

Through the Air Power Lens- The Failure of Western Military Power in the Vietnam War

“War is nothing but the continuation of policy with other means.”¹

Karl von Clausewitz

***Success in war relies on the national leadership’s ability to employ its
military forces as a political instrument.²***

Stephen W. Wilson, 2001.

Good morning.

As the title suggests, this paper examines the employment of air power in the Vietnam War as a case study in overall failure of western military power to achieve US, and Australia’s strategic aims in the Vietnam War.

The context though, will be less about day-to-day air operations and more about the effectiveness air power as a component of national strategy during the conflict.

The experience of the Vietnam War is an example of the challenges faced by the practitioners of the western way of war in complex and adaptive limited wars, especially insurgencies.

Given the Australian perspective of this conference, I’ll also touch briefly on the basis for the Australian involvement in the conflict, but will not dwell on the subject. Having been the previous RAAF historian, I can’t resist putting a couple of words about our Air Force too.

Two definitions must first be understood. The ‘*Western Way of War*’ refers to the employment of massed military power used with decisive intent, energy and planning. Most importantly, it is military power used as an extension of national policy, a means to achieve strategic aims through deterrence and coercion. Thereby forcing the adversary to accept the will of the victor rather than being persuaded through diplomatic entreaty.

This approach has both strengths and weaknesses. Not the least of which is the near unanswerable question of what keeps the adversary to the agreed peace terms once the military forces have left the theatre?

The current Australian definition of ‘Air Power’ is the total strength of a nation’s capability to conduct and influence activities in, through and from

the air to achieve its objectives.³ While the definition of air power might differ in phrasing across the world's air forces, the common element in most is that air power is a component of national power and employed in accordance with strategic aims as set by Government and not simply a term referring to the employment of aircraft on operations.

AIR POWER

Air power, as opposed to fighting from the air, relies on a combination of the following factors to be strategically effective:

- a. The available target sets have to be centres of gravity which are essential to the adversary's national power model or their strategic aims.
- b. The effects generated by air power must have direct impact on those adversaries who have influence over national strategic aims.
- c. The effects generated through air power have to be sufficient to obtain the desired strategic outcomes.
- d. There must be strategy in place for the sustainment of the effects generated by air power before air power is employed. In other words, when a conflict is drawing to a negotiated settlement, coercive force is no longer an option. If the adversary is aware of this fact, they know they only have to ride out the air campaign before agreeing to negotiations. What then can be used to maintain the coercive effects previously generated by air power?

When the US and its allies committed military power to the conflict in Vietnam, it did so in expectation it would be done in the Western Way. Overwhelming military force applied to coerce the Government, the military forces of North Vietnam and the Viet Cong, to align with the strategic objectives of the Governments of the US and South Vietnam.

Saigon on 30 April 1975

When, in April 1975, the victorious forces of North Vietnam took control of Saigon, it was evident that the overwhelming superiority of the western military power of the US, had failed to achieve any of its objectives. Why?

This paper will explore at least part of the answer to that question through the lens of air power as an exemplar of all forms of national power employed during the conflict.

First though, a brief overview of the initial Australian commitment to the Vietnam War.

The Australian involvement in the Vietnam conflict was generated by a number of strategic interests. In the post-1945 period the region to Australia's north became increasingly identified as an area of importance as the influence of European control receded and the spread of communism increased almost in lock step with the re-emergence of the national identities of the previously colonised states.

Geneva Conference

More specifically, the origins of the Australian involvement in Vietnam can be traced to the 1954 Geneva Conference called to finalise the armistice agreement which ended the fighting in the Korean War. Also on the conference agenda were discussions around the emerging independent states of Indochina - that of Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam.⁴

While the Geneva Conference failed to reach a meaningful agreement on the situation in Korea, it did result in a decision on the withdrawal of French forces from Indochina and the partition of Vietnam along the 17th Parallel, separated into a communist North and a republican South.

Elections were to be held no later than July 1956 to enable the Vietnamese to decide on the nature of their political system of government in a reunified Vietnam. Known as the Geneva Accords, the decision concerning Vietnam did not rest easily with at least two of the key actors.

