3-2024

Assessing Victory: Did Different Measures of Success Lead to an Extension of the Vietnam War

Brian Althouse
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Assessing Victory:
Did Different Measures of Success Lead to an Extension of the Vietnam War

An Undergraduate Honors Thesis
Submitted in Partial fulfillment of
University Honors Program Requirements
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

by
Brian Althouse, BA
Political Science
College of Arts and Sciences

March 25, 2024

Faculty Mentors:
Ross Miller, PhD, Political Science
Donald Beahm, PhD, Political Science

Abstract

In his paper *Exploring the Bargaining Model of War*, Dan Reiter argues how "in some conflicts, militaries may have different measures of success; two opposing sides could conceivably observe the same battle outcome with both concluding that they were successful, coming no closer to agreement on the eventual outcome of the war" (Reiter 2003). Extrapolating on this point, he assesses how this theory could be one explanation for the Vietnam War. Reiter argues that within the conflict both US and North Vietnamese forces measured success through increases in enemy casualties, and that occurrence of combat and casualties on both sides caused "each [side] to conclude that it was doing well, perhaps delaying the termination of the war" (Reiter 2003). In this paper, I address the validity of this claim, analyzing the hypothesis within the context of three major campaigns during the war: Operation Rolling Thunder, the Tet Offensive, and Linebackers I and II. Overall, I find that this hypothesis does not appear to be true within the context of the Vietnam War for two key reasons. Firstly, while North Vietnamese leaders appeared to measure victory to some extent by body count, American officials seemed much more focused on measuring success by their ability to push the North into negotiations. Secondly - and more prominently - American and Northern leaders did not appear to overwhelmingly "conclude that [their side] was doing well" in the lead up to or aftermath of each of these campaigns, and as such the sense that victory was close does not appear to be a driving factor in the extension of the war (Reiter 2003). Instead, when an operation seemed definitively successful for at least one side - as seen in Linebackers I and II - the war was brought to an end rather than extended further.

Key Words: Vietnam War, Body Count, Bargaining Theory

Assessing Victory:
Did Different Measures of Success Lead to an Extension of the Vietnam War

Introduction

Since the end of the Second World War, the world has seen a rise in asymmetric conflicts - fighting in which relative power and tactics differ significantly between opponents - with this rise appearing primarily in the form of civil wars (Grange 2000, Walter et al. 2023). Over time, these conflicts have become increasingly longer, leading to greater violence and more civilian deaths (Walter 2020). In order to determine the driving factors influencing these various conflicts, numerous political scientists have performed research on these conflicts over the past century, producing theories on their causes and potential resolutions. In this paper, I plan on analyzing one argument proposed by Dan Reiter on the Bargaining Model Of War, putting it in reference to the Vietnam War.

Within his paper *Exploring the Bargaining Model of War*, Reiter argues how "in some conflicts, militaries may have different measures of success; two opposing sides could conceivably observe the same battle outcome with both concluding that they were successful, coming no closer to agreement on the eventual outcome of the war" (Reiter 2003). He describes how this could be one interpretation of the Vietnam War, "as the United States sought to inflict North Vietnamese casualties (the infamous body count) and North Vietnam sought to inflict American casualties", with "the occurrence of combat and casualties on both sides caus[ing] "each [side] to conclude that it was doing well, perhaps delaying the termination of the war" (Reiter 2003). Throughout this paper, I plan to test this hypothesis, examining whether both sides used body count as a measure of victory, and whether these competing measures of success led to an extension of the war. I argue that while both sides used attritional strategies which emphasized body counts, the primary American measure of success was whether the North

Vietnamese were pressured towards a bargaining settlement. Along with this, while both sides led escalation campaigns which increased enemy casualties during the conflict, these higher casualties did not make both sides believe they were getting closer to victory. As such, both sides measuring victory by body count did not lead to an extension of the Vietnam War, contrary to Reiter's proposed hypothesis.

Literature Review

In order to better understand the nature of wars and why they are fought, numerous scholars have performed research on historical conflicts across the globe, proposing theories towards why these wars begin, what determines how they are fought, and how these wars can be brought to a close. When explaining war, several scholars have identified war as part of a "bargaining process", in which violence is used to advance political goals (Fearon 1995, Powell 2006, Reiter 2003, Schelling 1967). One particular theory - the Bargaining Theory of War - expands upon this idea, discussing how war is inherently costly yet can still occur between two rationally acting states (Fearon 1995). The theory - first proposed by Carl von Clausewitz - has been expanded upon by several other scholars, including James Fearon and Dan Reiter (Fearon 1995, Reiter 2003).

In his paper *Rationalist Explanations for War*, Fearon outlines the Bargaining Theory model, citing incomplete information and commitment problems as two key factors that can draw states to war, describing how states are typically unsure of the exact strength or resolve of their opponents and are also uncertain whether their opponents will stick to any negotiated settlements (Fearon 1995). Along with this, Fearon also identifies that some issues between states might be indivisible, with these governments being unwilling to compromise over or share a specific resource, being more willing to go to war instead (Fearon 1995).

Expanding on the Bargaining Model, Robert Powell argues that “bargaining indivisibilities should really be seen as commitment problems”, stating that “bargaining indivisibilities do not solve the inefficiency puzzle by rendering it moot” (Powell 2006). Instead, Powell links together three kinds of commitment problems - “preventive war, preemptive attacks arising from first-strike or offensive advantages, and conflicts resulting from bargaining over issues that affect future bargaining” - describing how in each case, “large, rapid shifts in the distribution of power can lead to war” (Powell 2006). In this manner, wars might be created even if both sides have complete information about their opponent, with fighting starting when “a state becomes convinced it is facing an adversary it would rather fight than accommodate” (Powell 2006).

In terms of the conduct and termination of war through the lens of the Bargaining Model, Dan Reiter describes how within the model, “military means are used as part of the bargaining process, to advance political ends” (Reiter 2003). Through fighting, states “can seek total conquest, or the utter destruction of the enemy’s means to resist, in order to achieve victory in a Clausewitzian absolute war”, using brute force to achieve political objectives (Reiter 2003, Schelling 1967). Along with this, states can also engage in combat to “reduce uncertainty about the capabilities or resolve of the combatants”, with “the outcome of combat [being] observed by both sides and [causing] their expectations to converge regarding the likely outcomes of future combat… increas[ing] the likelihood of reaching an agreement that both sides prefer over continued fighting” (Reiter 2003). In this manner, Reiter describes how states can use direct fighting to achieve political objectives, and how wars can be brought to a close through the bargaining model.

