

---

# JUST WAR & NATIONAL HONOR: THE CASE OF VIETNAM

ERIC PATTERSON

In 1956, Senator John F. Kennedy claimed that Vietnam was “the cornerstone of the Free World in Southeast Asia, the keystone in the arch, the finger in the dike, and should the red tide of Communism pour into it...much of Asia would be threatened.”<sup>1</sup> From Eisenhower through Nixon, a succession of US presidents supported the government of South Vietnam as part of a global strategy of containment and in support of democracy and development in the Third World.

America’s Vietnam War has been examined using the lens of just war thinking by serious scholars, such as Paul Ramsey and Michael Walzer, as well as by countless less thoughtful critics who reflexively echo that the war was “unjust.” Those critics nearly always mean one or both of two things. First, the war was fought in an unjust manner from the start. Second, the social, economic, and political costs of prolonging the war were so great that at some point it became immoral and unjust. Just war thinkers will recognize these arguments as having to do with *jus in bello* (the morality of how war is fought) criteria such as proportionality and discrimination.

What is largely missing is a thoughtful, historically-accurate look at the *jus ad bellum* criteria, the ethics of going to and continuing war. The fundamental just war criteria of legitimate authority, just cause, and right intention can easily be evaluated when it comes to the Vietnam War because we have hundreds of explicitly stated presidential war aims across four presidencies. Such an analysis clearly demonstrates that it was just to go

to war alongside the South Vietnamese and their allies to counter Communist aggression.

I will summarize the justness of the three primary presidential war aims, which I have elaborated in far greater length elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> Then I will turn to a more problematic war aim that is generally overlooked by just war thinkers, but that mattered a great deal to these presidents. This is the concept of national honor. Just war theorizing has typically left the issue of national honor untouched, although warriors and statesmen routinely emphasize the importance of vindicating the sacrifice of the fallen. Does prolonging a war in order to assuage or vindicate national honor comport with the just war tradition? This essay carefully examines the honor arguments made by US presidents during the Vietnam War and concludes that national honor *should* assign some moral obligations on the government and citizenry such as care for veterans, but that national honor generally does not justify—on its own—the continuation of bloodshed and destruction.

---

## ***JUS AD BELLUM & VIETNAM***

Before looking at the issue of national honor, we should address the elephant in the room. Did the Vietnam War meet *jus ad bellum* criteria? Yes.

Just war thinking provides clear ethical guidelines for going to war, most notably the three principles of sovereign political authority, just cause, and right intention. Each of these moral presuppositions is obvious in the principal war aims of US presidents during the Vietnam War. More specifically, for Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon, US policy was explicitly three-fold: (1) contain Communism, (2) spread democracy, or at least hold it in places where it already existed, and (3) demonstrate resolve to various foreign audiences.

First, US presidents rightly, and righteously, argued that the West had a moral obligation to resist totalitarian Communism and its evil effects. In 1954, President Eisenhower observed, “You have a row of dominoes set up. You knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly.”<sup>3</sup> Eisenhower had not only Indochina in mind, but the recent war in Korea and “loss” of China to Mao Zedong’s Communists. He was also reflecting back on European appeasement in the 1930s. By 1955, the US had made security commitments via the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and at the Geneva Conference.<sup>4</sup> Many Asian countries in the region were dealing with their own Communist insurgencies and wanted a strong stand taken in Vietnam. The act of governments allying to resist rapacious Communism meets just war standards.

Moreover, America’s national interest and its ideals compelled it to support to the weak but semi-democratic regime in Saigon as a signal to all new, post-colonial democracies of US intentions. Kennedy’s “National Security Action Memorandum No. 52” pledged, “the US will undertake economic programs in Viet-Nam with a view to both short term immediate impact and a contribution to the longer range

economic viability of the country.” JFK typically spoke in this language of security and economic development when speaking about Vietnam. In his budget message to Congress for fiscal year 1964, Kennedy wrote:

We are steadfast in our determination to promote the security of the free world, not only through our commitment to join in the defense of freedom, but also through our pledge to contribute to the economic and social development of less privileged, independent peoples.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, these presidents understood the US must resist Communism because doing so in Indochina sent signals to other contested flashpoints, such as Berlin, that the US would not appease tyrants (as the West had done in the 1930s) and would fight against encroaching Communism. Eisenhower recognized the importance of resolve and credibility, reflecting on parrying the Communists, “over a period of eight years, with problems involving Iran, Trieste, Guatemala, Korea, Suez, Lebanon, the Formosa Strati, Vietnam, Laos, Austria, Cuba, and other areas...[we] tried always to create mutual confidence and trust, well knowing that without these ingredients alliances would be of little enduring value.”<sup>6</sup>

