

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
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**THESIS**

**HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPING AND  
MAINTAINING HOMEFRONT MORALE FOR THE WAR ON  
TERRORISM**

by

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June 2002

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HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING  
HOMEFRONT MORALE FOR THE WAR ON TERRORISM

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## **ABSTRACT**

The War on Terrorism will be vastly different than any previous U.S. military campaign. The war will span a wide range of geographic, economic and political boundaries. Terrorist organizations will rely on stealth and dispersion to evade the American military and international law enforcement agencies. The United States will therefore be required to engage the enemy in a wide variety of arenas and with a wide variety of tools. Thus, the War on Terrorism will require the skillful blending of many American and international capabilities in order to meet the challenge. One such challenge is to cultivate and sustain homefront morale for the War on Terrorism.

This paper will offer recommendation's on how the United States should address their current homefront morale challenge through the analysis of two case studies. The first case study will examine how Great Britain was able to develop and sustain homefront morale during World War II. The second case study will examine the homefront morale issues concerning the United States involvement in the Vietnam War, specifically on their loss of public support for the war. Both case studies will address the applicability of the respective information campaign to the War on Terrorism, and will focus on generating a set of lessons learned that can be directly applied to today's homefront morale challenge. Once completed, the analysis of the two case studies will offer a solid historical basis to develop recommendations for building homefront support for the War on Terrorism. These recommendations will be

presented as answers to a set of questions, fundamental to the homefront morale problem. The answers to these questions, along with their rationale, will provide the backbone of the paper's recommendations for building and sustaining homefront morale for the War on Terrorism.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. BACKGROUND

The 9-11 terrorist attacks aimed to directly alter American foreign policy. By demanding the withdrawal of U.S. troops stationed in Saudi Arabia, al-Qaeda intends to drive US presence and influence out of the Middle East. Secondly, al-Qaeda intends to alter the Middle East's balance of power by undermining American support for the Israeli's in their ongoing conflict with the Palestinians. [Hayes]

Concession to these demands is unacceptable to American national interests. The U.S. National Security Strategy, as required by the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Department Reorganization Act of 1986, contains three core objectives: to enhance America's security, to bolster America's economic prosperity, and to promote democracy and human rights abroad. A concession to al-Qaeda's demands would violate all three of these core objectives.

A withdrawal from the region and a retraction of US support for Israel would set a dire precedent. The message sent around the world would be that the U.S. will bend to a terrorist group's demands so long as serious damage is inflicted on America. Upon concession to al-Qaeda demands, numerous other groups would be encouraged to act similarly in the hopes of altering US policy. American national security would be critically damaged.

Additionally, it is vital to the United States' economic and political interests that it maintains influence in the region. The Middle East represents roughly

64% of the world's proven oil reserves and 34% of its gas reserves. [Cordesman] Ensuring the availability of these resources is essential to maintaining global economic stability. The Middle East's volatile political climate demands U.S. military and diplomatic presence. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has the potential to escalate, and a US withdrawal from the region would only further destabilize the situation. Finally, the ongoing military threat of Saddam Hussein's regime also represents a serious threat to the region and the world.

Concession to al-Qaeda would also undermine democracy's future in the Middle East. By using acts of terrorism as propaganda, al-Qaeda could further destabilize the political landscape within the Arab states. With the rise of grassroot Muslim support for al-Qaeda following 9-11, politically moderate Arab leaders have sought to distance themselves from Western influence; thereby weakening democracy's standing in the region. Consequently, Arab tolerance of Israel, the lone democratic state in the region, has been severely undermined. The basic principles of democracy are also threatened. As they showed in Afghanistan, al-Qaeda is in direct opposition to fundamental human rights, including the freedom of speech, religion, and assembly. The United States' objective to promote democracy and human rights abroad would not be served by a concession to al-Qaeda's demands.

In light of these consequences, the United States has made the obvious choice not to yield. The U.S. has strengthened its commitment to prevent further attacks and to bring the terrorists to justice. However, the United

States is not only committed to prosecuting al-Qaeda, rather the War on Terrorism aims to remove terrorism as a means of achieving political aims.

The War on Terrorism will be vastly different than any previous U.S. military campaign. The war will span a wide range of geographic, economic and political boundaries. Terrorist organizations will rely on stealth and dispersion to evade the American military and international law enforcement agencies. The United States will therefore be required to engage the enemy in a wide variety of arenas and with a wide variety of tools. Thus, the War on Terrorism will require the skillful blending of many American and international capabilities in order to meet the challenge. One such challenge is to cultivate and sustain homefront morale for the War on Terrorism.

**B. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HOMEFRONT MORALE**

Persuasion is the ultimate purpose of every terrorist action and relies on both the rallying of ones own morale combined with the degradation of the opposition's morale. Terrorism hopes to provide "propaganda by deed," whereby a terrorist act seeks to "awaken the consciousness of the people" to their cause. [Laqueur] By inducing a western escalation of the conflict, al-Qaeda hopes to provide the catalyst for an Arab revolution in opposition to the West. The coalition of Arab states would constitute a force capable of threatening the prosperity of western civilization, and therefore capable of forcing the withdrawal of western presence in the Middle East.

Terrorism also seeks to undermine homefront support of American foreign policy. Al-Qaeda hopes to meet their

political aims by having a dramatic effect on the American will to fight. By inflicting, or threatening to inflict significant damage to the United States and its populace, al-Qaeda hopes to force the American public into opposition of the governments Middle East policy. [Tugwell, pg. 68] By developing and maintaining homefront morale the American government would deny the terrorists the effect their attacks intend.

Further, The War on Terrorism will undoubtedly be a protracted campaign, requiring a great deal of budgetary investment. In order to assure continued monetary support for the war effort, the public must believe that victory is possible. Public support for the war will lead to political support for the war, which in turn will lead to budgetary support. Armed with the necessary funds and political mandate, the government will be empowered to take the necessary measures to prevent further attacks and effectively prosecute the terrorist networks.

Maurice Tugwell, author of *Terrorism as a Psychological Strategy*, claims that a military campaign can only exist if the warring nation meets three psychological criteria. The three convictions, termed the Mobilizing Trinity, consist of the following:

First, a belief in something good to be promoted or defended;

Second, a belief in something evil to be destroyed or resisted;

Third, a belief in the ultimate victory of the good cause. [Tugwell, pg. 70]

While it cannot do so alone, a homefront morale campaign can aid in meeting the criteria by serving as the intermediary between the public and the cause. The development and implementation of a campaign for homefront morale can help form the public's perception of what is at stake, who the enemy is, and the prospect of victory. The question thus becomes how should the U.S. government develop, maintain, and regulate public support for the war?

### **C. METHODOLOGY**

This paper answers the above question through the analysis of two case studies. The first case study will examine how Great Britain was able to develop and sustain homefront morale during World War II. The second case study will examine the homefront morale issues concerning the United States involvement in the Vietnam War, specifically on their loss of public support for the war. Both case studies will address the applicability of the respective campaign to the War on Terrorism, and will focus on generating a set of lessons learned that can be directly applied to today's homefront morale challenge. Once completed, the analysis of the two case studies will offer a solid historical basis to develop recommendations for building homefront support for the War on Terrorism. These recommendations will be presented as answers to the following four questions: who should disseminate war information, how should homefront morale be gauged, what role should the media play, fundamental themes should be promoted? The answers to these questions, along with their rationale, will provide the backbone of the paper's recommendations for building and sustaining homefront morale for the War on Terrorism.

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## **II. WORLD WAR II CASE STUDY**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The first case study examines Great Britain's campaign to develop and sustain homefront morale during World War II. The analysis presents a set of lessons learned that can be directly applied to the development and maintenance of homefront morale for the War on Terrorism. Why Britain was forced to deal with the homefront morale issue and the nation's subsequent organization and strategy is also discussed.

The examination of the British homefront morale campaign during World War II is relevant for a host of reasons. The British faced an adversary, much like America faces in the War on Terrorism, which sought to degrade their power and influence. The British nation and civilian population were physically under attack, much like America and Americans are today. Clearly many differences also exist between the American War on Terrorism and the British role in World War II. For instance, the British faced a regional hegemony, whereas the United States faces a coalition of non-state powers. However, care was taken to find the common campaign attributes and subsequently generate lessons learned that can be applied to today's homefront morale challenge.

