US entered the European war (11 Dec. 1941) because Operations BARBAROSSA and TYPHOON had failed. During unconventional wars and counterinsurgency it is less a question of competence or bravery, than that the insurgents have the *home-court* advantage like Americans did during the War for Independence. Some of the following will show how evil communism was part of a bag of lies used to trick Americans into accepting corporatism and undeclared wars. Now it's more about terrorists, but who is the biggest terrorist?

² About a sixth of U.S. killed were due to aircraft losses, as described in a separate 4-page fact sheet on U.S. defeats in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. American *mass killing* of civilians began with the bombing raids during OPERATION GOMORRAH in August 1943. As in World War 2, airpower did not force determined enemies to surrender. The Air Force myth goes back to Italian Fascism but Vietnam proved that airpower was not enough.

³ This list excludes other films as being war porn, misleading, or too narrow in scope: *The Visitors* (1972), *Green Berets* (1968), *Deerhunter* (1978), *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), and *Jarhead* (2005). *Hamburger Hill* (1987) close,

⁴ There are several videos (YouTube) by Dr. Lewis Sorley that largely blame General Westmoreland for losing Vietnam/ For example see ><http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C8D7JEpbshE><.

The book is a well regarded classic, written at some sacrifice, to provide a scathing critique of the CIA's role in the final departure from Vietnam (1975). It told by a Chief CIA Strategy Analyst in Vietnam, who believed in the CIA's cause but was disillusioned by a treacherous abandonment of Vietnamese allies. It remains a riveting testament to a dark episode of American history. His view is briefly summarized in *Last Days in Vietnam* (below). This summary is from Snepp's website (see >www.youtube.com/watch?v=allKSNZeYYY< (12m)

It ended that way due to wishful thinking by a lot of American officials who did not want to admit the war was lost. They waited too long to plan for the exit. In early 1975 the North Vietnamese began chipping away close to the capital to test Saigon's resiliency. The president of South Vietnam, Nguyen Van Thieu panicked and, in mid-March, to preserve his best forces ordered them back in two crucial areas. The withdrawal quickly turned into a rout. Over the next two weeks their Communists sliced the country in two and eliminated half of Saigon's army. Some Embassy officials, including Ambassador Graham Martin, could not believe it. He was a Cold Warrior who had lost a son in Vietnam and wasn't going to lose Saigon. He kept insisting that Saigon still had a chance and refused to plan for a proper evacuation and many in the Embassy started sneaking Vietnamese friends out of the country on cargo aircraft. Four days before the end, he persuaded President Thieu to step down and get out of Vietnam. Thieu escaped safely but the Communists didn't pause. Retreat is the most difficult of all military operations. But as a matter of honor you do not leave friends on the battlefield. In the evacuation of Saigon over half of the Vietnamese who finally got out escaped on their own with no help from us until they were far at sea. Many didn't make it.

The last CIA message from U.S. Embassy declared *"Let's hope we do not repeat history. This is Saigon station signing off."*

In the other video (28m), Snepp talks about the CIA, Vietnam and torture based on broadcast interviews on national security, official secrecy, the CIA, counterintelligence, interrogation, torture, and Snepp's return to the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. These torture revelations are just another chapter in policies that have gone on for decades. During the Vietnam War, the CIA experimented with many different techniques of disorienting people to extract information but it ultimately fails to get accurate results. Snepp tells the story.

***Go Tell the Spartans* (1978, 114m, Ted Post)** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIw0tYdW8qk>

Intelligent fiction of contradictions with U.S. advisors in 1964 Vietnam incident. Army *Raiders* are led by a dedicated major (Burt Lancaster) trying to deal with an increasingly untenable struggle against VC that doomed a French unit at the same site a decade earlier.

***Year Zero: The Silent Death of Cambodia* (1979, 52m, John Pilger)** www.youtube.com/watch?v=0rpZz5I_ylo<

Nixon and Kissinger illegally and secretly unleashed 100,000 tons of bombs (the equivalent of 5 Hiroshimas) on neutral Cambodia.

***Coming Home* (1978, 86m, Hal Ashby)** Luke's Speech at www.youtube.com/watch?v=duyYbn2TkY< (4m)

The plot follows a love triangle between a young woman, her Marine husband, and a paralyzed Vietnam War veteran (Jon Voight) she meets while her husband is overseas. Jane Fonda conceived the film in 1972 as a first feature of her film company, IPC (Indochina Peace Campaign). It was inspired by a friendship with Ron Kovic, who she met in an antiwar rally. Voight, who also participated in the antiwar movement, asked for the part. It compares to *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946) except that it over-preaches. Ashby had done *Shampoo* (1975) about the ignorant 1960's elite, so maybe he was compensating. Fonda and Voight won Academy Awards for their performances.

***Apocalypse Now* (1979, 154m, F. Coppola)** also see *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse* (1991, 96m, et al)

The film received vast acclaim upon its release, but is based on Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as a study of characters and images. It is not an accurate recreation of the Vietnam experience. The spectacular cinematography and sound was not needed for a look into the places of the soul that most Americans never want to discover. For those who never experienced combat, however, such sterile emotions replace intellectual exercise. Coppola, considered the film to be both anti-war and anti-lie, about how our media hid the brutality of what was really going on, and epic lies perpetuate the possibility of war. The film shows the aimless brutality of combat at the local level. For example the emblematic attack on a village (with loudspeakers blaring *Ride of the Valkyries*) and praise to "the smell of napalm in the morning" can be seen as pro-war until it is contrasted to its [suggested] purpose - to allow soldiers to surf. The assertion of American supremacy with its image of technology destroying nature may seem to glorify combat, but then we recall how it all ended. It does offer an insight into the lack of strategic leadership. It's haunting visions are mostly hallucinatory *art*. The film can be valued as such.

***Vietnam: The Ten Thousand Day War* (1980, 13hr, Michael Maclear)** 26-part Canadian television documentary series⁵

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4M7M54yle8&list=PLdl6M7tpxBc1B4E9O3L9Hm1kAGd_LXfok

Written by CNN correspondent Peter Arnett, these episodes trace the course of the conflict from the closing days of World War II when Ho Chi Minh first began to assemble his revolutionary army to the fall of Saigon in 1975. With extensive archival footage shot by both sides and interviews with participants ranging from infantrymen to diplomats, *Vietnam* has a journalistic objectivity and fairness that fails to blame the French, or Kennedy, Johnson, or Nixon. The war's progress is depicted as an unclear and slippery slope that inexorably led to a vast number of deaths and laid waste to Vietnam and the region. It also understates the damage done.

***U.S. Human & WMD Tests: Forgotten Guinea Pigs, The Agent Orange, A-BOMB Test Survivors and You* (1981, 51m).**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDjGF1krV4A>

This early documentary is part of the *Alternative Views* collection (#107) that exposes the nature and effects of using **Agent Orange** in Viet Nam. Dan Jordan, his wife, and another vet, discuss experiences with "unexplained" diseases and handicapped children. They provide information about a Brotherhood of Viet Nam Veterans efforts seeking government assistance for vets affected by Agent Orange. The program also includes a showing of the 1953 government documentary in which an A-bomb was dropped in Nevada, and then American soldiers were marched into the blast area immediately afterward to show that atomic warfare is "safe" (but many had or died from cancer). The final interview is about secret, U.S. based germ and chemical warfare experiments carried out since the 1950s.

***Vietnam: A Television History* (13 part 1983, 780m / 10 part 1997, 660m, Richard Ellison @ WGBH-TV Boston) six Emmys**

This documentary TV mini-series about Vietnam (1955-1975) is from the U.S. perspective. Two of the original 13 episodes were later dropped (2&13) and censored from DVD version. Stanley Karnow⁶ served as chief correspondent and his book *Vietnam: A History* (1984, 800p) accompanied the series. It was a well-written history of U.S. involvement in Vietnam that delivers a precise prose account, with criticism of errors made by political and military leaders. The account of the French and Viet Minh offers a background to U.S. government policy and how it ultimately failed even after Nixon changed that policy (1969) to "Vietnamize" the war. Despite a fascinating description of how the JFK initially supported Ngo Dinh Diem, then tacitly approved of a coup (1963), the book generally neglects the CIA's and Dulles brothers prominent role in dragging the U.S. to war and later crimes like the bombing or Operation PHOENIX.

***Witness to War: Dr. Charlie Clements* (1985, 29m, Goodman)** Interview at www.youtube.com/watch?v=pYCge-l-GRU<

Won Best Short Documentary. Dr. Clements left the Air Force in 1970 and wrote book (1983) about why he refused to fly more combat missions in Vietnam. He eventually became a doctor with the AFSC, assisting rural population of El Salvador during its civil war. He served as President/CEO of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (2003-2010) and earlier was President of Physicians for Human Rights. He currently serves as Executive Director of Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at JFK School of Government at Harvard.

⁵ The series was consolidated into 13 hour-long episodes for American television syndication and released on videocassette format by Embassy and won a National Education Association award for best world documentary.

⁶ Karnow served in the army during WW2 in the CBI Theater, graduated from Harvard and then studied in Paris, where he began a journalistic career (1950) as a *Time* correspondent. He went to Asia for *Time* and *Life* (1959) and later reported from there for *Washington Post*. He was also a correspondent for the *Saturday Evening Post*, *London Observer*, *NBC News*, editor of the *New Republic*, and a columnist for *Newsweek International King Features*. He won a **Pulitzer Prize in history** for his book (later narrated) *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines* (1989). His earlier books include *Mao and China: From Revolution to Revolution* (1972).

>www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFvcuuS5eUI< and >www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hpr1HYZDzHY<
The book (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986) by Southern Methodist Sociology professor Gibson examines the nature of the war at the macro planning level--the politicians and generals--and with common soldiers. It provided fresh insight into nature of war and insights into the feelings of the fighting men. Gibson shows how war was designed and managed like a factory, with high-ranking officers being managers and frontline soldiers being workers. One product was body count, often through attrition. The result was soldiers being used as *ambush bait* on search and destroy missions. The U.S. emphasized sophisticated technology. Vietnamese civilians who got in the way were subjected to continuous atrocities. Technology not only failed to bring American victory, but also was often counterproductive in a popularly supported political war of national liberation. The second part describes how Vietnamese overcame technical superiority. In the air war; sorties were an equivalent to body counts and resulted in heavy bombing with inflated results passed up the U.S. military chain of command. It also describes the dissolution of the U.S. Army as a fighting force. Soldiers sometimes refused to fight and a few killed disliked leaders ("fragging"). Mass media misrepresented the war and the widespread South Vietnamese corruption. Intelligence reports understated enemy strength. Finally Dr. Gibson critiques two schools of thought about the war: the liberal ("It was just a series of little mistakes, with no villains.") and the conservative (We didn't use enough force.). He concluded (1987) how U.S. leaders had not learned anything from the Vietnam experience. They were using the same methods in Central America {and now in the Middle East }.

