WALTER LIPPMANN: A STUDY OF AN OPINIONMAKER'S CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE UNITED STATES INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

WALTER LIPPMANN:

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UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY IN VIETNAM

This study examines columnist Walter Lippmann's coverage of the Vietnam war and compares his reportage with that of the New York Times and Newsweek. The two-fold purpose of this thesis is to study one of America's most respected journalists who was outspokenly critical of United States involvement in Southeast Asia as far back as 1950 and, by so doing, to point out some of the failures of the two major publications in the news media in adequately informing the public about the longest and costliest war in American history.

The study covers the early period of American involvement in Vietnam, from the time American economic aid was given to the French in Indochina, through the terms of President Kennedy and Johnson, and finally until President Nixon assumed office.

Lippmann's reportage in conjunction with these two members of the national press will be studied in an effort to show how reportage and opinion over the Vietnam war differed, especially during the period from 1960 to 1965. Both publications had first-hand information of the war because they had correspondents in Vietnam and, therefore, should have been more accurate than

those newspapers, magazines, and columnists which covered the war exclusively from Washington. This study will show that Walter Lippmann's assessments about the war were much more accurate and incisive than these two members of the national press. Particularly interesting is the fact that Newsweek, which carried Lippmann's columns in the 1960's, did not always see the Vietnam policy as he saw it. This fact will provide the opportunity to study the contrasting views of a national news magazine and one of America's most influential columnists in terms of how the war was interpreted. All reportage is examined and analyzed in light of the Pentagon Papers because they provide the most accurate and detailed account of United States policy in Vietnam to date. The Papers will show just how accurate Walter Lippmann was in assessing the events during the war.

As early as 1961, Lippmann urged a review of American foreign policy in Southeast Asia. He warned that the present policy of intervention would lead to a major land war, a "quagmire", that would not serve any interest to United States security. As early as 1950 he warned that fighting on the mainland of Asia would never stop Communist influence in that area.

Lippmann and the national press, particularly the Times and Newsweek, differed sharply in their coverage of such major events as the first troops sent to Vietnam by Kennedy, the support of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem, the corrupt government, the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964, and the escalation of troop reinforcements by President Johnson. The difference in the

reportage came about because Lippmann probed beyond the government press releases, white papers, and briefings to tell the American public the truth about the war.

Lippmann's journalism during these years is in the best tradition of the American free press. His probing and incisive writing demonstrated independence and courage that other segments of the press were sometimes unwilling to display.

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by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

United States foreign policy after World War II was shaped by the Truman Doctrine. The postwar era had left many changes in world affairs. Boundaries were altered. Germany was divided. The Soviet Union swallowed up the small European countries along their border. Different alliances emerged and different spheres of political influence were backed by the military power of the United States and the Soviet Union. The men who directed American foreign policy considered themselves to be realists. Realism implied the measured use of power to implement American idealism. Thus, the "containment" of the Soviet Union was a policy originally constructed for Europe and first implemented under President Truman in 1947. The Truman Doctrine, promising military aid to Greece and Turkey, contained the ambiguous phrase that the United States would support free peoples who were resisting subjugations by armed military forces or by any other outside pressures. Furthermore, to get Congressional support, the Truman Administration felt itself compelled to invoke the rhetoric of the spreading danger of Communism. By the Dulles era in the 1950's, the Russian threat had become the Communist threat.

The Chinese threat came to be viewed in the same manner. In 1949, when Mao Tse-tung spectacularly achieved control of China, containing Communism in Asia suddenly developed the same fixation

it had been in Europe. Truman decided to oppose further expansion. One way of doing this was by supporting the French in the restoration of the Indochina colonial empire. The French, except for World War II when the Japanese invaded and controlled it, had occupied Vietnam since 1889. The leader of the Vietminh, Ho Chi Minh, was rebuffed by the United States in seeking aid for his nationalist group because of his association with the Chinese during a stay in Moscow in the 1930's. The fact that he had fought against the Japanese and led troops with the British and French was inconsequential.

For two decades, United States officials explained America's mission in Indochina as part of the general effort to halt the advance of Communism. The policy that was ostensibly designed to deal with the situation in Europe was now applied to Asia. The decision to move it towards a worldwide basis also meant that the United States was committed to maintaining the status quo in any nation even indirectly threatened by Communism.

Throughout the 1950's, under the leadership of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, the United States not only granted economic aid but also provided American forces to secure and protect territorial integrity. As long as the countries were not Communist, the United States had decided to extend itself. Even if it was a small country having no vital interest to the United States security, policy dictated that aid be given and arms be shipped.

But while the American press focused on the Cold War rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States, this country was

gradually increasing its involvement in a war more than 10,000 miles across the Pacific. It was not the Korean war. It was the war between the French, our colonial allies, and the nationalist troops of Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam. Posing little threat to United States security, the American press hardly acknowledged that we were becoming more involved each year in preserving a French colony against the people's will.

As late as 1963, when South Vietnam had finally caught the attention of the press because of Americans fighting there, the only newspaper to have a full-time reporter stationed in Vietnam was the New York Times. For the most part, the American press was relying on Associated Press and United Press International dispatches and government sources in Washington.

One journalist in Washington who did not rely on government propaganda about the Vietnam conflict and our reasons for being there was Walter Lippmann. He had been an outspoken critic of the Dean Acheson and John Foster Dulles policies during the Cold War and was unwilling to believe that American troops were justified in getting involved in Vietnam. Lippmann was a syndicated columnist writing under the caption entitled "Today and Tomorrow" and a contributor to Newsweek magazine during the 1950's and 1960's.

The purpose of this study is to examine Lippmann's coverage of the Vietnam war and to compare it and contrast it with what is regarded as the "establishment" or national press. This study concentrates on the critical years of increasing American involvement in the war in Southeast Asia from President Kennedy's term in

office up to the time President Nixon was elected in 1968. The study will also deal with United States foreign policy during the Cold War, the early 1950's when the United States was contemplating sending troops to aid the French forces in Vietnam. Lippmann's articles are examined along with two of the most influential members of the print media, the New York Times and the weekly news magazine, Newsweek. These were chosen because of their national impact on public opinion and because each had a reporter in Vietnam, thus having more firsthand information than those members of the press who covered the war exclusively from Washington via wire services. Editorial opinions on the war are examined closely to show how Lippmann's articles differed markedly from publications that had firsthand access to the war news. In addition, all reportage is examined in light of the Pentagon Papers which, besides serving as a major source, will show Lippmann's reporting to be the most accurate and correct.

Before examining the specific war coverage of Walter Lippmann and the two national publications, some background is needed. The first chapter, accordingly, traces Walter Lippmann's early life as a student at Harvard and as a young journalist working for Lincoln Steffens. The second chapter discusses the origins of the Vietnam war in terms of American involvement during the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations from 1950 to 1960. The third chapter reviews the editorial statements made by Newsweek and the New York Times in support of the Kennedy Administration's limited involvement in Vietnam. It also examines Lippmann's warning over the United States'

refusal to realign its foreign policy and why the involvement there would not deter Communism. The fourth and fifth chapters of this study examine the total escalation brought on by President Johnson after the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and the credibility gap that developed when the President lied to the American people. In that light, Lippmann's assessment of this period is developed in an attempt to show why, in the end, the Times and Newsweek had changed position on the war and were finally in agreement with Lippmann's opinions.

This study not only examines the reportage of Walter Lippmann on Vietnam but, in doing so, points out some of the failures made by two respected members of the national press in adequately informing the public about the longest and most divisive war in American history.

Writing in the Columbia Journalism Review, Jules Witcover, Washington Bureau Chief for the Los Angeles Times, offered his assessment of the press during the growing involvement of the United States in Vietnam:

> In coverage of the war, the press corps' job narrowed down to three basic tasks--reporting what the Government said, finding out whether it was true, and assessing whether the policy enunciated worked. The group did a highly professional job on the first task. But it fell down on the second and third, and there is strong evidence the reason is that too many reporters sought the answer from the same basic source--the Government. One can only speculate on the course of the war had more members of the Washington news community relied less on their government and more on its responsible critics in appraising the veracity and effectiveness of government policy.[1]

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[1]Jules Witcover, "Where Washington Reporting Failed," Columbia Journalism Review, Winter, 1970-71, pp. 7-8.

Lippmann was among the small faction who did not simply report the government policy.

A large room in Yale University's Sterling Memorial Library is where the Walter Lippmann Collection is located. It was the privilege of the author to visit and study there during a short period in February, 1976. The Lippmann room which includes manuscripts, personal letters, and diaries was not open for review to general researchers at the time. However, it was through the courtesy of Mr. Robert O. Anthony that the author was able to gain some insights into the columnist's life that was not available from reading the many books that discussed Lippmann. Mr. Anthony is the Curator of the Lippmann room at Yale University. The bibliography of Lippmann's works, his "Today and Tomorrow" columns, all cross-referenced, and any other piece of information written about him is located there.

No other journalist and few public figures have had a career so closely documented for historians, students, or general admirers to review. Every scrap of Lippmannia is located in the room. The portions that were available to this author were enormous help in preparing for this study.

CHAPTER I

WALTER LIPPMANN'S EARLY LIFE, EDUCATION AT HARVARD, INTELLECTUAL GROWTH, AND ACHIEVEMENTS UP TO 1914

At the age of twenty-five and a graduate of Harvard, Walter Lippmann did not profess to have an understanding of foreign affairs. Simply, it was an area he did not choose to know anything about. But by the time World War I began, he realized how important the understanding of foreign affairs was to a journalist. Throughout the rest of his life, events in international politics gained his scrutiny and attention. What was once an area he did not seem to enjoy or take much interest in was soon to be a familiar topic in his writings.

His world, at this time, was not oriented to include the complexities of the international structure of political affairs. At the time of Lippmann's birth, the world was still in awe of the widowed Queen Victoria overseeing England's vast colonial empire. Her grandson, Kaiser Wilhelm II, had just acceded to the German throne and proclaimed the divine right of the House of Hohenzollern to rule. Across the Atlantic, Grover Cleveland was finishing out his first term in the White House. The Battleship "Maine" had not yet been sunk and Cuba and the Phillipines still remained possessions of Spain.

Lippmann was born on September 23, 1889 in New York City,

the only child of an upper-middle class family. From his father, a successful clothing manufacturer, and from his mother, a witty and cultivated woman interested in the arts, Walter Lippmann received every comfort and advantage.[1] He attended a private school in New York until he entered Harvard in 1906.

Having come from a fairly wealthy but conventional middle class family, it was his original intention to become an art critic. His preference for some genteel profession was altered. Harvard's intellectual environment reoriented his interests. He had rejected the ethnic heritage of his Jewish ancestry and refused to follow his father into the world of business. In the campus activities aimed at furthering social reforms, he began to find causes to give meaning and purpose to his life. He saw journalism as the natural outlet for an activist. He wrote for such Harvard student publications as The Red and Blue, the Illustrated, and the Monthly of which he became an editor during his junior year. His prose style was influenced by the muckrakers and the content of his writing reflected liberal demands for reform. "The spirit of advance is the inspiration at Harvard today," he wrote in one of his earliest articles. To him this venerable institution of higher learning was a "living bridge stretching into a splendid future."[2]

His class of 1910, included John Reed, radical and author

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[1]Charles Budd Forcey, The Crossroads of Liberalism: Croly, Weyl, Lippmann and the Progressive Era: 1900-1925. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 91.

[2]Louis Filler, Crusaders in American Liberalism (New York: MacMillan, 1961), p. 241.

of Ten Days That Shook the World; the poet Alan Seiger; Heywood Broun, who later became Lippmann's fellow columnist on the New York World; and T. S. Elliot.[3]

John Reed, in a poem about Lippmann's days at Harvard revealed some traits of the young scholar in the following lines:

> Lippmann,--calm, inscrutable,
> Thinking and writing clearly, soundly, well;
> All snarls of falseness swiftly piercing through
> His keen mind leaps like lightening to the True;
> * * * *
> Our all unchallenged Chief! But . . . one
> Who builds a world, and leaves out all the fun--
> Who dreams a pageant, gorgeous, infinite,
> And leaves all the color out of it,--
> Who wants to make the human race, and me,
> March to a geometric Q.E.D.[4]

Besides his journalistic endeavors, Lippmann helped found a local chapter of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society. His interest in socialism came about as a result of attending seminars held by Graham Wallas, a visiting scholar from England, and one of the original creators of the British Fabian Society. Being attracted to Fabian socialism, and as President of the Socialist Club, Lippmann advocated reform in areas such as child labor, the exploitation of workers and farmers, and corrupt government. He was particularly active in the campaign for woman suffrage. As editor of Monthly, H. V. Kaltenborn refused to print an article by Lippmann concerning the subject because it would not appeal to Harvard's undergraduates.

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[3]H. V. Kaltenborn, Fifty Fabulous Years: 1900-1950 (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1950), p. 44.

[4]John Reed's poem is taken from Granville Hicks, John Reed: The Making of a Revolutionary (New York: MacMillan, 1936), p. 80.