### **B. THE HOMEFRONT MORALE PROBLEM**

Prior to World War II the British government came to recognize the important role homefront morale would play in the coming war with Germany. The need for homefront morale arose out of the changing nature of modern warfare:

"warfare has come to resemble campaigns in which whole countries besiege one another." [Speier, pg. 5] Within this modern warfare framework, the industrial and organizational skills of the home populace directly impact the effectiveness of a nation's armed forces. Accordingly, defeat may not flow from a collapse of armies on a conventional battlefield but from the weakening of industrial assets at home. The breakdown of homefront morale could therefore directly impinge the effectiveness of the British Armed Forces through a decline in industrial output. The citizen's morale and his willingness to contribute to the war effort had therefore become of decisive military importance. [McLaine, pg. 2]

While maintaining a productive workforce was the primary aim, there were other reasons for developing a homefront morale campaign. In the 1930's, the Nazi's began to use propaganda in an attempt to degrade and destroy rival governments. The organization of legions of Germans and foreign nationals into a worldwide fifth column provided the Nazi's a means of distributing propaganda throughout the world. The Nazi's hoped to use fifth column's propaganda to disable nations prior to attack or annexation. [Laurie, pg. 8] The reported use of a Nazi fifth column to "spread the spirit of defeatism" throughout the European continent aroused fear within the British government. [McLaine, pg. 75] The homefront morale campaign, therefore, set out to counter the Nazi's subversive scheme to degrade British governmental power.

The British morale building campaign had to account for changes in the social and political environment since

World War I. For instance, the populace's "increasing disinclination" to accept the policies and decisions of government complicated the morale building environment. Further, the advent of German long range bombers meant that the British populace became a viable target. [McLaine, pg. 2] While World War I had been fought on the distant battlefield, the British government had to prepare their nation for a war fought in their own backyard. Thus, the homefront morale campaign would have to psychologically prepare the homefront for the rigors and horrors of total war.

Finally, the homefront morale campaign aimed to counter the communist threat. While the British recognized that the Nazi's could not use communism against them, they did fear adoption of communism's pacifist outlook, particularly among the working class. [McLaine, pg. 59] Thus, the government set out to squelch communism's impact on homefront morale. Ultimately, the British government used propaganda in order to walk the fine line between militarily supporting the Russians on the Eastern Front, and morally discarding communist ideology.

### **C. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE HOMEFRONT MORALE CAMPAIGN**

Throughout the early 1930's the British government examined the homefront morale problem, ultimately creating the Ministry of Information in 1935 to organize and execute the campaign. Due to the dramatic differences between the two eras and a lack of historical documentation, the organization and doctrine of the Ministry of Information had very little in common British propaganda during World War I. [McLaine, pg. 12] Though it was not admitted, the

Ministry closely resembled the organization of Joseph Goebbels Ministry of Propaganda. [McLaine, pg. 12]

The Ministry contained an intelligence element, known as the Collecting Division, which was tasked with collecting information pertaining to the population's state of morale: "The [Collecting] Division's immediate tasks were to supply the Ministry itself with routine monthly and ad hoc reports on matters of urgency and on the effectiveness of the propaganda." [McLaine, pg. 51] The Collecting Division developed a network of information sources, including social clubs, the press, and public opinion polls. The polling organizations, Mass-Observation and British Institute for Public Opinion, utilized the same tools as the Gallup Poll in the United States.

The Ministry also contained a News division which officially aspired "to tell the truth, nothing but the truth, and as near as possible the whole truth." [McLaine, pg. 26] The Ministry demanded that its News Division should be privy to all available service information, arguing that full access would allow for more polished propaganda. Further, they argued that full access would allow them to more effectively carry out their censorship responsibilities. In the end, the War Services never fully trusted the News Division, resulting in significant information flow problems.

In terms of censorship, the Ministry of Information struggled to balance the public's desire for information, the media's need for autonomy, and the military's need to maintain operational secrecy. While the Ministry of Information understood the public voracious desire for war

information, they also recognized that the dissemination of false or overly optimistic news by an independent press would foster anxiety and rumor, and could ultimately create distrust for the government's motives and conduct of the war. [McLaine, pg. 36] The government, and therefore the Ministry, decided that censorship was the solution. The backbone of the Ministry of Information's censorship policy was Defense Regulation 3, which made it a criminal offense to obtain, record, communicate or publish any information which might be of military value to the enemy. [McLaine, pg. 24] While censorship of the press was officially voluntary, editors were to submit articles with potentially sensitive information to the Ministry's News Division for review. Thus, the Ministry inherently made any questionable news report subject to censorship.

Throughout the war, the Ministry of Information tried to frame themselves as the liaison between the people and the government. In no way did the Ministry want to be associated with propaganda: "It should not, of course, be hinted that [The Ministry of Information] knows the existence of such a thing as public morale." [McLaine, pg. 49] The Ministry attempted to seamlessly provide the public with complete and trustworthy news that also furthered its homefront morale agenda.

The Ministry of Information's effectiveness at cultivating homefront morale is uncertain. The British government never concluded that homefront morale was dangerously low. In fact, history has shown British homefront morale as being exceptionally high. As Winston Churchill said at the conclusion of the war, "The British

people have shown a very high degree of common sense." [McLaine, pg. 277] However, to attribute the high state of civilian morale solely on the Ministry of Information would be naïve. Instead of trying to quantify the effect the Ministry had on homefront morale, this paper examines the Ministry of Information's campaign by analyzing the logic and rationale behind its organization and initiatives.

#### **D. RELEVANT LESSONS LEARNED**

##### **1. Information Availability**

Throughout World War II, the Ministry of Information struggled to provide relevant and thorough news to the British people. However, the organizational design of the British government severely hampered the Ministry's ability to do so. An obvious example of this problem occurred in the beginning of the war, as Germany began their attack on Poland. Though England was obligated by treaty to defend Poland and had gone to war ostensibly to defend Poland, the British government seemed resigned to watch as the nation fell to Nazi forces. [McLaine, pg. 34] The public thirsted for any information regarding the war, specifically an articulation of war aims. Yet, the Ministry of Information released nothing but innocuous information to the public. When Poland finally fell to German forces, the Government appeared to be apathetic. [McLaine, pg. 35]

The public's unmet need for information had a negative effect on homefront morale. Some citizens began to doubt the very existence of war, while others subsidized the lack of information by creating and distributing rumors. [McLaine, pg. 34] The problem cut to the heart of government's strength and viability, and raised questions of the Ministry of Information's credibility.

Members of Government called for the Ministry of Information to show Great Britain:

fighting Germany on land, in the air, and at sea, ceaselessly, without remorse, with all her armed might, with financial resources, industrial manpower, and commercial assets, with all her idealism and determination. [McLaine, pg. 45]

However, the interaction between the ministry and the war services prevented such a message from being presented. The Ministry of Information did not have full access to war information; rather information was pre-selected by the war services prior to reaching the Ministry. The military had a fundamental distrust of the Ministry of Information, and therefore failed to share sensitive information in order to maintain operational security. As Winston Churchill said:

it was for the Admiralty or other department to purvey to the Ministry the raw meat and vegetables and for the Ministry to cook and serve the dish to the public. If the Admiralty could have had it their way they would prefer a policy of complete silence. [McLaine, pg. 36]

Due to the powerful political influence of the War Services and the lack of political clout of the Ministry, this information flow problem was never fully corrected. The Ministry of Information could have been more effective if they had been privy to all war information.

## **2. Gauging Morale**

The Ministry of Information struggled to develop and implement an effective means of gauging the morale of the people. From the onset, the British government stated that the only viable means of gauging morale was to analyze actions, not thoughts. Dr. Stephen Taylor, Head of the Home Intelligence Division, stated that "morale must... be

ultimately measured not by what one thinks or says, but by what he does and how he does it." [McLaine, pg. 119] While in theory the Ministry was to limit their research of public morale to actions, in practice they were also deeply concerned with public opinion. The inclusion of thoughts complicated the Collecting Division's job, and made judgments on the state of homefront morale much more imprecise.

The Ministry of Information also at times misinterpreted certain behaviors as being indicative of lowered homefront morale. Worrisome behaviors were primarily hysteria, trekking,<sup>1</sup> and looting. While hysteria and looting were rarely observed, trekking was widespread. [McLaine, pg. 115] Trekking was interpreted by the Ministry as an indication of the population's hopelessness. [McLaine, pg. 111] An internal ministry analysis stated the following:

It is known there is a section of the population... who are of a weaker constitutional make-up than the rest. These people react to different situations in two ways - either by cowardly retreat or by a neurotic mental breakdown... the potentially neurotic section of the population takes to the roads each evening and seeks safety in dispersal. [Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 23-30 April 1941]

Within the same report, the Home Intelligence Division acknowledged that the majority of the people returned to the cities and their jobs each morning. If morale were to be solely judged by actions that promote or hinder the cause, trekking would never have raised any concerns. The

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<sup>1</sup> Trekking was the term applied to the exodus of people from the cities during air raids.

Ministry confused the desire to live with hopelessness. The lack of a universally accepted definition of homefront morale clouded the Ministry's ability to gauge the state of public opinion and behavior. The above example illustrates the need for a rational definition of both homefront morale and the actions or thoughts that indicate lowered morale.