Platoon (1986, 120m, O. Stone) See Stone talk about it at >www.youtube.com/watch?v=rEWtSmsTCoQ< 50m

Platoon is a realistic look at a soldier's (Charlie Sheen) tour of duty in Vietnam in late '60s. He's shipped off and serves with a diverse group of fellow *grunts* under two men who lead the platoon: Sgt. Barnes (Tom Berenger), whose facial scars are a mirror of the violence and corruption of his soul, and Sgt. Elias (Willem Dafoe), who fights with moral courage even though he does not believe in the cause. After a few weeks in country, the soldier quickly loses his idealism after a search for enemy troops devolves into a war crime. Unlike earlier Vietnam fiction (*Deer Hunter, Apocalypse Now, Coming Home*), it is a soldier's-eye view that focuses on those who suffered the wounds of war (Stone also volunteered & got two purple hearts). The onscreen battles mix combat details (bugs, jungle rot, exhaustion, C-rations, marijuana, and DEROs counting) but also examines human duality in the horrors of war. This film established Stone's reputation after *Salvador* by winning Oscars for Best Picture, Director, Sound, Film Editing (plus 4 nominations). 1st of Stone's Vietnam trilogy.

Hamburger Hill (1987, 104m, John Irvin) Trailer at >www.youtube.com/watch?v=dD8JsqTcZoc< also several clips

Platoon level view, based on the assault on a fortified NVA position near the Laotian border (Ap Bia Mountain) in May 1969.

Born on the Fourth of July (1989, 145m, O. Stone) with author Ron Kovic. 2nd of Stone's Vietnam trilogy.

>www.youtube.com/watch?v=JoSeBtXU92E< (2014, 2m) www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYW6FmOlg1o (2011, 13m), >www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJjj-mDsGo4#t=53< (2009, 5m)

Based on Kovic's 1977 book, co-written with Stone, it tells the true story of a patriotic, all-American small town athlete (Tom Cruise) who shocks his family by enlisting as a Marine to fight in Vietnam. Once overseas, his enthusiasm turns to confusion and horror when he accidentally kills one of his men in a firefight. Then a wound leaves him paralyzed below the chest. After a nightmare stay in a veterans' hospital, he gets increasingly disillusioned. He pulls his life together to become an outspoken anti-war activist. The emotionally powerful film may be Cruise's best performance. *Both he and Stone were nominated for Oscars as was the film*, and Stone won as director.

The Cu Chi Tunnels (1990, 59m, Mickey Grant⁷) >www.youtube.com/watch?v=19ejFuEyHyk<

The book *Tunnels of Cu Chi* (1985, 320p, T Mangold & J Pencyate) is a war classic that describes the determination of those who dug the tunnels and then lived beneath the ground. The wiry "tunnel rat" soldiers, who were brave enough to fight in the narrow darkness were a feared foe of this underground community. *In contrast*, this film is told by America's former enemy (with subtitles) about over 200 miles of secret underground tunnels sprawled from Cu Chi Province to the edge of Saigon which was originally built in the time of the French and later enlarged. When the Americans began bombing Cu Chi's villages, the survivors went underground for the duration. The film is about the determination of those who lived beneath the ground in secret tunnels joined villages and often passed beneath American bases. They were Viet Cong fortifications and also a center for community life, with schools hidden beneath destroyed villages, public spaces where couples were married, and private places for lovers. There were hospitals where surgery was done on war casualties and children were born. There were even theaters for song, dance, and traditional stories. The story is told (mainly) by a surgeon, an artist, an actress, an engineer, and the few survivors of a guerilla unit who left the tunnels each night to fight against a vastly superior foe. Footage by documentary filmmakers who were attached to the guerilla bands survived the war and provides a fascinating insight.⁸

Heaven & Earth (1993, 142m, O. Stone) >www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQxoOFgkIXk< Concluded Stone's Vietnam trilogy.

A visually impressive, true story presented by a Vietnamese woman who survived a hard life during and after the Vietnam conflict. Le Ly Hayslip was a freedom fighter, hustler, young mother, a sometime prostitute, and wife of a US. Marine. After escaping VC violence, she leaves her farming village with her mother for Saigon. After disgracing herself by becoming pregnant, she moves in with her sister. While hustling American troops, becomes a lover with Steve Butler (Tommy Lee Jones). Encouraged by his promises, she goes to America with him. The film got mediocre reviews, partly because it included more truth about Vietnam than Americans were ready to accept.

Vietnam - The Last Battle (1995, 51m, J. Pilger) - >www.youtube.com/watch?v=olBCln4NKds<

John Pilger received several awards for his Vietnam reporting over ten years.⁹ He was at the American Embassy in Saigon on the last day in 1975. He returns to Vietnam to review the previous twenty years, seeking to rescue something of Vietnamese past and present from Hollywood images which pitied the invader while overshadowing one of the most epic struggles of the 20th century. With the embargo on the country now lifted by Clinton, he describes Vietnam's effort to resist economic plunder by the U.S. and other powerful countries. He had also did *Do You Remember Vietnam?* (1978, 52m) >www.youtube.com/watch?v=EO_U5BmU0OA< to see how the new regime was rebuilding.

A Bright Shining Lie (1998 on HBO, 120m, & T George) interview is at >www.youtube.com/watch?v=tp8DM_j4xRw<¹⁰

To convincingly recreate Neil Sheehan's 1988 Pulitzer Prize-winning best seller¹¹ about the conflict in Vietnam and John Paul Vann (acted by Bill Paxton) this TV docudrama filmed in Thailand.¹² On arrival, Vann disagreed with how the war was run and exposed some deceptive battle reports, falsified casualty figures, and other lies. Journalist Steven Burnett relayed the truth to American media. After somehow being forced to resign, he returned as a civilian (1968) and was decorated for contributions during the Tet offensive. He was promoted to the civilian equivalent of a general, in charge of some U.S. forces. The film shows who really ran the war and reveals Westmoreland's failure. Within budget constraints, the film accurately condenses Sheehan's long biography into a single story examining how we tried to win by brutally conventional means, even after Tet. Vann's military life provided a fulfillment he lacked as a civilian. He

⁷ Director Mickey Grant has 2 other films on Google Video: *China Run* and *Destination Danang, Injection*, and can be reached at 214-282-2671

⁸ Grant started his shooting in 1986 on 16mm film and his premier on 35mm film was shown in Saigon in 1990 with the cast of former Viet Cong present. It ended with a 30 minute standing ovation.

⁹ His earlier documentaries included *The Quiet Mutiny* (1970, 26m, >www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-eVbJbgUpE<) from front line interviews with disillusioned and rebellious American troops, and *Still America's War* (1974, 27m, >www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_-A7w5TUOY<) covered the year after the 1973 Paris Agreement and cease-fire when regular U.S. combat units had departed to be partly replaced with contractors and technicians. Pilger also did *Heroes* (1981, 50m, >www.youtube.com/watch?v=M7Gj43SxXBk<) which was about the mistreatment of returning U.S. combat soldiers and it somewhat followed the theme in *Quiet Mutiny*.

¹⁰ Could not find this one on YouTube but this interview with Sheehan is specifically about the book. There is also a later Q&A interview that includes a book on nuclear war >www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Q-vOZUoVsg<.

¹¹ **A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam** by Neil Sheehan, NY: Vintage, 1989. - This is definitely one of most important works about the Vietnam Conflict. It was written over 18 years and is an honest and detailed account that condenses the U.S. blunder in Vietnam through Vann, a key participant who was there throughout the critical years of 1962-1972.

¹² At \$14-million, it was the most expensive two-hour movie ever done by HBO. The DVD episodes are as follows: 1. Clearer Times, 2. Skilled & Experienced, 3. Matter of Perspective, 4. Reluctant Warriors, 5. Truth Hurts, 6. Promising Career, 7. US Aide Program, 8. Who's Side Are You On?, 9. Vann's Personal War, 10. Ill Advised, 11. Saigon Under Siege, 12. Vietnamization, 13. Shrewd Strategist, 14. America's Warrior.

that this legal-sized format is designed to "fit" on a letter-sized page 4
was a complex man who didn't smoke or drink, but had adultery issues. Vann tried to understand Vietnam's culture, maybe enough to help his obsession toward victory. His strategic insights eventually got twisted into ruthless bombing campaigns that destroyed what they could not defeat. He orchestrates some wins over the North, but dies in the effort in a helicopter crash.¹³ The film avoided the risk of preaching instead of teaching, so it is less than pleasing as entertainment. However, the frustration of nonfiction is time well spent.

***We Were Soldiers Once... And Young* (2002, 138m, Wallace) See CBS Report >www.youtube.com/watch?v=JfBLUOSNryc< (27m)**

Although based on a best-selling book (1992, 480p, LTG Moore & journalist J.L.Galloway), this film inaccurately portrays the first major battle between NVA regulars and U.S. troops in the Ia Drang Valley. 1stBrig/1stCavD conducted an airmobile assault led by 1stBn/7thCav into LZ X-ray near Cambodia. It was nearly overrun but called all available air support, including first *tactical* use of B-52 bombers. When 1stBn was extracted after two days, it *did not* end with a heroic charge. A stranded platoon had been *rescued* mainly by 2ndBn./5thCav. C Co., nearly overrun was saved by BCo./2ndBn/7thCav, which repulsed a major NVA push on the former line of C Co.. In fact, most of the NVA division survived and over the next two days destroyed 2ndBn/7thCav in an ambush while it marched to LZ Albany. The remnants were saved by 2ndBn/5thCav (enroute to LZ Columbus). Both these other two battalions were then evacuated. The 1stCavD declared victory (by 30 Nov.) but a "counteroffensive campaign" against the NVA continued into 1966 by building base camps and logistical installations. At the end of the month, after his own Vietnam visit, McNamara wrote Johnson a *Top Secret* Memo that unequivocally proposed strategic withdrawal ("Option 1") because he saw further years of war leading only to a stalemate. Despite departures from historical accuracy, it is a useful film about uncommon valor and loyalty among soldiers, as suggested in the words of the following 1stCavD departure speech:

Look around you, in the 7th Cavalry, we got a Captain from the Ukraine, another from Puerto Rico, we got Japanese, Chinese, Blacks, Hispanics, Cherokee Indian, Jews and Gentiles, all American. Now here in the States some men in this unit may experience discrimination because of race or creed, but for you and me now, all that is gone. We're moving into the valley of the shadow of death, where you will watch the back of the man next to you, as he will watch yours, and you won't care what color he is or by what name he calls God. Let us understand the situation we're goin' into battle against a tough and determined enemy. ...

