end of the decade, however, she was concentrating most of her attention on the women's liberation movement, and her definition of a sexist described many of her former allies. In Miami Beach last July Ms. Steinem supported the nomination of Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm and described George McGovern as the best white male candidate.

In the late Sixties and early Seventies American society was in the process of breaking up into an ever increasing number of smaller groups that entered the political arena to advance their own special concerns—women's rights, homosexuals' rights, students' rights, or whatever. Each of their voices became more strident, more assured, less willing to compromise with centrist values. We had moved a long way from that chilly January morning in 1961 when John Kennedy electrified the nation by asking us to think, not of what we could do for ourselves, but of what we could do for our country. Perhaps the toll the war has taken can be measured by how faintly the echo of that call resounds today. □

The Effect on the Balance of Power, Part I

REAPING THE BENEFITS OF DEFEAT

By Edwin O. Reischauer

In strict balance-of-power terms, declares Professor Reischauer, the irony is that losing the war has proved more profitable than winning it; yet certain domestic and foreign reactions to the outcome could be dangerous.

The supreme irony of the Vietnam War may be that, because of our failure to achieve our goals there, the global balance of power has become more stable and may even have shifted in ways favorable to the United States —at least in the short run. The long-run prospects, however, are more disconcerting.

Let me try to untangle the threads. To begin with, we did not become involved in Vietnam out of a concern with the political and social institutions under which Vietnamese people live, nor certainly out of economic considerations, but rather because we sought to maintain the balance of power in Southeast Asia and elsewhere, which appeared to us to be in danger of becoming unbalanced.

In the early years after World War II we supported the French in Indochina because we feared that French reverses and disappointments there would adversely affect the stability of France and thus upset the fragile balance of forces in Europe. As the Cold War intensified, China came under Communist rule, the Korean War gave a searingly hot reality to Cold War fears, and the nations of Indochina came to loom in American minds as front-line defense posts in the global conflict with Communism. Vietnam was seen as a teetering domino in a line stretching back into unspecified heartlands; it was the weak spot in the dike holding back the rising Communist flood; it was the test case in the deadly international game of chicken; it was the place where we would prove definitively that "wars of aggression do not pay." Our hope in Vietnam was that, by a judicious incremental addition of power from our virtually limitless resources, we would, at the least cost to ourselves, find the point at which the other side would cry "uncle." Thus we would demonstrate that we had the will and the capacity to stop the Communists anywhere on the earth. If we proved this point in Vietnam, we believed we would not be faced with other tests and the balance of power would be restored—or perhaps even tipped in our favor.

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The war, of course, has turned out quite differently. If anything has been proved, it is that the United States is extremely unlikely to engage again in this sort of misadventure. Whatever the Nixon Doctrine means in a positive sense, it also gives a very clear negative message: "No more Vietnams." If Vietnam, then, was a test case, the way is far more open today than it was before to similar wars of "aggression" or "national liberation" or whatever the Vietnam War has been. The "other side" can now engage in such activities with the understanding that the United States will be very reluctant to intervene in the same massive way it did in Vietnam. Our allies, insofar as they fear such aggression, can have little confidence that we will come to their rescue. In short, we

have utterly failed to prove that we can now, or will in the future, stop wars of national liberation, and if our original premise was correct that we must show the power and determination to quell such disturbances as that in Vietnam everywhere in the world, then we must face the fact that the war has produced a catastrophic shift of the balance of power *against* our interests.

I do not believe this to be the case, but anyone convinced of the premise that led us into Vietnam in the first place may now find evidence suggesting dire consequences. North Korea, seeing how deeply mired the United States was in Vietnam, became quite venturesome a few years ago, capturing the electronic intelligence-gathering ship *Pueblo* and sending bands of saboteurs and assassins into South Korea. Kim Il-sung, the Premier of North Korea, obviously felt that the time might be ripe for a military showdown with South Korea. Furthermore, in much of Asia, and perhaps elsewhere, too, there has been a marked downgrading of the American defense shield. The Japanese have even greater doubts than they did before about the credibility of the American nuclear umbrella. The Thais and other Southeast Asians clearly realize that their security cannot be guaranteed by the United States. Talk about a five-sided balance of power in the world (the United States, the Soviet Union, Western Europe, China, and Japan) or a four-sided balance in Asia (all of the aforementioned except Western Europe) —talk that was started largely by President Nixon himself—appears to be an attempt to explain that the United States can no longer single-handedly balance the Soviet Union and China. Some may even see the growing Soviet naval role in East Asian waters, the admission of the People's Republic of China into the United Nations, and the American and Japanese rapprochements with Peking as clear evidences of a massive shift in the balance of power in favor of the Communist side.

