

**The Vietnam War and the U.S. South:
Regional Perspectives on a National War**

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Abbreviations/Acronyms and Glossary

AFQT	– Armed Forces Qualification Test
A.P.	– Associated Press
ASSC	– Armed Services Select Committee
Cat I, II, III, IV, V	– Category One through to Category Five
C.O.	– Commanding Officer
CYA	– Cover your ass (mentality)
DMZ	– De Militarized Zone
DoDI	– Department of Defense Instruction
DoD	– Department of Defense
DTIC	– Defense Technical Information Center
FNG	– fucking new guy
FUBAR	– fucked up beyond all recognition
G.I.	– General Issue
HCAS	– House Committee on Armed Services
JCS	– Joint Chiefs of Staff
KIA	– Killed In Action
KKK	– Ku Klux Klan
LZ	– Landing Zone
MAAG	– Military Assistance Advisory Group Vietnam
MACV	– Military Assistance Command Vietnam

MCD	– Military Command Directive
Medevac	– Medical Evacuation
M.J.C.	– Military Judicial Code
N.G.	– National Guard
NVA	– North Vietnamese Army
O.C.S.	– Officer Candidate School
P100k	– Project One Hundred Thousand Men
PTSD	– Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
RAND	– Research and Development
RnR	– Rest and Recuperation
REMF	– rear echelon motherfucker
SnD	– Search and Destroy
SRS	– Service Rotational System
STEP	– Special Training and Enlistment Program
ToD	– Tour of Duty
U.C.M.J.	– Uniform Code of Military Justice
USMC	– United States Marine Corp
VC	– Vietcong
VFW	– Veterans of Foreign Wars
VPA	– Vietnamese People’s Army
VVM	– Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Abstract

The American South's cultural distinctiveness has been a central historiographical issue debated by scholars since the first decades of the country's inception. Implicitly or explicitly, this debate centres largely on one question – why has the South retained its distinct identity for cultural, social, political and economic exclusivity? This thesis examines southern distinctiveness with specific reference to America's military involvement in Vietnam during the 1960s and 1970s, providing new insights upon an old question. Although a national effort, which encompassed the service over three million men, America's 16 year involvement in their war against the communist-backed North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Viet Minh/Vietcong (VC) forces was shaped by distinct southern influences attributed to the region's history and culture. This thesis demonstrates that the southern influence over America's political, economic and military theatres profoundly shaped the direction and administration of the Vietnam War. Southerners occupied crucial leadership roles throughout the Vietnam war era, including the presidency and Secretary of State, while both the Senate and the House of Representatives were led by men from South of the Mason-Dixon Line.

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Introduction – Good ol’ Simple Folk

In 1973, the book *Red Hills and Cotton: An Upcountry Memory*, was granted its third reprint by the University of South Carolina Press. Its author, novelist and Associated Press journalist Benjamin Franklin Robertson, was described as ‘a loyal son of the South’ and an individual who ‘repeatedly lamented the region's many shortcomings, and [the South’s] tendency to blame all of its twentieth-century problems on the defeat of the Confederacy’.¹ Unlike the canonical works of southern history, such as C. Vann Woodward’s *The Burden of Southern History* (1960), Robertson’s book is not generally renowned as a pivotal work on U.S. southern history. Notwithstanding, by 2008, it was a text considered by many white southerners as a ‘must read’ that had gone through a further two reprints. Notably, the 1973 third edition of *Red Hills and Cotton* was the book’s most successful issue by far, in terms of sales figures. It is not clear why this third reprint, acclaimed then, as a memoir that reiterates that ‘only the wars that are lost are never forgotten’, was so successful.² However, this version of Robertson’s book coincided with a crucial and turbulent period in American history, as it became apparent that the United States was losing the war in South Vietnam, after fourteen years of conflict. For white southerners, the impact of this potential second defeat – with the American Civil War being their first – this period served to enhance the cultural myths established throughout the preceding century to encourage southerners to re-evaluate their regional and national identity.

Coinciding with the reprinting of Robertson’s book, in August 1973, the United States confirmed that militarily they were no longer directly involved in hostilities against the North

¹ 1991 review of Benjamin Robertson, ‘*Red Hills and Cotton: An Upcountry Memory*’ (South Carolina, 1991), <http://www.sc.edu/uscpres/books>.

² Review of 1973 edition of *Red Hills and Cotton*/www.kirkusreviews.com/ben-robertson-2/red-hills-and-cotton.

Vietnamese Army (NVA) and South Vietnamese Viet Minh forces.³ Up until this point, the United States could still assert that their nation remained undefeated in the theatre of war. The importance of such a claim cannot be underestimated in the martial history of any nation, especially that of the United States, which had established itself as the world's superpower in contrast to the dubious — in the eyes of many westerners — Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.). Historian, Stephen Morillo contends that being undefeated in war often results in the victorious countries writing of their conquest in a familiar triumphalism often associated with the jingoistic notions of powerful regimes throughout history. Consequently, Morillo reiterates that 'ground roots' military history is not the most respected branch of historical enquiry in academic circles, 'because there exists deep suspicion that to write about war is somehow to approve of it, even to glorify it – a suspicion not unfounded in the writing of military history'.⁴ Despite Morillo's view on the historical recording of military conflicts, white southerners were particularly proud to reiterate and promote the efforts of their region's men in previous wars, but particularly the controversial causes of their ancestors in the Civil War. Nevertheless, with the signing of the Paris Peace Accords in January 1973, the U.S. military's ineffective offensive in Vietnam was effectively over, thus subjecting the nation to its first defeat in conflict.⁵ Consequently, the American military, politicians and its electorate had to come to terms with the embarrassment and anger of defeat at the hands of the relatively small, communist-backed army of the North Vietnamese Army and the southern League for the Independence of Vietnam (Viet Minh) forces. In addition to this national defeat, for a specific but large group of southerners, the national loss in Vietnam was felt to a deeper degree on a personal ancestral level. White male southerners, typically displaying unswerving

³ The term Viet Minh refers to the resistance forces fighting for the cause of the North Vietnamese Army. 'Vietcong' is frequently used in texts to refer to the same group. A derogatory term used by both the American military and the South's Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN).

⁴ Stephen Morillo, *What is Military History* (Wiley, Kindle Edition, 2013), line, 83 and 1359.

⁵ On January 15th 1973, President Nixon announced the cessation of offensive actions against North Vietnam. On January 23rd, the Peace Accords Treaty was signed in Paris by representatives of the involved countries.

pride and faith in their race and southern heritage regarded the Vietnam War loss as a second blow to the region's historic and proud martial history, following the defeat to Union forces a century earlier in the American Civil War.

White southerners have made references to martial bravado and a distinct honourable culture since the late eighteenth century. Historian Joseph Fry, argues that following America's humiliating defeat in Vietnam, 'southerners were especially convinced that the war could have been won, if winning had been our goal and if we had fought it as we knew how to fight'.⁶ This belligerent 'do or die' or 'win at any cost' attitude proved to be recurrent in the sentiments of many white southerners, who remained embittered of their nation's restricted warfare policy in Vietnam. These resentful opinions were all the more poignant given the fact that southerners led the nation both politically and militarily. Consequently, the terms that delineated pro-war individuals as 'hawks' in contrast to the more liberal-minded 'doves', was regularly utilised by many southerners to support their 'hawkish' stances regarding foreign policy. Though some 'dovish' individuals were apparent in the South, their views remained largely suppressed. Accordingly, southerners equally derided the opinions of much of the northern populace who chose to express of their views on Vietnam, as cowardly, liberal and typical of northerners. Hence, by drawing from their controversial past, which promoted slavery, racial subjugation and unjustified violence as culturally acceptable, many white southerners believed that the nation's cause in Vietnam had been as honourable and patriotic as their southern ancestors' distinct cause a century earlier in the Civil War. The American government's use of chemical defoliants, napalm, carpet bombing and forced re-location of Vietnamese civilians were all considered acceptable by much of the southern populace when opinion polls were conducted throughout the period. The white South's approval of these

⁶ Joseph A. Fry, *Dixie Looks Abroad: The South and U.S. Foreign Relations* (Louisiana, 2002), p.293.

belligerent methods conformed to the nineteenth century southern Lost Cause myth, which endorsed fighting for unpopular and some cases immoral goals.

Certainly, the white South's insistence on its cultural distinctiveness has endured through the efforts of their region's authors and historians. In 1991, eighteen years after the United States' defeat in Vietnam which cost the lives of 15,400 southerners, despite being 48 years old, *Red Hills and Cotton* was still applauded as 'southern social history at its best'.⁷ Reflecting previous canonical works on various aspects of American southern identity, a particular extract from Robertson's book captures the embodiment of southern distinctiveness for many white people of the American South. The following quotation concisely sums up the powerful influence that the myth of the Old South still retains upon much of its black and white populace – albeit for differing reasons – while affirming many of the culturally nuanced distinctions that white southerners conveyed throughout the chapters of this thesis:

We are farmers, all Baptists-a strange people, complicated and simple and proud and religious and family-loving, a divorceless, Bible-reading murdersome lot of folks, all of us rich in ancestry and steeped in tradition and emotionally quick on the trigger.⁸

Even seven decades after this little-known book's initial writing; these much-lauded rudiments of southern individualism remain typical distinctions and mannerisms in the minds of southerners. Notwithstanding the recognition Robertson's book receives from southerners, it should be noted that an individual's race and social standing ensured that a common consensus was not apparent. Whereas southern whites may well have related to the proud, rich in ancestry claims and murdersome claims, African Americans were largely prevented

⁷ Carl Epting, review of *Red Hills and Cotton*, *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* Vol. 62, No. 3 (1961), p. 186. Southern casualty rates will be subject to an-depth examination in chapter III.

⁸ Benjamin Franklin Robertson, *Red Hills and Cotton: An Upcountry Memory* (New York, 1942), p.6.

from such entitlements, hence they would relate more to the simple, family-loving and bible reading aspects. This generic ‘labelling’ of all southerners, especially apparent in early historiography on the region, needs to be considered in context, given that this period largely excluded African Americans and many poor whites from any form of representation in literature. Robertson’s quotation personifies the nature and concept of the southern myth, by alluding to how these century-old regionally-determined distinctions affected the social, political, economic and military theatres in all of America’s twentieth century wars; but none more so than the ever-controversial Vietnam War.⁹

The South’s historic, distinct and in some cases irregular and peculiar devotion to personal honour, masculinity and martial behaviour, is the major focus of this thesis.¹⁰ Through the examination of military enlistment and performance records, as well as the response from the provincial southern media and southern music and literature, a distinct South will be presented to determine how and to what extent this region influenced the national response to America’s involvement in South-east Asia. As a result, the very concept of ‘the South’ as an exclusive, culturally unified region is highly problematic. In order to achieve some classification and clarity, ‘the South’ needs to be considered in diverse contexts, which are also subject to change. Determining ‘if’ and ‘how’ the South, a southerner or southernness ‘exists’ can be deliberated in three general frameworks. Firstly, as an assembly of separate political states with the American nation, ‘the South’ very much exists both in material and geographic terms. This physical ‘bricks and mortar’ presence is generally considered the eleven states located South of the Mason-Dixon Line, which constituted the

⁹ Practice differs on whether the word ‘war’ in the term Vietnam War should be capitalised when referring to the subject. As the United States Congress never officially declared war on Vietnam, it remains in political terms, a conflict and not an officially sanctioned act of war. Despite this, much as a result of continuing works on the conflict and due to the notoriety of the war, when America’s military involvement in Vietnam is referred to in this thesis, the word ‘War’ will be capitalised.

¹⁰ Throughout this thesis, the term distinct/distinctiveness will be utilised to denote southern characteristics. As a result of the South’s turbulent history, terms such as trait, ideology, tradition, peculiarities and in some cases psyche could all be used in discourse on the region. Notwithstanding, ‘distinct’ will be utilised to refer to the various characteristics that southern culture entails.

