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Does It Still Matter? The Impact of the Vietnam Syndrome on American Foreign Policy

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Does It Still Matter? The Impact of the Vietnam Syndrome on American Foreign Policy

Abstract
During the Vietnam War there existed a lack of consensus as to what the official policy of dealing with the crisis at hand should be. Starting with Eisenhower and continuing through Johnson, the consensus was that South Vietnam was an area of vital interest to the US that could not be lost to the Communists. After the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964, the task of how to deal with Vietnam fell to Johnson. The following years witnessed a messy display of force, the loss of thousands of American lives, and the unsuccessful retreat of the US from Vietnam. Ever since, there has been an element of fear surrounding intervention and the use of force in places that could potentially take the US down this same route of failure. The lessons learned have varied and have coalesced into multiple strategies used by future administrations; however, is it fair to say that the memory of Vietnam and the "syndrome" that developed thereafter, are still driving forces behind creation of US foreign policy? This paper will try to demonstrate through three case studies (the First Gulf War, Somalia, and Afghanistan) that the need to avoid another Vietnam, not just the war itself but the consequences to such a loss, are still relevant factors in an Administration's decision as to whether or not to intervene abroad.

Keywords
Vietnam, Vietnam Syndrome, foreign policy, intervention, HW Bush, Clinton, W Bush, use of force, humanitarian intervention, Gulf War, Somalia, War in Afghanistan, Social Sciences, Political Science, Michael Horotwitz, Horowitz, Michael

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Does it Still Matter?
The Impact of the Vietnam Syndrome on the Creation of American Foreign Policy

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Undergraduate Honors Thesis in Political Science
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April 8, 2011

ABSTRACT:

During the Vietnam War there existed a lack of consensus as to what the official policy of dealing with the crisis at hand should be. Starting with Eisenhower and continuing through Johnson, the consensus was that South Vietnam was an area of vital interest to the US that could not be lost to the Communists. After the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964, the task of how to deal with Vietnam fell to Johnson. The following years witnessed a messy display of force, the loss of thousands of American lives, and the unsuccessful retreat of the US from Vietnam. Ever since, there has been an element of fear surrounding intervention and the use of force in places that could potentially take the US down this same route of failure. The lessons learned have varied and have coalesced into multiple strategies used by future administrations; however, is it fair to say that the memory of Vietnam and the "syndrome" that developed thereafter, are still driving forces behind creation of US foreign policy? This paper will try to demonstrate through three case studies (the First Gulf War, Somalia, and Afghanistan) that the need to avoid another Vietnam, not just the war itself but the consequences to such a loss, are still relevant factors in an Administration's decision as to whether or not to intervene abroad.

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I. INTRODUCTION

I.I. Introduction of Thesis:

In 1988, when President HW Bush referenced the Vietnam War in his inaugural address he said: "that war (Vietnam) cleaves us still. But friends, that war began in earnest a quarter of a century ago; surely the statute of limitations has been reached. The final lesson (of that war) is this: no great nation can long afford to be sundered by a memory"[1]. While the Vietnam War may still represent a rich subject of analysis for scholars, has its memory ceased to influence current policymakers when deciding whether or not or to pursue warfare? This thesis will seek to demonstrate that the memory of Vietnam as well as the Syndrome that developed post-1975, are relevant factors that impact an administration's ability to create effective foreign policy.

I.II. Relevance in today's world:

The importance of researching this question is not just to understand the details of a failed attempt at democratization, but instead to identify whether Washington has come to a conclusion on two key questions that arose at the end of the Vietnam War. The first question involves the debate over the use of force abroad to exact victory against an oppressive government. The second question has a more pragmatic focus as it tries to strike a balance between the importance of intervention and the American national interest. More specifically, it asks whether intervention to restore something abstract (e.g. humanitarian rights) is reason enough for US involvement if an area holds only little US significance but a large possibility of protracted warfare. The importance of measuring the degree of US interest in a mission also

[1] *Bush, George HW. "George H.W. Bush Inaugural Address - 1989."* National Center for Public Policy Research - A Conservative Organization. Web. 16 Mar. 2011. <http://www.nationalcenter.org/BushInaugural.html>.

directly relates to domestic opinion and American purpose abroad. For example, if a presidential administration never defines and links the national interest to a foreign mission, the support of the American people will quickly diminish. Simply stated, every accepted US mission must hold at least some degree of hard interest to go along with its more moral or abstract value. The relevance and importance of these preceding factors has since enjoyed an even more acute focus after the war in Vietnam. Thus, understanding the current influence of the Vietnam Syndrome directly relates to these factors in that it explains how much America has actually learned and synthesized into workable policy since the fall of Saigon. If it is found that Vietnam ceases to play an active role in decision-making, then this might signal a resurgence of American confidence in its use of force and a clarification of American purpose abroad, thus removing any lingering fears or doubts over US capabilities and reasoning behind intervention. However, if Vietnam has sustained its status as an active factor in decision-making, then this might mean the American public, including Washington, still has not reached a conclusion on the value of force or intervention abroad, especially when a mission serves another country's interest over that of the US's. If it can be shown that Vietnam is still an active factor, then perhaps it also could be said that America is still grappling with its failure in South Vietnam, still unsure of what a successful policy should look like so as to avoid such quagmires in the future.

Before preceding it is important to differentiate the memory of Vietnam from the memory of other past wars, like World Wars I and II. Both of those wars certainly left a great mark on the American psyche; however, unlike Vietnam, they did not lose support as casualties increased, and they did not dilute respect for government[2]. All were wars which sparked fear and taught lessons; however, Vietnam was the only one with physical and psychological strains that

[2] Moore, David *Support for War on Terrorism Rivals Support for WWII* Gallup News Service. October 3, 2001. http://www.gallup.com/poll/4954/Support-War-Terrorism-Rivals-Support-WWII.aspx

acted almost like a "ghost" policy on future administrations' initiatives. More specifically, Vietnam's impact was so great in a negative sense that, unlike previous wars, (which although bloody did much to unite the country) it placed severe restrictions on what actions a president could take or even gain support for in the future. As the new political hegemon of the international scene, America simply had more responsibilities than others, but how an administration dealt with these added responsibilities (e.g. interventions to help others, not protect ourselves) and how the public reacted to these missions had a great deal to do with the effect of the Vietnam War. Thus, the Vietnam Syndrome not only described a debate over force abroad, but also how initiatives were judged, how a president formulated said initiatives, and how US missions were defined. Hopefully this explains why understanding the current legacy of this particular war still remains important over three decades later.

Throughout the rest of this section, key details of the foreign policy traditions active in the Vietnam period will be highlighted, along with the background to the crisis itself, as well as the lessons learned from the defeat. All of this information is important in order to understand why certain decisions were made, certain strategies chosen over other possibilities, and what role the accepted wisdom of the time played in shaping thought processes. The section will conclude with the research approach used to examine the preceding hypothesis.

Before the following commences, it should be duly noted that the following arguments are not meant to provide a full history or detailed description of each war involved in the study; rather, exposition will only be conducted to the point necessary for satisfaction of the overall argument being made in each particular situation. The history of the following events is obviously important, but clarity of the overall meaning of this thesis will be valued over exhaustive facts.

I.III. Background to 1960s Foreign Policy:

Policymaking in the years post-WWII were dominated by the need to control aggression abroad so as to stop it from spreading or worsening. This was the lesson Americans had learned from the failure of appeasement at Munich in 1938. 20th century presidents also subscribed to the principles of Wilsonianism, a tradition arguably universalist in its approach to World Order[3] that did not easily lend itself to an analysis of the relative importance of various countries. Wilsonianism, as described by Woodrow Wilson himself, was the government's obligation to work toward a just and righteous policy in which platonic abstractions (e.g. national self-determination and world peace) were served to a degree that, in practice, almost eclipsed practical or selfish decisions[4]. To be clear, Wilsonianism was not meant to be a complete dismissal of pragmatism; rather, it was a theory that promoted prosperity in the long-run over short-term focused policy based on individual self-interest. He argued that spurning selfish interests like economics or power politics was not a policy of non-realism but one that spoke to an even higher realism[5]. Regardless of Wilson's message, many realists still looked at Wilsonianism as representing the antithesis of Realpolitik, because while it expressed the importance of such admirable traditions as democracy and freedom, its usage favored an idealism that failed to take force or power into account. While a great motivating factor behind more abstract values, it never seemed to place enough importance on having a concrete interest in conjunction with said softer value[6]. During the presidency of George W. Bush, scholars

[3] Kissinger, Henry *Diplomacy.* New York, New York. Simon and Schuster, 1994 pg. 232-233
[4] McDougall, Walter A. *Promised Land, Crusader State: the American Encounter with the World since 1776*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997
[5] McDougall, Walter. Personal Interview 11 November 2010
[6] Ambrosious, Lloyd E. *Wilsonianism,: Woodrow Wilson and his Legacy in American Foreign Relations* MacMillan Palgrave, New York. 2002 pg.s 1-2

agreed that the policies exemplified by the neoconservatives in his administration were those that combined Wilsonianism "with teeth", or military force; however, this militarized version of the tradition was not in play at this time[7]. To be accurate, all policy was not driven by this idealistic theory; rather, Realism still existed as an influential factor during the lead-up to Vietnam, and in fact, realists were the first to critique the war strategy before combat even started. They chastised government officials for thinking that they could easily conquer communism by democratizing an area that had no history of a democratic tradition[8] and they protested against the war way before American efforts started to falter. They even went so far as to say that the VietCong were not even motivated by the tenets of Communism, but rather by nationalism and self-determination[9]. Ironically, Wilsonianism, in principle, would have been the one tradition that would have argued for allowing the VietCong these rights; however, their actions were in tension with too many other values that Wilsonians would normally uphold, like democracy or human rights. At any rate, despite a significant realist influence at the time, this group of thinkers did not enjoy the support of anti-communists, who vehemently believed in the Wilsonian principle of democracy over communism. So afraid were people of the influence that communism could have on the well-being of the United States that they initially gave great momentum to a moral war, despite realist critiques and concerns. As a result, when Lyndon Johnson took office in 1965, he dealt with a war whose motivations were slightly eschewed in the direction of a soft interest with little concrete interest (i.e. clear definition for the mission) to back it up.

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[7] Mearsheimer, John *Hans Morgenthau and the Iraq war: realism versus neo-conservatism.* OpenDemocracy.Net http://www.politischer-realismus.de/Realism%20vs.%20Neo-conservatism.pdf 16 March 2011 pgs. 1-2

[8] Mearsheimer, John. *Hans Morgenthau and the Iraq war: realism versus neo-conservatism* pg. 4

[9] Mearsheimer, John. *Hans Morgenthau and the Iraq war: realism versus neo-conservatism* page--

I.IV. The beginning of a War

In 1950, NSC 64 concluded that IndoChina was a key area of Southeast Asia under immediate threat of communism. The accepted wisdom of the time period, originating from the fears of communism expounded upon above, was that if Americans allowed Vietnam to fall to communism, other countries in southeast Asia would quickly follow, and then countries in other regions would begin to fall under the rule of the Soviet Union. Eventually almost every state in the international system would be forced to surrender to the Soviet Union, leaving the United States alone and weak against an unstoppable international power[10]. This "domino theory" sparked the beginning of an American commitment in Vietnam, where Wilson's moral foreign policy informed much of the soft interest and motivation behind intervention. Unfortunately, the goals of Wilsonianism, absent a hard interest connected to national security, can easily be undermined with a poor showing abroad; therefore, in 1975 when the Nixon Administration needed to deal with the deteriorating war effort, the question for policymakers became how to extricate the US commitment without making it seem as if America had abandoned the reasoning used to justify the war. Retreat, as some argued, had the dangerous ability to undermine the credibility of an American commitment abroad, perhaps even precipitating more violent outbreaks in countries who no longer worried about an American threat[11]. Also such an embarrassing American effort that highlighted not only US weaknesses but a definitive US breaking point, could easily give the communist effort the wrong impression of American resolve in this and future causes[12].

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[10] Mearsheimer, John. and Hans Morgenthau. *The Iraq war: realism versus Neo-conservatism* pg. 2

[11] Mack, Andrew. *Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict* World Politics Vol. 27, No. 2 (Jan., 1975), pp. 175-200 Published by: Cambridge University Press Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/2009880

[12] Karnow, Stanley *Vietnam: A History.* New York, New York. Penguin Publishing, 1997 pgs. 342-343.

