

IT2-- "A GENERATION BETRAYED: THE BUSH DOCTRINE, VIETNAM AND IRAQ", early 2003

"The U.S. will, if necessary, act preemptively, and will require bases within and beyond Western Europe and Northeast Asia, the ability to ensure U.S. access to distant theaters, and critical U.S. infrastructure and assets in outer space. Our forces will dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in hopes of equaling the power of the United States. We will not (be) impaired by the International Criminal Court (ICC), whose jurisdiction we do not accept. We will respect the interests of our friends and partners. Still, we will be prepared to act apart when our interests require."

-- from the Bush Doctrine, "The National Security Strategy of the United States," September 20, 2002

"The White House is developing a detailed plan to install an American-led military government in Iraq. It would put an American officer in charge of Iraq for a year or more while the U.S. and its allies maintained Iraq's oil fields."

-- The N.Y. Times, September 11, 2002

A baby-boom generation whose elders betrayed it in Vietnam is on the verge of betraying its own young through an irrational policy of seeking unilateral world control while continuing to neglect the biospheric deterioration comprising the greatest threat facing future generations. Every nation which has temporarily become the world's major power has dreamed of remaining so indefinitely. Not only has every such attempt failed, however, but the very act of seeking it has ensured decline.

However one feels about U.S. intervention in Afghanistan or Iraq, the notion that they should serve as stepping-stones for an ongoing U.S. strategy for world domination that includes installing U.S. colonial governments in the heart of the Middle East makes even less sense than U.S. Indochina policy a generation ago. The recent strategy document published by the National Security Council, coupled with the

Administration's neglect of the environment, is a recipe for national decline and world chaos.

As we are reminded by the publication of former Defense Department analyst Daniel Ellsberg's new memoir on Vietnam, Secrets, a U.S. Executive Branch with more war-making power than our Founders intended really is capable of miscalculating U.S. national security interests on a massive scale - wasting hundreds of billions of dollars, killing tens of thousands of Americans and millions of foreigners. It really can betray the young people it sends to war by manipulating information. And, as former U.S. Defense Secretary Robert McNamara later admitted, it really can display a "profound ignorance of the history, culture and politics of the people in the area" it is attacking.

From an intellectual point of view the "Bush Doctrine" itself is not something to be overly upset about. It will obviously prove as ephemeral as the many "doctrines" before it, such as the Nixon-Kissinger Doctrine making the Shah of Iran a linchpin of U.S. policy in the Middle East. The U.S. clearly cannot afford to police the world and outer space, and a commitment to unilateral and preemptive action wherever evil rears its ugly head will isolate us from the world at the very moment when building a new cooperative world order is our top national security priority. A commitment to indefinite military superiority would weaken our economy, reduce needed social initiatives, divide us at home, alienate us from our allies and the non-committed, accelerate already intolerable biospheric decline, embolden our enemies, and prove unviable even as a military strategy.

The problem is, however, that the new "Bush Doctrine" is not merely an intellectual exercise. The Administration is actually basing real-life policy on it. By obsessively focusing on military action against Iraq it is ignoring far greater threats to both the immediate safety of thousands of Americans and our long-term national security.

The debate over Indochina was often a dialogue of the deaf, with conservatives talking national security and liberals morality. In the case of attacking Iraq as part of the "Bush Doctrine", however, critics

can clearly demonstrate that it is the most harmful possible strategy for U.S. national security.

The issue is not yet decided, of course. The 77 million baby-boomers born between 1945 and 1960 still compose one of the most idealistic and innovative generations in American history. There is strong sentiment for environmental protection and peace. And the logic of protecting the U.S. through international multilateral cooperation, careful police work, homeland security, promoting democracy abroad, deterrence, conflict prevention and resolution, and humanitarian military intervention as a last resort, is so compelling that reason may eventually prevail.

"The Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon Administrations inflicted terrible suffering. People are fallible. The adage applies to me and to my generation of American leadership regarding Vietnam. Hindsight proves us wrong. In the end we must confront the fate of those Americans who served in Vietnam and never returned. Let us learn from their sacrifice and, by doing so, validate and honor it."

-- former U.S. Defense Secretary Robert McNamera, In Retrospect, p. 333

"What I had in my safe at Rand was seven thousand pages of documentary evidence of lying, by four presidents and their administrations over twenty-three years, to conceal plans and actions of mass murder. I decided I would get it out somehow."

