



SOUTHEAST ASIA INITIATIVE
HARVARD UNIVERSITY
ASIA CENTER



HARVARD Kennedy School
RAJAWALI FOUNDATION INSTITUTE FOR ASIA

FIFTY YEARS ON:

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE VIETNAM WARS- GVWSI 2025 CONFERENCE

3-4 October 2025

Harvard University – CGIS S010 Tsai Auditorium

1730 Cambridge St.,

Cambridge, MA 02138

A Letter from the Program Director & Principal Investigator

Dear Colleagues, Friends, and Guests,

It is our great privilege to welcome you to the inaugural Global Vietnam Wars Studies Initiative (GVWSI) Conference, *Fifty Years On: New Perspectives on the Vietnam Wars*. This gathering represents years of progress and collaboration in the field, and it is deeply meaningful to bring so many scholars, veterans, students, and community members together for this milestone event.

The fall of Saigon in 1975 marked the culmination of decades of conflict across Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Half a century later, war continues to shape how we understand politics, memory, and reconciliation. Yet the conversation has too often been limited to narrow perspectives. This conference was created to broaden that dialogue, to bring forward new research and new voices, and to encourage a deeper, more global understanding of the Vietnam Wars and their legacies.

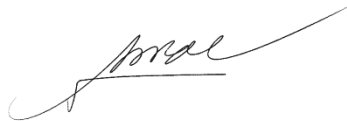
I would like to extend special gratitude to Frank and Catherine Jao, whose support has made this conference possible. Their generosity not only supports the event itself but also strengthens the future of this work.

I also want to thank our faculty advisors, colleagues, and long-time supporters for trust and dedication to the program. Without them, this conference would not have been possible. Most of all, I thank you for joining us as we launch what we hope will be an enduring tradition of scholarship, reflection, and exchange.

With sincere appreciation,



Anthony Saich
Harvard Kennedy School's Rajawali
Foundation Institute for Asia Director
and Daewoo Professor of International Affairs



Hai Nguyen
Co-Founder and Director of the Rajawali Foundation Institute for
Asia's Global Vietnam Wars Studies Initiative (GVWSI)



FIFTY YEARS ON – DAY ONE AGENDA

Friday, 3 October 2025 at the Tsai Auditorium

7:30-8:30 AM	<u>Day One Check-in & Breakfast</u> Breakfast and check-in for audience members, discussants, and panelists in the Tsai Auditorium lobby.
8:30-8:50 AM	<u>Opening Address</u>
9:00-10:00 AM	<u>Panel 1: The United States</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Christopher Goscha, <i>Moderator</i> - David Biggs - Geoffrey Wawro
10:10-11:30 AM	<u>Panel 2: South Vietnam</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Edward Miller, <i>Moderator</i> - Sean Fear - Edwin Moise - Phi Van Nguyen
11:30-12:35 PM	<u>Keynote and Special Announcement</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fredrik Logevall, <i>Harvard University's Laurence D. Belfer Professor of International Affairs</i>, "Reflections on America's War" - Hai Nguyen, <i>GVWSI Co-Founder and Director</i>, "Introduction to GVWSI" - Frank Jao, <i>GVWSI Founding Donor, Donor Advisory Group member, Harvard Kennedy School Dean's Council Leadership Circle member</i>, "Special Announcement"
12:45-1:45 PM	<u>Lunch</u>
2:00-3:20 PM	<u>Panel 3: North Vietnam</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pierre Asselin, <i>Moderator</i> - Ho Son Dai - Dang Kim Son - Nguyen Manh Ha
3:30-4:50 PM	<u>Panel 4: International Perspectives</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - James Hershberg, <i>Moderator</i> - Su Jeong Ku - Mitsuaki Ono - Yu Yao
5:00-6:20 PM	<u>Roundtable 1: War Legacies and Reconciliation</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - James Willbanks, <i>Moderator</i> - Takeshi Furumoto - Hoang Thi Khanh - Nguyen Thanh Thuy - Tran Ngoc Hue



FIFTY YEARS ON – DAY TWO AGENDA

Saturday, 4 October 2025 at the Tsai Auditorium

7:30-8:30 AM	<u>Day Two Check-in & Breakfast</u> Breakfast and check-in for audience members, discussants, and panelists in the Tsai Auditorium lobby.
8:30-9:50 AM	<u>Panel 5: Battlefield Experience, Conflict and Memory</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nathalie Huynh Chau Nguyen, <i>Moderator</i> - Xiao Bing Li - Lo Khac Tam - Ron Milam
10:00-11:20 AM	<u>Panel 6: Gender & Culture</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Heather Stur, <i>Moderator</i> - Maya Nguyen - Jane Griffith - Ann Marie Leshkovich and Martina Nguyen
11:30-12:30 PM	<u>Lunch</u>
12:40-2:00 PM	<u>Panel 7: The War at Home in America</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Christian Appy, <i>Moderator</i> - Chester Pach - Connor Mitchell - Jacob Ganz
2:10-3:25 PM	<u>Roundtable 2: Assessment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Robert Brigham, <i>Moderator</i> - Mark Lawrence - Justin Simundson - Kenneth Quinn - Andrew Wiest
3:35-4:00 PM	<u>Closing Address</u>

A SPECIAL THANKS TO...

The Global Vietnam Wars Studies Initiative sincerely thanks Frank and Catherine Jao for their generous support to help make the Fifty Years On: New Perspectives on the Vietnam Wars – GVWSI 2025 Conference events possible. Frank, founding donor for GVWSI and a Harvard Kennedy School Dean's Council Leadership Circle member, together with Catherine, the Donor Advisory Group members and Faculty Advisors has ensured a more just and accurate historical record of the Vietnam Wars can continue to be revealed.



SOUTHEAST ASIA INITIATIVE
HARVARD UNIVERSITY
ASIA CENTER



HARVARD Kennedy School
RAJAWALI FOUNDATION INSTITUTE FOR ASIA

Meet the Panels and Roundtables

Panel 1: The United States

Abstracts and Biographies

The War Before the Wars:

How the American Intervention in Vietnam during WWII shaped what came after

The Americans knew where Vietnam was long before President Lyndon Johnson deployed US troops there in 1965. American strategic interest in this country had first come into focus during the Second World War. Nowhere was this more evident than at the start and the finish of the Pacific War. The first part of this paper examines why American leaders attached great strategic importance to Vietnam as the Japanese turned southwards in 1940. As Frank Michelin has argued, the Pacific War started in Indochina in 1940-41. The second part of this paper revisits the American naval raid across the South China Sea in early 1945. Led by Admiral William Halsey, and his second in command, Vice-Admiral John McCain (the father of Vietnam War hero, John McCain), the Americans unleashed a massive attack on Indochina in January 1945. This attack and others that followed had important implications for what came next in Vietnam, but it was all part of a wider, little known American attempt to sever the Japanese supply lines at the vital Indochinese pass, at the naval base of Cam Ranh Bay in particular. These two American cases studies coming from the Second World War can shed new light on what would come in the subsequent three wars for Indochina.

Biography:

Christopher Goscha is professor of international relations in the history department at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). He teaches international relations, the Indochina Wars, and global history. He recently published *The Road to Dien Bien Phu: A History of the First Vietnam War* (Princeton University Press, 2022). He is currently writing an international history of the wars for Indochina between the 13th and 20th centuries.

“Where They Were:”

Human Perspectives on Land and Ecowar in Vietnam

The aerial bombing campaigns, rapid construction of base cities and unprecedented use of chemicals from napalm to tear gas to cloud seeding and Agent Orange, the Vietnam War has attracted attention since the early 1960s as an ecocidal conflict or “ecowar.” Still, for all of the studies, lawsuits, and international remediation efforts that have taken place over the past sixty years, very little of this work has focused on individual, human perspectives of ecowar, from the development and deployment to chemical weapons to more localized, ground-level problems concerning land seizures, base closures, and postwar responses. Drawing from years of local research in Vietnam and work with specialists and scientist-activists including Harvard’s Matthew S. Meselson, geneticists, ecologists, community leaders and various archives, this panelist highlights human perspectives on land and ecowar tied to military land seizures, base closures, chemical operations and ongoing efforts in scientific and activist circles to clean up hotspots and improve the lives of those impacted.

Biography:

David Biggs is a Professor and Chair of the History Department at UC Riverside. His research examines the modern environmental history of Vietnam and Southeast Asia with a special focus on the environmental politics and legacies of war, development projects and urbanization in the long 20th century. His books include *Quagmire: Nation-Building*

FIFTY YEARS ON:

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE VIETNAM WARS- GWWSI 2025 CONFERENCE



SOUTHEAST ASIA INITIATIVE
HARVARD UNIVERSITY
ASIA CENTER



HARVARD Kennedy School
RAJAWALI FOUNDATION INSTITUTE FOR ASIA

and *Nature in the Mekong Delta* (2009) and *Footprints of War: Militarized Landscapes in Vietnam* (2018) and his essays have appeared in such venues as the *Journal of Asian Studies*, *The New York Times*, and *Environmental History*.

Was the Vietnam War Winnable?