### **3. Human Factors**

The Ministry of Information did not fully appreciate the dynamic nature of morale. An example of this shortcoming occurred from September 1939 to May 1940, as Britain prepared to face a German bombing campaign. Coupled with the nation's physical preparation for bombardment, the Ministry of Information began to distribute propaganda to bolster homefront morale. [*Your Courage, Your Cheerfulness, Your Resolution* Poster, McLaine, pg. 87] However, the threat was late in materializing, and the propaganda campaign proved unnecessary, if not counter-productive. As *The Times* reported:

...the insipid and patronizing invocations to which the passer-by is now being treated have a power of exasperation which is all their own. There may be no intrinsic harm in their faint, academic piety, but the implication that the public morale needs this kind of support, or, if it did, that this is the kind of support it would need, is calculated to provoke a response which is neither academic nor pious. [Briggs, pg. 164-5]

While impossible to ascertain how many people shared this opinion, the prominent nature of the statement shows that the opinion did exist. Clearly, the Ministry failed to realize that their efforts had to be coupled with a need, lest they desired to annoy their audience.

The unmaterialized German threat coupled with the enormous anticipation also lead to concerns over the longevity of the British people's morale. At the time, Home Secretary Sir John Anderson presented a stern warning regarding the state of British morale:

Criticism of the blackout, the strength of the Civil Defense personnel, the emergency hospital scheme, all reflect the same tendency to call in question the need for the precautions which have been taken; and in the present state of public opinion there is a real danger that the re-adjustments that have been made to meet present circumstances may be interpreted as an admission that the scale of our Civil Defense measures was set out of proportion to any risks of large scale air attack, merely because no such attack has yet to be delivered; and unless active steps are taken to counter this spirit of false optimism we may well find that, by the time that the blow falls, we shall have dissipated the resources and broken the morale which we have built up to resist it. 4 [McLaine, pg. 35]

As the statement reflects, the enormous build-up threatened to give the people a false sense of security. The Ministry initially failed to recognize that the British people could not be held in a constant state of preparedness, instead their efforts and thoughts had to be regulated.

A morale building campaign cannot count on a static level of homefront morale; rather a cyclical nature of ebbs and flows should be expected. [Rokeach, pg. 139] Rather than heightening the public's anticipation, the Ministry could have been more effective if they had set out to temper the people's nervousness and false expectations. Ultimately, the Ministry came to understand the need to

match their morale-building efforts with the situation.  
[McLaine, pg. 58]

#### **4. The Value of Bad News**

The Ministry of Information understood that bad news could be leveraged in favor of homefront morale. While clearly too much bad news may cultivate the feeling of hopelessness, the Ministry recognized that by occasionally informing the public of bad news their credibility was strengthened. [Pratkanis, pg. 133] Tom Clarke, then Deputy Director of the Ministry's News Division, expressed the Ministry's viewpoint on the value of bad news:

Frankness will give all the more emphasis to bulletins announcing our successes. Our civilian population is not afraid of an occasional dose of bad news, and would not be cast in panic by it ... Detail kills the public distrust of vague announcements. [McLaine, pg. 64]

As the quote indicates, bad news could be used to establish the Ministry's credibility and also to emphasize British successes. The ministry correctly understood that bad news could be leveraged to yield greater homefront morale.

#### **5. Audience Assessment**

Lessons can also be derived from the Ministry of Information's estimation of the British people's intelligence, biases, and needs.

The Ministry of Information often failed to understand their audience's point of view. This failure is highlighted in two posters developed by the Ministry. The first poster published by the Ministry in 1939 involved the depiction of a Long Bowman from the Hundred Years War. While the poster was intended to convey British resilience, its

interpretation by some British people was far different. The poster evoked questions of class responsibility, hinting that the lower class would be primarily responsible for the defense of Great Britain. [McLaine, pg. 22] While the Ministry of Information strived to unite Britain, the poster proved to be counter productive to the cause. Clearly, care should be taken to determine all possible interpretations of propaganda.

The second poorly designed poster, titled *Mightier Yet*, was released during the heaviest period of German bombing. [*Mightier Yet* Poster, McLaine, pg. 79] The poster was intended to reassure the public that the British armed forces were strong and capable. The theme failed to meet the people's psychological needs, many of whom were seeking shelter from German bombardment. The British people required propaganda relating to their own situation and efforts, not a vague reassuring of British strength. [McLaine, pg. 99] The example illustrates the importance of a flexible morale building campaign that matches propaganda with the psychological needs of the audience.

Another example of the British Ministry of Defense failure to recognize the needs of the people was their distribution of the pamphlet titled *If the Invader Comes*. The pamphlet set forth rough guidelines for how citizens should react if the Germans invaded Britain. Urging people to "Stay Put" and attempt to prevent the enemy's access to petrol and transportation, the document was widely faulted for providing only vague instructions. [McLaine, pg. 227] Instead of satisfying the public's need for "words of command," the Ministry supplied the public with "words of

suggestion." [McLaine, pg. 70] As the head of the Ministry would noted:

The public is tired of being left to fend for itself ways of helping in the war effort. People want to be ordered about, to have sacrifices imposed on them, to be provided with occupations obviously related to national defense... unless the demand for compulsion is met, the public will feel the government lacks efficiency and energy... [McLaine, pg. 71]

Clearly, the British government could not afford to be seen as lacking decisiveness, and would subsequently produce more specific instructions. The Ministry of Information should have taken greater care in assessing their audience's point of view.

#### **6. Framing the Enemy**

Lessons can also be gleaned from the Ministry of Information's portrayal of the German character. Officially, the Ministry claimed to rely solely on the truth in their portrayal of Germany. However, as George Orwell said, "All propaganda is lies, even when one is telling the truth." [McLaine, pg. 137] The Ministry fully and truthfully portrayed the Germans only when it met their aims. The Ministry of Information's attempts to mold the public perception of the enemy did face certain challenges.

Prior to 1940, many British citizens believed, due to Germany's seemingly effortless charge across Europe, that Germany and Hitler were unbeatable. [McLaine, pg. 146] The implied hopelessness of such a belief directly opposed the homefront morale campaign. The Ministry, therefore, set out to dispel the notion. The following summarizes the Ministry

of Information's approach to destroying Hitler's mythic stature:

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that Hitler's success is engendering a legend infallibility which is immensely powerful... THIS LEGEND MUST BE DEFEATED. It must be made clear that the little countries Hitler has invaded were lying defenseless at Hitler's door for generations. Even in France he is only making headway by sheer weight of steel. Hitler is personally fallible, despicable, cowardly... He is important only as the embodiment of the German lust for power in the most evil guise it has ever taken. [McLaine, pg. 146]

As the quote indicates, the Ministry aimed to degrade Hitler's achievements and to stress the strategic differences between the British and the rest of Europe. Further, Hitler was not portrayed as a unique figure in history. Rather, the Ministry desired to equate Hitler previous European aggressors, such as Bismarck and Napoleon. This association, while slight, was designed to reassure the British people that Hitler, like his historical predecessors, could be defeated. [McLaine, pg. 145]

The quote also indicates that the Ministry sought to associate the German character with evil. As Hans Speier stated in his book *Morale and Propaganda*: "In modern war, in which mass opinions count, the enemy has to be wholly identified... with the principle of evil, so that one can mobilize the necessary power of right for ones own cause." [Speier, pg. 137] While the Ministry of Information sought to portray Germany as fundamentally evil, they recognized the strategic value of regulating the British public's exposure to that evil.

The Ministry of Information came to realize the value of rationing the publication or broadcast of German atrocities. While the Ministry understood that the communication of German atrocities would strengthen the notion of Germany's evil nature, they also recognized that too much coverage would be counter-productive. Excessive coverage of German atrocities could have created apathy among their audience, and would prevent the particularly heinous transgressions from being viewed in their proper light. [McLaine, pg. 165] A Ministry of Information's Planning Committee outlined the ministry's strategy with regards to German atrocities:

In self defense people prefer to think that the victims were specially marked men - and probably a pretty bad lot anyway. A certain amount of horror is needed but it must be used sparingly and must deal always with treatment of indisputably innocent people. [McLaine, pg. 166]

The Ministry sought to keep their war coverage from becoming simple horror stories. Instead, the ministry sought to evoke real empathy among their audience for the victims, and therefore cultivate the British people's hatred for Germany. [McLaine, pg. 166] Further, the British people's information needs proved to be factual, and less narrative. Harold Nicholson, head of Ministry's propaganda development, stated:

From the propaganda point of view all the country really wants is some assurance of how victory is to be achieved. They are bored by talks of righteousness of our cause and our eventual triumph. What they really want are facts regarding how we are going to beat the Germans. I have no idea how we are going to give them those facts. [McLaine, pg. 227]

Thus, the audience was not necessarily interested in the evil nature of Germany, and excessive focus on the issue threatened to cause the Ministry audience to discount their message. Care had to be taken to ensure that the communication of German atrocities was measured.

An illuminating example of the Ministry's strategy was their coverage of the Nazi concentration camps. Though the British government undoubtedly knew about the genocide, they did not report on the subject prior to 1944. [McLaine, pg. 167] Why did the British choose not to use the atrocities in anti-German propaganda?

The Ministry did not feel that the atmosphere was right for disclosure. The state of British opinion on the German race indicated that the Ministry had effectively cultivated a climate of hatred toward the German race. A poll conducted in April 1943 showed that 41% of the British citizenry believed the German people, as distinct from the Nazi government, were responsible for the war. [McLaine, pg. 169] Thus, there was no need to meddle in the public perception of Germany and Germans.