But, if the original American premises about what was at stake in the Vietnam War were incorrect, as I believe they were, then all this appears in an entirely different light. And present realities seem to bear me out. For, if a major shift in the balance of power had occurred, one would expect a great increase in influence by and fear of China and the Soviet Union, particularly in East Asia. Yet there is no evidence of such an upsurge of influence or fear.

The Japanese rapprochement with China and Japan's simultaneous efforts to improve economic and other relations with the Soviet Union are basically signs of relaxed fears and growing self-confidence on the part of the Japanese. The tentative contacts established recently between North and South Korea, following the intensification of hostility a couple of years ago, are signs that the North Koreans are giving up hope that either China or the Soviet Union will support them in an aggressive policy and that the South Koreans feel more confidence than before in their own bargaining power. No one can believe that a Vietnam that has remained fiercely independent of China, despite the desperate pressures of war, will become a Chinese puppet in peacetime. Centuries-long domination by the Vietnamese in Indochina makes the ultimate fate of Cambodia and of Laos dependent to a large degree on the outcome in Vietnam, but the concern of these other Asian peoples is with the Vietnamese, not the Chinese. Similarly, Thailand has more to fear from a resurgent Vietnamese neighbor than from the colossus to the north. All of the countries of Southeast Asia are less threatened by external aggression than by internal instabilities—ethnic tensions in Malaysia, economic stagnation in Indonesia, both these problems in Burma, and political and economic instability in the Philippines. All of these nations are susceptible to subversion, but the external pressure in such subversion is inconsequential compared to the internal pressure. Moreover, insofar as the countries of Southeast Asia fear threats from beyond their borders, they are far more worried about Japanese economic domination than about any Chinese or Soviet military power. Even an increased Soviet naval presence seems to raise no fears in Asia. After the American disaster in Vietnam no one can believe that the Soviet Union would choose to embark on military adventures in East Asian waters. Outside of Indochina itself there has been no sign of a domino effect; no flood waters have surged through the broken dike.

Taiwan is one area that has been clearly buffeted by international forces, but the crisis in which it finds itself

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is not one of balance of power in the narrow military sense. Its defenses are secure—at least for the foreseeable future. Taiwan's problem is that the changed diplomatic position of Peking undermines the claim of the government in Taipei to be "China," and that might in the future damage the position of the island in world trade. For the time being, however, Taiwan remains one of the most economically successful units in all of Asia. It seems probable that the diplomatic wave that has swept over it will leave this situation basically unaltered.

In sum, the failure of the United States in Vietnam, whatever it has done to the United States itself, does not appear to have increased the weight of either the Soviet Union or China in the worldwide balance of power. Indeed, there may well be an important gain from the war for the United States in imparting to the American people a more sophisticated understanding of balance-of-power problems. Part of this sophistication may be the realization that there are limitations, after all, to our ability to determine the flow of history, particularly on the soggy economic and institutional terrain of a less developed country, where American power, however "awesome," so easily bogs down. One can hope that we have rid ourselves of at least some of our "arrogance of power."

In addition, we may have learned that the less developed world is not a power vacuum waiting to be filled, if not by us, then by the "other side." Such may have been the situation in the nineteenth century—the golden age for balance-of-power concepts—but it most certainly is not the case today. The rise of nationalism throughout the world has radically altered the relationship between the great military powers and less developed nations. The ability of nationally aroused Chinese guerrillas to frustrate a powerful Japanese military machine in the 1930s and 1940s was the first clear indication of this great change in the strategic situation in the world. The collapse of the colonial empires and the inability of the French and the Dutch to reestablish their power in East Asia was even more emphatic evidence. For those who still could not perceive the trend against successful outside manipulation of less developed powers, the Vietnam War has written the message in still bolder letters.

The war thus has contributed to a growing realization that the less developed countries, far from being sites for the crucial tests of will and strength between the great powers, are really independent of whatever global balance of power may exist. Many of these countries are insistent on their own nonalignment, and all cherish their independence. As a result they cannot be controlled by an external power at a cost that would make the effort a sensible investment. And, even if they could be controlled, they would be of little use to their controllers. Military advantage today does not depend on the domination of pieces of terrain, and, furthermore, weak client states may constitute political and economic liabilities that lessen the strength and increase the vulnerability of the patron country.