The preceding allowed the Vietnam War to shockingly expose American weaknesses on the international scene; however, there was a subtle arrogance to the views that had brought the US into Vietnam. That Americans believed the feasibility of victory to be so simple reflected an ignorance to the changing face of foreign policy, post-WWII. Conventional warfare and power politics no longer dominated the international scene and America took too long to realize that a new strategy was needed to win the goals of future warfare[13]. The change occurred when America assumed the position that Great Britain had held for so many decades prior, that of the protector of the balance of power. When Great Britain had held that position it had been a different world, one where nuclear weapons had not been a factor, Communism had not descended upon all of Eastern Europe, and there existed very little theory in opposition to the tenets Realpolitik. This new world that America presided over, was one of interdependence, meaning that Americans could no longer define their national interest in domestic or international terms alone; instead, both spheres had to be taken into account[14]. The changing nature of the new environment called for balancing needs, services, and resources, especially when it came to pursuing adversaries. Not only was there the national self-interest to worry about, but there was also ethical considerations for intervening on the side of small, disadvantaged countries who could not protect themselves. At the same time, there still existed an obligation to draw distinctions between practical and non-practical interventions[15], which was a concept that sometimes eluded 20th century leaders. At the time, the lessons of WWII, still fresh in the minds of many, favored curbing all aggression by foreign actors in order to stop world war; however, the fear of another world war should have been nowhere near as salient at

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[13] Galula, David. *Counter-Insurgency warfare: Theory and Practice.* Westport, Connecticut. Greenwood Publishing, 1964. pg. 34

[14] Nye, Joseph S. Jr. *Why the Gulf War Served our National Interest.* The Atlantic. Volume 268, No. 1; pages 56 - 64. July 1991 http://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/issues/91jul/nye.htm 30 March 2011

[15] Kissinger, Henry *Diplomacy.* pg. 388

the time due to the overwhelming presence of nuclear weapons. As the theory of nuclear deterrence states, if a country tries to seek excessive gains through a huge display of force (similar to those seen in the World Wars) then they increase their chance of total destruction due to the use of nuclear weapons by their opposition[16]. As a result, the dawn of the nuclear age actually enforced, and arguably increased, the use of small displays of focused force to achieve now smaller objectives, as world peace could be kept stable by nuclear deterrence[17]. However, many policymakers at the time failed to understand both the need for smaller and direct force displays as well as the need for a new war strategy; limited objectives simply could not be achieved in the framework of conventional warfare[18].

In addition to a poor understanding of new realities, Vietnam strategy arose from ill-thought out actions on behalf of the Johnson Administration. Many times, Johnson's presidential initiatives played against the peace policies that all wanted to pursue. In April 1965, the President gave a speech that articulated the goals of Vietnam as limited. He stressed that the US objective was one of the "independence of South Viet-Nam, and its freedom from attack." He went on to say that "we want nothing for ourselves--only that the people of South Viet-Nam be allowed to guide their own country in their own way." America, he said, would do everything necessary to reach that objective; however, we would do *only* what is absolutely necessary[19]. As the speech continued Johnson went on to say that the US was ready to engage in unconditional negotiation and discussion with the other side, emphasizing that this would be the path to peace. However, Johnson ran into trouble as time passed as it became clear to the American public and

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[16] Jervis, Robert *The Political Effects of Nuclear Weapons: A Comment.* "International Security" Vol. 13, No. 2 (Autumn, 1988), The MIT Press http://www.jstor.org/stable/2538972 pg. 81
[17] Jervis, Robert *The Political Effects of Nuclear Weapons: A Comment.* pg. 81
[18] Galula, David. *Counter-Insurgency warfare: Theory and Practice.* pg. 32
[19] Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965. Volume I, entry 172, pp. 394-399. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1966.

everyone else, that the mission had never really been defined or linked to the national interest; as a result, it suffered from indecision, confusion, and mission creep. For example, when General Westmoreland continued to ask for more troops, Johnson consented, not sure what else to do, even though he professed peaceful intentions. These actions only succeeded in reinforcing conflicting goals and ill-feelings at home[20].

To analyze Vietnam in terms of limited war theory, it is important to understand that limited violence can always escalate to another more undesirable level, as arms control and crisis stability can never be guaranteed. Those in charge of war policy are always capable of performing actions that state the wrong message[21]. Because of the confusion inherent in interpreting another's actions, it is not so much the actual act of escalation that causes larger war, but rather the fear of what each country involved will do next. Any statement that presumes limited wars will not lead to all-out war is one that presumes limited wars can be rationally carried out under circumstances in which similar goals exist between one party and its opponent. Due to the asymmetric nature of the conflict it becomes very difficult to even suppose that one side would ever act the same as the other in any situation[22]. Applying this background theory to Johnson, it is easy to see that his policy was doomed by his ambiguous actions (which obviously sent the wrong message to the enemy) even in the face of his own yearnings for peace. All of this is to say that while Johnson may have only wanted to go in and achieve the moral objective of democracy over communism, it is impossible to separate such a course of action from that of all-out war with an enemy who already views the situation as total.

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[20] Research and Reference Service: Foreign Reaction to President Johnson's Johns Hopkins Speech on Vietnam, 4/14/65. Confidential Files, Box 89. LBJ Library.

[21] Robert, Jervis. *Arms Control, Stability, and Causes of W*ar Political Science Quarterly Vol. 108, No. 2 (Summer, 1993), pp. 239-253 Published by: The Academy of Political Science. Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/2152010

[22] Mack, Andrew. *Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflic*t World Politics Vol. 27, No. 2 (Jan., 1975), pp. 175-200 Published by: Cambridge University Press http://www.jstor.org/stable/2009880

Johnson's commitment to the war was aways questioned as the years went by, which caused him to lose his credibility and support from the American public. It seemed that every time he tried to pacify all, he ended up confusing both Americans and the enemy with inconsistent policy. At the same time that he would approve continued bombings and troop escalation as a means to appease the war hawks in Congress, he would also place limitations on where the bombs could be dropped and where the troops could use force[23]. Although he meant his behavior to signal a commitment to peace, he only added to the larger problem at hand, which was American confusion as to the mission of Vietnam and its importance to the US[24]. As time went by, Johnson's approval ratings plummeted causing his resignation as a candidate in the 1968 Presidential election.

I.V. Lessons of Vietnam:

Much of the damage done by the Vietnam war was and is still unquantifiable. One thing is for sure, however, the American defeat in Vietnam created a new type of foreign policy where incoming administrations tried continuously to avoid another similar disaster. This precipitated two new rules of force that have since influenced policy.

One immediate American response was that never again should the US government enforce interventionist policies that might run the risk of rupturing American confidence abroad. The protest of "no more Vietnams" so prevalent throughout that time of troubles permeated the reluctance to use American armed forces for intervention. There was a reverse argument to this,

[23] Valenti, Jack. *A Very Human Presidency***.** Library of Congress Catalogue, Publication Data, 1975. LBJ Library.
[24] Karnow, Stanley *Vietnam: A History.* New York, New York. Penguin Publishing, 1997.

however, that stated that the United States was not defeated because of the use of force in Vietnam, but rather it was the absence of strong and effective force that caused the US defeat[25]. In this view, the military was forced to act with one hand tied behind its back leading many to conclude that if one intends to win a war, the military must be trusted to achieve victory in the way that they have been trained[26].

Lastly, American arrogance, as discussed earlier, was such that all believed victory could be achieved with little or no cost to America itself; however, the failure of policymakers to recognize the practicality of certain interventions over others, as well as the inability to control violence escalation, cost America in a very permanent way. Despite the need to protect countries under circumstances of injustice, this was a time for choosing as America just did not possess the resources or the commitment to intervene in all situations that did not directly affect national security. These lessons precipitated the development of a Vietnam Syndrome, a termed first used to describe the psychological symptoms of veterans returning home from Vietnam, but then used in its more enduring political format in 1978. The phrase, in this context, is attributed to Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia who proposed legislation that would allow the president to mobilize troops during a crisis, without the declaration of a national emergency. Nunn argued that such legislation was necessary to combat what he called a "Vietnam Syndrome" in Congress that might paralyze them during times of disaster[27].

The phrase "Vietnam Syndrome", depending on which political orientation it originated from, meant two different things. If used by the political Left, it often referred to a reluctance to contemplate military intervention abroad, especially in Third World countries. In their view,

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[25] Simons, Geoff. *The Vietnam Syndrome: Impact on American Foreign Policy.* New York, New York Palgrave, MacMillan Limited. 1997.

[26] Kissinger, Henry *Diplomacy.* New York, New York. Simon and Schuster, 1994

[27] Herring, George C. *The Vietnam Syndrome* in *The Columbia History of the Vietnam War,* ed. Anderson. Columbia University Press, New York. 2011 pg. 411-412

Vietnam had been unnecessary and altogether unwinnable, and they believed that if America were to intervene again in a similar situation, they would probably be faced with similar results[28]. For those on the Right[29], the phrase was employed negatively to mean that failure to intervene abroad and thus allow other areas to fall to communism, would produce catastrophic results for US dominance. In their view, if America were to ever reassert its global leadership, it would have to quickly overcome the Syndrome[30]. They argued that America's defeat was largely self-inflicted and if the Johnson Administration had used force decisively and without limit, instead of the gradual escalation strategy that had been in place, the war could have been won[31].

Regardless of what side one took in the debate over intervention and the use of force, the Syndrome, in general terms, also described the state of foreign affairs absent political associations. By this it is meant that those who looked upon the US saw a combination of a public biased against war and presidential foreign policy seemingly frightened or conflicted over the use of force, making it look as if the US were unable to go on the offensive, paralyzed by the fear of another disaster[32]. The lasting effects of the Syndrome, in all of its forms, on the creation of American foreign policy is what this thesis will try and quantify.

I.VI. Research Approach:

In order to test the validity of the preceding hypothesis, the following three post-Vietnam interventions-the First Gulf War, the war in Somalia, and the current war in Afghanistan-will be analyzed. In each analysis a short overview of the conflict will be given, including the strategy,

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[28] Herring, George C. *The Vietnam Syndrome* pg. 412

[29] The political Right in this context does not match up with the political Right of today. Many of the members of this group were moderate democrats as well as the new group of republicans, known as Neo-Conservatives. The group also caught the attention of some liberals for a brief period of time.

[30] Herring, George C. *The Vietnam Syndrome* pg. 413

[31] Herring, George C. *The Vietnam Syndrome* pg. 413

[32] Simons, Geoff. *Impact of Vietnam on American Foreign Policy.* New York, New York Palgrave, MacMillan Limited. 1997. pg. 44

goals, and objectives of the administration, paying close attention to the evolution of their foreign policy approach and how they adopted the strategy they ultimately pursued. How much of an influence the lessons of Vietnam had on the strategy taken will be acutely reviewed by seeing if the architects themselves ever referenced the war, chose not to take a certain path because of the war, or had been outspoken leaders on either side of the debate over the use of force post-Vietnam. If a President in question was also involved in the Vietnam war, either as a supporter or a dissenter, the impact of that experience will be analyzed in terms of the role it played in that administration's political strategy and public persona. The attitude surrounding military intervention at the time of each conflict will also be analyzed on a scale of favorably inclined to highly opposed in terms of bureaucratic and public perceptions. If any attitude demonstrated has direct connections or references to Vietnam, this will also be noted. Finally the overall success or failure of the war policy and the intervention will be analyzed as a product or non-product of Vietnam. If this hypothesis is shown to be valid then some sort of connection to Vietnam should be clear or their should at least be some visible influence of the memory shaping presidential policy. Alternatively, if the Vietnam syndrome has become a relic of the past, no longer influencing the decisions made by the President or Congress, than we should see little or no reference to the war or, references only in the sense of negation, as if to say that the leaders acknowledged the past situation but had moved forward signaling an end to its effects. Policies, in this case, would then be seen as shaped by the external and internal factors of the environment and era in which the war occurred, rather than by memories of Vietnam. These alternative factors, which would be identified as the main influencing factors of foreign policy in tension with the Syndrome, will be further discussed in section II.

II. Strategy Post-Vietnam

After the fall of Saigon in 1975, there existed a clear demobilization of the military as well as a reluctance to become involved in Third World conflicts abroad[33]. Policy wise, Conscription was abandoned as a useful resource, military aid to unstable allied governments was dramatically reduced, and a ban on the extended deployment of troops abroad, as expounded upon in the War Powers Act of 1973, was enforced[34]. After Vietnam, the new strategy used to replace normal combat and eschew the use of direct force, came to be known as the Indirect Strategy of US intervention, which replaced conventional force with new types of power that expressed US interests without the loss of lives. Some of these techniques included bolstering the defense of capabilities of friendly third world countries or utilizing democratic methods of negotiation over force[35]. If traditional force was used at this time, only numerically small forces were utilized in an non-intrusive manner so as to suffer the least amount of costs[36]. The truth of the matter was that in the years immediately following Vietnam, the American public still felt the war too acutely and refused to support even the smallest military interventions. Congress, sensing the reluctance surrounding intervention, often countered military missions with congressional roadblocks that obstructed the necessary authority for said intervention[37] [38]. The deep impact that Vietnam had on the American psyche influenced intervention throughout the

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[33] Schraeder, Peter and Lynne Reinner. *Intervention into the 1990s: US Foreign Policy in the Third World*. Second Edition. Lynne Reinner Publishers, London, 1992. pg. 43

[34] Schraeder, Peter, and Lynne Reinner. *Intervention into the 1990s: US Foreign Policy in the Third World.* pg. 43

[35] Kissinger, Henry *Diplomacy.* pg. 43.

