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A Guest Editorial (From The National Review)

In a speech on the Senate Floor on May 11, Senator Goldwater delivered a spirited attack on critics of the administration's war policy and deplored, in passing, the "many special articles . . . in liberal and left-wing publications under the title 'Nixon's War.'" On May 12, there appeared in the *National Review*, the conservative magazine edited by William F. Buckley, an editorial which we are reprinting here today because we believe it makes a compelling argument and makes it well. The editorial, as it appeared in the *National Review*, was entitled . . .

Richard Nixon's War

In his April 26 address to the nation the President gave a firm and surprisingly clear statement of the reasons for the U.S. presence in Vietnam and the objectives of his own policy of Vietnamization. "If one country, armed with the most modern weapons by other countries, can invade another nation and succeed in conquering it, other countries will be encouraged to do exactly the same thing—in the Mideast, in Europe and in other international danger spots. If the Communists win militarily in Vietnam, the risk of war in other parts of the globe would be enormously increased."

And specifically as to Vietnamization: "I have warned . . . I would act to meet that attack for three reasons: To protect our remaining American forces, to permit continuation of our withdrawal program, and to prevent the imposition of a Communist regime on the people of South Vietnam against their will, with the inevitable bloodbath that would follow for hundreds of thousands who have dared to oppose Communist aggression. . . . We have offered the most generous peace terms—peace with honor for both sides . . . but we will not be defeated, and we will never surrender our friends to Communist aggression." (The italics are ours.)

The editors of *National Review* have no fault to find with this conceptual and rhetorical framework

within which Mr. Nixon placed the Vietnam war, which he thus chooses to make, henceforth and unambiguously, his war. We commend in particular the directness with which he spoke in the face of the massive domestic attack that has been mounted against him since he ordered the air and naval reply to North Vietnam's attack in Southeast Asia.

But the President's address was less convincing, in rhetoric and in substance, when he touched on the military and political measures by which he proposed to carry his policy through. The military actions which he has ordered during the past month, with all their consequences here as well as in Southeast Asia, are justified only if his policy in the end succeeds; if it is to fail, they are wrong, most terribly wrong, militarily, politically and morally. If the Vietnam war is going to end in any case with a Communist takeover, either directly or through the more likely route of a coalition government, then it is time to bring the fighting to a quick close, not to step up its scale, since that political result could be brought about by negotiation. We hope Richard Nixon has faced the implications of his present stand, and that he has adequate grounds for believing that the aims he stated on April 26 will in truth be achieved. And if he has, he owes it also to us, to the Vietnamese, and to our allies, to inform us of the facts on which he relies. An optimistic report from General Abrams is not enough, there having been too many such reports over the years. If the North Vietnamese can still send a powerful, multipronged invading army into South Vietnam, if it still requires a substantial portion of American air and sea power even to slow down the invasion, then it is obvious that Vietnamization has not been achieved. We have the right to ask why, on the record so far, we should believe it will be.

The cover photograph of the current issue of the French magazine *L'Express* is of Richard Nixon, with the caption, "*Vietnam: Nixon Joue Quitte ou Double*" [Nixon Bets Double or Nothing"]. He must not forget that the Vietnamese and his own countrymen are the chips he is playing with.