-- Dan Ellsberg, Secrets, p. 290

At the moment, however, a combination of post-September 11 fear, extremist and uninformed White House leadership, and the cravenness of Congressional critics who have forgotten their pledges to themselves not to repeat the fundamental mistakes of Vietnam, may lead to an even larger generational disaster than Vietnam. It is striking that today's occupants of the White House are conducting themselves with the same obsessive secrecy and basic ignorance about foreign cultures as their predecessors. Former U.S. Defense Secretary Robert

McNamera wrote in 1995 that "our misjudgments of friend and foe alike reflected our profound ignorance of the history, culture and politics of the people in the area, and the personalities and habits of their leaders."

We will not have to wait 20 years for Colin Powell's memoirs to understand the ignorance of today's White House leaders. Their basic case for attacking Iraq was invalidated by a CIA report saying that Saddam is unlikely to use his weapons unless attacked. Their inability to understand local politics was just demonstrated when fundamentalists vowing to protect Al Quaeda recently won a resounding victory in the provinces of Northwest Pakistan where Al Quaeda leaders are believed to reside. And that they would even seriously discuss the idea of colonizing Iraq and seizing its oil - which would spawn and inflame a new generation of Islamic militants and vastly increase the likelihood that thousands of Americans will die from terrorist attacks in coming years - reveals a misunderstanding of U.S. security needs exceeding even that displayed in Vietnam.

White House fantasies of world domination remind us of the central and very simple lesson of Vietnam: U.S. leaders cannot be given the benefit of the doubt in making complex geopolitical decisions. This was true of the "best and the brightest" in Vietnam. Even 35 years later, it seems incredible that the brightest graduates of our best universities, people with the most distinguished careers in academia and business, could so completely fail to understand Indochina and world geopolitics. It is clearly at least as true for the present folks creating U.S. foreign policy in a world they clearly do not understand.

Most Americans are willing to give a President the benefit of the doubt on foreign policy, assuming he and his team know something they do not. But, as Indochina demonstrates, this assumption is not only incorrect but can lead to mass murder of civilians, unnecessary deaths of thousands of U.S. soldiers, and weaken the security of the United States. We best honor the 50,000 Americans and 2-3 million Vietnamese who died in Indochina when we assume our leaders capable of misleading us and themselves, and thus demand solid

evidence that their war-making is justified and can work before supporting it.

Such reflections are sparked by the confluence of the Bush Doctrine, Congress's blank check for war in Iraq, and the publication of Daniel Ellsberg's book *Secrets* - perhaps the most convincing chronicle of U.S. governmental betrayal of its citizenry in Vietnam ever published.

Ellsberg was familiar with the most secret U.S. government documents on Indochina, many of which he released as *The Pentagon Papers*. He served at the Pentagon during the Gulf of Tonkin incident, spent two years in Vietnam studying the situation in the countryside and engaging in combat operations, and interacted with many of the top U.S. officials conducting war in Indochina. He is thus uniquely positioned to explain how governments use deception to manipulate domestic opinion more than to confuse foreign enemies.

Ellsberg describes, for example, explaining to Robert McNamera on a trip back from Saigon in October 1966, at a time when more than 100,000 Americans were fighting in Vietnam and many more were about to be sent there, why America's Vietnam strategy was failing. McNamera turned to an aide and said "This proves what I'm saying! We've put more than a hundred thousand more troops in the country over the last year, and there's been no improvement. The underlying situation is really worse!" McNamera then landed and declared at a press conference on the tarmac that "I'm glad to be able to tell you that we're showing great progress in every dimension of our effort. I'm very encouraged by everything I've seen and heard on my trip."

Let us be clear what this means. McNamera was not only lying to the American public, but to young people he was sending to die. Many would not have gone to Vietnam had they known that he did not believe that their sacrifice was succeeding. Even if one still justifies our war in Indochina, there can be no possible excuse for misleading the public and young soldiers about it. And there is no question that U.S. policy failed. Our society is still paying, and will pay indefinitely, for our young having been betrayed in this way.

Youth abused by their elders are emotionally scarred for life. This is particularly true for U.S. baby-boomers who grew up in the aftermath of "The Good War" with an unusually strong belief in their nation and its values, and were thus unusually confused by the betrayal of these values in Vietnam. Decades of government lying on behalf of large-scale murder plunged this generation into a moral abyss from which we have never really emerged. The "Sixties generation" was an unusually creative, courageous and idealistic generation. But its anger and sense of betrayal has also made it an unusually depressed generation, for whom "anti-depressant" medications were invented. We are also unusually divided, angry, litigious, cynical and bitter, as 5 minutes of TV channel surfing will reveal.