New Research on America's Overreach in Southeast Asia

Efforts since 1975 to assert that the U.S. could have won the Vietnam War do not confront the dominant facts of the case. It has been variously argued that to secure victory Washington should have invaded North Vietnam and the sanctuaries, should have added troops, should have increased funding, and should have reinforced Creighton Abrams' "better war," after 1969. This paper, sourced in U.S. and British archives, will argue that such arguments ignore reality in every area. By 1968, Vietnam had pushed the American defense budget to more than half of federal spending and 10 percent of GDP – an unsustainable level. This spending exceeded already massive Great Society expenditures. As a result, U.S. inflation doubled from 1965 to 1967 and doubled again between 1967 and 1970. Financially, there was no feasible way to expand the war. This is a key aspect of America's Vietnam War overlooked or ignored by most military histories. Even had funds been found for further escalation, where would Washington have found the troops? By 1968, the United States had seven Army and two Marine divisions plus ten air wings as well as two to four carrier groups of the Seventh Fleet engaged in Vietnam. In the course of 1967, the demands of Vietnam had reduced an American strategic reserve of nine Army and three Marine divisions to just one Army and one Marine division. Even had more troops been found, how would Washington have won the war? 540,000 U.S. troops in 1968 yielded fewer than 60,000 combat troops, such was the tail-to-tip ratio in the highly mechanized American military. This paltry number of grunts became lost in a forested country the size of Montana. Fewer than 10 percent of their operations found the enemy. America's defeat in Vietnam was shaped beyond the battlefield: by mounting national debt, budget deficits, inflation, a souring Congress, public protest, competing regional commands not in Southeast Asia, and a preparedness crisis inside the U.S. military. These background factors, added to the futility of military operations in Vietnam, made further escalation impossible. LBJ acknowledged this reality when he abandoned the presidency in 1968. Nixon did too. He postured boldly but spent his presidency drawing forces down in a panicked attempt to stabilize the budget, contain inflation, reduce (American) casualties, and appease Congress, the media, and the public.

Biography:

Geoffrey Wawro is University Distinguished Research Professor and Founding Director of the Military History Center at the University of North Texas. From 1996-2005, he was Professor of Strategy & Policy and Professor of Strategic Studies at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. Wawro's Ph.D is from Yale University, his B.A. Magna Cum Laude from Brown University. He was an English-Speaking Union Scholar at Cheltenham College in the U.K., and a Fulbright Scholar at Austria's University of Vienna. He speaks German, French, Spanish, and Italian. Wawro is the author of seven books, most recently *Vietnam: A Military History* (Basic Books, 2024). He is also the author of *Sons of Freedom: The Forgotten American Soldiers Who Defeated Germany in World War I* (Basic Books, 2018), *A Mad Catastrophe: The Outbreak of World War I and the Collapse of the Habsburg Empire* (Basic Books, 2014), *Quicksand: America's Pursuit of Power in the Middle East* (Penguin Press, 2010), *The Franco-Prussian War* (Cambridge, 2003), *Warfare and Society in Europe, 1792-1914* (Routledge, 2000), and *The Austro-Prussian War* (Cambridge, 1996). From 2000-2009, Geoffrey Wawro anchored six different shows for The History Channel on books, movies, business, and current events. He continues to work frequently as an on-camera expert for Netflix, History, Discovery, Smithsonian, American Heroes, National Geographic, Science, and other channels.



Panel 2: South Vietnam

Abstracts and Biographies

South Vietnam's Civil Wars:

Sovereignty, Space, and Violence in the Mekong Delta

In recent years, historians have begun to acknowledge a long-overlooked fact about the Vietnam War: the conflict was, among other things, a Vietnamese civil war, and countless Vietnamese experienced it as such. But what exactly do we mean when we call a war a civil war? And how does this approach change how we study and think about the Vietnam War? In this paper, I seek to understand civil warfare in Vietnam not simply as intra-Vietnamese violence but as a particular way of waging conflict over sovereignty and space. I apply this understanding of civil war to the province of Bến Tre in the Mekong Delta—a region in which civil war was the predominant form of warfare throughout both the First and Second Indochina Wars. In opposition to the claim that focusing on civil warfare in South Vietnam will marginalize (or “de-center”) the role of foreign actors in the Indochina Wars, I argue that civil war is the key to understanding the imperial military interventions undertaken first by France and later by the United States in the Mekong Delta. Civil warfare is also critically important to understanding the course and outcome of the Vietnam War, both in the Delta and the rest of Vietnam.

Biography:

Edward Miller joined the Dartmouth faculty in 2004, shortly after receiving his PhD in History from Harvard University. He teaches in both the History and Asian Studies Departments and currently serves as the chair of Asian Studies. His research and teaching focus on Modern Vietnam, the Vietnam War, the History of Development, oral history, and the digital humanities. Prof. Miller's publications include *Misalliance: Ngo Dinh Diem, the United States, and the Fate of South Vietnam* (Harvard, 2013), *The Vietnam War: A Documentary Reader* (Wiley, 2016), and one volume of *The Cambridge History of the Vietnam War* (Cambridge, 2025). He is a co-founder of the Dartmouth Vietnam Project and the founder and director of the Dartmouth Digital History Initiative. He is also a co-founder of “Developing Vietnam,” a collaborative study abroad program between Dartmouth and Fulbright University Vietnam in which students from the two universities study together in both Hanover and Ho Chi Minh City each fall term.

Collapse from Within?

The Rise and Fall of South Vietnam's Second Republic 1967-1975

The political history of the Republic of Vietnam (aka South Vietnam) has often been overlooked in most English-language accounts of the Vietnam War, especially during the final years of the conflict. But the breakdown of the Saigon government's legitimacy in the eyes of its own antiCommunist constituents during this period was a critical factor in determining the outcome of the war. This presentation assesses South Vietnam's ‘Second Republic’, forged by an ambitious set of constitutional reforms implemented in 1967 in the hopes of restoring order after years of political upheaval. It explores a wave of anti-Communist solidarity that swept through South Vietnam's cities and provincial towns following the 1968 Communist Tet Offensive, and analyzes the South Vietnamese state's ambitious efforts to implement economic, agricultural, and political reforms. The post-Tet period arguably marked the zenith of anti-Communist cohesion in Vietnam. For a time, it appeared plausible that the balance might be tipping in Saigon's favor. But the military government squandered this uniquely poised opportunity by monopolizing political power at the expense of civilian parties and institutions. Instead, President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu's mounting authoritarianism and clashes with South Vietnam's civilian parties and institutions dealt a fatal blow to the establishment of legitimate anti-Communist government in the South. Thiệu's autocratic turn betrayed the constitutional order on which the state's authority was based, deflating post-Tet enthusiasm, accelerating American funding cuts, and precipitating

FIFTY YEARS ON:

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE VIETNAM WARS- GWWSI 2025 CONFERENCE



SOUTHEAST ASIA INITIATIVE
HARVARD UNIVERSITY
ASIA CENTER



HARVARD Kennedy School
RAJAWALI FOUNDATION INSTITUTE FOR ASIA

South Vietnam's collapse from within during the final Communist offensive in 1975. Drawing on newly available Vietnamese-language sources, this presentation examines the underappreciated impact of a diverse range of South Vietnamese protagonists, who shaped the decisive political breakdown that brought the Vietnam War to its conclusion.

Biography:

Sean Fear is a Lecturer in International History at the University of Leeds. His research focuses on South Vietnamese domestic politics and diplomacy during the Second Republic (1967-1975), and he is completing a book manuscript under contract with Harvard University Press. He has conducted research in Vietnam, Great Britain, France, Canada and the United States, and draws heavily on Vietnamese-language official records and print media. He has published in *The Cambridge History of the Vietnam War*, *Diplomatic History* and the *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*. Sean attained his doctorate from Cornell University and has received funding and awards from the Dartmouth College Dickey Center for International Understanding, the New York University Center for the United States and the Cold War, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, among others. In 2022-23 he served as Visiting Professor of History and Vietnam Studies at Fulbright University in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

“Whose Combat Infantry?”

One of the most important arguments of David Prentice's recent book *Unwilling to Quit* (Kentucky, 2023) is that when President Richard Nixon began withdrawing US ground combat troops from Vietnam in 1969, Republic of Vietnam President Nguyen Van Thieu was not opposed. Thieu believed the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) needed US air support, logistical support, and so forth, much more than they needed US ground troops. Reducing US casualties by reducing American involvement in ground combat would make the war more acceptable to the American public, and thus preserve the forms of US support that mattered more. My paper will place this in context in several ways. In the early months of Vietnamization there were not many US military personnel withdrawn from Vietnam, but the burden of ground combat shifted to the RVNAF more dramatically. In the second half of 1969, there were 10,083 RVNAF personnel and 3,074 Americans killed by hostile action, a ratio of 3.3 to 1. The RVNAF could accept this increase in the burden of combat because they had already been bearing that burden to a greater extent than most Americans realize. In every year of the Vietnam War the number of RVNAF personnel killed by hostile action had been larger than the number of Americans. An army needs both infantry—regular ground combat troops—and support personnel of various sorts. Infantry made up an abnormally large proportion of the RVNAF, and an abnormally small proportion of the US forces. This partly explains the imbalance in deaths. The US needed a lot of support personnel and the RVNAF fewer of them because the Americans were providing a lot of the support for RVNAF troops. It was these American support personnel, not American combat infantry, that President Thieu could not afford to lose.

Biography:

Edwin Moise (B.A. Harvard 1967, Ph.D. University of Michigan 1977) is a professor of history at Clemson University. He is the author of *Land Reform in China and North Vietnam: Consolidating the Revolution at the Village Level* (University of North Carolina Press, 1983); *The Myths of Tet: The Most Misunderstood Event of the Vietnam War* (University Press of Kansas, 2017); and *Tonkin Gulf and the Escalation of the Vietnam War*, rev. ed. (Naval Institute Press, 2019). He is currently approaching completion of an overall history of the Vietnam War.