According to Home Intelligence, many British citizens held anti-Semitic beliefs:

The Growth of anti-Semitism is reported from widely separated areas. Infringements of the rationing orders, dealings in the black markets, and deliberate cunning evasions of measures instituted by the Government to meet war time conditions are said to have aroused strong public feeling. [McLaine pg. 167]

The unpredictable public reaction to the German persecution of the Jew's was a risk the Ministry of Information was not willing to take. The example shows the

Ministry of Information's adherence to their strategy of rationed disclosure of German atrocities. The Ministry effectively weighed the cost of disclosure against the benefit of disclosure, and took action accordingly.

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### III. VIETNAM CASE STUDY

#### A. INTRODUCTION

The second case study examines American homefront morale during the Vietnam War (1965-1974).<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this case study is three-fold: to discuss the American homefront information strategy, to examine the role that homefront morale played in the Vietnam War, and to present a set of lessons learned that can be applied to the War on Terrorism's homefront morale effort. It is essential to begin with an examination of the applicability of Vietnam to the War on Terrorism.

A study of American homefront morale during the Vietnam War is germane to the War on Terrorism. History has credited the lack of public support for the war as a fundamental cause of the United State's withdrawal from Vietnam. Today's military planners, to avoid a similar fate, should be aware of why and how the public turned against the war. Secondly, the political and social atmosphere throughout the Vietnam War is more similar to today's environment than World War II. An analysis of Vietnam offers greater insight into how today's public will react to both the rigors of war and various information strategies. Thirdly, the Vietnam War was a protracted, limited campaign. While difficult to predict the future, it appears that the War on Terrorism will be a protracted campaign, marked by limited engagements in geographically dispersed regions. Finally, both conflicts aimed to prevent

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<sup>2</sup> The case study's scope of analysis is limited by the following two events: President Lyndon Johnson's escalation of American military forces from 74,000 to 174,000 (July, 1965), and the conclusion of the Paris Peace Talks (January, 1974).

further escalation. Vietnam was intended to thwart the spread of communism in Indochina, and therefore prevent World War III. [Hallin, pg. 60] Similarly, military action in the War on Terrorism is intended to protect the United States from future acts of terrorism. The War on Terrorism, like Vietnam, will have to sell the public on proactive engagement of the enemy.

The comparison of the War on Terrorism to Vietnam does have limits. For instance, the conflict in Vietnam was against an identifiable nation state, whereas the War on Terrorism is against a political strategy. In Vietnam, the United States' primary military objective was to force a North Vietnamese surrender. The War on Terrorism would not end with an al-Qaeda surrender; instead the United States seeks to remove Terrorism as an acceptable means of political bargaining. Secondly, Vietnam was a regional conflict, whereas the War on Terrorism is a global conflict. The fall of Saigon in 1975 and the ultimate fall of the Soviet Union proved American national security was not at stake with the loss of South Vietnam to communism. The loss of Vietnam to communism did not threaten the United States' economic viability, or the security of the American citizenry. Instead, the conflict in Vietnam pursued the national objective of promoting democracy throughout the world. As demonstrated in chapter one, the National Security of the United States is at stake in the War on Terrorism. Finally, whereas the fighting in Vietnam was explicitly accessible to the American public, much of the War on Terrorism will be fought in secret.

## **B. HOMEFRONT MORALE AND THE VIETNAM WAR**

Throughout the Vietnam War, the American government understood that controlling homefront morale was central to their war effort. In order to force surrender, the North Vietnamese had to believe that the United States was fully committed to winning the war. The credibility of America's commitment was directly dependent on the American public's support for the war effort.

Secondly, while they were forced to control public opinion in order to sustain support for American engagement, the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations also sought to control the scale of American presence.<sup>3</sup> Both Administrations feared that if the hawks were to become too vocal, the war could grow politically and militarily out of control. By keeping the war limited, both Administrations attempted to keep the war off the political agenda. [Lind, pg. 82]

President Kennedy, hoping for re-election in 1964, chose to fight a limited war because he felt the political opposition gave him no other choice. President Johnson, on the other hand, chose to fight a limited war because he was unwilling to sacrifice other political priorities for an all-out war effort. Further, Johnson was not convinced that the expanded measures advocated by the military would bring victory at a reasonable cost, and was concerned that the budgetary expenditure would require drastic cuts in domestic spending. [Hallin, pg. 212] Johnson was not willing to sacrifice his "Great Society" initiative for a

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<sup>3</sup> The Nixon Administration, for the most part, inherited the war in Vietnam. Prior to taking office, the war in Vietnam had become a major political issue. While pursuing "Peace with Honor," Nixon could not possibly remove Vietnam from the political agenda.

total war in Vietnam. [Hallin, pg. 61] To both the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, controlling homefront morale was central to not only fighting the war in Vietnam, but fighting on acceptable terms.

### **1. Selling the War to the American Public**

Justifying significant military action in Vietnam to the American people proved to be a difficult task. Americans would be killed on behalf of a small unknown nation, with limited economic and political ties to the United States. France had already withdrawn from the effort, and the threat of losing Vietnam to communism did not instinctively invoke fear in the American psyche. Regardless, the government would pursue a war in Vietnam and would sell the war around two messages.<sup>4</sup>

Fundamental to justifying the war in Vietnam was the strategy of containment and its symbolic roots in the "lessons of history." [Hallin, pg. 61] By proactively engaging the spread of communism, the United States would prevent other, potentially larger conflicts. [Hallin, 61] Thus, the government sought to educate the public on the strategic necessity of the containment of communism in Indochina. As President Johnson said, following the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution: "I am convinced that our retreat from this challenge would open the path to World War III." [Sobel, pg. 65] Losing South Vietnam to the communists, according to the government, would threaten the security of

<sup>4</sup> (July 17, 1965) President Johnson's approval of the deployment of 100,000 additional troops to join the 74,000 troops already committed marked the unofficial beginning of the American war in Vietnam. U.S. forces would no longer be used to guard installations and to provide emergency backup to South Vietnamese, but would assume the burden of defeating the NLF and the North Vietnamese. America committed itself to a land war in Asia. [Hallin, pg. 61] The Johnson Administration's justification of war in Vietnam would act as the framework for the entire war.

the United States and the free world. Thus, public support for the war in Vietnam was to be derived out of the American fear of communism.

The government also sought to associate the thwarting of communist aggression in Vietnam with past American military campaigns. President Johnson's statement on July 28, 1965, following the announcement of the troop deployment, shows how history was used to justify military action in Vietnam:

Nor would surrender in Vietnam bring peace, because we learned from Hitler at Munich that success only feeds the appetite of aggression. The battle would be renewed in one country and then another country, bringing with it perhaps even larger and crueler conflict, as we have learned from the lessons of history. [Hallin, pg. 60]

The linking of Vietnam to history served two purposes. Through historical analogy, the government would derive support for containment by simplifying what was at stake and what had to be done. For instance, by relating the spread of communism to Hitler's land grab, the government hoped to translate the public's opposition to Hitler into a consensus against the spread of communism. Secondly, by tying Vietnam to history the government hoped to challenge the current generation of Americans. Whereas previous generations had fought in World War II and Korea, the current generation's place in the American military tradition would be tested in Vietnam. By making it a generational objective, the government hoped to rally the most influential section of the population behind the cause.

## 2. Tet and the Fracturing of Homefront Morale

The Tet Offensive in January 1968 marked the turning point in homefront morale during the Vietnam War. Before the offensive, a clear majority of Americans approved of the war and the government's handling of the conflict.<sup>5</sup> [Hallin, pg. 9] However, many Americans interpreted Tet as an indication that the war would not be won easily or quickly. Clark Clifford, the Secretary of Defense under President Johnson, would later note: "Here [the American public] thought things were going well, and thought maybe we were near the end of it, and here the enemy proved to be infinitely stronger...That really tipped over the bucket with the American people." [Sobel, pg. 76] From November 1967 to February 1968, the number of people who thought the United States was making progress in the war dropped from 51% to 32%. President's Johnson's approval rating, over the same period, was cut by 13 points. [Lind, pg. 137] While public support for Vietnam was clearly damaged by the Tet Offensive, it was only the start of the decline in homefront morale. A clear dichotomy in public opinion would take form. While the conservative South remained behind the

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<sup>5</sup> Gallop Poll data on the number of People believing "American involvement in Vietnam was a mistake": 1965: 25%, 1967: 46%, 1968: 55% [Lind, pg. 137].

war effort, moderates increasingly joined the liberal left in opposition to the war. [Lind, pg. 272]

### **3. Tet and the Changing News Coverage**

The Media's coverage of the war in Vietnam began to turn against the government following the Tet Offensive in 1968. Daniel Hallin, in his book *The Uncensored War*, identified five general themes promoted by journalists covering the war prior to the Tet Offensive. By examining these themes before and after the Tet, the changing voice of war coverage is clearly seen.<sup>6</sup>

One theme promoted by the media was that "war is a national endeavor." American journalists had, for the most part, described the American presence in Vietnam in the first person. The war, like World War II or Korea, was termed "our" war. [Hallin, pg. 142] According to Hallin, the media willingly split the Vietnam conflict into two groups: "us" and "them." By associating their work with the war, the news media accepted a role in the American war effort. [Hallin, pg. 142]

Following Tet, the media no longer referred to Vietnam as "our war," rather it became referred to as "the" war. According to Hallin, journalists began to distance themselves and their profession from the American war effort in Vietnam. [Hallin, pg. 175] Reflecting the growing skepticism of the war, the media no longer assumed a supporting role to the American mission. Instead, the media began to openly challenge the government's policies and the military's conduct.