"Lippmann told me," Kaltenborn recalled many years later, "that I was a pretty poor editor not to realize the great importance of this article."[5]

Lippmann's absence of interest in foreign affairs was obvious. As a socialist bent on reform issues, he was oblivious to the gathering storm threatening the disruption of Europe's borders. Lippmann assumed that the money spent on battleships would be better spent on schoolhouses and that "war was an affair 'militarists' talked about and not something that seriously-minded progressive democrats paid any attention to."[6] When Lippmann was about to leave Harvard in 1910, Graham Wallas warned him that a great war might soon break out and that if it did it would smoulder on for thirty years. Lippmann confessed: "I had no notion that it would ever touch me or jeopardize the interests of the country."[7]

In 1910, Lincoln Steffens, the editor of the muckraking journal Everybody's, hired Lippmann first as a secretary and was so impressed by his "keen, quiet, and industrious traits that he soon promoted him to assistant editor."[8] Lippmann worked for Steffens for two years investigating the "Money Power" on Wall Street, studying the methods by which several life and fire insurance companies, banks and railroads were controlled, and writing a few

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[5]Kaltenborn, Fifty Fabulous Years, pp. 44-45.

[6]Walter Lippmann, United States Foreign Policy, xi.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Lincoln Steffens, Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1959), pp. 592-597.

articles for the magazine. But Lippmann became disenchanted with muckraking: "You cannot go very far by reiterating that public officials are corrupt, that businessmen break the law."[9]

In January, 1912, Lippmann, bored with his work on Everybody's, accepted a position of secretary to the Reverend George Lunn, recently elected socialist mayor of Schenectady, New York.

As he worked closely with Mayor Lunn he began to discover many drawbacks to practical politics. In a Preface to Politics, written soon after he left, Lippmann wrote:

> At first it was a hard confession to make, but the more I saw of politics at first hand, the more I respected the indifference of the public. There was something monotonously trivial about our reformist enthusiasm.[10]

He never participated in politics again.

In 1913, Walter Lippmann accepted an invitation from Herbert Croby to become associated with him in the publication of a new progressive opinion journal, the New Republic. To him, it was a relief and a pleasure that he had found something worthwhile to do for the first time since he left Harvard. He had a sense of constructively participating in the reform movement.

The magazine championed the progressive reforms of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. Working on one of the more influential magazines of the era, Lippmann was still "totally unconscious" of the fact that he was living in an international as well as a

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[9]Walter Lippmann, Drift and Mastery (New York: Holt, 1914), p. 23.

[10]Walter Lippmann, A Preface to Politics (New York: McMillan, 1933), p. 3.

national world.[11] At the time, the magazine totally ignored foreign affairs.

The outbreak of World War I in August, 1914 confronted the New Republic with the fact that foreign affairs had to be taken seriously. From 1914-1919 (after a brief vacation in Europe), Lippmann returned to the magazine and to struggle with "misgiving and reluctance to grasp our interest in the war."[12] By the time World War I erupted, Lippmann admitted that, "it seemed like a terrific plunge, let loose by a few men who had consulted nobody."[13]

Speaking to a friend who was about to enlist in the American Expeditionary Forces in 1917, Lippmann made a remark that left his friend astounded to the fact that the former socialist student reformer and young journalist had finally forced himself to reexamine the world in a way contrary to his past thinking: "The world as we have known is finished. It will never be the same again. The acids of modernity bit into us."[14]

The young intellectual's consciousness, forced by events he had chosen to ignore was finally awakened to a different world--one in which he would specialize in the rest of his life.

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[11]Walter Lippmann, United States Foreign Policy, xi-xiii.

[12]Ibid., xii.

[13]Walter Lippmann, The Stakes of Diplomacy (New York: MacMillan, 1915), p. 5.

[14]Carl Binger, "A Child of the Enlightenment," Marquis Childs and James Reston, eds., Walter Lippmann and His Times (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1959), p. 36.

CHAPTER II

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE ORIGINS OF THE VIETNAM WAR, 1950-1960, AND WARNINGS FROM LIPPMANN

> For many years, in talking to different countries, different governments, I have tried to insist on this principle: No outside country can come in and be really helpful unless it is doing something that the local people want.
>
> President Eisenhower
> April 7, 1954

United States involvement in Vietnam dates back nearly a decade before American troops were committed in large scale to Southeast Asia. On June 27, 1950, the outbreak of the Korean War, President Truman ordered "direct acceleration in the furnishing of military assistance to the forces of France and the Associated States in Indochina and the dispatch of a military mission to provide close working relations with these forces."[1]

President Truman was referring to the support of the French colonial government in its war against the Vietminh, later commonly referred to as the Vietcong. The Vietminh were led by Communist Ho Chi Minh who became President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, better known as North Vietnam, after World War II.

Except for the World War II occupation by Japan, the French had held Vietnam as a protectorate since 1889. The French colonial

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[1]U. S. Department of State Bulletin, XXIII, July 3, 1950, p.5.

empire of Indochina was restored after the Japanese surrender in 1945. Ho Chi Minh had expected to gain independence for Vietnam but the Yalta conference ended all hopes and expectations of an easy settlement. Trusteeships were declared for the two sections of Vietnam, split by a geographical border. The North was to be administered by China which had not yet turned communist and the South by Great Britain. When the British unexpectedly returned the southern portion of Vietnam back to France, the guerilla forces led by Ho began a battle for independence that would last for over twenty years. It was to be known as "the first Indochina War."[2]

For a period between 1950 and 1954, the United States supplied the French with an estimated $2.6 billion worth of economic and military aid. When President Eisenhower assumed office, the United States was paying for 80 per cent of the total cost of the war against the Vietminh. It was estimated that by 1954 the United States had given $1.8 to the French in direct aid.[3] During the final two years of the war, the United States gave France some $1.8 billion dollars in an attempt to defeat the Vietminh.

American aid did not affect the outcome of the war. On May 7, 1954, the French were defeated at Dien Bien Phu by the Vietminh and the following day sued for peace at the Geneva Conference. During

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[2]The history of this period concerning the politics involved over Vietnam and the Yalta Conference can be reviewed by seeing Ellen J. Hammer, The Struggle for Indochina (Standford, California: Standford University Press, 1954).

[3]Robert Scheer, How the United States Got Involved in Vietnam, Report to the Center of Democratic Institutions, Santa Barbara, California, July, 1965, p. 10.

the final weeks of the war when the French were surrounded at Dien Bien Phu, a number of United States government leaders urged President Eisenhower to commit American military power in an attempt to help save the French from certain defeat. Among them, Vice-President Richard Nixon supported intervention:

> The United States as a leader of the free world cannot afford further retreat in Asia. It is hoped the United States will not have to send troops there, but if this government cannot avoid it, the Administration must face up to the situation and dispatch forces . . . This country is the only nation politically strong enough at home to take a position that will save Asia.[4]

Another cabinet member in favor of intervention was Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, who believed the "imposition" of communism on Southeast Asia "should not be passively accepted but should be met by united action."[5]

On April 3, 1954, Dulles held a secret conference with eight ranking members of the Congress to enlist their support for a joint resolution by the Congress to permit the use of American air and naval power in Indochina. Admiral Arthur W. Radford, Chariman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, agreed with the Secretary, arguing that the fall of Indochina to the Communists would lead to the eventual loss of all of Southeast Asia. This was the so-called "domino theory" that was to become the cornerstone of United States Southeast Asia policy and, according to the Pentagon Papers, "the assumptions

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[4]New York Times, April 17, 1954, p. 1.

[5]U. S. Department of State Bulletin, XXX, April 12, 1954, p. 540.

behind it were never questioned."[6] The congressional leaders, one of them being Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson, balked at intervention without first being guaranteed the support of the United States' European allies. Britain would not agree to such action and, as a result, direct intervention was tabled. Instead, Dulles came up with a proposal for the formation of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) which he hoped would provide a "united front" leading to "united action."

Although many government officials were urging military intervention, others, like Senator John F. Kennedy, were looking for an independent, nationalist alternative to French rule on one hand and Ho Chi Minh on the other. Kennedy and others were caught between their hatred of communism and their distaste for colonialism. On April 6, 1954, in the chambers of the Senate just before the Geneva Conference was to begin, Kennedy said he feared the Republican administration would permit a negotiated peace in Vietnam thus paving the way for participation in the government by the Communists under Ho Chi Minh. As an alternative, he recommended that the United States urge the French to grant independence to Vietnam, exclude the Vietminh from the new nationalist government, and support the new government's army whenever necessary by making "some commitment of our manpower."[7] The strength of such a commitment was never mentioned.

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[6]Neil Sheehan, et al., The Pentagon Papers (New York: Bantam, 1971), p. 7.

[7]100 Congressional Record, 4672 (1954).

Within this political climate the Geneva Conference on Korea and Vietnam began. The Vietnam question was taken up on May 9 and after two months of debate and political infighting, a settlement, reached in July, established three goals: (1) it ended the hostilities between France and the Vietminh, (2) it "temporarily" divided Vietnam in half at the seventeenth parallel, and (3) it provided a means for reunifying the country through nationwide elections in July, 1956, with consultations between the two factions beginning a year earlier.[8] In brief, what the Geneva Accords accomplished was to move the struggle for Vietnam from the battlefield to the political arena, a favorable settlement for the Communists because they had the support of the majority of Vietnamese and believed they would be victorious in free elections.

In addition to the above mentioned three results, there were several other important provisions in the Accords dealing with military activity. Article 16 stated that "the introduction into Vietnam of any troop reinforcements and additional military personnel is prohibited."[9] Article 17 prohibited the introduction "of any reinforcements in the form of all types of arms, munitions and other war material, such as combat aircraft, naval craft, pieces of ordnance, jet engines and jet weapons, and armored vehicles."[10]

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[8]Donald Lancaster, The Emancipation of French Indochina (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 313-337.

[9]Marvin E. Gettlemen, ed., Vietnam: History, Documents, and Opinions (New York: New American Library, Inc., 1970), p. 169.

[10]Ibid., p. 170.

Article 18 prohibited the establishment of any new military bases in either zone of Vietnam. An international commission of three countries--India, Canada, and Poland--was set up to supervise the execution of the agreement.

The Eisenhower Administration viewed the Geneva agreements as a "disaster."[11] The National Security Council met on August 8 and 12, and reported that the settlement "completed a major forward stride of Communism which may lead to the loss of Southeast Asia."[12] At the closing session of the Geneva Conference, W. Bedel Smith, the Undersecretary of State explained the American reaction to the settlement and the reasons why the United States never signed the Accords:

> . . . my Government is not prepared to join in a Declaration by the Conference such as is submitted. However, the United States makes this unilateral declaration of its position in these matters . . . (The United States) Takes Note of the Agreements concluded at Geneva.[13]

The Undersecretary of State further stated that, while the United States merely "took note" of the agreements "it would refrain from the threat of use of force to disturb them" and "would view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the aforesaid Agreements with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security."[14]

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[11]Sheehan, Pentagon Papers, p. 14.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Gettlemen, Vietnam, p. 184.

[14]Ibid., pp. 184-185.

If the United States was to keep Vietnam from becoming united under the communist banner of the Vietminh and Ho Chi Minh through the proposed elections, it had to strengthen the regime in the South. An anti-communist, nationalist alternative to Ho had to be found as a replacement for Emporer Bao Dai, the French puppet who was extremely unpopular in the wake of the growing Vietnamese nationalism that followed the French defeat. As historian Ralph Stavins pointed out in Washington Plans an Aggressive War:

> To strengthen the regime set up by the United States in the South and keep Vietnam from becoming united under Ho Chi minh, a strong anti-communist had to be found as a replacement for the French puppet, Emperor Bao Dai. Dai was extremely unpopular because of his ties to the French and with growing Vietnamese nationalism swelling after the defeat at Dien Bien Phu, it was evident he would not be able to stay in power.[15]

A devout Catholic and anti-communist was selected as an alternative to lead the South from being overrun by Ho. Educated in French schools in Hanoi, Ngo Dinh Diem was virtually unknown in his own country because he had been studying in the United States at Michigan State University and in New York during the conquest of the French.

The reason Diem was selected by the United States to lead the fight against Ho is discussed in former Senator Ernest Gruening and Herbert W. Beaser's book entitled Vietnam Folly:

> There can be little doubt that United States pressure upon France was responsible for the selection of Diem by Bao Dai as Premier. The United States was in an excellent

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[15]Ralph Stavins, Richard J. Barnett, and Marcus G. Raskin, Washington Plans an Aggressive War (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 8.

> position to do so since it was, and had been pouring vast sums of money into Vietnam in aid of the French. The French and the non-communist Vietnamese already knew that they were through. If anything was to be saved in Vietnam, it would have to be done with the United States' aid. In addition, continuing United States' assistance would be needed in rebuilding and defending France.[16]

According to the Central Intelligence Agency, when Diem took office in July, 1954, he had little popular support. The CIA believed that all of Vietnam would be united under Ho's leadership through electoral politics, not war.[17]

Thus, Diem moved to solidify his position, politically and militarily, by crushing both Communist and Buddhist opposition and by initiating a referendum on the first anniversary of his assumption of power. The referendum, held October 23, 1955, gave the electorate a choice between himself and Bao Dai. Diem received 98.2 per cent of the vote, despite "irregularities" at the polling booths, and proclaimed himself president. At the end of 1955, Diem had received $325.8 million in American aid.[18]

Under the Geneva Accords, the two temporary zones of Vietnam--the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North) and the State of Vietnam (renamed the Republic of Vietnam after the Diem referendum)--were to begin consultations one year prior to the scheduled reunifying elections in July, 1956. But neither the consultations nor the internationally supervised elections were ever held. The

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[16]Ernest Gruening and Herbert W. Beaser, Vietnam Folly (Washington, D. C.: National Press Inc., 1968), p. 138.