[36] Brown, Louis T. *War and Aftermath in Vietnam* Routledge, New York New York. 1991 pg. 273

[37] Herring, George C. *The Vietnam Syndrome* pg. 412

[38] It is important to note here that the military had been exhausted by Vietnam and was in no position to take on any more missions until its strength was revived. Therefore, even though Americans did not want to use force abroad, the option was much less of a possibility in the aftermath of Vietnam than it had been prior to 1975. This point is discussed in more detail later in the thesis.

rest of the 1970s and into the 1980s, leaving many to wonder if the Syndrome would continue to serve as the guiding force of foreign policy[39]. There was another side to the argument, however, that was first popularized by conservatives of the time[40], but which has since grown to include other political groups. These officials argued that the change in policy and strategy did not represent a paralysis to act brought on by the fears from that war, but, rather, the changes were recognition of the fact that foreign policy always faced difficulties due to local contexts and that sometimes the best course of action was inaction, based on the situation. Everything was not an extension of America's failures and they urged the public to stop being so obsessed with past mistakes.

Those who posited these alternative theories, which negated a Vietnam Syndrome, believed that in any historical era a president always has the task of striking a balance between competing considerations for intervention, trading off what seems to be ideal, according to one criterion, to meet the needs of another constraint; more often then not, this requires an acute analysis of the amount of time and political capital leaders are willing and/or able to spend in order to reach a high quality foreign policy decision[41]. Some foreign policy theorists would argue that while Vietnam may have made many of these analyses more salient for future policy decisions, never had they been defunct factors in international relations decision-making. Many argued that the over-learning of history lessons or their misapplication to inappropriate contexts were inimical to effective policymaking. Basically those who argued against the idea that the Vietnam Syndrome defined future US actions abroad were essentially saying that Vietnam was an example of a poor calculation of the local contexts of the time period. Yes the conflict ended

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[39]Klinghoffer, Judith Apter *The Influence of the Vietnam Legacy on American Electoral Politics.* New York Times, July 7 1996. http://rauli.cbs.dk/index.php/assc/article/viewFile/1636/1664 28 March 2011.
[40] Please reference page 14 of the introduction for more detail on this group of individuals.
[41]Renshon, Stanley and Deborah Welch Larson. *Good Judgement in Foreign Policy-Theory and Application* Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., Lanham Maryland. 2003 pg. 8.

poorly, but the overall message was not that the US should thereafter refuse to intervene abroad; instead, they argued that the next time intervention occurred, policymakers had to do a better job dealing with local context and strategy. Hard challenges to intervention would always exist, regardless of whether or not a country had suffered a humiliating defeat. Dealing with these challenges, whether they be internal (interagency conflicts, partisan fighting, domestic concerns, military exhaustion) or external (location of intervention, geopolitical significance, stability of foreign government) would prove difficult for any President to overcome, regardless of history[42]. Difficulties would always arise and sometimes this might mean refusing intervention, not because of fear, but because of practicality[43]. As stated earlier, creating policy is all about balancing different considerations and viewpoints and rarely is every sector of a government in agreement about what should be done in a given situation. If failed intervention happens, these anti-Syndrome strategists would argue that it has as much to do with the physical intervention itself as it does with the ability to coordinate proper strategy and planning.

From the preceding, it could be stated that the creation of new types of foreign doctrine, specifically the type that shies away from military means, does not necessarily mean that America still struggles to excoriate a paralysis abroad due to failures in Vietnam, but rather that foreign policy is always an application of lessons learned combined with responses to traditional challenges. Therefore, the new types of strategy developed post-1975 (i.e. counterinsurgency; clandestine pro-insurgency against enemies; peacetime contingency operations) were not cowardly measures to avoid using direct force but instead informed strategies based on the

[42] Renshon and Larson, *Good Judgement in Foreign Policy-Theory and Application* pg. 236-237.
[43] Renshon and Larson, *Good Judgement in Foreign Policy-Theory and Application* pg. 241.

changing face of US enemies as well as the fact that resources were not as abundant post-Vietnam since the military needed time to recover[44].

Also, generally speaking, there are certain concrete reasons for American intervention abroad that, if not present, would cause America to resist involvement. If they do materialize, however, America usually considers the possibility of intervention regardless of past failure. Some of the situations that often beg for American involvement include pacification or control of ethnic conflicts; humanitarian crises; promotion of military civic action to enhance the profile of allied forces**;** maintenance of world order; abuses of international law; and finally promotion of democracy and US capitalism in order to open up global markets and secure US economic hegemony[45]. Once again, anti-Vietnam theorists might argue that if intervention fails to occur, it may be because the situation lacks one of the above (i.e. a lack of a unified driving force that would normally serve as a legitimate reason for intervention).

No matter what the historic period or the challenges facing an administration, the only way to succeed in foreign policy is to have a hard interest in an area and explanation of the goal in terms of American values. Where the US hasn't had both of these elements is where one sees trouble and failure[46]. No matter what, there must always be a goal, a definition of the mission, and a strategy if success is to be enjoyed.

Whether the challenges exemplified above and the reasons for intervention exposited above have actually always been a part of historical foreign policy or if they have indeed only become challenges due to failure in Vietnam is at the present moment unclear; however, all of

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[44] Renshon and Larson. *Good Judgement in Foreign Policy.* pgs. 48-49.

[45] Schraeder, Peter and Lynne Reinner. *Intervention into the 1990s: US Foreign Policy in the Third World,* Second Edition. Lynne Reinner Publishers, London, 1992. pgs. 48; 55; 75; 124.

[46] Personal interview with Ambassador David Newton, US State Department Director, Office for Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestinian Affairs (1988-90) US Ambassador to Iraq (1985-88). 2/18/11

the preceding theories will now be discussed and analyzed in terms of applicability within three case studies starting with The Persian Gulf War in 1991.

III.I The Gulf War-Background to the Crisis

Throughout the 1980s, the US had acted as a covert ally of Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War and had even failed to act when Saddam Hussein committed humanitarian crimes against the Iraqi Kurds[47]. The US failure to take action against Saddam was explained by a political analysis that posited Iran as the greater enemy over Iraq after its Islamic Revolution of 1979. The resulting unstable government was thought to be a legitimate threat to pro-western policies in the Middle East if allowed to rise to power[48].

Near the end of the Cold War, specifically during the time of the USSR invasion of Afghanistan, Saddam showed interest in renewing diplomatic ties with the US to bolster his defenses; however, after the USSR fell in 1989, his motives changed dramatically as he began to plan for an all-out takeover of the Persian Gulf, viewing it as an opportunity to usurp the dominant seat of power there[49].

Prior to this, Iraq had signed a cease-fire with Iran to end the past eight years of hostility. As a state, Iraq was virtually bankrupt owing much of its debt to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Iraq pressured both nations to forgive the debts, but they refused[50]. Iraq also accused Kuwait of exceeding its OPEC quotas and driving down the price of oil, thus further hurting the Iraqi economy. This collapse in oil prices had a catastrophic impact on Iraqi prosperity, which lead its government to proclaim Kuwaiti actions as a blatant attempt at economic warfare against Iraq[51].

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[47] Sullivan, Michael J. *American Adventurism Abroad; Invasions, Interventions. and Regime Changes since WWII.* Blackwell Publishing, Victoria, Australia. 2008. pg. 138

[48] Hooglund, Eric. *"The Persian Gulf"* in *American Adventurism Abroad; Invasions, Interventions. and Regime Changes since WWII.* Blackwell Publishing, Victoria, Australia. 2008. pgs. 341-342

[49] Hooglund, Eric. *"The Persian Gulf"* pg. 342.

[50] Hooglund, Eric. *"The Persian Gulf"* pg. 342.

[51] Hooglund, Eric. "The Persian Gulf" pgs. 340-342.

The Iraq-Kuwait dispute also involved Iraqi claims to Kuwait as a territory of Iraq, asserting that Kuwait was rightfully their territory and had only been allowed sovereignty after the allied victory in WWI[52].

In November of 1990, after Iraq forcibly invaded Kuwait, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 678, which afforded Iraq until January 15th of 1991 to withdraw from Kuwait. The Resolution also stated that all necessary measures needed to uphold a condemnation of the invasion as well as a withdrawal of Iraqi troops would be utilized[53]. When Saddam refused to heed the Council's warning, the coalition forces moved to start an invasion of Iraq in January of 1991, starting with an aerial bombing campaign on January 17th.

III.II The Vietnam Link

The ferocity with which HW Bush approached the border war with Iraq seemed quite of out of character with American foreign policy at the time, especially since the US had failed to meet earlier aggressions[54] with the same display of force. With such a solid comprehension of global politics in his background, however, President HW Bush believed there existed a solid basis for acting in the Gulf. Bush believed that this war would, in fact, prove to the World that America no longer suffered from a paralysis that inhibited it from standing up for its interests and principles abroad, thereby leaving behind any notion of a lingering Vietnam Syndrome[55]. For Bush, pushing beyond the fear of the use of force was never an empty propaganda point to rally support for the war; rather, he held the strong belief that the US should push forward since

[52] Hooglund, Eric. "The Persian Gulf" pg. 340.
[53] Sullivan, Michael J. *American Adventurism Abroad; Invasions, Interventions. and Regime Changes since WWII.* Blackwell Publishing, Victoria, Australia. 2008 pg. 200
[54] Examples of earlier aggressions where the US failed to get involved include: Syria into Southern Lebanon (1976), Israel into Lebanon (1982), Iran and Iraq in (1980-1988). Source: Sullivan, Michael J. *American Adventurism Abroad; Invasions, Interventions. and Regime Changes since WWII* pg. 200.
[55]This point (the piercing of the syndrome as a symptom or cause of the war) will be debated momentarily.

the country needed to take a more active role in the world[56]. Shortly after victory in the Persian Gulf, Bush was quoted as saying, "By God, we've kicked the Vietnam Syndrome once and for all"[57], which most took as a clear recognition from the President that piercing the Syndrome had existed as a major reason for the war itself, almost to say that proving that the US could succeed in a third world intervention was more important to the future of US policy than intervention based on a good cause.

Bush's foreign policy had been seen by many as an attempt at exaggerating the long line of "quieter" foreign policies in practice before him. For example, after Vietnam, Nixon had created a foreign policy that placed the burden of fighting on the lesser country involved rather than on the US. Then when Carter took over, his foreign policy looked slightly more aggressive as he pledged to protect American interests in the Gulf using military force; however, since US military forces were sufficiently weak during his tenure as president, he was criticized for a policy that seemed to hold little water. In October of 1981, Carter's successor, Ronald Reagan, extended his policy with the "Reagan Corollary to the Carter Doctrine", which proclaimed that the United States would intervene to protect Saudi Arabia, whose security was in fact threatened after the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War; yet, the task of actually putting any of these previous initiatives into concrete action fell upon HW Bush, who time and time again made reference to the restraints that Vietnam had placed on this country and the need to slacken their grip[58]. Throughout his career, Bush had always acted as a proponent of the idea that America lost the Vietnam War due to interference by civilian politicians who refused to allow the military the

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[56] Personal Interview with Ambassador Edward Gnehm, US Ambassador to Kuwait 1991-1994. 2/18/11

[57] Herring, George C. "America and Vietnam: The Unending War | Foreign Affairs." Home | Foreign Affairs. Jan. 1992. Web. 04 Mar. 2011. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/47440/george-c-herring/america-and-vietnamt-he-unending-war>.

[58] Von Bothmer, Bernard. *Framing the Sixties: The Use and Abuse of a Decade from Ronald Reagan to George W Bush*. University of Massachusetts Press, Boston MA. 2010. pgs. 102-106.

space to do their job[59]. The Gulf War was Bush's proof that the military had been rebuilt in the eyes of the public, replenishing the positive reputation and prestige that it had lost during Vietnam[60].

With the victory so new, however, it was unclear to both the American public and skeptics of the use of force as to whether or not the Gulf War had in fact excoriated the Syndrome. Scholars, like Eric Alterman, lamented that Hussein had been an evil man with a mission that needed to be destroyed; however, in his perspective, the war itself had only succeeded in taking him out of power, not in erasing a historical Syndrome[61]. Whether this had even been the goal also seemed difficult to answer definitively; however, despite debate, the public did seem to have a cathartic reaction to the victory, which explained the elevation of the military to a higher level than previously afforded[62].

The cathartic public reaction was also shared by HW Bush, who was convinced that the success of the Persian Gulf war had in fact expunged the Vietnam Syndrome from American memory. Bush hoped that his victory would return the US to a time in which their existed unity and/or consensus among the public and Congress concerning foreign affairs, similar to the time leading up to WWII[63].

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[59] Von Bothmer, Bernard. *Framing the Sixties: The Use and Abuse of a Decade from Ronald Reagan to George W Bush*. pg. 102

[60] Personal Interview with Ambassador David Newton. 2/18/11, Washington DC.