Confederacy or were the major slave-owning regions that had an invested interest in the southern philosophy. This was a region recognised and generally accepted from the nineteenth-century onwards as being culturally distinct. The reasons, actions and outcome of the American Civil War heightened this distinction as the southern states attempted to uphold their own individualism following the Union victory.¹¹ The aforementioned motives of white southerners throughout the postbellum period were frequently recalled and utilised by twentieth century southern politicians during the Vietnam era to justify and compound the southern mentality with regard to implementing the nation's foreign policy.

To complicate the widely accepted border of the Mason-Dixon Line, many inhabitants of the 'Border States' often espouse their 'southernness' on a cultural level, from speech to music to food.¹² Perhaps more pertinently, groups have often identified themselves with historic southern causes. During the Civil War, for example, Oklahoma was the 'Indian territory', and while not being officially part of the Confederate states, their region's natives chose to side with the Confederacy, while also providing over 3,500 native Americans to fight against the Union forces.¹³ Accordingly, despite driving out General Lee's Confederate forces in 1861, then gaining their autonomy in 1863, many inhabitants of West Virginia still consider themselves typically southern. Often referred to as a state where brothers fought one another during the Civil War, Kentucky's residents are eager to mention that their state was the birth place of both the Union and Confederate presidents of Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davies, and that their state is represented by the central star on the Confederate Southern Cross flag. Furthermore, the state of Maryland, which straddles both the North and South borders, contains many inhabitants that today debate their ancestral allegiances to the

¹¹ The states usually considered to be 'historically' southern are Virginia, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida and Texas.

¹² Still often capitalised, the Border States are usually defined as slave states that did not secede from the Union, or chose to a later date than the original Confederate states.

¹³ George B. Everton, *The Handybook for Genealogists* (Utah, 2002), p. 549.

Confederacy. Consequently, these historic associations still referred to by the Border States populace only adds to the difficulty of clearly defining a physical South. As is the case of the Border States, geographic locale is not an overall determining factor either. Southern distinctiveness is certainly historic, as despite the states of New Mexico, Arizona and southern California being on a similar geographic bearing, the allegiances of these states during the American Civil War ‘excludes’ them from being regarded as ‘truly southern’. Notwithstanding these ambiguities, in geographical terms, not including the Border States, the South of the former Confederacy, constitutes to approximately 25% of America’s total land mass.

A second context, from which to understand southern identity, is the collective perception of a distinct regional identity, based on a shared history and culture. Although it is practically a given fact that, when questioned, the majority of southerners, both black and white and regardless of state, would consider themselves ‘southern’ to some extent. Nonetheless, a consensus on what ‘brands’ them as southern is far from apparent when examined further. Accordingly, although many elements of southern identity can be traced back to the past having seemingly endured throughout the generations, the strength, relevance and influence of specific elements constituting southern identity are subject to change across time. Whether one person, group or region of the South considers itself more southern than another is entirely a matter of personal and collective perspective.¹⁴ The former Confederate states that seceded from the Union from 1861 are, in general, regarded as constituting the ‘authentic’ Old South. These perceptions and projections have been constructed and deconstructed, have evolved and developed at a pace since the latter half of the nineteenth

¹⁴ As well as the South’s division from the North, the region contains sub-regions that possess their own geographically determined titles. The South Atlantic states, the East-south central states and the West-south central states are all terms used to define a Souths ‘within’ the South. The Old South usually refers to the slave states that existed at the time of the region’s secession from the Union, while the Solid South is used to define the Democratic Party’s political dominance on the South up to 1964.

century. During this critical period of the South's identity formation, the region's ruling white elites affectionately referred to their confederate expanse as 'the Old/Ole' South', remaining a term which has endured into the twentieth century. Long after this particular elite class had been challenged by other groups — most notably an insurgent industrial middle class — these historic perceptions retain a varying but lasting influence upon the region's black and white peoples. It is this shared reverence for a historical legacy manifested within a distinctive culture, which grew out of the past practices of slavery, segregation, quest for federal autonomy, and above all, the Lost Cause of the former Confederacy that has proved enduring.

A third context, perhaps most problematical of all to pin down, is the way in which the South exists as a concept in the minds of all Americans in general. From the period of the 1970s onwards, the South appeared to be much like anywhere else in the United States — in an economic and commercial sense — but the region remains distinct in the minds and sentiments of much of the American populace; none more than southerners themselves. Much as a result of modernisation and a blurring of some cultural themes, a lack of absolute distinctions, along with a constantly changing and evolving culture means the region continues to vie for its own distinct place in national history. Working within and across these differing frameworks, this thesis will examine the cultural upbringings of key figures in the political, military and economic spheres. Moreover, it will examine distinct southern attitudes towards race, political recalcitrance, martial characteristics and the region's changing economy as a result of ordnance-related spending. This multi-faceted approach will establish whether and to what extent southern culture affected the attitudes and responses of its populace, and how these distinct nuances contrasted, sometimes significantly from that of the northern states, probing the way in which southern identity played out on the national stage during the Vietnam War.

Throughout the nineteenth century, white southerners — albeit predominantly those of the elite class — regularly referred to their collective commitment and cause to maintain their region's specific model of honour, masculinity and culture at any cost. Masculine behaviour in the South of this period permeated the lives of the majority of both elite and poor whites. Historian, John Tosh contends that the influence of masculinity is imperative in understanding how a nation is constructed. Although not officially a nation, the elites in charge of the states of the Confederacy exercised all the means available to enforce its influence over whites and African-Americans in their efforts to maintain the southern way of life. Tosh contends that 'only by placing masculinity in a field of differences that includes categories such as race, religion and ethnicity can we fully comprehend its meanings and influence'.¹⁵ Nowhere is Tosh's argument more relevant than in the history of the southern states. For white men in the South, rite of passage was often accomplished through acts of individual aggression upon another. This violent conduct was essentially anticipated if a southerner's personal honour/masculinity was disrespected. Despite the gulf in social and economic standing apparent between the region's elites and poor whites, race still categorically determined the crucial racial hierarchy of the South throughout the nineteenth century. Fear of black rebellion, sexual prowess and subsequently social equality, encouraged derogatory stereotypes of black men as animal-like and incapable of recognising and acting out of honour. These fabricated prejudices only served to enhance and glorify the role of the white southern male further still in the crucial years that followed their Civil War defeat. These racial and culturally-imbued prejudices remained apparent to varying degrees a century later in much of the South. The prevalence of these attitudes will be examined in chapter two as the southern economy boomed, southern blacks still witnessed little benefit, and in chapter three which

¹⁵ John Tosh, Karen Hagemen and Stefan Dudink, (eds), *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History* (Manchester, 2004), p.xiv.

reveals how the region's blacks and poor whites were exploited by the military to fill the ranks for men bound for South-east Asia.

In 1865, after four years of hostilities, the Southern Confederacy surrendered to the north's Union forces, signalling their loss in the American Civil War. Within seven months of the region's military defeat, southern slavery along with the region's political individualism was duly quashed as the northern model of political governance and social order was enforced upon a reluctant white South. Consequently, much of the South's dejected white population — though its poor whites to a lesser extent — were eager to maintain their region's 'cause' and subsequently sought to construct and rationalise a heroic image of their South in order to maintain pre-Civil War notions of cultural superiority over the North. Historians Lorri Friend and Craig Glover, argue that the South's determination to retain their political cultural autonomy was due in part to the influence of their European ancestors' behaviours from past centuries. Friend and Glover affirm that, 'Southern honour is a relic of mediaeval European culture that reinforced emotion rather than intellect, ultimately shaping Southern masculinity'.¹⁶ This thesis examines how this survival of white masculine honour and the continued social subjugation of African Americans personified southern identity to ensure it persisted throughout the 1960's both domestically and 'in country' in Vietnam.

Secondary sources upon the Vietnam War are abundant. Mark Lawrence's 2008 book, *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History* offers a succinct and well-balanced account of the war, in which Lawrence affirms that Vietnam left 'an enduring psychological legacy, that bitterly divided Americans'.¹⁷ In Lawrence's opinion, the acrimonious

¹⁶ Lorri Friend and Craig Glover, *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South* (2004), Xiii. Throughout the nineteenth century, references to black masculinity and acts of honour were practically non-existent. Craig and Glover's research on this subject will be further utilised in subsequent chapters to affirm the influence the southern model of masculinity differed from other regions of the United States. Accordingly, this thesis will also examine, where relevant, the construction and emergence of black males' martial behaviour and perceptions of honour throughout the twentieth century — especially with regard to service in Vietnam.

¹⁷ Mark Atwood Lawrence, *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History* (Oxford, 2008), p.6.

psychological legacy derives from the fact that the North Vietnamese somehow won an unwinnable war. Lawrence affirms that, 'for Americans, the war left not only physical scars but also deep social cleavages and a pervasive anxiety about national decline. Even in the twenty-first century, as painful memories of the Vietnam War weigh heavily on Americans.¹⁸ Adding to this assessment, Fredrik Logevall's work also offers an insightful view in to how the chance of achieving peace in Vietnam was recurrently ignored or mismanaged by American politicians; many of who were southern. Logevall sustains that in the eyes of the majority of Americans, Vietnam remained unpalatable, with Logevall affirming that 'what was most remarkable about the war was that, with the exception of Charles De Gaulle (French President) and George Ball (Under Secretary of State), so few challenged the fundamental assumptions of the American vision'.¹⁹ In spite of a large literature concerning the Vietnam War, only three titles discuss the war from a southern perspective.

James R. Wilson's *Landing Zones: Southern Veterans Remember Vietnam*, uses the testimonies of twenty four southern men and women to offer a more personal perspective to their region's participation in Vietnam. Wilson asserts that because of the South's previous [Civil] war loss and fervour for cultural recalcitrance 'Southerners sensed they were outsiders twice over in Vietnam. As a result, it was not unusual for them to seek each other out and coalesce into groups'.²⁰ Although the questions posed by Wilson are somewhat generic in nature and avoid such matters as race and social prejudice, his results do offer a thought-provoking insight into the consciousness of selected southerners of the Vietnam period. Owen Gilman's *Vietnam and the Southern Imagination* argues how the cultural stimulus of the

¹⁸ Lawrence, p.162.

¹⁹ Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (California, 1999), p.376. Logevall argues that for the presidents associated with the Vietnam War (Johnson and Nixon); their own political standing was under enormous threat, due to the war's controversial running. However, for Johnson in particular, as a result of his own personal insecurities and prejudices, Vietnam was a personal mission in which he could prove he was fit for the role of president.

²⁰ James R. Wilson, *Landing Zone: Southern Veterans Remember Vietnam* (North Carolina, 1990), p.xiv.

South's past is pertinent in binding and upholding a constant link with the region's present. Gilman asserts that the effect of the South's Civil War loss, made service in Vietnam for the southerner ever the more poignant. Singling out the region's differing attitude towards war, Gilman states that 'because Southerners have been working under the spell of history for such a long time, they are ideally suited to the task of placing their Vietnam experience within lasting time'.²¹ Adding to this, Joseph A. Fry's examination of the South's Cold War era foreign policy elaborates what impact southern strategies had on America's role in Indochina.²² Emphasising that the South's more aggressive form of anti-communism towards Vietnam policy, Fry affirms that the region's belligerent populace were 'decidedly supportive of the military and the pursuit of peace through strength, and more inclined than other American regions to solve international problems through the use of force rather than diplomacy'.²³ The efforts of Wilson, Gilman and Fry offer useful interpretations of the South's role in Vietnam, and will be utilised throughout this thesis.