The US government had at least three audiences that it felt it had to convince of its resolve. The first was the Communists themselves: the US felt that it had to prove to the Communists the depth of its commitment not to abandon its allies. A second audience was its own allies. The US was deeply concerned not to appear as if it were vacillating in Vietnam because that could signal to other countries, such as the Philippines or those in Latin America or Europe, that the US lacked the will to come to their aid if they were similarly challenged by Communism. A third audience was potential allies, including members of the Non-Aligned Movement such as India, Egypt, and Indonesia. If the West did not support South Vietnam, the thinking went, the lack of resolve would turn potential allies away.

In short, it was morally just for the US to make these commitments. The US was not a colonial



*"With covering fire the wounded were brought out using ponchos. The photographer, walking near the front of the line, had raised up to take a picture and was shot through the face. He kept looking through his bandages for his camera. I couldn't help him." Get Them Out, by Stephen H. Randall, Vietnam Combat Artists Program, 1968. Source: US Army Center for Military History.*

overlord, and it was acting from a mixture of national interests and global goodwill to thwart the depredations of Communism. The US was upholding the UN Charter as well as the convention that ended the Korean War and called for de-escalation in the region. The US refused to fall into the appeasement trap of the 1930s and knew that it had paid dearly in Korea just a few years before for not being more explicit about its security commitments. The US was not only supporting Saigon militarily but investing hundreds of millions of dollars in infrastructure and agriculture development; President Lyndon B. Johnson famously asserted the superior promise of the Mekong Delta over the Tennessee Valley Authority.<sup>7</sup>

These policy approaches were made by sovereign political authorities in Washington, DC, at the United Nations, and in national capitals such as Sydney, Manila, Jakarta, and Saigon. The cause was just: resist insurgency and military domination. The intentions were just, and the cost was sacrificial. The secondary *jus ad bellum* criteria, such as

proportionality of ends, likelihood of success, and last resort, all seemed to be in order for helping allies defend their own homeland when requested. It remained a limited war in that the US tried very hard not to expand the theater of operations or escalate to the nuclear threshold. In sum, the US began and prosecuted the Vietnam War alongside Asian allies in a spirit of cooperation and dogged, costly action. Americans should be proud of the resolve and investment made by their countrymen in Vietnam.

## VIETNAM & THE IDEA OF THE SACRED

There is very little writing on the concept of "national honor" in contemporary just war writing. In fact, far too much recent so-called just war theorizing is really quasi-pacifism designed to limit all resort to force. Yet there remains a need for new just war scholarship in many areas. One of those areas is when presidential war aims, or war justifications, cite "national honor" as a reason to go to war or to prolong a war.

---

To this point we've talked about grand strategy (e.g., containment), but we must transition to the spiritual elements of national sacrifice. Although Clausewitz was partly correct that "war is politics by other means," he missed the spiritual dynamic of war. The moment blood is spilt, war takes on a sacred character as the spiritual and physical costs of lives lost compel the nation at war to a moral obligation not to allow such sacrifices to be in vain. Wars in the newspaper are just a hum in the background. But wars in which you've lost loved ones take on a spiritual, transcendent character. This is not just true for individuals: it is also true for politics and their leaders. Thus, a war aim that develops over time as blood and treasure are invested, and that begins to double as a justification for continuing the war, is the vindication of national honor.

The word "honor" can mean "to accord privilege and respect," but it can also mean "to fulfill an obligation." Both definitions are salient when speaking in the context of lost comrades in arms. The question, when leaders spoke about Vietnam, is whose honor? What is the nature of the obligation? And how are we to think about the antithesis of honor—shame—in political life? These questions are often overlooked in just war literature.<sup>8</sup> The answer, at least to some of the questions, can be ascertained by looking at the rhetoric of political leaders during the Vietnam War, including statements by Richard Nixon over the course of an entire decade. In 1965, Richard Nixon made this claim in a *Reader's Digest* essay: "our nation and our honor have been committed, and our men are falling and dying every day." In the same article, he said that a weak "negotiated settlement" would mean that the "hundreds of Americans and thousands of Vietnamese who have given their lives in the fight against Communist aggression would have done so in vain."<sup>9</sup> As a candidate running for president, Nixon promised, "I pledge to you that we shall have an honorable end to the war in Vietnam."<sup>10</sup> And on January 23, 1973, in a televised address to the American people reporting on the successful outcome of the Paris Peace

Conference, President Nixon used the word "honor" seven times:

I have asked for this radio and television time tonight for the purpose of announcing that we today have concluded an agreement to end the war and bring peace with honor in Vietnam and in Southeast Asia...