However, when considering violence as part of the bargaining process, Schelling argues that success can also be achieved through coercive violence, convincing one's opponent to meet one's demands (Schelling 1967). In this manner, states do not have to use full military force to achieve total victory or cause expectations to converge, but can instead use "the threat of damage, or of more damage to come" to bend opponents to one's demands (Schelling 1967). As described by Schelling, "it is latent violence that can influence someone's choice - violence that can still be withheld or inflicted, or that a victim believes can be withheld or inflicted" (Schelling 1967). This form of diplomacy directly correlates with the idea of limited wars, in which states attempt to coerce their opposition to surrender without using the full might of their military. Since this coercion relies on threats rather than action, coercive violence can also be used both during peacetime and while at war, achieving goals such as deterring future violence or forcing an enemy to capitulate (Schelling 1967). However, "the power to hurt is often communicated by some performance of it", with it not being the "pain and damage itself but its influence on somebody's behavior that matters" (Schelling 1967). In this manner, in order to achieve their political goals, states must find ways to credibly signal that their power to hurt is not only real, but also worth avoiding.

Along with the Bargaining Model of War, several scholars have suggested other various theories and factors that influence war duration. When considering civil wars, scholars have generally found that factors which favor insurgencies - such as poverty, rough terrain, political instability, funding from outside sources, and large populations - tend to increase the duration of these conflicts, with "mobilization and strategic surprise hav[ing] little effect on war duration" (Fearon & Laitin 2003, Fearon 2004, Bennett & Stam 1996). Along with this, as the duration of a war increases, the expected outcome for the initiator worsens, with "democracies tend[ing] to

select wars they correctly predict to be short (presumably because of the declining public support for fighting)" (Slantchev 2004). Democratic initiators and targets have also been found to be more likely to win wars, with civil war termination commonly resulting from "shocks to relative power in the form of entry or exit of foreign support for one side" (Reiter & Stam 1998, Fearon & Laitin 2007).

When considering the duration of wars - particularly civil wars - several scholars have found that third-party states which intervene in a conflict can have a considerable influence over its duration and outcome (Aydin & Regan 2012, Norrevik & Sarwari 2021, Balch-Lindsay & Enterline 200). When third-party states intervene in a war on opposing sides of the conflict, studies generally show that the duration of these wars is increased (Aydin & Regan 2012, Balch-Lindsay & Enterline 2000). On the other hand, if third-party states intervene "on the same side of a civil war", they "are effective in stopping the fighting only when the intervening parties share similar preferences (Aydin & Regan 2012). In a similar fashion, "when third parties raise the stakes of the conflict by engaging in the use of militarized force against the civil war state, the duration of these conflicts is reduced" (Balch-Lindsay & Enterline 2000). Wars are also shortened when democratic states provide troop assistance to government forces, with external military assistance also increasing the likelihood that the government or rebel forces who receive this aid will win the conflict (Norrevik & Sarwari 2021).

Along with third-party interventions, several scholars have analyzed public opinion and its relationship with war, particularly as the duration of a conflict increases. These scholars generally agree that as casualties increase, public opinion and support for the conflict declines (Gartner & Segura 1998, Larson 1996). However, disagreement exists over the exact manners in which casualties in war can impact public opinion. Some researchers suggest that "that the log of

cumulative casualties is the best predictor of wartime opinion", with opinion declining as cumulative casualties rise (Gartner & Segura 1998, Larson 1996). However, others argue that the level of marginal casualty accumulation is a better predictor of wartime opinion, with marginal increases and spikes of casualties mattering more than the total casualty count (Gartner & Segura 1998). Overall, these researchers have found that "marginal casualties are more appropriately suited to predicting opposition when casualties are accumulating at an increasing rate", but that "cumulative casualties perform better in periods when the accumulation of war losses has begun to slow" (Gartner & Segura 1998).

While casualties seem to have a key impact on public opinion in times of war, some researchers also argue that political and military elites have a wide sway over a public's willingness to wage war (Larson 1996, Berinsky 2007). These researchers argue that "when political elites disagree as to the wisdom of intervention, the public divides as well. But when elites come to a common interpretation of a political reality, the public gives them great latitude to wage war" (Larson 1996, Berinsky 2007). Expanding on this, one researcher argues that when considering wars, the public often seeks to determine whether "the probable outcome seem[s] (or seem[s] still) to be worth the costs", taking into account factors such as the expected benefits, prospects for success, and expected costs (Larson 1996). When making their evaluation of the conflict, "members of the public gauge consensus or dissensus among leaders to inform their own evaluations" (Larson 1996).

Researchers also generally agree that if a conflict increases in duration, public opinion of the war will decline over time (Larson 1996, Sanaei 2019). When fighting a war - particularly an asymmetric one - "the longer the war lasts, the more it will look like a never-ending war", contributing to public support declining over time. While "public support is not always a

required condition for fighting asymmetric war" - even in democracies - "in the long run, leaders have to expend enormous political capital to continue fighting wars that are not supported by a majority of the electorate" (Sanaei 2019). Therefore, if an asymmetric conflict drags on for an extended period of time, the strong side may be encouraged "to cut its losses short and stop the war" (Sanaei 2019).

However, some research has also emphasized the "importance of leadership and objective events and conditions in the level of the public's commitment to an ongoing military operation" contradicting other views that casualties and declining support might either lead to "demands for immediate withdrawal" or "demands for escalation to victory" (Larson 1996). The research study argues that the public may grudgingly continue to support wars despite casualties if they believe the stakes are high enough and the costs are not unreasonable (Larson 1996). In this manner, this research places a continued emphasis on the "consensus or dissensus among leaders", with these leaders predicting the course of public opinion (Larson 1996).

Along with this research on the general factors which contribute to the outbreak, extended duration, and termination of wars between and within states, some researchers have also looked into the contributing factors which led to the long duration of the Vietnam War, and why the United States (US) was ultimately defeated. Overall, these researchers have come to several different conclusions on why the war was extended to last so long and how the US eventually came to be defeated. On one hand, scholars generally agree that the US did not inflict enough damage or casualties upon the North Vietnamese to coerce them to surrender (Pape 1996, Crane 2012, Herring 1991). However, these scholars disagree over how this exactly came to be the case, and whether the US could have won the conflict if it deployed its resources differently.

Focusing on the major air campaigns of the Vietnam War, one scholar states how “the air war against North Vietnam suggests that success is possible, but that the critical leverage in conventional coercion comes from exploiting the vulnerabilities in the opponent’s military strategy, not from threats or costs to civilians” (Pape 1996). In this manner, the author suggests that a US victory could have been achieved if aerial bombing focused North Vietnamese military capabilities rather than civilian vulnerabilities. This emphasis on poor military strategy reflects ideas from other analyses of the American defeat, which argue that the war’s unconventional nature and inadequate measures of success made it difficult for US officials to measure the effectiveness of their campaigns, contributing to their defeat (Crane 2012).