My own research into the significance of southern identity for those serving in Vietnam, as well as those who had a vested political and economic interest, provides a new perspective however. The methodology utilised in this thesis examines various aspects of the Vietnam War from a southern viewpoint drawing from fresh sources to provide a deeper evidential base than found in previous research which has examined southern distinctiveness. Hitherto, no scholar has attempted a quantitative analysis, in the form of public and media opinion provided by provincial newspaper articles and reports to present a more regional

²¹ Owen W. Gilman Jr, *Vietnam and the Southern Imagination* (Mississippi, 1992), p.7. In views similar to those of Wilson, Gilman contends that southern soldiers 'went off to the war in Vietnam with baggage' that was not exactly the issue of the U.S. armed forces, but the historic martial expectations of their southern peers.

²² Joseph A. Fry, *Dixie Looks Abroad: The South and U.S. Foreign Relations 1789–1973*. Fry's 2015 book *The American South and the Vietnam War* largely reiterates the argument of his earlier work while concentrating on what the author states was 'agony for Dixie'.

²³ Fry, (2015), p.12. Fry asserts that southern distinctiveness permeated all cultural aspects in the region from the eighteenth century. Regarding the Vietnam War era, Fry asserts that 'Dixie' sustained its interventionist mind-set into the 1970s, ardently supporting the Cold War's containment policy, especially when 'native sons' Lyndon Johnson and Dean Rusk were in charge.

based analysis. Subsequently, regardless of the apparent influence of the southern myth, an examination of military statistics from a southern perspective also reveals how the southern contingent that served in Vietnam enlisted and performed much like their northern brethren. Notwithstanding, numerous discrepancies were apparent in the southern public's attitudes toward the war in contrast to the opinions of northerners. This is especially apparent in the opinions offered by southern newspapers and sentiments of the region's populace who were researched by opinion polls. As such, the results of this investigation make an important intervention into this subject which has been previously overlooked in the voluminous literature concerning the Vietnam War.

Consisting of two parts, with part one examining the late antebellum period and part two the twentieth century South, chapter one examines how the white South cherished acts of honour through masculine and martial behaviour highlighting the distinctiveness of the region up to the mid-twentieth century. Correspondingly, despite many of the region's poor whites existing in similar social circumstances to that of the South's black population, the region's white men demonstrated a similar model of southern honour as the elite classes from previous decades. Through the utilisation of primary and secondary sources, an examination of the culturally-oriented peer pressures and need to behave 'honourable' and 'masculine' in a southern sense will be presented to elucidate why elite whites as well as many poor whites remained distinct and thus avoid further affiliation to the region's subjugated and emasculated black population. The framework of southern identity was in many ways underpinned by the enduring significance of the Lost Cause. The effects of this crucial historical movement are examined in chapter one, as the white South rapidly developed, and would later cling vociferously, to the myth of the Lost Cause. Chapter one will also establish how the collective belief among many white southerners drew from the continued meaningfulness of the Confederacy's loss in the American Civil War.

Chapter two examines the substantial role the southern states played both politically and economically in their nation's participation in the Vietnam War. In-depth analyses of the character of prominent southerners such as President Lyndon B. Johnson (Texas), Secretary of State Dean Rusk (Georgia) as well as influential senators such as Richard Russell (Georgia), J. William Fulbright (Arkansas) and James Eastland (Mississippi) will reveal the extent their regional origins affected U.S. foreign policy in Vietnam. It is imperative to take into account that these politicians grew up in the South of the early twentieth century, when racial segregation and a hatred of northern political interference permeated the consciousness of these 'traditional' southerners. Historian, Joseph Fry argues that Lyndon B. Johnson's foreign policy was surely tainted as a result of his origin affirming that 'Johnson was convinced that the media and northerners criticized him because he was a southerner and he did not go to Harvard'.²⁴ Despite Fry's claim that Lyndon Johnson felt he was persecuted for 'being' southern — such was Johnson's shrewdness of the political process — that throughout his presidency, LBJ was well aware of how and when to use his 'good ol boy' persona. Nevertheless, Johnson's support of the Civil Rights movement, as well as his less-belligerent, non-traditionally southern approach on Vietnam policy ultimately drove the southern electorate away from the governing Democrat Party which had seemingly perpetual dominance in the South. This downturn in electoral support was swiftly recognised and utilised by Richard Nixon's Republican Party who adopted its 'southern strategy' to garner support of the region's populace for Nixon's 1968 presidential campaign.

From a military perspective, the military commanders who guided much of America's role in Vietnam were also predominantly southern. The soldier most associated with the war was the South Carolinian, Four Star General William (Westy) Westmoreland. In 1976, the retired General stated that 'the fact that, even in military defeat, persons of honour can

²⁴ Joseph A. Fry, *Dixie Looks Abroad: The South and U.S. Foreign Relations 1789-1973* (Louisiana, 2002), p. 264.

maintain the stance of pride is a point of wisdom only southerners could take to heart before Vietnam.²⁵ The southern influence in Vietnam would be further compounded with Admiral of the U.S. fleet Thomas Hinman Moorer (Alabama), Acting Chief of Staff, General Bruce Palmer (Virginia) and Commander of the United States Marine Corp (USMC) Leonard F. Chapman Jr (Virginia) all hailing from the southern states. The circumspection and regional culturally-orientated differences of what Westmoreland coined northern ‘those academic whizzkids’, such as Secretary of Defense, Robert S. McNamara and his Harvard-educated team became an increasing irritation in the minds of these martially imbued southerners as the war become protracted.

Chapter two also examines how, much as a result of the nation’s involvement in Vietnam, the South’s economy was transformed from a predominantly agrarian, to one central to the nation’s military industrial complex within two decades. Much of this economic growth, particularly in ordnance-related output was as a result of the efforts of savvy southern politicians’ eager to profit from the nation’s growing fear of communism. James C. Cobb affirms that from the outset of the Cold War period ‘the South’s economy took off, registering dramatic growth and improvements in every economic statistical category’.²⁶ This once slow-paced, traditional, agrarian-reliant but ultimately fading ‘Old South’ was naturally set to clash with the ‘New South’ that was increasingly modern — in terms of lifestyle — mechanically industrialised and most worryingly to many of the region’s white traditionalists’, more socially liberal and racially progressive.²⁷

²⁵ William Westmoreland, *A soldier Reports* (New York, 1994), p. 26. Reaching the rank of Four-star General, Westmoreland commanded the U.S. forces in Vietnam from 1964 until 1968.

²⁶ James C. Cobb, *Redefining Southern Culture: Mind and Identity in the Modern South* (Georgia, 1999), p.89. Cobb’s essential argument is that through its distinct consumer culture, and in the face of sweeping changes to its economy, society, and political structure, the ‘modern South’s’ identity has endured, and remains distinct in the twentieth century.

²⁷ The term ‘new’ or ‘modern South’ is frequently utilised by historians to explain the postbellum characteristics of southerners, when reliance on a slave-based plantation economy was outlawed. This group of more modern-

Entitled, *In Country: The Southerner in Vietnam* chapter three examines the sentiments of southern men and women who served in Vietnam. Considering the South's historic reverence to personal honour and martial behaviour, through a quantitative analysis of government data, the first part of the chapter will present the military statistics of southern men who served in Vietnam from each state. Following this, statistics on recruitment figures, medal and commendation recipients, criminal activity and assault figures, as well as cases of desertion and 'absent without leave' (AWOL) cases will likewise be analysed to determine if regional stimuli played a part in such actions. Due to the government's prejudicial draft and service deferment procedures, the war in Vietnam provides a suitable case study to reveal the class and regional disparities when serving in the military. Historian, George Lepre compounds this view of prejudicial military selection, arguing that 'command in Vietnam was equally unstable, and that morale was further undermined as a revolving door policy saw officers promoted so quickly that it represented careerism at its worst'.²⁸

Following on from this statistical analysis, chapter three then examines the oral testimonies of six Vietnam veterans who volunteered to share their sentiments on topics specifically for the purpose of this thesis. The interviewees who kindly offered their time in the research of this thesis were Benjamin Sewell (North Carolina), Rick Owen (Kentucky), Ben Humphries (Tennessee), Rick Roll (Connecticut), Eldson McGhee (Georgia) and Solomon Smith (Mississippi). Taking into account the pitfalls of asking such loaded questions, the men were questioned on various aspects of their service in Vietnam in order to determine if their southern ancestry — except in the case of Mr Roll — affected their personal sentiments and military performance 'in country' in Vietnam. Along with the opinions of other veterans' testimonies located from other sources, this methodology will assist in

thinking southerners were regarded as the men and women from the emerging middle-class who modernised the region through their commerce-related practices.

²⁸ George Lepre, *Fragging: Why U.S. Soldiers Assaulted their Officers in Vietnam* (Texas, 2011), p.12.

revealing if regionally-nuanced ideologies affected the mind set and subsequent actions of everyday southerners in Vietnam.

The final chapter provides a case study on the war atrocity commonly referred to as the Mỹ Lai Massacre, from a southern perspective. The white public and political reaction to the massacre was very different in the South in comparison to the North. Added to this was that the only man given a custodial sentence for his part in the massacre, William Calley and a key prosecution witness, Hugh Thompson were both southerners, as was the head of prosecution Aubrey Daniel. Georgia's Fort Benning, the location of Calley's trial and incarceration also came to typify the prototypical region of martial support often exhibited in the South. Subsequently, an examination of the two additional investigations, which ran concurrent to the Calley trial, will also reveal how many southerners reacted in contrast to northerners throughout the course of these inquiries. The House Committee on Armed Services (HCAS) investigation proved to be a distinct southern affair as a result of its outspoken chairman Mendel Rivers. In contrast to the HCAS conclusions, the military's Peers Commission Report, which was held in the north and led by Iowan General William R. Peers, showed no indications of regional distinctions throughout the course of the investigation. An analysis of hundreds of newspapers that reported on the case will also be presented to reveal the distinct regional nuance attributed to the trial. Through the examination of these opinions, the political and public response towards the court martial and concurrent investigations revealed distinct regional disparities in attitudes towards Calley, as many southern politicians and their electorate vehemently defended the soldier's actions. This reaction underlines the South's long-established historic, political, and cultural distinctiveness, and the ways in which it played a distinguishably different role in the southern response to the Vietnam War.

Chapter I

Myths and Perceptions:

Identity and Honour in the South

*I wish I was, in the land of cotton, old times there they are not forgotten...
In Dixieland, I'll take my stand, to live and die in Dixie.*

Daniel D. Emmett, 1859.¹

Part I – The Nineteenth Century South

In order to evaluate the complicated question of southern identity and the Vietnam War, it must be first established how and why the southern states were considered culturally distinct from the rest of the United States. To do this, this chapter examines the region's formative period during the nineteenth century by utilising the views of the region's most influential historians.² As gaining a precise interpretation of what represents 'the South' is practically impossible, many historians of southern history often offer contrasting opinions. In a collection of essays that discuss the South as 'an American problem', historian, Charles G Sellers, declared that 'the traditional emphasis on the South's differentness... Is historically wrong, making it all the harder to understand both Southernism and Americanism, and hence escape the defensiveness, prejudiced, and belligerence of the region's self-preoccupation'.³

While the influence of European settlers is apparent from the sixteenth century, for the South

¹ Lyrics for Dixie from, www.musicanet.org/robokopp/usa/oiwishi.html

² The work of historian W.J. Cash remains a crucial source when examining the conscience of southerners in historical narratives. Cash argues that to ignore the influence and conception of the frontier mindset of southerners from the eighteenth century is to abandon notion of gaining an insight into southern thought. Regarding the South's specific devotion to honour and piety, Cash stated that 'No group of people anywhere, ever more constantly represented to themselves and to the world that they were absolutely under the domination of these ideas and Christian virtues'. *The Mind of the South* (New York, 1941), p.74.