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel Hallin's five themes were derived by a statistical examination of a wide range of news sources, including both newspapers and television. Further, the study covered the entire American presence in Vietnam.

Prior to Tet, the media also promoted the notion that "war is an American tradition." [Hallin, pg. 142] The media, like the government, sought to equate Vietnam to past American military campaigns, particularly World War II. An illustrative example of this association came from NBC's Dean Brelis on July 4, 1966. Brelis closed his broadcast by saying "the first infantry Division, the Big Red 1 of North Africa, Omaha Beach, Normandy, Germany, and now the Cambodian border." [Hallin, pg. 142] Like the government, the media used metaphors to make unfamiliar events understandable. The overall effect of this was to take Vietnam out of the present context, placing it within the American military tradition. [Hallin, pg. 143]

Following Tet, Hallin found no references to World War II. It would appear that "Vietnam was now cut off from that legitimizing connection with tradition." [Hallin, pg. 175] As previously noted, the United States could not decisively win the war in Vietnam without a major re-escalation; yet significant escalation was simply not an option to President Johnson. According to Hallin, the World War II-Vietnam analogy became irrelevant and inappropriate. [Hallin, pg. 175]

Thirdly, the media promoted the notion that "war is manly." [Hallin, pg. 175] The theme was directly related to the American understanding of war during the 1950's and 1960s. Hallin identified two elements that were especially important to the American conception of "being a man": toughness and professionalism. War was considered manly because it gave a man the opportunity to prove his toughness, to determine if he could pass the test of war.

An example of this theme is found in a report from NBC's Garrick Utley: "They are Marines. They are good, and they know it. But every battle, every landing, is a new test of what a man and what a unit can do." [Hallin, pg. 144] War also gave American men the chance to show mastery and control of their work, to show that they were professionals. Because he was a professional, the American soldier not only did his job well but was free of vindictiveness. Thus, the media found little cause to report on civilian casualties, for the American soldier was doing everything in his power to prevent them. [Hallin, pg. 144] All in all, by portraying the soldier as a heroic figure, the media effectively strengthened the public's trust of the American military.

The heroic stature of the American soldier became clouded following the Tet Offensive.<sup>7</sup> According to Hallin, the change is most clearly demonstrated by media's handling casualties. As the war effort stagnated, the media naturally began to focus on the human costs of the war. The weekly "Body Count," announced every Thursday, became a prominent event. [Hallin, pg. 176] The media, in this case ABC's David Brinkley, tried to condone the coldness of the statistic:

Today in Saigon they announced the casualty figures for the week, and though they came out in

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<sup>7</sup> There were negative stories prior to the Tet Offensive. The most famous example being Morley Safer's (CBS) August 1965 report showing American Marines burning the village of Cam Ne. Though the Americans were telling, in English, the Vietnamese to exit their huts, it was not until they were told in the Vietnamese language that they exited to safety. The report suggested that the American soldiers were willing to kill the Vietnamese civilians, without regard to their political affiliation. Clearly, the story showed the American's as "the bad guys." While significant at the time, Safer's story and the few like it did not constitute a major shift in how the Media's portrayal of the American soldier.

the form of numbers, each one of them was a man, most of them quite young, each with hopes he will never realize, each with family and friends who will never see him again. Anyway, here are the numbers. [Hallin, pg. 175]

By humanizing the war in Vietnam, Hallin argues that the American soldier became flawed by induction. The soldier's mission to kill was no longer an admirable pursuit.

The fourth theme promoted by the media prior to the Tet Offensive was that "war is rational." According to Hallin, the American military was portrayed as moving inexorably toward victory. [Hallin, pg. 146] By attributing American action to the pursuit of fixed objectives and characterizing each battle as a victory or a defeat, Journalists artificially provided Vietnam the structure of previous American military campaigns. The media, by taking the American government's claims at face value, also gave the appearance that the war was going well. From 1965 to 1967, the media consistently portrayed the United States as holding the initiative.<sup>8</sup> This theme was supported by television reports overwhelmingly showing American troops "on the move." [Hallin, pg. 146] Hallin also found that 79% of the media's assessments of the overall military situation were positive. The media believed that the war in Vietnam was going well, and reflected this belief in their coverage.

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<sup>8</sup> 58% of the reports portrayed Americans as having held the initiative. The North Vietnamese were described as holding the initiative 30% of the time, while 12% of the reports described a mutual advance. The Defense Department would later report that, from 1965 to 1967, the North Vietnamese held the initiative 90% of the time.

Following Tet, the image of an effective war effort in Vietnam was supplanted by the image of an irrational and stagnating conflict. [Hallin, pg. 176] The media began to focus on the aspects of the war in Vietnam that made it different than previous campaigns. Vietnam was a war of attrition, without a front or fixed objectives. Further, it was nearly impossible to determine whether any given victory was a victory or a defeat, or how a given battle contributed to the overall strategic objectives. A typical post-Tet report, according to Hallin, was: "The Special Forces and the enemy fought this battle to a standstill. And there was nothing left but to tend to the wounded, and fight another day." [Hallin, pg. 176]

The final pre-Tet theme promoted by the media was the notion that "winning is what counts." [Hallin, pg. 144] According to Hallin, the media did not question the necessity of American military engagement in Vietnam. Cold War ideology required American response. Accordingly, the media sought to purge the war of political and moral implications. Civilian and military casualties were relatively inconsequential when compared to the thwarting of the communist threat. Communism had to be defeated in South Vietnam.

Following the Tet Offensive, decisive American victory in Vietnam was no longer the goal of the government. The Cold War necessity to defend South Vietnam from communism was replaced by Nixon's desire to defend "America's Cold War credibility." [Lind, pg. 135] Nixon's decision to pursue "peace with honor" had a dramatic effect on the morale of the troops and subsequently the media coverage.

[Hallin, pg. 179] To the soldiers fighting in Vietnam, the war became a lame duck. Yet, the military still tactically pursued a war of attrition. The "Search and Destroy" missions, designed to induce large enemy casualties, also required heavy friendly casualties. While winning the war in Vietnam was no longer achievable, the soldiers were expected to sacrifice everything for the cause. The media, therefore, began to openly challenge the military's choice of tactics. [Hallin, pg. 179]

The work presented above is a summary of Hallin's finding as presented in *The Uncensored War*. Admittedly, the conclusions presented are vague. The sheer volume and diversity of reports make an exhaustive analysis of consistent themes difficult. However, the message is clear: media coverage changed dramatically from the beginning of the American presence in Vietnam to their ultimate withdrawal.

#### **4. The Impact of Fractured Homefront Morale**

The lack of homefront support for the Vietnam War interfered with the government's ability to both wage war and make peace. In terms of the military strategy, the government was forced to balance the pursuit of aggressive military tactics with appeasing the public's distaste for the war. To both the Johnson and Nixon Administrations, escalation of American presence in Vietnam was the only way to decisively win an ultimate victory. [Sobel, pg. 66] However, both administrations were unwilling to accept the domestic political ramifications of escalation. Thus, the public effectively constrained the government's military flexibility, specifically its ability to pursue decisive victory through escalation. The following are two examples,

one from each Administration, demonstrating the role public opinion played in American military strategy.

In 1968, General William Westmoreland recommended to President Johnson that an additional 205,000 to 400,000 troops be sent to Vietnam. Westmoreland's recommendation was not in reaction to the Tet Offensive, rather he believed the additional troops would allow for an expanded military strategy in the future. [Sobel, pg. 66] While President Johnson agreed that escalation was militarily prudent, he worried that the public would not endorse such a large escalation: "[my] biggest worry was not Vietnam itself; it was the divisiveness and pessimism at home." [Sobel, pg. 67] Ultimately, Johnson decided to send only an additional 45,000 troops, effectively deescalating the war. While at the time Johnson would not admit that his decision to deescalate was due to the fractured public opinion, his memoirs indicate that public opinion played a large role in his decision making: "the dissention prolonged the war, prevented a peaceful settlement on reasonable terms, encouraged our enemies, disheartened our friends - and weakened us as a nation." [Sobel, pg. 67] President Johnson allowed public opinion to influence, if not drive, his military strategy.