CSPAN2 discussion >www.c-span.org/video/?169443-1/book-discussion-soldiers-young< 48m In a followup book *We Are Soldiers Still* (2009, 288p): >www.youtube.com/watch?v=xKMPCNbOla0< (CSPAN2, 9m) the authors talk further about the battle and note how the NVA had a good view of the valley from the nearby mountain and learned how to fight US airpower.

***Bombies: The Secret War* (2002, 57m, Jack Silberman) >www.youtube.com/watch?v=6HPH7grVHR0#t=110<**

Between 1964 and 1973 the U.S. conducted a secret air war, dropping over 2 million tons of bombs on tiny Laos, thus making it the most heavily bombed country in history. Millions of the cluster bombs did not explode; leaving Laos massively contaminated with "bombies" as dangerous now as when they fell. The problem of unexploded cluster bombs is examined through personal experiences to argue for eliminating this weapon of war. They remain a standard part of the US arsenal and were dropped in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. This cohesive, well-documented film captures the history and effects of the illegal U.S. carpet bombing of Laos.

Fog of War* (2003, 95m, Writer/Director Errol Morris) >www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOp3pUCHGow<¹⁴ **Best Documentary, 2004*

After several books,¹⁵ an 85-year-old McNamara did interviews (23 hrs) for Morris's PBS *First Person* series (2000). It grew to this multiple award-winning¹⁶ film that goes beyond Vietnam into nuclear war. Besides interviews, Morris adds stylistic archival bits, like excerpts of TV reports from the 1960s, illustrated meetings, taped LBJ phone conversations, footage of WW2 air attacks, the developing mess of Vietnam, and rapid shots focusing on headlines, statistics, or critical reports. As General Curtis LeMay's staff officer, McNamara had used statistics to improve WW2 bombing and later got rich as a senior executive at Ford. He escalated Vietnam at DoD, and then headed the World Bank for 13 years. He admits how Vietnam was a mistake and that bombing civilians was criminally disproportionate.¹⁷

Instead of giving emphasis to this singular revelation, Morris picked the subtitle "Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara" to structure the film. Some are useful but others are trivial, poorly supported, or illogical.¹⁸ Maybe it was allowed as mechanism of deconstruction to give McNamara a way to absolve himself before the American public,¹⁹ as in his 1990s autobiographical books and Vietnam visits. Despite flashes of candor, he backs away from the truth.²⁰ Some of the issues raised will leave moviegoers stunned and left to wonder why he wasn't hauled away for aiding and abetting criminal behavior. Wasn't that the big question about Vietnam? Why was no one held criminally liable for the vast atrocities in what - in retrospect - was clearly an international war crime? Mildly menacing music of Philip Glass at least creates the right mood to expose the dishonesty of a Berkeley/Harvard-educated *whiz kid*, but not in a cathartic or triumphant way. In order to break the monotony of a "lesson" in making cars "safer envelopes" at Ford (1950s), some engineers are shown dropping human skulls wrapped in cloth down a stairwell. The destruction of bombing is illustrated by percentage numbers as aerial footage plummeting (b&w) toward Japanese cities under bombing runs and contrasted to comparable American cities. For example, on 10 March 1945 the United States incinerated almost 100,000 civilians in Tokyo. Did the Nazis or Stalin ever match that in a single day?

Then McNamara offers a self-indictment: ***"LeMay said if we had lost the war, we would have been prosecuted as war criminals. And I think he's right. . . . What makes it immoral if you lose and not immoral if you win?"*** After that, however, he uses standard excuses for Vietnam (middle of Cold War, believed it to be "domino," following orders, etc.). When Morris asks if he ever felt that he was an instrument of events that were outside of his control. He answers no, that he was obeying orders of an elected President, carrying out the will of the people (!). The unasked question was: "How you believe that you serve the people if you lie to them?" The codependency with Johnson's top military brass is never really addressed. Both dragged the nation down a wrong road. McNamara admits they misunderstood the Vietnamese and repeatedly says he thought the U.S. should withdraw.²¹ Yet he continued on the fatal path. Why? Maybe to be rewarded by a World Bank position? Morris concludes the film by asking if McNamara feels guilty for Vietnam. He replies how it would require too many qualifications, but isn't that the only road to a get closer to the truth?²² The diversions leave us puzzled. Maybe ***that's not a bad thing.***

¹³ Vietnam was largely a helicopter war, which the US arguably lost in 1971. After explosives and small arms. Aircraft losses were the third leading cause of death for Americans, accounting for about a sixth of all US deaths.

¹⁴ This review began with one by David Loftus on March 6, 2004. He saw veteran documentary filmmaker Errol Morris's *The Fog of War* two days after it won the 2004 Academy Award and wondered whether the golden statue would translate into the wider business this film deserves and wrote that Morris should have been nominated for an Oscar before. In 1965, Loftus's father campaigned for Johnson over Goldwater as the "the peace candidate and as an eighth grader, David wore a "McGovern/ Shriver" button to school and hasn't found any reason to adjust his attitude toward U.S. government foreign adventures. Also see McNamara Interview at >www.youtube.com/watch?v=ze8P-KAt3bc<

¹⁵ See *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Times Books, 1995) by Robert McNamara with Brian VanDeMark. According to him, we misjudged our adversaries and exaggerated the dangers to the U.S. He admits we were terribly wrong and said **"We owe it to future generations to explain why."** We underestimated the political forces within the country and the appeal of nationalism. We were ignorant of the people and their leaders and failed to recognize our limitations in dealing with unconventional adversaries. We failed to adequately inform the American public. We had no right to try to shape other nations in our image. We failed to recognize that the international community should support military action. We did not know how to change course. (p321-22). Have our arrogant leaders learned to change their destructive ways?

¹⁶ **Awards:** Four "Best Documentary" Awards (2003 U.S. National Board of Review, 2004 Chicago Film Critics Association, 2004 Independent Spirit Awards, 2004 Los Angeles Film Critics Association for Best Non-Fiction Film); & 2004 Oscar, Best Feature Documentary, Academy of Motion Pictures Arts. Film critics generally praised the film and commended its insightful and sober lessons, but apparently some wanted a sealed confession.

¹⁷ The U.S. dropped over three times the tonnage of bombs on Indochina than had been dropped by all sides in all WW2 theaters *combined*. It destroyed credibility in claims that we wanted to save the Vietnamese people. Such savagery could never win "the hearts and minds" of a people. It further united their resistance. Much of the world was repulsed by the condescending hypocrisy of American militarism.

¹⁸ Some are good ("#2: RATIONALITY WILL NOT SAVE US," "#7: BELIEF AND SEEING ARE BOTH OFTEN WRONG,") while others are obvious, trivial, or poorly supported ("#4: MAXIMIZE EFFICIENCY," "#6: GET THE DATA," "#10: NEVER SAY NEVER"). #9 & #11 ("IN ORDER TO DO GOOD, YOU MAY HAVE TO ENGAGE IN EVIL." & "YOU CAN'T CHANGE HUMAN NATURE.") are mere opinions. The former seems particularly inappropriate. Maybe WW2 Allied bombing points are debatable, but McNamara says it in the Vietnam context without pointing to any substantial "good" that came from our involvement. McNamara diverts to a popular myth to make the last point. According to him, Union General William Sherman said, "war is cruelty" and torched Atlanta after its mayor had pleaded for the city to be spared. **In fact:** Sherman did order military or industrial structures burned but expressly forbid his soldiers to harm residential property, with offenders to be shot on the spot. His officers patrolled the city to prevent arson and vandalism. Historians disagree on whether flames spread from targeted structures to the rest of the city by accident or if outlaw parties set the fires, but either was contrary to Sherman's orders. Also, despite the stories spread by Southerners about Sherman's infamous march, it is well established that during the army's trek across Georgia the bluecoats needed supplies and spent more time putting out fires set by retreating Confederates than setting them

¹⁹ He may appear emotionally remorseful (tears brimming), but the leader of the 1960's "best and brightest" brat pack recklessly edits history. There is even evidence that he was the one who lied to LBJ about Tonkin Gulf. To the uninitiated, he may seem a contrite, grandfatherly giant forced to do the ill bidding of a politically desperate President, against his own will and best judgement. Veterans will not be easily fooled.

²⁰ For example, after boldly admitting that "we burned to death a hundred thousand Japanese men, women, and children" in a single night of firebombing of Tokyo (Morris shows a "R.S. McNamara" signature on the orders), he calmly discusses HOW PROPORTIONALITY SHOULD BE A GUIDELINE IN WAR ("Lesson #5"). McNamara indignantly asks us to imagine our cities being similarly ravaged to those of Japan and says, this "is not proportional, in the minds of some people, to the objectives we were trying to achieve." It's a strong point about "some people", but what is the conclusion?