SOUTHEAST ASIA INITIATIVE
HARVARD UNIVERSITY
ASIA CENTER



HARVARD Kennedy School
RAJAWALI FOUNDATION INSTITUTE FOR ASIA

The Politics of Nationhood in Non-Communist Vietnam: Ruling over Constituents as Migrants in the Associated State of Vietnam and the Republic of Vietnam 1949-1956

When political authorities compete in a civil war to head an emerging nation-state, they often face a dilemma. On the one hand, they must show benevolence and respect for their nationals if they pretend to represent all of them. Yet on the other one, they often struggle to trust many people of their loyalty or suspect some of them of subversion, especially when they have little to no means of knowing who these people are. This concern is particularly serious when the structures and processes established to identify individuals have been dismantled or when a substantial part of the population has moved away from their place of origin. How did the State of Vietnam and later the Republic of Vietnam handle this delicate balance between political legitimacy and security risks?

Biography:

Phi-Van Nguyen is an Associate Professor of History at the Department of Social Science and Humanities of the Université de Saint-Boniface in Winnipeg, Canada. Her research has appeared in several journals, including *The Journal of Asian Studies*, *The American Historical Review*, and *French Colonial History*. Most recently, her book, *A Displaced Nation: The 1954 Evacuation and Its Political Impact on the Vietnam Wars* has appeared with Cornell University Press in 2024. A French translation, under contract with Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, will appear in 2026.



Panel 3: North Vietnam

Abstracts and Biographies

Hanoi's Cultural Diplomatic Offensive, 1965-75

This presentation addresses the instrumentalization of culture by Vietnamese communist authorities to serve their war aims in the late 1960s and early 70s. Specifically, it considers the exploitation by the authorities of northern Vietnamese artists and intellectuals to create a “good image” in the global arena and thus advance the “anti-American resistance for national salvation.” Its focus is on the cultural and artistic means employed by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRVN, or North Vietnam) to variously establish, develop, and sustain relations with foreign governments and publics. It relates not the outcome of that effort – difficult to measure even today – but its rationale, intent, and actualization. Winning overseas hearts and minds – to use a popular wartime trope – was necessary to, on the one hand, secure material, political, and moral support for the resistance in both halves of Vietnam and, on the other, delegitimize decision-makers in Saigon and isolate those in Washington.

Biography:

Pierre Asselin is the Dwight E. Stanford Chair in American Foreign Relations in the Department of History at San Diego State University. He is the author of *A Bitter Peace: Washington, Hanoi, and the Making of the Paris Agreement* (2002), *Hanoi's Road to the Vietnam War, 1954-1965* (2013), and *Vietnam's American War: A New History – 2nd Edition* (2024). He is editor of *The Cambridge History of the Vietnam War, Volume III: Endings and Aftermaths* (2025). Other notable, recent peer-reviewed publications include “National Liberation by Other Means: US Visitor Diplomacy in the Vietnam War” in *Past & Present* (2024); “The Indochinese Communist Party's Unfinished Revolution of 1945 and the Origins of Vietnam's 30-Year Civil War” in *Journal of Cold War Studies* (2023); “French Decolonisation and Civil War: The Dynamics of Violence in the Early Phases of Anti-colonial War in Vietnam and Algeria, 1940-56” (with Martin Thomas) in *Journal of Modern European History* (2022); and “Forgotten Front: The NLF in Hanoi's Diplomatic Struggle, 1965-67” in *Diplomatic History* (2021). His latest book project, “The Global Vietnam War: Hanoi's Diplomatic Struggle, 1965-1975” is under contract with Cornell University Press.

Ho Chi Minh's Wartime Ideology

This presentation advances a new perspective on Ho Chi Minh's political ideology, arguing that it was fundamentally oriented toward peace rather than war. For Ho Chi Minh, the peaceful life and happiness of the people were paramount, and armed struggle was justified only as a last resort when all peaceful avenues of resisting foreign aggression had been exhausted. Once fighting became unavoidable, he insisted that independence and freedom be secured at all costs, while peace negotiations should resume immediately upon the withdrawal of foreign forces. This principle consistently shaped his leadership during both resistance wars against France and the United States - from delaying the call for national resistance against France until 1946, to valuing the 1954 Geneva Accords as a framework for peace, to seeking negotiations even during the height of the U.S. war. Reconsidering his policies through this lens challenges prevailing depictions of Ho Chi Minh as primarily a war-driven architect, revealing instead a leader whose vision for independence was inseparable from a sustained commitment to reconciliation and peace.



Biography:

Dang Kim Son (Đặng Kim Sơn) is an independent researcher and author of fourteen books published between 1987 and 2024, including works on the Vietnam War. With expertise in agriculture and economics, he has also spent decades in public service. He was Deputy Director of the Policy Department at the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) until 2000, then led MARD's Institute of Policy and Strategy until 2015. He later directed the Institute of Agricultural Policy and Market through 2022 and now serves as President of the Association of High-Tech Agricultural Enterprises (2025). Beyond his government roles, Dang advised the Prime Minister from 2008 to 2016 and was a member of the Communist Party's Central Theoretical Council from 2011 to 2015. Internationally, he represented Vietnam at the World Economic Forum's Food System Initiative (2010-2015) and the Asia-Pacific Agricultural Policy Forum (2002-2024). Dang earned his Ph.D. from the Vietnam Academy of Agricultural Sciences in 1992 and a master's degree in development economics from Stanford University in 1996. He is the son of Major General Dang Kim Giang, former Deputy Director of the General Department of Logistics of the PAVN during the Anti-French Resistance War and the Vietnam War.

The Role of General Nguyen Chi Thanh in the South Vietnam Battlefield (1964-1967)

This presentation argues that General Nguyen Chi Thanh was a pivotal yet understudied figure in the Vietnam War. A Politburo member and Chairman of the Political Committee of the People's Army of Vietnam, he was initially assigned to agricultural affairs before his unexpected deployment to South Vietnam in 1964. Amid U.S. escalation and major counteroffensives, Thanh assumed leadership as Secretary of the Central Office for South Vietnam, Secretary of the Military Committee, and Political Commissar of the National Liberation Front (NLF). From 1964 to 1967, he issued key directives: building the NLF's main force, establishing a regional logistics system, defining strategies of resistance against U.S. troops, and restructuring the southern command. Thanh died suddenly in 1967 while preparing for the Tet Offensive, yet his initiatives continued to shape the conflict until 1975. By examining General Thanh's role, this study not only fills a historiographical gap but also illuminates new insights into how Vietnam's leadership transformed asymmetry into resilience, ultimately positioning the NLF and PAVN to contest U.S. power and shift the war's trajectory.

Biography:

Ho Son Dai (Hồ Sơn Đài) is a historian, senior researcher, and lecturer at Ho Chi Minh City University of Education. His works center on the Vietnam War in the South, with a focus on the Southeastern front from the Vietnamese perspective. He is the author of several books, including *Witnesses and History* (2024), *The Newspaper of the Liberation Army of South Vietnam 1963-2023* (2023), *Combat Soldiers* (2022), *People's War Against French Colonialism in the Southeastern Region* (2015), *The Resistance War 1945-1975: Viewed from the South* (2008), and *Base Areas in the Southeastern Region* (1996). He has also edited and co-authored numerous volumes on provincial histories and the Liberation Army of South Vietnam's wartime units in the region. Over the years, Ho has held several leadership posts: Head of the Military History Board of Military Region 7 (1994-1999), Vice President of Ho Chi Minh City Association of Historical Sciences (1997-2002), Chief Editor of the Military Science Information Journal of Military Region 7 (1998-2015), Head of the Department of Military Science at Military Region 7 (2005-2015), and Director of the Institute of Southeastern Region at Thu Dau Mot University (2019-2023). Since 2017, he has served on the Editorial Committee of the Military History Review. He earned his Ph.D. in Vietnamese history from the Academy of Social Sciences. He also received training at the Army Academy in Da Lat (1997-1998), the Military Technical Academy in Hanoi (2002), and the State University of Management in Moscow, Russia (2013).



The Role of Le Duan, the First Secretary of the Party, in the Vietnam War (1954-1975)

This paper reexamines Le Duan's instrumental role in shaping Vietnam's revolutionary course from 1954 to 1975, offering a fresh perspective that highlights not only his position as a policy architect but also his direct command and proactive coordination of military, political, and diplomatic efforts against U.S. war strategies. It situates his influence across three decisive moments: first, the drafting of the revolutionary thesis for the South and his contribution to the Party Central Committee's Resolution No. 15 (1954–1959); second, his assessment of U.S. troop escalation in South Vietnam and leadership in shaping the 1968 Tet Offensive; and third, his direction in conceiving and executing the 1975 General Offensive that brought the war to its conclusion. Alongside this analysis, the author offers personal reflections on Le Duan as a statesman and Party leader, underscoring his significance within Vietnam's revolutionary leadership. By illuminating dimensions of Le Duan's agency that are often overlooked, this study enriches scholarship on Vietnam War statesmanship and demonstrates how policy, strategy, and individual agency intersected in shaping the conflict's outcome.

Biography:

Nguyen Manh Ha (Nguyễn Mạnh Hà) is a senior researcher and lecturer specializing in Vietnamese military history. He has published nearly 400 articles and papers in domestic and international journals and conference proceedings, along with seven books and dozens of edited or co-edited volumes. His scholarship centers on the role of the Vietnamese Communist Party and its leaders during the resistance wars against France and the United States, as well as Vietnam's relationships with major powers such as the Soviet Union, China, and the U.S. His recent works include *Decoding Dien Bien Phu* (2025, co-authored), *Ho Chi Minh's Road to National Salvation* (2022), *The Party's Policy Planning for the National Liberation Revolution and Lessons Learned in Leadership* (2022), *The Communist Party of Vietnam and Its Leadership in the Resistance War Against the United States for National Salvation* (2022), and *The Communist Party of Vietnam and Its Leadership in the Resistance War Against French Colonialism* (2022). Nguyen previously served as Deputy Director of the Vietnam Military History Institute and as Director of the Institute of Vietnam Communist Party History at the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics. From 2005 to 2006, he was Deputy Commander for Political Affairs and Deputy Political Commissar of the 308th Division, I Army Corps.