[17]Stavins, Washing Plans an Aggressive War, p. 9.

[18]Gruening and Beaser, Vietnam Folly, p. 150.

United States government played a major role in Diem's decision to ignore the elections. The Eisenhower Administration knew that the Communists had wide popular support in both zones and did not want to risk the possibility of a Vietminh government for all of Vietnam. A policy of seeking to postpone the elections and of "requiring guarantees that the Communists could be expected to reject,"[19] was forwarded in July, 1954, by a secret cablegram from Secretary of State Dulles to W. Bedel Smith. Dulles said:

> Since undoubtedly true free elections might eventually mean unification of Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh, this makes it all the more important they should only be held as long after cease-fire agreement as possible and in conditions free from intimidation to give democratic elements best chance.[20]

The CIA, after reviewing the first year of Diem in office, stated that prospects for political stability depended on the ability of the government to maintain firm control of the army and the police. The reason for such strict control was that Diem's regime reflected his ideas of how to run the country. According to Ralph Stavins, the CIA observed that:

> A facade of representative government is maintained, but the government is in fact essentially authoritarian. The legislative powers of the National Assembly are strictly circumscribed; the judiciary is undeveloped and subordinate to the executive; and the members of the executive branch are little more than the personal agents of Diem. No organized opposition, loyal or otherwise, is tolerated, and critics of the regime are often repressed . . . The exercise of power and responsibility is limited to Diem and a very small circle mainly composed of his relatives, the most important being Nhu and Can.[21]

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[19]Sheehan, Pentagon Papers, p. 22.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Stavins, Washington Plans An Aggressive War, p. 13.

Where the French had found a puppet in Bao Dai, the United States was propping up a man of their own, Ngo Diem. With tremendous sums of American aid pouring into his country, Diem was able to sustain his power in the South. Without such huge sums, the Pentagon analysis during this period felt that:

> Without the threat of U. S. intervention, South Vietnam could not have refused to even discuss the elections called for in 1956 under the Geneva settlement without being immediately overrun by the Vietminh armies. Without U. S. aid in the years following, the Diem regime certainly, and an independent South Vietnam almost as certainly, could not have survived . . . South Vietnam was essentially the creation of the United States.[22]

To help aid Diem in strengthening his armed forces and enable better intelligence estimates of the communists, the United States sent 350 military personnel to Saigon in May, 1956. It was a move the Pentagon Papers later called an "example of the U. S. ignoring"[23] the Geneva Accords because American forces were supposed to be restricted to 342, the number of the United States military personnel in Vietnam when the Accords went into effect. The new additions brought official United States troop strength to nearly 700.

The strength of Diem was at its height as government troops and state police gained momentum in trying to eliminate communists in the South. In an article entitled "The Struggle for Reunification of Vietnam," French writer, Phillippe Devillers wrote in China Quarterly:

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[22]Sheehan, Pentagon Papers, p. 25.

[23]Ibid., pp. 23-24.

> The Diem government launched out in 1957 into what amounted to a series of man-hunts . . . The organization of the police, which was already elaborate, was yet further strengthened . . . A considerable number of people were arrested in this way, and sent to concentration camps, or political reeducation camps, as they were euphemistically called, under conditions which, to be sure, reflected no credit on a state that proclaimed itself to be a respector of the human person. This repression was in theory aimed at the Communists. In fact it affected all those, and they were many--Democrats, Socialists, Liberals, adherents of the sects--who were bold enough to express their disagreement with the line of policy adopted by the ruling oligarchy . . .
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> In 1958 the situation grew worse. Round-ups of "dissidents" became more frequent and more brutal. The enemies . . . were difficult to apprehend. The areas where they took refuge . . . were not favorable for operations by government forces. Moreover, the way in which many of the operations were carried out very soon set the villagers against the regime . . . Diem never succeeded in winning the peasants and tenant farmers over to his side.[24]

By 1958, the Vietminh were known as the Viet Cong and entered into armed struggle in the South. From Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh set up the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam in September, 1960.

After six years in power, Diem had still not gained the support of the people to the extent where a common unity could begin to be established in an effort to fight the Viet Cong. The failure to liberalize the regime and allow a more tolerant attitude towards the Buddhists and other political partisons nearly brought his downfall in 1960.

In April, eighteen Vietnamese nobles petitioned Diem to liberalize his regime. In November, he barely survived a coup attempted by his elite paratroopers who were joined by thousands of civilians. Four hundred were killed in the uprising.

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[24]Phillippe Devillers, "The Struggle For Unification in Vietnam," China Quarterly, IX, January - March, 1962, pp. 2-23.

Diem's mistakes in ruling the South had now become magnified because of the attempted coup. When John F. Kennedy assumed office as the thirty-fifth president of the United States, he inherited a situation that would soon need attention. The Eisenhower Administration did not agree to the Geneva settlement and had hand-picked an anti-Communist who obviously was not able to rule the South effectively. By ignoring a prescribed timetable for elections intended to reunify the country, the United States had, in a series of calculated moves, decided to support a separate nation in South Vietnam.

As President Eisenhower was about to complete the first two years of his first administration, Walter Lippmann warned of the problems that could arise. When the French were still trying to exert control in Indochina, he was critical of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles' apparent eagerness to intervene militarily when the final battle of Dien Bien Phu was about to begin. He wrote:

> There is a notion in what might be described as highly irresponsible quarters that, while it would be better to have allies than not to have them, it would be feasible for the United States alone to take over the war in Indochina and win it. This is a most dangerous fantasy for men of power and influence to entertain.[25]

Long before other members of the press joined in the dissent of the United States involvement in Vietnam, Lippmann foresaw the problems of engaging in a land war on the mainland of Asia. The lessons of Korea where the Chinese seemed to have been able to

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[25]Iverch McDonald, "The Logic of Allied Unity," Marquis Childs and James Reston, eds., Walter Lippmann and His Times (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1959), p. 139.

supply an inexhaustible number of troops proved to Lippmann that a great deal of reevaluation was needed when there arose talk of defending a country which was not vital to United States interests. He wrote:

> I am astonished at the number of responsible men who want to use the Marines and the American paratroopers in Vietnam. In my view, they have let their pride, their frustration, and their impatience exaggerate fantastically the importance of this small peripheral country. I cannot imagine any course of action better calculated to lose the cold war than to become engaged in the jungles of Indochina.[26]

That article was written in 1961. Eleven years earlier he had warned the leaders in the United States that intervention would be senseless. The defense of the Truman Doctrine, originally applied to Greece in 1947, was being tested in Asia. The application of this policy, with Secretary of State Dean Acheson and then John Foster Dulles, implementing the doctrine of containing Communism in Asia was disastrous, Lippmann thought.

During the Cold War, Lippmann accepted as normal big-power dominion of certain geographical areas. While the United States had traditionally controlled the Western Hemisphere, so the Soviet Union controlled their satellite countries and tolerated no meddling from without. With Red China growing steadily in power, Lippmann felt that it would seek paramountcy on the Asian mainland. Southeast Asia would, in a matter of time, become part of its sphere of influence. He feared that the United States in its role as

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[26]"After the Rebellion," Today and Tomorrow, April 27, 1961.

protector of democracy as underlined in the Truman Doctrine, would be hopelessly entangled in the Far East. He wrote in 1950: "What could suit the Russians better than to have the only land army in Western Europe fighting guerillas in Indochina?"[27]

This question was raised in February, 1950, just four months before the United States was to commit itself to the defense of South Korea; and a full decade before American involvement in Southeast Asia.

In February of 1952, he again warned prophetically that getting bogged down in an attempt to aid the French in Vietnam was ridiculous. He wrote:

> There are some amateurs who think they can solve the Far Eastern Problem by a series of public commitments. They would like to announce what the Air Force will do, what the Navy will do, if Indochina is invaded by the Chinese, if it is supplied from China. Where they go wrong is in wishing to publish what is tantamount to a blueprint of horrors that would follow our intervention. It imprisons our diplomacy in the formula of "all or nothing," in a self-inflicted strait jacket where it can do nothing by the big threat because that--in their own second sober thoughts--is suicide.[28]

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[27]"Commenting on American Far Eastern Policy," Today and Tomorrow, February 14, 1950.

[28]"The Dangerous Amateurs," Today and Tomorrow, February 15, 1952.

CHAPTER III

THE YEARS BEFORE TOTAL ESCALATION, 1961-1963

KENNEDY AND VIETNAM

> The President faces a series of inglorious and rearguard actions. Here he can find the first answer to the famous question in his inaugural address of what we can do for our country. What we can do for our country is first of all give up being too proud to go through that truly agonizing reappraisal which is needed so that we can see the realities.[1]
>
> Walter Lippmann

John F. Kennedy did not form the policy of setting up on the periphery of Asia a semi-circle of American military clients. But by 1961 he was confronted with the breakdown of that policy, with the disorders, the dangers and the pains of having to pick up the pieces. It was an experience for which the leaders of this country had never prepared the American people. They had not been told by anyone in authority that there had been a radical change in the military situation and what the consequences of that change might be. They had not been told that the military situation which existed when John Foster Dulles established the policy of aiding an unpopular ruler was disintegrating.

In May, 1961, Walter Lippmann reviewed the problem that confronted President Kennedy and what it was beginning to mean to

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[1] "The Reappraisal," May 4, 1961.

the country. He wrote:

> Our moral and intellectual unpreparedness for the reality of things is causing widespread demoralization among us. We must not let ourselves be overcome by it. We can do that best by, I think, recognizing that our present experience in Asia is the equivalent of what the British and French are experiencing during the liquidation of their colonial empires. For what we are witnessing is the dissolution of the Dulles system of Asian protectorates.[2]

During the thirty-four months Kennedy was in office, the American troop strength in Vietnam rose to 16,000. When he had taken office in January, 1961, only 685 American military "advisors" were stationed in Vietnam.

The Pentagon Papers points out that "the limited risk gamble undertaken by Eisenhower had been transformed into an unlimited commitment under Kennedy."[3] The study concludes that this commitment gave priority to the military aspects of the war over political reforms in the Diem regime.

By the end of 1963, 489 Americans had been killed. Only fourteen were killed by the end of 1961.

According to the Pentagon Papers, Kennedy secretly ordered 500 Special Forces troops to Vietnam in the spring of 1961. The Pentagon study notes that this small expansion "signalled a willingness to go beyond the 685-man limit on the size of the United States (military) mission in Saigon, which if it were done openly, would be the first formal breach of the Geneva Agreements."[4]

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[2]"A Dying Policy," May 18, 1961.

[3]Sheehan, Pentagon Papers, p. 84.

[4]Ibid., p. 79.

During the Kennedy years the United States tried desparately to keep the Diem regime afloat as a legitimate anti-Communist government in the South. As the political troubles of Diem mounted, the United States commitment to South Vietnam in the form of military and economic aid increased in proportion.

As escalation continued to spiral, Lippmann began to write more frequently about the growing troubles the United States was having in supporting Diem as the legitimate ruler of South Vietnam. He felt Kennedy knew that South Vietnam could survive the war with the Viet Cong only if the government in Saigon reformed. Lippmann felt that Diem had to recapture the popular support by changes in policy and personnel. This amounted to telling Diem to disentangle himself from the clutches of his corrupt family. But Lippmann did not think President Kennedy believed this could be done and he criticized the president for a "wait and see" type stance. He wrote:

> Diem's power does not rest upon popularity and election but upon force, patronage, corruption, and intrigue. While their will to wage the guerilla war has never been strong, there is nothing to show that there is any decided change.
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> There is, it would seem, some confirmation for this view in the varying reports about the Administration's line of policy towards Diem and his family. At first it was that they must be made to go by withholding American aid until a junta of Army generals overthrew them. But on second thought, presumably as a result of reports from Saigon, the line was changed to one of living with Diem and trying to reform him by diplomacy. How long we ask ourselves might that be? It is hard to believe that the President really thinks that this will or can be done, or that he thinks that if it were done, South Vietnam could proceed to win the war.[5]

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[5]"The Nettle of Vietnam," September 3, 1963.

The political and social reforms promised publicly by Diem in an effort to keep American aid from ending never materialized. A coup was staged and Diem, along with his brother, was assassinated. The Pentagon study reveals that Kennedy knew and approved of the plans for the coup in 1963 and it states: "Our complicity in his overthrow heightened our responsibilities and our commitment" in Vietnam.[6]

From the time the Vietnam war erupted as a major news item in the United States during the Kennedy Administration, the American press, especially the national press, was united behind the policy of preventing a communist government from taking over in South Vietnam.

In the midst of this national press consensus on United States policy in Vietnam, Walter Lippmann continually dissented. His "Today and Tomorrow" columns consistently questioned American objectives in Southeast Asia. In a column entitled "Mr. Kennedy on Vietnam," Lippmann wrote:

> We can be sure that it is quite beyond the capacity of Diem's government, or of any other Saigon government to cut the supply lines to the North. Only the United States could do that, and then only if we were willing to pay the price. If we decided on a military solution, we should have to operate directly against North Vietnam. The price of a military victory in the Vietnamese War is higher than American interests can justify.[7]

Newsweek, in a cover story called: "The Little Man Who Stands Tall . . . In Vietnam," previously said that "if the United

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[6]Sheehan, Pentagon Papers, p. 158.