³ Charles G Sellers, in Larry J. Griffin and Don Harrison Doyle, *The South as an American Problem*, (Georgia, 1995), p.21.

specifically, its traditionally decisive period was the nineteenth century, due to the region's reliance on slavery providing the workforce for the tobacco, rice, sugar and, particularly cotton plantations and Confederate states' secession from the Union beginning in 1860 with South Carolina.⁴ In the post-war period, the South was occupied by the Union army, thus southerners sought increasingly violent ways to resist federal rule during Reconstruction. In order to elucidate the influence of these cultural distinctions that still resonated during the Vietnam era, this chapter examines the construction of southern identity. This discussion provides a crucial foundation for analysis of the later twentieth century period.⁵

In 1859, two years before the outbreak of the American Civil War, musician Daniel D. Emmett penned the tune still recognised by southerner and northerners today as 'Dixie' or Dixieland. The tune's lyrics, describe how southerners will take their stand – a clear reference to the South's distinctive culture, while opting to live and die in Dixie and was adopted as the unofficial 'national' anthem to the Confederate cause in their war with the Union.⁶ Recognised as 'minstrel' performances, Emmett's band of white men performed with their faces blackened in order to mockingly bear resemblance to the South's enslaved black population of the period. Ironically, Emmett, a 'northerner' from Ohio, expressed his antipathy towards the South and its practices stating that, 'if I had known to what use they

⁴ The Union refers to the period when the United States of America was politically unified up to the outbreak of the Civil War. The Confederate States of America, or the Confederacy, were the eleven southern slave states that seceded from the Union ultimately resulting in the American Civil War.

⁵ The term 'Vietnam era' is regularly utilised throughout historical narratives. Although open to various interpretations, the Vietnam era is generally considered the decade from 1965 to 1975. This period is well recognised by the nation as ground troops were deployed to fight in 1965 and ten years later the fall of Saigon to NVA forces witnessed the last troops leave Vietnam.

⁶ The term 'Dixie' or 'Dixieland' has been part of the American vernacular since the late eighteenth century. Two recurrent origins of the term 'Dixie' are offered on the topic. The ten-dollar note used as legal tender in the French Quarter of New Orleans was labelled the 'Dix'. The more common and plausible explanation derives from the Mason-Dixon borderline, a three-year geographical survey beginning in 1763 to determine the demarcation line between the British colonies in colonial America. In 1852, a Cincinnati journalist wrote that the line was already considered a cultural border stating that 'the landmarks of the Mason and Dixon were the very outposts of all civilization and progress'. James C. Cobb, *Away Down South* (Oxford and New York, 2005), p.37. Though not officially representative as an official border, the Mason-Dixon Line is still often utilised by historians as a term to symbolise the cultural boundary that exists between the North and South.

(southerners) were going to put my song, I will be dammed if I'd have written it'.⁷ Notwithstanding Emmet's dismay, his band's performances were famous across the South. In 1885, celebrated author, Mark Twain reflected on his love of this form of entertainment stating that 'if I could have the nigger show back again in its pristine purity, I should have little use for opera'.⁸ In contrast to Twain, the nineteenth century African-American social reformer, Frederick Douglass wrote that 'Blackface performers are the filthy scum of white society, who have stolen from us a complexion denied them by nature, in which to make money, and pander to the corrupt taste of their white fellow citizens'.⁹ Emmett could not have known that his Dixie composition would maintain its status as the unofficial anthem for southern individualism for a further century, and that it would be a frequently used to socially separate not only northerners and southerners, but also black and white people. The fact this piece of music, which laments old times past is still resurrected at many southern cultural occasions and sporting events today, as well as remaining a regular anthem in the South's military training facilities, signifies the tensions that remain from the nineteenth century.¹⁰

As much of research on the South often focuses on the Confederacy's defeat in the American Civil War, its outcome and subsequent influence remains a critical historical and cultural theme that deeply shaped southern identity during the twentieth century. As the Confederacy's downfall was specifically a southern loss, much of the region's white populace

⁷ In *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World* (Cambridge, 1997). Dale Cockerill writes that though vaudeville acts slowly replaced the minstrel show as the most commercially popular genre of entertainment in the last decade of the nineteenth century, many minstrel groups still made a healthy living from their acts in to the twentieth century. Emmett quote from Hans Nathan, *Dan Emmett and the Rise of Early Negro Minstrelsy* (Oklahoma, 1962), p.275.

⁸ Mark Twain, *Own Autobiography* (Wisconsin, 1990 edition), p.xix

⁹ E. Malcom Wise, *Bamboozing Black America: Classisfied* (Indiana, 2013), p.39. A prominent nineteenth century abolitionist, author and speaker, Frederick Douglass' literary works are crucial in the examination of slave narratives, abolitionist activities and southern culture.

¹⁰ Academic debate as to how regionally aware southerners were in the antebellum period remains contested. Regardless of these discrepancies, the political battles in the period leading up to the Civil War encouraged a powerful ideology of southern distinctiveness. Recently, historians have been questioning myths of the Old South as pre-modern, backward-looking and distinct from progressive capitalist societies. John McCardell's *The Idea of a Southern Nation: Southern Nationalists and Southern Nationalism, 1830-1860* (New York, 1979), presents a concise study of the South's fervour for a particular cultural self-definition.

soon referred to the defeat as ‘their’ or ‘our’ loss. Although obvious, it is worth remembering for the value of this thesis that the pronoun ‘their’ typically connotes a unified group or collective possessing or belonging to a common cause. The fact that much of the discourse on southern history encompasses all southerners — albeit unequally and somewhat incorrectly — suggests that the Confederacy’s Civil War defeat was concordantly shared by all of the southern populace.¹¹ In actuality, this conviction was strictly a fabrication of the region’s white populace – or more specifically, its ruling elite that had the most to lose from the impending changes that were to be thrust upon southern culture. Despite the fact that thousands of white and black southerners fought on the side of the Union in the war, in the decades following the southern defeat, authors of the southern myth ensured that the contributions of these atypical southerners received little to no recognition in the discourse on the South’s cause in the Civil War.¹² In view of this omission from the preferred southern narrative, many non-white southern subcultures had experienced the trauma of military defeat and moral subjugation for decades before the outbreak of the Civil War. As a result of the efforts of white elites to promote ‘their’ defeat, the plight of Native Americans, the region’s African Americans and treatment of Mexican and South-American immigrants remained irrelevant to the southern narrative, regardless of their numbers that constituted a considerable part of the southern populace.¹³ Considered in this context, the South’s Civil War ‘defeat’, in a historical sense, is overwhelmingly a southern white man’s construction of ‘their’ righteous Lost Cause, as the suppression of non-white peoples narrative from the region negated any

¹¹ Throughout this thesis, when the term ‘southerners’ and in some contexts ‘southern’ is utilised, I will be referring to white southerners specifically, as much of the region’s cultural distinctions were constructed and upheld by this dominant group. When the terms are used to encompass all races, it will be indicated as such.

¹² Mike Walbridge attests that by the end of the Civil War, 186,000 African Americans assisted in the Union victory. Walbridge states that ‘from Bull Run to Appotomax, African Americans helped behind the lines also as spies, scouts, nurses and teachers.’ *African American Heroes of the Civil War* (Maine, 2000), p.7.

¹³ Although now updated in its syllabus, education during the Vietnam War era was still lacking in its inclusiveness of other cultures. Jerry D. Blanche studied how contemporary teaching of modern American history was still somewhat absent and biased in its representation of its subcultures. Blanche wrote ‘accounts of Indians (Native Americans) have been neglected in the books which are used in countless schools which most Anglo-Saxon educators and history writers do not care to answer’. Blanche, ‘Ignoring it won’t make it go away’ *Journal of American Indian Education* (October 1971), p.1.

claims to a prior defeat of its populace. The efforts of renowned southern historian C. Vann Woodward to expose and write of the inequalities and ironies of life in the South are crucial to any work on southern history. His iconic 1953 essay '*The Irony of Southern History*', describes how Woodward set out to 'free' the South from its history of social and racial oppression and to explain as well as dilute the influence of the region's Lost Cause mentality.¹⁴ In his 1951 publication titled, *Origins of the New South, 1877–1913: A History of the South*, Woodward argued how that in the decades following the Civil War, the emerging 'new South' witnessed a marked decrease in the influence of white plantation elites, in favour of middle-class industrialists and entrepreneurs who were keen to shape a different South. Woodward's extensive and lucid contributions to this subject remain crucial, but in the public arena anyway have failed to dislodge the enduring image of the Old South as a land of moonlight and magnolias, or the myth of the gallant South heroically embroiled in a needless war.

The early history of the South is usually set in contrast to that of the North, specifically New England, a region that has been typically presented in a different and more culturally liberal home of American 'civilisation'. These early narratives usually implied that America's first immigrants embodied the 'cultured morals' of their white European relatives. Notwithstanding this popularised and generic view of the nation's inception, post-1700, the practices of white settlers in the southern states were soon associated with the cruel practices of racial hatred, the trading of people for slaves and forced acquisition of land. Due to the white South's fierce support of slavery in the face of the abolitionist movements from 1830 — and the political and social turmoil of the ensuing Civil War — nineteenth-century southerners soon established and subsequently guarded their region as distinct, defining themselves and their community as dissimilar from the rest of the United States. Historian,

¹⁴ Woodward's 'Irony of Southern History' forms part of the work of his book *The Burden of Southern History* (Louisiana, 1993).

Fred Hobson aptly affirmed the southerner's fervour of regional distinctiveness when he argued that 'the South of the late nineteenth century, was an alien member of the national family', or more precisely 'in word and deed exceptional among places in America'.¹⁵ The perseverance and efforts of the region's elites to maintain white, political and cultural superiority, while also managing to survive following secession from the Union came to typify what is still recognised by many today as 'southern individualism'.¹⁶ It was through the persistence of motivated twentieth century southern individuals that these myths were retold to ensure that despite the realities of modern lifestyles, southern culture could still endure as distinct.

The Origins and Borders of the Distinct South

Like the majority of southern history, determining a precise historical moment in which southerners began to identify themselves as different, be it culturally or geographically, is somewhat problematic. Historian, Peter Coclanis affirms that the North/South cultural divide in 'cause and values' had begun as early as the late seventeenth century. Coclanis states that the establishment and validation of forced slavery gave birth to the elites who would become so influential in the region. Consequently, Coclanis determines on this topic that 'the rise of the nascent plantation sector, set the South down a path never followed in the more temperate

¹⁵ Fred Hobson, 'The American South and the Self', *Cultures Journal* Volume 12 (2006), p.28.

¹⁶ Individuality in a geographically collective sense, i.e. the sentiments of a region differing from that of their nation give rise to interesting nuances evident in southern identity. Alex Zakaris writes 'the pursuit of individuality requires the active effort to extricate oneself and others from inadvertent complicity. This effort begins with awareness of the extent of our personal involvement in injustice'. Zakaris offers a comparison of how citizens of New England claimed to be appalled by the practice of slavery in the South, but took no public action against it. Thus, their lack of mass protest nullified individualist traits so treasured by the South, which inferred they actually had no strong preference on the topic of southern slavery. *Individuality and Mass Democracy: Mill Emerson and the Burdens of Citizenship* (Oxford, 2009), p.98.

(liberally moderate) colonies in the north'.¹⁷ Despite the indeterminate dating of a social and cultural divide, racial and social disparities ensured that southern white distinctiveness was clearly emerging by the turn of the eighteenth century. In 1785, in a letter addressed to a French ambassador, America's third president, and principle author of the Declaration of Independence, Virginian Thomas Jefferson, wrote lucidly and somewhat unfavourably of the southern way of life. While reiterating that these cultural characteristics grew 'weaker and weaker by gradation' (travel) from South to North, Jefferson affirmed that 'in the South, they (specifically white elites) are fiery, voluptuary, indolent, unsteady, and jealous for their own liberties, but trampling on those of others, generous, candid, without attachment or pretensions to any religion but that of the heart'.¹⁸ For the purpose of this thesis overall, it is imperative to comprehend that the white South's reverence for historical traditionalism and regional distinctiveness was at least 150 years-old by the time of American involvement in Vietnam. Recognition of this ingrained southern distinctiveness will assist in establishing and thus understanding why and how these individualities were readily rekindled, to varying degrees in the Vietnam era.