Panel 4: International Perspectives

Abstracts and Biographies

Moscow, Hanoi, and the Escalation of the Vietnam War:

New Evidence from Soviet (and Soviet-bloc) Archives

As U.S. military involvement in the Vietnam War escalated in the mid-1960s, no aspect of North Vietnam's international relations inspired more speculation, investigation, and intelligence agency analysis in Washington than the DRV's links with the USSR and Soviet bloc. In this presentation, Hershberg and Radchenko will present and comment upon new evidence from Russian/Soviet and Soviet-bloc archives on the war's international aspects, particularly during the crucial escalatory period 1966-1967. Most of the documents deal with Soviet-North Vietnamese summits involving such figures as Leonid I. Brezhnev, Pham Van Dong, Vo Nguyen Giap, and Le Duc Tho. Translated from Russian, Polish, Czechoslovak, or Hungarian, most have never before been published; a few were only recently web-published. The authors obtained many of these records researching their most recent books: Hershberg, *Marigold: The Lost Chance for Peace in Vietnam* (Stanford University Press/Wilson Center Press, 2012) and Radchenko, *To Run the World* (Cambridge University Press, 2024), but only a fraction of the findings in these materials appeared in the final monographs, and some became available only after publication. All have only emerged many years after the main scholarly work on the topic using Soviet archives—Ilya V. Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War* (Ivan R. Dee 1996)—and hence can contribute new insights into the international history of the war. By assessing these materials, new aspects of the dynamics of Moscow-Hanoi relations can be explored, including discussions of such topics as coordinating military aid and diplomacy (including the so-called “Marigold” initiative), the impact of the Sino-Soviet split, the evolving battlefield military situation, and alternative strategies for the struggle ahead. The authors had planned, after the conference, to donate their translations and commentary to the Woodrow Wilson Center's Cold War International History Project (which Hershberg formerly directed), so they may be placed on the Wilson Center's digital archive and be generally available to the field. With the Wilson center's destruction by Trump/Musk/DOGE, the authors will seek other means to make these materials generally available to scholars.

Biography:

James G. Hershberg is Professor of History and International Affairs at George Washington University and Director Emeritus of the Cold War International History Project of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. His scholarship on the Vietnam War includes a book—*Marigold: The Lost Chance for Peace in Vietnam* (Stanford University Press/Wilson Center Press, 2012)—and many journal articles and book chapters, most recently “International Peace Initiatives,” in Andrew Preston, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Vietnam War, Vol. II: Escalation and Stalemate* (Cambridge University Press, 2024), pp. 579-603. He is also the author of James B Conant: *Harvard to Hiroshima and the Making of the Nuclear Age* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1993) and articles on various aspects of Cold War history. He is currently completing a book on Cuba, Brazil, and the Cold War.

Sergey Radchenko is the Wilson E. Schmidt Distinguished Professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. He has written extensively on the Cold War, nuclear history, and on Russian and Chinese foreign and security policies. He has served as a Global Fellow and a Public Policy Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Centre and as the Zi Jiang Distinguished Professor at East China Normal University (Shanghai). Radchenko's books include *To Run the World: the Kremlin's Cold War Bid for Global Power* (Cambridge UP, 2024), *Two Suns in the Heavens: the Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy* (Wilson Center Press & Stanford UP, 2009), and *Unwanted Visionaries: the Soviet Failure in Asia* (Oxford UP, 2014). Professor Radchenko is a native of Sakhalin Island, Russia, was educated in the US, Hong Kong, and the UK, where he received his PhD in 2005 (LSE). Before he joined SAIS, Professor Radchenko worked and lived in Mongolia, China, and Wales.



A War with Two Memories: South Korea and Vietnam

This paper explores the divergent and often conflicting memories of the Vietnam War in South Korea and Vietnam. By examining how each nation has constructed its narrative through memorials—such as Vietnam’s Monument of Hatred and Korea’s Vietnam War Veterans’ Memorial—this study reveals the opposing perspectives on the war. These memorials reveal a public memory of war that is often superficial, overshadowing the profound personal experiences of individuals and communities. The monuments in Vietnam represent a counter-memory, a poignant response to Vietnam’s “violence of forgetting” and a challenge to official narratives by bearing witness to the civilian victims’ suffering. In contrast, the memorials in Korea embody the officially endorsed memory, glorifying the war while sidestepping any acknowledgment of civilian casualties, thereby perpetuating Korea’s own “forgetting of violence.” Ultimately, this paper examines what different memories of the same war South Korea and Vietnam hold, and what kind of historical conflicts arise from these distinct recollections. When the experience of war transcends a single nation, the issue of memory must become transnational. As two nations that uniquely share the painful memories of colonialism, division, and war, South Korea and Vietnam have a critical opportunity. Confronting the past through historical reckoning and forging a “solidarity of suffering” can serve as a cornerstone for genuine reconciliation and a peaceful future for East Asia.

Biography:

Ku Su Jeong, a pioneering peace activist, is credited with first bringing the issue of civilian massacres by the South Korean military during the Vietnam War into public discourse. Her deep understanding of the issue stems from her academic career in Vietnam, where she earned a Master’s and a Ph.D. in History. Upon returning to Korea in 2016, she founded the Korea-Vietnam Peace Foundation to work for a just resolution of the issues surrounding the war. Her significant efforts have earned widespread recognition. Ku Su Jeong was awarded the Gil Won-ok Women’s Peace Prize, while her foundation was honored with the No Gun Ri Peace Prize for Human Rights, underscoring the profound impact of her work on historical reconciliation and human rights.

The Transnational Dimension of the Anti-Vietnam War Movement in Okinawa

After World War II, Okinawa remained under US military rule until 1972. During the Vietnam War, Okinawa became a strategically important military hub. The war had a profound impact on Okinawa’s politics, economy, society, and culture, and it also intensified local demands for liberation from the military occupation directly linked to the war. This paper examines the encounters and processes of mutual transformation among three actors: young Okinawan activists, anti-war Black GIs, and American anti-war activists. Under the oppressive rule of the U.S. military, the people of Okinawa had been demanding the reversion of the islands to Japan since the 1950s. However, when the Japanese and U.S. governments agreed in the late 1960s to return Okinawa without removing the U.S. military bases, many young Okinawan activists began to question the reversion itself. Instead, they called for liberation from militarism and war, articulating their demands in new terms and forms. In their search for a new direction, Okinawan activists began forming connections with Black anti-war GIs and American anti-war activists around 1969. They held meetings and exchanged ideas. Okinawan activists came to understand the internal oppression faced by soldiers within the U.S. military and how military violence—intertwined with racism—was affecting the people of Vietnam, Okinawa, and Black Americans alike. In turn, Black GIs learned about Okinawa’s modern history of domination by both Japan and the United States, and many came to support the Okinawan people’s demands for the removal of military bases. Furthermore, American activists from organizations such as the Pacific Counseling Service leveraged their international networks within radical movements to facilitate communication between Okinawan activists and Black GIs. This paper explores the evolving relationships among these three actors and argues that the anti-Vietnam War movement in Okinawa gave rise to a transpacific and transnational alliance.



Biography:

Mitsuaki Ono is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Shiga Prefecture in Japan. He received his Ph.D. in Sociology from Ritsumeikan University in 2012. He is the author of *Okinawa Tōsō no Jidai 1960/70 (An Era of Okinawa Struggle 1960/70)*, Jimbunshoin, 2014) and serves on the editorial board of *Shakai Undōshi Kenkyū (Social Movement Histories)*, Shinyōsha, 2019–), a journal that provides a platform for researchers, archivists, and activists. His current research focuses on two major projects: the first explores transnational anti-Vietnam War movements and their relationship to U.S.-occupied Okinawa; the second investigates the socioeconomic dynamics of militarization and demilitarization in contemporary Japan. He has presented several papers on the history of the anti-Vietnam War movement at conferences of the Association for Asian Studies. In addition, his ethnographic research, based on participant observation of ongoing anti-military base movements in Japan, has been published in leading Japanese journals such as *Gendai Shisō (Contemporary Thought)* and *Ekkyō Hiroba (Transborder Space)*.

Threats from the Anti-Chinese Alliance and Beijing's Policy Towards the Vietnam War: 1963-1965

According to Chinese sources related to the People's Liberation Army (PLA), China's policy towards the Vietnam War during 1963-1965 was an integral part of its general policy towards the Anti-Chinese Alliance led by the United States. After a series of crises in 1962, Mao Zedong and other radical Chinese leaders confirmed that while there existed an Anti-Chinese Alliance (反华联盟) led by the United States and joined by the Soviet Union and India, which imposed security threats on China in Indochina, the Taiwan Strait, Central Asia, and the Himalaya. Mao believed that the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Liberation Army could handle them with an integration of full domestic mobilization, active assistance to friends around China, and smart diplomatic approaches towards enemies. So, since the end of 1962, China's assistance to North Vietnam and the Pathet Lao quickly increased as one part of its general war preparations for the worst situations possibly imposed by the Anti-Chinese Alliance. But Beijing's support resulted in unintended consequences. As North Vietnam escalated its armed struggles with China's support, it resulted in further interventions by the United States and the Soviet Union into the Vietnam War, which China was unwilling to see. And China's goal to limit its assistance at the level of no risk of an immediate Sino-American confrontation also led to divergences between Beijing and Hanoi.

Biography:

Yu Yao is a Professor of History at East China Normal University. He received his Ph.D. from the Hong Kong University. His research focuses on modern China after 1949 and its roles in the Cold War. He published a Chinese book on U.S. intelligence estimates of China's economy during Mao's era and will publish another book in Chinese on U.S. economic policies towards non-aligned countries. His English works have appeared in *the Journal of Cold War Studies (forthcoming)*, *the Journal of Global History*, and *The China Review*.