[7]"Mr. Kennedy on Vietnam," September 5, 1963.

States refuses to support men like Ngo Dinh Diem, patriotic men, who will fight and die to preserve their countries from Communism--these men will surely fall and their countries will be swallowed up."[8]

Unlike Lippmann, Newsweek supported the American presence in Vietnam, refusing to question the moral or legal right to be there. In addition to Newsweek, the New York Times concluded in an editorial during the spring of 1961 that:

> The free world must unceasingly protest against and oppose Communist subversive aggression as practiced most accutely in Southeast Asia. To accept it as a matter of course is to hand the Communists half a victory without a fight.[9]

While Lippmann's columns had reviewed the same information that the Times and Newsweek had been receiving, it was obvious that the columnist had analyzed the situation in Vietnam much more accurately than cover stories and editorials had sought to do. In an obvious attempt to prove the Times editorial presumptions false, Lippmann wrote:

> In South Vietnam, the government we brought into power still holds the cities but it has lost all control of the countryside to the Communist guerrillas. Why is our friend and client, Ngo Dinh Diem, losing this civil war? Citing Mao Tse-tung on guerilla warfare, it is known that they must have support from within--in this case the Viet Cong. Also the great majority of the people must be convinced that the guerillas will win.
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> Now the truth is that our man is extremely unpopular, his government being reactionary and corrupt. It follows that if we are going to build up a resistance to the Communists, we cannot do it by dropping in our paratroopers and expecting them to win a guerilla war. We shall have to reform the government which we support. For unless we can support a popular government, we are certain to lose in Vietnam.[10]

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[8]Newsweek, May 22, 1961, p. 41.

[9]New York Times, April 14, 1961, p. 6.

[10]"The Reappraisal," May 4, 1961.

In the midst of national press consensus on United States policy in Vietnam there was a dissenting voice. Lippmann did not understand why Kennedy was slowly escalating a war by tremendous amounts of money and equipment. He had believed the Kennedy Administration only sought to help the South Vietnamese win the war themselves, not with the help of a large American expeditionary force.

Questioning Kennedy on the course of such action Lippmann predicted the problems the United States would be sure to face:

> Until the country understands that the basic conception of our policy has to be changed, Mr. Kennedy will be a harried man. He will have a series of crises in which he has to be on the defensive and always trying to see how little he can lose. Moreover, the energies of this country and his energies will be dispersed, and the attention of the country and his attention will be distracted from the great tasks.[11]

Because Kennedy was still indecisive on what to do about the situation in Vietnam, he dispatched General Maxwell Taylor, his chief military adviser to study the situation and return with recommendations. In October of 1961, Taylor returned and advised Kennedy to decide among three courses of action: (1) massive United States intervention of up to three divisions, (2) limited intervention "for the purpose of establishing American presence in Vietnam," and (3) increased training and technical assistance to Vietnamese units.[12]

The visit by Taylor and his urgings for Kennedy to commit

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[11]"The Reappraisal," May 4, 1961.

[12]Sheehan, Pentagon Papers, pp. 99-111.

a military task force "capable of raising national morale and of showing the seriousness of the United States interest to resist a Communist takeover,"[13] marked the real beginning of increased American involvement in Vietnam.

After the Taylor mission, increased troop levels in Vietnam followed within several months. By the beginning of December, 1961, 948 American military men were stationed in South Vietnam. By the first week in January, 1962, 2,646 had arrived and by June of that year, the figure stood at 5,576.[14]

While Newsweek and the Times viewed the increasing escalation of the war as the only way to stop the onslaught of Communism, Walter Lippmann was taking a much closer look at the real reasons the Kennedy Administration was having difficulty coping with what seemed an unmanageable situation. He wrote:

> The revolution in South Vietnam is a warning that in Asia the policy of containment by American satellite states is breaking down. In South Vietnam the government has been our client, indeed they have been our creations. The government is crumbling and there is a simple reason. In relation to the rising popular feeling of independence and the rising popular expectations of material welfare, this American client state is not only corrupt but intolerably reactionary (author's emphasis). The fact that South Vietnam is under the protection of a foreign and non-Asian power is an additional liability.[15]

After the Taylor mission, the Times said in an editorial: "The battle is not yet lost in South Vietnam, and indeed it can still be won by the proper use of all resources, American and

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[13]Sheehan, Pentagon Papers, p. 103.

[14]Ibid., p. 110.

[15]"A Dying Policy," May 18, 1961.

Vietnamese."[16]

Newsweek was also uncritical of the Taylor mission. Two issues, one at the end of October and the other at the end of November, agreed with government policy, saying "Taylor may not be the last American to peer through a sight at the Communists,"[17] and that President Kennedy was "trying to avoid the commitment of U. S. troops but that this self-limitation was not necessarily permanent."[18]

It was obvious Newsweek and the Times supported American intervention and blamed the war on aggression from North Vietnam instead of rebellion against the Diem government. Meanwhile, Walter Lippmann's early warnings, dating as far back as 1950 continued to be unheeded. An excellent example of how blindly the members of the national press reviewed the situation in Vietnam is Kenneth Crawford's analysis for Newsweek. He wrote:

> Whatever Diem's shortcomings, confidence in his ability to hold out against Hanoi is growing. His well-wishers, whatever the feeling about the President and his family, see no preferable alternative.[19]

Even though it was true Hanoi was supplying the Viet Cong with armaments, the national press had completely lost sight of the real reason a war was taking place in South Vietnam. The point of view of the press in the United States was that the

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[16]New York Times, October 12, 1961, p. 28.

[17]Newsweek, October 30, 1961, p. 33.

[18]Ibid., November 27, 1961, p. 40.

[19]Ibid., December 10, 1962, p. 41.

fighting going on was simply a subversive campaign directed by Hanoi. It left out accounts that the insurrection in the South existed before the communists decided to take part and that from a grassroots level a civil war began because the people were literally driven by Diem to take up arms in self-defense.

While Lippmann was calling for an end to American participation in the war, the New York Times was claiming editorially that the "root cause" of the conflict was the subversive activities by the Communist North Vietnam regime against the South, which violated the Geneva Accords of 1954.[20]

On April 17, the Times editorial said the United States was "exercising its legitimate right to assist a government and people that are the objects of a deliberate attempt at Communist conquest, an attempt inspired, directed, and regularly reinforced by North Vietnam. The South is defending itself against the North's campaign of subversion and aggression.[21]

In the Fall of 1962, the Times said: "There is no end in sight to the war. Our moral commitment is already unlimited; our physical commitment is certain to increase."[22]

Throughout this period no attempt was made by Newsweek or the New York Times to acknowledge or dispute what Walter Lippmann, one of the most astute political commentators in Washington journalism, was saying. He was simply ignored.

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[20] New York Times, April 17, 1962, p. 38.

[21] Ibid.

[22] New York Times, October 17, 1962, p. 38.

On November 1, 1963, Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu were killed trying to leave the country in the wake of a coup. Three weeks before the coup, United States Ambassador to South Vietnam Henry Cabot Lodge wrote:

> We are launched on a course from which there is no turning back; the overthrow of the Diem government. There is no turning back because there is no possibility, in my view, that the war can be won under a Diem administration.[23]

Twenty-one days later, Kennedy was shot while riding in a motorcade in the streets of Dallas, Texas. Lyndon Johnson now had to decide if he was going to follow the same course Kennedy had set or widen it to a degree where there was little doubt about making South Vietnam the crucial place where the United States felt it could stop the spread of Communism in Southeast Asia.

Johnson sent Secretary of Defense Robert Mc Namara to South Vietnam in December of 1963 to find out what the situation was now that Diem was gone. Returning from Saigon, Mc Namara said: "The situation is very disturbing. Current trends, unless reversed in the next two or three months, would lead to a neutralization at best and more likely to a Communist-controlled state."[24] With this assessment by Mc Namara, the new president indicated that he would follow the policy of Kennedy by helping "South Vietnam win the fight of externally directed and supported Communist conspiracy." "The war," he said, "would be over by 1965."[25]

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[23]Sheehan, Pentagon Papers, p. 197.

[24]Ibid., p. 190.

[25]Ibid., p. 191.

Still, it was a statement radically different from the one President Kennedy said after reviewing the collapse of the Diem regime. Despite the increased military troops and economic aid Kennedy realized that eventually South Vietnam could not be totally dependent on the United States. He said:

> 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 there as advisers, but they have to win it, the people of Vietnam.[26]

It is not certain, and has yet to be proven, if Kennedy's reevaluation of what business the United States had in Vietnam was an outgrowth of what Lippmann's articles had been saying from 1961 through 1963. However, it is doubtful that Kennedy himself had ignored Lippmann's criticisms. That Kennedy acknowledged, finally, "it is their war," perhaps shows more insight than what the New York Times and Newsweek had been trying to tell the American public.

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[26]"Walter Lippmann on Limited War and Unlimited Aims," Newsweek, January 16, 1967, p. 16.

CHAPTER IV

THE JOHNSON YEARS: GREAT SOCIETY AND TOTAL ESCALATION

> The crucial struggle of the war is now being fought in the breast of Lyndon Johnson. Lyndon Johnson is a complicated man. There are at least two spirits wrestling within him. One is that of a peacemaker and reformer of a better world. The other is that of the primitive frontiersman who wants to nail the coonskin to the wall, who wants to be the biggest, the best, the first, a worshiper of what William James called the bitch goddess, success.[1]

When the fortunes of fate suddenly placed him in the White House, Lyndon Johnson intended to be known in history as a great president. Relying on his own legislative experience as a former Majority Leader in the Senate, Johnson soon began to operate in the style to which he was accustomed. He pressured, persuaded, and cajoled congressmen. Whichever technique suited the occasion was utilized to secure enactment of a huge backlog of bills worked out previously by Kennedy. Before the 1964 elections, countless measures were brought before him for presidential signature.

In less than a year since taking office, Congress enacted a Civil Rights Act, a foreign aid appropriation, a Housing Act, extended the National Defense Education Act, the Economic

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[1]"Walter Lippmann on The Temptation of Lyndon Johnson," February 27, 1967, p. 21.

Opportunity Act (the antipoverty act) and funds for the "impacted areas" (money for urban schools). Because of his impressive record in so short a time, Democrats were elated at their prospects of electing Johnson to a full four-year term in 1964.

While passing legislative bills, President Johnson was trying to put the uneasy questions about the Vietnam war in the background. According to journalist David Halberstam who served as a New York Times correspondent in Vietnam, Johnson wanted to neutralize the war issue in the United States and, thus, keep it away from the Republicans, particularly Senator Barry Goldwater, the Republican presidential hopeful from Arizona, who was urging escalation.[2]

Regarding foreign policy, the Arizonian opposed any action that might be considered being "soft" on Communism. Using emotional appeals to morality and red blooded Americanism, he spoke of achieving "total victory" over Communism everywhere in the world. By calling the Soviet Union and Red China our "sworn enemies," and promising to eradicate the Communist challenge in Europe and Asia, his rhetoric made it appear he was ready to mount a full-scale war against the enemies of democracy.[3]

To Barry Goldwater, Walter Lippmann was a "radical columnist" and a "long time leftist."[4] While Goldwater was running for

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[2]David Halberstam, The Best and the Brightest (New York: Random House, 1972), pp. 401-405.

[3]Edward L. Schapsmeir, Walter Lippmann-Philosopher-Journalist (Washington, D. C.: Public Affairs Press, 1969), p. 145.

[4]Ibid., p. 147.

president, Lippmann received more abusive attacks than he had ever experienced during his long career as a political columnist.

In rebuttal, Lippmann wrote that, "if Goldwaterism were practiced in foreign affairs the country would be in the crazy position of risking a very great war while it was disorganizing itself at home."[5] Lippmann went on:

> The G.O.P. presidential candidate's foreign policy ideas based on a naive assumption that the United States must be obeyed by all the rest of the world. What a cruel fallacy. He gives the voice to the unreason of a dreamer: the illusion of Superman that all opponents can be commanded to disappear.[6]

Because Goldwater took such an extreme position on foreign policy, Johnson did little to comment on problems abroad, other than to allege his opponent was "trigger-happy."[7] Although Johnson was not able to completely silence the questions on the war, he stood out as the more rational candidate because of Goldwater's extremism. Commenting on the image Goldwater projected to the public, historian Edward L. Schapsmeir wrote:

> Goldwater had the image of a Western he-man with six guns and atomic bombs looking for villains. Because of this matters of international relations were hardly mentioned by the Democrats. America's future role in Vietnam, for instance, was not given the serious debate it deserved. Walter Lippmann decried this state of affairs, but he asked seriously: "How could these unsettled problems be debated with a man who starts out with the dogmatic prejudice that all who call themselves Communists from Yugoslavia to North Vietnam are identical and should be treated with the same implacable hostility.[8]

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[5]Schapsmeir, Walter Lippmann--Philosopher-Journalist, p. 145.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid., p. 149.

[8]Ibid., p. 148.