Alongside the difficulty in determining when the region became distinctive, scholars also debate the geographic composition of the South. In defining a 'distinct' South', exactly what are we talking about, and who gets to decide? The former Confederate states incorporate numerous immigrant groups and subcultures that settled in specific geographic areas of the region commonly titled 'the South'. Historians largely settle with Larry J Griffin's affirmation the populaces of each of America's 50 states has hewn their own particular identity from their own region's history. Notwithstanding, Griffin sustains that 'none is as distinctive as the South, and none has been imbued with such historical weight in its collective memory and

¹⁷ Peter Coclanis, 'Tracking the Economic Divergence of the North and South' *Southern Cultures* No 7 (2000), p. 83. Coclanis uses the term 'temperate' in reference to the North's reputation for showing a more moderate stance on national policies and preference for self-control not in the meteorological sense.

¹⁸ James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (Oxford/New York, 2005), p.10.

mythological self-understandings'.¹⁹ Despite Texas being the most westerly region of 'the South', Texans still consider themselves southern with regard to their martial service and cultural characteristics. In 1860, General Robert E. Lee considered the state's support in the western region as vital to the South's cause during the Civil War.²⁰ Similar quandaries are apparent with the states that are often referred to as the 'Deep South' – largely considered to be the states of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and South Carolina. While some of these states are recognised as 'deeply southern' due to their geographic locality, and reliance on plantation agriculture, the states of South Carolina which is North of the cotton plantation belt stretching, from Georgia is usually included with these deep South states due to its proslavery politics and that it was the first state to secede from the Union in December 1860. Accordingly, the South's upper/upland states, generally regarded as North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia and West Virginia, whose climates suited the cultivation of tobacco and hemp are usually considered southern, yet display stark differences in terrain, demographics and economic histories. In a quandary similar to that of Texas, swampy coastal peninsular of Florida in the East are sometimes erroneously omitted from southern narratives. Yet in the minds of much of their populace, the inhabitants of these atypically 'southern' regions often refer to their own southern individualism, if not least by affirming that they are certainly not northern in a cultural sense. Despite the geographical distances and differing cultures, author, Tony Horwitz argues that the South's penchant for a collective distinctiveness — although sometimes perplexing — is evident in the sentiments of the majority of southerners since the nineteenth century. Horwitz affirms that 'the cohesion and resilience the region displayed during the Civil War has led to all of the South still, as a whole cherishing the Confederate memory ever since'.²¹ Historian, John Shelton Reed argued that

¹⁹ Griffin, *Southern Cultures* Vol 12, (2006), p.3.

²⁰ Confederate General, Robert E. Lee regarded the Texan forces as his 'shock troops' throughout the Civil War, due to their apparent ability to fight immediately with little leadership.

²¹ Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches From The Unfinished Civil War* (New York, 1999), p. 319.

during the postbellum period, southerners persisted in maintaining their own identity, upholding their legacy of defeat, occupation, and subordination, thus giving the former Confederates another common basis for identification and distinctiveness based on history rather than on current circumstances.²²

By the outbreak of the war in Vietnam, then, a southern fictive kinship — based on their ambiguous yet unified cultural distinctions — had existed for approximately two centuries. When Tony Horwitz questioned a member of the prominent historical society, the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) on what sustains this kinship, the reply he received was typically southern but salient:

The answer is family. We grow up knowing who's once removed and six times down. Northerners say, forget the war, it's over. But they don't have the family Bibles we do, filled with all these kinfolk who went off to war and died. We've lost so much." 25% of southern men died in the war, compared to 10% of Northerners.²³

Thus, the distinctiveness of 'being' southern has remained prevalent amongst the region's black and white population, though for differing reasons, since the nineteenth century. This historic stimulus was upheld domestically in both civilian and military theatres and through the efforts of motivated individuals serving abroad in foreign wars. These sustained actions to uphold the South's distinctiveness predictably acted as a common cultural divider distinguishing this group from their northern brethren.²⁴

²² John Shelton Reed, *Southern Folk, Plain and Fancy* (Georgia, 1986).

²³ Horwitz, p.26.

²⁴ John Shelton Reed argued that during the postbellum period, southerners persisted in maintaining their own identity upholding their legacy of defeat, occupation, and subordination, thus giving the former Confederates another common basis for identification and distinctiveness. Social psychology works such as Richard Nisbett and Dov Cohen's *Culture of Honor: the Psychology of Violence in the South* (New York, 1996) contends that the North/South divide in cultural identity actually stemmed from the origins of the populace before they arrived on

The Stimulus of Masculinities in the South

As historical narratives have established, the history of a region or country is usually interpreted on the basis of decisions and actions of its elite or influential individuals and their associated support groups. Especially with regard to the American southern states, the masculine and martial deeds of its men are often the focus of such actions – however inaccurate, fanciful, or deplorable their acts may have been. The South’s provocative social and racial history provides an appropriate segue for the necessary examination of nineteenth and twentieth century masculinities in shaping the region’s crucial martial and social history. The importance of honour ‘codes’ or customs that emphasise individual or collective masculine and martial behaviour, especially with reference to defining and defending honourable causes, is vital to maintaining the customs of an established culture. Stephen Morillo argues that such behaviours are crucial to sustaining the power and influence of any state, affirming that ‘the history of warrior elites in traditional societies, and the public images of soldiers even in traditional and modern states is intimately tied up with social constructions of masculinity’.²⁵ Similarly, prominent sociologist, Raewyn W. Connell’s research on the subject of masculinities affirms that ‘mass culture generally assumes there is a fixed, true masculinity beneath the ebb and flow of daily life. We hear of *real men*, and the *deeply masculine*, an idea that is now shared across an impressive spectrum’.²⁶ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, in a highly influential thesis, insists that the most crucial difference between the North

American shores. Studies show that much of the North’s settlers originated from the more financially stable parts of England, Germany and the Netherlands, whereas the majority of southern settlers originated from the lowly populated fringes of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Predominantly herdsmen, these people may have been prone to act with vociferous violence when challenged or shown disrespect as a result of their difficult existence. The conclusions reached by these sociologists and historians may assist in explaining the short-tempered and defensive nature so written of in southerners.

²⁵ Morillo, (Wiley, Kindle Edition, 2013), line, 2480.

²⁶ R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (California, 1995), p45. Morillo writes how the masculine actions of men on the battlefield are central to the construction of a society’s cultural history, regardless of era. Similarly, Connell believes that mass culture assumes that masculinity is vital in the ebb and flow of a nation’s daily existence.

and South is not reflected in economic or politics, but in the white South's retention of a masculine honour code rooted in an older European tradition of honour. Consequently, an understanding of nineteenth century southern mannerisms assists when researching the intersection of warfare, martial culture, and masculine behaviour that still played a crucial part in the study of the southern response to the Vietnam War as presented in this thesis. Through the region's support of masculine behaviour, often through violence and a distinct, often peculiar understanding of personal and collective esteem, much of the white southern populace is seemingly instilled with a proclivity to display belligerent behaviour. Due to the nature of such conduct, the distinctions between military and civilian acts of masculine honour are easily relatable, as well as often referred to by southerners, thus serving to justify such actions. As well as multifarious references to the southerner's Lost Cause, subsequent chapters will reveal how many southerners, both black and white, remained imbued with a sense of cultural distinctiveness defined against the north, throughout the two world wars, the Korean War, and more specifically, their involvement in Vietnam.

The Roots of the Lost Cause Ideology

Influencing southerners in diverging ways well into the twentieth century, an understanding of the Lost Cause is essential in gaining an insight into the cultural heritage of southerners serving in Vietnam. Southern soldiers regularly, and collectively, emphasised their southern identity, repeating some of the myths of the Lost Cause more than a century after its conception. Southern scholars of the nineteenth century pinpoint the crucial formative significance of the Lost Cause, a phenomenon that has influenced so many other aspects of southern history and arguably continues to do so today. Through a somewhat antiquated outlook to lifestyles, religious evangelicalism, political manoeuvring and the adherence to a

social and cultural dogma, the Lost Cause ‘code’ has become central within southern history. Following the Civil War loss, elite white southern elders instilled bitter memories of ‘their’ defeat into the consciousness of subsequent generations, thus ensuring that a particular mind set was acknowledged both North and South of the Mason-Dixon Line.²⁷ Historian, Gaines M. Foster argued that within a decade of the South’s capitulation to the Union, a ‘vigorous Confederate revitalization program, culminating in creation of groups such as the United Confederate Veterans (UCV), and UDC shaped and firmly established the rituals and creed of the Lost Cause’.²⁸ Other groups, less-imbued with the Lost Cause myth still endeavoured to remain distinct from the remainder of the country. Although later becoming infamous for their mission to maintain white supremacy, vigilante groups such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) also fought to destroy the fragile political union of the Reconstruction period that threatened to invalidate the white elite’s monopoly on political autonomy and honour-based distinctiveness.²⁹ The political turmoil and cultural incursion of the apparently more liberal-minded morals of northerners served to be a continuing cause of anxiety to whites in the South. These cultural disparities served to fuel the masculine fervour and martial behaviour attributed to white southern distinctiveness, as the region’s white populace fought off threats to their established political and economic practices and religious faith – but none these characteristics were defended more so than their prized Lost Cause legend.

Originating from the Protestant regions of northern Europe such as Germany, England and the Netherlands, religion also played a prominent role in the shaping of southern identity. The South’s orthodox predilection for Evangelical Protestantism promoted honour, even with

²⁷ A 1994 study by Fred Arthur Bailey argues that southern scholars have paid scant attention to the efforts of ‘neo-Confederate’ groups in their crusade to interpret and present ‘their’ version of the past. ‘Free Speech and the Lost Cause’, *South-western Historical Association Quarterly* Vol 97, (January, 1994).

²⁸ Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the new South, 1865 to 1913* (New York, 1987). p.6.

²⁹ Though less radical than the Ku Klux Klan, throughout the Postbellum period, business and politically orientated associations known as Union Leagues were established throughout the nation. In the southern states, staunch and southern-biased Republican league members encouraged blacks and poor whites to vote for their party in order to undermine the Democratic South’s stronghold on politics.

the use of ‘justified’ violence, and proved an individual’s piety through the strict adherence of the ideologies of their European ancestors. This traditional more conservative piety differed to the relatively new — in terms of established religions — separatist Puritanism adopted in the New England region, which strove to reform the European model of Christianity amongst the region’s settlers. Postbellum sermons from southern clergymen often associated the former Confederacy’s ‘just cause’ to that of the eleventh century Christian Crusades against the Muslim infidels. The mission and legacy of the Lost Cause inspired many southern preachers and ministers to often adapt their sermons to resemble the plight of the South to those of the biblical quests. James C. Cobb contends that ‘[men of religion] likened white southerners to the children of Israel, preaching that God sometimes allowed his people to undergo apparent defeat (i.e. the Civil War) as a test of honor’.³⁰ White southerners of all social status were educated in their moral duty to personify this unique version of honour from all aspects of southern society. The Lost Cause mentality relied on religious dogma and the southern agrarian-inspired lifestyle, as well as a reverence for unregulated martial behaviour, which ultimately condoned and personified physical force – all serving to further compound the cultural schism between North and South post-Civil War.³¹

Through stories, poems and other literatures, as well as public dialogue, collectively embittered, influential white southerners sought to maintain their region’s uniqueness against the homogeneity of the northern notion of national identity in the twentieth century. This point is emphasised by what might be considered a pivotal text of southern cultural identity:

I’ll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition, by 12 Southerners, (1930),

³⁰Cobb, (2005), p. 63. David G. Matthews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago, 1977), offers an insight in to the unique aspects of southern religion’s pious mood of individualism in comparison to followers of the same faith in the northern U.S. states. Matthews interprets religion in America from 1750 to 1860 as two distinct forms, Evangelical South and what he terms as the ‘New England way’.