²¹ For example, in following up the *Rolling Thunder* campaign with a Marine incursion, Johnson is recorded as telling McNamara, **"My answer is 'yes,' but my judgment is 'no'"**

²² Of the job that will forever blacken his name, he says, "those were good years." His probable reward was the World Bank presidency (1968-81) but that's not in the film. McNamara suggests it somehow involved world improvement. Canadian businessman and author John Saul instead suggested (1992) McNamara as an evil poster child for relentless corporate rationalism: **"...the most perfect example, of a technocrat holding great power while crippled by a personality cleanly divided between mechanical brilliance at one extreme and childlike idealism at the other, with absolutely no thread of common sense to link the two together."**

Why We Fight (2005, 99m, Eugene Jarecki) >www.youtube.com/watch?v=LXxYW_PA94M<

This is about corporatism and maintenance of what Eisenhower originally called a U.S. military--industrial--*congressional* complex, and its sixty-year involvement with war. The documentary asserts that since World War II, **the public was misled** and that incumbent administrations fueled a militarized economy to maintain global political dominance. For example, since Korea presidents don't bother getting a formal declaration of war, much less U.N. approval. Interviews include former-CIA political analyst/author Chalmers Johnson, commentator William Kristol, bureaucrat Richard Perle, writer Gore Vidal, Senator John McCain, policy expert Joseph Cirincione, and many others. It documents foreign policy consequences with the stories of: ❶ a Vietnam War veteran whose son was killed in the 9/11 attacks asking to write his son's name on bomb dropped on Iraq; ❷ a 23 year-old New Yorker who enlists after his mother's death because of his debt; and ❸ a female explosives scientist who came to the U.S. as a Vietnam refugee in 1975. Jarecki had previously followed the journalist Christopher Hitchen's in *Trials of Henry Kissinger* (2002 BBC, 80m >www.youtube.com/watch?v=9IvcJ1JispE<)²³ based on a book that gave it a solid foundation. It critically examined American diplomacy through the lens of international standards of justice. Jarecki's current work, *The House I Live In* (2012, 110m) >on DVD with clips on YouTube< is on the Prison Industrial Complex.²⁴

Sir! No Sir! (2005, 85m, Zeiger) >www.youtube.com/watch?v=3nPJgeg6hpA<

This documentary focuses on the efforts by troops in the U.S. military during the Vietnam War to oppose the war effort by peaceful demonstration and subversion. This movement took place in barracks, aircraft carriers, army stockades, navy brigs and dingy towns that surround military bases. It penetrated elite military colleges and spread throughout Vietnam. It was a movement no one expected, least of all those in it. Hundreds went to prison and thousands into exile. In the words of one colonel, by 1971 it had infested the entire armed services. Yet today few people know about this GI movement against the war in Vietnam. Although it speaks mainly to veterans, but serves as a ready reminder to civilians that soldiers may oppose war as stridently as any civilian, but certainly at greater personal peril.

Frost/Nixon (2008, 122m, Ron Howard) critical clip is at >www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFHYiOfBRng<

Peter Morgan, who also adapted the screenplay, bases this British-American historical drama on a 2006 play. It purports to reenact the events leading up to the 1977 Nixon interviews. In the above clip Nixon says that "**When the President Does It, It's not illegal**". The interviews are available on YouTube (4 hours). They are worth watching as a history lesson in how criminality can be rationalized or deconstructed. The motivation seems to include humanizing Nixon and his decisions. These were his words and most of the thoughts were carefully formulated years after the fact. (Stone's *Nixon* did a better overall character study.) We never learned how a jury would have decided about Nixon's crimes but a Gallup poll after the interviews showed that over 70%t of the public thought Nixon was guilty of obstruction of justice and deserved no further public role. Despite other nominations, it only won awards at the Vegas film society.

Vietnam - American Holocaust (2008, 87m, Clay Claiborne) >www.youtube.com/watch?v=DbGC8CM3o8U<

This documentary reveals why news clips or commentators may use the term *holocaust* when describing the horrors of Vietnam. In a 1995 visit to Hanoi, Robert McNamara (former SecDef) conceded that 3.4 million were killed during a conflict imposed by presidents of both U.S. political parties.²⁵ They used generals, pilots, and soldiers to kill on a vast scale. The film argues that lessons of Vietnam are still relevant and must never leave our national conscience. Martin Sheen (captain in *Apocalypse Now*) narrates a documentary that starts with a peace memorial at "Arlington West" for U.S. soldiers who fell in the current war. To suggest added connections to Vietnam, we also learn how U.S. Administrations helped support other tyrannical governments (Shah in Iran, Saddam in Iraq, Taliban in Afghanistan).

Sheen shows archival footage showing French conquests of Indochina. It follows with scenes of Vietnamese liberation struggles from 1945 to French defeat in 1954. Voices from both sides are heard. The young Ho Chi Minh is introduced with attention to his time in NY. Reasons for opposing Vietnamese independence are given in a clip on Eisenhower. We hear Robert Kennedy questioning NSC plans for a coup in South Vietnam weeks before his brother's murder. Was he assassinated to countermand his withdrawal orders from Vietnam (reversed on day of his death)? Since the focus is on American participation, the pace slows when specifics are given about U.S. history.

The film details the crucial role of the Gulf of Tonkin false-flag incident.²⁶ It illustrates the damage done to Vietnam by a massive air war that added napalm and chemical warfare to conventional bombing. Words from LBJ, Curtis LeMay, Vietnamese victims, a Hanoi doctor, American pilots, and others bring its brutality home (the Agent Orange section is chilling). Other footage includes Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, Diem, Gerald Ford, Joe McCarthy, Nixon, Senator Morse, and many more. As the film shifts to ground war, American and Vietnamese voices give a window to human tragedy. The point that Vietnam was *a My Lai every week* is graphically driven home by recounting the many other massacres that took place. After you witness real deaths happening on the screen, you may begin to understand why some Vietnam vets still suffer from *moral injury*. At the end, we return to Arlington West and recall the Iraq War. Again the point is made that those who forget history are doomed to repeat it. Martin Sheen and Claiborne make a plea to stop the current madness.

Most Dangerous Man in America: Daniel Ellsberg and Pentagon Papers (2009, 92m, Ehrlich & Goldmith)

In 1971, Daniel Ellsberg shook the foundations of government corruption by revealing the top-secret: *United States -- Vietnam Relations, 1945--1967: A Study Prepared by the Department of Defense*.²⁷ The film dramatically tells how the papers were made public and why Kissinger (Nixon's NSA) called Ellsberg "**the most dangerous man in America**" who "**had to be stopped at all costs.**" *But he wasn't!* He fought back against espionage and conspiracy charges (facing 115 years). The ensuing fight speeded Nixon's downfall. The study, discovered by Ellsberg, was copied by him and his friend Anthony Russo (Oct. 1969) for disclosure to senators and others, even including Kissinger (NSA). None were interested. To encourage debate, US Senator Mike Gravel entered it to a Congressional record,²⁸ also published by the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations (Beacon Press). Ellsberg leaked the Papers to end "a wrongful war." Ellsberg's story includes his colleagues, critics, government officials, Pentagon Papers authors, family, Vietnam veterans, journalists & their attorneys, anti-war activists; and White House audiotapes. For the first time on film, we have the inside story of this pivotal event when a determined Pentagon insider, armed only with his conscience and improperly classified²⁹ documents, helped end the Vietnam Conflict. The most damaging revelation was how four administrations had lied. Ellsberg's relentless truth telling "**demonstrated unconstitutional behavior by a succession of presidents, the violation of their oath and the violation of the oath of every one of their subordinates.**" For example, a 1996 NYT article said that the "**Johnson Administration had systematically lied, not only to the public but also to Congress, about a subject of transcendent national interest and significance.**"³⁰ The nation never recovered (see > www.people-press.org/2014/11/13/public-trust-in-government/<).

²³ It focused on **criminal charges against Kissinger for his role in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Chile, and Indonesia**. It shows NSA Kissinger lying to Congress in order to overthrow governments, which caused civilians to die. The story raised profound questions about American foreign policy and highlighted a long history of human rights abuses and evidence about his unique role in numerous war crimes.

²⁴ When he spoke about in the Lehigh Valley (at Lehigh University & Muhlenberg College) in 2014, he suggested that this abuse of power would become the future focus of his work.

²⁵ Over 3 million killed in Vietnam, a country that had asked our help to securing its independence! It had no desire or capacity to attack the U.S. and, despite the Tonkin Gulf lies, had never tried to attack the United States.

²⁶ It shows that the attack never happened. This should no longer be controversial. Besides interviews with the captain of the ship that was allegedly attacked, the chief gunner, a North Vietnamese general and recollections of pilots that flew air cover on the fateful night, (McNamara mentions similar doubts in *Fog of War*, but this particular footage was not shown before.) More significantly, by using recent White House tapes, it proves that LBJ had foreknowledge that such an attack never took place. What should be controversial is why no one was held accountable for the lies.

²⁷ *The Pentagon Papers* by Neil Sheehan, Hedrick Smith, F. Butterfield & E.W. Kenworth, NY: Bantam Books, 1971. This report was a US DoD background history of American political-military involvement in Indochina. It proved the Tonkin Bay incident was a fraud and generally illustrated a systematic pattern of lying by government officials. Ellsberg eventually gave *New York Times* reporter Neil Sheehan most of it (43 of 47 vols.) in March 1971. The first excerpt (June) was titled "Vietnam Archive: Pentagon Study Traces Three Decades of Growing US Involvement." The Papers revealed how early US raids into North Vietnam and bombing in Cambodia and Laos were not revealed to the US media. President Johnson sent combat units to Vietnam and planned a reserve call-up by July 17, 1965, before pretending to consult Congress or even his advisors.

²⁸ Article I, Sec 6 of US Constitution provides that "for any Speech or Debate in either House, [a Senator or Representative] shall not be questioned in any other Place." Gravel thus could not be prosecuted for doing this or for entering it to the Congressional Record, thereby allowing the Papers to be publicly read without threat of a treason trial and conviction. The Supreme Court in the decision *Gravel v. United States* confirmed this.

²⁹ Nixon Solicitor General Erwin Griswold later called the Papers an example of "massive overclassification" with "**no trace of a threat to the national security**". The published documents were written years before the ongoing war. The report was not officially declassified for public release until June 2011. In a current "Commemoration" the Pentagon continues to make misleading statements about the Indochina invasions.

³⁰ For example, a later DoD memo under Johnson listed reasons for American persistence as mainly (70%) to avoid a US defeat and to emerge without unacceptable taint from methods used. It was *not* to keep the area from Chinese hands (20%) or to help its allies or friends to enjoy a better, freer way of life (10%).

Untold History of the United States (2013, 12 hrs, Oliver Stone & book by Peter Kuznick) [12 parts on Blu-ray]

Episode 3 and other parts might be on YouTube; see >www.youtube.com/watch?v=vVLYyvpIex4&list=PLxEVybDOMEa5FRNRA-9R1d9AUrFvgj7c7<

This series³¹ rises above the usual noise to offer an informative look at events that shaped history and two episodes focus on the U.S. involvement in Vietnam. A costly expansion after French defeat (1954) is analyzed in context.³² Truman reversed Roosevelt's colonial policies. When Ho Chi Minh asked for help (1946) and when French Indochina was to be dissolved in 1955, the U.S. stopped elections and instead created set up a "South" Vietnam in violation of the Geneva agreement. They brought back an incompetent urban Catholic bureaucrat Ngo Diem Diem (from NJ on 26 June) to rule over a mostly rural Buddhist nation. American patronage probably derived from his ability to understand English (still rare among Vietnamese) and Roman Catholic support. The series probably peaks with President Kennedy's effort to withdraw from Vietnam. Then the roller coaster speeds up but we can still "slow forward" to look at details that we forgot or never knew. Important bits connect the dots to larger present events. View it with an open mind and remember that the world is shades of gray, not black and white. This series exposes the lies told about American exceptionalism and that material will upset some. It will likely alter your opinion if you believe Ronald Reagan should get majority credit for ending the Cold War, which could have happened with Stalin's death. Take your time. If you get too angry, you'll risk deconstructing facts. Blaming the messengers will not help.