At the San Francisco Cow Palace the Republicans nominated Barry Goldwater. The crowd of delegates at the convention went wild with delirium when Goldwater, in his acceptance speech, uttered the defiant words, "Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice." This convention, resembling a congregation of true believers, wanted to wage a campaign against what they deemed to be corrupting influences in American life and Goldwater was their prophet. During one frenzied outburst against the press, a delegate from North Dakota was heard to shout: "Down with Walter Lippmann! Down with Walter Lippmann!"[9]

Because of the ill conceived programs concerning America's foreign policy role, Lippmann endorsed Lyndon Johnson as the candidate most likely to win the allegiance of a "vast majority of prudent men."[10]

Lyndon Johnson sought and won a massive mandate on the basis of his short but impressive record and the weakness of his opposition. Having acquired the presidency in his own right, he sought an appellative term to distinguish his administration from his predecessor's "New Frontier." The President considered Lippmann as a friend who had counseled him when he first assumed office and he made use of a phrase popularized by the columnist. In his writings concerning the changes within the United States during the past fifty years, Lippmann wrote of the United States becoming a "Great

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[9]Schapsmeir, Walter Lippmann--Philosopher-Journalist, p. 145.

[10]Ibid., p. 147

Society." Lippmann acquired this term from Graham Wallas, the socialist economics professor teaching at Harvard during the early 1900's. To Lippmann, the "Great Society" meant the complex urban-industrial way of life which had evolved because of vast technological changes.[11] To Lyndon Johnson, this expression was an excellent replacement for "New Frontier" because it adequately reflected the focus of domestic reforms he had in mind. In a letter to historian Edward Schapsmeir, presidential assistant Bill Moyers explained how the "Great Society" was formulated. He said:

> Several members of the President's staff participated in the many deliberations which led to crystallization of the Great Society concept. The ideas of Walter Lippmann were among many that influenced the staff.
>
> This is not to say that Lippmann's writings gave birth to the Great Society. They did not. It is much more the product of the President's long experience in public service and his thinking about government.
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> The ideas and thoughts of many men were considered in defining the whole concept. Mr. Lippmann was one of them.[12]

Writing for Newsweek, Lippmann lauded Johnson's intentions of dealing with domestic problems. He wrote:

> The Great Society, as President Johnson is using the words, is much more than a mere collection of necessary or desirable programs making life more livable in this country. It is an attempt to open a new chapter in the annals of popular government.[13]

Lippmann felt Johnson's programs rested on "the two pillars of controlled affluence and of political consensus. "Further,"

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[11]Schapsmeir, Walter Lippmann--Philosopher-Journalist, p. 145.

[12]Ibid.

[13]"Walter Lippmann on The Great Society," Newsweek, January 19, 1965, p. 27.

he said, "if the conception were to fail, it would not be because the conception is false. It would be because of some external cause--probably because we had become diverted by some entanglement in another continent."[14]

Asia was the war Lippmann had in mind. Both Eisenhower and Kennedy had involved the United States in Vietnam, but only in a limited manner. He warned the Johnson Administration not to follow the same suit as the two presidents before him. Lippmann correctly identified the problems Johnson would soon be facing if the war was escalated. The situation, as Lippmann reviewed it, was the conflict between the unfinished business of making democracy work well in the United States and the unfinished business of adjusting foreign commitments.

President Johnson did not decrease American involvement in Asia, nor did he even stabilize it. Upon the recommendation of Secretary of Defense Robert Mc Namara, Johnson ordered the United States military to begin, as the Pentagon Papers called it, Operation 34A. On February 1, 1964, an elaborate program of covert military operations began against North Vietnam.[15] According to the Pentagon, these clandestine operations were conducted while the Johnson Administration was planning to secure a congressional resolution that it could use as a declaration of war. The Joint Chiefs of Staff at this time were urging the President to

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[14] Newsweek, January 19, 1965, p. 27.

[15] Sheehan, Pentagon Papers, p. 235.

escalate by bombing key targets in North Vietnam, committing ground troops, and using United States forces as necessary in direct actions against North Vietnam. While military advisors were telling Johnson to focus the war effort on North Vietnam, intelligence reports stated this assumption was false. The Pentagon Papers confirmed what Lippmann had been saying previously. The problem was a revolutionary and social uprising against the dictators in the South who were being aided by North Vietnam. The Pentagon Papers stated:

> During this time, intelligence analysis stated that the "primary" sources of Communist strength in South Vietnam are "indigenous," arising out of the revolutionary social aims of the Communists and their identification with the nationalist cause during the independence struggle against France in the nineteen fifties.[16]

On March 20, Johnson sent a secret cable to Ambassador Lodge advising him of what plans were being considered. Johnson stated, "Our planning for action against the North is on a contingency basis at present, and immediate problem in this area is to develop the strongest possible military base for later action."[17]

Also underway during this time was an attempt to obtain, when the appropriate time came, a congressional resolution whose purpose, according to the Pentagon, "was to dramatize and make clear to other nations the firm resolve of the United States government to support the President in taking whatever action was necessary to resist Communist aggression in Southeast Asia."

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[16]Sheehan, Pentagon Papers, p. 235.

[17]Ibid.

This planning resulted in the Southeast Asia Resolution, commonly known as the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which was passed by Congress in August, 1964, and gave the President what he saw as a "declaration of war."[18]

President Johnson signed the Southeast Asia Resolution into law on August 10, 1964. He had gotten what he desired from Congress, permission to attack North Vietnam whenever it was deemed necessary, but he also faced the task of repairing his image.

The attack in the Gulf of Tonkin had alarmed the country and had somewhat tarnished the image of Johnson as a man of peace who would keep the United States out of a massive land war in Southeast Asia. Johnson's sudden nationwide broadcast of the Gulf of Tonkin incident, his ordering instant retaliatory air strikes against North Vietnamese bases, and his stern message to Congress asking for passing of the resolution contributed in some quarters of the country to arousing a sense of unease--vague feelings that perhaps the war was, in fact, being escalated.

In his campaign against Goldwater, Johnson had sought to lay to rest these fears and to dispel decisively the notion that the only choice the voters had was between a "trigger-happy Arizonian and a trigger-happy Texan."

Before the Democratic party workers of Indiana and Kentucky on October 9, 1964, in Louisville, Kentucky, Johnson said:

> We are trying as best we can not to enlarge that war, not to get the United States tied down in a land war in Asia, and

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[18]Sheehan, Pentagon Papers, p. 235.

> not for American boys starting to do the fighting that Asian boys ought to be doing to protect themselves.

Twelve days later he said on October 21: "We are not about to send American boys nine or ten thousand miles away from home to do what Asian boys ought to be doing."[19]

Lippmann criticized the Tonkin Resolution because the war policy over Vietnam was still not clear to the American people. The circumstances that dictated such a major step as retaliatory bombing did not make sense to Lippmann since no definition of the circumstances which surrounded the bombing were made clear. He said that the Administration had let itself be chivied into making public declarations about our willingness and readiness to fight a war in hypothetical and undefined circumstances.

Hence, when North Vietnamese artillery and PT boats attacked United States naval destroyers in the Tonkin Gulf allegedly without provocation, Lippmann's opposition to escalation increased dramatically. What previously had been stern warnings to avoid escalation now became harsh criticism. Lippmann felt the policy of increased escalation should be reversed promptly. Gradual withdrawment would create a favorable climate for a Vietnamese settlement of their own internal problem, he felt. It was "possible to postpone and then to avoid a mortal confrontation with Red China," he predicted, "if the United States used prudence by recognizing that nation's

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[19]Sheehan, Pentagon Papers, p. 235.

predominant position on the mainland."[20] Lippmann felt the United States main role in Asia should be to "negotiate a settlement which releases us from the trap and frees us, as the paramount power on the sea and in the air, to work toward a general settlement in Asia."

To back up his argument that seeking negotiations were the only way for the United States to disengage itself, Lippmann wrote:

> The only way to defeat the guerilla is to put much larger numbers of men on the ground, in the jungles, in the swamps, and on the plains and in the mountains. As against Africans and Asians, white men should know they cannot win such wars. The experience of the British in Malaysia, of the French, the Belgians, and the Dutch, is that guerilla warfare in Africa and Asia can have no victorious military solution.[21]

In order to counter the proposals by members of the Johnson Administration, particularly Mc Namara and Secretary of State Dean Rusk, that bombing North Vietnam would bring a quick settlement, Lippmann ridiculed such an idea as foolish. He felt that amidst the continuing disappointment and frustration of the war, supporters of bombing were blind to the situation. On December 22, 1964, in a review of the United States policy for the past year, Lippmann countered the proponents of bombing and tried to show, once again, why negotiations were the only solution to ending United States involvement. He wrote:

> There are some who want to change the character of our intervention. They want us--presumably Congress--to make

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[20]Schapsmeir, Walter Lippmann--Philosopher-Journalist, p. 150.

[21]"The Policy in Asia," August 20, 1964.

> the operation in Southeast Asia "our war" and to use the bombers to attack North Vietnam. The significant point in the program of the war party is that they want the war to be waged by American airplanes up in the sky and not by American infantry down in the mud and in the jungle. This is significant because it shows the pretention that there is a cheap way to win a war on the mainland of Asia. There is no use fooling the American people into thinking that a war for villages in the jungles and the swamps can be a clean war in the open skies.
>
> We ought to try for something better than that. If there is anything better to be done, it will not be done by shifting generals in South Vietnam or with the bombers. It will be done as part of some much larger and more elaborate diplomatic proposal and action--at an Asian settlement from the Mekong to the Yalu.[22]

In 1964, the national press saw the war in much different terms than Walter Lippmann. As in the Kennedy Administration, national press publications still viewed the war as a confrontation between the "Communist bloc" and the "free world." All agreed the United States would have to play the major role in the fight. Only then they felt, could Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam save themselves from being swamped by the Communist tide.[23]

Completely different evaluations of the war and what the American people supposedly "felt" were published by the New York Times, disregarding what Lippmann had been writing.

What Lippmann had said concerning the belief Americans were not in favor of a wide-open war differed remarkably from what the New York Times gauged public opinion to be. The Times, in a May 24 editorial, proposed this solution for the war and what the

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[22]"On Vietnam," December 22, 1964.

[23]New York Times, March 22, 1964, p. 8.

sentiments of the American people were:

> Our task right now is to convince the Communists that they, no more than we, are going to attain a victory. It may well be that to teach this lesson a further substantial investment of American forces in this area will be needed. We believe the people of the United States are prepared to accept such additional sacrifices for clearly defined, limited political objectives.[24]

The "clearly defined, limited political objectives" were not given. The editorial failed to even explain what was meant by that phrase. For the past year Walter Lippmann had been pressing for "clearly defined objectives" from people within the Johnson Administration but to no avail. If the Times had the answer, it clearly was not making it public. While Americans celebrated their nation's independence, the Times editorial that day reiterated the position of the previous editorial by explaining that "we should not, perhaps, give up our option to punish North Vietnam, the direct aggressor, if this becomes unavoidable."[25]

Less than a week before the Gulf of Tonkin incident, the Times praised the Johnson Administration for its "genuine effort" in fascilitating news coverage of the war. This was during the same period of Operation 34A, the covert clandestine war plans, when bombing proposals were being secretly prepared by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and drafting of a congressional resolution to expand Presidential power to declare war were in progress.

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[24] New York Times, May 24, 1964, p. 10.

[25] Ibid., July 4, 1964, p. 21.

According to the Times, "the Johnson Administration was moving decisively to provide the American people with accurate information about the course of the war and its aims."[26] Any information given only espoused the official government line.

Newsweek's position was similar to the Times': The United States needed to remain in South Vietnam and do whatever was necessary to insure the survival of the Saigon regime against the Communists. No mention was made of the fact that the present regime was as corrupt and dictatorial as the Diem government when the magazine came out with a cover story about North Vietnam. Entitled "Face of the Enemy," Newsweek, like the Times editorials, expressed concern over the small Asian countries bordering South Vietnam and their immenent collapse if the United States withdrew from the area. Advancing Secretary Dean Rusk's views about the "domino theory" the magazine stated: "If the Khanh government in Saigon weakens or falls, not only South Vietnam but all of the Southeast Asia would be open to piecemeal absorption by the Communists."[27] The magazine was also uncritical of future escalation by the United States saying: "It will not shrink from escalating the war if it proves necessary to stem the Communist advances in Southeast Asia."[28]

The support of Newsweek and the New York Times of

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[26] New York Times, July 20, 1964, p. 32.

[27] Newsweek, June 8, 1964, p. 27.

[28] Ibid., p. 34.

Johnson's war policy ended after the President was inaugurated and full-scale bombing raids began and coups and counter-coups continually toppled Saigon's government.

During the presidential campaign of 1964, the Johnson Administration had reached a consensus to bomb North Vietnam although the policy would not be put into operation before February, 1965. According to the Pentagon, the administration reached a "general consensus" at a White House strategy meeting on September 7, one month after the Congress had passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. The bombing, under the recommendations of General Maxwell Taylor, the new U. S. Ambassador to South Vietnam, "was to be a carefully orchestrated attack to boost the faltering Saigon government."[29]

Apparently Johnson's campaign pledge of "Asian boys for Asian wars" was a sham. It was obviously campaign rhetoric to persuade the electorate that the Tonkin Resolution was not a vehicle by which the war would be escalated.