³¹ Nineteenth century writing on the South often alludes to ancient behavioural codes from the region’s European ancestors. The Christian Crusades, medieval knights, aristocratic cavaliers, Victorian gentlemen and devout Protestants were all utilised to construct a southern ideal. In *The Mind of the South* (1941), W. J. Cash states that southerners were infatuated with tracing and expressing their European lineage from Scotch and Irish kings, to German emperors and even mythical personages such as Brutus and Scota, the daughter of Pharaoh.

although now over 80 years old, this book remains a crucial work in southern historiography. Commonly referred to as the Southern Agrarians, historian Frank Owsley, was one of the twelve writers dedicated to rekindling and maintaining the southern tradition. Owsley aptly reiterated much of the populace's fervour for martial thinking and dislike of interference from their northern neighbours with the following quote:

The South had been conquered by war and humiliated and impoverished by peace, there remains something intangible in the realm of the spirit. There commenced a second war of conquest, the conquest of the southern mind, calculated to remake every southern opinion, to impose the Northern way of life and thought upon the South.³²

Due to the white South's prejudiced attitude towards its black population, many southerners endeavoured to uphold racial standards and other values from the past – this recalcitrant approach also ensured that their northern brethren remained alienated. John Shelton Reed argues that this distinction persists, even into the late twentieth century, affirming that 'southerners see the South as different from the rest of the country, not only in its natural resources, but in human terms as well; they see themselves as slower (easy going), more conservative, and more polite than other Americans'.³³ Chapters two and three will reveal how southern politicians and military men drew from their region's distinct past to justify their political and economic objectives — in the case of politicians — while troops reflected on the influence of their ancestors' military service in past wars. This southern vehemence in

³² Frank Lawrence Owsley, "The Irrepressible Conflict", *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition, by 12 Southerners* (New York, 1962), p.63.

³³ John Shelton Reed, *The Tears Spoiled My Aim: and Other Reflections on Southern Culture*, (Columbia, 1993), p.70. In Reed's view, southerners still resembled immigrant groups that settled in a foreign land, as they possessed a sense of collective identity based on shared history and cultural uniqueness that is continually played out from past stories and memories that uphold 'the South's image favourably.

adhering to a 'southern way' of getting things done permeated the narratives of political, business and military individuals throughout the Vietnam War era.

Although a national problem, racial animosity was cultivated by Americans of all regions during the Vietnam War era. Notwithstanding, given the South's past practices, white military personnel were motivated to personify a distinct masculine ideal, which subjected black soldiers — especially southern African-Americans — to continued racial prejudice during their training in the South's numerous military facilities and actual service in Vietnam. Through acts of distinct southern masculine behaviour, and a reverence for military service, white and black manliness developed contradictory characteristics 'in country' in Vietnam.³⁴ David D. Gilmore's anthropological studies discuss how manhood remains a difficult ideal to achieve, especially with allusion to the South's white model of masculinity. Gilmore writes that 'so long as there are battles to be fought, wars to be won, heights to be scaled, hard work to be done, some levels of society will have to act like men'.³⁵ As forced labour of emasculated black men and servile women was a crucial factor in the success of the nineteenth century South, the legacy of the white man's racial dominance meant masculine emancipation of black men all the more difficult to achieve when serving in the military of the twentieth century. Militarily, despite African-Americans serving on both sides during the Civil War — albeit in a support role for the Confederacy — the ruling white classes portrayed any form of assertive behaviour from black people as typically savage and socially retarded, thus proving a menace to communal order in white martial culture.³⁶ Ultimately, African-

³⁴ Discussed in greater depth throughout chapter III, 'In country' is the term regularly used by the military and its veterans to denote the nation's mission and soldiers experiences in a foreign country.

³⁵ David D. Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (Yale, 1990), p.32. The basic curriculum taught in schools in the South of the latter half of the nineteenth century supported slavery, personal honour and masculinity and the importance of social hierarchy. This was in contrast to the North's curriculum that taught the restraining of masculine behaviour was preferred in order to maintain civility.

³⁶ Bruce Levine's *Confederate Emancipation: Southern Plans to Free and Arm Slaves during the Civil War* (Oxford, 2006), offers a comprehensive discussion on this topic. The association of nationalism with race underlined the South's fervour for personal and collective identities over time and the power that Confederate

Americans could never achieve true masculine status in the opinion of the white southerners, as the notions of white supremacy in which southern white masculinity was founded upon, could not exist without it. Historians, Richard E. Nisbett and Dov Cohen affirm that ‘young men of the South were prepared for violent activities by a socialisation process designed to make them physically courageous and ferocious in defense of their and the South’s reputations’.³⁷ Appropriately, the masculine ideal was depicted and defended as an exclusively white trait in the South, unattainable to the region’s black men regardless of their merits. Nevertheless, as the decades passed racial tensions between black and white hierarchies would fester and ultimately reach a climax during the period of the Vietnam War. These anxieties played out domestically both in the North and South and were transferred overseas, serving to increase racial and hierarchal tensions between the thousands of men serving in Vietnam.

By maintaining their ‘unique’ masculine identity, white southerners solidified and even exaggerated what Bertram Wyatt-Brown stated were ‘traditional male values that were the chief guidelines for conduct and moral assessments – what may be called the system of honour’.³⁸ Despite the controversial labours of many sections of white southern society to maintain this nineteenth-century ideal, upholding these mythical tropes of personal honour and unique pride during the Vietnam era proved increasingly difficult, as the South’s cultural distinctiveness faced further threats from both within and outside the region. Although seeking to promote timeless values and defend ‘the’ southern way of life, elites could not forestall the cultural revolution and modernisation within the southern states that threatened to upset the status quo throughout the twentieth century.

imagery held over many in the region, and created of the antebellum South a mythical, would-be land of noble gentlemen and ladies, of contented slaves, a society ordered by the laws of chivalry.

³⁷ Richard E. Nisbett and Dov Cohen, *Culture of Honor: The Psychology of Violence in the South* (Colorado, 1996), p.2.

³⁸ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The Evolution of Southern Culture* (Georgia, 1988), p. 108.

Part II –Southern Myths of the Vietnam Era

The second part of this chapter focuses on how the cultural myths and ideas formulated by nineteenth-century white elites still influenced the mentality of many numbers of twentieth-century southerners — albeit in diverging ways — with specific attention to the Vietnam War era. Throughout history, folklores and traditions within cultures largely hark back to earlier formative, influential events, sometimes referred to by historians as a ‘golden age’ in a region’s past.³⁹ Political Scientist and member of the Southern Agrarians group who were so noted for the promotion of southern traditionalism, Herman Clarence Nixon affirmed that ‘the old South had only been a golden age for, at the most, a few thousand families’, while slaves, poor whites, yeoman farmers and many more destitute constituted what was in the opinion of Nixon ‘the millions of the real population and furnished the concealed reality of southern economy’.⁴⁰ As established, such was the South’s cultural distinctiveness; the region had long been a focus for the construction of cultural myths, not only by southerners themselves but also by ‘outsiders’ from the northern states and other parts of the world who derided the mannerisms of southerners. The preservation and recreation of the southern legend required a significant number of influential individuals to celebrate an up-to-date version of their Lost Cause golden age. Historian, Stephen Smith wrote that throughout the whole of the twentieth century, ‘the southern myth was still created and propagated by white elites, and that this new class of southerners were an imaginative, well educated, vocal, literate, and enthusiastic cadre

³⁹ Often used throughout the writing of history, especially with regard to the works of southern authors, the term ‘Golden Age’ generally denotes periods in a region or nation’s history that experienced cultural harmony, martial peace/dominance, political stability and economic prosperity. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the region’s white elite lauded the antebellum South as such a period, hence the many recollections and references to the ‘Old South’ throughout the historiography on the region.

⁴⁰ James C. Cobb, *Away down South: a History of Southern Identity* (New York, 2005), p.126.

of middle and upper middle class southern professionals'.⁴¹ Most white southerners regarded the growing influence of the Civil Rights Movement and continuing federal interference from northerners as akin to the issues their ancestors had to deal with during the antebellum and Civil War era. This vocal and predominantly privileged cadre that Smith refers to strove to maintain the southern myth through politics, music, literature and film in a way that endeavoured to keep the South distinct.

As the possibility of national homogeneity, in a cultural sense increased, patriotic southerners propagated and brought forth memories of the Old South myth, thus encouraging much of the region's population to proclaim their support for a new 'southern styled' cause during the Vietnam War era.⁴² Historian, Robert Gildea contends that a region's reverence for its own past invariably creates problems within its narrative, and that the recording of history can be neither objective nor universally agreed and — even if it were possible — it would then be of little interest to the individual 'outsider'. Gildea determines that 'what matters is myth, not in the sense of fiction, but in the sense of a construction of the past, elaborated by a political community for its own ends.'⁴³ In a similar vein, the efforts of prominent, and in some cases outspoken southern politicians, 'traditionally' southern military men and motivated southerners form a major part of the southern myth. Accordingly, the labours of renowned southern authors such as C. Vann Woodward, W. J. Cash, James C. Cobb, John Shelton Reed, and Bertram Wyatt-Brown to name just five, reveals the extent to which southern distinctiveness persists and still depends on the recounting of myths of the 'Old

⁴¹ Smith is alluding to the fact that many of this 'new class' of elites were descendants from the old elite thus possessing very similar cultural attitudes of their South. Quoted in John Shelton Reed, *Minding the South* (Missouri, 2003), p.108.

⁴² W. J. Cash and C. Vann Woodward are southern historians frequently used for their disparate views of the 'New South creed'. Woodward contends that the New South had emerged out of the ashes of the Civil War, showing disdain of federal occupation, and a cultural counterrevolution that differed profoundly from that of the slave-period South. Whereas Cash described proponents of the new South as a 'Yankeeizing party' who amounted to little more than a group of individuals who insisted the best thing the South could do would be to imitate the Yankee civilisation exactly.

⁴³ Robert Gildea, *The Past in French History* (Yale University Press, 1996), p.12.

South’ to assist in deciphering a more coherent understanding of the modern South. These factors serve to enforce a viable belief in the minds of many of the region’s black and white people — both possessing deeply contrasting opinions — that the southern myth is factually valid and flourishing. Both fiction and non-fictional accounts of ‘the southerner’ in books, film, and music has not only compounded the intrinsic individualism of the southerner, but also served to portray people from this region as distinct in the eyes of outsiders, i.e. anybody who does not subscribe to the region’s mythical history. As martial bravado and justifiable and honourable military action is intimately linked to individual and collective deeds performed in combat, to this day, new works both scholarly and non-academic that discuss America’s role in the Vietnam War are still produced in significant numbers. Evident throughout many of these narratives, is the cultural distinctiveness of southerners and the way in which these intrinsic and collective regional nuances offer an accustomed insight in to the mind-set of a ‘typical’ southerner.