Gelpi, Christopher, Peter D. Feaver, and Jason Reifler. Success Matters Casualty Sensitivity and the War in Iraq International Security, The President and Fellows of Harvard College and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. 2006 http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/international_security/v030/30.3gelpi.html 30 March 2011.

[61] Alterman, Eric *DIALOGUE: The Gulf War's Aftermath Is the Vietnam Syndrome Dead?; No, Hussein Was One of a Kind.* NYTimes, New York. March 4, 1991. http://www.nytimes.com/1991/03/04/opinion/dialogue gulf-war-s-aftermath-vietnam-syndrome-dead-no-hussein-was-one-kind.html?src=pm March 28, 2011.

[62] Von Bothmer, Bernard. *Framing the Sixties: The Use and Abuse of a Decade from Ronald Reagan to George W Bush*. pg. 104

[63] Von Bothmer, Bernard. *Framing the Sixties: The Use and Abuse of a Decade from Ronald Reagan to George W Bush*. pg. 102

III. THE GULF WAR

Vietnam became a constant reference during the Bush presidency, even after suffering defeat to Bill Clinton. In his autobiography entitled, "*All the best, George Bush: My Life in Letters and other Writings",* Bush wrote that he hated the Vietnam Syndrome as he believed it was a symbol of disrespect to all those who had gone to South Vietnam to risk their lives at the order of their commander and chief[64]. Towards the end of his presidency he recalled wanting to have a ceremony at the Vietnam Memorial, but he feared it would look as if he were "sticking it in Clinton's ear" over his poor service record[65]. Regardless of controversy, Bush still wanted to have the ceremony, stating that "there is not much time left to say what is in my heart, but the one thing that I care about is Vietnam"[66].

Bush's secretary of state James Baker recalled that the Bush inner-circle was "very aware" of the Syndrome during the lead up to the Gulf War, as it was the first major war in terms of troop commitments since Vietnam. Baker also recalled that talk of the failures in that war very much colored the opinion of the Senate in the pre-war hearings[67]. The Gulf War, even for those within the Bush inner circle, had never been regarded as a sure thing; in fact, during the planning stages, most believed the war to be fraught with great risk and Congress was not interested in being held responsible for sending troops from their districts or states to what could potentially be a bloody war[68]. Because of the memory of Vietnam, the US also struggled with credibility as an active and secure ally during the Gulf War, especially since most of America's Arab allies looked at Vietnam as a weak moment in which the US walked away from what was supposedly an important, yet helpless, protectorate. Because of the lingering memories of 1975, the Gulf

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[64] Bush, George HW *All the best, George Bush: my life in letters and other writings* Scribner, New York, NY. 1999. pg. 573

[65] Bush, George HW *All the best, George Bush: my life in letters and other writings* pg. 574

[66] Bush, George HW *All the best, George Bush: my life in letters and other writings* pg. 574

[67] Von Bothmer, Bernard. *Framing the Sixties: The Use and Abuse of a Decade from Ronald Reagan to George W Bush*. pg. 102-103.

[68] Von Bothmer, Bernard. *Framing the Sixties: The Use and Abuse of a Decade from Ronald Reagan to George W Bush*. pg. 104.

States remained extremely weary of a US commitment and asking for their cooperation meant proving beyond a doubt that America would not pull out if it suffered a loss[69].

For some, what the Gulf War actually accomplished remained as unclear as the true motives behind the war itself. For example, many attributed the success of the Gulf War to the Powell Doctrine and believed that the war had done much more to affirm this type of strategy (i.e entering a war with a direct strategy for success through the overwhelming use of force followed by a concrete exit strategy) than it did to erase the concerns inherent in intervention abroad[70]. Powell, very much influenced by the lessons of Vietnam, had an understanding of war that cautioned him against complete trust of political-civilian strategy. Sometimes, albeit nowhere near a hard and fast conclusion, civilian leaders made decisions to commit the military in ill-advised ways without thinking of all of the issues (e.g., exit strategy, feasibility, objectives)[71]. Unlike the military, civilian leaders had different agendas to promote and objectives to reach; as a result, political objectives which called for immediate action often trumped a strategy of gradual involvement due to ambiguous details. Powell, on the other hand, tended to value exhaustive planning in a mission over making an immediate statement. In the Gulf War, he yielded to cautious decision-making, which advocated for quick withdrawal and no permanent presence after the liberation of Kuwait. Keeping forces or people in Kuwait post-conflict meant an implicit commitment to future war if one were to break out; therefore, he supported a clean break from the situation once the goal had been accomplished. If a continued presence were

[69] Personal Interviews with Ambassador Edward Gnehm and Ambassador David Newton. 2/18/11. Washington, DC
[70] Von Bothmer, Bernard. *Framing the Sixties: The Use and Abuse of a Decade from Ronald Reagan to George W Bush*. pg. 106.
[71] Interview with Ambassador Gnehm. Washington, DC. 2/18/11.

allowed, this might lead to "mission creep", which Powell thought analogous to the start of another Vietnam[72].

Another decision questioned by skeptics was the choice to not push on to Baghdad; if Bush did in fact mean to silence the Syndrome, why wouldn't he have continued the mission to show Saddam and the rest of the world that America feared no challenge? Perhaps the Syndrome did, in fact, still shape his decisions enough to convince him and his Administration that the loss of lives in Baghdad would be too great for a force-averse public too handle; thus, perhaps just as Bush was proclaiming the death of the Vietnam constraint, he might also have been bowing to it[73].

Without question, Bush invested a great deal of time in Vietnam rhetoric and thought during his presidency; however, his policy approaches and motivations for certain decisions could also be attributed to a less Vietnam-centric viewpoint. While certainly shaped by that war, Bush also considered himself a pragmatist who focused less on the fear of failure and more on the "most efficient route". When examining this side of the Bush approach to foreign policy, different explanations arise for the intervention itself as well as the decision to stay away from Baghdad.

III.III The Vietnam Counter-hypothesis

One of the main concerns of the West during the lead-up to the Gulf War was the significant threat Iraq posed to Saudi Arabia's oil fields. Following the conquest of Kuwait, the Iraqi army was within easy striking distance of Saudi oil fields. Control of these fields, along with Kuwaiti and Iraqi reserves, would have given Hussein control over the majority of the

[72] Interview with Ambassador Gnehm. Washington, DC. 2/18/11.
[73] Von Bothmer, Bernard. *Framing the Sixties: The Use and Abuse of a Decade from Ronald Reagan to George W Bush*. pg. 106.

world's oil, which could easily mean a threat to US economic interests[74]. The US had what most would call a "hard interest" in protecting regimes that supported overall US objectives; therefore, allowing such a volatile regime to come to power in an area that was so important to US capital seemed too risky.

On paper, the US had always listed its justifications for intervention in the Gulf as democracy promotion and humanitarian intervention; however, scholars like John Mueller, argued against this reasoning citing that the real reason for the American reaction to Iraq's invasion was neither to repel aggression (the official UN mandate), nor to bring democracy to Kuwait (a popular belief of many Americans)[75]; rather it was to ensure that Kuwait's oil was kept in the hands of those who would be friendly to Western capital[76]. To expound upon this, scholars writing about the Gulf War in 1991, posited the theory that the moral reasoning behind the war (e.g. to curb aggression, stop humanitarian atrocities, create a new world order) were used to bolster US resolve and make a US commitment in that region indivisible[77]. More specifically, Bush valued these goals but he also saw them as helpful in creating support for a war that was largely, albeit not entirely, about economic interests. The Administration's seeming indifference to the human rights of Iraq's Shiite and Kurdish populations (post-war) is usually the most obvious piece of evidence that is cited to bolster the preceding point (and will be discussed in more detail later)[78]. Basically, Saddam was seen as too unstable, or too independent to trust as a trading partner even though his country had a long history of participating in the global capitalist market. Therefore, the US needed to make sure they made the case for intervention

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[74] Sullivan, Michael J. *American Adventurism-Invasions, Interventions, and Regime Changes since WWII.* pgs. 202-203

[75] Mueller, John. *Policy and Opinion during the Gulf War.* University of Chicago Press, Chicago IL. 1994. pg. 39.

[76] Sullivan, Michael J. American Adventurism-Invasions, Interventions, and Regime Changes since WWII. pg. 138

[77] Fleming, Paula *Capabilities and Objectives in the Gulf Crisis*. International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society, Vol. 5, No. 1, 1991 pgs. 9-13

[78] Fleming, Paula *Capabilities and Objectives in the Gulf Crisis.* International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society, Vol. 5, No. 1, 1991 pgs. 9-13

extremely strong so as to avoid defection or criticism from the domestic audience. After all, an Iraq takeover of Kuwait would have meant that Saddam had the opportunity to double his share of the world's oil resources from 10% to 20%. If he then moved into Saudi Arabia, that share would increase to 48%[79]. Earlier foreign aggressions, in past years, where the US had failed to intervene[80] had never been met with this same type of globally sanctioned armed response, largely because these other conflicts had not threatened global capitalist oil markets[81].

In regards to American decision-making, it is also important to note the large impact that Israel has on US foreign policy. Some of the earlier aggressions in which the US failed to act involved Israeli aggression and therefore America remained very reluctant to get involved, especially since action would have meant putting military forces between Israeli and Arab coalitions[82]. Because this type of conflict would definitely be seen as intractable and dangerous, policymakers recognized the futility in acting as well as the unpopularity that such a course abroad would have at home[83]. Therefore, those who argued against the role of the Vietnam Syndrome in shaping Gulf policy often stated the motivation for the war had been strictly economic, and the only reason that this war served as the first big deployment of troops since Vietnam was not because of fear but because of the nature of the actors involved in the previous conflicts and their smaller significance to US interests.

These anti-Syndrome theorist also countered democracy promotion as a reason for becoming involved in the Gulf, using America's own actions as evidence. For example, in order to make sure that the majority of the world's oil stayed out of the hands of Saddam Hussein,

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[79] Sullivan, Michael J. *American Adventurism Abroad-Invasions, Interventions, and Regime Changes since WWII*. pg. 138 ; 202-204.
[80] please reference footnote 54 for specific examples.
[81] Sullivan, Michael J. *American Adventurism Abroad-Invasions, Interventions, and Regime Changes since WWII*. pg. 203.
[82] Personal Interview, Ambassador Edward Gnehm, 2/24/11.
[83] Personal Interview, Ambassador Edward Gnehm 2/18/11

American began stirring up secessionist movements among the Shitte Arabs of southern Iraq and the Kurds in the north. If the goal of all of this had been democracy or nation-building, Americans, as stated previously, would not have abandoned support for these insurgencies once the war concluded and oil remained in favorable possession[84]. This type of behavior on behalf of the US showed an appreciation for the practical over the moral or ideal, which suggested that the object of the war had not been to defeat Saddam Hussein in order to prove the dominance or effectiveness of American principles and reputation, but rather to cripple Iraqi military power to such an extent that it would be unable to threaten regional US allies. Officials were not interested in changing Iraq's form of government and when it became clear that the Saddam would remain in power after the war, the US was prepared to tolerate this because a weakened Saddam seemed more predictable than the prospect of a less authoritarian regime subject to public pressures[85].

Lastly, there existed the practical need to show the Gulf states that America was still the ruler of the international system even if the Cold War had ended, which might have given some of these once oppressed countries the opportunity to spread across their borders and assert their dominance in newly unoccupied areas. As this was a dangerous prospect for the US, one that many believed Saddam could ignite, there existed a critical a need to combat this possibility with military force[86].

II.IV The Case of Baghdad

As mentioned earlier, the HW Bush Administration made the conscious decision to not push on towards Baghdad in order to overthrow Saddam Hussein. There was some criticism surrounding the choice to allow such a dictator to remain in power and some believed that the

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[84] Sullivan, Michael J. *American Adventurism-Invasions, Interventions, and Regime Changes since WWII*. pg. 138.
[85] Hooglund, Eric. "The Persian Gulf" in *American Adventurism Abroad; Invasions, Interventions. and Regime Changes since WWII.* pg. 341-342.
[86] Hooglund, Eric. "The Persian Gulf" in *American Adventurism Abroad; Invasions, Interventions. and Regime Changes since WWII.* pg. 341-342.

decision had been an outgrowth of the fear of another Vietnam occurring, with the loss of thousands of lives and the development of a long, protracted war; however, others, including members of HW Bush's cabinet, gave different reasons for the decision to not push forward into Baghdad[87].