Disregarding Lippmann's predictions about what consequences the United States would face if bombing began, the President and his advisors agreed with General Taylor's proposal. The President was in the midst of a campaign in which he was presenting himself as the candidate of reason and restraint as opposed to Barry Goldwater, the "trigger-happy anti-Communist." One year later,

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[29]Sheehan, Pentagon Papers, p. 307.

Johnson would be following the policy Goldwater espoused. Other considerations for withholding the raids included " . . . a desire to hold the line militarily and diplomatically in Laos; the need to design whatever actions were taken so far as to achieve maximum public and congressional support; and the belief that the bombing might bring a call for premature negotiations before North Vietnam was 'hurting'."[30]

On February 13, 1965, a month after his inauguration, President Johnson gave permission for "Operation Rolling Thunder" to begin. It was the government's code word for the sustained bombing campaign of North Vietnam after the city of Pleiku in the highlands of South Vietnam was attacked.

Now, for the first time since the United States began its long involvement, did the American press in general begin to sound an alarm that further escalation was wrong. While staunchly backing the President's policies before and after the Gulf of Tonkin incident, the bombing campaign precipitated an outcry that had been predicted years before by Walter Lippmann. Almost every news report from South Vietnam confirmed Lippmann's contention that a bombing campaign would end any hope of negotiation and that the bombing would never be able to successfully keep a regime of South Vietnamese generals in power.

Beginning with the Kennedy Administration, the New York Times had always believed North Vietnam, not the Viet Cong, had been the

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[30]Sheehan, Pentagon Papers, pp. 349-352.

reason for the prolonged war. In an editorial on February 14, 1965, the paper finally acknowledged that "an infinity of social, political, economic, religious, tribal, nationalistic, historic, and traditional factors are at work in Vietnam. This country can best demonstrate its wisdom and responsibility by trying patience, diplomacy, and negotiation. History, good intentions, and a concatenation of events have led the United States into a morass we sink deeper in every day."[31]

And, on February 19, the Times editorial ended with a warning to President Johnson and the credibility of his campaign pledges of not "seeking a wider war" by saying: "The American people made it overwhelmingly clear in the last election that they do not want to plunge recklessly down that road of escalation."[32]

Newsweek in a concise but bitter statement stated on February 20: "The simple disturbing fact is that in South Vietnam the United States is committed to defending a country which, so far at least, has shown lamentably little effective interest in defending itself."[33] Newsweek finally recognized what Lippmann had been saying in 1961: In the twenty years since the end of World War II, a succession of United States administrations had failed to clearly articulate the nation's long-term interest in Asia.

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[31]New York Times, February 14, 1965, p. 8.

[32]Ibid., February 19, 1965, p. 34.

[33]Newsweek, February 20, 1965, p. 20.

Everything Walter Lippmann had been saying from the Kennedy years to and through Johnson's first full year as President began to be repeated by the rest of the print media. A representative sampling of the nation's editorials proved this. The Washington Post said: "What we are up against is a hard and protracted struggle that may have to be waged for decades if it desires to contain Chinese power and influence in Asia."[34] The reliably conservative Chicago Tribune said: "The Administration seems to have got so scared of its own mythology of 'escalation' . . . that it can't make up its mind to fight to win."[35] The Milwaukee Times noted: "Only one paramount fact is sharply clear--we are in trouble in Vietnam and the danger of being forced into a major struggle is great. The honorable way out and only way out consistant with our national interest in an area so remote from our shores--is negotiation."[36] The Kansas City Star sharply lambasted the Johnson Administration for an unclear policy on the war by saying: "We believe the American people are entitled to a clearer and fuller explanation of the Administration's position. We can easily see why Americans are confused as well as troubled. Do we have a specific, unwavering policy or are we improvising from crisis to crisis."[37]

Always succinct and to the point, Lippmann commented on

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[34] Newsweek, February 20, 1965, p. 20.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

the obvious failure of the Johnson policy. Seeing it as more than a wider step, Lippmann viewed the bombing from the perspective that the United States was doomed to a war that perhaps now could never be ended by negotiations. Five days after the bombing began, Lippmann wrote:

> We, for our part, have found ourselves quite unable to put together a South Vietnamese government which is willing or able to rally enough popular support to hold back the Viet Cong. The American army fighting the Viet Cong has been like men trying to drive away a swarm of mosquitoes with baseball bats. We do not wish to face the disagreeable fact that the rebels are winning the civil war.
>
> The easy way to avoid the truth is to persuade ourselves that this is really not a civil war but is in fact essentially an invasion of North Vietnam against South Vietnam. This has produced the argument that the way to stabilize South Vietnam is to wage war against North Vietnam. This North Vietnamese army, larger than any other army on the east Asian mainland except China's, can walk. Nobody has yet found a way of bombing that can prevent foot soldiers from walking.[38]

At the end of his article, Lippmann for the first time questioned if the present policy had any chance whatsoever of bringing North Vietnam to the peace table. He wrote:

> For this country to involve itself in such a war is an act of supreme folly. While the warhawks would rejoice, the people would weep before it ended. There is no tolerable alternative except a negotiated truce, and the real problem is not whether we should negotiate but whether we can (author's emphasis).[39]

Lippmann's criticism of the war was always based on historical perspective. Learning from past policies, he reasoned, should have enabled the United States to use better judgement when key foreign policy decisions had to be made. The hard questions of

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[38]"The Vietnam Debate," February 18, 1965.

[39]Ibid.

involvement in a war that could not be won deeply bothered Lippmann because the leaders now in power had not learned from the past. Using examples of foreign policy decisions made by past presidents, enabled him to prove his point about the mistaken judgements the Johnson Administration was making. On February 23, 1965, Lippmann gave historical perspective to our involvement in Vietnam. The debate of globalism and isolationism was revived. Among the points Lippmann sought to make clear was whether Vietnam was of vital interest in the worldly affairs of the United States. To him, the Johnson Administration viewed the issue of foreign policy in Vietnam as whether the security of the United States depended on an unlimited engagement of our military power in Vietnam. Rather, Lippmann felt that United States foreign policy in Vietnam was hampered by past doctrines. He wrote:

> The problem of our foreign policy today will not be fully understood until historians explain how our intervention in the second World War to defeat the Nazis and Japanese became inflated into the so-called Truman Doctrine of the late 1940's, in which the United States said it was committing itself to a global ideological struggle against revolutionary communism.[40]

Lippmann said the United States was being swayed by proponents of ideological globalism who warned that a return to isolationism would bring the downfall of the United States as a world power. To prove that this policy of "ideological globalism" was not warranted, Lippmann provided examples of President Eisenhower realizing that certain events in other countries could not be changed by letting the United States become involved. To Lippmann

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[40]"Vietnam Foreign Policy," February 23, 1965.

this proved there was a stopping point between globalism and isolationism. In his view, the test of a true statesman was to find those stopping points and to act accordingly. He wrote:

> As an example, take the insurrection in Hungary in 1956. There was every ideological reason why the United States should have intervened. But President Eisenhower did not intervene because the price of intervention, which could have been the Third World War, stayed our hand.
>
> For another reason, take Berlin. There was an uprising in 1953, and on ideological grounds alone we should have supported the insurrection and even incited it. On the contrary, we did what we could to damp it down, not wishing to trigger a World War by a pitched battle in Berlin.[41]

With historical hindsight carefully set down Lippmann then went on to use that criteria to explain why proponents of "ideological globalism" were wrong in considering Vietnam a major key to the defense of the United States as a world power. In addition, he wrote why they failed to see a "stopping point" between globalism and isolationism. He said:

> It is this "global commitment" which is at the root of our difficulty in appraising cooly the extent and the importance of our engagement in Vietnam. Thus there are men saying today that the defense of Saigon is the defense of Hawaii, and that a truce rather than a "victory" in Indochina will determine the fate of the world and the position of the United States as a great power (author's emphasis). For those who think this way, there is no stopping point between globalism and a retreat into our former isolationism.
>
> For my part I admire the public men who play it cool and do not bend their judgement to the exhortations of the globalists.[42]

By now Lippmann's opposition to the war was almost an obsession. Eventually it led to a bitter and public feud between President Johnson and the political commenter.

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[41]"Vietnam Foreign Policy," February 23, 1965.

[42]Ibid.

During a television interview with the CBS network in early 1965, a continuation of his annual network appearances, Lippmann talked much about the situation in Vietnam. Lippmann, by then, had refused to acknowledge the premise that a military victory was at all possible. He felt the most that could be expected or hoped for "was a political truce in the civil war for a period of time--some years--so that they (North and South Vietnam) could adjust themselves to each other." By designating the fighting as a civil war he was labeling it an internal dispute. Hence, it was an affair that had to be settled by the Vietnamese people themselves and not by the United States. Lippmann concluded the television broadcast with a congeries of reasons why America should extricate itself from Vietnam:

> We are not the policemen of mankind (author's emphasis). We are not able to run the world, and we shouldn't pretend that we can. Let us tend to our own business which is great enough as it is.
>
> It's very great. We have neglected our own affairs. Our education is inadequate, our cities are badly built, our social arrangements are unsatisfactory. We can't wait another generation.
>
> Unless we surmount this crisis, all of these plans of the Great Society here at home . . . will all be put on the shelf because war interrupts things like that.[43]

Walter Lippmann was a special kind of journalist. He was not so much interested in facts or dates but in ideas and scopes. During this period he, perhaps more than any other journalist during that time, illuminated for the American people the implications of having their government pour billions of dollars into the war

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[43]"CBS Reports 1965," transcript of broadcast, Columbia Broadcasting System, New York.

effort. He described the problems of American society and the consequences of the war by writing:

> Our unfinished domestic business consists of the problems which have accumulated during this half-century of wars. Never for more than brief periods during this time have the American people been free to fix their minds on their own problems. They have had to fight wars and prepare for wars. The consequences of all this neglect are the violence and the bitterness, the squalor and the crime, which trouble our domestic peace.
>
> The Johnson Administration will not be allowed to devote itself to the Great Society here at home unless it develops a foreign policy which faces lucidly and deals constructively with the pressing problems of overextended commitments of the United States. To develop such a policy will require as high a degree of intellectual and moral courage at home as the physical courage we expect of the soldiers who risk everything abroad.[44]

Lyndon Johnson had not reckoned with Lippmann's staunch opposition to his foreign policy. To regain the columnist's support, which was considered essential for retention of the intellectual community's loyalty, Johnson requested his assistance in drafting a speech. The President's address, to be given at John's Hopkins University, was intended to be a major policy statement on Vietnam. According to historian Edward L. Schapsmeir, Lippmann collaborated with the President and his aides for an entire day. "While so engaged Lippmann made a determined effort to persuade Johnson of the need to seek a negotiated peace,"[45] Schapsmeir wrote. The author continued, saying: "Verbal assurances made to him by Johnson indicated the forthcoming address would

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[44]"Johnson at Home and Abroad," March 4, 1965.

[45]Schapsmeir, Walter Lippmann--Philosopher-Journalist, p. 156.

would announce American willingness to start peace talks."[46]

In the speech delivered on April 7, 1965, Lyndon Johnson seemingly echoed many of the columnist's sentiments. Straightforwardly the President said: "We must deal with the world as it is, if it is ever to be as we think."[47] Indicating, seemingly, a desire to deescalate the level of warfare, Johnson asserted: "We will use our power with restraint and all the wisdom we can command."[48] He called for a solution to the conflict without resorting to "bombs and bullets." Negotiations rather than the pursuit of an "endless course of battle" was suggested. While it appeared Johnson had offered an olive branch to North Vietnam, Johnson began to staunchly defend United States intervention. "We are there," he said, "because there are also great stakes in the balance." This put the American intrusion in Asia on the basis of preserving the balance of power in favor of the non-Communist nations. A mixture of friendly overtures and defiant overtures to North Vietnam concluded his remarks: "We do not want to bury anyone . . . but we do not intend to be buried."[49]

Now, for the first time since taking office, Johnson offered to engage in discussions with Hanoi without reserving the

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[46]Schapsmeir, Walter Lippmann--Philosopher-Journalist, p. 156.

[47]Text of President Johnson's address at Johns Hopkins University, April 7, 1965, in Manfred Jones, ed., American Foreign Relations in the Twentieth Century (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1967), pp. 173-178.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Ibid.

right to refuse discussions unless certain conditions (which were not specifically stated) were met first. Although this opened the door for discussions, Lippmann still felt there was little reason to expect a diplomatic settlement in the near future. The outcome of the war was being determined by the course of the war itself and there was no disposition on either side to avoid a military showdown.

Secretary of State Dean Rusk confirmed Lippmann's belief that the Johnson Administration had not really changed policy with the limited and shallow gestures of peace given to Hanoi. On June 23, 1965, in an address before the American Foreign Services Association, Rusk announced without reservation that North Vietnamese leaders had turned their backs on the President's peace offers. Clearly, the "root of the trouble," as he viewed it was the continuance of a "cruel and sustained attack by North Vietnam upon the people of South Vietnam." Rusk acted for all intent and purposes as if he were withdrawing from the record any peace overture President Johnson may have made at Baltimore. Taking a hawkish stance, he laid down stiff conditions for ending the war. Included were an "end to aggression; the removal of foreign military forces; and "effective guarantees for the independence and freedom of the people of South Vietnam."[50] Prerequisites such as these presumed military victory--not diplomatic compromise.