As established earlier, in-depth academic historiography on the American South’s contribution to the war in Vietnam is insufficient, given the relevance of the region on a national scale. Notwithstanding, the few sources that are available on this subject conform to the recognised orthodox perception of political and martial southern distinctiveness to varying degrees. Regardless of how this self-imposed individualism is titled — be it trait, nuance, or ideology — upholders of the southern myth were particularly active throughout the culturally and politically turbulent period of the Vietnam War.⁴⁴ By the early 1960s, ideological and cultural animosities between the North and South resurfaced when the possibility of military conflict in Vietnam arose. Southerners frequently alluded to the region’s martial conduct from the previous century when referring to the effort of ‘their boys’ in a new military campaign,

⁴⁴ Often capitalised due to its significance on the region’s historiography, the ‘Southern Myth’ of exceptionalism largely draws on the nineteenth century literature of life in the South, the Lost Cause and the region’s older model Protestant European ancestry.

again reinforcing the South's inescapable and historic battle-hardened relationship to its nineteenth century cause. From a military perspective, the most effective way of analysing primary sources is to examine the personal testimonies of the men who served in their nation's military, as well as compiling the opinions of the family members of these servicemen. As is the case with many military campaigns, testimonies from Americans are abundant, which allows a comparative analysis of how different conflicts were regarded by the individuals involved. The characteristic of how men from the South perceive military service and perform in battle has a distinct cultural nuance when compared with information and personal testimonies from other American troops. Craig Friend and Lorri Glover's research on southern martial behavioural characteristics affirmed that in the South, 'from the 19th-century southern militia groups, war was indeed a refuge of masculinity, as it always carried with it the risk of death, but soldier who falls in battle assures himself a place among his nation's heroes as the embodiment of bravery and manhood'.⁴⁵ In 1964, World War II Veteran and former president of the Southern Historical Association, George Tindall, stated that 'militarily, the South's complex and controversial past still results in historians collectively developing a complex framework for interpreting the region today'.⁴⁶ At the time of Tindall's statement, the United States military forces had been stationed in South Vietnam as strategic advisors known as the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) for approximately five years. The southerners so well placed in the American government were well aware of MAAG's failings in Vietnam and were just months away from stepping up their

⁴⁵ Lorri Glover and Craig Thompson Friend, *Southern Manhood, Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South*, (Georgia, 2004), p16.

⁴⁶ George Tindall, 'Mythology: A New Frontier in Southern History' in Frank E. Vandiver, *The Idea of the South: Pursuit of a Central Theme* (Chicago, 1964), p.10.

involvement to an offensive combat role, thus allowing their martial upbringings to shine on the public stage once more.⁴⁷

North/South Political Disparities

Throughout the two decades of American involvement in Vietnam, numerous southern politicians displayed well-nurtured regional idiosyncrasies that culturally distinguished them from their northern colleagues. Despite these recognisable cultural nuances, it needs to be taken into account that southern politicians were also aware of the failings and benefits that their southern identity would have had upon the opinions of non-southerners, both nationally and internationally. Taking these factors in to account, from a political perspective, southern individuals held many key positions in government, which given the object of this research, raises the question as to whether their ancestral sentiments may have had an influence upon White House policies and international relations throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Not surprisingly, and in line with their martial past, the opinions of many of these men were duly dubbed as ‘hawkish’ ensuring opinions remained largely belligerent, guarded, and in some cases openly offensive towards the more liberal, in an optimistic peace-keeping sense of the ‘dovishly’ termed political outlooks of many of their northern colleagues.⁴⁸ Joseph Fry argues how the more open-minded approach to peace from northern politicians ‘destined the South’s heightened insecurities to a strengthening of previous foreign policies as Dixie sustained its

⁴⁷ Titled MAAG (Military Assistance Advisory Group) from 1959 to 1965, the United States operated in an ‘advisory role’ to the South Vietnamese government forces (as well as providing significant funding) with the directive of training the South Vietnamese forces to defend their border from the communist-backed northern forces.

⁴⁸ Used regularly in political terminology, hawk/hawkish or dove/dovish refers to those who advocate aggressive foreign and military policies (hawks) in contrast to the more sanguine and peaceful approach proclaimed by ‘doves’. Throughout narratives that discuss the Cold War era, the South’s politicians are largely referred to as hawks when guiding political policies.

influence on the government'.⁴⁹ During his presidency from November 1963 until January 1969, President Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ) regularly referred to the influence of his southern upbringing. LBJ would often voice his disdain for the culturally detached, and often more capital-oriented industrial North and their liberal 'Ivy League' educated politicians who interfered with his domestic and foreign policy strategies.⁵⁰ Similarly, the Secretary of State of the period, Dean Rusk, William Fulbright (Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee) and influential senior Senator Richard Russell of Georgia also displayed similar southern-nuanced musings to those of their Texan president. Notwithstanding the southern hawkish sentiments attributed to these men, the assumption of their southern identity concealed much of their actual sentiments on Vietnam policy. In numerous quotes, Johnson stated how his own sentiments towards Vietnam remained ambivalent. In 1965, after coming under pressure from his military and the Republican Party to step up American involvement, Johnson stated that 'it was the Republicans who were eager to enlarge the conflict, and that [the military] call upon us to supply American boys to do the job Asian boys should do'.⁵¹ Accordingly, historian, Caroline Ziemke affirms that the war in Vietnam was America's Lost Cause, and more specifically, it also became personal to Senator Richard Russell. Regarding Russell's ambivalence towards Vietnam, Ziemke states that 'on an individual level, the Vietnam years is that of one man's struggle with a complex of conflicting loyalties to his state, his region, his president, his party, his nation, and the men who fought in that nation's wars'.⁵² Similar quandaries are evident in the sentiments of William J. Fulbright, whose early support for military action in Vietnam would ultimately be overturned, as he would become one of the war's greatest opponents. Nonetheless, despite these ambiguous and changing sentiments, at

⁴⁹ Fry, (2002), p.223.

⁵⁰ Chapter II will present an in-depth discussion of the influential role of southern politicians and businessmen in the administration of the Vietnam War.

⁵¹ Seyom Brown, *Faces of Power: Constancy and Change in United States Foreign Policy, from Truman to Obama* (Columbia, 2015), p181.

⁵² Caroline F. Ziemke, 'Senator Richard B. Russell and the "Lost Cause" in Vietnam, 1954-1968', *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 72, No. 1 (1998), p.31.

many points in their political careers, through regular recollections of their ancestral experiences, these men developed a fictive kinship, based on southern distinctiveness, which was evident and played out in numerous Vietnam War-related decisions.⁵³

In 1972, journalist, John B. Henry wrote how Rusk's typically southern and somewhat stalwart stance towards the war in Vietnam, as well as unwavering support of his president's views, ultimately made him appear out of touch. Henry attests that 'it was [Rusk], whose childhood hero had been Robert E. Lee — another soldier whose honor was bridled to a Lost Cause — and that the charge that Vietnam had become a Southerner's war had more than a grain of truth'.⁵⁴ In 1967, the foremost historian of the South, C. Vann Woodward, appealed to President Johnson and Secretary Rusk to lead 'a new generation of southern politicians to shape a foreign policy based on empathy and restraint'.⁵⁵ In Woodward's opinion, southerners such as Johnson and Rusk had helped expand America's presence in South-east Asia by invoking themes of cultural and political superiority and military invincibility; Woodward's pleas were ultimately not heeded. Aside from the regional stimuli upon LBJ, his ignorance of the views of individuals such as Woodward stemmed from his dislike of academics in general, regardless of their origin — a view he reiterated to his biographer Doris Kearns-Goodwin. Similarly, in the case of Rusk, his religious and poor upbringing made him impatient to the views of scholars who did not understand the harsh realities of foreign policy. The political separatism so espoused by southerners remained fervently upheld and sustained its influence on the presidencies throughout the Cold War period, much as it had done for the 150 years previously. Regardless of the circumstances of the nation's increasingly difficult campaign in Vietnam, polls reveal that the southern populace remained largely supportive of Lyndon

⁵³ Jay Winter affirms that 'fictive kinship' is a powerful means of social unification that 'conveys the sense of social bonds as created through stories and acts'. Although those concerned are not blood related, such bonds between these individuals form a kinship strongly similar to that of families. Jay Winter, *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.42.

⁵⁴ John B. Henry, 'The Tragedy of Dean Rusk', *Foreign Policy Journal* (1972), p.186.

⁵⁵ C. Vann Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History*, (Baton Rouge, 1968), p.229.

Johnson's policies even as the war became unpopular and evidently unwinnable. Southern government officials of all levels were well aware that 'one of their own' was in the White House and thus, were reliant and supportive, as they portrayed the same ethics and conventions as that of their own 'good ol' boy' and Commander in Chief from the Texas countryside.⁵⁶

In 1965, as U.S. ground troops landed on the beach at Da Nang, Lyndon Johnson's notion of southern honour helped to shape his judgement when faced with the fight or flight decisions required in times of war. Historian, Bertram Wyatt-Brown reiterated how the president's sentiments of the mission in Vietnam were guided by the honour code, quoting Johnson; 'if America's commitment is dishonoured in South Vietnam, it is dishonoured in forty other alliances or more. We do what we must regardless of consequences. Our course is charted always by the compass of honor'.⁵⁷ Hence, bygone martial honour and an aversion to more liberal northern-style policies were two key facets that may well have shaped Johnson's thinking — albeit to varying levels — throughout his political ascendancy and presidency. Although not empirically conclusive, numerous nationwide opinion polls commissioned throughout the Vietnam War era revealed that of the southerners polled, the majority called for the unrestricted bombing of North Vietnam, as well as increased or unlimited troop involvement in much higher numbers than those polled in the North. In 1966, a Gallup poll indicated that 62% of southerners favoured aggressive tactics in Vietnam in order to guarantee a crushing victory.⁵⁸ Even under the subsequent presidency, Californian Richard Nixon chose to exploit the South's mythical 'good old past' with his southern Strategy in order to garner

⁵⁶ The term 'Good ol' Boy' is still utilised to personify the image of what it 'is' to be a southern male. These typical characters' are generally considered to originate from rural areas, possessing a southern drawl to their accent, paradoxically prone to upholding the spirit of their region's laws while not always adhering to them, while still possessing good southern morals and family values. This good 'bad boy' image is still repeatedly referred to and utilised in American film and music culture today.

⁵⁷ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s 1880s* (North Carolina, 2001), p.298.

⁵⁸ Gallup figures retrieved from Oliver Kendrick, *The My Lai Massacre in American History and Memory* (Manchester, 2007), p.163.

support for his 1969 Republican victory.⁵⁹ Outspoken southern Congressmen such as Richard Russell and Harry F. Byrd encouraged their electorate to continue to support nationally controversial policies towards Vietnam, which often entailed belligerent tactics to assure the preservation of 'honour' at any cost. Especially evident throughout the Vietnam era, the distinctive martial attitude of southern politicians was often guided by their own sentiments as a result of their own former military service in previous – and more crucially, victorious and popular wars.

The Southern Martial Stimulus

From a military perspective, the historic correlation between southern cultural separatism and an aggressive outlook towards non-southern 'outsiders' was predictably evident. Four-star general, William Westmoreland, America's highest ranking officer of Military Assistance Command Vietnam (M.A.C.V.), often referred to the martial influence of his South Carolinian upbringing during his command in Vietnam.⁶⁰ In Westmoreland's autobiography, the retired general frequently saluted the South's 'historic warrior tradition' while endeavouring to express the influence the region's history had upon him throughout his military career.⁶¹ Westmoreland reflected how, as a West Point cadet, he would often seek the

⁵⁹ The Southern strategy refers to a Richard M. Nixon's plan of gaining political support from certain candidates in the South. Nixon's rhetoric appealed to white voters as he stated they had been let down by the Democratic South, while also campaigning to blacks against racism in America. Stephen Smith wrote that the same southern mythical characteristics, 'reached its effigy by the time of the 1976 presidential campaign. Steven Smith, *Myth, Media, and the Southern Mind* (Arkansas, 1986), p.108. Similarly, Jimmy Carter's ascendancy to the presidency in 1977 was based on the 'country ethics' of a southern 'good ol' boy' from the Georgia countryside. Carter's initial national popularity proved just how influential this 'new elite' party of southerners actually were in portraying this revised version of the southern myth, despite many of these 'qualities' being reminiscent of the region's controversial and supposedly outdated old Lost Cause myth.

⁶⁰ Views on Westmoreland's charge in Vietnam err on the side of derogatory. Stanley Karnow described Westmoreland as 'a corporation executive in uniform' (*Vietnam: A History* London, 1994, p.361). Despite this, Westmoreland was in command in arguably one of the most difficult periods in U.S. military history.