From Hollywood To Hanoi (1995, 78m, Tiana Alexander); finishing The General and Me (2015)

Despite entrepreneurial, anticommunist South Vietnamese origins, Tiana Alexander made the film, *From Hollywood To Hanoi* (1995) to help bring Vietnamese voices to America because they have been deliberately buried by history. It is based on her visits - mostly 1988 - into Vietnam. There are excerpts on YouTube ><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0U-mDePsO4>< Tiana has been struggling for reconciliation between our countries. After 40 years, it's due. Her previous presentation is not as slick as that of Ms. Kennedy but maybe her 2015 story will show what the North Vietnam did right, including the 1975 offensive. She is now finishing *The General and Me* about interviews with North Vietnam's late General Vo Nguyen Giap, who led successful wars against Japan, France, and America.

There will be sad depictions of the late US General William Westmoreland and a contemptible ex-Defense Secretary McNamara, but her story will not emphasize details of what Americans did wrong. The broader failure to recognize a civil war and the general lack of American empathy in foreign relations are arguably more important than descriptions of abandoning a corrupt ally after 1972. Her new film will not delve into the causes of that corruption but will probably help embellish the goals of the current US Administration that seeks to promote American ties with Vietnam. Both countries today fear China more than each other.

The World According to Dick Cheney (Jan. 2013, 69m, Cutler) and post-Vietnam stress disorder (PVSD).

As in his memoir, *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir* (567p), the former vice president strongly defends the policies of his administration, including the torture that can be traced to *Operation Phoenix*. The film includes an insight to Vietnam on Cheney's extraordinary rise from alcoholic, semi-employment in Wyoming at age 24 to being Gerald Ford's White House chief of staff ten years later. Cheney spent 1968 as a draft-dodging political science graduate student (U. of WI), which was one of many radicalized campuses in the country with student general strikes in 1967 and 1969, and a campus bombing in 1968. This immersion in history pushed him to the Republican right, boosted by ideological soulmate and mentor Donald Rumsfeld.³² Their collusion eventually led to a Middle East war that repeated past mistakes in a new setting. Iraq became a politically divisive and grotesquely mismanaged parody of Vietnam. It was based on lies and delivered at a shocking cost that turned the civilian population of the region against us (much to Iran's benefit). The neocons of Cheney's generation, haunted by the defeat 40 years earlier, refought Vietnam in Iraq, but will it ever turn out right.

Same Same but Different (2014, 54m, Perryman & González) on Vimeo at ><https://vimeo.com/68704406><

In this short documentary several Vietnam War veterans describe their experiences as foreign invaders committed to a Cold War. Then they were transformed into opponents of the war. The Deep South origins of most of the subjects add poignancy and Perryman fits that description. With other veterans, he quietly returned to former battlegrounds to clear unexploded ordnance, work with victims of Agent Orange, and to build schools and orphanages. The film suggests an untold truth that *"We have met the enemy and he is us."*

Last Days in Vietnam (2014, 98m, Rory Kennedy) provides a one-sided view of the Fall of Saigon (PBS)

There are many clips here of an unfamiliar story of chaotic evacuations and a political spasm that took place in 1975; two years after most U.S. troops were withdrawn. Ms Kennedy contradicts the horror filled legacy of ten years by humanizing the 40-year old events. The narrative begins in 1973, when Paris Peace Accords negotiated by NSA Henry Kissinger that apparently ended this conflict with plans to withdraw U.S. forces while proclaiming "peace with honor" and ambiguous hopes that South Vietnam could remain separate (like South Korea). Most Americans looked away from the conflict that had bitterly divided the country after *Watergate* deposed Nixon (late 1974). When Ford made a late effort to persuade Congress to get \$722 million to help South Vietnam even congressional right-wingers and the Pentagon opposed it. Ms. Kennedy's father, Robert F. Kennedy, had been assassinated while running for President on an antiwar ticket (1968) but her story helps distract from that tragic legacy. North Vietnam lacked an Air Force and was outgunned by South Vietnam but when its troops marched south they swept quickly through Da Nang and quickly closed into Saigon by April 1975.

There is no mention of the well-known corruption of the escaping government. The escapees are generally depicted as innocent and forsaken victims of American policy. It seems that much of the blame goes to either political apathy or antiwar activists but what motivation would peace activists have to interfere with humanitarian help to South Vietnam in 1975? It would have been useful to hear voices from the other side. Ms. Kennedy seems incapable from critically approaching a complex result, perhaps due to self-serving accounts fed to her by former NSA Kissinger. The one-sided story of tragedy distracts from learning more about avoiding future failures. Her sympathetic interviews for the South Vietnamese being torn from their homeland fails to include voices of women and an overwhelming majority of Vietnamese who welcomed a return to villages from which they had been displaced. They felt that the end was not a time of fear and flight, but joy and relief. The book *American Reckoning* (below) provides a far better context for the collapse of South Vietnam.

Emphasis on the North's crimes distracts from the prolonged American support for South Vietnamese corruption and condones failed war agendas that extended the suffering. Those who prolonged the killing by demands at the peace table (1969) deserved more blame than State Department failure to plan for inevitable an collapse. This film could have emphasized the incompetent Republican fumbling.



BOOKS ON VIETNAM

365 Days (1981, 300p, Dr. Ronald Glasser).

Wounded from Vietnam came through hospitals in Japan. Dr. Glasser eloquently tells the story of soldiers evacuated from Vi-

etnam. He was Medical Corps pediatrician assigned to Zama, an Army hospital in Japan (Sept.1968). An average of six thousand patients was processed each month with a staggering amount of suffering. Truth is usually the first victim of war but,

³¹ Most TV "news" coverage and media commentary is distracting entertainment so Americans rarely get a big picture of national policy. The series recalls details and forgotten players that influenced big historical changes. The series starts out in the late 1920s Great Depression but the book time line starts out in late 1800s and it also covers the widespread general American anger towards post WW1 war industry profiteering and Wall Street excesses that took place (surprise!) just before that depression. The triple fact-checked book, mainly by American University scholar Peter Kuznick, provides easy access to footnotes that will silence unbiased critics on controversial issues. It stretches from the Great Depression into Obama's Presidency and the facts may cause you to re evaluate FDR's administration and how former Vice President Henry Wallace was more heroic than his replacement.

³² The context reexamines Truman's double atom-bombing that *did not* decide WW2 and the root causes of a costly Cold War. Stone found that schoolbooks were often biased and intends this series to educate younger generations and his own kids about what has been incorrectly learned. Clips of his award winning films are sometimes inserted into narration, which is almost all in the background. They can get old, but historical footage beats "talking heads."

³³ Besides Cheney, Bush W. and Rumsfeld deserve most of the blame for the Iraq fiasco but there were also liberal hawks (Hillary Clinton, John Kerry, etc.) who swallowed the administration's lies and helped pass the Vietnam poison to a new generation, to make it feel *exceptional* about foreign policy. The mainstream media failures also expanded the war agenda. Such motivations are beyond the present scope.

since WW2, innocent civilians also died in far greater numbers than soldiers. They pay the most tragic price of modern war.

American Reckoning: Vietnam War and Our National Identity

Chris Appy's oral history (2015, 416p), like Studs Terkel's *Good War*, grounds the lingering damage and legacy of Vietnam in the vivid memories of people who lived it. Essential reading!

***[The] Best and the Brightest* (1972, 720p by D Halberstam)**

This is a well-told story by a journalist with great credentials. He expertly explores foreign policy decisions that led to Vietnam and paints a picture of the catalytic role of naive idealism in shaping modern America. Halberstam had access to some *Pentagon Papers*, but even with another 30 years of documentation, it is doubtful that he could have done a better book to show how bad and dishonest decisions by smart, well-accomplished people ("best and the brightest") got us into an unwinnable war. These military and foreign policy experts were incredibly wrong for incredibly long. They advised President Johnson to carry on a fight that past administrations had supported. This absorbing book shows how arrogance by the well-educated, affluent Power Elite led the country into the Vietnam quagmire. They also did not know how to bring it back from the brink. The book is also about also about applying the wrong lessons of history: *Munich* taught that nations should not shrink from "tyranny," but the "tyranny" of North Vietnam was mainly nationalistic resistance from earlier colonial wars. Despite their rational mental power, the "best and brightest" didn't get this. Some who might have warned about it had been purged during the McCarthy period.

Halberstam had personal experience as a correspondent in Vietnam before initiating the research for this book, and he draws a number of intimate and absorbing portraits of the major figures involved in French Indochina. He covers the servile McNamara, the Bundy brothers (McGeorge & William), former Oxford Scholar Dean Rusk, Generals Maxwell Taylor and Westmoreland, George Ball, and President Kennedy. Maybe the book makes a little much of their credentials because these alumni of great schools and families did interact with LBJ (an accidental president) and Nixon to make such bad decisions.

We need not forget the temptations of power and how merely ambitious men are also decision-makers, but Halberstam's damning version of events has become a standard account. He succeeds in showing forces that acted on flawed individuals during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Whether from honest misjudgments or outright lies, "the best and the brightest" misled the nation. **Why?** One could argue that there isn't a more important question than the loss of trust in government that traces back to a lack of accountability for, arguably, the biggest American war crime of the twentieth century.

***Blowback* (1988, 407p, Christopher Simpson)³⁴**

America's Recruitment of Nazis and Its Destructive Impact on Our Domestic and Foreign Policy..

"Better dead than Red" (*Besser tot als rot*) inspired the Cold War. It originated with Nazi propaganda Minister Goebbels appeal for last-ditch resistance against Soviets advances in 1945. That same mindset was used by Anglo-American leaders to excuse the sedition that started before the final shots of WW2 were fired.