The lesson probably has not been fully learned. Too many of the old balance-of-power ideas that led us into Vietnam are still voiced approvingly in Washington and other world capitals today. American, Soviet, and Chinese bluster and posturing over the Indian-Pakistani war last winter demonstrated that these misconceptions survive throughout the world. But the Vietnam War has brought at least a dim awareness that, if the vital interests of the great military powers and the balance of power among them are not much affected by the outcome in Vietnam, their vital interests are not likely to be involved in most other less developed countries. The perceived area of major conflicting interests among the great powers, and therefore the chances for actual conflict among them, has been substantially reduced. In other words, a war fought to maintain the balance of power has through its loss demonstrated that the world was in much greater strategic balance than had been assumed.

Still, granting that the likelihood of big-power confrontation in the less developed world has been reduced, it could be argued that American military ineptitude in Vietnam, or a weakening of the American will in military matters, or merely Soviet or Chinese perceptions of some weakness in the United States has tipped the balance of power against the United States or at least made the balance less stable.

There is little evidence, however, that this has been the effect of the Vietnam War. If there had been some sort of debacle for American forces in Vietnam or a sudden and unceremonious American withdrawal, the balance of power might well have shifted or become destabilized. But the United States has not suffered a Dienbienphu, and meantime other factors appear to have offset possible damage to the credibility of American power. The battlefield experience of U.S. forces in Southeast Asia and the testing of new weapons, such as the "smart bombs," cannot have gone unnoticed by the Chinese and the Russians. Moreover, although American military adventurism has undoubtedly been dealt a blow, there is no reason to believe that the American will to maintain a nuclear balance has been in any way affected. Indeed, the obvious reluctance of both the Soviet Union and China to become directly involved in Vietnam and their

willingness to reach new agreements with President Nixon while the war was still under way could be seen as showing a weakening of military will on *their* part.

In fact, the Vietnam War not only may have reduced the likelihood of a direct clash of the big powers but may actually have improved the American position. The realization that Chinese aggression and domination were not the problem in Vietnam permitted Americans to see that China was not as militarily aggressive as had been supposed. This realization opened the possibility of relaxation of our containment policy toward China and of the development of more constructive relations with Peking. The decline in Sino-American tensions, in turn, improved the American bargaining position with the Soviet Union, perhaps making more possible the recent strategic arms limitation (SALT) agreements. Some increase in Soviet-Chinese tensions may have resulted from the Washington-Peking thaw, but otherwise the possibilities of direct conflict between the great powers seem to have been reduced, and thus the balance-of-power position of the United States has, if anything, been improved.

The irony, of course, remains that all this was not achieved by design but rather by miscalculation. If the United States had won the Vietnam War in the way it first intended, the balance of power would probably be much less stable than it is today and the strategic position of the United States much less favorable. China would be even more fearful of the United States, and the tensions and dangers of war between China and the United States therefore greater. The Soviet-American relationship might well have worsened rather than improved. Americans, having kept what they believed to be the first domino from falling, would be still burdened with their mistaken worries and false sense of responsibilities around the globe, and the resultant worldwide military involvements would remain as possible reasons for a mutually fatal confrontation with the Soviet Union.

Losing the war, then, has proved, in strict balance-of-power terms, much more beneficial than winning it. And yet there may be serious losses to the United States in the broader field of international relations. For example, there is the danger of a swing back to isolationism in the United States, which is encouraged by natural concern about our manifold domestic problems, some of which have undoubtedly been exacerbated by the war in Vietnam. By isolationism, of course, I do not mean a lessening of our "arrogance of power," the renunciation of our self-chosen role as "world policeman," nor the abandonment of the false balance-of-power concepts that got us into Vietnam. These are all desirable withdrawals toward reality. I am referring to a decline of concern with international problems, particularly the problems of the less developed three-quarters of the world. The growing gap in well-being between this world majority and the minority in the affluent, industrialized nations, together with the global problems of pollution and the pressures of a growing population on limited natural resources, seems to me much more likely to bring the world to disaster than a breakdown in the balance of power. If the Vietnam War induces the American public, which controls so much of the world's wealth, to turn its back on these problems, even temporarily, then this may prove to be the ultimate, though long-fused, disaster resulting from this war.