Ngô Đình Diệm

Ngô Đình Diệm, the Prime Minister and later President of South Vietnam, did not favour an election on reunification due to what he considered an oppressive political environment in North Vietnam that would not result in a free and fair ballot.

While in Hanoi, Ho Che Mhin, the President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam while outwardly supportive of the elections, maintained support to the Viet Minh movement in the South, primarily to maintain a political-military presence in the largely rural areas and to adversely influence governance in the south.

When the Ngô Đình Diem Government formally declared that the promised elections would not go ahead, there began a progressive slide into what was

to become an increasingly violent and wide spread Communist led insurgency in the South.

SEATO Policy Statement

In a move intended to curb the communist influence developing in South Vietnam as part of the national intent of encouraging democratic stability across the Indochina region, Australia joined with several regional states as well as with Britain, France and the US, to form the South-East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO). The aim of SEATO was to underwrite the sovereign independence of South-East Asian states. More specifically, the US increasingly directed SEATO initiatives towards curbing the spread of communism in the region.⁵

As the security and political situation in South Vietnam deteriorated, Australia and the US became increasingly drawn into a war aimed at resisting further North Vietnamese incursions into the South.

This was no surprise and had been a policy foreshadowed in Australia for some years. In the 1956 Strategic Basis for Australian Defence Policy document, the language and intent was specific. Stating in relation to the arch of states to Australia's north, that 'collective defence is the most effective and economic method for ensuring Australia's security'.⁶

Indochina Map

In partnership with other South East Treaty Organisations, but principally with the USA – Australia began to express concerns regarding the threat posed to Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam by what was referred to as 'other power groups'. Further defining the specific threat to Vietnam in a 1955 SEATO report as 'Communist violation of the 1954 Geneva Accords'.⁷ In response to the escalation in Viet Cong operations, the Australian Government began to look to its Defence force for contributions to the stabilisation of the political conditions South Vietnam.

Flying Officer David Cooper

The RAAF's contributions started small. Over the period 9-21 May 1963, a C47 Dakota from No 2 Squadron's transport flight based at RAAF Base Butterworth and captained by Flying Officer David Cooper, conducted 28 humanitarian aid sorties in South Vietnam. Delivering some 25 000 kg of food and medical supplies to Montagnard refugees displaced by the Viet

Cong insurgency. This short deployment marked the beginning of the RAAF presence in Vietnam.

By 1967 the RAAF had three squadrons in Vietnam, consisting of Iroquois helicopters, Caribou transports and Canberra bombers. The RAAF presence in Vietnam was to continue in varying forms and with only minor breaks until 1975.

I would just like to close the Australian phase of this presentation with an image of three of the four last Australian servicemen in Vietnam. Literally, the last ADF boots on the ground in the Vietnam.

When Australia withdrew its forces from Vietnam during 1971-2 it did so in the expectation of successful negotiations between the US and North Vietnamese. The resulting settlement did not last.

In 1975 the North successfully invaded the South and the Vietnam we know today was born out of the result.

EVAC FLT

As the North closed in on Saigon, RAAF C-130 aircraft conducted a number of evacuation flights of refugees, orphans and Australian Embassy staff. When what was supposed to have been the last C-130 was due to depart it was found to be overloaded.

ADG

It required the offloading freight and the four-man Airfield Defence Guard security section. Fortunately, a spare C-130 was circling just off the coast as a contingency measure. Here you see three of the ADGs waiting somewhat pensively to see who arrived at the airfield first – the North Vietnamese or the RAAF C-130.

Fortunately, the RAAF got in first.

F-104s

We now move to the bigger picture of the Air War, which needs to focus on the American conduct of what would result in the largest bombing campaign by tonnage the world has ever known.

USAF MONTAGE

One of the great lessons to come out of the war was the need for unified Command and Control of air power. Over the course of the Vietnam War there was in effect seven independent self-contained air forces operating as part of the West's forces. These consisted of:

USAF Strategic Air Command – This force, while ostensibly part of the US's strategic deterrent intended to threaten the USSR, was employed in operations in and around Vietnam conducting conventional bombing, air-to-air refuelling and strategic air reconnaissance operations in Southeast Asia including over North and South Vietnam.