A Cold War pitted the U.S. against its former ally after Stalin entered nine central European countries in the summer of 1944. US intelligence services scrambled to gain an upper hand. They started recruiting Nazis,³⁵ and that bacillus infected U.S. leadership. The book describes extensive U.S. employment of war criminals (besides rocket scientists), apparently against communism.

Senior officials at the CIA, National Security Council, and elements of an emerging US national security state recruited the SS, Nazis, and collaborators.³⁶ Many of their recruits had killed countless innocents as part of Hitler's "Final Solution." Such unrepentant mass murderers were secretly accepted into the Amer-

ican fold, their crimes whitewashed, forgotten, or otherwise forgiven by compliant government agencies seeking intelligence.

Others have since examined the topic,³⁷ but *Blowback* was the first scholarly study of extensive U.S. - Nazi collaboration.³⁸ Cold War motivations falsely painted fascist methods as less brutal than communist. Besides propaganda and psychological warfare, they began military operations against anticolonial movements. **That led to a US invasion of Indochina**, which was considered a "domino" in Chinese or Soviet expansion plans.

***Dereliction of Duty: Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam* (1997, 480p, H.R. McMaster)**

A popular myth surrounding the Vietnam War is that the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) knew what it would take to win but was somehow undermined by the senior politicians. McMaster shatters this misconception after painstakingly wading through all the memos and reports concerning Vietnam from every meeting of the JCS. In fact, they faced a president unified with his advisors divided by interservice rivalries. This left the JCS unable to offer a coherent conclusion about the conduct of the war. For example the Army and Marine Corps estimated that "victory" would require five years and 500,000 troops. President Kennedy was unwilling to deploy combat units but allowed covert operations with military advisers into South Vietnam.³⁹ He claims the turning point came with the assassinations of Ngo Dinh Diem and Kennedy. McNamara became an indispensable member of Johnson's cabinet and neither he nor LBJ wanted to listen to earlier cautions. When the Pentagon's war game of McNamara's "graduated pressure" theory ended in stalemate, McMaster theorizes that such warning signs were suppressed to calm LBJ's anxiety until after the 1964 election was over.

In essence, McMaster's thesis is that McNamara systematically sidetracked JCS advice. McNamara's *In Retrospect* (1995) bolsters the book's credibility because he also admitted errors in "judgment and capabilities." McMaster does not excuse the JCS because they went along with McNamara's policy, which had salient deceptions that plunged America into Vietnam before it was ready. McMaster's is diligent in his effort to pinpoint the cause of the Vietnam fiasco. He offers interesting insights on the political and military policy decisions. From his account, the technocrats left from Kennedy's administration are arrogant and shallow, apparently thinking they knew military planning better than the JCS. They emphasized analysis and statistics in a forced "communication" process. With McNamara's active help, Johnson was responsible for shaping the bad advice he received from political and military advisors. Their conscious actions can clearly be framed as a dereliction of duty.

Johnson's imposition of war without a formal declaration by Congress was at best cynical, if not criminal but the book clinically exposes MacNamara's enthusiastic lies about this policy. The actions of JCS Chairman Maxwell Taylor, who later became US Ambassador to Vietnam, might also qualify as *derelict*. Under the *National Security Act* (1947), the JCS was 'the principal military adviser to the president, the National Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense.' When its mission of giving accurate military strategic advice to the President was partly crippled by inter-service rivalry, Taylor lacked sufficient backbone to either act or resign. He perceived that military action could lead to disaster, but allowed himself to be marginalized from decision-making. As ambassador, he tried to muddle through the danger of the administration's decisions and thus encouraged a process of failure. It's an ugly picture that made it impossible to overcome the arrogance of Johnson and his advisors.

McMaster claims that McNamara was impatient with JCS squabbling and felt its cumbersome administrative system was slow in responding to his demands. Each Service Chief's desire to further his own branch agenda hampered smooth JCS ability. It may also be recalled that McNamara had served under Curtis LeMay in WW2 and was prone to endorse Air Force strategy because he was familiar with it. The JCS warned why bombing

³⁴ See >www.youtube.com/watch?v=CAm27RFNSpw< & >www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBoPzkC6H08<.

³⁵ A new Introduction to the E-book edition has previously suppressed facts based on CIA declassified records.

³⁶ Simpson's *The Splendid Blond Beast* (1993) adds insights on the political background of genocide for profit by examining the interplay of the Dulles family (brothers John Foster & Allen, & sister Eleanor) leading the U.S. into a broader wars that decisively shaped today's world. When the Cold War was at its peak, in the 1950s, this immensely powerful trio led the country to combat in morally and financially costly foreign adventures, besides Vietnam. He demonstrates how this collaboration intensified the Cold War with lasting detrimental effects on US government and society. Loftus with Aarons - **Secret War Against the Jews** (1997) and Annie Jacobsen's **Operation Paperclip: The Secret Intelligence Program that Brought Nazi Scientists to America** (2014) see >www.c-span.org/video/?317955-1/book-discussion-operation-paperclip< have also followed in these steps. The current Ukraine conflict can also be linked to a neo-fascist global aristocracy that profits from similar violence.

³⁷ See >en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._intelligence_involvement_with_German_and_Japanese_war_criminals_after_World_War_II< John Loftus has also done excellent work in this area with **America's Nazi Secret** (2010).

³⁸ Were Nazis evil because they planned and perpetrated genocide or was that the signature symptom of their evil. One *Trident II* submarine can destroy any nation on earth. How is that not a **plan for genocide**?

would not convince Hanoi to stop supporting the Viet Cong, but McNamara believed that it would be sufficient to turn the tide.

Since each service assumed that it had a primary capacity to win the war, appointing Army General Earle Wheeler as JCS Chairman proved unpopular with non Army Pentagon officers, which also undermined joint *planning*. By late 1964 the JCS was largely reduced to providing technical support for McNamara. After Johnson got elected he reacted to a VC attack on an U.S. airfield at Bien Hoa (1 Nov 1964) based on a strong opinion by Wheeler that if the U.S. did not take immediate action against North Vietnam, it should withdraw all forces from the South.

Johnson secretly authorized resumption of destroyer patrols into the Gulf of Tonkin (Jan 1965), possibly to provoke North Vietnam into an overt attack. He also secretly decided (Feb.) to introduce U.S. ground combat units into South Vietnam. The JCS silently felt that this lacked a clear strategic direction. The silence of the five JCS men allowed the commitment of U.S. units without public debate of the likely costs and consequences. This made them accomplices to the presidential deception. Americans were soon dying in combat while the JCS engaged in turf battles. Vietnam was lost in the Pentagon in 1965 before the U.S. took over responsibility for the fighting, before the American people realized our country was at war, and even before American the first combat units were deployed. The inexcusable interservice rivalry constituted a *dereliction of duty*.

Nixon refused North Vietnam's terms for ending the war in 1969 - better than Kissinger got in 1972 - so the war dragged on for another 3 years at immense cost. The simple fact that Vietnam was going to be reunited seemed to be incomprehensible to the planners in Washington DC. The arrogance of power and contempt for obvious democracy are as troubling today as they were in 1965. Refusing major structural reform of the Pentagon and JCS continue to be a dereliction of duty.

Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam

(1972, 600p Frances Fitzgerald) Book won a **Pulitzer Prize**

Fitzgerald examines³⁹ faulty "black and white" assessments to underscore U.S. inability to see things from an international perspective. She portrays our political culture in collision with Vietnam's. Their bloody history to expel invaders (1,000 years against China) underscored a courageous tenacity inconsistent with U.S. values that too often supported thugs over patriots, elevating those with wealth over the common people. Most Vietnamese were neither 'democrats' nor 'communists.' For example, the millions in a Cao Dai sect near Tay Ninh in South Vietnam mainly focused on nationalism. Vietnam's essentially agrarian existence was dominated by a small minority that was not inclined share land with peasants. Such issues of land reform corruption help explain U.S. defeat. An arrogantly flawed US military strategy also ignored the alliance with Ho Chi Minh during WW2. His heroes were Jefferson and Washington, not Marx or Stalin. Truman and the Dulles brothers found such patriotic nationalism to be less reliable than French colonialism.

Kill Anything That Moves: The Real American War in Vietnam⁴⁰

(2013, 370p, Nick Turse) Indyreader.org Panel discussion >www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDr4Rm_LP6c <⁴¹

Turse⁴² devoted 12 years tracking down secret documents written by a Pentagon task force that secretly operated from Army CofS General Westmoreland's office. The documents were called "Vietnam War Crimes Working Group Collection." Then he traveled throughout the Vietnam talking with eyewitnesses and even interviewed many accused of atrocities. He describes the brutality inflicted on civilians and why the "Kill Anything That Moves" at My Lai was a missing narrative of a systemic policy that we can use to better understand current U.S. military interventions. Evidence for Turse's position, like that in Stone's *Platoon*, is condensed from a long war into one book. It overstates direct *murder* of civilians and makes rape appear routine (most veterans never saw incidents of either). Some soldiers lost their lives

because they were not cautious with women or children but very few killed to avoid that nightmare scenario. Many units never even encountered civilians in the field. Turse's information derives from written reports and does offer a record of ground soldier atrocities but rarely at the My Lai level.

A greater destruction of lives and property resulted from indiscriminate artillery and air support, especially from bombing. There is particular truth in the records of abuse and inflated body counts that the chain of command sought, even if falsified. They also opened regions as "free fire zones" with lax *rules of engagement*. Killing innocent people was an obvious consequence. However, even relocating families and destroying their possessions was an obvious evil. Imagine if it was done here.

Hidden History of the Korean War: 1950–1951 (1952, 384p)

by I.F. Stone Also see >WWW.ifstone.org/weekly_searchable_output.php <

The journalistic icon's courageous, controversial book was republished during the Vietnam Conflict to explain our involvement and raise troubling questions about a war that history books claim only lasted from 1950 to 1953. In fact, our longest-lasting conflict began when US troops arrived in 1945. By closely analyzing US intelligence before the official start (25 June 1950), and actions of key players like General MacArthur, Dulles family, and Chiang Kai-shek; Stone takes apart the official story of a "forgotten war." He sheds light on the tangled sequence of out-law events⁴³ that led to a containment "pactomania" - like SEATO - that still mires us in Asia. Documents from the former Soviet archives (available in the 1990s) further illuminate an introduction by Bruce Cumings in the newest edition.