Beneath the depression and anger, however, lies a deep sadness and confusion that explains much of our inability to reach a generational consensus about what we or our society stands for. Within just two years baby-boomer leaders have veered crazily from agreeing that deficit reduction is needed to beginning to amass the largest debt in peacetime history; from espousing environmental action to abandoning it; and from promoting a new cooperative international order to destroying it.

Such policy shifts are, moreover, only the tip of an iceberg. We have not yet as a society even begun to discuss the implications of the betrayal of an entire generation. The first to experience it were young people opposed to the war. Their elders' willingness to kill them for a war in which they did not believe produced a fury which eventually consumed many of them in a miasma of anger, narcissism, drugs and despair, which in turn alienated large numbers of their elders and contemporaries.

Somewhat later many of those youth who had believed in the war came to realize that they too had been betrayed. But most, psychologically unable to accept that their government and elders had used them, turned their fury instead upon the peace movement. The result today is a deeply divided generation for which policy differences are only the surface manifestation of tremendous unconscious anger, resentment and despair that has never been resolved. This division

has prevented the development of a common set of values and principles that can heal our nation.

Our various recent scandals, for example, have one thread in common. In the absence of common values, leaders put their own self-interest and careers ahead of the good of their constituents, employees, or nation. Young people today cannot reasonably trust their Catholic priests, stockbrokers, corporate employers, or the leaders of the FBI and CIA leaders - let alone their elected representatives.

What such phenomena signify is a central reality of our time: we have not put Vietnam behind us. On the contrary. Its principal effect was its DOMESTIC impact on U.S. baby-boomers who have today become the world's dominant economic, political, military and cultural power. As a result, understanding the themes of Ellsberg's book on Indochina is critical for understanding our life today. Its conclusions are not only a contribution to history, but critical to understanding today's headlines on Iraq, the future wars the U.S. will likely engage in should its Iraq effort succeed, and the larger question of whether democracy can survive if leaders withhold relevant information from its citizens.

"Congress supports the determination of the President to take all necessary measures to ... prevent further aggression..."

--The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, August 4, 1964

"The president is authorized to use the Armed Forces of the United States as he determines to be necessary and appropriate ... against the continuing threat posed by Iraq."

-- House Resolution on Iraq, passed October 9, 2002

Iraq is not Vietnam. Saddam Hussein is a brutal tyrant who enjoys far less domestic support than Ho Chi Minh. His biological, chemical and potential nuclear weapons pose a larger threat to its neighbors than did Vietnam. And it is unlikely that the U.S. will fight a long ground war against him. After September 11 American citizens face a far greater domestic threat from Arab terrorists than they ever did from the Vietnamese. And Bush Administration officials have shown somewhat

more candor than did LBJ's advisors. That said, however, the parallels between the two situations are remarkable.

As occurred 28 years ago, Congress is acquiescing to policies which could kill tens of thousands of Americans without achieving their stated goals of enhancing U.S. security. Saddam Hussein is as much of a tyrant as Stalin, Mao and Kim Il Sung and should be removed. But that is not the question. The issue is whether we can do so in a way that enhances our overall national security.

We did not attack the Soviet Union, China or North Korea because the cost of doing so clearly outweighed the potential benefits. There is every reason to believe that the costs of a Bush Doctrine seeking to colonize the world's second largest oil producer in the heart of the Middle East, and then proceeding to challenge the many other leaders it doesn't like, will also far exceed potential benefits.

In addition, Saddam does not pose nearly as great a threat to our interests as poor homeland security, as documented by the Hart-Rudman commission, and Al Qaeda. By turning so much attention on Iraq the Administration has necessarily lost focus on the main threats to Americans.

The most disturbing single event in recent months has been Congress's granting the President of the United States a blank check to wage war against Iraq. However one feels about Iraq, the notion that we should return to a pre-Vietnam mindset in which the President is given the power to wage unilateral war is deeply disturbing. As Ellsberg's timely book reminds us, the Executive Branch can neither be trusted to tell the full truth to the public or Congress, nor to use its power in a way that actually guarantees our national security.