First of all, a war in Baghdad was not the mission that the US had sold to Congress or the American people, and pragmatically speaking, both the US and UN had an interest in seeing Iraq remain in power to act as a bulwark against a potentially expansive Islamic Iran[88]. National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft argued that such a course would have fractured the alliance, and would have had many unnecessary political and human costs associated with it, including destabilizing and destroying the country of Iraq altogether and causing mission creep (something that the administration had specifically sworn against doing)[89]. In 1992, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney echoed Scowcroft when he stated the following: "I would guess if we had gone in there, we would still have forces in Baghdad today. We'd be running the country. We would not have been able to get everybody out and bring everybody home. And the final point that I think needs to be made is this question of casualties. I don't think you could have done all of that without significant additional U.S. casualties...and the question in my mind is, how many additional American casualties is Saddam (Hussein) worth? And the answer is, not that damned many. So, I think we got it right, both when we decided to expel him from Kuwait, but also when the President made the decision that we'd achieved our objectives and we were not going to go

[87] Bush, George HW and Brent Scowcroft. *A World Transformed.* Alfred A. Knopf Inc., New York NY. 1998. pg. 489

[88] Sullivan, Michael J. *American Adventurism Abroad; Invasions, Interventions, and Regime Changes since WWII* pg. 202-203

[89] Bush, George HW and Brent Scowcroft. *A World Transformed*. Alfred A. Knopf Inc., New York NY. 1998. pg. 489-490

get bogged down in the problems of trying to take over and govern Iraq"[90]. The interesting thing in Cheney's dialogue was that their was an admission of a fear of casualties similar to the Vietnam Syndrome problem, however, it remains unclear whether or not he attributed it to more of a cost-benefit analysis or a historical fear brought on by that war. Ambassador Ronald Neumann, now head of the American Academy of Diplomacy stated that during the Gulf War, the US "pushed harder for airstrikes versus ground invasion not because of the direct threat to American lives but because the Administration did not want to be stuck in a war that [the US] had no way of dealing with. There were no good orders that could be given to the young servicemen [to carry out such an extended objective]"[91]. Simply put, President HW Bush had not planned for the extra invasion and from a logistical and military perspective, the US would have been grossly ill-prepared. The goal, which the President had been extremely conscious of, had always been to liberate Kuwait and he felt that changing the objective would have been synonymous with abandoning American trust[92]. The President had also been assured by his Arab allies that if such an invasion were to occur, they would not stand with him. For them, eliminating aggression was one thing but blatant meddling into Iraq's domestic affairs was something wholly different[93].

III.V. Evaluation of the War in terms of Vietnam

Due to its place in the timeline of history, the Gulf War was implicitly informed by the Vietnam War as it was the US's largest troop commitment abroad since 1975. President HW Bush had definitely been deeply impacted by the Vietnam War as reflected in his policies and rhetoric; however, it does not seem fair to suggest that the Gulf War existed as a direct attempt to

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[90] Pope, Charles. *Cheney Changed his View on Iraq.* Seattle Post-Intelligencer. Sept. 28, 2004. http:// www.seattlepi.com/national/192908_cheney29.html March, 30, 2011
[91] Personal inteview with Ambassador Ronald Neumann via phone. 2/8/11.
[92] Personal Interview with Ambassador Edward Gnhem. 2/18/11 Washington, DC.
[93] Personal Interview with Ambassador Edward Gnhem. 2/18/11 Washington, DC.

pierce the Vietnam Syndrome. There existed many reasons for US involvement in the Gulf War and while Vietnam definitely shaped the polices that were ultimately enacted, it was not the sole reason behind the actions taken. The piercing of the syndrome that arguably occurred seemed more a symptom of the war rather than a cause. However, Vietnam's effects were certainly felt during the war as seen with the difficulties in securing Congressional support for initial action and also when trying to create a coalition of Arab states abroad. Even the Powell Doctrine, which contributed to the success of the war, had been greatly informed by the lessons of Vietnam.

The overarching reason for success in the Gulf War directly related to Vietnam in the sense that the reasoning behind intervention, unlike Vietnam, held both a hard interest and soft interest. While both the need to show credibility abroad and stop a blatant disregard for humanitarian rights served as the soft interest, American economic concerns served as the hard interest. It was because America had both their principles and their national security invested in the war that it was a success. This was not the case in Vietnam, nor was it the case in Somalia, the next conflict to be analyzed.

IV.I Background to the Crisis

In 1989, civil war had broken out in Somalia, with control over food distribution being used as a weapon by rival militias. With over 70% percent of the population succumbing to famine, the Bush Administration responded to the humanitarian disaster by supporting the United Nations peacekeeping operation in Somalia, UNOSOM-I[94]. Intervention in Somalia was justified under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, which was not just an order of peacekeeping, but rather peacemaking (i.e. an outside force imposes what they believe to be an appropriate order upon actual warring parties)[95]; therefore, in order to accomplish this goal, the US joined the effort, contributing a new American lead unified task force known as UNITAF. When Bill Clinton took over the operation from the exiting President, the famine had been stopped but the mission continued. While President Clinton was interested in setting his foreign policy focus on what he called the "enlargement" program (i.e. making more room for democracy and global markets in the world), he had made it very clear in multiple White House communications that he did not want this mission to be one of nation-building, a strategy that he believed involved too much risk[96]. In a press release on October 13, 1993 the President was quoted as saying the following: **"**We went to Somalia because without us a million people would have died. We, uniquely, were in a position to save them, and other nations were ready to share the burden after our initial action. What the United States is doing there is providing, for a *limited period of time*, logistics, support, and security so that the humanitarian and political efforts of the United

[94] Sullivan, Michael J. *American Adventurism Abroad; Invasions, Interventions, and Regime Changes since WWII* pg. 206
[95] Sullivan, Michael J. *American Adventurism Abroad; Invasions, Interventions, and Regime Changes since WWII* pg. 207
[96] Sullivan, Michael J. *American Adventurism Abroad; Invasions, Interventions, and Regime Changes since WWII* pg. 207

Nations...can have a reasonable chance of success. The United Nations...has a longer term political, security, and relief mission designed to minimize the likelihood that famine and anarchy will return when the United Nations leaves. The U.S. military mission is *not now nor was it ever* one of "nation building'"'[97]. Despite Clinton's own proclivities, however, there was simply no way to ignore the political roots that had created the famine[98]. In order to remedy it, the US and UN had no choice but to deal with the civil war that was still raging in the country and this meant that nation-building could not be avoided; however, Clinton was still quick to begin withdrawing US troops after the success of the UNOSOM-1 mission. This meant that when the UN lead force, UNOSOM-II, finally took over it was at a distinct disadvantage with only 4,200 of the once 28,000 strong US troop forces left[99]. Then, in June 1993, the UN forces suffered an attack from Somali warlord Mohammed Farrah Aideed, which sparked a five month mission to capture him. In October 1993 the search ended with the Battle of Mogadishu, where Aideed avoided seizure, but the US suffered 18 casualties in what came to be known as the "Black Hawk Down" incident[100]. For most Americans, this tragedy came as a great shock since many believed the mission in Somalia had been long over for US troops; thus, the incident acted as the impetus to withdraw the rest of US troops over a six month period, despite an unfinished mission hanging in the balance[101]. While President Clinton stressed in a press release that it was important to show US resolve in the cause, it was made very clear that withdrawal, so as to avoid

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[97] The White House: Office of the Press Secretary For Immediate Release October 13, 1993 "TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES" http://www.ibiblio.org/pub/archives/whitehouse-papers/1993/Oct/Presidents-Somalia-Message-to-Congress-1993-10-13 March 24, 2011.

[98] Melanson, Richard A. *American Foreign Policy Since the Vietnam War: The Search for Consensus from Richard Nixon to George W. Bush*. 4th ed. ME Sharpe, Inc. Armonk, New York. 2005 pg. 242.

[99] Sullivan, Michael J. *American Adventurism Abroad; Invasions, Interventions, and Regime Changes since WWII* pg. 206-207.

[100] Sullivan, Michael J. *American Adventurism Abroad; Invasions, Interventions, and Regime Changes since WWII* pg. 207.

[101] Sullivan, Michael J. *American Adventurism Abroad; Invasions, Interventions, and Regime Changes since WWII* pg. 207

excess costs, would still be valued over staying in Somalia to help the UN finish the larger mission at hand. In a White House Press release, Clinton was quoted as saying the following: "[If] American forces [were] to leave now we would send a message to terrorists and other potential adversaries around the world that they can change our policies by killing our people. It would be open season on Americans. We will, however, leave no later than March 31st, 1994...That amount of time will...allow the United States to fulfill *our* obligations properly"[102]. While the troop withdrawal may have quelled domestic concerns, the hasty retreat, combined with rhetoric that signaled much greater resolve, made it look as if the US had abandoned the Somalis because of a failure.

IV.II Reasons Behind the Failure

Although the mission in Somalia proved complicated for multiple reasons, one of the biggest factors that people blame for the perceived failure was the US decision to limit UNITAF's role abroad. Although the US participated in UNOSOM-II, its vastly reduced troop contributions were limited to a supporting role, even though it was obvious that they represented the most talented troops involved in the Somalia mission[103]. The decision to limit UNITAF's commitment to operational objectives only sheltered the US from the more complicated, albeit necessary, objectives of conflict resolution and nation-building. By December 1992, the General Secretary of the UN insisted that UNITAF expand its mandate to help ensure the success of the mission as he was certain that the UN would be unable to maintain the requirements for a peacemaking mission if the US remained so removed[104]. However, the strong unwillingness to

[102] The White House: Office of the Press Secretary For Immediate Release October 13, 1993 TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES http://www.ibiblio.org/pub/archives/whitehouse-papers/1993/Oct/ Presidents-Somalia-Message-to-Congress-1993-10-13 March 24 2011

[103] Diprizio, Robert *US Humanitarian Interventions from Northern Iraq to Kosovo*. John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland. 2002 pg. 46.

[104] Diprizio, Robert *US Humanitarian Interventions from Northern Iraq to Kosovo.* pg. 47

become involved in the nation-building process permeated both the Bush and Clinton presidential administrations, both of whom opposed the idea that this was anything more than a humanitarian intervention. Paradoxically, US actions had already implicitly consented to the fact that Somalia was in need of nation-building. For example, during the beginning of Operation Restore Hope, the US had agreed to intervene in Somali affairs without the consent of the Somali government (the first time ever done in UN history) because they believed the country to be bereft of a functioning government. This clearly suggested that the US was aware of the necessity to nation-build[105]. The Clinton Administration, however, had been quick to point out that the UN had a far greater responsibility for carrying out this part of the mission than the US[106]. While acutely aware of the importance of the process, the US remained content to approve of it from the sidelines, never expressing any interest to become seriously involved even if its presence was necessary for success. This explained why the US refused to answer the UN's General Secretary when he asked for more troop involvement in Somalia. It also explained why the US authored the Security Resolutions responsible for assigning roles in the intervention at the Pentagon, as this gave the US the ability to assign the bulk of the mission to the UN[107]. Had they been penned abroad, the US would have been held accountable to the standards of an international audience that wanted the US to take on more responsibility. And, once again, while America was willing to support a UN follow-up mission, they were not interested in taking on more responsibility. Many believed the reluctance to engage actively in the mission directly related to a fear of force abroad, especially after the Black Hawk Down incident. The attention

[105] Sullivan, Michael J. *American Adventurism Abroad; Invasions, Interventions, and Regime Changes since WWII* pg. 207

[106] The White House: Office of the Press Secretary For Immediate Release September 25, 1993 STATEMENT BY THE PRESS SECRETARY. http://www.ibiblio.org/pub/archives/whitehouse-papers/1993/Oct/Presidents-Somalia-Message-to-Congress-1993-25-09. March 25, 2011.

[107] Diprizio, Robert *US Humanitarian Interventions from Northern Iraq to Kosovo.* pg. 48

paid to these claims only increased once Clinton began to receive harsh criticism over his poor military service record and what most believed to be a shaky grip on foreign policy strategy. The influence of these factors will be discussed shortly in section IV.IV.

IV.III A Reluctance to Fight

In fairness to the US, the decision to shy away from strong displays of force had never been a secret. The Bush Administration had entered the failed state that was Somalia because they were unwilling to stomach the suffering abroad knowing that they held the power to stop it. Yet US participation, Bush maintained, would never escalate past a humanitarian intervention. Despite concerns from his cabinet that this war could turn into a drawn-out and dangerous conflict in an area which was of no strategic importance to the US, Bush remained confident that this could remain a humanitarian mission. Yet, even though he made his restrictions on US involvement extremely clear to the international public, General Secretary of the UN, Boutros-Ghali, continued to postpone the transition from US to UN command as he believed that only the US held the power to successfully disarm the warring factions. As a result of this belied in US superiority, he stalled the change of command in hopes of guilting the US into taking the reins[108]. Thus, even though the mission began to creep, the US had been upfront about its commitment and was unwilling to change its stance. It was certainly true that the mere presence of the US in a military setting had already added to the political uprisings and unrest that the UN now had to deal with, but this fact was regarded with little consideration by the US.