On the other hand, some scholars hold that “there is no way to know whether the war could have been won if it had been fought differently. More important, to attribute US failure to an errant strategy and lack of will oversimplifies a very complex problem and provides at best a partial explanation” (Herring 1991). To expect that expanding bombing campaigns or escalating the ground war into nearby territories would have altered the course of the conflict seemingly overlooks factors such as the limited technology of the time, the strength of enemy defenses, the growing costs escalation would bring, and the outside potential of intervention from the Soviet Union or China (Herring 1991). In short, these scholars suggest that America’s defeat in the war can be centered around the fatal error of underestimating its opponent, being unable “to understand the total unyielding commitment of the enemy, the willingness to risk everything to achieve an objective” (Herring 1991).

Theory

While numerous scholars have researched the various factors which direct the outbreak of war, impact a war’s duration, and lead to a war’s termination - particularly through the

Bargaining Theory of War - in this paper, I plan on testing a specific hypothesis discussed in an analysis of the Bargaining Theory of War, applying this theory to the Vietnam War. In his paper *Exploring the Bargaining Model of War*, Dan Reiter addresses one interpretation of the Vietnam War, in which the war was extended due to both sides having opposing measures of victory, with each side measuring victory by the body count of their opponents (Reiter 2003). In this paper, I will test this argument, examining whether the different measures of victory in the Vietnam War did in fact lead to an extension of the conflict. To do this, I will first establish each sides' measure of victory in the conflict, and attach some reasoning to why they chose this measure. I will then introduce four periods of escalation within the Vietnam War - Operation Rolling Thunder, the Tet Offensive, Linebacker I, and Linebacker II - which demonstrate the usage of these victory measurements, determining why these escalations were used, whether they could be viewed as successful, and how they contributed to the extension of the war. Overall, I argue that while each side used different measures of victory during the Vietnam War, these competing measures did not extend the war by causing both sides to simultaneously believe they were close to victory.

Research Design and Evidence

Before analyzing how each side's measure of victory may have led to an extension of the Vietnam War, it is first important to address what measures each side used to determine whether they were winning the conflict and why these measures were chosen. When considering North Vietnamese strategy, Northern leaders sought to wage a war of attrition during the Vietnam War, hoping to weaken American popular support for the war to the point that they would concede defeat. When considering rules for the conflict, Robert McNamara came to the belief that "the enemy operated under the assumption that it could win "a long inconclusive war"", feeling as

though the North Vietnamese were looking to drag out the conflict to a bloody stalemate (Rostow 1996). As stated by MACV (Military Assistance Command, Vietnam) Command History in 1996, "The overall NVN (North Vietnam) political strategy was aimed at the demoralization of the RVN (Republic of Vietnam) and the collapse of resistance in the south, as well as the closely related contingency of US withdrawal from Vietnam" (National Archives and Records Administration 2019c). With this strategy, the North Vietnamese assumed that "the high financial cost, the loss of American lives, international pressures, and domestic dissension inevitably would force the US Government to withdraw military forces from RVN" (National Archives and Records Administration 2019c). In order to pressure an American withdrawal, North Vietnamese forces focused on three key objectives, which were to "develop strong multi-division forces in dispersed areas that were secure and accessible to supplies; to entice FW forces into prepared enemy positions so that the entrenched communist forces could inflict heavy casualties on them; and to continue country-wide guerrilla action to tie down Allied forces, destroy small units, and extend control" (National Archives and Records Administration 2019c). As such, enemy body count and declining popular support for the opposition's war effort could be seen as key measures of victory used by the North Vietnamese during the Vietnam War.

On the other hand, in terms of American tactics during the Vietnam War, US officials also generally followed a strategy of attrition and pacification, hoping to pressure the North Vietnamese into surrendering though coercive violence (Brower 1991, Daddis 2012, Daddis 2015, Escobar 2016, Mueller 1980). Beginning in 1965, General William Westmoreland - commander of US forces in Vietnam - outlined three key successive steps his troops would follow: first "halt the VC (Viet Cong) offensive to stem the tide" then "resume the offensive to destroy VC and pacify selected high priority areas" and finally "restore progressively the entire

country to the control of the GVN (Government of the Republic of Vietnam)" (National Archives and Records Administration 2019c). Westmoreland's attempts at waging an attritional war to destroy the VC can be seen through his "concept for ground operations [from 1965 to 1967]", which "came to be called the "search and destroy" strategy" (Brower 1991). Within this "search and destroy" tactic, "US forces "exploit[ed] American firepower and mobility by engaging and destroying NVA/VC main force units, thereby denying the enemy freedom to threaten the populated areas" (Brower 1991).

While this strategy hinged on the assumption "that Communist forces would reach a "breaking point" after suffering enough punishment", it was created primarily due to the asymmetric nature of the conflict at hand (Mueller 1980). Fighting an insurgency, American forces had no clear frontlines or strategic ground to attack or defend, making it difficult to create accurate "metrics for assessing progress and effectiveness" (Daddis 2012). The metrics that were created - released in "monthly 'Measurement of Progress' reports" - contained information on "countless aspects of the fighting in Vietnam – force ratios, enemy 'incident' rates, tactical air sorties, weapons losses, security of base areas and roads, population control, area control, and hamlet defenses" (Daddis 2012). Among these metrics, "kill ratios became a central yardstick for many US combat units", with American troops being incentivized to inflict as many enemy casualties as possible (Daddis 2012).

However, despite being a "central yardstick" for measuring victory, "even contemporary officers sensed that [these ratios] were inadequate", with a "1974 survey of army generals who served in Vietnam" revealing how "55 percent noted that kill ratio was a "misleading device to estimate progress."" (Daddis 2012). While body count might have been used as a basic - albeit flawed - measure for progress, I argue that the core metric among US leaders for measuring

success during the Vietnam War was whether the North Vietnamese were pressured to the negotiating table on American terms. US tactics throughout the war often focused on controlled, moderated violence, attempting to push the North Vietnamese to negotiations while mitigating concerns that Chinese or Russian forces might enter the conflict more directly. The use of this metric as a marker for American progress and its impact on how American officials viewed the war is best highlighted through three key campaigns - Operation Rolling Thunder, the Tet Offensive, and Linebacker I and II - which each exemplified both American and North Vietnamese usage of their own respective measures of victory.

These three campaigns - Operation Rolling Thunder, the Tet Offensive, and Linebacker I and II - are of particular interest to this paper, as they each served as major escalations and turning points in the Vietnam War which emphasized coercive violence within American and North Vietnamese strategy. On the American side, while US leaders did practice a strategy of pacification - described by MACV as "the military, political, economic, and social process of establishing or re-establishing local government responsive to and involving the participation of the people" - their second strategy - the war of attrition - best highlights the usage of body counts and damage towards the enemy as measures of success, with "the primary purpose [of the attritional strategy being] to gradually but steadily reduce [the] number and strength [of North Vietnamese fighters] over time to such an extent that it would render the Communist insurgency ineffective in South Vietnam" (Travis 1990). In this manner, Operation Rolling Thunder and the Linebacker campaigns serve as high profile executions of this strategy, with these intense aerial bombing campaigns highlighting the usage of attritional, violence-based coercion in an attempt to force the North to concede. These programs were also under the direct focus of key American

leaders throughout the war, and therefore can provide a better look into the perspective of these US officials as the war progressed.

