

1978

The United States Navy and the Vietnam Conflict: Vol. I, the Setting of the Stage to 1959

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Recommended Citation

Cameron, Allan W. and Hooper, Edwin Bickford (1978) "The United States Navy and the Vietnam Conflict: Vol. I, the Setting of the Stage to 1959," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 31 : No. 1 , Article 20.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol31/iss1/20>

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(2) There was a military buildup in progress prior to 1965. For instance, the major Soviet Navy ship construction program is known to have been given great impetus immediately following the Cuban Missile Crisis, October 1962. However, it is possible to track its genesis into the late 1950s. A similar time progression can be drawn for Soviet missile forces.

(3) On the political side, much emphasis is placed on the spate of Soviet bilateral treaties of friendship and cooperation signed during the 10-year period. In perspective, this may not be too significant. The Soviet Government always has tended to operate abroad under treaty aegis. In the 1920s, the Lenin-Stalin regime negotiated a phenomenal number of treaties, agreements, and understandings. Diplomatic effort is a Soviet penchant; written agreements a standard *modus operandi*. To imply a sinister design to recent activity, without saying it is standard procedure and reminiscent of the 1920s, may be to stretch the point.

Given these caveats, however, Haselkorn's book is nonetheless recommended for politicomilitary planners. His diligent research effort and consequent strategic conceptualization provide food for thought.

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Hooper, Edwin Bickford, et al. *The United States Navy and the Vietnam Conflict: Vol. I, the Setting of the Stage to 1959*. Washington: U.S. Dept. of the Navy, Naval History Division, 1976. 419pp.

Prepared by the Navy History Division, this is "the first of a planned series on the United States Navy and the Vietnam conflict." When completed, that series should be of great value to students both of naval history and of the wars in Vietnam. If that objective is to be fully achieved, however, subse-

quent volumes (number and nature as yet unspecified) must be better defined and prepared than is this one.

This first volume is designed to give a general survey of developments in Vietnam prior to active American involvement (whenever one wants to date that), and to provide background for the rest of the series. While the book is unquestionably useful and will be a valuable resource for later historians, as a self-standing historical work, it suffers in a number of respects.

Vice Admiral Hooper, former Director of Naval History, explains in his Preface that "the volume is the product of a team effort within the Naval History Division." Unfortunately the book shows it. Many of us have reservations about the abilities of committees to do much of anything, much less such a difficult, and indeed idiosyncratic, task as writing history. In this case the product might have been more satisfactory had the responsibility for authorship been assigned to a single individual, as has been the case with the best of the various military history series. Indeed, Admiral Hooper's own book about logistics in Vietnam (*Mobility, Support, Endurance: A Story of Naval Operational Logistics in the Vietnam War 1965-1968*, Washington: U.S. Dept. of the Navy, Naval History Division, 1977) is a far more successful historical work even though it treats a subject with much less general appeal.

The problem of multiple authorship is compounded by the stated objective of providing simultaneous treatment of three interrelated but nonetheless distinct threads. While the quality varies considerably among the three threads, none is very well done and the cutting back and forth succeeds primarily in confusing the reader.

As one thread the book treats the historical background and context of developments in Vietnam as a whole. While certainly of relevance to an understanding of the specific involvement of

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the U.S. Navy in the French Indochina War and its aftermath, the treatment is of necessity summary, and often sketchy. It relies overwhelmingly on "standard" secondary sources and provides little new information or insight. Brevity leads to inevitable distortions which, while certainly not intentional, are fundamentally misleading. These parts of the book may have some value for someone with no knowledge of Vietnamese history at all, but such a reader might be better advised to start with a more comprehensive historical work. For the reader with some background, the presentation here is often irritating and frustrating. If the authors deemed general background essential, they would have presented it better in a single chapter or an appendix. This was the approach adopted, with great success, in the first volume of the Marine Corps history of its involvement in Vietnam (Captain Robert H. Whitlow, USMCR, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Advisory & Combat Assistance Era, 1954-1964*, Washington: Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, History and Museums Division, 1977).

Similar comments apply to the second thread, the evolution of U.S. defense policy and organization and, within that, of the Navy itself during the period between the beginning of World War II and 1959. This subject, too, is treated far better in other works. Description of the changing organization of the Navy, of the evolving role of the Chief of Naval Operations, of the impact of debates over weapons systems (much treatment of aircraft carriers, surprisingly little of the Polaris program and nuclear power), may be of interest in other contexts, but the scattered and simplified analysis found here gives little and detracts much. It too often seems remote from the main subject. Again, single chapter or appendix treatment might have been preferable.

