

Date of preparation: 15 Dec. 2012.

How the U.S. Loses Wars

Georgia Institute of Technology
Spring 2013

INTA 4803; CRN 29453; INTA 8803; CRN 29614
MWF 2:05-2:55 p.m.

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The cases of Vietnam 1964-1975 and Iraq 2003-2009 are used to explore the factors leading to U.S. defeat in one case and U.S. success in the other. The course examines theories of Mao Zedong, Le Duan, Abu-Mus'ab al-Suri, and Harry Summers about how an inferior power defeats a superior power. Examined too are the military strategies adopted by the United States and its adversaries at each stage of the two conflicts, the calculations and mis-calculations underlying those strategies, and the factors inhibiting or facilitating institutional learning and adaptation. For Vietnam, the contrasting strategies of William Westmoreland and Creighton Abrams, and for Iraq, the contrasting approaches of Ricardo Sanchez, George Casey, and John Abizaid on the one hand, and David Petraeus on the other hand, are studied. "Fighting the last war" and organizational culture are stressed as obstacles to learning and adaption. The interaction between military strategy and U.S. domestic politics --- the separation of powers, partisan competition, and public opinion --- is posited as a critical variable. The problem of asymmetrical interests and political systems in relation to maintenance of national will is also considered.

Required Textbooks:

George Herring, America's Longest War, The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975, Knopf, 1986.

Harry Summers, On Strategy, A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War, Dell, 1982.

Andrew Krepinevich, The Army and Vietnam, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

Lewis Sorley, A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam, Harvest Press, 1999.

Michael A. Palmer, Guardians of the Gulf; A History of America's Expanding role in the Persian Gulf, 1833-1992, Free Press, 1992.

Thomas Ricks, Fiasco; The American Military Adventure in Iraq, Penguin, 2006.

Linda Robinson, Tell Me How this Ends; General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq, Public Affairs, 2008.

The following three monographs are available gratis from the U.S. Army Strategic Studies Institute, via their website at www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil> They are also available via the Tech Library e-reserve system.

Conrad C. Crane, Avoiding Vietnam; the U.S. Army's Response to Defeat in Southeast Asia, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, September 2002. 19 pages.

Steven Metz, Decisionmaking in Operation Iraqi Freedom: Removing Saddam Hussein by Force, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1 February 2010. 54 pages.

Steven Metz, Decisionmaking in Operation Iraqi Freedom: The Strategic Shift of 2007, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2010. 64 pages.

RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOK

Truong Nhu Tang, A Viet cong memoir; An Inside Account of the Vietnam War and Its Aftermath, Vintage, 1983.

If you have time, I strongly recommend this memoir by a founding and leading member of the "Viet Cong." It offers an fascinating and "objective" account of such things the impact of the 1968 Tet offensive on North-south relations within the Viet Cong, as the impact of the Phoenix Program, and, ultimately, the relation between the "Viet Cong" and the VWP.

ACCESSING LIBRARY ELECTRONIC RESERVES

The reserve readings listed above are on electronic reserve with the library. To access them go to:

www.library.gatech.edu

Click on "Course Reserves"
Browse to "International Affairs"
Open "INTA 4101, Garver"

The code for this course is: **zfb3i0r**

(The penultimate integer is “zero;” No spaces between integers, shown above only for your reading convenience))

To access the electronic reserve materials you will need a Georgia Tech Prism ID and password. If you do not have or have forgotten such, you should be able to create one on-line by going to the "help" menu on the left-hand side of the "library.gatech.edu" web-page. If you have problems with reserves, you may call 404-894-7600 at the library and ask for Stephanie, Kevin, or Felecia. If you need further help creating a password or accessing e-reserves, you may telephone the Library Reference Desk at 4-4530.

GRADUATE PAPER

Graduate students will be expected to research and write a paper of a final length of approximately 25 double-spaced pages. The paper should compare a particular process or problem using the two cases of the Vietnam war and the Iraq war. That is, the paper should utilize the comparative case study approach.

This paper will be based on a fairly deep reading and comparison of journal articles and books dealing with some aspect of the Vietnam and/or Iraq wars. The student should read and incorporate at least 5 books and at least 12 journal articles, comparing and evaluating the various contentions and conclusions of those articles. The purpose of these graduate papers is not to do original, primary research, but to scan, evaluate, and synthesize existing secondary literature focusing on a particular issue.

