Naval War College Review

Volume 35
Number 2 *March-April*

Article 20

1982

Why the Vietcong Fought: A Study of Motivation in a Modern Army in Combat

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Recommended Citation

Kinnard, Douglas (1982) "Why the Vietcong Fought: A Study of Motivation in a Modern Army in Combat," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 35 : No. 2 , Article 20.
Available at: https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol35/iss2/20

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made their arms decisions. Nor, Ball argues, was the massive buildup a reflection of strategic doctrine as it went far beyond what Kennedy and McNamara thought necessary for deterrence. Rather, it was the outgrowth of political pressures upon the new administration, some of which Kennedy had created himself.

During the presidential campaign Kennedy had hammered away at the alleged weakness of the American strategic arsenal and had repeatedly stated his intention of supporting a variety of weapon programs to restore clear-cut American superiority. According to Ball, these promises, while they aroused public expectations did not account for the primary source of pressure upon the administration. This came instead from within the government, from the Air Force and Navy, both of which were intent on committing the President to buying as many missiles or submarines as possible. Air Force requests for the Minuteman, for example, ranged from between 3,000 and 10,000. The Navy, which toyed with the idea of a fleet of 100 Polaris SSBNs, pushed for 45; their calculation of the force levels required to achieve finite deterrence ignored completely the existence of the Air Force and its contribution to the American deterrent.

Both services used whatever political clout they had to lobby both the administration and the Congress for their respective programs and succeeded, Ball argues, in committing the administration to a much higher level of strategic forces than it had wished for. In this regard, Ball sees the lobbying efforts of defense contractors, certain to profit from expanded production of missiles and submarines, as another effective pressure upon the administration.

Ball believes, with good reason, that the Kennedy experience has great contemporary relevance. Whereas the Soviet Union has followed an evolutionary path to strategic force development, improving its forces by means of a series of small modifications, the United States has proceeded by fewer but larger generational leaps. The Trident and the MX missile, regardless of the ultimate mode of deployment for the latter, represent another such leap. What level of forces will be deployed?

According to Ball, there is a tendency for existing numbers to assume sanctity and for systems to be replaced on a one-for-one basis regardless of the qualitative differences between them or the changing nature of American strategic requirements. His purpose in writing is to demonstrate the extent to which the Kennedy-McNamara strategic decisions—the source of today's numbers—were both hasty and the product of political compromise. By doing so Ball hopes to prod strategists and policymakers into taking a more open look at force requirements and presumably to opt for lower force levels.

Ball's analysis is sound if unlikely to find a receptive audience in the current administration. Like Kennedy, Reagan has come to power pledged to build up American forces to compensate for our alleged inferiority. To date his strategic decisions appear to be at least as influenced by bureaucratic in-fighting as those of Kennedy were. The Reagan administration is likely to bequeath to us a strategic arsenal that goes a long way toward meeting the "wish lists" of the services and defense contractors. Like the forces Kennedy built, they may bear only a marginal relationship to any coherent conception of real strategic needs.

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Henderson, William Darryl. ***Why the Vietcong Fought: A Study of Motivation in a Modern Army in Combat.*** Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979. 163pp. $17.95

This is another of Greenwood's highly specialized publications, in this

case mainly of interest to those involved in retrospective analysis of the Second Indochina War.

In his preface Colonel Henderson develops the contrast between the People's Liberation Army (PLA), which endured, and the U.S. Army, which the author feels did not. The contrast shortly brings the author into a critique of *Crisis in Command* previously reviewed in this journal. He is highly critical and powerful in his comments on that work, but his commentary, however cogent, is really a digression.

The central question Henderson seeks to answer is why the PLA soldiers fought so well in view of the hardships they endured, including the tremendous firepower that was arrayed against them. His approach is to examine factors of motivation and control of the individual PLA soldier in the context of the relationships between the fighting men and the Communist party organization. He places particular emphasis on the importance of small groups of soldiers (the primary group, i.e., a three-man cell) and what makes them cohesive. All the data he examines comes from the period 1965-67.

Colonel Henderson concludes that soldiers' attitudes were shaped by three important forces: party organization and ideology, cadre leaders, and the primary groups. The cadre leader, who was the conduit between party and fighter in instilling homogenous values within the primary groups, was the key to success.

Henderson's general source of data is interviews conducted by RAND which sought to develop information on PLA organization and why it fought so effectively. He has added appendices which describe the nature and limitations of the interviews and he includes a questionnaire—though, as the author points out, the interviews were open-ended.

Henderson has succeeded in producing a very interesting and well done monograph. Though it is aimed at the specialist on Vietnam, it has value to those interested in examining the motivation and control, and hence staying power, of insurgents elsewhere than Vietnam.

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Anderson, Terry H. *The United States, Great Britain and the Cold War 1944-1947.** Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981. 256pp. $18

Hathaway, Robert M. *Ambiguous Partnership: Britain and America, 1944-1947.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1981. 448pp. $22.50

Anderson and Hathaway have contributed significantly to the cold war literature. Moreover, their books transcend the years in question to offer practical insights into alliance politics. And the backdrop of their topic is the not untimely problem of how a superpower responds to an accelerated decline in relative power. Political analyses of the early postwar years generally suggest that the world slid easily into a situation where there were only two actors on the international stage. American writings have been especially parochial in reducing these years to a bipolar confrontation while overlooking the complexities of Atlantic relations. The physical metaphor of the United States "filling the vacuum" left by a bankrupt and demoralized Britain has been a retreat from explanation. Both authors tell a far more complicated story.

From 1944 until 1947 Britain saw itself as in many ways more of a world power than either Russia or the United States. Its armed forces in a global ring of bases were better deployed than America's. Its fleet was so superior to

*For another view of Terry Anderson's book see the review article by Richard A. Best, Jr., in the November-December 1981 issue, pp. 97-99.