Kiss the Boys Goodbye (1990, 530p by MJ & W Stevenson)

A prize-winning "60-Minutes" producer and her husband did this story of men left behind for the sake of political expedience, mainly due to a number of classified operations. It continues a POW/MIA's investigation that aired on *60-Minutes*. It contains interviews from U.S. intelligence operatives, former POW's, U.S. politicians, families of the missing, and others; sometimes at risk of humiliation or government retaliation. Apparently hundreds of American soldiers were abandoned as POWs of war in the "honorable" U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam in the 1970s.

To avoid government embarrassment and uncomfortable questions, the national security establishment and some politicians tirelessly denied their existence and discouraged loved ones from finding or freeing them, Stevenson, unhappy with what was shown, quit working for *60 Minutes* and wrote this book. It should make most American citizens sad or angry. The authors prove that the Nixon administration maliciously betrayed some POWs to simplify its exit from Southeast Asia.

Nation Betrayed by Bo Gritz, (NV: Boulder City Lazarus 1988).

A decorated Green Beret commander recounts a hazardous missions into postwar Laos trying to recover MIA's and POW's from the Vietnam War, only to discover that high U.S. officials were deeply involved in the drug trade. He documents CIA drug dealing that bypassed our system of constitutional government.⁴⁴ The book also touches on 1980s Iran-Contra scandal.

Nuremberg and Vietnam: An American Tragedy (1970, 225p)

"Will We Finally Apply Nuremberg's Lessons?" (Sept 2010)

by Telford Taylor with New Introduction by Benjamin B. Ferencz⁴⁵

Telford Taylor concluded that Vietnam was a tragedy: ***"Somehow we failed ourselves to learn the lessons we undertook to teach at Nuremberg"*** (*Infra*, at 207). What are the lessons and how acceptable are they? Can laws of war be realistically enforced on a raging battlefield? It is worth re-examining how our powerful country is again being seen by many as a giant ***"prone to shatter what we try to save"*** (*Id.*). He recognized how a permanent institution to punish aggression could be a ***"turning point in the history of international law."***⁴⁶ What was Taylor's sequel to Nuremberg? The primary lesson was that, regardless of rank or station, indi-

³⁹ Fitzgerald is a scholar-journalist whose father was an infamous CIA Deputy Director. The book title comes from the *I Ching*, the Chinese Book of Changes. It depicts the image of revolution and only a tenth of the book goes beyond Tet (1968), but the bibliography includes some 200 entries.

⁴⁰ Interviews at www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7x6upOmdrw & www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXqVb6DvkmM

⁴¹ This youtube video was produced thru a contributor to Indyreader.org at the 3rd *Historians Against The War National Conference* (Towson University in MD, 6 April 2013), Turse spoke about the Vietnam War era files at the National Archives that later became the basis of his book. The panelists who here responded to Nick Turse's talk were Hofstra University History Professor Carolyn Eisenberg and John Prados (PhD, GWU National Security Archives Senior Fellow).

⁴² Nick Turse, PhD is an award-winning journalist, historian, essayist, and managing editor at TomDispatch.com, the co-founder of Dispatch Books, and a fellow at the Nation Institute.

⁴³ In 1950, the U.S. intervened in a civil war in Korea without a declaration of war. The Soviet Union decried American military aid to the South as aggression. In turn, the U.S. accused the Soviets of aggression by assisting North Korean communists who had penetrated the South. The armed intervention by the U.S. cost countless lives and did not restore peace or democracy to the area. Korea is still divided.

⁴⁴ The PBS documentary *Guns, Drugs and the CIA* examined *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*.

⁴⁵ Publisher: Foundations of the Laws of War series, The Lawbook Exchange. Ferencz (J.D. Harvard 1943) was the Chief Prosecutor at Nuremberg against SS Murder Squads (*Einsatzgruppen*). He is a 2009 Erasmus Prize Laureate. His many books, articles and lectures on aggression and world peace are available without cost on his website: www.bferencz.org. This page condenses his introduction to Taylor's book without going beyond Vietnam (into his excellent case for the ICC).

⁴⁶ Telford Taylor, "The Meaning of the Nuremberg Trials," Speech in Paris (April 25, 1947)

Individuals could be held criminally responsible by international law. The enforcement by the International Military Tribunal (IMT), and later Tokyo Tribunal, was limited to basic crimes condemned by international custom or treaty; i.e., aggression, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. In addition, medieval notions of sovereignty had become obsolete in a modern world.

No nation or person could be above the law. It must apply equally to everyone. Justice Jackson, a leading architect of the trials and Chief U.S. Prosecutor put it this way in his opening statement in the initial trial (1946) against Goering and cohorts before the IMT at Nuremberg: *"We must never forget that the record on which we judge these defendants today is the record on which history will judge us tomorrow. To pass these defendants a poisoned chalice is to put it to our own lips as well."*⁴⁷

Taylor put it more succinctly that law is not a one-way street. After October 1946, he was appointed Chief of Counsel for twelve subsequent trials designed to show how the Nazis had gained and abused power. In a speech (Paris, 1947) Taylor noted: *"Judicial recognition of the long-established and universal conviction that aggressive war is a crime is a milestone in the development of international law and a new foundation stone of civilization."*

In his Opening Address for the United States, Justice Jackson made clear *"that while this law is first applied against German aggressors . . . it must condemn aggression by any other nations, including those who sit here now in judgment"* (Id. at 154). The time had come to hold leaders accountable for offenses that threatened the survival of civilization. The IMT Charter, adopted in London by the four occupation powers (Aug. 1945) denounced the planning or waging of wars of aggression as "Crimes Against Peace." This idea that aggression should be an international crime culminated many years of deliberation by distinguished jurists and the eminently fair IMT held that it was "the supreme international crime" since it encompassed all the other crimes.

The court said that law is not static and follows the needs of a changing world by continued adaptation. Condemnation of war crimes and crimes against humanity had ancient roots. Idealists believed that armed force must be restrained. Conventions and Codes at the Hague, Geneva and elsewhere sought to humanize inhumane activity. The war crimes list was comprehensive and encompassed obvious inhumanities such as "wanton destruction of cities, towns or villages," and "murder or ill-treatment of prisoners of war."⁴⁸ In contrast, so-called realists believed that controlling warfare by rules was unattainable and undesirable. That is the framework to evaluate current practices.

By handing down capital sentences for the crimes of aggression, war crimes and crimes against humanity, Allied courts condemned military leaders of Germany and Japan. They hoped that the lessons of Nuremberg would thus lead to a more humane world. The IMT Charter and Judgment were praised by legal experts and affirmed by the United Nations. These principles of humanity were established long before Nuremberg. A right to injure enemies is limited. No soldier must obey illegal orders.

General Taylor's book opens with a salutation to the American flag, stressing *"the Liberty and Justice for which it stands."* The path his country took after Korea (1950) troubled him. By 1965, intervention in Vietnam was also ignoring lessons of Nuremberg and McNamara resigned (1966), convinced that we could not win. When Taylor wrote this volume, the U.S. was already deeply mired in combat and academics were sharply divided about the legality of U.S. intervention. Many loyal Americans denounced the invasion and bombings as crimes of aggression because North Vietnam had not attacked the US and the Security Council had not authorized the use of armed force in what was seen as a civil war between rival political factions. As North Vietnam increasingly moved into the South, the U.S. bombed Cambodia and Laos, countries with which we were not at war, in an effort to interdict supplies going to NVA troops fighting in the South. The excuse was that this was necessary to stop the spread of

communism, a threat to democracy, but the U.S. had invaded these countries because - essentially - our leaders feared that the communists would win in fair elections.

Respected law professors, led by Richard Falk of Princeton, challenged the legality of U.S. intrusion⁴⁹ and U.S. war crimes. Taylor, mindful of McArthur's admonition regarding the sacred duty of the soldier to protect the weak and unarmed, put a public spotlight on some crimes like those of the Mylai Massacre. The evidence showed that American soldiers had murdered helpless civilians, including women and children seeking shelter in a ditch.⁵⁰ The voice of the law was unheeded on the field of battle because few criticized patriotic young Americans who risked their lives under unbearable conditions. Most of the protesters were not unpatriotic and many were themselves veterans. Most just wanted to bring our boys back alive.⁵¹

Thomas Paine, who inspired the American Revolution, had written that a true patriot is one who dares to criticize his country when it has gone astray. The public outcry did finally help bring Vietnam to an inconclusive end but by then (1975) millions of Vietnamese were killed in an undeclared war. Taylor visited Hanoi (late 1972) to witness the bombing and confirmed the message in his book that it was a military and moral debacle.

The extent of this misjudgment was authoritatively confirmed 20 years later when McNamara did several books and tabulated the major causes for "our disaster in Vietnam." The listed failures had led the repentant former Secretary of Defense to conclude that it would be in the U.S. interest to create a world *"in which relations among nations would be based on the rule of law . . ."* It echoed President Eisenhower's advice: *"The world no longer has a choice between force and law. If civilization is to survive, it must choose the rule of law."* (May 1, 1958) We fought for a decade not to let Vietnam fall to communism but it did, making it the first war America lost. Unfortunately, the US failed to learn from defeat.

The Phoenix Program: America's Use of Terror in Vietnam (1990, 460p, Douglas Valentine) now also available as an E-book⁵²

This is an exposé of a covert CIA "counter-terrorist" program initiated in the dark days of Vietnam. It included widespread assassination, torture, murder, kidnapping, and rape devised to destabilize the National Liberation Front (NLF) and Viet Cong. Based on in-depth interviews with participants and observers, Valentine blows the lid off of the inhumane covert operation. Most of the victims were noncombatants. They were usually subject to extended imprisonment. Even execution was usually without trial. Sometimes people were simply shot as they answered the door at a suspected house. The victims were typically suspected of working with the VC—though corrupt security personnel likely put many there to extort money or remove rivals. Although there were earlier efforts, *Phoenix* operated between 1965 and 1972. When the abuses began getting negative publicity, it was shut down and replaced with "F-6," a similar program.

This was done under the watchful eyes of US government agencies and never punished. More than 81,000 people were "neutralized" and CIA Director Colby, acknowledged that over 20,000 people had been killed and U.S. perpetrators were rewarded.⁵³ Imagine if an outside power had done this in the U.S.

The new ebook introduction, "The Phoenix Has Landed," addresses a "Phoenix-style network" that constitutes America's current internal security apparatus. It was used in Central America and Middle East. The failure of torture was shown in Vietnam only to be repeated in Iraq. Neocon lawyers found acceptable ways to adapt terrorism and torture to the American

⁴⁹ Falk, "International Law and the United States Role in the Viet Nam War," 75 *Yale L. J.* 1128 (1965-66).