Throughout the years of negotiations, we have insisted on peace with honor. In my addresses to the Nation from this room of January 25 and May 8 [1972], I set forth the goals that we considered essential for peace with honor...

And finally, to all of you who are listening, the American people: Your steadfastness in supporting our insistence on peace with honor has made peace with honor possible. I know that you would not have wanted that peace jeopardized...

The important thing was not to talk about peace, but to get peace—and to get the right kind of peace. This we have done.

Now that we have achieved an honorable agreement, let us be proud that America did not settle for a peace that would have betrayed our allies, that would have abandoned our prisoners of war, or that would have ended the war for us but would have continued the war for the 50 million people of Indochina. Let us be proud of the 2 1/2 million young Americans who served in Vietnam, who served with honor and distinction in one of the most selfless enterprises in the history of nations. And let us be proud of those who sacrificed, who gave their lives so that the people of South Vietnam might live in freedom and so that the world might live in peace.<sup>11</sup>

The idea of honor is that political leaders have a responsibility to vindicate the sacrifices of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice in battle. Their deaths should mean something. The fallen should not die in vain. This concept of honor also extends to the fallen of one's allies, including in this case thousands of French and South Koreans, hundreds of Australians, and well over a million South Vietnamese soldiers and civilians.<sup>12</sup> All of them resisted deprivations of the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong, from the mass graves found at Hue, to

---

torture, assassination, and terrorism. Didn't the living owe something to the dead? And, by honoring their sacrifice, Nixon argued, we send a message to our friends and our adversaries about our character, our values, and our steadfastness.

Additionally, the notion of honor includes, whether stated or unstated, the idea of return on investment. The US had invested heavily in Vietnam for a decade and across Southeast Asia since the late 1940s. It is very difficult for leaders—especially can-do, pioneering, overcome-every-obstacle American leaders—to admit that there is an unmovable obstacle or unachievable goal. Americans put a man on the moon the year that Nixon took office! Certainly America could achieve an honorable peace in the rice paddies of Asia! Americans want to win: it is, or was, in the very DNA of the national culture. Moreover, it is very difficult to abandon sunk costs and all the sacrifice that represents.

At times, US leaders used negative terms to describe the opposites of honor: humiliation, shame, and degradation. These concepts intersect with the war aim about credibility in the eyes of allies. Because the US had not committed large numbers of troops to Vietnam during his presidency, Eisenhower did not speak in terms of US national honor, but he did speak of the sanctity of French lives lost. In a letter to the French president in 1954, Eisenhower memorialized:

My dear President Coty:

The entire free world has been inspired by the heroism and stamina displayed by the gallant garrison at Dien Bien Phu. Their devotion and the quality of their resistance have been so great that that battle will forever stand as a symbol of the free world's determination to resist dictatorial aggression and to sustain its right of self-determination and its dedication to the dignity of the human being. France has in the past suffered temporary defeats, but always she has triumphed in the end to continue as one of the world's leaders in all things that tend to bring greater richness to the lives of men. Those who fought and

died and suffered at Dien Bien Phu should know that no sacrifice of theirs has been in vain; that the free world will remain faithful to the causes for which they have so nobly fought.