Roundtable 1: War Legacies and Reconciliation

Discussant Biographies

James H. Willbanks is Professor Emeritus of Military History at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He retired from CGSC in April 2018 after forty-nine years of combined federal service. For two years before retiring, Dr. Willbanks served as the General of the Army George C. Marshall Chair of Military History. Dr. Willbanks joined the CGSC faculty in 1992, when he retired from the Army as a Lieutenant Colonel with twenty-three years' service as an Infantry officer in various assignments, including a combat tour as an infantry advisor with a South Vietnamese regiment during the 1972 North Vietnamese Easter Offensive. Before assuming the Marshall Chair, he served as Director of the CGSC Department of Military History. Dr. Willbanks holds a B.A. in History from Texas A&M University and an M.A. and Ph.D. in History from the University of Kansas. He is the author or editor of twenty-three books. He and his work have been highlighted in the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *US News & World Report*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Army Times*, *Stars and Stripes*, the History Channel, and PBS. He served as a consultant to Ken Burns and appeared on camera in the 10-part 18-hour documentary on the Vietnam War for PBS which began airing in the Fall of 2017. Dr. Willbanks is a former two-term Trustee of the Society for Military History, is on the editorial board of the Modern War Studies series for the University Press of Kansas and the Texas A&M Press Advancement Board. He and his wife now reside in Georgetown, Texas.

Takeshi Furumoto was born in the Tule Lake Segregation Center on Oct 20, 1944. After being released from the Camp, his family including himself, moved to Hiroshima, Japan 4 months after the atomic bombing, living in Nishihara, suburb of Hiroshima, only 7 miles from the epi-center of the bombing. In May of 1956, they moved back to the United States. After graduating from UCLA with business degree in Winter of 1967, he volunteered in the United States Army and was commissioned as an intelligence officer in Feb of 1969. He was sent to Vietnam on Feb of 1970 and assigned to District of Duc Hue, Hau Nghia as a District Intelligence and operations officer as well as assigned to counter insurgency program, PHOENIX. He was decorated with Bronze Star Medal on Jan of 1971. He started Furumoto Realty in 1974 with his wife. They are celebrating their 51st year this year. He is a Founder of Hiroshima-Kai of NY on 1988, Board Member of Japanese American Association of NY, Life Member of Japanese American Veteran's Association. Currently, he is one of the Commissioners of AAPI in State of NJ. He is married to Carolyn for 53 years and have a married son, Scott, who lives in SF.

Hoang Thi Khanh (Hoàng Thị Khánh) is the head of Ho Chi Minh's Liaison Committee for Former Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War and, since 2023, the head of the National Liaison Committee for Vietnamese Revolutionary Soldiers Imprisoned by the Enemy. A former political prisoner at Con Dao, she has dedicated her life to public service, supporting workers, cooperatives, and education in Vietnam. Born into a North Vietnamese family in Cambodia, she joined patriotic groups in her youth and, at sixteen, left for South Vietnam to join the National Liberation Front. From 1964 to 1969, she worked in the Propaganda and Training Department of the Central Office for South Vietnam, starting as a mess staff member and later leading the Armed Propaganda Squad under the Saigon-Gia Dinh Party Committee during the 1968 General Offensive. Captured in late 1969, she endured years of detention before being sent to Con Dao, the infamous "Hell on Earth," where she remained until her release in May 1975. After the war, Hoang held significant leadership positions, serving on the Ho Chi Minh City Party Standing Committee, chairing its Party Inspection Committee, and being Vice President of the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor, as well as a member of the Standing Committee of the Vietnam Cooperative Alliance. She also chaired the founding board of Ton Duc Thang University and contributed to establishing the Capital Aid Fund for Employment of the Poor (CEP) and the Capital Aid Fund for Cooperative Members (CCM). Hoang holds four bachelor's degrees in Politics, Literature, Economics, and Law.



Nguyen Thanh Thuy (Nguyễn Thanh Thủy) Born: 1943 in My Tho province, Vietnam | Father: Nguyễn Ngọc Phai, teacher | Mother: Le Ngoc Dung, housewife | Husband: Le Thanh Long, ROVAF Captain; *EDUCATION*: 1949-1955: Primary School Lá, My Tho | 1955-1962: High School Nguyễn Đình Chiểu and Girl High School (currently Le Ngoc Han) | 1962-1963: Pharmacy College in Saigon (quit due to illness) | 1964-1965: School of Management and Business, Dalat University, and School of Pedagogy (quit due to illness) | *CAREER*: 1966, graduated from Officer Class 1, National Police Academy | 1967: member of Research Team, Special Police Bloc, National Police Command | 1969: Leader & Instructor of Intelligence Swan Team | 1972: Special Police Major, remaining Leader of Swan Team | *IN RE-EDUCATION*: 6-1975: forced to lose all properties and be 're-educated' for 13 years in camp Long Thanh (twice), Thu Duc, Z4 (Public Police, Hochiminh city), and Z30 D (twice) | *LIFE UNDER VIETCONG REGIME*: 1988: freed, homeless, living miserably here and there for 4 years, selling odd things on city pavements to feed children | *FREEDOM*: 1992: resettled in South California, US. under H.O.12 Program | 2003: working as a volunteer for the H.O. ROV Disabled Veterans Relief Association, keeping files of widows and a few veterans | 2018: elected as the Association Head, keeping fund-raising to aid ROV veterans | 2018: wrote the book "*The Swan Team*" | 2020: re-elected as Head until present | 2023: wrote the book *A Defiant Swan in Re-education*. Both books were translated into English by Ton Dzien, and all 4 (Vietnamese & English) printed in 2023.

Tran Ngoc "Harry" Hue (Trần Ngọc Huế), Lieutenant Colonel, was a decorated officer in the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), famed for his leadership during the Vietnam War. He was born in 1942, in Huế city Vietnam into a distinguished military family and graduated from the prestigious Đà Lạt Military Academy in 1963 and commissioned as an ARVN lieutenant. Lieutenant Colonel Hue commanded the elite Hắc Báo (Black Panther) company under the 1st ARVN Division and engaged in intense combat during the Tet Offensive in Hue in 1968. He was awarded the U.S. Silver Star by U.S. General Creighton Abrams for rescuing American soldiers during the Battle of Hue. He also earned South Vietnam's Medal of Honor, National Order of Vietnam, Fifth Class Medal, and U.S. Bronze Star for Valor. During Operation Lam Son 719 in March 1971, while commanding the Black Wolf Battalion, he was seriously wounded for the fifth time and captured by the NVA and spent approximately 13 years as POW. After release, he lived in Saigon Vietnam until emigrating to the U.S. in 1991, settling in Falls Church, Virginia with his family. Lieutenant Colonel Tran's journey reflects extraordinary courage under fire, survival through adversity, and resilience in rebuilding life abroad. His service saved countless lives and stands as a testament to personal bravery amidst war's harshest hardships.



Panel 5: Battlefield Experience, Conflict and Memory

Abstracts and Biographies

Military Prisoners:

South Vietnam's Women in Uniform

The grainy 1957 black and white photograph reveals Bui Ngoc Thuy with a deployed parachute in front of her after she had completed a jump above Cu Chi in South Vietnam. A refugee from North Vietnam, she had joined the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) in 1955 at the age of nineteen. She served for seven years in the Airborne Division and notes that she was one of ten women who obtained parachuting qualifications in the 1950s. These women were pioneers who volunteered for military service as well as the risks and dangers of parachuting. By 1975, there were 6,000 women serving in the RVNAF. Drawing from oral histories and published sources, this paper examines the experiences of RVNAF servicewomen. Their narratives not only illustrate their negotiations of military service with their roles as daughters, sisters, wives and mothers but also the tension between modernity and tradition. Their lives were a microcosm of South Vietnamese society. Their accounts also highlight women's experiences of postwar internment and reeducation after 1975, and the ways in which they reconstructed new lives overseas.

Biography:

Nathalie Huynh Chau Nguyen is Professor of History at Monash University and Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia. A Commonwealth Scholar at the University of Oxford, she held four fellowships in 2005-2015 including two major Australian Research Council (ARC) fellowships as well as a Visiting Research Fellowship at Oxford. She is the author of four books including *Vietnamese Voices: Gender and Cultural Identity in the Vietnamese Francophone Novel* (2003), *Voyage of Hope: Vietnamese Australian Women's Narratives* (2005), which was shortlisted for the 2007 New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards, and 2010 *Choice Outstanding Academic Title Memory Is Another Country: Women of the Vietnamese Diaspora* (2009) and *South Vietnamese Soldiers: Memories of the Vietnam War and After* (2016) (these last two titles were reprinted by Bloomsbury in 2024). She is editor of the *Routledge Handbook of the Vietnamese Diaspora* (2024) and author of *The Refugee Legacy: The Vietnamese Diaspora in the Second Generation* (Bloomsbury forthcoming).