USAF 7th Air Force – Operating from 10 air bases within Vietnam, the 7th Air Force was under the operational control of the Military Assistance Mission Vietnam or MACV as it was known and responsible for tactical missions such as suppression of enemy air defences, ECM, combat air patrols, close air support, interdiction, tactical reconnaissance missions within Vietnam and for the conduct of strike missions across the region.

USAF 13th Air Force – operating across Indochina as well as in Vietnam, the 13th Air Force was intended to not only operate as part of the Vietnam air war, but was expected to act as a deterrent force across Asia as part of SEATO.

USMC – operating attack, tactical reconnaissance and strike fighters as well as helicopters in support of US Marine ground operations. The USMC aircraft operated from both carriers at sea and from airbases within Vietnam. The command and control of this air element was closely guarded by the Marines.

For example it took the power of no less than the President of the USA to broker an agreement between the Marines and the USAF on the integration of USAF and Marine strike missions during the Battle of Khe Sanh.

USN -The USN carrier force conducted an extensive range of roles including strategic strike missions into North Vietnam. Additionally, the USN conducted suppression of enemy air defences, ECM, combat air patrols, close air support, interdiction, tactical reconnaissance missions. The flexibility and persistence of carrier aviation on Yankee Station is an often overlooked and at times undervalued contribution to the tactical and operational conduct of the war. Like the Marines, the US Navy closely guarded control of its air assets.

US Army – operating helicopters and airlift aircraft in support of ground operations.

South Vietnamese Air Force – operating a mix of fighters, helicopters and airlift aircraft in support of operations of South Vietnamese forces.

Throughout the war, at no stage was there any single unified command structure over all of these air elements. While MACV had an air operations cell which could task elements of the USAF and Army, there was no ultimate control or centralised planning across all seven discrete air components.

This resulted in the replication and inefficient use of capability, delays in response time for immediate tasking and the constant need for deconfliction of air assets at the tactical level rather than at the operational planning stage.

So, if air power at the strategic level is to generate effects in accordance with national strategic aims, how can a coherent, consistent and synergistic air strategy be developed and enacted across the theatre of operations if there was is no single air commander or central planning authority responsible to Government, the Joint Chiefs of Staff or to the theatre land and maritime commanders?

What we see in the command and control of air power in the Vietnam War, is the breakdown in the symbiotic relationship between National intent and Military action.

This though may not have been as big a problem as was. For compounding these complex C2 arrangements was an absence of an achievable and consistent strategic intent coming out of the White House.

LYDON JOHNSON & McNAMARA

Just after the 1965 start of the initial US bombing offensive into North Vietnam, known as Rolling Thunder, the USAF Chief of Staff General McConnell stated that the strategic intent he was working to and as directed by President Johnson was air power was to be used as a political tool of ‘strategic persuasion’ and that the intent of Rolling Thunder was not to achieve total victory...rather it is designed as an instrument of foreign policy for the attainment of a diplomatic objective.⁸

This is all well good on the surface. But let’s look at this strategy more closely. From a North Vietnam perspective, what McConnell was saying was

that the US President had directed that bombing in North Vietnam would only target and destroy what the US thought might hinder the North's war efforts in an attempt to bring on negotiations, but would not seek to destroy the North's instruments of Government, war sustainment infrastructure or its military capability entirely.

The strategic planning and control of Rolling Thunder was not managed at the theatre level or even at the higher Pentagon level through the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The identification, selection of the so called 'strategic targets' as well as decisions on the intensity of the bombing was determined each Tuesday by a White House committee chaired by the President for implementation by the in-theatre air forces over the following week.⁹ At no point was there a USAF officer involved in this selection process.

From President Johnson's perspective he was employing a positive strategy to achieve an ends while avoiding the negative outcome of escalating to the point that might cause the USSR or China to enter the war. The threat of which hung over the White throughout the Vietnam War like a spectre of the grime reaper.