With expressions of my personal regard,

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER<sup>13</sup>

In a parallel letter to the South Vietnamese leader, Eisenhower spoke of heroism and sacrifice:

Our admiration for the gallant men of the Vietnamese forces...so heroically defended Dien Bien Phu against insuperable odds. It is sad indeed that the fortress and its brave defenders have fallen to the enemy, but we can be heartened in the knowledge that their sacrifice has not been in vain... [T]heir heroic resistance to the evil forces of Communist aggression has given inspiration to all who support the cause of human freedom. Those brave men made their sacrifice in order that individual freedom and national independence for the people of Viet-Nam should not be lost to Communist enslavement. We of the free world are determined to remain faithful to the causes for which they have so nobly fought.<sup>14</sup>

John F. Kennedy spoke in a very personal way about honoring the sacrifice of the fallen in response to a February 1963 letter from Mrs. Bobbie Lou Pendergass of Santa Ana, California. She asked if the death of her brother in a helicopter crash in Vietnam had any meaning. The president assured her that her brother "had not died in vain...earn[ing] the eternal devotion of this Nation and other free men around the world." President Johnson used such language in his 1965 Johns Hopkins speech:

We are there because we have a promise to keep. Since 1954 every American President has offered support to the people of South Vietnam. We have helped to build, and we have helped to defend. Thus, over many years, we have made a national pledge to help South Vietnam defend its independence. And I intend to keep our promise.

To dishonor that pledge, to abandon this



*“Army doctors and nurses played a big part in the Pacification Program. While on assignment with a MEDCAP visit to a local village at Binh Zum with the 61st Medical Detachment...a baby with sores on his legs got shots.” I See It, by Stephen H. Randall, 1968. Source: US Army Center for Military History.*

small and brave nation to its enemy, and to the terror that must follow, would be an unforgivable wrong.<sup>15</sup>

Nixon likewise spoke of the dishonor of not keeping international commitments, such as in his famous 1973 speech revealing the resolution of the Paris Peace talks to the American people: “A nation cannot remain great if it betrays its allies and lets down its friends.”

Nevertheless, there is something significant in the way that “honor” was referenced in front of our allies, especially by President Nixon, rather than “shame.” The underlying idea is that there is a national soul that must be tended by righteous and even heroic action, regardless of the cost.

Honor is not necessarily victory, but an honorable peace is certainly not surrender. In the case of Vietnam, debates raged, and continue to this day, about what winning might look like. But at the time of the conflict, a secondary logic took hold that was beyond the narrow logic of containment found in the domino theory: an honorable end to the war should accord with national dignity and the loss of the fallen. Elements of that honorable peace may be myth, such as America telling itself that it could have won had it “taken off the gloves” or unleashed nuclear weapons. But also key to that notion of honor was getting the North Vietnamese to go through the rituals of international diplomacy, such as publicly signing an agreement, publicly committing to

---

peaceful conflict resolution, promises (even if they are not believed) of ceasefire and the end of hostilities, assurances that ultimate reunification of Vietnam would occur through democratic means, and the like.

“Honor” meant that the US had defended its ally, forced the North Vietnamese to live up to international standards, and that the US could leave along the lines first outlined by President Kennedy a decade earlier. “In the final analysis,” he said, “it is their war. They are the ones who have to win it or lose it. We can help them, we can give them equipment, we can send our men out there as advisers, but they have to win it, the people of Vietnam, against the Communists.”<sup>16</sup>

In conclusion, the notion of honor in its most profound sense is not usually a strategic objective during the wrangling among governments in the high politics of international life. The back and forth of diplomacy, threats, sanctions, espionage, blockades, and other political theater may be high drama, but this is not the time that a statesman articulates a concept of honor. But when the “last full measure of devotion” occurs and the lives of one’s countrymen in uniform are lost, a new logic enters the arena of “politics by other means.” That is the sacred logic of honor. Honor is about the national soul and its virtue. In the case of Vietnam, there was a strong sense by American presidents, at least Johnson and Nixon and many of their advisors, that any sort of peace had to be an “honorable” peace, not surrender.

## NATIONAL HONOR & JUST WAR THINKING

Does the vindication of national honor meet just war criteria? Just war thinking begins with the idea that governments go to war, and prolong existing wars, when *sovereign political authorities* act on a *just cause with right intention*. Hence, a war of self-defense meets these primary just war criteria. Defending an ally meets these just war criteria as does employing armed force in meeting one’s treaty

commitments, whether the NATO charter or the Genocide Convention.

But what about the war aim of national honor? In this instance, we are not focused on fulfilling treaty commitments (“honoring” promises) but instead on the idea of keeping faith with the sacrifice made by those who lost their lives on the battlefield and their families. Don’t leaders owe victory, or at least “peace with honor,” to the families, comrades, and memories of those who have lost their lives in the fight?