In purely theoretical terms, the US refusal to deal with the whole problem should have come as no surprise when one considered the individuals who were in charge of creating

[108] Melanson, Richard A. *American Foreign Policy Since the Vietnam War: The Search for Consensus from Richard Nixon to George W. Bush* pg. 242

strategy. Neither Bush, the Realpolitik, nor Clinton, the domestic President, would have been interested in taking on such a geographically unimportant mission or advancing a higher commitment in a non-pragmatic situation as there value systems contrasted greatly with such initiatives. Most of the international elite, however, disregarded the merit in this type of theoretical analysis. In their minds the US possessed the most resources to handle the situation and therefore should have expected to take on more responsibility[109].

Besides his own political agenda, Clinton's decision to keep the conflict limited to humanitarian efforts also linked directly to his own military experiences, which, unlike HW Bush, had been largely negative. With no history of military service or expertise, Clinton suffered from an illegitimacy in foreign affairs that only complicated matters when trying to present his policies to the public. Without a public mandate to endorse his ideas, he often suffered a greater handicap in garnering support or trust for his foreign policy ideas than had past presidents. This often made the slightest sign of failure seem a product of his ineptitude rather than happenstance[110]. Probably the largest cause of this inability to connect with the military or Congressional adversaries over foreign policy related back to his draft-dodging days in Vietnam[111].

IV.IV The Vietnam Link

As part of Bill Clinton's Presidential Campaign in 1992, he spent a portion of his time traversing the country, trying to explain to the public how and why he avoided serving in the

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[109] Halberstam, David. *War in a Time of Peace: Bush, Clinton, and the Generals.* Scribner, New York, NY. 2001. pgs. 253-255.

[110] Melanson, Richard. *Foreign Policy since the Vietnam war: the search for Consensus, from Nixon to Clinton.* pg. 308-309.

[111] Cannon, Carl M. *Feeling Snubbed by Administration, Military Views Clinton with Growing Distrust.* The Baltimore Sun, 21 March 1993. http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1993-03-21/news/ 1993080040_1_clinton-administration-military-war-college March 25, 2011.

military during the Vietnam War[112]. Clinton understood that his past experiences as a vehement anti-war protestor had made him a point of controversy and therefore, his explanations on the campaign trail were not mere expositions on his part, but rather acknowledgements of the fact that, if he won the election, a time would come when he would have to ask young servicemen and women to do exactly what he had been unwilling to do in his youth. As many military men note, there is a great deal to be said for someone who has never even seen blood in combat, asking another to go and shed it[113]. Having that singular experience proves extraordinarily useful when engaging in civil-military planning; unfortunately, Clinton could not fall back on such tangible ties[114]. If he had taken the same chances in battle as past leaders had, he would have enjoyed an arguably broader moral balance as well as a stronger profile of credibility in the public eye[115]. Of course, without this experience, it meant that once in office, Clinton suffered from multiple problems with the Department of Defense and the military as portions of each organization distrusted Clinton for his previous anti-war activities and non-service record[116]. It also didn't help that as stated earlier, Clinton, a domestic-president, had the task of defining a new foreign policy in an era where the Cold War was now officially over. The pressure this exerted on the administration was clearly visible as they constantly emphasized the need to create a new guiding light for foreign policy. Unfortunately, with such a weak background in foreign affairs, the President struggled to garner enough support for initiatives abroad, especially

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[112]Jackson, David. *As Vietnam trip nears, Bush rejects Iraq link. USA Today. 11/13/2006* http:// www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2006-11-12-bush-iraq-vietnam_x.htm March 25, 2011.

[113] Personal Interview with Ambassador Ronald Neumann 2/8/11; Bush, George HW Bush. *All the best, George Bush: my life in letters and other writings* pg. 574

[114] Personal Interview with Ambassador Ronald Neumann 2/8/11.

[115] Personal Interview with Ambassador Ronald Neumann 2/8/11.

[116] Melanson, Richard A. *American Foreign Policy Since the Vietnam War: The Search for Consensus from Richard Nixon to George W. Bush* pg. 278

if they did in fact entail the use of force[117]. Ironically, Clinton often shared the Department of Defense's skepticism about the employment of ground troops in gray area conflicts; yet, while they could claim legitimate understanding for their reasoning, Clinton often fell victim to accusations of fear of force or incompetence in strategizing when he questioned, or avoided, military intervention[118].

In truth, Clinton was probably most impacted by the lingering presence of Vietnam since his largest problem in claiming dominance in the foreign policy arena grew out of the way in which people colored him by that war. Throughout his entire presidency, Clinton forced his staffers to keep him acutely aware of public opinion, always trying to calculate the domestic impact of his foreign policy initiatives and always proving reluctant to risk any combat for fear of provoking an isolationist backlash in Congress and/or the public[119].

The interesting thing about the impact of his legacy in Somalia, however, was that in trying to avoid the loss of lives and protracted warfare, the limited amount of force used by the Administration was probably what prevented victory. Such a messy display abroad went exactly against the strategy weapon that had won the Gulf War (i.e the Powell Doctrine), something that Clinton believed in but seemed, almost uncontrollably, unable to prove himself worthy of using[120].

IV.V Evaluation of Policy

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[117] Melanson, Richard A. *American Foreign Policy Since the Vietnam War: The Search for Consensus from Richard Nixon to George W. Bush* pg. 279

[118] Melanson, Richard A. *American Foreign Policy Since the Vietnam War: The Search for Consensus from Richard Nixon to George W. Bush* pg. 279

[119] Melanson, Richard A. *American Foreign Policy Since the Vietnam War: The Search for Consensus from Richard Nixon to George W. Bush.* pgs. 281; 351

[120] Waller/Cologne, Douglas. "*Keeping The Peace: The Three Ifs of a Clinton Doctrine*". TIME. Breaking News, Analysis, Politics, Blogs, News Photos, Video, Tech Reviews - TIME.com. 28 June 1999. Web. 07 Mar. 2011. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,991341,00.html>.

IV. THE WAR IN SOMALIA

The long term effects of the "ghost of Somalia" infused with the "memory of Vietnam" caused great difficulties for Clinton's foreign policy initiatives, at least initially. For example, one month after the withdrawal of all troops from Somalia, the small UN Assistance mission in Rwanda came under assault in the midst of bloody ethnic fighting. Although the deaths numbered more than 800,000 the UN was basically paralyzed in offering help when the US, still reeling from its burn in Somalia, refused to commit troops[121]. Pragmatically speaking, the genocide did not affect US interests and it also did nothing to advance Clinton's two biggest foreign policy initiatives, democratic enlargement and increased global markets; therefore, since Somalia was still stinging, no one protested too much against not getting involved in another potential nation-building disaster[122]. However, the long delayed responses by the US in Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone, and the Congo later in the Clinton Presidency seem to have their roots in the 1993 failure, which has its roots, at least partially, in Clinton's Vietnam woes.

To gain perspective, however, one must understand that the failures in Somalia were part of problem that was much wider than Clinton's dubious service record. While this certainly played an important role, as hopefully demonstrated above, a large part of the problem was that the sizable US force in command initially, suffered from inadequate UN back-up. Therefore, when US troops were relegated to special forces units only, the high risk operations supposedly being carried out by those inadequate UN troops, suffered from the law of averages; i.e., one extraordinary US troop could not make up for three average to below average supporting troops[123].

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[121] Sullivan, Michael J. *American Adventurism Abroad; Invasions, Interventions, and Regime Changes since WWII* pg. 208

[122] Nye, Joseph S. Jr. *Redefining the National Interest* Foreign Affairs Vol. 78, No. 4 (Jul. - Aug., 1999), pp. 22-35 Council on Foreign Relations URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/20049361

[123] Personal Interview. David Newton 2./18/11

IV. THE WAR IN SOMALIA

Lastly, the idea that the US saw this only as a humanitarian intervention was merely a glorified wish accepted by the public. Its political roots were deep and unavoidable and going into Somalia with the hope of dropping bread and leaving meant that the US lacked a clear understanding of the mission, which played a great part in the failure. In this case, the political leadership had asked the military to do something, without defining two key questions; what exactly was the mission and how would the military know when the goal had been achieved[124]. Civil leaders often avoid being tied to down to these points of clarification and often move forward without answering them, or at least without answering them correctly, as was the case here and in Vietnam. The fact that the mission had been defined as strictly humanitarian when it clearly was not, played a great part in its failure. And of course, Clinton's lack of a mandate to fix the situation complicated the problem even further. To bring the argument full-circle, many of the problems, besides Clinton's service record, also held a deep linkage to Vietnam. Many could argue that the decision to even limit US involvement from the beginning had a great deal to with the same fears that circulated post-Vietnam; however, there also seemed to be a dismissal of one of Vietnam's lessons (i.e. valuing direct and clear displays of force in missions that directly affect the national interest) which suggested that confusion and mismanagement severely hampered the intervention. To many, Somalia reinforced the idea that the Gulf War was a singular instance in US foreign policy where success had come easily, but that did not mean that the fears and problems of Vietnam had been erased.

[124] Personal Interview. David Newton 2./18/11

V.I The W. Bush Background

President Bush never experienced the war in Vietnam first hand and many were skeptical of his service to the Texas Air National Guard during a time when 350 men were dying a day over in Vietnam[125]. Most questioned how Bush had made it into what most believed to be a draft dodger club for "good old boys" with family connections, especially since he only scored 25% on the entrance exam, the lowest possible score to qualify for admission[126]. During Bush's 2000 campaign, public records surfaced that solidified some of the skepticism which had originated in the 1970s. The records showed that during the last two years of Bush's six year commitment he fell significantly short of his requirement to do inactive duty. The records Bush ended up producing to account for his absences were often inconsistent, showing training allegedly done on January 9, 1973 to make up for training he missed on March 10, 1973, just over two months later[127]. Because he was non-compliant with his military service obligation, Bush should not have been allowed the honorable discharge he received and should have been called up for active duty the moment he breached this service agreement. Unlike Clinton, however, the controversy surrounding Bush's service record failed to permanently tarnish his foreign policy plans once in

[125] Hoagland, Jim. "*Bush's Vietnam Blunder.*" Washington Post; Politics, National, World & D.C. Area News and Headlines, Washingtonpost.com. 24 Aug. 2007. Web. 07 Mar. 2011. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/08/23/AR2007082301835.html>

[126] Hoagland, Jim. "*Bush's Vietnam Blunder.*" Washington Post; Politics, National, World & D.C. Area News and Headlines, Washingtonpost.com. 24 Aug. 2007. Web. 07 Mar. 2011. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/08/23/AR2007082301835.html>

[127] Hoagland, Jim. "*Bush's Vietnam Blunder.*" Washington Post; Politics, National, World & D.C. Area News and Headlines, Washingtonpost.com. 24 Aug. 2007. Web. 07 Mar. 2011. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/08/23/AR2007082301835.html

office. Bush, who most would describe as a militaristic Wilsonian, gave a completely new direction to foreign policy post-Clinton[128].

George W. Bush provided America with service in office that looked as if it should have been situated in the pre-1975 war era. Unlike his predecessors, including his own father, Bush never bought into any of the US weaknesses that Vietnam had exposed; in fact, the idea of the US losing any of its dominance due to the loss suffered there never existed in reality for Bush. His constant catch phrase "stay the course" during his own presidential wars was recognition that all needed to support ongoing combat even during times of uncertainty as distrust of the cause or leaders were symptomatic of failure. Bush believed that it was a lack of conviction in strategy and support that ultimately lead to the failure in Vietnam. His attitude while in office suggested a complete dismissal of any of the fears associated with the Vietnam loss[129]. In fact Bush's entire presidency served a precedent that harkened back to the pre-WWII era. He believed pursuing unilateral action, symbolic of the days before collective security organizations or international treaties, was the most efficient way to assert US dominance on the international stage. As a result, he pulled the US out of the Kyoto Protocol on Climate change, the US-Russian Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, and refused to function as a signatory of the International Criminal Court[130]. In Bush's opinion, the US had learned to bow to other nations with much less power than that of the US and he felt this to be a drain on American resources, prestige, and dominance; therefore, treaties aimed at equalizing power levels among the US and other nations simply could not be supported.

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[128] Ambrosius, L. E., *Woodrow Wilson and George W. Bush: Historical Comparisons of Ends and Means in their Foreign Policies*. Diplomatic History; 2006. 509–543.

[129] Tripathi, Deepak. *Overcoming the Bush Legacy in Iraq and Afghanistan*. Washington, D.C.: Potomac, 2010 pg. 23.

[130] Tripathi, Deepak. *Overcoming the Bush Legacy in Iraq and Afghanistan* pg. 21

V. THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

Despite the unfavorable reputation abroad that his attitude had generated after his first year as President, 9/11 gave Bush a new mandate to enter the international community[131]. In a perverse way, 9/11 provided Bush with the imperial moment that he had been searching for throughout his days in office. A week after September 11th, it has been reported that Bush told one of his closest advisers, "We have an opportunity to restructure the world toward freedom, and we have to get it right"[132].