What Johnson was actually doing was preventing the application of air power in its full destructive capacity to coerce North Vietnamese and to impact their war aims. He was also telegraphing to the North that Rolling Thunder was a survivable campaign if they held to their fundamental beliefs.¹⁰

At the operational level, the lack of a combined air operations centre made the dissemination of the Johnsons weekly revised target list difficult to implement and in the allocation of air assets across the competing priorities of close air support, interdiction, strike and tactical reconnaissance missions.

That this lesson was well learned is evident in later doctrine, directives and C2 organisation of the coalition air component formed as part of the Gulf War in 1990-91. Both Schwarzkopf and the Air Commander, Lt GEN Chuck Horner were adamant that the air war would be centrally commanded and directed from a unified Air Operations Centre.¹¹

HỒ CHÍ MINH TRAIL

One of other major efforts of Rolling Thunder was to restrict the movement of logistic and manpower support from the North to the forward deployed North Vietnamese regulars and Viet Cong forces operating in South Vietnam. It was considered that without external support the insurgency in the south would wither and die.

There began a long and near continuous series of air operations aimed at cutting supply lines such as the Hồ Chí Minh trail and the key rail and road infrastructure leading from the North into South Vietnam including targets in Laos and Cambodia.

These operations were an echo of two previous US interdiction campaigns conducted first in WWII and again in the Korean War. Known as Operation STRANGLE and STRANGLE II respectively, the WWII operation was aimed at cutting German logistics lines and to destroy supplies moving south down the Italian Peninsular during 1944.

While Operation STRANGLE II was a similar interdiction operation aimed at cutting North Korean and Chinese supply moving south towards the 38th parallel during the Korean War.

In Vietnam, operations such as STRANGLEHOLD were conducted in Vietnam as an enduring interdiction campaign throughout the war.

While partially effective, neither Operation STRANGLE I or II were 100% successful in their own right as purely air operations. The experience of both the WWII and Korean operations show is that it was necessary for the ground forces to sustain a tempo of operations against the German and North Korean fronts in order to force on the adversary an expenditure of personnel, munitions and fuel to a level beyond what could be supplied.

While a similar outcome was intended for the interdiction operations along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in the Vietnam War – this proved to be unachievable. As noted by the USAF's official historian Dr Richard Hallion in his appraisal of the WWII operation in Italy, the reduction in support for fielded forces from air attack is only effective while the adversary is forced to increase his tempo of operations beyond what the supply routes can provide for.¹²

Without the means to constantly force the tempo of operations of the disparate North Vietnam forces, Viet Cong and similar irregular formations, the reduction of supplies from the north mattered little.

As noted by air power historian Mark Clodfelter, the Communist forces operating in South Vietnam at the height of their strength of some 300 000 in 1967 required only 34 tons of externally provided support per day.

Further, the North Vietnamese and VC did not have to maintain active operations in the field, they had only to maintain a force in being to achieve the political effects they required.

They were able to decide when and where to conduct low intensity operations and to always ensure that they operated within their means to continue to generate those political effects.

There was also at the heart of Rolling Thunder a weakness that no amount of measured bombing could mitigate. That weakness was the instability and lack of legitimacy of the South Vietnamese Government.

Ngô Đình Diệm & MILITARY COUPS

In May 1963 Diem's pro-Catholic regime was toppled as a result of continued persecution of Buddhists and the widespread dissatisfaction of his handling of the war. This began nearly two years of near continuous political instability in South Vietnam. There followed through 1964 to February 1965 no less than seven regime changes, including five coups.

By March 1965 the Government of South Vietnam was barely stable and it would not be until the elections of 1967 that the regime of Nguyễn Văn Thiệu had any form of legitimacy – and that was tenuous at best.

Nguyễn Văn Thiệu

From North Vietnam's perspective, this political instability was an opportunity to further spread the insurgency politically via the National Liberation Front and Viet Cong forces. The US bombing, while hindering the North's operations could not influence the North's propaganda led strategy so long as the government of South Vietnam continued to appear vulnerable and lacking in legitimacy.