The effect of fractured public support on military war is also demonstrated by President Nixon's ultimatum to the North Vietnamese in late 1969. Through the operation code named "Duck Hook," the Nixon Administration set out to indirectly inform the North Vietnamese that escalation would occur on the first of November if they did not grant "diplomatic concessions." [Sobel, pg. 82] Unfortunately,

the ultimatum coincided with the peak of the antiwar movement, specifically with the moratorium protests. With the first protest on October 15, 1969, protest planners intended to hold continually lengthening moratoriums every month until the Administration promised to deescalate. [Sobel, pg. 82] While President Nixon believed that escalation would aid the war effort, he feared the repercussions of carrying through with his ultimatum:

I knew that unless I had some indisputably good reason for not carrying out my threat of using increased force when the ultimatum expired on November 1, the Communists would become contemptuous of us and even more difficult to deal with. I knew, however, that after all the protests and the Moratorium, American public opinion would be seriously divided by any military escalation of the war. [Lind, 137]

When the ultimatum date passed, Nixon did not escalate. Publicly President Nixon attempted to seem unaffected by the antiwar movement: "If a President - any President - allows his course to be set by those who demonstrate, he would betray the trust of the rest." [Sobel, pg. 83] Yet by not carrying through with his ultimatum, President Nixon clearly allowed public opinion to drive the nation's military strategy.

The lack of homefront support for the Vietnam War also placed limits on the government's ability to negotiate an acceptable peace settlement. In order to pursue pacification, whereby the communists would retreat to the North in exchange for the halting of American bombing, the North Vietnamese had to believe that the United States was committed to win at any cost. However, the peace movement revealed the fundamental lack of political support for

escalation, thereby making American threats to escalate moot. In the fall of 1969, during Operation Duck Hook, President Nixon noted: "My real concern was that these highly publicized efforts aimed at forcing me to end the war were seriously undermining my behind-the-scenes attempts to do just that." [Sobel, pg. 82] Nixon feared that the Vietnamese would call his threat to escalate for what it was, a bluff. The North Vietnamese recognized that Nixon did not have the necessary mandate to escalate American forces in Vietnam, and therefore the anti-war movement, as Nixon would later state, "undercut the credibility of the ultimatum." [Sobel, pg. 83] The Americans lack of military leverage seriously inhibited their ability to negotiate an acceptable peace settlement.

Did the lack of public support for the war ultimately cause the US withdrawal from Vietnam? To solely blame public opinion for the American retreat is analogous to blaming a disease on its symptoms. The loss of public support for the war effort was rooted in the fundamental deficiencies of the American military and political strategies. Regardless, the lack of homefront morale did indirectly play a part in the final decision to retreat by raising concerns of the American resolve to stick to its Cold War doctrine of containment.

Fractured public opinion threatened Cold War ideology. In order to deter Soviet or Chinese aggression, the American government had to maintain an American consensus on their willingness to oppose Communism with military force. [Lind, pg. 257] Without a consensus, the government feared the Soviets and Chinese would be tempted to spread

communist ideology in the Asian region, and around the world. By 1968, the cost of the war in Vietnam, and the subsequent rise of a significant isolationist movement, had reduced public support for an open-ended U.S. commitment to Indochina to dangerously low levels. [Lind, 271] In addition, the costs were beginning to endanger public support for other Cold War commitments, such as the defense of Japan and South Korea. Ultimately, the Nixon Administration feared that a growing isolationist movement would force American withdrawal from these key commitments. The United States had to maintain its Cold War credibility, and therefore had to withdraw from Vietnam.

The loss of public support did not directly cause the conclusion of American involvement in Vietnam, but was a reflection of the government's failed political and military policies. As Clark Clifford, the Secretary of Defense under President Johnson, stated:

I think you cannot *force* down the throats of American people a foreign policy they will not accept... They'll fail to be present for the draft, they'll refuse to raise any money for it, they'll refuse in every way to go along with you. And the President who takes that position, despite the warning from the American people, is practically guaranteed to be a failure. He's going to fail. [Sobel, pg. 77]

The American public was unwilling to accept the high cost of winning the Vietnam War. While the specific military and political strategies used during the conflict are beyond the scope of this paper, uncovering the lessons learned from the American governments handling of homefront morale during the Vietnam conflict is essential to the topic.

## C. RELEVANT LESSONS LEARNED

### 1. The New News Media

The attributes of the typical reporter and the organization he worked for had changed dramatically since World War II. Reporters, according to Daniel Hallin in *The Uncensored War*, no longer saw themselves as "soldiers of the typewriter" whose mission was to serve the war effort. Instead, journalism had become "professionalized." [Hallin, pg. 7] A journalist was expected to abide by certain professional ethics, particularly the ethic of political independence. Resistance to political pressures was considered a mark of ones journalistic honor. [Hallin, pg. 9] The journalist of the late twentieth century had become far more independent than his World War II predecessors.

The typical news organization had also changed. Newspapers of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century were political institution, often financially supported by a politician or a political party. The news organizations, as dramatized in Orson Wells' movie *Citizen Kane*, were routinely part of the story. [Hallin, pg. 8] However, by the late twentieth century news organization had become corporate bureaucracies. These organizations were theoretically free of outside political pressures.

A new, more adversarial relationship between the media and the government also began to take form. Officials, in their effort to control appearance, challenged the autonomy of the media. Journalists, consequently, were forced to defend their independence by avoiding anything that could be construed as partisan. [Hallin, pg. 9] Secondly, professional journalists, unlike politicians, did not try

to be part of the story. Instead, journalists began to reflect the American public's growing distrust of the government. Arising out of the Progressive Movement, American political culture began to hold a general distrust of the "wielders of power;" the media assumed the role of political watchdog. [Hallin, pg. 9] The press was becoming the "fourth branch of the government." By giving up its right to write with a partisan voice, the press was given access into to "inner circles" of government. [Hallin, pg. 9] All in all, the rise of professional journalists and news organizations set the media agenda in direct opposition to that of the government officials.

The growth of television news added a second dimension to the government-media relationship. [Hallin, pg. 132] Though it saw limited use during the Korean War, television news had matured by 1965. Due to the advent of jets and satellites, film from the front could be included in daily news coverage. However, television news coverage would present a different voice from that of the print media. Print media was based on the journalist's ideological assumptions, and looked to high level sources for information. For instance, *The New York Times* early coverage of the conflict in Vietnam revolved around the articulation of Cold War doctrine as interpreted by governmental officials and intellectuals. Television coverage, on the other hand, revolved around telling the story of "American boys in action." [Hallin, pg. 129] By examining the citizen-soldier's story, television could present the war in a very powerful, very familiar voice.

Television also gave the media a powerful new means of presenting the news. According to Hallin, television's coverage of Vietnam "presented a subconscious level of ideology, composed of dramatic images of war that could be 'pulled off the shelf' to make this confusing conflict more familiar." [Hallin, pg. 134] Television also complicated the traditional tension between the government's desire to tell the public what was happening and the media's desire to discover what happened. Television gave the media a stronger voice to refute the government's statements. [Hallin, pg. 134] However the power of television can be ambiguous, distorting facts as easily as revealing them. [Hallin, pg. 131] Regardless, the rise of television-based news had a dramatic effect on how the American people perceived the war in Vietnam.

## **2. Censorship and the Media in Vietnam**

Vietnam was the first war in which reporters were allowed to accompany military forces yet were not subject to censorship. The peculiar circumstances of the war made full censorship legally impossible. Since the United States had not officially declared war, censorship could not be legally enforced stateside. American reporters in Vietnam could therefore circumvent the system by sending reports to the United States for distribution. [Hallin, pg. 128] Further, full censorship could not be enforced due to the lack of legal jurisdiction. Since the US forces were officially "guests" of the South Vietnamese government, the U.S. court martial jurisdiction could not be extended to third country nationals reporting for Asian or European news organizations. [Hallin, pg. 128]

Instead of censorship the American government imposed voluntary guidelines on the press. Reporters had to agree to a set of rules outlining fifteen categories of information which they were not allowed to report without authorization. For example, they were forbidden from reporting on troop movements or casualty numbers prior to their announcement in Saigon. Violations could result in loss of access to the military forces and the government. [Hallin, pg. 128] The government, as the following statement by President Kennedy suggests, relied on the press to govern themselves:

If the press is awaiting a declaration of war before it imposes the self-discipline of combat conditions, then I can only say that no war ever posed a greater threat to our security. If you are awaiting a finding of 'clear and present danger,' then I can only say that the danger has never been more clear and its presence more imminent... every newspaper now asks itself with respect to every story: 'Is it news?' All I suggest is that you add the question: 'Is it in the interest of national security?' [Hallin, pg. 13]

In the beginning of American involvement in Vietnam, the news media did show considerable restraint in their coverage. The press believed, as the government hoped they would, that the defense of Vietnam was in the national interests of the United States. [Hallin, pg. 22] To the American press the larger conflict of "blocking Communist Expansion" required American presence in Vietnam [Hallin, pg. 9] However, after the Tet Offensive in 1968, the war in Vietnam would become the pre-eminent news story. The coverage of events in Vietnam would soon reflect the aforementioned changes in the news industry. Was the loose

editorship of the media within Vietnam a significant factor in diminishing homefront morale?