Buried Memory:

Untold Stories of Chinese Soldiers in the Vietnam War, 1965-1971

From 1965 to 1971, China sent 430,000 Chinese forces to Vietnam and Laos to fight against the U.S. forces in the Vietnam War. Both the Chinese and Vietnamese governments officially denied any foreign intervention on Hanoi's side in the war. For many years after the war, the Chinese veterans were not even allowed to talk about their wartime experience because it had been a secret mission. The Vietnam War became a "forgotten war" in China. From the 1990s-2020s, the author collected memoirs and interviewed war veterans in China. Recent oral accounts have become more available, not just for filling in factual gaps, but also for making a remarkable contribution to the study of the war as a global history and added another perspective to the subject. Each of the veterans paints his or her own pictures of a specific aspect of war experience. The immense detail recorded provide sources for discovering both the new themes and significance of the topic. The findings in this paper indicate that, first, the CCP (Chinese Communist Party)'s control of the PLA (People's Liberation Army, China's armed forces) through political indoctrination and party institution in the military. Secondly, the PLA had its own way to transform a civilian into a soldier through foreign war. Thirdly, China's intervention in the Vietnam War served Beijing's own security and diplomatic goals. By involving in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, China's position



SOUTHEAST ASIA INITIATIVE
HARVARD UNIVERSITY
ASIA CENTER



HARVARD Kennedy School
RAJAWALI FOUNDATION INSTITUTE FOR ASIA

in the Cold War changed from peripheral in the 1960s to central by the early 1970s and created favorable international conditions which it could survive and eventually succeed. Thereafter, America, Russia, and everyone else had to deal with China. Within less than 30 years, China transformed from one of the poorest third-world countries to a global economic power. The perspectives, legacy, and implications of China's war for Vietnam are vital for both those who would seek to avoid war with China, and those whose task it is to prepare for it.

Biography:

Xiaobing Li is professor of history, Director of Western Pacific Institute, and Don Betz Endowed Chair in International Studies at the University of Central Oklahoma. He received his PhD from Carnegie Mellon University in 1991. Among his recently authored or co-edited books are *China under Xi Jinping* (Leiden U Press, 2024), *China's New Navy* (Naval Institute Press, 2023), *Sino-American Relations: A New Cold War* (Amsterdam U, 2022), *Attack on Chosin* (U Oklahoma, 2020), *The Dragon in the Jungle: The Chinese Army in the Vietnam War* (Oxford U Press, 2020), *Building Ho's Army* (U Kentucky, 2019), *China's War in Korea: Strategic Culture and Geopolitics* (Palgrave, 2019), *The Cold War in East Asia* (Routledge, 2018), *China's Battle for Korea* (Indiana U, 2014), *Voices from the Vietnam War; Stories from American, Asian, and Russian Veterans* (U Kentucky, 2010).

The U.S. Combat Soldier in Vietnam Comes Home

"For the "Fifty Years On: New Perspectives on the Vietnam War – Harvard GVWSI 2025 Conference," under the Content Priority Theme of "Examination of how the war continues to challenge participating countries in their process of healing, reconciliation, and addressing war legacies in nation-building" this paper will address the issue of the approximately 600,000 American soldiers who actually experienced combat in Vietnam, killed millions of "enemy" soldiers while serving alongside ARVN allies, then returned to a nation that was somewhat indifferent to their service. Using both personal scholarship and my experience from serving during the late years of the American involvement (1970-1971), I will address the complicated adjustment to civilian life and the status of being a veteran. Working as a "Special Government Employee – SGE" for the Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Advisory Committee on Rehabilitation – VACOR, I have personal experience on issues associated with homelessness, Agent Orange induced illnesses, hearing and respiratory diseases caused by burn pits, Post Traumatic Stress (Disorder) - PTSD, and the relatively recent diagnoses of Moral Injury. All of these mental and physical medical issues resulted from soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marine experiences in Vietnam. This paper will begin where my chapter 3: "US Combat Soldiers in Vietnam" in Volume II: Escalation and Stalemate of The Cambridge History of the Vietnam War leaves off. While the number of living Vietnam combat veterans is unknown, the VA estimates that 850,000 of the approximately 2.7 million who served are still alive."

Biography:

Ron Milam is a Professor of Military History at Texas Tech University and a Fulbright Scholar to Vietnam. He teaches Study Abroad in Southeast Asia every other summer in Vietnam and Cambodia. He is the author of *Not a Gentleman's War: An Inside View of Junior Officers in the Vietnam War*, and editor of the *Vietnam War in Popular Culture: The Influence of America's Most Controversial War on Everyday Life* (2 volumes). Dr. Milam is the Executive Director of the Institute for Peace & Conflict (IPAC), which includes the world-renowned Vietnam Center and Sam Johnson Vietnam Archive. He is a Special Government Employee to the Veteran's Advisory Committee on Rehabilitation (VACOR). Dr. Milam is a combat veteran of the Vietnam War, and in 2015 was inducted into the Officer Candidate School (OCS) Hall of Fame at the National Infantry Museum at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Lived Experiences in the Battlefield of a North Vietnamese Soldier

This presentation shares a previously unheard personal account of the Vietnam War from the author, a rare veteran who fought in many of the major battles against the United States. From his first encounters with American forces at Chu Prong and the Ia Drang Valley (1965) to later campaigns in East Sa Thay (1966) and North Kon Tum (1967), Lo Khac Tam advanced from an inexperienced recruit to a seasoned commander at company, battalion, and higher

FIFTY YEARS ON:

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE VIETNAM WARS- GVWSI 2025 CONFERENCE



SOUTHEAST ASIA INITIATIVE
HARVARD UNIVERSITY
ASIA CENTER



HARVARD Kennedy School
RAJAWALI FOUNDATION INSTITUTE FOR ASIA

levels. His testimony sheds light on the lived realities of war—battlefield strategies, political and ideological education, and the treatment of the dead and wounded—featuring voices seldom captured in official histories. By foregrounding the perspective of an individual soldier, this presentation offers a more human-centered understanding of the Vietnam War and provides new insights into how personal experiences and battlefield realities shaped the collective struggle.

Biography:

Lo Khac Tam (Lộ Khắc Tâm) is a Major General of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) and former Chair of the Strategy Department at the National Defense Academy. He also served as Deputy Head of the Department of Operations in the PAVN General Staff. Lo joined the army in April 1962 at age twenty and fought in many significant battles in the B3 Front (Central Highlands) during the Vietnam War (1965-1975). He is a rare veteran who took part in the Ia Drang Battle, which marked the first engagement between the US forces and PAVN regulars on 14-17 November 1965. He was promoted to become Commander of the 25th Regiment on the B3 Front and later Commander of the 337th Division, Corps 14, Military Region 1. For his service, Lo received numerous medals and awards from the PAVN. He later participated in the two wars of national defense: against the Khmer Rouge on the Southwestern border (1977-1980) and against Chinese forces on the Northern border (1979-1985). Lo earned a Ph.D. in Military Science in 1999 and dedicated his postwar career to training and teaching at the National Defense Academy until his retirement in 2008.



Panel 6: Gender & Culture

Abstracts and Biographies

Seeing Combat:

American Women in the Vietnam War

From the 1950s through 1975, American women served in the Vietnam War through the U.S. armed services, the American Red Cross, and U.S. government agencies. Approximately 7,500 women served military tours, while 25,000 or more went to Vietnam in civilian capacities. Although a few women went to Vietnam before the U.S. committed combat troops and remained in country until 1975, the majority of American women who served in either military or civilian capacities arrived between 1965, the year of the first deployment of ground troops, and 1973, when the last U.S. combat troops departed. Women were not assigned to infantry or other forward units, but they experienced the trauma of war through their work with U.S. servicemen. In particular, nurses and Red Cross workers saw what combat did to soldiers, yet the nature of their jobs and the expectation that they nurture wounded and traumatized servicemen required them to put aside their own mental and emotional injuries that the war inflicted. The U.S. combat experience in the Vietnam War is typically told from the perspectives of men, which makes sense because only men were allowed to serve in combat units. However, American women “saw combat” in another way. Nurses saw how it destroyed young men’s bodies. Red Cross workers saw how it harmed Vietnamese families. Women’s Army Corps personnel boxed up the personal effects of American soldiers killed in action and mailed them to their families. Looking at the experiences of American women who served in the Vietnam War offers another way of looking at how “seeing combat” took shape even for those who were not in military combat units. War trauma and posttraumatic stress were not limited to men who served. American women dealt with their own war trauma for years and decades after their tours of duty.

Biography:

Heather Marie Stur, Ph.D., is professor of history at the University of Southern Mississippi and a senior fellow in the Dale Center for the Study of War & Society. She is the author of four books, including *21 Days to Baghdad: General Buford Blount and the 3rd Infantry Division in the Iraq War* (Osprey Publishing, 2023), *Saigon at War: South Vietnam and the Global Sixties* (Cambridge 2020), *The U.S. Military and Civil Rights Since World War II* (ABC-CLIO 2019), and *Beyond Combat: Women and Gender in the Vietnam War Era* (Cambridge 2011). She is also co-editor of *Integrating the U.S. Military: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation Since World War II* (Johns Hopkins 2017). In 2013-14, Dr Stur was a Fulbright scholar in Vietnam, where she was a visiting professor on the Faculty of International Relations at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Ho Chi Minh City.

Vietnamese Women in the National Liberation Front

My research will document the significant role of the National Liberation Front (NLF), particularly its female cadre, played in the success of Vietnam winning the war. Americans views of the war are mainly shaped by military and academic men who have written about the war. My female-to-female study will fill a gap missing in the history of the war. From 1970-73 I directed a pacifist organization, the American Friends (Quaker) Service Committee, humanitarian efforts in South Vietnam for a decade. I benefited from its reputation, trust among the population and excellent contacts. During these years, I had developed contacts and strong relationships with Vietnamese women who were part of the NLF in the province of Quang Ngai. My newly released book (March 8 2025), is a memoir written with my best friend, a double amputee who was an NLF propaganda officer before her injury. In 1973 I was able to secretly photograph and document the stories of tortured political prisoners. accused of being NLF, held in a building at the local hospital. Other contacts provided me with direct and lengthy association with women who had been active cadre with the NLF. As part of the team preparing the English publication of *Last Night I Dreamed of Peace, the Diary of Dang Thuy Tram*, I met many friends of Thuy and traveled with her sisters to



Duc Pho district where Thuy was killed. In 2005, with a UMA grant from the Joiner Center, Sophie Quinn-Judge, formerly with Temple University, and I interviewed a dozen women who held various positions from guerilla fighter to diplomat. Neither of us has ever published our research findings or shared the documentation publicly. I will present this information in my talk.