President Johnson's foreign policy statement made at Johns

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[50]Dean Rusk, "Vietnam: Four Steps to Peace," June Department of State Pamphlet, June 23, 1965.

Hopkins now seemed a gesture to pacify the doves rather than an invitation to start bona fide peace negotiations. His press conference on July 28, 1965, confirmed the fact that he still felt the United States was justified in fighting in South Vietnam. Johnson told newsmen, "We have learned at a terrible and brutal cost that retreat does not bring safety and weakness does not mean peace."[51] Red China and North Vietnam were to blame for the war. Their goal, Johnson insisted, was to "defeat American power and to extend the Asiatic dominion of Communism." The American position seemed to him both honorable and clear: "We did not choose to be guardians at the gate, but there is no one else. Nor would surrender in Vietnam bring peace because we learned from Hitler at Munich that success only feeds the appetite of aggression. The battle would be renewed in one country, bringing with it perhaps even larger and crueler conflict, as we have learned from the lessons of history."[52]

In addition, the President restricted his offer of "unconditional discussions" to "any government" thereby ruling out negotiations with the immediate adversary, the Viet Cong. He stated that the United States did "not seek the destruction of

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[51]Lyndon Johnson, "We Will Stand in Vietnam," Text of President's statement at his press conference July 28, 1965. Department of State Pamphlet, p. 264.

[52]Ibid.

any government, nor covet a foot of territory."[53] * The President also took this occasion to announce an increase in United States troops in Vietnam from 75,000 to 125,000 men and a rise in the draft call from 17,000 to 35,000 per month.

Finally, after too long a time, Lippmann had been joined by the segments of the national press particularly Newsweek and the New York Times, in condemning the course of the war. Both publications by the end of 1965 had finally recognized the conflict as a civil war with historic, cultural, and ideological factors with which the United States was not adequately prepared to deal.

From 1966 to 1968, public outcries and sometimes violent dissent would be felt in the United States over the war. An incumbent President would voluntarily leave office in 1968 and the American people would have the choice of choosing Richard M. Nixon or Hubert H. Humphrey to lead their country out of the quagmire in Asia.

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[53]Johnson, Department of State Pamphlet, p. 264.

*Hanoi and the Viet Cong (National Liberation Front) alleged that the scale and apparent permanence of the new facilities then being built by the United States at Camranh Bay and other projects along the Vietnamese coast contradicted Washington's disavowal of any desire to retain bases in Vietnam. That their allegation may not have been entirely irrational is suggested by a report from Saigon of James Reston in the New York Times on August 27, 1965: "In fact, the United States base at Camranh Bay, which has one of the best natural ports in Asia, is being developed into another Okinawa, not merely for the purposes of this war, but as a major power complex from which American officials hope a wider alliance of Asian nations, with the help of the United States, will eventually be able to contain the expansion of China."

Johnson's policy during this period of wider escalation had duplicated precisely the attitude which President Truman had taken in Korea. He had committed his country to endless, costly warfare as long as the enemy chose to continue fighting. Walter Lippmann's prophetic warnings back in 1950 and 1952 concerning United States involvement on the mainland of Asia had been correct. His perception of the problems that would be encountered were unmatched by other segments of the press.

In summary, Lippmann seemed to have felt it was one thing to go to the defense of an ally assaulted by aggression and to repel that aggression. It was another, he felt, to enter an interminable war of attrition where kill ratios did not mean a thing because of the endless supply of troops that communists in Asia could provide against the United States. It was plain that the United States did not have the capacity to end the war and increased bombing would never force the enemy to the peace table, rather, it would only make them fight harder.

By reading Lippmann's articles from 1964 through 1965, the paradox of an American president saying one thing and doing another unfolds clearly. Lippmann's articles examined the reasons for Johnson's policies and their futility. The paradox Lippmann examined was of a president presenting the image of a man seeking peace while accusing a rightwing Republican of being "trigger-happy" and then pursuing the course of his opponent. Lippmann then presented how Johnson's peace pleading did not add credibility to his military measures. His military commitment seemed to

belie his search for peace. Lippmann had correctly analyzed a policy that was schizophrenic in objectives.

CHAPTER V

CREDIBILITY GAPS, DEMONSTRATIONS AND THE ELECTION, 1966-1968

In the United States, by 1967, there seemed to have been three major effects of the massive military involvement in Vietnam:

First, a growing credibility gap between the government, the people, and the press.

Second, the steady erosion of the "Great Society" programs that were eaten up by the money spent on the war.

Third, the mounting uneasiness of the ever-increasing number of people in the United States as manifested in teach-ins, public protests, and student demonstrations, leading to the support of Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy as viable alternatives to replacing Lyndon Johnson as President in 1968.

From 1966 to 1968 domestic tensions grew as anti-war protesters increased the tempo of their demonstrations. Johnson's "Great Society" was decaying because of lack of funding. Eventually Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led the hue and cry over the administration's failure to fund anti-poverty programs aimed at providing equal opportunities for the poor. Draft card burnings increased in number while college campuses became a staging ground for more

militant protests. In the summer of 1966 the ghettoes of Watts, in Los Angeles, and Detroit in 1967 were burned and rioting became widespread. Dr. King's vehement outcries against the war stood out even more clearly. It had become obvious to many that the grievances of slum dwellers should have priority over military assistance to South Vietnam.

Commenting on the riots and what it meant, Lippmann castigated the President by saying:

> He does not understand that when issues are life and death, everything else becomes pale and irrelevant and unimportant. Some of the measures of the Great Society are still on the White House list of desirable legislation. But with a half million men fighting in Asia, nobody cares, or can care, about what life is like in a Detroit slum. [1]

One reason for such an attack by Lippmann was President Johnson's budget message to Congress on January 24, 1966. In the message, Johnson stated, for the fiscal year July 1, 1966 to June 30, 1967 that:

> In domestic affairs, we are determined to press confidently forward toward the Great Society--but we shall do so in an orderly and responsible way, and at a pace which reflects the claims of our commitments in Southeast Asia upon the nation's resources (author's emphasis).[2]

The press by now was complaining about a "credibility gap," where information was seemingly incorrect in spite of official denials to the contrary. Johnson's speech to the Congress about the budget seemed to confirm what the press had speculated. In light of Johnson's repeated pledges in the Presidential campaign

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[1]Schapsmeir, Walter Lippmann--Philosopher-Journalist, p. 157.

[2]Gruening and Beaser, Vietnam Folly, p. 333.

of 1964 not to "involve American boys" and the obvious troop buildups, it was inevitable for the press to question anything Johnson was saying in 1966, be it concern over the cities or the war.

In March, 1967, Lippmann said that the relations between the President and the press were, so far as he knew, the worst in history. In two long articles, with phrases like "Mr. Johnson is a pathologically secretive man," Lippmann analyzed the credibility gap. He wrote:

> In order to avoid calling a spade a spade newspapermen have tacitly agreed to talk about the "credibility gap." This is a polite euphemism for deception, rather like the habit of our Victorian grandparents who spoke of limbs when they were too shy to speak of legs.
>
> It goes without saying that if this gap is wide, the country is in the perilous position of not believing that it can trust its own Government.[3]

In the "credibility gap" articles, Lippmann accused the President of "disrespect for free journalism." Describing the relations between a president and the press as "unique," Lippmann felt the Johnson Administration, did not hold with the fundamental American principle that true honest opinion arises from honest inquiry necessary to a free government. "For this Administration," he said, "the right opinions are those which lead to consensus with the leader.[4]

The credibility gap could be traced back to Johnson's first press conference on December 7, 1963, according to Lippmann, when

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[3]"The Credibility Gap," March 28, 1967.

[4]Ibid.

the President began to practice "razzle-dazzle" with the budget. The gap widened in 1965, when the President broke his campaign pledge and made the war in Vietnam an American war. After short bombing pauses failed to bring negotiations there were no signs of the United States trying to deescalate the war. Since then, Lippmann said: "Mr. Johnson has persistently manipulated the news of war and peace. When he was escalating the war he covered it with gestures about peace."[5] The deception included the "fiction" created in the State Department in 1964 about the absence of overtures from Hanoi to negotiate about the war.[6]

Lippmann's charge that the Administration was unfairly attempting to manipulate public opinion received the endorsement of the Freedom of Information Committee of Sigma Delta Chi, the professional society of American journalists. The Committee's report in November, 1967, accused the administration of "deliberately misleading the public, press, and Congress through fat lies, through half-truths, and through clever use of statistics that distort."[7] The President's press conferences, the report stated, were staged in a manner to make it "unlikely that he will face . . . consistent hard questioning. He has it well organized for a White House snow job."[8]

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[5]"The Credibility Gap," March 28, 1967.

[6]Ibid.

[7]John Luskin, Lippmann, Liberty, and the Press, (Birmingham, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1972), p. 236.

[8]Ibid.

Taking the lead in Congress that Lippmann had taken with the press, were at least seven Senators, many of them had voiced dissent as far back as 1964. Taking the lead was Senator J. William Fulbright, Chariman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who publicly reversed his stand since supporting the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. Other Senators such as Wayne Morse of Oregon, Frank Church of Idaho, Ernest Gruening of Alaska, and George McGovern of South Dakota, all denounced the war. Minnesota's Eugene McCarthy, mounting a Presidential campaign in the New Hampshire primary the following year, and finally Robert Kennedy, whose brother had committed some 17,000 military personnel in South Vietnam also took a stand against continuing the trouble.[9]

Seeking to coalesce the anti-war sentiment, Lippmann kept a flow of criticism directed at Johnson. At times his effort seemed futile. Lippmann wrote article after article warning about the violence in American cities, growing disrespect and contempt for America abroad, and the implications of what the student demonstrations meant.

According to Edward Schapsmeir, Lippmann tended to dignify the violence and techniques used by such groups as the Students for a Democratic Society. Schapsmeir said Lippmann refrained from "criticizing their crude tactics, making no comment about draft card burners or those who paraded with Viet Cong flags."[10]

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[9]Schapsmeir, Walter Lippmann--Philosopher-Journalist, p. 157.

[10]Ibid.

This is incorrect. Schapsmeir obviously had not taken the time to read the columnist's article on October 12, 1965, when the student demonstrations were first starting their mementum. Lippmann began by reviewing the protester's tactics and then went further by trying to explain the reasons for their action. He began by writing:

> While the student demonstrations are quite evidently self defeating they are, it seems to me, a pathetic reminder of what happens in a country when responsible debate on great matters of life and death are throttled down and discouraged. The unhappy youths who burn their draft cards are no doubt misguided. But we must not forget they come from a nation which expects to understand what its government is doing.[11]

The blame for letting the demonstrations create the obvious appearance of a nation divided, Lippmann felt, rested on the premise that the people were not able to hear informed debate by their responsible leaders. Lippmann acknowledged that the demonstrators had a right to demand open and candid debate because their generation had to do the fighting. He wrote:

> These young people have a very personal stake in the conduct of foreign policy, a much higher stake than the rest of us. Some men, especially brave, have gone out into the streets because the radicalized change of policy for the Vietnam war has occurred without serious, thorough, and informing candid discussion and responsible debate in Washington.[12]

It was obvious to Lippmann that when debate by those who had a "right to know" was discouraged, there would be no responsible guidance of public opinion from either the White House or the Congress. Thus, it was not surprising, he thought, the issue would be taken to

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[11]"On the Student Demonstrations," October 26, 1965.

[12]Ibid.

the streets or discussed at the teach-ins being held on college campuses across the country.

In May, 1967, Lippmann said he had begun to suspect that Hanoi had become hopeful, because of the American public opinion polls and the student demonstrations, that Johnson would not be reelected. He said that: "It is probable, I think, that Ho Chi Minh and his associates are determined not to negotiate with the men who have attacked and are destroying their country."[13] Then cautiously, Lippmann offered the hypothesis that: "Just as an end to the Korean War had to wait for a change of administrations, so the election of a Republican President may well turn out to be the only solution now."[14]

On May 25, 1967, shortly after that column was written, Lippmann announced he would be leaving Washington and he would discontinue the regular "Today and Tomorrow" columns. Many observers felt he was leaving because he had called for a change in administrations and the feud between Johnson had become too harsh.

Admitting his disaffection for the President, Lippmann denied that he was leaving Washington because of the bitterness he had for the President's policy on the war. He said, "I'm not leaving because of Lyndon Johnson. I wouldn't give him the

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[13]"An Insoluble War?" May 2, 1967.

[14]Ibid.

satisfaction. I stuck it out here through the McCarthy era. I decided on this before Johnson went off the deep end."[15] Lippmann was then 77 years old. He did not intend to quit writing, saying: "I do not mean to retire and lapse into silence. I have been experimenting with new forms--with longer articles which cover a wider range of subject matter and can, if editors choose, be broken up into a series of smaller pieces."[16]

After spending 36 years in Washington, Lippmann could derive satisfaction from the fact that the correspondents whose ranks he was leaving regarded him as preeminent among them in the reporting of the world of public affairs. According to William L. Rivers, in 1962, newspaper columnists ranked Lippmann as "the fairest and most reliable among Washington journalists."[17] It seemed unlikely, after his articles on the Vietnam war that their attitudes had changed.

Lippmann had said he would try a different format for his articles. One of those, appearing in the Washington Post on October 22, 1967, had to do with the United States resigning its position in South Vietnam and pulling back to Australia. Proposing a new "startling" strategy for the United States' influence in the Pacific, Lippmann suggested a withdrawal of American sea and air power to Australia and New Zealand. He wrote:

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[15]"Farewell to Washington," Time, January 16, 1967, p. 36.