V.II The Bush Mandate

Unlike the other conflicts previously explored, Afghanistan represented a war in which virtually every branch of government, as well as the public, stood in complete agreement about the need to intervene in the Middle East after the 9/11 attacks. Bush who had stayed somewhat away from foreign policy during his first year as President, suddenly held very strong convictions about what the US should do to reshape the world after the devastation. Much of this aggressive response resulted from a neoconservative world view which had taken shape in the 1990s[133]. Like these Republicans, George W. Bush believed that the world was divided into camps, similar to the Cold War period; however, the two groups were now the American System vs. Islamic Fundamentalism and the new fight was what Bush himself had described as a monumental struggle between good and evil[134]. Unlike the policies of Clinton, which revolved around intervening abroad only when democratic spheres or global markets could be enhanced, Bush was determined to reshape the Middle East, a conviction that came from his deep-seated

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[131] Saad, Lydia Public *Confidence in U.S. Image Slips in Past Year Smaller majority thinks United States is viewed favorably.* Gallup News Service, Feb. 14, 2003. http://www.gallup.com/poll/7804/Public-ConfidenceUSImage-Slips-Past-Year.aspx 29 March 2011.

[132] Jervis, Robert *Why the Bush Doctrine Cannot Be Sustained* Political Science Quarterly, Volume 120, Number 3, Fall 2005 Publisher: Academy of Political Science pg. 378-379

[133] Tripathi, Deepak. *Overcoming the Bush Legacy in Iraq and Afghanistan*. pg. 23

[134] Tripathi, Deepak. *Overcoming the Bush Legacy in Iraq and Afghanistan*. pg. 23

belief in the superiority of America and its globalized free economy set in the context of liberal democracy[135].

In this sense, Bush practiced a foreign policy that employed much less pragmatism than the polices of his predecessor or his father, HW Bush. In fact, Bush went so far as to admit that he was not extremely interested in learning from his father, as he believed he answered to a "higher authority"[136]. His policies possessed a strong idealism that brought the US into the world's most volatile regimes in order to topple authoritarian figures too offensive to co-exist with, according to W. Bush[137]. He was committed to removing America from what he called an indecisive time for foreign policy during the Clinton presidency, in which US reputation and power had been weakened[138]. However, in spite of what most would call an aversion to international cooperation, 9/11 enabled Bush to enjoy the support of a large number of coalition forces even though he had shunned many of them previously and had enjoyed little support abroad. This newfound strength in numbers grew from a unanimous UN resolution which condemned the September 11th attacks as a threat to "international peace and security" and appealed to all states to work together to to bring justice upon the perpetrators. Most countries did indeed follow suit with the message of the UN, pledging to support the President in his "war on terror" despite a mixed reaction from the international public[139]. Bush, who many had thought always committed to reshaping the Middle East, took this moment of unparalleled support to push his foreign policy even further, both politically and geographically[140], by popularizing a new foreign policy approach known as the "Bush Doctrine".

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[135] Tripathi, Deepak. *Overcoming the Bush Legacy in Iraq and Afghanistan*. pg. 25
[136] Personal Interview with Ambassador David Newton. 2/18/11
[137] Murphy, John M. *Our Mission and Our Moment: George W. Bush and September 11th* Rhetoric & Public Affairs, Volume 6, Number 4, Winter 2003, pp. 607-632
[138] Tripathi, Deepak. *Overcoming the Bush Legacy in Iraq and Afghanistan*. pg. 23-33.
[139] Tripathi, Deepak. *Overcoming the Bush Legacy in Iraq and Afghanistan*. pg. 34-36.
[140] This refers to his 2003 push into Iraq before successfully completing the mission in Afghanistan

V.III. The Bush Doctrine

While "The Bush Doctrine" did not become a point of serious contention until Operation Iraqi Freedom, it would be impossible to discuss the foreign policy of George W. Bush without bringing up this influential piece. And as a matter of timing, the phrase actually made its mark back in 2001 to describe Bush's decisions to extricate the US from the international treaties previously mentioned[141]. Also, because of the very intertwined nature of the War in Afghanistan and the War in Iraq (the latter unable to occur without the former), it will be taken as acceptable to talk about it in this context.

The three main tenets of the "The Bush Doctrine" were preventative war, democratic regime change, and unilateralism in order to protect US interests. The policy of preventative war held that the United States should depose those regimes that represented a potential or perceived threat to the security of the US, even if that threat failed to be imminent. The second tenet, that of spreading democracy, especially in the Middle East, was explained by Bush as a necessary strategy for combating terrorism. Finally, Bush's call for an unconditional willingness on behalf of the military to unilaterally pursue the US national interest was a major part of his plan to assert American dominance on the international scene. This last tenet, despite complicating international cooperation, gave the United States the opportunity to demonstrate that it would override strong objections from allies if deemed necessary in order to achieve its stated goals[142]. While this horrified multilateralists, it showed that Bush was serious about his doctrine. Later in Bush's Presidency, UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, publicly disproved of an American attack on Iraq without Security Council endorsement, stating that it "would not be in conformity

[141] Krauthammer, Charles. *Charlie Gibson's Gaffe*. The Washington Post. 13/4/2002
[142] Jervis, Robert *Why the Bush Doctrine Cannot Be Sustained* pg. 375

with the [UN] charter". Unfortunately, Annan failed to understand that for some members of the Bush Administration, particularly ardent Neo-Conseratives, rejecting the charter would be a large part of the point of the action[143].

The roots of preventative war and aggressive unilateralism indeed grew out of Afghanistan, where the high enthusiasm Bush had once enjoyed for war, began to dissipate right around his second year in office. After articulating in his State of the Union address that Iran, Iraq, and North Korea were a collective axis of evil that was aggressively pursuing WMDs, Bush said that Afghanistan remained only the beginning of the fight abroad, and he intended to pursue a policy of unilateral military action to preempt any security threat and to replace hostile regimes with democratic governments, using force if necessary[144]. Slowly, nations and peoples which had once wholeheartedly supported the war began to defect and Bush looked more and more like a unilateral president who was dismissive of international authoritative mandates. This view of the President succeeded in weakening American legitimacy abroad[145].

V.IV The Difficulties in Invasion

The invasion of Afghanistan and the collapse of the Taliban regime, occurred with only a small unit of allied and US troops on the ground to do what ultimately became a nation-building effort. This small number of about 11,000 troops in February 2002 was inadequate for pursuing the mission of restructuring an entire country that lacked a disciplined military and police force. Creating a friendly and workable government also meant an enormous expense to the US government, especially since Bush had decided to open a new conflict in Iraq with Afghanistan

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[143] Jervis, Robert *Why the Bush Doctrine Cannot Be Sustained* pg. 376
[144] Tripathi, Deepak. *Overcoming the Bush Legacy in Iraq and Afghanistan*. pg. 24.
[145] Maogoto, Jackson Nyamuya."*War on the Enemy: Self-Defence and State-SponsoredTerrorism"* 2003.MelbJlIntLaw 3; (2003) 4(2) Melbourne Journal of International Law 406 http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/MelbJIL/2003/3.html

nowhere near complete. Also, the strain that conducting two wars put on the military acutely impacted success in Afghanistan. At the beginning of the war in Iraq, skillful troops were pulled out of Afghanistan in order to better serve the Iraqi conflict; consequentially, this starved the Afghan operation[146].

The Afghan strategy also required counter-insurgency operations which not only meant money and troops, but also a need for a stable host government capable of providing military and political help as well as a supportive public; the Afghan operations lacked all of these[147]. Bush's invasion also boasted goals that were extremely ambitious. Trying to rebuild an entire governmental system and make a non-democratic people more enlightened looked like an impossible mission based on the fact that the central government's rule of law remained corrupt even after the US invasion. With no coherent plan as to what to do about the rule of law, the mission ultimately sounded like a case of over-stretch on behalf of the US[148]. Bush may have been trying to prove the supremacy of America in an area of deep trouble, but the results and reactions were mixed at best and the public grew war weary as the reasons for continued fighting became more and more abstract[149].

V.V An Analysis of the Bush Legacy and Vietnam

Throughout his presidency, Bush's foreign policy served as a point of contention for many. His disregard for international law went against everything that The United Nations Charter had specifically spelled out. Plus, as a signatory of the Charter, the US had pledged to abide by this treaty just as if it had explicitly been a part of the supreme law of the land. Even

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[146] Personal Interview David Newton 2/18/11
[147] Cohen, Eliot. "Principles, Imperatives, and Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency." OAI. Web. 16 Feb. 2011. <http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/oai?verb=getRecord&metadataPrefix=html&identifier=ADA486811>
[148] Personal Interview with Ambassador David Newton 2/18/11
[149] Cohen, Eliot. "*Principles, Imperatives, and Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency*." OAI. Web. 16 Feb. 2011

during the most favorable circumstances, when the war in Afghanistan enjoyed a high level of support abroad, it was impossible to ignore the criticism that began to arise over Bush's illegals actions in Iraq. As stated earlier, violation of international law was of very little concern to President Bush, as being constrained by factors that seemingly did nothing for the US was inconceivable. What mattered to Bush was that these regimes posed a direct threat to American national security and the American way of life. Allowing them to survive and spread anti-American ideology signaled the evolution of a country that was on its way out of a hegemonic seat in the international community[150]. His decision to listen to his own convictions instead of public reaction to illegal mandates or casualties proved that Bush was probably less affected by Vietnam than any of his predecessors. Everything from his policies to his attitude situated him in a time where American pre-eminence had never been questioned and the need to support coalitions in order to glean authority was unnecessary. Bush's ability to create foreign policy could not have been tainted by the Vietnam War because his romanticized view of war did not include this episode of American failure. For Bush, it was merely a blip on the radar screen where America had refused to "stay the course" and therefore lost[151]. During a speech on August 22, 2004 to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Bush stated the following: "Whatever your position is on that debate (over withdrawal), one unmistakable legacy of Vietnam is that the price of America's withdrawal was paid by millions of innocent citizens...[there was] Another price to our withdrawal from Vietnam;... -- those who came to our soil and killed thousands of citizens on September the 11th, 2001...Osama bin Laden declared that "the American people had risen

[150] Bush, George W. *Decision Points.* Random House, New York. 2010 pg. 48
[151] Sullivan, Michael J *American Adventurism Abroad-Invasions, Interventions, and Regime Changes Since WWII. pg. 235*

against their government's war in Vietnam. And they [Al Qaeda] must do the same today.[152]" Comments like these affirmed Bush's beliefs that the inability to show unwavering resolve in Vietnam had not only caused defeat, but had served as an example for future terrorist actions against the US. As a result, Bush negated all notions of doubt in his policy, believing such cowardice to be the biggest threat to American security. Because of his vision, nothing in Bush's past (e.g. a poor service record) or present (public outcry against violation of international law or questionable motives for fighting) could have changed the way he was going to carry out this war. Bush looked at the Middle East and saw the opportunity to make it a space for transplanting US mandates and principles. His conviction proved so strong that it became reminiscent of an older time in American history, where moral (and now militarized) Wilsonianism had combined with an all-powerful executive branch to lead the American people[153].

The Bush vision of the world, however, boasted risks that removed reciprocity from the equation when dealing with other states. Bush's aggressive use of unilateralism caused less nations to support the US as they no longer could be sure of the same reciprocal support from the US in future multilateral actions[154]. It also caused force to become the first resort rather than the last resort which decreased the legitimacy of missions and hurt American soft power. While it may have been easier to form a coalition without worrying about procedures and differences in behavior, as in normal alliances, America was and is still incapable of sustaining unilateral action forever[155]. Afghanistan, and later Iraq, represented a strange time in foreign policy, where

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[152] Bush, George W *Transcript of President Bush's Speech at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Convention* NYTimes, August 22 2007. http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/22/washington/w23policytext.html?pagewanted=5&_r=1.

[154] Steinberg, Jim. "*The Bush Foreign Policy Revolution. Saddam Does Not Threaten Us. Bush's Crime against Humanity.*" Internet FAQ Archives - Online Education - Faqs.org. Web. 16 Feb. 2011. <http://www.faqs.org/abstracts/Political-science/The-Bush-foreign-policy-revolution-Saddam-doesnotthreaten-us.html>.

[155] Steinberg, Jim. "T*he Bush Foreign Policy Revolution. Saddam Does Not Threaten Us. Bush's Crime against Humanity*. Web. 16 Feb. 2011

Bush allowed the Neo-Conservatives to guide him into murky waters with little evidence that their assessments of the situations were in fact correct. For example, although Bush held strong convictions about the way the world, particularly the Middle East, should operate, the Neo-Conservatives in power at the time played an important role in convincing Bush that the US could have a decisive and quick victory in Iraq, which made it seem plausible to open that war at the same time that the US still occupied Afghanistan[156]. Secretary of State, Donald Rumsfeld, also held his own objectives in Afghanistan, mainly professing a need to show that his ideas of shock and awe could substitute for Colin Powell's slow and expensive build-up of resources necessary to utilize the Powell Doctrine[157]. The Neo-Conservatives were also partly responsible for pushing for the use of dramatic force quickly before examining the situation to find the exact justification for its use[158].