After 20 years as a military reservist and having worked on post-conflict issues at the US Department of State in Africa and Asia, I am sympathetic to the honor position. Like many others, my visits to Gettysburg, Normandy, Baghdad, Kandahar, and elsewhere have had an otherworldly, spiritual dimension. No one wants to think that our sons, husbands, brothers, and fathers died in vain at Hue, Khe San, and Hamburger Hill. Many of us instinctively feel that every name carved into the black granite of the Vietnam Memorial was not a victim but rather a hero whose purpose—we the survivors—must somehow vindicate. President Johnson believed this. He had nightmares of being labeled a “traitor” if he lost in Vietnam. Nixon believed this, and his belief was supported by a silent majority who gave him two major election victories in 1968 and 1972, despite the growing unpopularity of the war.

To reiterate, the US did not go to war to vindicate its national honor; honor became a war aim that prolonged our involvement after its justified prosecution had already begun. The reasons for going to war in Vietnam in the first place, as well as the Berlin Airlift, the Korean War, and the use of force elsewhere, were typically just. However, when it comes to the prolonging of war, the concept of national honor does not necessarily accord with just war thinking, regardless of its emotional and psychological power. Trying to uphold the sanctity of ephemeral national honor is morally perilous because it suggests additional cost and sacrifice, not in pursuit of victory, but simply to continue

the fight. Those additional costs can become unrestrained: “no cost too great.” National honor by itself is not a rationale for victory, nor is it synonymous with morality. Rather, national honor can become a rationale for prolonging the unnecessary—and thereby unjustified—destructiveness of war. In its most perverse form, the honor justification begins to make the war itself the highest good and any and all sacrifice not only legitimate, but venerable. The perverted, extreme view of national honor does not accord with the individualistic, democratic sentiments of the US because it can become the voice of Hitler and kamikazes.

To be clear, I am not arguing against national honor. I am arguing that national honor can become an end to itself, in contrast to just war thinking’s emphasis on order and peace as the end of war. The Vietnam War was just in terms of *jus ad bellum*, but became confused when LBJ and Nixon were driven by considerations of personal ego and national honor rather than the things that reinforce authority and justice. One can see this in the increasingly awkward policies of the Johnson era, such as White House approval of bombings, leaving US POWs in prison camps for years on end without robust action, vacillating support for political reform in Saigon, and the like.

We must not overstate the case. There *is* something moral about invoking the sanctity of national honor, in at least two ways. First, during the war we want national leaders to prioritize honoring the sacrifice of citizens and taxpayers, and so a focus on honor can actually become a limiting factor restraining other presidential war aims. We want presidents and generals to say they will fight hard to win. They will give our sons and daughters in uniform every tool to be successful. They will care for them when they’re in uniform and after they come home. And that they promise us that if the calculus for fighting this war changes in some way, they will honor their service and our sacrifice by changing course and that they won’t dishonor the dead by needlessly adding more to their numbers. *That* is a formula for peace with honor.



*“The dark image on the right is a medic. He has a towel around his neck and he’s checking the pump action on a shotgun his dad sent him in the mail. On the left is a 5th Special Forces [soldier] making sure of his equipment for the mission. The seated figure is exhausted, sitting on his helmet, deep in thought. What could he be thinking about?” Soldiers, by Stephen H. Randall, Vietnam Combat Artists Program, 1968. Source: US Army Center for Military History.*

Second, after the war leaders must honor the meaning and sacrifice of the survivors as well as the lost. “Peace with honor” should include establishing war memorials, rehabilitating veterans, ensuring the well-being of families of the fallen—not to mention identifying intelligent “lessons learned” and teaching them to military officers and civilian leaders to prevent the reenactment of past errors.

President Nixon was on to something morally complex but precious in speaking about honor when one thinks about the needs of veterans, especially those scarred by their service. This *is* an issue of national honor, not just for the government but society at large in how it treats the veterans of its wars. A scandal in US history is the way that so many Americans in the anti-war campaign spat upon those in uniform.

In sum, the Vietnam era of US history was lengthy and costly. Tens of millions of Americans were directly involved, whether serving in government, or in uniform, or by being connected to those who served. The conditions that President Truman faced in Southeast Asia in the early 1950s evolved dynamically to the moments when President Ford watched the abandonment of the US embassy in Saigon on his television set in 1975. The decisions made across presidencies to fight and prolong the war had sound strategic and ethical foundations, and yet there are morally troubling aspects to the evolving war aims as well. Today, a half-century after the escalation of US fighting in Vietnam, these controversial issues can help us reflect on the ethics of our current use of armed force in conflicts around the world. P

**Eric Patterson**, PhD, is a *Providence* contributing editor and Dean and Professor in the Robertson School of Government at Regent University in Virginia Beach, VA. He is the author or editor of 11 books, including *Ending Wars Well*, *Ethics Beyond War's End*, *Debating the War of Ideas*, and, with Timothy Demy, the just released *Philosophers on War*.