Along with this, the Tet Offensive represents a major turning point within the Vietnam War, highlighting the effectiveness of US strategy in the years prior and influencing the overall outlook and tactics used by both US and North Vietnamese forces alike. Being a massive surprise escalation in the war, this offensive reflects the usage or non-usage of body counts and attrition by each side as victory measures during the war, and the American and Northern responses to the offensive's aftermath highlight whether each side believed the war was progressing well. Due to their attrition-based and war-altering nature, I will use these three major escalations within the Vietnam War to test the Reiter hypothesis.

Lasting from March 1965 to October 1968, Operation Rolling Thunder represented the American's first major bombing campaign and attempt at coercive violence through air power (Pape 1996). The primary objective of the operation was to "dissuade the North from infiltrating men and supplies into the South and to force Hanoi to negotiate a peace settlement", with additional objectives being to "bolster South Vietnamese morale and reaffirm the credibility of the American commitment to resist revolutionary activity in the Third World" (Pape 1996).

The American strategy for accomplishing these objectives consisted of four key components. First, American forces would attempt to coerce North Vietnam through "the threat to destroy its nascent industrial base", with attacks on these industrial complexes pressuring North Vietnamese leaders into reconsidering their insurgent actions in the South (Pape 1996). Second, American leaders would attempt to control the use of force "to keep the hostage healthy", believing that "the campaign "should be structured to capitalize on fear of future attacks"", with "pressure on the DRV [Democratic Republic of Vietnam - North Vietnam]

depend[ing] not upon the current level of bombing but rather upon the credible threat of future destruction" (Pape 1996). Third, American forces would attempt to create "a discernible pattern of escalation" with their bombing, "which would convince Hanoi of American willingness to inflict ever-increasing costs to achieve its political goals" (Pape 1996). Finally, American units would work to achieve "coordination between military action and secret diplomacy", using civilian control over air operations to "tailor military pressure to the course of diplomacy" (Pape 1996). Through these four steps, American officials hoped to use coercive violence - as described in Schelling's paper *The Diplomacy of Violence* - in order to bend North Vietnam to American will.

While attrition was at the heart of these plans for Operation Rolling Thunder, I argue that success in the eyes of US leaders was overall measured by the campaign's ability to pressure North Vietnam to the bargaining table, something it ultimately failed to do. When discussing the early stages of the campaign, US officials described how the program "had already scored some immediate political and psychological gains", with the bombing "[giving] a clear signal to NVN -- and indirectly to China – that the U.S. did not intend to suffer the takeover of SVN without a fight" (National Archives and Records Administration 2019a). However, despite these initial gains, officials regarded these early stages of the operation as "somewhat disappointing", as "the hopes in some quarters that merely posing a credible threat of substantial damage to come might be sufficient "pressure " to bring Hanoi around had been frustrated" (National Archives and Records Administration 2019a). This disappointment at the campaign's lack of ability to coerce North Vietnam to a bargaining settlement highlights how the campaign's ability to coerce served as the key marker when measuring success. Although the US had successfully carried out strikes, created an increase in enemy casualties, destroyed mass amounts of infrastructure, and given a

clear signal of resolve to the North Vietnamese, American officials still regarded the early stages of Operation Rolling Thunder as a failure due to their inability to pressure the North towards a favorable negotiated settlement.

As the campaign progressed, it showed difficulty in accomplishing both conventional objectives and the overall goal of coercion, even when the number of attacks were growing. When comparing the progress of the campaign between 1965 and 1966, "there were 148,000 total sorties flown in 1966 as compared with 55,000 in 1965, and 128,000 tons of bombs were dropped as compared with 33,000 in the 10 months of bombing the year before" (National Archives and Records Administration 2019a). Along with this, "economic damage to NVN went up from $36 million in 1965 to $94 million in 1966, and military damage from $34 million to $36 million", with "estimated civilian and military casualties in NVN also [going] up from 13,000 to 23-24,000 (about 80% civilians) (National Archives and Records Administration 2019a). Despite these escalating costs being placed on the North Vietnamese, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) reported that "the evidence available does not suggest that ROLLING THUNDER to date has contributed materially to the achievement of the two primary objectives of air attack – reduction of the flow of supplies to VC/NVA forces in the South or weakening the will of North Vietnam to continue the insurgency" (National Archives and Records Administration 2019a).

Even if success had been measured in means of body count and attrition, it does not appear that the increased damage and casualties caused by Operation Rolling Thunder led American officials to "conclude that [they were] doing well" (Reiter 2003). In fact, "McNamara and his civilian advisers had been disillusioned in 1966 with the results of the bombing and held no sanguine hopes for the ability of air power, massively applied, to produce anything but the

same inconclusive results at far higher levels of overall hostility and with significant risk of Chinese and/or Soviet intervention" (National Archives and Records Administration 2019a). Instead of being motivated by the idea that the campaign was succeeding due to higher enemy casualties - encouraging an extension of the war - American leaders - particularly those who were military - seemed motivated by the idea that the principle of bombing was sound, but that "only civilian imposed restraints on targets had prevented the bombing from bringing the DRV to its knees and its senses about its aggression in the South" (National Archives and Records Administration 2019a). Instead of military success, failure and disagreement over the tactics at use - as well as the inability to push North Vietnam to the negotiating table - appeared to be the main driving factors in extending Operation Rolling Thunder into 1967.

Going into 1967, American officials remained locked in debate over whether to expand the air campaign further or de-escalate and end the operation (National Archives and Records Administration 2019b). Ultimately, attacks would continue, and within the first seven months of the year American forces would fly almost 64,000 attack sorties (Central Intelligence Agency 1968). While "attacks against major industrial plants in North Vietnam [gave] a new dimension to the air war", and "damage to electric power facilities [was] particularly severe and [had] affected other industries", CIA intelligence indicated that "modern industry, however, [did] not play a vital part in North Vietnam's ability to meet the needs of the people or to continue the war" (Central Intelligence Agency 1968). Likewise, these attacks failed to pressure North Vietnam towards a negotiated settlement, with "public morale in North Vietnam appear[ing] to [hold up] fairly well, despite growing hardships" (Central Intelligence Agency 1968, Pape 1996). As such, the campaign in 1967 reflected the failures in 1966 and 1965, with US forces being unable to meet their attritional objectives of crippling the North's ability to wage war and

pressuring them “into reconsidering their insurgent actions in the South” (Pape 1996). In this manner, the growing enemy casualties and damaging of enemy infrastructure did not appear to make US officials believe the war was going well, or much less cause them to extend the conflict due to the belief that victory was close. Instead, the campaign was viewed as a failure, with the North continuing to hold out and refusing to negotiate any form of settlement.