Biography:

Jane Griffith's career included directing historic restoration projects and working for international humanitarian agencies, especially directing a Quaker project in Vietnam during the Vietnam war. She served as the Chief Curator and Restoration Officer of the US Treasury Department, a historic preservation advisor to the White House and appointed director of historic buildings in New Jersey. Jane has also held positions at the World Wildlife Fund, National Gallery of Art, National Trust for Historic Preservation, UNICEF, and the Center for International Policy, as well as the Asian Art Museum in Stockholm, Sweden. She is the author of a book about Japanese textiles, *Shibori* in continuous print since 1983, two cookbooks, and the footnotes for *Last Night I Dreamed of Peace: Diary of Dang Thuy Tram*. Jane's memoir *Two Women, One War: The Unlikely Friendship during the Vietnam war*, was published in March 2025.

The Vietnamese Áo Dài in a Time of War: Fashion, Citizenship, and Nationalism (1954–1975)

In conjunction with an exhibition that we are co-curating at College of the Holy Cross (August 26–December 19, 2025), our paper takes an innovative approach to the war by exploring the role that Vietnam's national costume—the áo dài—played within Vietnam and on the global stage. We examine the self-presentation and political programmes of two “first ladies” of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam)—Trần Lệ Xuân (President Ngô Đình Diệm's sister-in-law) and Nguyễn Thị Mai Anh (President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu's wife)—in order to revise dominant narratives that have caricatured or dismissed the agency of both women. Employing a critical gender analysis, we argue that attending to each woman's overall public image—actions, words, and appearance, especially careful curation of particular styles of áo dài—reveals that they intentionally put themselves forward as public symbols of the Republic's aspirations to cosmopolitan modernity and stewardship of Vietnamese cultural heritage, both of which they asserted to be threatened by the socialist Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam). We also explore the role that their public personas played in advancing each first lady's vision of women's roles and civic responsibilities in Vietnamese society, which often courted controversy and criticism. Our analysis reveals how something as seemingly mundane and innocuous as clothing was used to assert Vietnamese nationalism and cultural identity during decades of violent civil and international war. Attendees of the conference will be invited to visit the exhibition in Worcester, which includes historically significant áo dài worn by both first ladies, traces the garment's history, offers a comparative perspective on clothing in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, details the importance of the áo dài to the Vietnamese American diasporic community, and chronicles the postwar revival of interest in the áo dài in Vietnam and its influence in global fashion over the past several decades.

Biography:

Ann Marie Leshkovich is Professor of Anthropology, College of the Holy Cross. She is author of *Essential Trade: Vietnamese Women in a Changing Marketplace* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2014; awarded the Harry J. Benda Prize, Association for Asian Studies, 2016) and co-editor of *Traders in Motion: Identities and Contestations in the Vietnamese Marketplace* (Cornell University Press, 2018), *Neoliberalism in Vietnam (positions: asia critique*, 2012), and *Re-Orienting Fashion: The Globalization of Asian Dress* (Berg, 2003).

Martina Thuchhi Nguyen is Associate Professor of History at Baruch College, City University of New York. Her book, *On Our Own Strength: The Self-Reliant Literary Group and Cosmopolitan Nationalism in Late Colonial Vietnam*, was published in 2021 by University of Hawai'i Press as part of Columbia University's Weatherhead East Asian Studies Institute book series. She is currently writing a gender history of patriarchy and how it became woven into Vietnamese national identity.



SOUTHEAST ASIA INITIATIVE
HARVARD UNIVERSITY
ASIA CENTER



HARVARD Kennedy School
RAJAWALI FOUNDATION INSTITUTE FOR ASIA

Participation of Children and Youth in the Vietnam War: Communism, Confucianism, and Childhood

Children and youth played diverse roles throughout the Vietnamese communist struggle against the United States and its South Vietnamese allies, engaging in activities such as espionage, nursing, combat, and logistical support. However, their experiences in the military conflict remain underexplored. In this paper, I reflect on 32 interviews with veterans who were formerly associated with the Vietnamese communist armed forces, as well as those who supported the struggle from the rear during their youth. Specifically, I investigate the social structures of mid-20th century Vietnam that facilitated children's involvement in the conflict. To this end, I analyze how communist ideology intertwined with existing Vietnamese cultural frameworks, particularly Confucianism, and how this interplay shaped children's and youths' experiences. Findings from my interview data suggest that, while children often lacked formal knowledge of communism and did not explicitly articulate ideology as their primary motivation, their reasons for taking up arms were closely tied to notions of class relations, justice, and equality. This apparent paradox arose because Vietnamese guerrillas and political cadres deliberately disseminated communist ideals in ways that were accessible, adaptable, and embedded in everyday life, making them easily appropriated and reinterpreted by children. This study contributes to scholarship on war, ideology, and childhood by revealing how young participants in revolutionary conflicts navigate ideological influences through cultural and social structures. By shedding light on the lived experiences of young participants in the Vietnam War, this project focuses attention on the everyday politics in military conflicts, and highlights the agency of children in shaping their own roles within larger ideological struggles, even as their lives are predominantly seen as apolitical.

Biography:

Maya Nguyen, PhD, is a Lecturer in International Relations at SOAS, University of London. Her primary research interest lies in examining the 'kindered' perspective of global politics, and particularly issues of (in)security. Her current research, which is based on life history interviews and archival research, explores the role of children and youth in the Southeast Asian military conflicts in the second half of 20th century.



Panel 7: The War at Home in America

Abstracts and Biographies

Did the Pentagon Papers Help End the Vietnam War?

In 1971, when Daniel Ellsberg arrived at a federal court in Boston, a journalist asked if he was concerned about going to prison for leaking a 7,000-page top-secret history of the Vietnam War. Ellsberg responded with a question of his own: “Wouldn’t you go to prison to help end this war?” That begs another key question: Did Ellsberg’s release of the Pentagon Papers actually help to end the American War in Vietnam War? While there is no easy or straightforward answer to this question, Ellsberg’s actions did produce consequences, some of them unintended, that led to the downfall of the Nixon presidency, thus ending any realistic possibility that the U.S. might re-enter the war directly from 1973 to 1975 to prevent the collapse of the South Vietnamese regime. Most obviously, the Nixon administration’s massive over-reaction to the Pentagon Papers exposure, including crimes against Ellsberg, were seminal steps leading to Watergate and Nixon’s impeachment. The Pentagon Papers also, I argue, contributed to a growing distrust of presidential authority to conduct foreign policy unilaterally and stiffened opposition to the war among many Americans who had not yet asserted a firm position, including members of Congress.

Biography:

Christian Appy is director of the Ellsberg Initiative for Peace and Democracy and a professor of history at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst where he has received the Chancellor’s Medal, the Distinguished Teaching Award, and the Distinguished Graduate Mentor Award. He is the author of three books about the Vietnam War--*American Reckoning: The Vietnam War and Our National Identity* (Viking, 2015), *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides* (Viking, 2003), and *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (University of North Carolina Press, 1993). He is currently working on a book about Pentagon Papers whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg.

Unheeded Warnings:

The Sigma Wargames of 1964 and the Path to Vietnam

The first Sigma Wargame of 1964 predicted the failure of American strategy in Vietnam, yet its warnings went unheeded, and America continued its tragic march towards war. This article explores this game, played during a critical decision-making period in the spring of 1964, and its largely overlooked insights into the Johnson Administration’s approach to war. The Sigma I-64 featured many of the leading figures from the Johnson Administration including National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy, JCS Chairman Earle Wheeler, CIA Director John McCone, Air Force General Curtis LeMay, and General Maxwell Taylor. With these influential figures in attendance, the game rejected many of the administration’s assumptions and predicted that escalation would lead to a prolonged quagmire, requiring over 500,000 U.S. troops by 1968 and sparking widespread domestic and international protests. Despite these prescient warnings, the game had little impact on key decisionmakers, and it remains unclear whether President Johnson was ever briefed on their results – a striking failure by his advisers to present all available intelligence before committing to war. This game stands out for its focus on the global perspective. Participants repeatedly debated how their actions would be seen by a global audience, culminating in a dramatized visit of Ho Chi Minh to the United Nations. While this never occurred in real life, the emphasis on international opinion and the game’s focus on the potential for international anger suggests that concerns over global reaction played a larger role in U.S. decision-making than many historians have previously acknowledged. This paper would fill a lacuna in the historiography of American decision-making leading up to the Vietnam War. By analyzing the Sigma I-64, it offers a fresh perspective on how U.S. policymakers ignored clear warnings and pursued a path that led to one of America’s most disastrous conflicts.



Biography:

Jacob Ganz is the Program Manager for the Wargaming and Crisis Simulation Initiative at the Hoover Institution. His work focuses on the history of wargames and their influence on U.S. foreign policy, as well as managing current wargaming efforts. He previously worked on Tom Steyer's 2020 presidential campaign and at the political strategy firm Ambrosino, Muir, Hansen & Crounse. Ganz holds an MA/MSc in International and World History from Columbia University and the London School of Economics, and a BA with highest honors from UC Davis.