Topics might be (these are illustrative only; feel free to define your own):

- “Fighting the last war’ in Vietnam and Iraq
- “The politics of strategic shift in Vietnam and Iraq”
- “The question of collapse of US public support in Vietnam and Iraq”
- “The separation of powers and the Vietnam and Iraq wars”
- “Failure to isolate the battlefield in Vietnam and Iraq”
- “Enemy attempts to exploit domestic divisions in US in Vietnam and Iraq”
- “The role of evaporating justifications for war in Vietnam and Iraq”
- “Presidential veracity and public support for War in Vietnam and Iraq”
- “The role of foreign sanctuary in Vietnam and Iraq”
- “Mortality rates among US wounded in Vietnam and Iraq”
- “Organization of tactical intelligence in Vietnam and Iraq”
- “Presidential leadership in war termination: Gerald Ford & George Bush
- “Creighton Abrams and David Petraeus: Learning Counter-Insurgency”
- “Why does the U.S. fight land wars in Asia?: Vietnam and Iraq”

The graduate paper-writing process will proceed according to this schedule:

16 Jan. Submission of written statement to professor after discussion of possible topics with professor.

1 Feb. Submission of bibliography (in proper form) of at least 17 sources dealing with the problem and stating in 1 sentence (no more) how each source does so. Standard Chicago Manual of Style format must be used to cite sources.

8 Feb. Submission of outline laying out the structure and development of the argument of the paper. The outline must clearly convey the logic of the paper..

15 Mar. Submission of a draft of paper.

Revision of draft on basis of professor's critique. This is imperative and required. The professor will photocopy the draft paper and refer to that copy when reading the final version. Final papers that do not respond adequately to the professor's criticism of the draft will receive a lower grade.

29 Apr. Final paper due. Late submissions will be severely penalized.

It should go without saying, that both the draft and final paper must be neatly typed, well organized and spell-checked, and with proper pagination, headings and sub-headings, and proper grammar.

Grade Determination:

Undergraduates:

Attendance:	20%
Mid-term exam:	40%
Final exam	40%

Graduates:

Mid-term exam:	25%
Final exam:	25%
Research paper:	50%

Outline of Course Sessions & Lecture Topics

Part I: Theories of Asymmetrical Warfare

7 Jan. The Strategic Problem: How Can the Weak Defeat the Strong?

9 Jan. Mao Zedong on Protracted People's War, I

Reading: Mao Zedong, "On Protracted War," from Selected Works of Mao Zedong, Volume II. (e-reserve)

11 Jan. Mao Zedong on Protracted People's War, II

Reading: Ibid.

14 Jan. Le Duan and Nguyen Chi Thran on Special War

Reading: "Vietnamese Communist grand strategy," From The Citizen's Compendium.

Recommended if you have time and interest:

Vo Nguyen Giap, "The Political and Military Line of Our Party," from The Military Art of People's War. (e-reserve)

16 Jan. Abu-Mus'ab al-suri on Global Jihad against the Far Enemy

Reading: Sarah E. Zabel, "The Military Strategy of Global Jihad," October 2007. Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College. 11 pages.
<http://www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil/>

18 Jan. The Specter of Chinese Intervention: Again Fighting the Last War

Reading: Qiang Zhai, China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975, U. of North Carolina Press, 2000, chapter 6, p.130-156-. John Garver, "The Chinese Threat in the Vietnam War," Parameters, Spring 1992, p. 73-85.

Note: This lecture is out of sequence to allow the professor to attend an academic conference in New York City on 18 January. Georgia Tech history professor Hanchao Lu will give a guest lecture on this day. According to the normal chronological sequence, this topic should fall on 18 April.

23 Jan. The Problem of Sustaining National Will in Democracies

Reading: Harry Summers, On Strategy, Introduction, p. 21-29, Chapters 1-4, p. 33-84.