From 1965 until the fall of the South Vietnamese Government in 1975 the Communists were able to maintain a narrative which attacked any initiative of the South Vietnamese Government, while also portraying the

administration as a corrupt puppet of the 'Imperial Colonial American Regime'.

Without strong government in the South and political leadership which could harness national will, the limited military power exercised through Rolling Thunder was insufficient to shake the North's resolve and long-term vision for a united Vietnam.

The inability of the US to shape the North's political will was not limited by air power alone. As the prospect of Rolling Thunder generating meaningful results was receding, the US began a troop surge to a peak just under 550 000 by 1969.

However, neither ground or air power could address the fundamental weaknesses of South Vietnam – that the Government and the political system was not sufficient to unify the nation and to generate an indigenous military able to sustain a war effort that would threaten the North.

The widespread US air and ground offensives conducted within South Vietnam did little to reassure many in the South that their Government and the US was not at war with them rather than with the Communist North.

Given that the strategic circumstances seemed to favour the North what changed in the war which caused the North to agree to the Paris peace accords in January 1973 which effectively ended the war for the US?

The answer to this question can be found in the events post the Tet Offensive in 1968 and the change in the political relationship between the 1969 Nixon Administration on one hand and the USSR and China on the other.

1972 NVA EASTER OFFENSIVE

After the strategic surprise the North's Tet offensive in early 1968, the domestic debate within the US about the ongoing war shifted towards an increasing anti-war narrative.

In 1969, the newly installed Nixon Administration announced the 'Vietnamisation of offensive operations and the withdrawal of US ground forces. This policy essentially meant that the responsibility for offensive ground operations would become the responsibility of South Vietnam's armed forces.

As the drawdown of US forces continued into the early 1970s, the perceived vulnerability of South Vietnamese forces encouraged North Vietnam to launch its Easter Offensive of 1972. While this offensive was defeated through the combined efforts of US air power and South Vietnamese ground forces, the North Vietnamese were able to retain a secure foothold in South Vietnam.

The results of the Easter offensive was in fact a two-edged sword for the North. While holding ground in the South they held considerable bargaining power in any peace negotiations. However, this offensive posture came at the expense of reverting to traditional military operations – which not only presented US air power with viable targets, but also became reliant on a logistics system vulnerable to air strikes.

US-USSR-China Detente 1972-73

Concurrent with the events in Vietnam was the successful policy of détente between the US, the USSR and China. These discussions resulted in Nixon deciding that he could escalate the bombing of North Vietnam and its conventional military forces in the South without intervention from the USSR or China - providing he remained committed to a US withdrawal and the continued acknowledgement of the North Vietnam Government. Absent was any commitment to meaningful unification on democratic lines.

Nixon directed that the air offensives which became known as Linebacker and Linebacker II should target the NVA forces and their now essential logistics systems and transport infrastructure. Further, the previously 'off limits' targets in and around Hanoi as well as the harbour and facilities around Haiphong, were to be specifically targeted and either mined or destroyed.

The success of Linebacker operations was greatly enhanced by the successful employment of precision guided munitions for the first time.

The effects generated by the Linebacker operations over May to October 1972 were to successfully progress peace talks in Paris with representatives from North Vietnam. When these talks stalled in November, a renewed and significantly escalated offensive, Linebacker II, was launched in December.¹³

MADAME NGUYEN THI BÌNH

The results of the LINEBACKER II raids were significant. The North Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam were becoming increasingly isolated and vulnerable to both air and ground offensives. Additionally, the North's harbours were closed to shipping due to aerial mining and the ports and associated infrastructure destroyed by bombing.

This was an important development in US targeting. The North was wholly reliant on the importation of all its heavy weaponry & munitions as well as for aircraft and surface to air missiles. In the face of continuing air strikes and the risk of a renewed ground war the North was forced to resume peace talks in Paris.

NORTH VIETNAMESE TANK

While the peace agreement may have been hastened by the bombing offensive, the fundamental political aim of North Vietnam, that of the reunification of Vietnam under a communist government had not changed.