⁵⁰ See *Cover-Up: The Army's Secret Investigation of the Massacre at My Lai* by Seymour Hersh, NY: Random House, 1972. By March, 1968, it was public knowledge that the U.S. had destroyed villages because some inhabitants favored communism. In the end, only Lt. William Calley, was prosecuted for the Mylai massacres. Calley was convicted and, though originally sentenced to life in prison, served less than four years under house arrest for war crimes that had disgraced his country.

⁵¹ This is over simplified. How many young people fled the country to avoid being drafted and how many committed suicide, or turned to drugs in their despair, can never be known.

⁵² Professor Mark Crispin Miller says that a corporate overclass uses various methods to bury books because it cannot simply ban them. See >www.goodreads.com/list/show/75839.Forbidden_Bookshelf<, >www.youtube.com/watch?v=XV20t4J7Tkl< and >www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0czUr2imGY#t=74<. For the long story see >www.youtube.com/watch?v=02tN4LFh7Vg<

⁵³ For example, in 2001 it was revealed that former Nebraska senator Bob Kerrey, as a member of a Navy SEAL team on a Phoenix mission in 1969, participated in killing a dozen women and children in Thanh Phong village. Kerrey claimed the civilians were caught in crossfire, but their bodies were found grouped together, as if they had been rounded up and executed. Kerrey told the *New York Times*, *"Standard operating procedure was to dispose of the people we made contact with. Kill the people we made contact with, or we have to abort the mission."*

⁴⁷ Justice Robert H. Jackson, Opening Statement Before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg (Nov. 21, 1945), in *The Trial of Major German War Criminals by the International Military Tribunal Sitting at Nuremberg, Germany* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1946), 5. When Justice Jackson returned to his duties on the U.S. Supreme Court, Taylor, replaced him (Oct. 1946) as Chief of Counsel.

⁴⁸ See, e.g., Charter of the International Military Tribunal for Germany, concluded by the Government of the United States of America, the Provisional Government of the French Republic, the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, acting in the interests of all the United Nations and by their representatives duly authorized thereto, annexed to the London Agreement, London, 8 August 1945, Art. 6(b).

arsenal.⁵⁴ On American soil this is adapted under the guise of protecting us from terrorism using local police that sometimes target U.S. citizens. The war crimes in Vietnam are the genesis of paramilitarized American police forces as adjuncts to political security forces engaged in suppression of dissent.

There's no end in sight to the lies of corporate media. The U.S. has backed fascist regimes:⁵⁵ Now, despite its communist credentials, Vietnam is seen as a possible ally against China, another communist country with which America enthusiastically trades. The military-industrial state replaced "communism" with "terrorism" to keep Americans docile and intimidated. That's why people need to understand what Phoenix was all about.

***Saigon* (1982, 1800p, Anthony Grey).**

A well-done epic novel in the Michener style that tells the complex history of events in Vietnam, 1925-1975.

***Tet!* (1971, 440p, Don Oberdorfer, NY: Doubleday.)**

It is a journalist's account of the 1968 offensive was a finalist for 1971 National Book Award. The VC targeted every major town and military base throughout South Vietnam, including the U.S. embassy in Saigon. The attackers took devastating losses but politically turned American public opinion by showing that attrition had failed. There was no "light at the end of the tunnel." It is based on hundreds of interviews with those in the struggle.

***Thirteenth Valley* (1982, 630p, John M. Del Vecchio)**

This gripping novel of infantry combat realistically presents soldiers that are transformed by the harsh reality of facing death. The survival psychology and grunt language will help you understand the experience of jungle warfare during two weeks with a company of the 101st Airborne Division.

***A Vietcong Memoir* (1986, 370p, Truong Nhu Tang)**

A historical account of the "other side" dispels many of the myths that westerners had about the war. It is well written by an intelligent and well-connected veteran of the early 1950s war against the French. He was committed to Uncle Ho's galvanizing personality from the time they met in Paris and much of their revolutionary ideology came from France and America. Truong was a member of the NLF, the political arm of the VC and not a VC fighter so the military conflict is not emphasized, but the book shows how South Vietnam disintegrated. The author's honesty and directness reveals the importance of Vietnamese family and personal connections that found little or no outlet with Western society. We are given an inside view of how a highly placed VC could undermine resistance to subvert South Vietnam from within by co-opting non-communist opposition.

He rose to become the VC Minister of Justice, but later fled in despair to be one the highest officials to have defected to the West. The book teaches political organizing and illustrates how communism was a convenient vehicle that lacked specific ideology and did not seriously question the risk of Soviet and Chinese influence. The book is also full of true encounters with security forces and the suspense that we would expect in spy novels.

***Vietnam: The Logic of Withdrawal* (1967, 150p, H. Zinn)**

The former French puppets who ran Vietnam in the South knew that Ho Chi Minh would win any free and fair election so they repeatedly broke the promise in the 1954 Geneva accords. After the U.S. installed dictator Ngo Dinh Diem, significant guerrilla activity started by reactivated Viet Minh units. The Viet Cong (National Liberation Front) formed in 1960 to resist U.S. backed terror, torture, and "manhunts." Before alleged infiltration from the North, the U.S. sent thousands of "advisors" in violation of the Geneva accords. Zinn notes that in 1964 the NLF made one of its many peace offers that entailed allowing it to participate as a political party in "neutralist" South Vietnam.

Zinn quotes Mansfield's Senate majority committee report that in January 1966 there were 230,000 NLF troops in the South and only 14,000 North Vietnamese. At the same time there were 170,000 American and other foreign troops (21,000 from South Korea) aiding the South Vietnamese forces. With

airpower, these allied forces vastly outnumbered the VC who were fighting in part of their own country. The Mansfield report stated that from 1962 to 1965, six times as many persons in the South (100,000) had joined the NLF, the only force in the South addressing the needs of the peasant masses. In 1965, 100,000 deserted from the ARVN. He quotes Neil Sheehan and Charles Mohr (NYT) saying that the NLF represented true social change for better or worse against the reactionary South Vietnamese oligarchy. He quotes a French foreign correspondent as observing that when what would become the NLF began assassinating South Vietnamese govt. officials in 1959-60, the peasants apparently supported these actions against their oppressors. Zinn observes that NLF atrocities were far fewer than US.

Zinn covers some of the reports of U.S. atrocities in the mainstream press. For example, Neil Sheehan reported (Nov. 1965) how the US and ARVN destroyed or heavily damaged dozens of hamlets (184 - 600 civilians killed) in order to root out the supposed NLF presence in them. In 1966 (Feb.) he reported that U.S. bombs & napalm had destroyed 1000 peasant homes in three hamlets (100 civilians killed in village of Tamquan).⁵⁶

Zinn adds the innumerable cases of the US supporting right wing dictatorships on bogus anti-communist grounds. He notes how the U.S. supported a right wing military coup in Laos (1958) as the leftist Pathet Lao were about to win an election. Then the US backed military subverted a neutralist government that kept the Pathet Lao weak, even as SEATO allies insisted that they were not commie stooges. Zinn quotes Bernard Fall,⁵⁷ to show how the Diem regime outlawed dancing and built high rent housing rather than schools or hospitals.

The U.S. placed an embargo on Vietnam (1975) that threw it into the arms of the the Soviet Union. Earlier communism, independent of any Russian or Chinese meddling, had adapted to local needs by impoverished peasants. The US had also fought called mild socialism (in Guatemala, 1954) when it cut into the profits of multinational corporations. Those overthrown sought help where they could, including the Soviet Union. Economic development was not much better than under capitalism until they became welfare states (as in Europe) or unions got power, but communism did offer more equal education, medical care, and electricity. It sometimes allowed educated dissent to grow.

***Westmoreland – The General Who Lost Vietnam* (2011, 416p)**

by Lewis Sorley; also see >www.youtube.com/watch?v=C8D7JEpbshE<

Military professional Lewis Sorley claims that to understand the failed brutality of Vietnam we need to study Westmoreland and his flawed strategy in a *civil war* 9,000 miles away. He no more understood those politics than he did domestic politics of the United States.⁵⁸ Sorley seems to be searching for an excuse for American defeat, but if a poorly armed enemy could beat America and South Vietnam because an incompetent general rose or remained too long in high command, how many other generals share such blame? It is sobering to consider the faults of a government that allows political promotions, *then and now*.

The CBS Special about "The Uncounted Enemy: a Vietnam Deception" by Mike Wallace on *60 Minutes* (NY, 1981) was a further exposé of Westmoreland's grossly exaggerated body counts of VC killed. The inflated numbers falsely made *attrition* seem to be plausible strategy. Instead it often served to excuse or cover civilian casualties. Westmoreland sued *60 Minutes* and eventually lost. See videos at:

>www.youtube.com/watch?v=5tsZP2IXQVw& < >www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOaexO6EaZU<

⁵⁴ A good examination of how the CIA became an international terrorist agency is available on YouTube as *The Watchmen: Secrets of the CIA* (44m) >www.youtube.com/watch?v=CbDKLHtpk5A<

⁵⁵ Nicaragua (Somoza Dynasty 1930s-1979), Paraguay (Stroessner Regime 1954-1989), Bolivia (Banzer Dictatorship, 1971-77), Chile (Pinochet's Military Junta, 1973-1990), Argentina (The Dirty War, 1976-1983), El Salvador's Dictatorship (Military Junta, 1979-1992), and Guatemala (Military Dictators). See >www.alternet.org/world/7-fascist-regimes-enthusiastically-supported-america<

⁵⁶ Sheehan reported that each month about 600 to 1000 civilians were being brought to a provincial hospital, injured by American weaponry. Many other later reports confirmed the pattern. Charles Mohr reported the case of an old woman who could no longer close her eyes and lost her arms and two of her children all because of U.S. napalm, stated "*Few Americans appreciate what their nation is doing to South Vietnam with airpower.*" Civilians were "*dying everyday in South Vietnam.*" Zinn quotes former Green Beret Donald Duncan as saying that he and his fellows regularly tortured the Vietnamese.

⁵⁷ He was a French military analyst respected by hawkish American planners, who also criticized Diem.

⁵⁸ Admiral Sharp, who led the air and naval bombardment of the North, also saw the strategy as applying overwhelming terror to force enemies into submission, much as the Nazis had done in WW2.