The third thread is what the book should have been all about: naval

operations in Vietnam. Here the essentials are covered, with much hitherto unavailable specific information from official naval sources, but the depth of presentation and analysis is uneven. The focus is on operational, rather than on tactical, activities. On the whole, the Marine Corps history mentioned earlier does a better job of providing the kind of detail most readers will expect from an official history.

There is illuminating treatment of the Navy's role in the minesweeping of Haiphong Harbor in 1945, of naval deployments in the Indochina theater during the early months of 1954, and of the assistance provided in the early development of the Vietnamese Navy. In these and other areas there has been effective use of otherwise unavailable or overlooked sources, notably official naval records and little touched primary collections such as the Gallagher Papers found in the Army's Center for Military History.

The treatment of other topics is less satisfactory. While the development of the French riverine forces ("Dinassauts") is correctly noted as significant, the specifics are largely ignored. Particularly in light of the subsequent importance of river warfare in Vietnam, the reader would benefit from more intensive analysis of things such as the kinds of craft found suitable (or not), the specifics of armament and protection, logistics and tactics, successes and failures. Similarly, the otherwise good coverage of the evacuation from the North in 1954 (the "Passage to Freedom") provides less detail than many readers will find satisfactory.

There are a number of small but irritating errors which should not appear in a book prepared with so much effort. At one point, Secretary of Defense Louis A. Johnson is referred to as "Secretary of State." The authors state that the Final Declaration of the 1954 Geneva Conference was "approved in a voice vote by all participants except the

United States," a statement which is simply inaccurate as a reading of the records of the meeting makes clear. The Tenth Plenum of the Central Committee of the Vietnam Worker's Party (the Communist Party of North Vietnam) is described as "the Tenth Congress."

Historiographic deficiencies also mar the overall quality. The extensive footnotes provide guidance to the wider materials on which the study is based, but a number of major sources cited with some frequency is not found in the Bibliography; one is the Commander in Chief, French Forces, Indochina, *Lessons of the War in Indochina*. Because the normal convention of providing a full citation the first time a source is referenced in each chapter is not followed, the reader is driven to distraction trying to find the identity of the work, which is normally cited only in the short form as *Lessons of the War in Indochina*. The only full citation is "buried" in a footnote on page 96. And, given the book's general survey and introductory nature as the first in a series, a more comprehensive bibliography would have been of considerable value.

There is certainly general misunderstanding of the extent to which naval activities were crucial to military operations in and around Indochina during the period treated in this volume and later as well. The fact that the enemy had little naval capacity leads many to ignore the vital role of seapower (and river power) for France, South Vietnam, and the United States. Unfortunately this book does not do enough to remedy that deficiency, if for no other reason than that it does not maintain a consistent central focus on the issue. Subsequent volumes, and the series as a whole, will be successful to the extent they rectify the problem of fragmented focus and fall into the tradition more of Samuel Eliot Morison than of a committee report.

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Published by U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons, 1978

Kinnard, Douglas. *President Eisenhower and Strategy Management: A Study in Defense Politics*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1977. 169pp.

This brief monograph examines President Dwight D. Eisenhower's role in the formulation and implementation of U.S. strategic policy. The author refutes the claim that the President was an indecisive, politically naive figurehead, dominated by strong personalities within his Administration and insulated from political reality by an excessively formal staff system. Kinnard maintains that Eisenhower undertook the management of America's defense program with a confidence born of a lifetime of professional military experience, and that he provided strong, effective leadership, personally articulating the strategic policy of his Presidency and skillfully defending it throughout his tenure.

The program Eisenhower initiated came to be known as the New Look—a long-term strategic plan designed to support existing containment policy through a careful balancing of military necessity and economic capability. Predicated on a concern for a healthy economy and balanced budget, this program sought to achieve "more bang for the buck" by major reallocation of resources among military components. Greater emphasis was placed on the deterrent and destructive power of nuclear weapons, i.e., massive retaliation; missile delivery systems and air defenses were upgraded; conventional forces were reduced; and allies, supplemented by U.S. logistic, air and naval support, were given primary responsibility for local defense. The new strategic goal, reflecting Eisenhower's disbelief in the possibility of a conventional war with the Soviet Union, was military sufficiency and economic stability over a prolonged period.

Not only was the President architect of this strategic program but, according to Kinnard, he developed effective bureaucratic techniques to manage and defend it. He revitalized the National