By March 1975 US had legislated against a return to air strikes in support of South Vietnam. The result was there was no form of coercion through the threat of air power. Furthermore, South Vietnam was at its weakest state since 1963. US financial aid was being cut by 25 per cent each year resulting in an ever-diminishing domestic military capability in South Vietnam.

In March 1975 a renewed and confident North Vietnam launched a well-orchestrated ground offensive into the south. By May 1975 combat operations had largely been completed. The Government and military forces of the South had ceased to exist and the long term aims of North Vietnam had been realised.

In a 1977 interview with *Der Spiegel* in relation to the defeat of South Vietnam by the North, Kissinger remarked that *"It was a very painful occasion. And we did it to ourselves by reducing aid to Vietnam in each peacetime year by 25 percent."*¹⁴

This statement reflects the extent of the West to truly misunderstood the motivating factors behind North Vietnam's fight for reunification as a communist nation.

Kissinger only saw failure from a perspective of the strategy the US failed to execute effectively in pursuit of its strategic aims. While completely ignoring

the fact that the North won through its own positive strategies at the heart of its campaign for self-determination.

The commitment of the North Vietnamese government to achieving their national aims of a united Vietnam were both long standing and held very dear.

In the North's eyes, the US actions were another test to their resolve. In a June 1969 speech, the North Vietnam's General Vo Nguyen Giap stated *"the Vietnamese people...have never bowed to any invader and who in less than three decades defeated Japanese fascism and French imperialism one after the other, and are now staunchly fighting and keeping in check the US imperialist aggressors."*¹⁵

From the North's point of view, the conflict was less about the spread of communism or the destabilisation of the South Vietnam government but more about the unification of the nation and the freedom from colonial powers or similar external interests. The American, and by extension, Australian forces, were intent on maintaining the division of Vietnam and the suppression its rights for self-determination.¹⁶

One of the most significant differences of the North Vietnamese and US strategies was the profoundly different contexts each strategy was executed. Where the US strategy was one of coercion to force political change. The North Vietnamese strategy was one of denial of the military effectiveness of US and South Vietnam forces.

Just consider these different strategies for a moment. The US was targeting political objectives, nationalism and ideologies – target sets which did not have physical vulnerabilities as such.

In fact, the more the North was attacked with kinetic means the more the US reinforced the idea that they were an imperial aggressor and pseudo-colonial power.

Whereas, the North Vietnamese strategy, in targeting US forces, was effective because of the vulnerability of the US Government policy to public opinion. Without the foundation of a specific threat to US security or prosperity, the national will of the US was influenced more by the personal and financial cost of the war rather than a desire to win sustained by ideology.

By simply resisting US aggression and generating casualties, the North's kinetic effects had a direct influence on their strategic objectives.¹⁷

In the face of the combined arms of world's greatest superpower, the viable long term national and holistic strategy of the North prevailed over the myopic strategy of the West.

In considering the war in Vietnam and the air war in particular, there develops I think four salient points of enduring relevance to western governments and to defence forces, especially in relation to the exercise of air power.

ENDURING LESSONS OF VIETNAM

First, there are conflicts which cannot be resolved through the application of military force alone. Where adversary motivation is driven by fundamental ideology, be it religious, political or cultural, military power will not be sufficient of itself to coerce the adversary to permanently bend to outside will to ensure a lasting conclusion to the conflict.

Second, tactical and even operational success, is not a guarantee of strategic success if the effects being generated do not contribute to the achievable national strategic aims. For example, control of the air is not a guarantee of success where the freedom of operations engendered by that air control is not or cannot be used to strategic effect.

Third, there is no independent air campaign in the same sense that there is no independent maritime and land campaign. In an era of increasing connectivity through the political, media, space, electromagnetic and cyber domains the concept of separate sea, land and air campaigns is an anachronism.

And forth, and closely aligned with all of the above points, is that the command and control of air power must be unified and seamless across the strategic, operational and tactical levels of conflict.

Thank you

Questions?

¹ Karl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. and ed., Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 69.

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- ¹⁴ Henry Kissinger, *For the Record*, Little, Brown & Company, Canada, 1918, p.163.
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- ¹⁷ Pribbenow, M.L. (trans), *Victory in Vietnam, The Official History of the People's Army of Vietnam, 1954-1975*, University Press of Kansas, 2002, p.171.

