III. The American War

A. Pacification (early 60s)

1. US military strategy to defeat the Viet Cong: two part

a. Gen. Greene: kill them

i. not battles, but attrition

ii. body count becomes all important

iii. if they are dead they are VC

iv. RW: ‘someone counted the arms and legs

and divided by four’

b. deny them support

c. BSL: “Terrorize the peasants out of supporting the Viet Cong”

d. RW: “After dark, they are Viet Cong.”

2. Method

a. rules of engagement: kill anything that moves

b. 1961-62 US began bombing, napalming, and defoliating with Agent Orange (cancer causing agent - dioxin), search and destroy

3. Goal:

a. destroy villages

b. destroy crops and animals

c. destroy jungle cover

d. force peasants to relocation camps aka "concentration camps," “strategic hamlets”

e. Colin Powell: this is what we did, films of it “Hearts and Minds”

4. “Unintended consequences”: “Bright Shining Lie”

a. Vann: “the bombing kills many more civilians than it ever does VC and as a result makes new VC” (111BSl)

b. Porter: “it was not a question of killing some noncombatants, it was a question of killing mostly noncombatants.”

B. Resistance to Diem and Pacification

1. Buddhist monks protesting in Hue 1963

2. Buddhist monks self-immolating

3. increased resistance from Viet Cong and aid from north

C. Losing but . . . Amazing- David attacks Goliath - Gulf of Tonkin August of 1964

1. torpedo boats unprovoked attack

2. PP: it was a lie, no attack, not international waters

a. destroyer was in Vietnamese territorial waters

b. spy mission

c. covert operation to infiltrate the North

3. Gulf of Tonkin Resolution

a. gave president power to wage war

b. without declaration of war

c. Supreme Court was supremely silent

D. Winning their "Hearts and Minds"

1. Increased bombing of SV

2. US began saturation bombing of NV

3. troop build up 1965: 200,000, by 1968: 550,000

3. massive bombing of SV began

a. 7,000,000 tons (90% in South)

b. 20 million bomb craters

c. more than 2x the number of bombs dropped in WWII (Europe and Asia)

d. one 500lb for every person in south where

e. reparations $87 per rubber tree and $34 per civilian

4. napalm

a. jellied gasoline

b. Fallbrook

5. Agent Orange and Operation Ranch Hand

a. 20 million gallons of herbicide including 11.2 million gallons of Agent Orange a defoliate meant to

i. destroy jungle as cover

ii. and poison rise crops

b. In Vietnam 400,000 deaths and 500,000 birth defects

c. also cancers, immune-deficiency diseases

d. dioxin still in environment - fish, plants, animals,

e. produced, sold, and profited - Dow Chemical

f. sprayed it on our own men

i. 270,000 exposed (cancers: Hodgkins disease, prostate, resiratory)

ii. 20,000 awarded $180 million in class action

iii. 6000 compensation from government

g. "The largest contamination of dioxin in the world . . ."

5. Free fire zones -- anyone or anything in the area were considered enemies

1. notify villagers in advance by loudspeaker from helicopter or leaflets

b. no warning if troops had received fire

c. once civilians move out 'free fire zone'

d. rule ineffective, ignored, civilians didn't understand

e. refugee camps full, no more refugees, but continue search and

destroy

6. Search and destroy -- villages that were suspected of sympathy were destroyed, people killed, including women and children --

a. "Kill them all and let God sort them out."

b. one area: 167 villages 130 destroyed

c. Bob Kerry

7. My Lai 4, in Quang Nai Province, Operation County Fair

a. killed 450 to 500 mostly women, children, and aged; raped and

sodomized

b. cover up - truth / every unit of brigade size has its My Lai: Oran

Henderson Colin Powell

c. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Sen John Kerry re: war crimes

d. Kerry plus 150 honorably discharged and

highly decorated

e. American troops: 'raped, cut off ears, cut off heads, taped wires to genitals, cut off limbs, blew

up bodies, randomly shot civilians, razed villages

like Germans in Russia, shot cattle, livestock, dogs

for fun, poisoned food stocks,

f. MLK: We have destroyed their two most cherished institutions: the family and the village.

We have destroyed their land and their crops . . .

We have corrupted their women and children and

killed their men."

8. Operation Phoenix 25,000 civilians were executed by

CIA without trial and 40,000 to concentration camps

a. Pro-administration analyst, we undoubtedly killed many innocent civilians

b. one village several hundred names, killed several

hundred but no one on the list

9. American Red Cross found systematic brutality in prisoner camps with Us soldiers participating in the brutality

E. This doesn't look good, I have a better idea

1.Viet Cong in congressional report 1967, they are redistributing land to peasants -- hearts and minds

2. McNaughton: "There may be a limit beyond which many Americans and much of the world will not permit the US to go. The picture of the world's greatest superpower killing or seriously injuring 1000 non-combatants a week, while trying to pound a tiny backward nation into submission, on an issue whose merits are hotly disputed, is not a pretty one. It could conceivably produce a costly distortion in the American national consciousness.”

3. A Great Idea - John McNaughton - flood the rice fields

cause massive starvation and then provide relief, Asst Sec of Defense

F. And this is all on TV

1. journalists with TV cameramen in the fighting

a. soldiers killed over 50,000 and 200,000 +

injured

b. body bags

c. US soldiers burning villages and food

d. napalmed children

e. My Lai

f. Saigon police chief shooting unarmed bound

civilian in the head

2. Michael Herr “Dispatches”

3. Neil Sheehan “Bright Shining Lie”

4. David Halberstam “The Best and the Brightest”

G. Tet 1968

H. Vietnamization

1. already illegally bombed Laos - 75,000 tons of bombs 1964-68, basically destroyed the Plain of Jars and its society

2. Nixon elected to withdraw with honor

3. Vietnamization

a. war over to SV and leave, only ground war

b. then in 1970 US invaded Cambodia and secret

massive bombing from Congress and people

c. 1971 massive bombing of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam 800,000 tons of bombs

d. Operation Duck Hook

I. Maximum bleeding

1. 1973 one last attempt at massive bombing of

NV civilian targets

2. 1975 Vietnamese forces take over country

3. LBJ: "I wanted to leave the footprints of America there."

4. results:

a. 2-3 million killed

b. destroyed environment

c. destroyed villages and agricultural infrastructure

d. "no water buffalo"

5. Carter: no reparations, the destruction was mutual