**Artwork:** In June 1966, "The Army Vietnam Combat Artists Program" was established as part of "The United States Army Art Program," utilizing teams of soldier-artists to make pictorial records of US Army activities in the course of the Vietnam War for the annals of military history. The concept of the Vietnam Combat Art Program had its roots in World War I when the US Congress authorized the Army to use soldier-artists to record military operations.

#### Endnotes

1 Quoted in Gary R. Hess, "Kennedy's Vietnam Options and Decisions," in David L. Anderson, ed., *Shadow on the White House: Presidents & the Vietnam War (1945-1975)* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1993), 69.

2 Eric Patterson, *American Just Wars* (forthcoming book, 2018).

3 Dwight D. Eisenhower, "The President's News Conference," April 7, 1954, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, presidency.ucsb.edu. Throughout this essay, I have utilized the vast resources of the University of California at Santa Barbara's "The American Presidency Project," which provides presidential speeches and other materials for the entirety of US history. I am grateful to John Woolley and Gerhard Peters for this spectacular, freely available resource available at my graduate alma mater.

4 The 1954 Geneva Conference brought together nearly a dozen countries with a goal of settling outstanding issues on

the Korean peninsula and in Indochina. Few people realize today that the original US position in support of South Vietnam (State of Vietnam) at the 1954 Geneva Conference was for a unified Vietnam with perhaps some United Nations involvement and a guarantee of competitive elections. In contrast, it was the North Vietnamese (Democratic Republic of Vietnam) and their allies who made the original argument for partition. The position of the two sides is revealing. The US seemed to have some faith in the democratic process and believed that, if it could fully take root in a Vietnam not plagued by warring factions or Communist fighting, the country might evolve into a democracy outside Moscow and Beijing's direct influence. In contrast, the Chinese pushed the North Vietnamese hard toward a partition agreement because, despite the French loss at Dien ben Phu, there remained over 400,000 French troops on the ground in Vietnam, and the Communists feared that the US would intervene and shift the balance of power against the Communists.

5 John F. Kennedy, "Annual Budget Message to the Congress, Fiscal Year 1964," online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, presidency.ucsb.edu.

6 Eisenhower, 624.

7 Department of State Bulletin, LII, April 26, 1965, vietnamwar.net.

8 There was a time when the notion of honor was intrinsic to how many thought about just war. As James Turner Johnson recorded, the chivalric code of the Middle Ages included conceptions of honor. See his *Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981).

9 Richard Nixon, "Why Not Negotiate in Vietnam?" *The Reader's Digest*, vol. 12 (1965).

10 Richard Nixon, "Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam," November 3, 1969, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, presidency.ucsb.edu.

11 Richard Nixon, "Address to the Nation Announcing Conclusion of an Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam," January 23, 1973, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, presidency.ucsb.edu.

12 "UCDP/Prio Armed Conflict Database," *Uppsala University*, pcr.uu.se.

13 Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Exchange of Messages Between the President and the President of France on the Fall of Dien Bien Phu," May 7, 1954, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, presidency.ucsb.edu.

14 Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Exchange of Messages Between the President and the Chief of State of Viet-Nam on the Fall of Dien Bien Phu," May 7, 1954, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, presidency.ucsb.edu.

15 Lyndon B. Johnson: "Address at Johns Hopkins University: 'Peace Without Conquest,'" April 7, 1965. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, presidency.ucsb.edu.

16 Full quote: In September of 1963, President Kennedy declared in an interview, "In the final analysis, it is their war. They are the ones who have to win it or lose it. We can help them, we can give them equipment, we can send our men out there as advisers, but they have to win it, the people of Vietnam, against the Communists... But I don't agree with those who say we should withdraw. That would be a great mistake... [The United States] made this effort to defend Europe. Now Europe is quite secure. We also have to participate—we may not like it—in the defense of Asia." Available at <https://www.jfklibrary.org/JFK/JFK-in-History/Vietnam.aspx>