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Strategic Air Power

Air power, as opposed to fighting from the air, relies on several factors to be strategically effective:

- The available target sets have to be centres of gravity which are essential to the adversary's national power model or national strategic aims.
- The effects generated by air power must have direct impact on those adversaries who have influence over national strategic aims.
- The effects generated through air power have to be sufficient to obtain the desired strategic outcomes.
- There must be strategy in place for the sustainment of the effects generated by air power once the conflict is resolved.



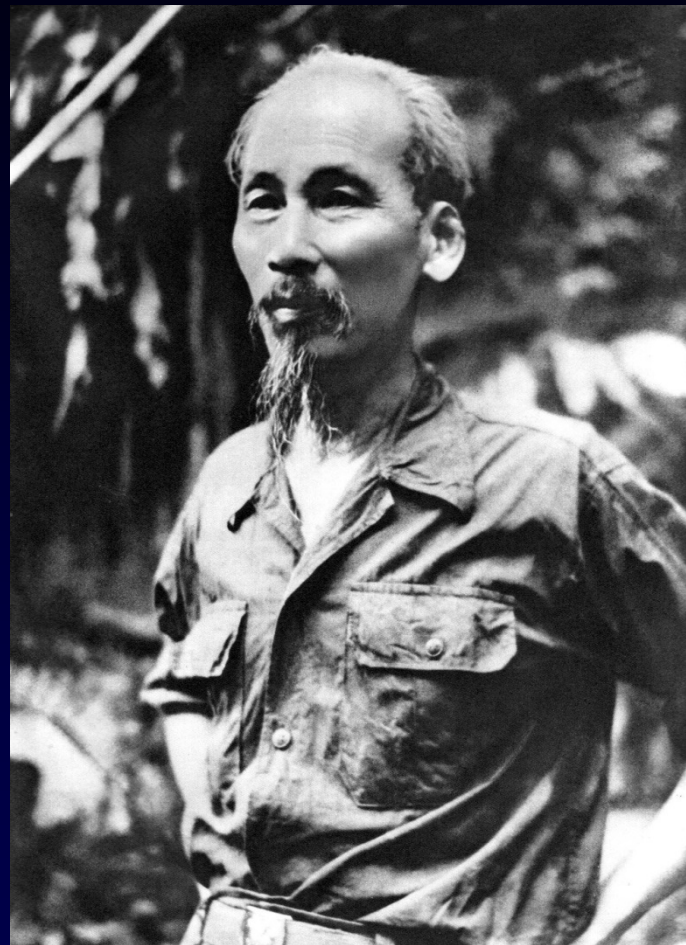
A North Vietnamese tank rolls through the gates of the Presidential Palace in Saigon on 30 April 1975