[16]"Personal Explanation," May 25, 1967.

[17]William L. Rivers, "The Washington Correspondents After 25 Years," Columbia Journalism Review, Spring 1962, pp. 4-10.

> The rhetorical claim that if we do not stand fast in South Vietnam, we shall have to fight in Hawaii or even California seems to me a frivolous insult to the United States Navy. The objection that the United States could not wield as much influence from Melbourne as it could from Saigon, could be met by properly defining "influence." By substituting for General Westmoreland and his "firepower," trade agreements, cultural programs, and diplomacy would be more meaningful and respected.[18]

Continuing on this subject the columnist wrote in Newsweek in December, 1967, that the dividends of such a policy would avert the threat of a war with China and a "conflict of interest" with Russia would be diminished. Most importantly, Lippmann believed the American people need "no longer be revolted and ashamed by the spectacle of themselves engaged in a war where a big rich super-armed giant is trying to beat the life out of a dwarf."[19]

On November 19, 1967, Lippmann declared "if Lyndon Johnson is reelected, I don't know what would happen."[20] It was an obvious reference to his article in May stating that Ho Chi Minh would probably never negotiate with the present administration and that a man from another party, the Republicans, was needed if the war was to ever be negotiated towards a peaceful settlement.

The man he wanted to see elected President was Governor Nelson Rockefeller. In a conversation with six college students on the Public Broadcasting Laboratory in 1967, the "crucial question" was, according to Lippmann, whether "the Republicans, who are still

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[18]"The Case for U. S. Pullback to Australia," Washington Post, October 22, 1967.

[19]"War Affronts Conscience," Newsweek, December 7, 1967.

[20]Schapsmeir, Walter Lippmann--Philosopher-Journalist, p. 160.

distraught by their ideological caper in 1964 can pull themselves together and seize an historic opportunity which is theirs for the asking."[21]

Since he could not then determine how well Rockefeller would do in the upcoming primaries, Lippmann also sought an alternative for the Democrats by urging Robert Kennedy to make a bid for the presidential nomination. Kennedy assumed that seeking the office in 1972 would be safer politically than trying to bridge Johnson in 1968. Lippmann contended that the condition of the party would be near ruin because the President had split the Democrats "with dissent, division, and distrust among themselves."[22] Only after Eugene McCarthy's victory in New Hampshire did Kennedy enter the race. He was sure the President's weakness offered him a chance of not having to wait another four years.

When Senator Eugene McCarthy convinced more than the college students in New Hampshire that Johnson was not invincible, Lippmann commended him as "the defender of the American faith."[23] Even though he was not the first choice of the columnist, Lippmann believed McCarthy best represented the views he had been pronouncing for more than a decade concerning open debate about the war and the way the government had misled the people. He wrote: "What he stands for is the avowal that the American system of government shall not

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[21]Schapsmeir, Walter Lippmann--Philosopher-Journalist, p. 160.

[22]Ibid.

[23]"Walter Lippmann on 1968 in a Crystal Ball," Newsweek, March 13, 1967, p. 31.

be a fraud and a deception, that it is a valid way by which the mass of our people can redress their grievances, can express their will, and can participate in the government of the nation."[24] McCarthy's mission, he felt was to "raise a flag to which the dissenting and the dispairing can repair."[25]

Declaring that the Johnson Administration had "corrupted and undermined the faith of our people in their political system," Lippmann believed McCarthy was trying to "stop the rot" and pull the Democrats out of disaster.[26] But though McCarthy might help restore the party for leadership in the 1970's, Lippmann said the only hope in 1968 lay in a "rejuvenated Republican Party."[27] This was his conclusion nearly a year before the election, a time when Rockefeller, John Lindsay, and Charles Percy were considered to have a chance for the nomination.

After Johnson dramatically announced that he would not run and after Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angeles after winning the California presidential primary, Lippmann analyzed the prospects of having Vice President Hubert Humphrey lead the country. He found them dismal. Humphrey's problems, Lippmann said, was the Vice President's "high credulity quotient--his endless capacity for

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[24] Newsweek, March 13, 1967, p. 31.

[25] Ibid.

[26] "Walter Lippmann on Eugene McCarthy's Mission," Newsweek, December 18, 1967, p. 25.

[27] Ibid.

becoming quickly and thoroughly persuaded."[28] This stemmed from Humphrey's belief in the Vietnam war during a period when he feared Johnson would drop him as a running mate in 1968. The phrase that bothered Lippmann the most was when Humphrey had exclaimed: "There is a tremendous opening here (meaning Vietnam) for realizing the dreams of the Great Society in the great area of Asia, not just here at home."[29]

According to Lippmann, anyone capable of such an "infatuated flight from reality," would be far more worrisome in the White House "than a devious old-fashioned politician who said one thing and did another."[30]

In July, 1968, when Humphrey attempted to repudiate the Vietnam war, Lippmann called it "a somersault for political expediency" which might be offensive to the "moral scruples of the voters."[31]

It was clear that anyone connected in the past with Johnson's war policies was a disagreeable candidate to Lippmann. Since Rockefeller had lost the California primary to Nixon there remained only one choice for Lippmann.

A month before the election Lippmann made his "hard and

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[28]"Walter Lippmann on the Credibility Quotient," Newsweek, July 15, 1968, p. 19.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Ibid.

[31]"Walter Lippmann on Return of the Native," Newsweek, July 29, 1968, p. 19.

dismal choice," telling the readers who followed him in Newsweek and in the infrequent "Today and Tomorrow" columns that Richard Nixon was "the only one."[32]

Lippmann's hypothesis followed: As President neither Humphrey or Nixon could be or would be unchanged. Those people who were asking whether Humphrey could inaugurate another New Deal, or whether Nixon could restore the tranquility of the Eisenhower years, were seeking answers to old unanswerable questions. Americans (according to Lippmann) must assume a "new" Nixon or a "new" Humphrey who would face foreign problems which were theoretically soluble (unlike Vietnam) and domestic problems which could not be solved in four or eight years, or even the span of a generation. The search for a miracle man would be futile, he thought.

The assumptions obviously were based on the failure of President Johnson to balance a "guns and butter" budget--where domestic needs soon took second place to a war that ate up too much money with too little results. Lippmann wrote: "I think Nixon's whole future will be staked on getting cease-fire and self-respecting withdrawal of our land forces. That is the best I am able to hope for. But I see nothing better in Humphrey."[33]

Lippmann's projection was apparently correct. The country elected Nixon, barely, after Humphrey had seen his campaign disintegrate almost before it began when violent protests rocked the

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[32]"Walter Lippmann on The Hard Choice," Newsweek, October 7, 1968.

[33]Ibid.

city of Chicago at the Democratic Convention. The politics of Lyndon Johnson and especially his stand on the war were repudiated by not voting for Humphrey. The campaign slogan of Nixon--"Bring U. S. together," was simply that--a slogan. Division and distrust still prevailed. The press continually harbored grief over the debacle of Vietnam in their editorial columns and Lippmann summed it up by saying:

> The new President faces the bleak task of trying to teach the country that it is not "omniscient and omnipotent" as it had believed itself to be. To govern successfully Nixon must avoid three big mistakes--the mistake of continuing the land war in Vietnam and doing it with a drafted army, the mistake of the Eisenhower Administration of permitting obsolete orthodoxy to blight economic growth; and the mistake of allowing domestic violence to escalate. The future, as I see it, is not bright with the promise of a new dawn.[34]

Lippmann had correctly identified the mistakes likely to plague Nixon until he resigned on August 10, 1974, rather than face impeachment for the obstruction of justice during the Watergate scandal.

Nixon continued the land war in Asia, with incursion into Cambodia and Laos, while he tried diplomacy with the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese in Paris.

Economic problems continued because Nixon had inherited the problems of inflation and a depressed market due to the war slowly winding down.

Domestic turbulence continued over the policy of "peace with honor" implemented by the President and Secretary of State

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[34]"Walter Lippmann on Nixon Wine," Newsweek, November 18, 1968, p. 37.

Henry Kissinger. The bombing raids over North Vietnam were even more harsh than the Johnson Administration tactics.

The war Lippmann had warned about, the problems of intervention, questioning the wisdom of foreign policy decisions made in the late 1940's and early 1950's being applied to the changing world affairs of the 1960's--and the attempt to convince the leaders of this country that they were not the policemen of the world--these opinions showed the foresight of a journalist who looked over a broader plane than just observing facts, dates, people, and places. He was opinionated and sometimes wrong. But the fact that he had correctly analyzed the foreign policy mistakes of the United States in the 1950's and 1960's was one of his greatest accomplishments.

CONCLUSION

If one were to ask what made Walter Lippmann so distinctive in his profession, one of the answers might be the fact that he was not carried away by the sometimes contemporary trademarks of journalism. Deadlines, beats, and scoops were not of his concern. Lippmann brought into journalism the idea that there were more important things to be concerned about than simply the recording of major events happening on a specific date. He was more interested in the meaning of what certain events meant, always trying to find the underlying reasons and the implications that surrounded them.

His writing brought a rich and informed background of continuing scholarship in economics, history, government, and philosophy. With intelligence and earnestness he sought to interpret for his readers day-to-day problems and long range issues that concerned America.

His comments on foreign and domestic affairs spanned more than a half-century of American journalism. He provided the American public with the information it needed to make intelligent, rational decisions. One of the most important reasons he was able to do this was his perversity against conforming to political and ideological trends. Proof of this can be seen after reviewing his columns of "Today and Tomorrow" and the many books he wrote.

His best journalism, his writings during the 1960's over a

variety of international and domestic problems facing the United States, offer insight as to the role great nations should play throughout the world. He correctly forecast the arrogance of power that the Truman Doctrine would later bring to this country during the 1960's. He had a sense of caution and modesty concerning this view. He did not feel the United States, when its immediate interests were not challenged, had a right to interfere with the affairs of another country. During the periods of the Cold War and the Vietnam war, he stood out as the main spokesman for such a philosophy.

While portions of the national press, specifically the New York Times and Newsweek, abdicated their responsibility in questioning the basic facts and premises of why a particular policy was implemented, Walter Lippmann stood fast, continually pressing the issue until a suitable, satisfactory answer was given him. Rarely was he ever satisfied with the responses he heard. Often the national press was satisfied with the answers they were given via usually standard government proclamations.

The press failed to scrutinize what was happening both in formation and execution of important foreign policy during the Cold War and the Vietnam war made Walter Lippmann's predictions during that time almost prophetic.

Little was known about Indochina by the American people during the 1950's and evey by 1960, the country of Vietnam was seen as just a small Asian country--except to government officials and historians. The press had only given out the standard rhetoric

that Secretary of State Dean Acheson and John Foster Dulles had pronounced--that of "containing communism." But the press, for the most part, failed to cut through official government propaganda and provide the American public with undistorted accounts of what was really happening in Indochina.

Walter Lippmann failed to be swayed by the government. While Newsweek and the New York Times invariably fell prey to being used as a willing tool of the government, Lippmann stood out as an observer not just relying on government handouts or press conferences.

The Times and Newsweek believed in the first four and a half years of the Vietnam war. The press, in general, failed to question the moral or legal rights of our "containment" policy first introduced by Acheson and then Dulles. In the case of Vietnam, the press failed to question the legitimacy of supporting a dictator who did not have the will of the people and who did not practice any of the democratic principles the United States believed in.

Indicated throughout this study is the fact that Walter Lippmann tried to convince the American public and the government that Cold War principles and intervention in another country's civil war would not benefit this country. He had warned of the experience the French had gone through trying to keep intact an old colonial empire and asked the United States to not follow the same course. He had tried to show the government that wisdom rather than power would be respected by the other countries throughout the world if we stayed out of Vietnamese affairs.

Lippmann's journalism during the years leading up to and through the Vietnam war was in the best tradition of American journalism. If other, larger, and more established institutions of the press would have demonstrated the same independence and forsight as he, the war in Vietnam might not have lasted as long as it did. Led by a more investigative press, public outcry might have put more pressure to deter government officials dedicated to escalating a war that was impossible to win.

Lippmann's genius was the ability to articulate--to get to the heart of an issue by piercing a morass of complicated detail. He hoisted up ideas and events for public opinion and inspection. He never pretended to be the "oracle of Delphi," rather, what he wrote was based on keen perception and reflection. Perhaps wisdom is a better word.

Behind the criticism of the war, a very personal and human feeling evolved from his writings. Lippmann believed old men should not promote wars for young men to fight. It was their business to try, he thought, as best they could, by whatever wisdom they could find, to avoid what could only bring absolute calamity for the United States.

He desired one thing for his generation to give the young. He stated: "What older people may be able to offer is not the translation of modern knowledge, but the transmission of that which is above knowledge, that is to say human wisdom."

His writings concerning the war always questioned the wisdom of why the United States thought itself to be the policemen of the

world. Throughout this period he was never given a satisfactory answer. But over this long tormented period in American history, he maintained a continuous dialogue trying as best he could, to inform the people what the government was afraid to say.

His attitude towards this philosophy, the openness of his mind and his ability to recognize mistakes made him a journalist standing like a monument above the rest of the people in his profession.

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