Part II: The Vietnam Case: How the U.S. Loses Wars

25 Jan. The United States, the Cold War, and Vietnamese Communism

- Reading: Herring, Longest War, chapter 2, p. 43-72.
- 28 Jan. Nation Building in South Vietnam
- Reading: Herring, Longest War, Chapter 3, p. 73-107.
- 30 Jan. Origins of the Southern Insurgency and Hanoi's Strategy
- Reading: Herring, Longest War, Chapter 4, p. 108-143.
- 1 Feb. The Sino-Soviet Split, JFK, and Counter-Insurgency
- Reading: Krepinevich, Army, chapters 1 & 2, p. 3-55.
- 4 Feb. The U.S. Decision for War
- Reading: Krepinevich, Army, chapter 3, p. 56-130.
- 6 Apr. The U.S. Strategy of Limited War and Graduated Escalation
- Reading: "The Search for the 'Breaking Point' in Vietnam," John E. Muller, International Studies Quarterly, Dec. 1980, p. 497-519.
- 8 Apr. U.S. National Will and Presidential Choices; The Great Society and Johnson's Limitation of the War Effort in Vietnam
- Reading: Krepinevich, Army, Chapter 4, p. 100 – 130. Summers, On Strategy, chap. 15, p. 221-239.
- 11 Apr. Search and Destroy: Technological Revolution and Fighting the Last War
- Reading: Krepinevich, Army, chapter 5, p. 131-163. Herring, Longest War, chapter 5, p. 144-185.
- 13 Apr. Search and Destroy in Practice
- Reading: Krepinevich, Army, chapters 6, p. 164-193.
- 15 Apr. Limited War and the Failure to Isolate the Battlefield
- Reading: Summers, On Strategy, Chap. 5-7, p. 85-118.
- 18 Apr. The Air War: Graduated Escalation

Reading: Watch the video program, “The Trail,” volume 5 of the series “Vietnam: the Ten Thousand Day War.” VHS tape on reserve in the library for viewing in the library

20 Apr. Growth of the Anti-War Movement and U.S. Public Opinion

Reading: “The Movement Against the War, in Vietnam and America, Marvin Gettleman, et. al., editors, Grove Press, 1985, p. 291-331.

Recommended video-program: “Homefront USA,” volume 8 of the series Vietnam: the Ten Thousand Day War, 1985. VHS on reserve in the library for viewing in the library.

22 Feb. Hanoi’s Strategy and the U.S. Election cycle

Reading: Summers, On Strategy, chap. 10, p. 151-173. Sorley, Better War, Chapt. 10, p. 154-170.

25 Apr. Creighton Abram’s Embrace of Counter-Insurgency and Vietnamization

Reading: Herring, Longest War, chapter 6. Sorley, Better War, prologue, p. xi-xv, Chapters 1, p. 14-16.

27 Apr. Phoenix, CORDS, and Pacification; the Lost Victory Hypothesis

Reading: William Colby, Lost Victory, chapters 16 & 17, p. 259-321. Sorley, Better War, chapt 2, p. 10-30; chap. 10, p. 154-70; Chap. 12, p. 191-216.

1 Mar. Hanoi’s Shift to Conventional Warfare and Linebacker I

Reading: Herring, Longest War, chapter 7. Sorley, Better War, chap. 3, p. 31-44; chap. 13, p. 217-227; chap. 20, p. 318-342.

Note: 1 March is the last day you can drop a course with an automatic “W.”

4 Mar. Nixon’s Triangular Diplomacy and Hanoi’s War

Reading: Sorley, Better War, chapt. 4, 5, p. 45-70.

6 Mar. The 1972 Election and the Question of Collapse of U.S. Will

Reading: Sorley, Better War, chap. 6, 7, p. 80-111. William Lynch, “American Public Opinion Towards the War,” In Robert McMahon, editor, Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War, p. 505-515.

8 Mar. The 1973 “Peace” Agreement and the “Decent Interval” Hypothesis

Reading: “The Paris Peace Accords of 1973 and the Fall of South Vietnam,” “Henry Kissinger’s Appeal to Congress for Emergency Aid, 1975,” and “James Schlesinger Recollects the Collapse of South Vietnam,” in McMahon, Major Problems, p. 556-566. [These two items are in the same packet as the previous listed reading in the McMahon anthology.]

Also, the exchange of letters “The Betrayal of South Vietnam,” and “In Defense of Henry Kissinger,” in Wall Street Journal, 23 January 1996 and 5 February 1996.