The failures of Operation Rolling Thunder and inability to dissuade the North from pursuing further insurgent actions in the South became most visible in 1968, when North Vietnamese forces launched the Tet Offensive. Beginning on January 30th, 1968, during Tet, the lunar New Year holiday, nearly seventy thousand North Vietnamese forces launched a surprise offensive, “surg[ing] into more than a hundred cities and towns, including Sagon, [and] audaciously shifting the war for the first time from its rural setting to a new arena - South Vietnam’s supposedly impregnable urban areas” (Karnow 1991). While “in many places, [these North Vietnamese forces] were swiftly crushed by overwhelming American and South Vietnamese military power, its destructive capacity brought to bear with uncommon fury”, the offensive represented a shock to US officials and the rest of the world, particularly with how deep into the south the offensive reached (Karnow 1991). To accomplish this extensive attack, “the Viet Cong acted as though they were weakening [during 1967] in order to mislead the Government of Vietnam and its allies”, when “in reality, men and weapons were moved in South Vietnam in considerable quantity” during this time period (Central Intelligence Agency 1968). While Northern leaders hoped for an idealistic success in which the Southern regime was toppled and a “neutralist coalition government dominated by their Vietcong surrogates” was created, their primary goal was to “propel the war into the phase of simultaneous fighting and talking” on Northern terms, “project[ing] the impression, especially to the South Vietnamese population, that

they were conciliatory" (Karnow 1991). This in turn would feed into the North's long term strategy, which "was to continue to bleed the Americans until they agreed to a settlement that satisfied the Hanoi regime" (Karnow 1991).

Overall, the objectives and tactics of the Tet Offensive highlight the overarching strategy and victory measures used by the North Vietnamese throughout the war. While propaganda about the offensive made "promises of impending victory", "the Tet offensive was not intended to be a decisive operation, but one episode in a protracted war that might last "five, ten, or twenty years"" (Karnow 1991). By putting an emphasis on shocking American officials and inflicting high enemy casualties, Northern leaders provided a prime example of coercive violence, violence which sought to "drive a wedge between the Americans and the South Vietnamese" and eventually cause the US to abandon the war effort (Karnow 1991).

However, on the North Vietnamese side, this escalation of the conflict - which resulted in an extension of the war - was not motivated by the belief that "their goal was within grasp" - as their propaganda suggested - but rather by the concession that "the struggle was deadlocked - at least on the battlefield" (Karnow 1991). Along with this, while some measures of success were achieved by the North during the campaign, I find it difficult to argue that Northern troops and leaders assuredly felt that the war was going well after the offensive. Rather, after the offensive, "many North Vietnamese and Vietcong troops were plainly disenchanted by the realization that, despite their enormous sacrifices during the campaign, they still faced a long struggle ahead", with "official reports express[ing] alarm at the erosion of moral among those who had "lost confidence" in the Communist leadership and had become "doubtful of victory, pessimistic, and display[ed] shirking attitudes"" (Karnow 1991). Even among generals, the conclusion was reached that the attacks "had not been a resounding triumph", as they had failed to accomplish

their primary objective of creating uprisings throughout the south (Karnow 1991). In this manner, it does not appear that the North was convinced to extend the war after the Tet Offensive because they felt as though they were doing well or were close to victory due to high enemy casualties, but rather the war was extended by the North due to the fact that the US had not yet yielded, and that the North “operated under the assumption that [they] could win "a long inconclusive war"” (Rostow 1996).

On the American side, going into the Tet Offensive, American officials did believe that their war situation was improving, and were more optimistic that the enemy was close to defeat (National Archives and Records Administration 2019b, Karnow 1991). In the last months of 1967, North Vietnamese forces began a series of more conventional attacks “against a string of isolated American garrisons scattered across the highlands of central Vietnam and along the Laotian and Cambodian frontiers”, delighting American leaders who could finally bring to bear the might of their firepower in a conventional battle (Karnow 1991). While these attacks “before and during the Tet offensive were intended to draw the Americans away from South Vietnam’s population centers, thereby leaving them naked to assault”, they nonetheless motivated US leaders who felt the war was improving and excited General Westmoreland, who declared that “the enemy’s hopes are bankrupt” (National Archives and Records Administration 2019b, Karnow 1991). While some American military leaders correctly believed this diversion to be “a trap” and “just a feint”, Westmoreland fell for the ruse, focusing on the battles in the highland rather than the offensive soon to come in the cities (Karnow 1991). As such, leading into the Tet Offensive, it could be argued that some American leaders - at least those in charge - reached the conclusion that the war was going well due to increased enemy casualties, incentivising them to

press on and win the war. While - despite being the result of deception - this could be the case, I believe this became assuredly untrue once the full extent of the Tet Offensive unfolded.

After falling into the North Vietnamese trap, US officials were left stunned by the start of the Tet offensive, which shattered the holiday truce both sides had supposedly agreed to (Karnow 1991). While the offensive quickly became a US tactical victory, with the superior firepower of American and South Vietnamese forces cutting down many of the North Vietnamese attackers, it was overall a strategic shock from the optimistic outlook American officials had going into 1968 (Karnow 1991). The offensive "put the Johnson Administration and the American public through a profound political catharsis on the wisdom and purpose of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam and the soundness of [their] policies for the conduct of the war", with public approval of President Johnson and his handling of the war sharply falling in the weeks following the offensive (National Archives and Records Administration 2019b, Karnow 1991). Simultaneous calls were made for both retrenchment and a further escalation of the war, with the decision finally being made to attempt to stabilize the situation in the South while de-escalating the war in the North (National Archives and Records Administration 2019b). With de-escalation in the North, the Rolling Thunder campaign was eventually brought to a close in 1968, as "one of the inescapable conclusions of the Tet experience… was that as an interdiction measure against the infiltration of men and supplies, the bombing had been a near total failure" (National Archives and Records Administration 2019b). Along with generally being a failure, another growing reason for aborting the bombing of the North was that American officials feared that further bombing would hamper the potential for negotiations with the North, whose foreign minister had declared that "after the United States has ended the bombing and all other acts of war, [North

Vietnam] will hold talks with the United States on questions concerned" (National Archives and Records Administration 2019b).