President Nixon believed that the lack of censorship had a strong negative effect on homefront morale. The following was President Nixon's reply to the above question:

The Vietnam War was complicated by factors that had never before occurred in America's conduct of war ... The American news media had come to dominate domestic opinion about its purpose and conduct... In each night's TV news and each morning's paper the war was reported battle by battle, but little or no sense of the underlying purpose of the fighting was conveyed. Eventually, this contributed to the impression that we were fighting in military and moral quicksand, rather than toward an important and worthwhile objective. More than ever before, television showed the terrible human suffering and sacrifice of war. Whatever the intention behind such relentless and literal reporting of war the result was a serious demoralization of the homefront, raising the question whether America would ever again be able to fight an enemy abroad with unity and strength of purpose at home. [Hallin, pg. 3]

In summary, Nixon believed that the lack of censorship of the media had a powerful effect on homefront morale by supplying the American people with the following two forms of information:

- Tactical information without strategic context.
- Information regarding the "terrible human suffering and sacrifice of war."

Nixon's statement is based on the assumptions that the American people agreed that the war in Vietnam "was a worthwhile objective," and that the military was provided an underlying objective. Historical perspective calls both

of these notions into question. Consequently, Nixon overestimated the role that an uncensored media played in the fracturing of homefront morale.

In terms of maintaining operational security, the voluntary censorship of the press in Vietnam worked well. With only a handful of violations, the American government never considered the press detrimental to military effectiveness.<sup>9</sup> [Hallin, pg. 211] Further, an uncensored media was not responsible for the shift in American public opinion following the Tet Offensive in 1968. The government, by downplaying the strength of the North Vietnamese and by making overly optimistic claims regarding the war, set itself up for a fall. [Sobel, pg. 76] Censorship of the media in Vietnam could not have hidden the implications of the Tet Offensive.

An uncensored media in Vietnam did show the American public war from a new perspective. While the print media relied on "high level sources" for their war coverage, television coverage focused on telling the story of "the American soldier at war." [Hallin, pg. 134] The focus on the citizen-soldier humanized the war in Vietnam. When this new perspective was coupled with the coverage of the "horrors of war," the human cost of war could no longer be hidden by cold statistics.<sup>10</sup> The uncensored coverage forced the American public to reconcile the conflict in Vietnam; they would ultimately decide that the ends did not justify

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<sup>9</sup> The leak of the U.S. bombing of Cambodia and Laos in 1969 did not have a dramatic effect on public opinion. They would become larger political issues following the American withdrawal. [Hallin, pg. 210]

<sup>10</sup> Most television coverage was not graphic. 22% of broadcasts showed actual combat, and 24% showed dead or wounded. The networks, out of respect for the families of the soldiers, tried to keep these numbers low. [Hallin, pg. 131]

the means. The media were not responsible for this conclusion, but were merely the messenger. If the cause was worthy of the cost, the American public would have supported the war in Vietnam.

According to Machiavelli, the control of information is central to the exercise of political power. In war there are tactical advantages to both secrecy and deception. [Hallin, pg. 214] The lack of censorship of the media in Vietnam did not threaten the American government's ability to exercise military secrecy. However, it did limit the government's ability to conduct political deception at home. An unjustified limited campaign, which had become both overly expensive and stagnating, was disclosed by the media. However, tighter censorship of the media could not have prevented the American government from hiding their flawed military and political strategy in Vietnam. Thus, while the lack of censorship helped lead the American public toward dissent, it was but one factor.

### **3. The Media and Political Consensus**

The real power of the media was not demonstrated by how it presented news emanating from Vietnam, but how it presented news about Vietnam emanating from the United States. According to Daniel Hallin, the news media had become a function of consensus, where the media's political position was directly related to the unity of the government, and the consensus of society at large. "When political consensus prevailed, journalists tended to act as responsible members of the political establishment, upholding the dominant political perspective. However, in situations of political conflict, the media became more detached and more adversarial." [Hallin, pg. 10]

While not solely reactive, the press began to reflect disunity in the government and the populace following the Tet Offensive in 1968. Thus, the transformation of the Media's focus and voice was not due to any internal process, but was a reflection of a faltering political consensus. While the shift arose out of the liberal anti-war movement, it only gained legitimacy when the clergy and government leaders began to hold dissenting viewpoints. Regardless of whether the dissent constituted a majority, the modern media gave the "loud minority" a powerful means of distributing their message. [Hallin, pg. 162] To solely blame the press for the loss of public support is naïve. The press acts as a mirror of the state of the political consensus. [Hallin, pg. 10]

#### **4. American Sensitivity to the Human Cost of War**

Another lesson learned concerns the relationship between homefront morale and the human costs of war. Homefront morale and the overall war effort were hindered by the government's failure to match an appropriate military strategy to the nation's willingness to accept losses in battle. A specific example of the government's insensitivity was President Nixon's "Peace with Honor" initiative. [Lind, 135]

Nixon, though he was elected to get American forces out of Vietnam, feared that American Cold War credibility would be damaged by a hasty withdrawal from the region. The American public had no desire to see soldiers needlessly dying in a "lame duck war," yet Nixon's prolonged withdrawal resulted in an additional 21,000 lives lost. [Lind, pg. 138] Consequently, many "formerly supportive moderate cold warriors" joined the left in a new

isolationist majority in congress. [Lind, 138] The American public, and Congress, would not tolerate such a heavy human toll.

While easy to question Nixon's "Peace with Honor" initiative, it is difficult to argue Nixon had any other choice. The necessity of a strong U.S. Cold War commitment was well founded. It is reasonable to assert that a military strategy based on spending American treasure, such as a heavier reliance on bombing, in place of blood would have probably resulted in far less public outcry. Regardless, any prolonged military campaign has to be backed by robust public support. The means of pursuing victory have to match the price the American public is willing to pay.

#### **5. Loss of Moral Authority**

Throughout the War in Vietnam, the government often failed to maintain the moral high ground in both domestic and international affairs. For instance, Nixon's "Peace with Honor" initiative weakened American cold war ideology. Michael Lind, in *Vietnam: The Necessary War*, argues that the image of a brokering "Nixon dining and drinking and sailing with the totalitarian rulers of the Soviet empire and the Chinese dictatorship tended to undermine the claim that there was a moral difference between the two sides in the Cold War." [Lind, pg. 136]

Both President Johnson and President Nixon also unnecessarily legitimized political dissent. [Lind, pg. 208] President Franklin Roosevelt had set a precedent on how to deal with campus isolationist movements: "call them shrimps publicly and privately." [Lind, pg. 208] Neither

Johnson nor Nixon would follow his lead. President Johnson, following his retirement, remarked: "I don't blame [the protestors]. They didn't want to be killed in war, and that's easy to understand." [Lind, pg. 208] President Nixon would regularly walk to the Washington Monument and converse with student protestors. [Lind, pg. 208] Instead of appealing to the general public's patriotism in denouncing the anti-war movement, both presidents legitimized the anti-war cause by actively engaging them in debate. Greater care should have been shown to maintain the ideological divide.

Finally, the government's moral authority suffered in light of their failure to prosecute genuine acts of treason. The most famous example of overt treason was Jane Fonda's series of anti-war broadcasts over North Vietnamese Radio from July 14- 22, 1972.<sup>11</sup> There was a clear precedent to prosecute Fonda. In the case *Chandler vs. United States* (1948), the Supreme Court declared that any participation in the radio propaganda of the enemy constituted an "overt act" of treason. [Lind, pg. 209] A number of American citizens had been convicted as "radio traitors" during and after World War II. The typical punishment was a ten thousand dollar fine and ten to thirty years in prison. [Lind, pg. 209] Further, the fact that the conflict in Vietnam was a shooting war, not a legally declared war, was not a legitimate defense. During the Korean War, also an undeclared shooting war, the Supreme Court declared that

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<sup>11</sup> In reaction to the POW's claim of being tortured in order to force their participation with her broadcasts, Fonda replied: "I think many POW's said they were tortured in order to excuse their circumstances of capture or their statements and actions opposing the war." [Lind, pg. 209]

the North Koreans could be termed "enemies to the Constitution." [Lind, pg. 209]

By carrying out an "overt act" in support of "an enemy" of the Constitution, Fonda committed treason. By not prosecuting Fonda, and other similar cases, the government effectively condoned their acts. According to Lind, "people assume that if behavior is tolerated by law then it must not be very bad. If it is legitimate to jail an American citizen for refusing to answer questions before a grand jury, it is difficult to understand why the government should refrain from prosecuting an American citizen who, during wartime, collaborates with an enemy regime killing or torturing American soldiers. If the interests of the American republic are worth defending from enemies without, they are worth defending from enemies within." [Lind, pg. 209] The failure to defend their cause from internal enemies ultimately weakened both the government's moral authority and the American cause in Vietnam.