11 Mar. Watergate and the Congressional Seizure of Control over Indochina Policy

Reading: Cecil Crabb, Invitation to Struggle: Congress, the Presidency, and Foreign Policy, Congressional Quarterly, 1992, p. 143-46.

Packet of readings from Congressional Quarterly, August 1973 and April 1975.

Julian Zelizer, “How Congress Helped End the Vietnam War,” Prospect, 6 February 2007, p. 3-5 only. <<http://prospect.org/cs/articles?articleId=12438>>

13 Mar. The Deteriorating Situation in South Vietnam after 1973

Reading: Herring, Longest War, chapter 8. Sorley, Better War, chap. 21, 22, p. 343-371.

15 Mar. First Exam

Spring Break

25 Mar. Hanoi’s final Offensive and the U.S. Reaction

Reading: “How We Lost the Peace,” Chapter 5, in Richard Nixon, No More Vietnams, Avon Books, 1985, chapter 4, p. 165-211. Sorley, Better War, chap. 23, p. 372-386.

Part III: The Iraq Case: How the United States Wins War

27 Mar. Oil and the Global Balance of Power

Reading: Palmer, Guardians, Chapters 1-3, p. 1-84.

29 Mar. The British Withdrawal from East of Suez and Iran as “Regional Policeman”

Reading: Palmer, Guardians, Chapters, 4-7, p. 85-149.

1 Apr. The 1991 War to Reestablish Kuwait

Reading: Palmer, Guardians, Chapters, 8-13, p. 150-252.

3 Apr. The 2002 Decision to Remove Saddam Hussein by Force

Reading: Metz, Removing Saddam Hussein by Force, p. 1-54. Ricks, Fiasco, Chapter 2, p. 12-28.

5 Apr. The 9-11 Trauma and the Decision for War

Reading: Ricks, Fiasco, Chapt. 3, 4, 5, p. 29-84.

Recommended video program: “9-11 D.C.” (Dramatic re-enactment starring Timothy Bottoms as George W. Bush of hours surrounding 9-11 attack, including introduction of Saddam Hussein into discussions. 2003. 2 hours, 7 minutes.) Available from Netflix.

6 Apr. The U.S. Army’s Anathema on Counter-Insurgency

Reading: Crane, Avoiding Vietnam. P. 1-19. Re-read Summers, On Strategy, chapter 8.

10 Apr. Manufacturing an Insurgency: Bureaucratic Politics and Ad Hoc Nation Building

Reading: Ricks, Fiasco, Chap. 6., p. 85-111.

Recommended: “New State Department Release on ‘Future of Iraq’ Report,” FOIA release, 1 September 2006. On e-reserve.

12 Apr. Manufacturing an Insurgency: Bremer's Blunders

Readings: Ricks, Fiasco, Chap. 8, 9, p. 149-202.

Recommended video program: "No End in Sight," 2007. DVD on library reserve for viewing in library.

15 Apr. The Anti-U.S. Coalition and Their Strategies

Reading: Ricks, Fiasco, chapt. 11, p. 214-269.

Recommended: "Al-Qaeda in Iraq," Wikipedia. On electronic reserve w/ library.

17 Apr. The Nader of the U.S. Effort

Reading: Ricks, Fiasco, chap. 18, 19, p. 390-429. Robinson, Ends, chapt. 2, p. 1-25.

19 Apr. The Push for Surrender qua Withdrawal

Reading: Ricks, Fiasco, Afterward, p. 400-439. Robinson, Ends, chapter 2, p. 24-45.

22 Apr. The Origin of the Strategic Shift ("the Surge")

Reading: Metz, "Strategic Shift of 2007," p. 1-64. Robinson, Ends, 2nd half of chapter 3, p. 67-83. "Surge," Chapter 12, Decision Points, George W. Bush, Crown Publishers, 2010, p. 355-394.

24 Apr. The Sunni Awakening and Building a New Iraqi State

Reading: Robinson, Ends, chapt. 4, 5, p. 85-140.

26 Apr. Counter-Insurgency and the re-Stabilization of Iraq

Reading: Robinson, Ends, chapter 6-end of book.

FINAL: Period 14, Friday, 3 May 2013, 11:30 a.m. – 2:20 p.m.