This shift away from coercive bombing in the North after the Tet offensive highlights both the disillusion US officials were experiencing following the attack and their focus on reaching a negotiated settlement on US terms rather than just inflicting high amounts of enemy casualties. If following the Reiter hypothesis that both the North Vietnamese and the Americans measured victory through body count, and that "the occurrence of combat and casualties on both sides" would cause each side to conclude they were doing well, then US officials should have been happy with their troops' stout defense during the Tet offensive, with even greater casualties being inflicted on an enemy whose prospects already seemed to be dwindling (Reiter 2003). Yet, the Americans seemed distraught over news about the offensive, and began to rethink their entire involvement in the war. Their strategy of coercive violence had brought them no closer to a settlement on their terms, and led them to reexamine the force requirements "for avoiding defeat or disaster in the South" (National Archives and Records Administration 2019b). Moving away from bombing also shows how US officials ultimately judged success by their ability to push North Vietnam to the bargaining table, as if body count was their ultimate measure of victory, they would have likely pressed onwards with the campaign to inflict even higher North Vietnamese casualties. Instead, they abandoned the air campaign due to the fear that continuing it in the North - despite increasing enemy casualties - would actually hamper efforts to reach a negotiated agreement. As such, the Tet Offensive - a key escalation and turning point for American policy in the war - highlight's several discrepancies with Reiter's hypothesis that competing casualty-based measures of victory contributed to the extension of the Vietnam War.

After the end of Operation Rolling Thunder in October 1968, the war entered a period of de-escalation and negotiation, with newly elected president Richard Nixon beginning a program of Vietnamization - which focused on pulling American troops out of the conflict and shifting responsibility to the South Vietnamese army (Spector 2024). Declining morale among US troops and the American public incentivized this withdrawal from the conflict, with US officials attempting to negotiate a peace deal with the North (Spector 2024). Despite these attempts at negotiations during this de-escalation period, no significant breakthrough was made until October 1972, when President Nixon's advisor "[Henry] Kissinger and North Vietnamese emissary Le Duc Tho secretly hammered out a complicated peace accord" following the North Vietnamese's Easter Offensive and the US operation Linebacker I (Spector 2024).

Lasting from May to October 1972, with a short additional campaign in December 1972, the Linebacker I and II bombings once again demonstrated an American attempt to use coercive violence to bring North Vietnam to meet negotiation demands (Pape 1996). The Linebacker campaigns primarily focused on bombing "a broad set of military targets in both North and South Vietnam, including logistical centers and transportation arteries", with the target sets between both campaigns being strikingly similar due to the fact that "Linebacker II was deliberately designed to repeat the earlier operation and because North Vietnam had used the bombing halt [between the two campaigns] to regenerate key choke points and facilities in its logistical network" (Pape 1996). While both campaigns shared similar targets, Linebacker I primarily came as a response to North Vietnam's Easter Offensive - which it launched in March of 1972 - whereas Linebacker II mainly came as a response to North Vietnam backing away from a peace agreement proposed in October of 1972 (Pape 1996, Karnow 1991). Unlike Operation Rolling Thunder, both Linebacker I and Linebacker II were fairly successful at accomplishing

their objectives, with “Linebacker I largely achiev[ing its] goal of thwarting the Easter Offensive”, pressuring the North Vietnamese towards negotiations and setting the stage for Linebacker II, which finally pushed the North to sign a peace agreement in Paris on January 27th, 1973 (Pape 1996, Karnow 1991).

Going into these two campaigns, I find it difficult to argue that both Northern and American forces felt as though the war was going well for their side, and believe that Linebacker I and II provide a clear example against Reiter’s hypothesis. On the American side - after his election in 1968 - “Nixon and his close adviser on foreign affairs, Henry A. Kissinger, recognized that the United States could not win a military victory in Vietnam but [instead] insisted that the war could be ended only by an “honorable” settlement that would afford South Vietnam a reasonable chance of survival” (Spector 2024). By early 1972, Nixon “had withdrawn more than four hundred thousand GIs [from Vietnam]”, highlighting this belief that the war could not be won but that only an honorable settlement could be achieved (Karnow 1991). With secret negotiations beginning between Kissinger and North Vietnamese representative Le Duc Tho in February of 1970, it seems clear that the primary objective for American leaders post-Tet was to reach an acceptable negotiated settlement with the North that would enable a complete US withdrawal rather than winning the war through body counts and attrition (Karnow 1991). As such, going into the Linebacker campaigns, the American perspective of the war did not seem to be one of an optimistic outlook in which victory seemed close - which might have incentivized American leaders to press on in the conflict - but rather one of a war weary nation ready to end the conflict at the soonest notice of an acceptable agreement.

Along with this, despite both campaigns being relatively successful for the Americans - stopping the North’s Easter Offensive and pushing the North to a peace agreement - these

campaigns did not necessarily promote the idea among American leaders that the war was going well, and certainly did not extend the duration of the war. Linebacker I - while halting the Easter Offensive - did not result in a decisive defeat of the North Vietnamese, who "still retained the capacity to continue fighting indefinitely, although it was now on the defensive" (Pape 1996). Similarly, "Linebacker II, like Linebacker I, damaged the North's ability to carry out its conventional military strategy for over-running the ARVN [Army of the Republic of North Vietnam], but it did not seriously impair its ability to defend already-held territories" (Pape 1996). Instead, both these campaigns contributed directly to the end of American involvement within the conflict, with Linebacker I "compell[ing] Hanoi to accept US terms for the peace accords", and Linebacker II discouraging the North from "retreating from the negotiated position" and compelling it "to accept cosmetic changes [to the peace agreement] that placated South Vietnam" (Pape 1996). As such, while the Linebacker I and II campaigns could be considered a success by the Americans - meeting their overall objective of coercing the North Vietnamese into a bargaining agreement - these campaigns did not lead to an extension of the war, but instead ended it.

On the North Vietnamese side, the years of 1968 to 1972 saw a shift in North Vietnamese strategy towards more conventional warfare, culminating in the Easter Offensive in March of 1972 (Pape 1996). While by 1972, nearly all American combat forces had been withdrawn from Vietnam, "the North's influence over territory [particularly in the south] had waned, principally because by 1972 the combination of [the American strategies of] Vietnamization and pacification had become effective" (Pape 1996). In 1968, the North "controlled or actively contested areas containing about 23 percent of South Vietnam's populace", but by the end of 1971, this figure had declined all the way down to 3 percent (Pape 1996). To combat this

declining influence, Northern leaders set out the goal to "defeat significant portions of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) and to capture a series of provincial capitals through enormous conventional invasion" in 1972, with the Easter Offensive being used to accomplish these goals (Pape 1996).