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#### **IV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The WWII and Vietnam case studies both provide valuable insight into the development and protection of homefront morale. While clearly differences exist between the case studies and the War on Terrorism, the overlapping campaign attributes allow for the development of a set of recommendations for the U.S. governments current homefront morale effort. These recommendations will be offered as answers to the following four questions:

##### **A. WHO SHOULD DISSEMINATE WAR INFORMATION?**

The War on Terrorism, like all military campaigns, will force the American government to balance the need for operational security with the publics demand for war information. However, campaign attributes unique to the War on Terrorism will limit the government's flexibility. As previously discussed, the war will not be defined by large force on force engagements, but will be fought through intelligence gathering and precise prosecution of the enemy. Consequently, the government's ability to protect its intelligence gathering methods and sources will be of paramount importance, requiring the War on Terrorism to be fought primarily in secret. While in the short term the government can maintain a high degree of secrecy, the protracted nature of the campaign could pressure the government for more robust disclosure of war information. In order to adequately maintain this delicate balance, the government should create an independent organization, much like the Ministry of Information, to act as the primary liaison between the war effort and the public. The creation

of such an agency would significantly empower a homefront morale campaign.

As seen in the British case study, an independent information agency would be more capable of meeting both the governments need for operational security and the public's need for war information. The ability to meet both demands is contingent on the given agencies access to available war information. The Ministry of Information's effectiveness, in light of their limited access, suffered because they were denied informational top sight. Thus, full and complete access to war information should be granted to the homefront morale campaign. Doing so would not only allow for war information to be placed within its appropriate context, but would also help determine what information is safe for disclosure.

The British case study also demonstrates the need for a homefront morale campaigns utilization of information regarding their audience's intelligence, biases, and needs. By regularly reevaluating their conception of the audience, a homefront morale campaign can identify potential avenues of approach, and better tailor communications. A centralized homefront morale campaign would be the logical instrument to both research this information and to leverage it toward more effective communication between the government and the public.

#### **B. HOW SHOULD HOMEFRONT MORALE BE GAUGED?**

As demonstrated by the British case study, a homefront morale campaign would benefit from the development of a clear and universally accepted concept of homefront morale and what constitutes indications of lowered morale. The

Ministry of Information's assessment of homefront morale was often clouded by anecdotal evidence; frequently resulting in poorly designed homefront propaganda. Further, the Ministry of Information, by striving for constant levels of public opinion, failed to recognize the dynamic nature of homefront morale. Thus, a homefront morale campaign should anticipate a cyclical nature of public support. By recognizing the dynamic nature of morale, the campaign can better match their morale building efforts with both the situation and the needs of the audience. The War on Terrorism's homefront morale strategy, based on the lessons learned from the British case study, should include a clear definition of homefront morale and understand the cyclical nature of homefront morale.

#### **C. WHAT ROLE SHOULD THE MEDIA PLAY?**

The media will have a powerful effect on the level of homefront support for the War on Terrorism. The Vietnam case study demonstrates the need for the American homefront morale campaign to develop a comprehensive strategy for dealing with the media.

As discussed in the Vietnam case study, the news media of the late twentieth century and early twenty first century has become the "fourth branch of government." [Hallin, pg. 9] Government officials, in their effort to control appearance, seek to challenge the autonomy of the media. Consequently, journalists are forced to defend their independence by avoiding anything that could be construed as partisan. The opposing agenda of the media has had a dramatic effect on news coverage, particularly war coverage. During Vietnam, both the Johnson and Nixon administrations failure to recognize this fundamental

change contributed to their inability to control homefront morale. Thus, the applicable lesson is a comment on the dynamic nature of the news media, where the information strategy of a homefront morale campaign has to be adjusted in order to meet the changing relationship between the government and the media.

Secondly, the Vietnam case study highlights the effect loose censorship of the media has on homefront morale. While it did not jeopardize the American government's ability to maintain operational security, the limited censorship did have a dramatic psychological effect on the American public. An uncensored media showed the American public war from a new perspective. While the print media relied on "high level sources" for their war coverage, television coverage focused on telling the story of "the American soldier at war." [Hallin, pg. 134] The focus on the citizen-soldier humanized the war in Vietnam. When this new perspective was coupled with the coverage of the "horrors of war," the human cost of war could no longer be hidden by cold statistics. [Hallin, pg. 134] Like Vietnam, the limited nature of the War on Terrorism makes full censorship of the media impractical. However, the campaign for homefront morale would be served by adjusting its information strategy to the consequences of loose censorship.

Finally, the homefront morale campaign should acknowledge the relationship between the media and the state of political consensus. As discussed in the Vietnam case study, the news media has become a function of consensus, where the media's political position is directly

related to the unity of the government, and the consensus of society at large. [Hallin, pg. 135] In Vietnam, the breakdown of the consensus throughout the political spectrum pushed the media toward taking an adversarial stand on the war. The development of homefront support for the War on Terrorism would be served by adopting an information strategy which limited the portrayal of disunity within the government and public. The campaign for homefront morale should stress the consensus throughout all levels of government and society.

**D. WHAT FUNDAMENTAL THEMES SHOULD BE PROMOTED?**

The War on Terrorism's homefront morale campaign's information strategy ought to include a set of fundamental themes the government should stress in order to develop and maintain public support for the war effort. Maurice Tugwell's Mobilizing Trinity offers a solid framework to develop these themes. Tugwell believes that a military campaign can only exist if the warring nation meets the following three psychological criteria:

First, a belief in something good to be promoted or defended;

Second, a belief in something evil to be destroyed or resisted;

Third, a belief in the ultimate victory of the good cause. [Tugwell, pg. 70]

While it cannot do so alone, a homefront morale campaign can aid in meeting these criteria by serving as the intermediary between the public and the cause. Thus, the campaign for homefront support of the War on Terrorism should aim to help form the public's perception of what is at stake, who the enemy is, and the prospect of victory.

Both case studies offer insight in to how the United States should go about meeting these criteria.

To meet the first criterion, the homefront morale campaign must emphasize the notion that the United States is fighting for a worthy cause. While the Vietnam case study clearly demonstrates the public's unwillingness to support an irrational campaign, the British case study demonstrates the need for basing a war effort on the defense of shared national principles. The War on Terrorism, like the British campaign during World War II, represents a direct challenge to the American way of life. Thus, the War on Terrorism should be similarly founded on broad and inspiring principles, such as the defense of freedom.

To meet the second criterion, the morale building campaign should portray the enemy as evil. Maintaining the public's association of the enemy with evil is essential to "mobilize the necessary power of right for one's own cause," and therefore of vital importance to a homefront morale campaign. [Speier, pg. 137] Both case studies offer insight into how to meet the second criterion. The World War II case study demonstrates the need for a morale building campaign to implement a systematic means of portraying the enemy's evil nature. While the British clearly wanted the public to believe the Germans were fundamentally evil, the Ministry of Information rationed the public's exposure to enemy atrocities. This systematic approach offered the British the ability to combat audience apathy towards the enemy and provided the British flexibility in confronting enemy propaganda. The campaign to develop homefront morale

for the War on Terrorism would benefit from adopting a similar strategy.

Along with the need to portray the enemy as evil, the United States must also maintain the War on Terrorism's moral authority. As demonstrated in the Vietnam case study, homefront support for a war effort is directly linked the warring nation's moral authority. In Vietnam, The governments failure to maintain the ideological divide between the United States and its enemies, combined with the governments legitimization of homefront dissent, damaged homefront morale. Public support for the War on Terrorism could be similarly damaged by a loss of moral authority. Thus, the United States cannot afford to either legitimize the terrorist's cause or appear guilty of committing acts similar to terrorism. The United States' ability to maintain the moral authority is integral to the development and maintenance of homefront support for the War on Terrorism.

To meet the third criterion, the campaign for homefront morale should stress the eventuality of ultimate victory. The unique campaign attributes of the War on Terrorism clearly make the achievement of this criterion difficult. The War on Terrorism, unlike the two case studies, will not be marked by conflict between nation states; rather will be against loosely connected non-governmental organizations. While this difference is substantial, the Vietnam case study offers some insight into the necessity of meeting this informational objective. Prior to the Tet Offensive, the American government presented the American public with an over optimistic

assessment of the War in Vietnam. The implications of Tet, and their stark contrast to the government's reports, allowed the enemy to leverage a tactical loss into a strategic victory. Thus, the lesson learned is that the government's public assessments of the War on Terrorism must be based on the truth. In order to prevent a political backlash similar to Tet, the war coverage should show Americans forces winning and losing. This notion is also supported by the British case study. The Ministry of Information utilized the release of bad news to leverage stronger homefront morale. By releasing bad news, the credibility of the government was inherently strengthened. Further, the British used bad news as a means to combat complacency and to also emphasize their own successes. The War on Terrorism will clearly be challenged to portray the inevitability of an ultimate American victory. Regardless, the homefront morale effort would be served by heading the lessons learned from both case studies.

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