The Geneva Accords





Ngô Đình Diệm

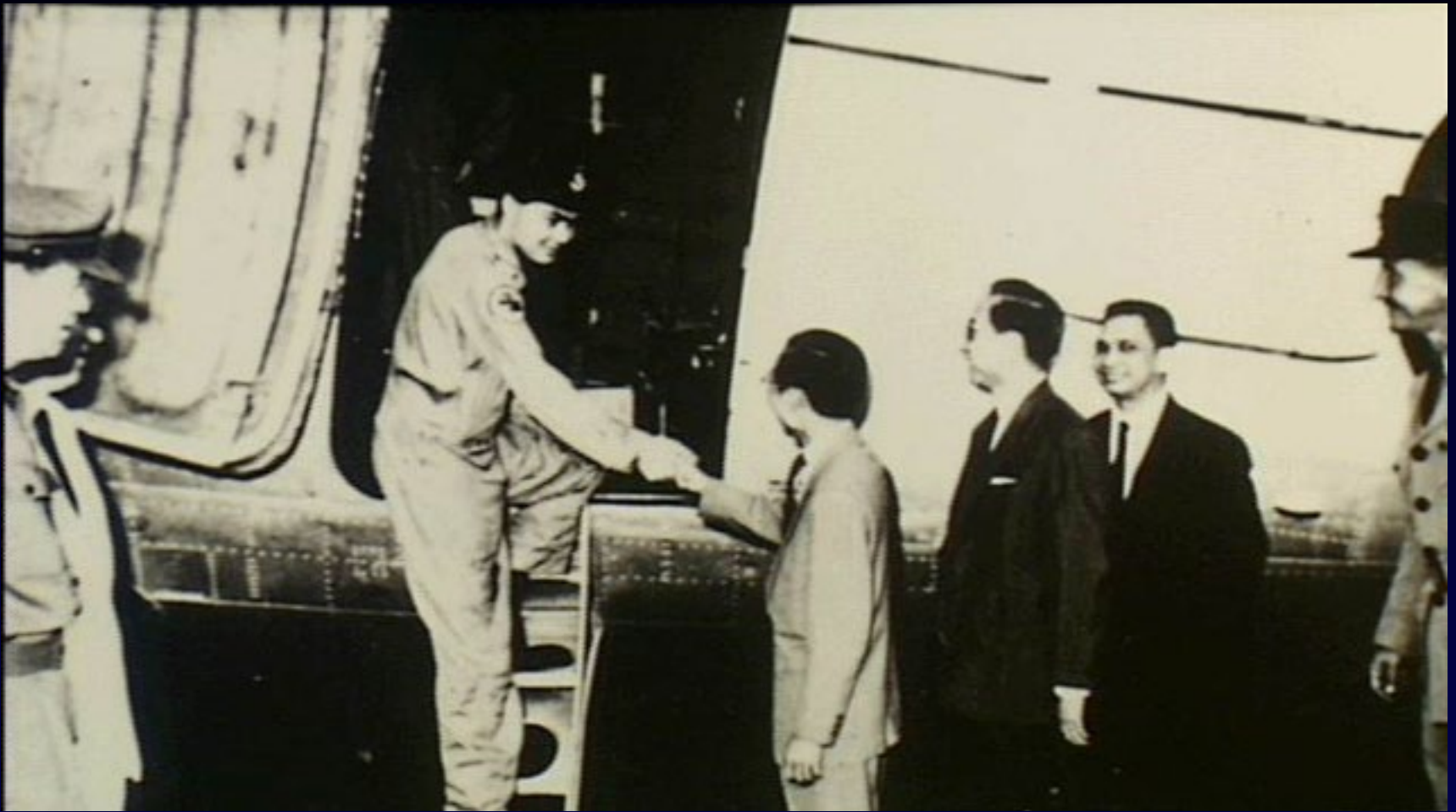


Ho Che Mhin

(a) The treaty secures from the Americans as definite a commitment as can be obtained at present for their participation in the defence of South-East Asia against Communist aggression on the Asian mainland. It is reasonable to hope that we can *in time develop* ~~build on the treaty to get~~ greater co-operation and joint planning ~~with the United States either under the Treaty or outside it.~~

(b) The treaty breaks new ground in international agreements by providing for separate and joint action to combat Communist subversion. As the main threat to Australia in the immediate future is likely to lie in successful subversion in the Associated States, Thailand and Malaya rather than in outright aggression, the provisions in the treaty for consultation and, if appropriate, joint action against subversion, could prove most helpful to Australian defence interests.





Flying Officer David Cooper arrives in Vietnam 9 May 1963



C-130 Evacuation Flight 1975



The Last



F-105Ds 34th TFS drop bombs on Vietnam





President Lyndon Johnson (r), talks with Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, sitting, after McNamara had returned from a fact-finding trip to Vietnam.
(*The Associated Press Image*)





**Ngô Đình Diệm
& South Vietnamese troops**





Nguyễn Văn Thiệu and GEN Westmoreland



1972 NVA Easter Offensive

**US-USSR-China Detente
1972-73**





Việt Cong representative, Madame Nguyen Thi Bình, signing the January 1973 Paris Peace Accords.



A North Vietnamese tank rolls through the gates of the Presidential Palace in Saigon on 30 April 1975