The Easter Offensive showed initial promise for the North Vietnamese, who took the Americans and South Vietnamese by surprise, and by early May, "Communist forces had the initiative and ARVN morale was on the verge of a collapse that would have meant the end of Thieu's regime and the achievement of Communist control over the entire country" (Pape 1996). However, after Nixon deployed Linebacker I, the Northern offensive came to a halt, with "Hanoi's prospects for further territorial gains in the short term [growing] slim" (Pape 1996). The interdiction efforts brought about by Linebacker I showed significant success due to the North's shift towards more conventional warfare, causing significant supply shortages among Northern troops (Pape 1996). With Linebacker I, American air power was able to reduce Northern overland imports from China "from 160,000 tons to 30,000 tons a month", with supply shipments to Northern troops in the South being reduced by up to 75 percent (Pape 1996). With vehicles running out of gas and artillery running low on shells, Northern leaders were unable to execute their battlefield strategy, prompting them to agree to a cease-fire on the 22nd of October 1972 (Pape 1996). A few months later, Linebacker II once again confirmed this halt in progress and pushed North Vietnam back to the bargaining table after it had begun to back away from the agreement, resulting in the final peace agreement on January 27th, 1973 which brought the war to an end (Karnow 1991, Pape 1996).

While North Vietnamese leaders might have been optimistic that the war was going well headed into Linebacker I - with Northern troops capturing territory in the South and the Southern

government seemingly on the verge of collapse - both Linebacker campaigns seemingly removed any hope for a quick end to the war as long as American air power still remained present in Vietnam (Pape 1996). Following the failed Easter Offensive and the Linebacker campaigns, one North Vietnamese general - Tran Van Tra - reported how "our troops were exhausted and their units in disarray… we had not been able to make up our losses. We were short of manpower as well as food and ammunition, and coping with the enemy was very difficult" (Karnow 1991). As American units exited the war in 1973, "Communist commanders now instructed their forces to attack only where they were clearly superior to Thieu's troops, their ultimate objective to tilt the military balance in their favor" (Karnow 1991). As such, it was "not until fall 1974, after the resignation of President Nixon, [that] Hanoi [became] sufficiently confident that the air threat had disappeared", and became willing to authorize "the final offensives" (Pape 1996).

In this manner, the Linebacker campaigns seemed to have several effects on the Northern perspective of the war. First and foremost, the campaigns directly contributed to the end of US involvement in the war, with US troops fully stepping back after the peace agreement in January of 1973. While this withdrawal of American support eventually enabled the North to achieve complete victory over the South, the initial damage of the failed Easter Offensive hurt Northern prospects for the near future, and while they might have been optimistic about their long term plans with the US withdrawal, it does not seem as though they might conclude the war was going well in the initial weeks following the Linebacker campaigns. Along with this, I believe the Linebacker campaigns do not represent an instance in which conflict caused the war to be extended, but instead that these two operations led to the eventual end of the war for both the North and the Americans. On the American side, Linebacker I and II directly led to the peace agreement that prompted American officials to declare "peace with honor", allowing them to

withdraw their forces from the war (Karnow 1991). Likewise, the campaigns and eventual peace agreement indirectly sped up the North's victory in the South, as by cutting the Americans out of the war, the North Vietnamese were able to wage full conventional warfare against a weakening South no longer supported by American air power. As such, the infliction of damage and casualties on both sides through these campaigns does not suggest an extension of the war, as proposed by Reiter's hypothesis, but rather represents the approaching end of the engagement.

Conclusion

When considering coercive violence, the Bargaining Theory of War, and various factors that impact wars' durations, one hypothesis proposed by scholar Dan Reiter is that "in some conflicts, militaries may have different measures of success" and that in a conflict, "two opposing sides could conceivably observe the same battle outcome with both concluding that they were successful", thus extending the duration of the war (Reiter 2003). Through this theory, Reiter suggests that this could serve as one explanation for the Vietnam War's long duration. In his reasoning, Reiter suggests that both the North Vietnamese and US measured victory throughout the war through body counts and enemy casualties, with both sides viewing escalations during the war as successful due to enemy casualties increasing, thus causing them to conclude the war was progressing well and incentivizing both sides to press on in the conflict (Reiter 2003).

In this paper, I have sought to analyze this claim within the context of three major escalations during the Vietnam War: Operation Rolling Thunder, the Tet Offensive, and the Linebacker campaigns. I argue that the execution of and response towards these campaigns do not fully meet the criteria specified in Reiter's hypothesis, thus demonstrating that it is not applicable to the Vietnam War. In Operation Rolling Thunder and the Linebacker campaigns,

American leaders seemed to measure success more by whether the enemy was pressured towards negotiations rather than measuring success through damage and casualties inflicted upon the enemy. Likewise, in each of the campaigns, both North Vietnamese and American leaders seemed to have considerable concern about the state of war going into and following each of these escalations and did not appear to conclude that the war was going well, as theorized by Reiter. As such, the Vietnam War did not appear to be extended due to both sides measuring victory by body count and perceiving the war to be going well; in fact, the opposite appeared to be true for the Linebacker campaigns, as rising costs inflicted on the North Vietnamese through American bombing hurt North Vietnamese optimism for victory in the short turn, pushing them to sign a peace agreement that ultimately resulted in the end of the war, rather than a further extension of the conflict.

Being a case study, one key limitation with this paper is its external validity, as it might be difficult to extrapolate the findings of this research into other conflicts and wars. While I argue that Reiter's hypothesis on war duration does not fit within the scope of the Vietnam War, this theory might still be applicable to other conflicts in which states used competing measures of victory. In this manner, future research within this topic could focus on if Reiter's hypothesis is applicable to other civil wars or international conflicts, and whether there are instances where two states continued fighting due to different measures of victory. By continuing research in these areas, future leaders and scholars might gain a better understanding of what leads to war, and what factors contribute to a war's duration.

Works Cited

Aydin, A., & Regan, P. M. (2012). Networks of third-party interveners and civil war duration. European Journal of International Relations, 18(3), 573-597. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066111403515

Balcells, L., & Kalyvas, S. N. (2014). Does Warfare Matter? Severity, Duration, and Outcomes of Civil Wars. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 58(8), 1390-1418. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002714547903

Balch-Lindsay, D., & Enterline, A. J. (2000). Killing time: The World Politics of Civil War Duration, 1820-1992. *International Studies Quarterly*, *44*(4), 615–642. https://doi.org/10.1111/0020-8833.00174

Bennett, D. S., & Stam, A. C. (1996). The duration of Interstate Wars, 1816–1985. *American Political Science Review*, *90*(2), 239–257. https://doi.org/10.2307/2082882

Berinsky, A. J. (2007). Assuming the Costs of War: Events, Elites, and American Public Support for Military Conflict. *The Journal of Politics*, *69*(4), 975–997. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2007.00602.x

Brower, C. F. (1991). Strategic Reassessment in Vietnam: The Westmoreland "Alternate Strategy" of 1967-1968. *Naval War College Review*, *44*(2), 20–51. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44638025