While Bush may have been completely unburdened by the fears of force or intervention that surfaced post-Vietnam, his policies had the paradoxical consequence of bringing the woes of Vietnam back to the forefront of the public conscious. While the US military still remains competent in its abilities to strategize and use force effectively, it has suffered serious strain and fatigue due to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The American economy, burdened by a huge debt due to two wars paid for by exorbitant borrowing, has yet to rebound to its healthier position of the early 1990s. The stress of all of these costs means that America will not be able to afford such extravagant wars any time in the near future, and similar to after Vietnam, the Marines and Army will need time to revitalize and recharge even before taking on smaller and/or more manageable missions. Adding to the excessive resource and monetary costs, the psychological strains that the two wars have placed on Americans, bureaucrats, and international ties are also

[156] Personal Interview with Ambassador David Newton. 2/18/11
[157] Personal Interview with Ambassador David Newton. 2/18/11
[158] Personal Interview with Ambassador David Newton. 2/18/11

more than most people would like to admit[159]. In July 2010, the US Army reported that one U.S. soldier had killed himself each day in the previous month, the highest single-month suicide total reported since the Vietnam War[160]. The number of soldiers and Marines who have experienced Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is near 20%, and the rate of divorce among active members of the armed forces has also skyrocketed[161]. And of course there is the question of success and results; after all, at this time, it is still unclear as to how these wars will turn out, or even what the standard for "mission accomplished" will be. With resources and money diminishing, no one can say for certain whether the US will be able stay long enough to satisfactorily finish the missions, or if they will devolve into another Somalia type crisis[162]. It certainly seems more than plausible that the tendency to turn inward again, similar to the period after Vietnam, will ultimately become the accepted reaction after all troops leave the Middle East. While some may view this approach as a necessary step towards providing the needed pause for revitalization of the US military and economy, many in the public may look at it as another failure abroad that has once again proven America inept at using force effectively, essentially undoing the successes of interventions like that of the Gulf War and taking the nation back to the fall of Saigon in 1975. While, both Afghanistan and Iraq are arguably nowhere near as dire as Vietnam, the fact that these wars have so often been compared to that period in American foreign policy speaks volumes for the lingering memory of Vietnam after the aggressive Bush years of foreign policy.

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[159] Personal Interview with Ambassador David Newton 2/18/11;

[160] Editorial *Suicides, violence and drug abuse mark strains of endless war.* STLToday.com, July 21 2010. http://www.stltoday.com/news/opinion/editorial/article_dca052b8-18c7-59fa-a5ce-905d110bc4de.html 30 March 2011.

[161] Stevens, Chrissy *Increased Divorce Rates Illustrate Strain on Deployed Troops.* Press Release, http:// iava.org/ press-room/press-releases/12308-increased-divorce-rates-illustrate-strain-deployed-troops. 30 March 2011.

[162] Personal Interview with Ambassador David Newton 2/18/11

VI.I Conclusion

The question that originated this entire thesis was whether or not the memory of Vietnam still plays an active role in an administration's foreign policy decision-making process; however, the answer that all of this leads to fails to be exactly clear cut. While the War in Vietnam may not be a habitual phrase that frequently springs forth from the mouths of bureaucrats during policy meetings, its effect definitely implicitly (if not explicitly) shaped and thus changed the American approach to foreign policy.

President HW Bush considered Vietnam a definite hindrance to the foreign policy approaches before him and so his modus operandi for constructing his particular foreign policy embodied a combination of two goals. The first goal dealt with answering the specific needs of the time period while the second dealt with reconstructing the image of the military and showing the domestic and international audiences that the United States understood and did not fear the use of force. While the Gulf War largely occurred as an answer to the national security pressures of the time, it also bore the soft interest of piercing the fears of failure and the use of force abroad owing to Vietnam. Both of these motives played a significant part in the ultimate success of the war. The hard interest for fighting found in the economic concerns helped motivate a nation, while the soft interest of proving US dominance abroad helped to clarify and strengthen the goals and strategy of the war, as exemplified in initiatives like the Vietnam-influenced Powell Doctrine. In this sense, Vietnam never acted as a cautionary reason to avoid conflict but more as a guiding light in terms of what to do versus what not to do. President Bush always felt

it had been his duty to erase the legacy of that war and he believed he had accomplished that goal with his success in the Gulf.

Intervention in the Gulf would arguably have taken place without the Vietnam War preceding it; however, the trajectory might have been very different. For example, Arab allies would never have had need to question the US commitment and the Administration might have found it excessive to acutely examine strategy to the point where they allowed Colin Powell the room to create a whole new type of fighting-one that arguably has had great impact on America's ability to use force successfully. Regardless of one's personal feelings about the Gulf War, the Vietnam Syndrome was directly implicated in policy creation during that war, proving that the Syndrome itself still remained strong enough to shape decisions during the HW Bush presidency.

In Clinton's case, the memory of Vietnam did more to impact his public image than it did to change his assumptions about American foreign policy. While he failed to be effective with decisions to intervene abroad at the beginning of his presidency, his mistakes were more of a product of his inexperience in the world of military affairs than a fear of the use of force. Of course, it definitely could be proven that because of his tenuous mandate in foreign affairs due to his Vietnam service record, he might have been weary to use force in the event that plans went awry, leaving him with an ineffective profile in the public eye. As stated previously, it was important for Clinton to avoid connection with such a situation as many would immediately (and probably mistakenly) owe it to an image of ineptitude believed to be an outgrowth of his draft-dodging days rather than due to specific external factors in a particular case. In this sense Vietnam did in fact haunt Clinton when trying to garner support for his ideas as well as when trying to form a cohesive relationship with the military; however, Clinton's own personal views of any foreign policy situation often sided with sanctions and negotiations over intervention and

force anyway because he believed these to be more desirable and effective. Also, as stated earlier, Clinton was was very suspicious of murky conflicts that held small ties to the national interest while simultaneously carrying the danger of an implicit future commitment or a draining long-term involvement.

In President George W. Bush's case, Vietnam never crossed his mind when dealing with the Afghanistan or Iraq conflicts. While Bush, similar to Clinton, held a controversial service record during the Vietnam War, it barely affected him once in office. He possessed a conviction so strong that he never looked back on America's failures, even so much as to note that they possessed the potential to serve as great learning experiences for future administrations. Where Vietnam did come into play during the W. Bush years was not so much in his creation of policy, which probably would have remained the same with or without the failure in South Vietnam, but in the domestic and international perception of US strength and effectiveness abroad. As previously stated, the connections that many Americans drew between the war in Afghanistan and the war in Vietnam informed a proclivity to look inward and once again fear the use of force in interventions abroad. The international reaction, similar to post-1975, revolved around a shaky faith in American credibility and intentions abroad, especially since the US had decided to fight at least one of the wars in a fashion that undermined the legitimacy of international law. Therefore, while Vietnam probably represented a small factor in the planning of Bush's policies, it acted as an overwhelming measure in evaluating his initiatives.

No matter what the war, there is always a need to show a hard interest to go along with a softer value-this is the recipe for success and Vietnam certainly seemed to have ingrained that into the minds of at least the American public. Vietnam was not a pre-destined failure that the US should never have become involved in; rather, one could have made an admirable case for

intervention in South Vietnam based on North Vietnamese treatment of its innocent sister country. Unfortunately, at the time the war was waged, the Johnson Administration lost sight of the practical goal, which meant that there existed no hard and fast measure to decide whether this war and its bloody consequences were actually worth it, eventually causing Johnson to be unable to stomach the war. In the aftermath of Vietnam, the military could still undertake quick, inexpensive missions, but it lacked the stamina, the resources, and the support to carry out any large-scale interventions. From this it follows that the legacy or impact of Vietnam is this: while perhaps not a handicap to a President's agenda in foreign affairs, meaning it does not affect their capacity to create new strategies abroad, it does act as an impetus for anyone involved in the decision-making process to work harder. In effect, a Vietnam Syndrome situation means that the military and its resources have been exhausted in a hard-fought loss, which in turn means that those in charge of creating the next decision in foreign policy must be more cautious of their use of force because they simply lack the capabilities and strength to take on anything extremely taxing. They also must learn from the past loss and decide why that mission went awry in order to avoid similar failures in the future and keep up at least some percentage of public support and trust. At the same time, they must avoid the look of cowardice to a public that may believe their cautionary attitude towards force a a confirmation that the US has been beaten into submission by an embarrassing failure to a lower country. This problem is only compounded when one takes into account the poor understanding that Americans hold in foreign affairs. Many times they often do not understand the need to go to country X to restore democracy, especially after an embarrassing defeat, which goes back to the serious need for a civil leader to define the mission in very detailed terms so that he can garner support as well as create a workable policy that the military can enforce. For example, to many, Vietnam was fought on abstract terms, meaning that

its mission did not directly affect the US national interest. While any chance of independence for South Vietnam may not have been possible without US support, the general public did not believe enough in the merit of the cause to continue fighting and, as a result, the mission lost steam. From this it makes sense that a debate would occur over whether or not America should in fact become involved in interventions for principle only. The debate was divisive throughout the Vietnam years and continues to remain so as it is hard to allow others to suffer if a nation knows it possesses the capabilities to change the situation for the better. From all of this, it is understandable why Vietnam would still perplex and constrain policymakers (and the public) even today.

In addition, while already stated in some ways, one of the major reasons that the memory of Vietnam has forced foreign policy officials to work harder to define goals and strategies is because it was a war that served the purpose of diluting the trust that the public had in foreign policy officials to do their job correctly. After that war, there no longer existed a large majority in the public that believed on faith alone in the righteousness of Presidential initiatives and choices. In its place, there existed a much stronger skepticism and suspicion that forced decision-makers to consider all angles of a conflict before getting involved as noticeable backlash at home was of much greater concern post-1975 than during the pre-Vietnam years[163].

Also, as stated in the introduction it is important to note that in any democracy, politicians and civil leaders will experience significant backlash at policies that raise the American death toll abroad. The decline in support for intervention as measured against the rising number of casualties has been studied by multiple political scientists, all coming to the

[163] Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. *How Americans View Government Deconstructing Distrust* http://people-press.org/1998/03/10/how-americans-view-government/ March 10 1998. March 25, 2011.

conclusion that most members of a democracy are casualty-phobic[164]. The Vietnam Syndrome, represents much more than an unwillingness on behalf of Americans to shed blood in battle; rather, Vietnam related casualty aversion to the idea that public support for the military and its mission actually began to decline because of the human costs of the war[165]. From this there grew the revulsion at the use of military power in areas with little to no impact on American national interest[166]. The Vietnam Syndrome also meant a lack of support for war, not only due to casualties and ambiguous objectives, but also because of distrust of the goals of the war and the progress being made with combat (i.e. the loss of support after the Tet Offensive)[167]. Preventing a Vietnam Syndrome, as hopefully shown, does not have to do solely with preventing casualties, but more so with forging the right mission with the right objectives. One of Vietnam's biggest legacies is that it showed the American people that the US could fail on the international scene. It took away any sense of American invincibility or fearlessness in interventions abroad. This is a fact that should not be taken lightly when evaluating the war's impact.

Vietnam has certainly created a large number of problems which have forced decision-makers to work harder than their predecessors; however, the one positive thing that should be taken from this discussion is that while lessons may not last forever, America is arguably smarter and more aware of its weaknesses in the aftermath of Vietnam than it had been before. Whether the current wars in the Middle East have disproved this can be argued, but at least there now exists stronger methods of evaluation and accountability than there had been prior to 1975. As long as people continue to debate over whether or not America should be forced to take up

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[164] Gelpi, Christopher, Peter D. Feaver, and Jason Reifler. *Success Matters Casualty Sensitivity and the War in Iraq.* 30 March 2011.

[165] Gelpi, Christopher, Peter D. Feaver, and Jason Reifler. *Success Matters Casualty Sensitivity and the War in Iraq.* 30 March 2011.

[166] Gelpi, Christopher and John Mueller *The Cost of War.* Foreign Affairs, Council on Foreign Relations. January/ February 2006. http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/61222/christopher-gelpi-and-john- mueller/ the-cost-of-war?page=show he-cost-of-war?page=show 30 March 2011.

[167] Gelpi, Christopher and John Mueller *The Cost of War.* 30 March 2011.

more responsibility abroad, Vietnam will still possess some saliency. When people argue the cons of being "policeman of the free world", they will inevitably allude to moral interventions that gave the US a definite sting; here is where Vietnam will continue to be referenced. And so, even if it fails to be mentioned during regular Presidential meetings on foreign affairs, no more than anything else in the past, it probably has a great deal to do with the 36 years that have passed since evacuation of forces.

Therefore, while my complete hypothesis may have been slightly mistaken in suggesting that an administration is unable to create effective interventionist policies due to the Syndrome, I do believe that Vietnam is an instance in American history that forced the US to change the way that it approached interventions, civil-military relations, and the use of force. An understanding of this is enough to appreciate the great impact that this conflict has had on current US foreign policy and the impact it will arguably have on future versions of American foreign policy.

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