Ellsberg, who was present in the Pentagon and handling the messages coming in from American ships in the Gulf of Tonkin in August 1964, reports that:

(a) the North Vietnamese did not fire on American destroyers on August 4, and there was reason to doubt the official report from the very first night;

(b) the President promised Senator Fulbright and the U.S. Senate that he would not use the resolution to expand the war. He then did so, using it as his sole legal basis for sending 50,000 American youth to die in Vietnam and to kill over a million Indochinese;

(c) the President claimed publicly that he was responding to "unprovoked aggression", even as his CIA chief John McCone told him privately that "the North Vietnamese are reacting defensively to our attack on their off-shore islands", referring to secret CIA-directed attacks that were not revealed to Congress or the American people;

(d) Senator Fulbright said publicly that President Johnson had lied to him and, through him, the U.S. Senate. Robert McNamera writes that the Johnson administration was "absolutely not" justified in using the Resolution "as a basis" for the U.S. escalation, and that "Senator Fulbright, in time, came to feel that he had been misled - and indeed he had."

The lying around the Gulf of Tonkin incident is but the tip of a very deep iceberg of government deception. It is only when we realize how massively the U.S. government lied to its own citizens in Vietnam that we realize how absurd it is that Congress and the public would give the present Administration the benefit of the doubt about the Bush Doctrine for world control.

Ellsberg painstakingly documents how U.S. leaders consistently misled the American people for over 20 years on the war:

-- Both Administrations constantly lied, day after day for 11 years, about the civilian casualties they were causing. They forced refugees to move out of their villages and then claimed they were voluntarily fleeing communism. They denied the torture, corruption and unrepresentativeness of U.S.-supported regimes. And above all, they simply reclassified the hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians

they murdered by indiscriminate bombing, artillery "reconnaissance by fire", and helicopter hunts that resembled game-hunting safaris, as "enemy combatants."

-- General Maxwell Taylor reported to President Kennedy after a September 1961 trip to Vietnam that U.S. troops would be necessary to save the government there. He said publicly, however, that U.S. troops would not be necessary. He continued to lie about this a decade later, even after Ellsberg published his memo saying that the South Vietnamese government would need U.S. troops to survive.

-- Johnson ran as a moderate on Vietnam in the 1964 election and promised "not to send American boys to do a job South Vietnamese boys should do" - even as he planned for a massive U.S. buildup that commenced shortly after he was elected.

-- Johnson, McNamara and other Administration officials constantly lied to Congress and the American people about the progress we were making in South Vietnam. They made a special effort to conceal estimates of North Vietnamese infiltration into South Vietnam which showed that new soldiers were more than replacing the ones we killed.

-- Johnson constantly concealed the extent of his planned troop buildups, so as to defuse opposition which would have coalesced had his real intentions been known.

-- President Nixon and Henry Kissinger took office on a promise of a "secret plan" to end the war in Vietnam, and Kissinger assured critics and the public that they were planning to withdraw in the months following their election. Ellsberg reports, however, that the Administration was even then conducting a massive expansion of the air war, was soon to invade Cambodia and Laos, and eventually fought for 7 more years at a cost of well over 6 million Indochinese killed, wounded and refueged, and over 10,000 American lives.

-- President Nixon and Henry Kissinger conducted secret bombings of Cambodia, including falsifying records to keep them as secret as possible from Congress.

-- Nixon and Kissinger conducted massive bombings against civilians in Laos, while denying for 15 months that the U.S. was bombing at all, and then claiming that only civilian targets were bombed.

It is common to excuse U.S. leaders' behavior in Vietnam on the grounds that they were sincere about protecting American interests, or anguished when they failed. There was a remarkable wave of sympathy for LBJ recently, for example, when secret tapes revealed how much he complained privately about sending U.S. soldier to die in a war he believed the U.S. could not win.

As Ellsberg's book demonstrates, the issue is what actually occurred not how those responsible felt about it. He demonstrates that deceit was integral to the conduct of the war, and the target of the government's deception was the American people not our enemies - who knew more about the secret bombing and other deceptions than the U.S. public.

His book demonstrates that what matters most in a democracy is giving people the full information so THEY can decide whether they wish to support or wage a war. When leaders withhold information, using George W. Bush's time-honored excuse of national security, they betray their nation and the people who elected them.

America's leaders sowed a whirlwind in Vietnam for which we are still paying nearly 30 years after the war's end, and for which we will pay indefinitely. If the Bush Administration is allowed to implement its recent "national security strategy", the price will likely be even higher.