Campbell, J. T., & Cain, L. S. (1965). Public opinion and the outbreak of war. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *9*(3), 318–329. https://doi.org/10.1177/002200276500900303

Central Intelligence Agency. (1968, February 20). *Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Tactics and Strategy for the Tet General Offensive*. Central Intelligence Agency. https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/00095746

Central Intelligence Agency. (1967, August 16). Effects of the Rolling Thunder Program: Bomb Damage, Civilian Casualties, and Morale in North Vietnam. https://vva.vietnam.ttu.edu/images.php?img=/images/041/04111146007.pdf

Daddis, G. A. (2011). No sure victory: Measuring U.S. Army Effectiveness and progress in the Vietnam War. *Journal of American History*, *99*(1), 365–365. https://doi.org/10.1093/jahist/jas068

Daddis, G. A. (2012). The problem of metrics: Assessing progress and effectiveness in the Vietnam War. *War in History*, *19*(1), 73–98. https://doi.org/10.1177/0968344511422312

Daddis, G. A. (2015). *Westmoreland's war: Reassessing American strategy in Vietnam*. Oxford University Press.

Escobar, G. P. (2016). A strategy of attrition: Why general Westmoreland failed in 1967. https://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/api/collection/p4013coll3/id/3475/download

Fearon, J. D. (1995). Rationalist explanations for war. *International Organization*, *49*(3), 379–414. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020818300033324

Fearon, J. D. (2004). Why do some civil wars last so much longer than others? *Journal of Peace Research*, *41*(3), 275–301. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343304043770

FEARON, J. D., & LAITIN, D. D. (2003). Ethnicity, insurgency, and Civil War. *American Political Science Review*, *97*(01), 75–90. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0003055403000534

Fearon, J. D., & Laitin, D. D. (2007, August). Civil war termination. In *Conference paper*.

Gartner, S. S., & Myers, M. E. (1995). Body counts and "Success" in the Vietnam and Korean wars. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, *25*(3), 377. https://doi.org/10.2307/205692

Gartner, S. S., & Segura, G. M. (1998). War, Casualties, and Public Opinion. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *42*(3), 278–300. http://www.jstor.org/stable/174515

Gartner, S. S., & Segura, G. M. (2000). Race, casualties, and opinion in the Vietnam War. *The Journal of Politics*, *62*(1), 115–146. https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-3816.00006

Grange, D. L. (2000). ASYMMETRIC WARFARE: OLD METHOD, NEW CONCERN. *National Strategy Forum Review*.

Grinter, L. E. (1975). How they lost: Doctrines, strategies and outcomes of the Vietnam War. *Asian Survey*, *15*(12), 1114–1132. https://doi.org/10.2307/2643587

Herring, G. C. (1991). America and Vietnam: The Unending War. *Foreign Affairs*, *70*(5), 104. https://doi.org/10.2307/20045006

Karnow, S. (1991). *Vietnam: A History*. The Viking Press.

Larson, E. V. (1996). *Casualties and consensus: The historical role of casualties in domestic support for U.S. Military Operations*. RAND.

Mueller, J. E. (1980). The search for the "Breaking point" in Vietnam: The statistics of a deadly quarrel. *International Studies Quarterly*, *24*(4), 497. https://doi.org/10.2307/2600287

National Archives and Records Administration. (2019). *Pentagon Papers: The Air War in North Vietnam. Volume I*. National Archives and Records Administration. https://nara-media-001.s3.amazonaws.com/arcmedia/research/pentagon-papers/Pentagon-Papers-Part-IV-C-7-a.pdf (a)

National Archives and Records Administration. (2019). *Pentagon Papers: The Air War in North Vietnam. Volume II*. National Archives and Records Administration. https://nara-media-001.s3.amazonaws.com/arcmedia/research/pentagon-papers/Pentagon-Papers-Part-IV-C-7-b.pdf (b)

National Archives and Records Administration. (2019). *Pentagon Papers: U.S. Ground Strategy and Force Deployments: 1965 - 1967. Volume I*. National Archives and Records Administration. https://nara-media-001.s3.amazonaws.com/arcmedia/research/pentagon-papers/Pentagon-Papers-Part-IV-C-6-a.pdf (c)

Norrevik, S., & Sarwari, M. (2021). Third-party regime type and civil war duration. *Journal of Peace Research*, *58*(6), 1256–1270. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343320975819

Pape, R. A. (1996). *Bombing to win: Air Power and coercion in war*. Cornell University Press.

Pohle, V. (1969). The Viet Cong in Saigon: Tactics and objectives during the Tet Offensive. *Rand Corporation*. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.7249/RM5799

Powell, R. (2006). War as a commitment problem. *International Organization*, *60*(01). https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020818306060061

Reiter, D. (2003). Exploring the bargaining model of war. *Perspective on Politics*, *1*(1), 27–43. https://doi.org/10.1017/s1537592703000033

Reiter, D., & Stam, A. C. (1998). Democracy, war initiation, and victory. *American Political Science Review*, *92*(2), 377–389. https://doi.org/10.2307/2585670

Rostow, W. W. (1996). The case for the Vietnam War. *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters*, *26*(4). https://doi.org/10.55540/0031-1723.1806

Sanaei, A. (2019). Time is of the essence: The causal effect of duration on support for war. *Journal of Peace Research*, *56*(6), 783–796. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343319834984

Schelling, T. (1967). The diplomacy of violence. *Arms and Influence*, 1–34. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt5vm52s.4

Slantchev, B. L. (2004). How initiators end their wars: The duration of warfare and the terms of peace. *American Journal of Political Science*, *48*(4), 813–829. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0092-5853.2004.00103.x

Shirkey, Z. C. (2016). Uncertainty and war duration. *International Studies Review*, *18*(2), 244–267. https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viv005

Spector, R. H. (2024). *Vietnam War*. Encyclopædia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/event/Vietnam-War/Tet-brings-the-war-home

Summers, H. G. (2007). *On strategy: A critical analysis of the Vietnam War*. Dover Publications.

Travis, D. S. (1990). *U.S. progress reports for the Vietnam War, 1967-1968: A study of the Hamlet Evaluation System and the enemy order of battle* (Order No. 1341879). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (303886256). https://bunchproxy.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/u-s-progress-reports-vietnam-war-1967-1968-study/docview/303886256/se-2

Walter, B. F. (2020, September 10). *Why civil wars have gotten longer, Bloodier, and more numerous*. Political Violence at a Glance. https://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2017/07/05/why-civil-wars-have-gotten-longer-bloodier-and-more-numerous/

Walter, B. F., Rosenfeld, S., Shephard, A., Weigel, M., & Shapiro, W. (2023, November 29). *We are living in the age of Civil War*. The New Republic. https://newrepublic.com/article/165959/global-age-civil-war