Even assuming that the American public has not been pushed into an ultimately self-destructive isolationism of this sort, the Vietnam War has worsened the international position of the United States in a number of other ways. Other countries now see us as a nation far less certain of our international course than we appeared before, and therefore they think of us as less predictable. Our assurances of almost any sort, ranging from nuclear protection down to economic aid, seem less credible. At the same time, to many foreign peoples the idea of close association with the United States seems less attractive today than at earlier times. If the American public could react in revulsion to our bombing policies in Vietnam, imagine how much greater has been the revulsion elsewhere. The net result of this offense to world public opinion has been a considerable decline in American prestige and influence. It could be argued that some of this decline is desirable because the American role and influence in the world since World War II have been overreaching. But the decline has certainly gone beyond the desirable point. The United States remains by far the richest and strongest nation in the world, and serious doubts about our intentions and distaste for association with us can have a dangerously destabilizing impact on international relations.

In summary, therefore, I come to three somewhat conflicting conclusions about the effect of the Vietnam War on the balance of power and international relations in

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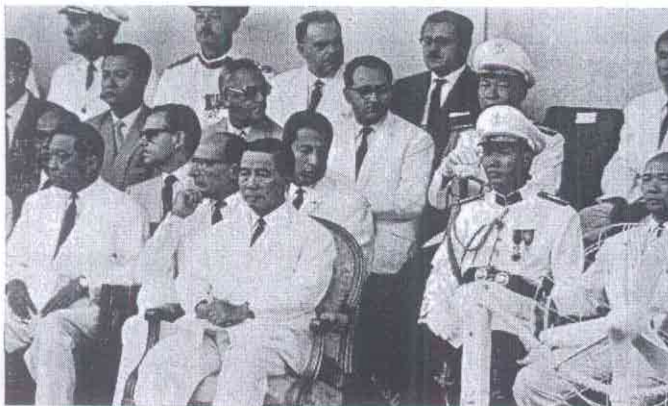

general. The only thing that all three have in common is that they are at complete variance with the American assumptions that led us into the war. These three conclusions are: 1) The immediate balance of power has been virtually unaffected by the war; 2) the future balance of power has probably been strengthened; and 3) a possible decline of American concern with the more basic world problems and an undoubted lessening in some countries of the desire for close cooperation with the United States may be dangerous long-range effects of the war. Such consequences may, indeed, seriously threaten the prospects for the development of a viable world community over the decades ahead. But we shall have to reserve judgment for the present. □

The Effect on the Balance of Power, Part II

AN EROSION OF MUTUAL TRUST

By Theo Sommer

"Europeans fear that the 'Vietnamization of Vietnam' might be followed by the 'Europeanization of Europe'," writes the political editor of Die Zeit.

In 1972 there are not many Europeans left who still care to remember that ten, even seven, years ago they supported America's war effort in Vietnam. It is not the fashion nowadays to remember. But there was undeniably a great deal of support, and I was one of the supporters. Late in 1965 I published an article on Lyndon Johnson's intervention in Indochina, embarrassingly entitled "The Necessary War." The argument was deceptively simple: successful aggression begets more aggression, so no aggressor must go unchecked. In the Forties and Fifties the containment of Russian Communism in Europe had been the main task. In the Sixties and Seventies priority would have to be accorded to containing Chinese Communism in Asia. If the Americans did not stand up for Saigon, they could not very well be expected to stand up for Berlin.

All this was conventional wisdom at the time. Like a lot of conventional wisdom, it turned out to be quite wrong—for the simple reason that it rested on a number of fallacious assumptions. *Fallacy number one* relates to the nature of the conflict. Vietnam was not a war instigated from outside, fanned by Moscow or Peking; it was not the beginning of a major Chinese thrust southward by armed revolution. It was originally a civil war fostered by a regime in Hanoi that happened to be both nationalist and Communist and could, by dint of the latter, count on a minimum of aid from Russia and China.

Fallacy number two derives from this. It seemed logical to transfer the imperative of containment from the Old World to Southeast Asia. But Indochina was not Western Europe. American efforts alone never had a chance of succeeding in fortifying and holding the line—basically because there was no commensurate effort on the part of the Vietnamese. It was a hopeless task to promote democratic reform while prosecuting a war and even more hopeless to promote the retarded process of Vietnamese nation building by waging an all-out military campaign.

Fallacy number three has to do with the strategic philosophy underlying the U.S. operation. Escalation was wrong for two reasons. First, piecemeal deployment of American troops never offered any prospect for decisive success on the battlefield because every increment of U.S. war-fighting capability could be countered by an

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