Dancing in Dissonance:

The 1968 TET Offensive and the Disconnect Between Washington DC and Saigon

Current historiography around the American political and military leadership of the Vietnam War focuses on asking "How?" the US defeat in Vietnam was possible. Historians have found their scapegoats in either Saigon via General William Westmoreland, or in Washington, DC via President Lyndon B. Johnson. The debates surrounding blame unnecessarily complicate the reality in which both the military leadership in Saigon and the political leadership in Washington DC ultimately share the burden of defeat in the Vietnam War. This paper seeks to provide a nuanced view of the strained relationship between the Presidential Commander-In-Chief and the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam by analyzing intelligence gathered by both groups in the lead up to, and during, the Tet Offensive of 1968. Typically, when the United States goes to war, the President and his cabinet set larger grand-strategic and foreign policy goals that the subordinate military commands work to achieve by completing tactical and strategic objectives. However, the Tet Offensive revealed to the American public that the alleged symbiotic relationship between the political and military leadership had ceased to exist. As such, public assent for the claims of a unified and coherent American foreign policy faltered, therefore dashing any hope of an American "victory" in Vietnam. Thus, the real enemy to American efforts in Vietnam was the disconnect between the political and military leadership of the United States.

Biography:

Connor Mitchell is a member of the American Historical Association who received a BA in Comparative Politics and History from American University's School of Public Affairs and a MA in History at American University's College of Arts and Science in Washington DC. While at American University, he studied military history, researching and presenting work on the Vietnam War to AU's 31st Annual Robyn Rafferty Student Research Conference. Additionally, he has worked in documenting, collecting, and archiving oral histories of American veterans of the Vietnam War for AU's "Humanities Truck," a mobile humanities lab based in Washington DC. He has also contributed to a database digitization project with the United States Army Heritage and Education Center and has published articles for the *Small Wars Journal* and the Center for Maritime Strategy's *Maritime Operations Center*.



War within the War:

Television News Coverage of the Vietnam War and Its Controversial Legacies

"I know where Vietnam is," says the title character in the film, Ali. "It's on TV." For the heavyweight boxing champion of the world and millions of others, television was the main source of news and understanding about the Vietnam War. My paper will examine how U.S. television news programs covered the war and how the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations devised strategies to counteract what they considered slanted or sensational reporting. In a war whose "main front" was "here in the United States," as Johnson believed, and in which "our worst enemy seems to be the press," as Nixon asserted, the television screen became an important battlefield. My paper will analyze what New York Times correspondent David Halberstam called the "war within a war," the conflict between journalists who reported about the deficiencies of the Saigon government or the problems in the U.S. war effort and officials in the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations who considered those stories myopic or malicious. It argues that TV news coverage of the Vietnam War rankled presidents not because it was slanted or sensational but because it showed the hard realities, high costs, and inconvenient truths of a controversial war. My paper is based on extensive research in presidential libraries and media archives and interviews with journalists who covered the war. The "war within the war" has left enduring legacies. A belief that uncensored reporting from Vietnam undermined popular U.S. support for the war led to restrictions on news coverage in subsequent military interventions in Grenada, Panama, and Iraq. It also produced continuing misconceptions, as when the Washington Post asked fifty years after the Tet Offensive, "Did the News Media, Led by Walter Cronkite, Lose the War in Vietnam?" The efforts of Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon to discredit news coverage of the war established precedents and created arguments that a later generation of government officials would use in twenty-first-century battles over "fake news." Those disputes over the news media more than a half century ago are painfully relevant today.

Biography:

Chester Pach, (A.B., Brown University, Ph.D., Northwestern University) is a professor of history at Ohio University. He is the author or editor of five books, including *Arming the Free World: The Origins of the United States Military Assistance Program 1945-1950*; *The Presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower* (rev. ed.); *A Companion to Dwight D. Eisenhower*; and *Milestone Documents of American Presidents*. His next book, *The Presidency of Ronald Reagan*, will be published in 2026 by the University Press of Kansas. His articles and book chapters about news coverage of the Vietnam War have appeared in *Diplomatic History* and the *New York Times*. His most recent publication is "The US News Media and Vietnam" in *The Cambridge History of the Vietnam War*, vol. II: *Escalation and Stalemate* (2025). He has received grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Fulbright Program. He was awarded the Stuart L. Bernath Scholarly Article Prize from the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations.



Roundtable 2: The Assessment

Discussant Biographies

Robert Brigham joined the Vassar College faculty in 1994. He is a specialist on the history of US foreign policy, particularly the Vietnam War. Brigham is author or co-author of ten books, among them *Reckless: Henry Kissinger and the Tragedy of Vietnam* (PublicAffairs, 2018); *Is Iraq Another Vietnam?* (PublicAffairs, 2006); and *Argument Without End: In Search of Answers to the Vietnam Tragedy* (PublicAffairs, 1999), written with former secretary of defense, Robert S. McNamara and James G. Blight. Brigham's forthcoming book is *This is a True War Story: An Adoptee's Memoir* (The University of Chicago Press). In 2019, the Alumnae/i Association of Vassar College presented Brigham with its Outstanding Faculty Award. He has won similar teaching awards from Southern Vermont College (1986–87), the University of Kentucky (1993), and Semester at Sea (2014). In 2023, the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations selected Brigham for the Peter L. Hahn Distinguished Service Award.

Mark Atwood Lawrence is Professor of History and holds the Walter Prescott Webb Chair in History and Ideas at the University of Texas at Austin. He served as Director of the LBJ Presidential Library and Museum from January 2020 to September 2024. His most recent book is *The End of Ambition: The United States and the Third World in the Vietnam Era*, published by Princeton University Press in 2021. Lawrence is also author of *Assuming the Burden: Europe and the American Commitment to War in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) and *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). His essays and reviews have appeared in the New York Times, Washington Post, Boston Globe, Foreign Affairs, and Commentary.

Justin Simundson is an Assistant Professor of History at the U.S. Air Force Academy. His work focuses on the politics and propaganda of counterinsurgency in the Vietnam War. He is the editor of *Crooked Bamboo: A Memoir from Inside the Diem Regime* by Nguyen Thai, which highlights Mr. Thai's experiences as a high-level South Vietnamese propaganda official and as a personal aide to President Ngo Dinh Diem. Dr. Simundson's current project examines the creation and failure of the combined South Vietnamese and American propaganda effort in South Vietnam from its beginning in the 1950s to its virtual collapse before the beginning of America's Vietnam War. He can be reached at justin.simundson@afacademy.af.edu.

Kenneth M. Quinn, PhD, spent 24 of his 32 year State Department Foreign Service career serving in or working on Indochina, including almost six years in Vietnam during the war: first as a USAID Rural Development advisor in the Mekong Delta, followed by his commanding a U.S. Army MACV District Advisory team. Wounded in a rocket attack and coming under enemy fire on multiple occasions, he received the Secretary of State's Medal for Heroism for five separate lifesaving rescues he personally carried out. He was the only civilian to receive the U.S. Army Air Medal for participating in over 200 hundred hours of helicopter combat operations, including, at night, boarding and guiding a medical evacuation helicopter into an overrun outpost to rescue 30 wounded South Vietnamese troops. In 1974, based on the remote Cambodian border, he submitted the first ever report on the existence of the genocidal Pol Pot Khmer Rouge. He subsequently wrote his doctoral dissertation on "The Origin of Radical Cambodian Communism." As a member of Henry Kissinger's National Security Council staff at the White House, he acted as interpreter in Vietnamese for President Gerald Ford, and was on the Weyand Presidential Mission to Saigon in April of 1975. After the war, as special assistant to Richard Holbrooke he traveled to Hanoi on the Woodcock mission. Then, as a Pearson Fellow on the staff of Iowa Governor Robert Ray, he was directly involved in rescuing the Vietnamese "Boat People" refugees, and also served as Director of Iowa SHARES that rushed lifesaving food and medicine to starving Cambodians. As Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, he shaped the "Roadmap Policy" that led to the establishment of diplomatic relations with Vietnam and Cambodia. As Chair of the Inter-Agency Group on POW/MIAs, he personally negotiated the first ever access into a Vietnamese prison and into the country of



Cambodia. He was also a member of the first U.S. team to gain entry to a former Soviet prison in Russia. As ambassador in Phnom Penh, his plan of demining and upgrading rural roads led to the final eradication of the Khmer Rouge. In a ceremony in the House of Lords, Ambassador Quinn became only the second person ever to receive the Aegis Trust Champion of Humanity Distinguished Service Award for his leadership in confronting and eradicating the Cambodian genocide. He is the only three time recipient of both the American Foreign Service Association Award for Intellectual Courage and Dissent in Challenging Policy; and the Director of the CIA Award for Exceptional Reporting and Analysis.

Andrew Wiest was born in Chicago, but raised in Hattiesburg. After attending the University of Southern Mississippi for his undergraduate and masters degrees, Dr. Wiest went on to receive his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois, Chicago. Specializing in the study of World War I and Vietnam, Dr. Wiest has served as a Visiting Senior Lecturer at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst in the United Kingdom and as a Visiting Professor in the Department of Warfighting Strategy at the United States Air Force Air War College. Dr. Wiest is the Founding Director of the Dale Center for the Study of War and Society at the University of Southern Mississippi. Dr. Wiest has published widely and presented his research at conferences and at invited talks both nationally and internationally. Dr. Wiest has published more than 20 books, including *The Boys of '67: Charlie Company's War in Vietnam and Vietnam's Forgotten Army* (which won the Society for Military History's Distinguished Book Award). He has also been nominated for an Emmy Award for his work on National Geographic Channel's documentary *Brothers in War*, which was based on his book *The Boys of '67*, and won a New York Festivals Gold Medal for his work on the History Channel documentary *Vietnam in HD*. He has also written for the BBC, the New York Times, CNN, and serves on the Department of the Army's Historical Advisory Committee.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Harvard University is located on the traditional and ancestral land of the Massachusett, the original inhabitants of what is now known as Boston and Cambridge. We pay respect to the people of the Massachusett Tribe, past and present, and honor the land itself which remains sacred to the Massachusett People.