⁶¹ Amongst others, Owen Gilman stresses that the South's infatuation with the 'warrior tradition' stems from the region's martial sense of honour to maintain a code of chivalry. Depending on the author, the roots of the southern warrior tradition can be traced back as far as the middle ages in Europe. The historical accuracy of these claims

company of his great-uncle, who as Westmoreland states ‘had joined the Confederate Army at the age of sixteen and had been with Robert E. Lee at Gettysburg’. Westmoreland continued to speak of his pride for his great uncle’s devotion to the Lost Cause affirming that ‘he hated Yankees and Republicans and talked derisively about both’.⁶² The topic of ‘Yankees’ as a separate cultural and political manifestation is a recurrent theme throughout southern discourse, and the term Yankee is still used and remains well recognised today – albeit with slightly more amiable connotations.⁶³ Westmoreland’s reminiscences repeatedly emphasised that southerners were especially, and in some cases exclusively, more proficient at maintaining their sense of pride and courage in times of personal and collective adversity. Subsequently, these claims of historical exclusivity and references to an apparent intrinsic ‘code of ethics’ that so epitomised southerners, were prominent themes frequently recounted in their own discourse of military service in Vietnam. Accordingly, a factor most notable throughout the period of researching this subject was that testimonies from northern individuals, who mentioned their regional history and upbringing as a factor in their political or military service, were practically non-existent throughout.

Numerous oral and written testimonies from southern soldiers often cited the influence of their ancestors’ service in the Confederacy, even when the topic was not directly referred to.⁶⁴ As a result of this seemingly unavoidable and powerful military legacy, many southerners who served in Vietnam, both black, white, poor and privileged, nurtured visions of themselves as deliberately set apart from and somewhat suspicious of ‘mainstream’ Americans. In order for this concept of a unique ‘southern way’ to be feasible to military life

can be rightly contested; however, whether myth or truth, the fact southerners are historically aware and willing to include such statements is a telling example of the influence of their region’s past.

⁶² William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (New York, 1976), p.12.

⁶³ Having numerous interpretations, the word ‘Yankee’ was historically, an insult. Interpreted as small or not useful in its Dutch translation and generally an insulting term used by the British and Australians to describe all Americans, its most common domestic use is to define or set apart northerners from the view of southerners.

⁶⁴ Through interviews conducted with Vietnam Veterans specifically for this thesis, Chapter III will examine the South’s martial role in Vietnam, while further utilising the sentiments of Westmoreland and other southern military in greater context.

in Vietnam, this characteristic would have to encompass the ideas, lifestyle customs, heritage, and distinct behaviour of the 825,000 southerners who served in Vietnam. Such claims to cultural uniformity and social unity should be rightly contested — especially considering that the philosophy of the South had remained socially and racially diverse for well over a century before — with masses of deprived white people, racially oppressed black people and a diminishing elite class population. Considered in this context, although distinct southern practices such as the familiar displaying of the Confederate flag, country music, racial separation and regional mannerisms were a distinguishable ‘in country’ in Vietnam. Contrary to the views of southern traditionalists, claims of southern homogeneity and cultural unity could not have been the resounding influence many southerners would have outsiders believed it to be.

Vietnam War narratives generally examine elements of defeat, pain, anguish, and a pursuit of some form of reasonable meaning to America’s involvement. These undertones to the war in Vietnam are still extensively retold in the South’s literature, music, and film of the past 50 years. Typically, the southern perspective on these interpretations ultimately reflected the region’s recalcitrant nature and fervour for martial conduct to varying levels. Owen Gilman writes that due to the unavoidable and tragic history of the region, ‘as a consequence, the southerner is not likely to write about Vietnam as a narrowly defined experience. The southerner’s sense of time extends backwards, far beyond Vietnam’.⁶⁵ Gilman’s somewhat whimsical claim that the southerner’s sense of time is more reflective deserves some credence, as dialogues from all strata of southerners frequently alludes to their ancestors past struggles. Nevertheless, the multifarious ways in which these southern distinctions were portrayed in Vietnam by literature and music warrants further investigation, as it is imperative

⁶⁵ Gilman, (1992), p.15

in order to understand why many southerners remained, or at least assumed they were different to their northern comrades.

Southern Music during the Vietnam Era

Both popular and uncommon genres of music have a determinate effect on any nation's culture, often reflecting the past, current, and future aspirations of the various groups of its populace. Throughout the twentieth century, the stimulus of southern music, which was distinct from northern genres, played an essential role in compounding the perceived cultural uniqueness present in the hearts and minds of much of the southern populace. Without reservation, since the 1920's, 'country/folk' remains the white South's predominant genus of music. This genre, which permeates all strata of southern society — although especially that of its poorer groups — served to intone the inimitable values of the southern lifestyle, especially through masculine ventures so enthusiastically associated with military service. Predominantly the music of white people, the majority of country tracks released throughout the period of the Vietnam War took the form of 'lyrical novels' that often promoted the uniqueness of southern culture and the distinct hypermasculinity of the region's men.⁶⁶ In the Vietnam era, country songs largely reflected the southerner's pride in representing the region once again in battle, as well as the tragedy and ultimate futility of serving in such an unpopular war. Two definitive examples of the South's penchant for individualism in country music are Merle Haggard's '*Okie from Muskogee*' and Kenny Rodger's '*Ruby*'. Both of these tracks were released in 1969, a year when much of the population were considering that the

⁶⁶ Underlining themes of lyrical novels in southern Country music often entail stories of personal or collective struggle in life. Songs of lost love usually entail stories of adultery due to the masculine exploits of hard drinking and desire for another man's woman.

nation's military directive was as a resounding failure, thus resulting in support for the war in Vietnam arguably reaching its lowest ebb.

For southerners in particular, Merle Haggard's 'Okie from Muskogee' became a popular anthem of southern pride when the region as a whole was coming to terms with the possibility of a second military defeat in its history. The song's lyrics enforce how the Oklahoma town of Muskogee is typically southern with its old ways and traditional practices. The state of Oklahoma, though rural and epitomised by its simple-living native culture, was not an 'official' state of the South during the Civil War, although its Native American support of the Confederacy is probably a factor in its southern-related history. In the song, Haggard informs listeners that the town of Muskogee, like much of the South of the period, remains 'a place where even squares (unadventurous traditionalists) can have a ball, and we still wave Old Glory (the Confederate Southern Cross flag) down at the courthouse, and white lightning's (Illegally still alcohol) still the biggest thrill of all'.⁶⁷ Haggard's composition, later referred to as outlaw country genre, championed the parochial Southern Cross-waving and alcohol-swilling lifestyle so often espoused by southern white males over the past century.⁶⁸ Even before the release of *Okie from Muskogee*, Haggard was an icon to southern manliness, due to his criminal record, denouncement of long-haired San Francisco 'hippie types' and colourful exploits riding on and living out of freight trains which traversed the southern states. For the track's maiden live performance, Haggard specifically chose the South's most celebrated military facility, North Carolina's Fort Bragg, named after the Confederate General Braxton

⁶⁷ The song's lyrics also malign the liberal stance taken by the non-southern populace stating that 'we don't make a party out of lovin, and we don't let our hair grow long and shaggy like the Hippies out in San Francisco do'. The persona of hippies rested particularly uncomfortable with southerners, as their anti-war stance and appearance directly contradicted the traditional ideals of southern masculinity. Lyrics sourced from <http://www.cowboylyrics.com/lyrics/haggard-merle/okie-from-muskogee-497.html>.

⁶⁸ A subgenre of Country Music, Outlaw Country experienced its greatest popularity throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. Structured around the region's discourse of masculinity, this genre took fundamental opposition to threats of change through governmental authority and modern culture. Further research on this topic is discussed by Christopher J. Washburne's *White Trash Alchemies of the Abject Sublime. Country as Bad Music: The Music We Love to Hate* (New York, 2004).

Bragg. To a cheering military audience, Haggard sang how '[southerners] don't burn our draft cards down on Main Street', thus referring to the southern man's fervour for military service. In an interview recorded 41 years after the release of the track, Haggard stated how he felt obligated to write the song after the 'liberal' and predominantly northern Vietnam War protesters disheartened him. Haggard stated that, 'during Vietnam, there were all kinds of protests. Yet, here were these servicemen going over there and dying for a cause – and here are these young kids that were free, bitching about it. There's something wrong with that and with disparaging those poor guys.'⁶⁹ Still performing today alongside fellow outlaw country singers, Haggard's affirms that *Okie from Muskogee* remains a favourite amongst many southerners, when asked of a memorable Vietnam-era song.

Kenny Rodgers version of *Ruby: Don't Take Your Love to Town* is another homage to southern identity, epitomising the southern romance of loss, in both life and war. The song originally reached number nine in the country charts in 1967 with Johnny Darrell, but Rogers' 1969 rendition was better timed to suit the sentiments of a disheartened nation and an increasingly embittered southern populace.⁷⁰ The affiliation to random acts of violence, abusive lifestyles and even domestic abuse are apparent in many other country music tracks written since the genre's foundation. Rodgers' version of the song notifies its audience how the Vietnam War-disabled character would kill his two-timing wife, if he had the physical mobility he had before his Vietnam service.⁷¹ On a more sombre note, *Ruby*, tells of a Vietnam Veteran's loss of sexual prowess through disability in what the lyrics describe as 'that crazy Asian war'. While mourning that 'it's true that, I'm not the man I used to be' the character's bravery remains uncontested as the track affirms that he 'was proud to go and do

⁶⁹ Narrative retrieved from interview with Haggard and Nancy Dunham, 'Merle Haggard, Okie from Muskogee – The Story Behind the Lyrics', *The Boot*, (11/10/10), p.24.

⁷⁰ Alabamian, Johnny Darrell served in the U.S. Army before he became one of the key participants in the outlaw country genre. Known for his then controversial lyrics, Darrell also penned southern outlaw classics such as *Rose Colored Gin*, *The Troublemaker*, and *Water Glass full of Whiskey*. Source: Alabama Music Hall, <http://www.alamhof.org/darrellj.html>.

⁷¹ Lyrics retrieved from <http://www.metrolyrics.com/ruby-dont-take-your-love-to-town-lyrics-kenny-rogers.html>.

my patriotic chore'. Crucially, Rogers' version was released in a year that not only epitomised the discontent of thousands of soldiers losing their martial prowess as a result of ongoing defeats, but also of the United States losing its global reputation as the prime military superpower, at the hands of Communist-backed North Vietnamese forces. A passage in the song states that 'she's leaving now cause I just heard the slamming of the door, the way I know I've heard it, some one hundred times before, and if I could move I'd get my gun and put her in the ground'.⁷² The helplessness spoken of by the song's character is also indicative of much of the southern population's frustration at not being allowed to pursue the war in Vietnam with maximum military conviction, which would in turn guarantee a victory. Southerners' grievances with regard to being helpless were largely based on the actions of 'dovish' northerners who refused to support a more belligerent course in Vietnam.

Throughout the Vietnam era, much of the output from country music epitomised the southern myth, which encompassed individualism and manly behaviour. The distrust of liberals and the non-southern way of life also served to feed the region's heightened belligerence towards the threat of Communism throughout the Vietnam period. The potential to commit acts of 'just' violence as well as a pledge to fight and sacrifice one's life for a just cause were recurrent themes that ran through much of the region's country music scene. The underlining tenet of country music is the genre's infatuation with hardship, missed opportunities, testing of one's faith and often failed love. These underscoring principles were well-suited to the southerner's affiliation to a second lost cause in Vietnam. While country music was popular to all of southern society, it remained an essentially class and race-biased genre. Southern country music outlines the folklores and myths of the region as a place of religious faith, rural values, and affection of an older simpler life. James C. Cobb affirms that

⁷² This dark subject in songs is a frequent topic used in many folk songs so popular in the U.S. South. Commonly referred to as 'murder ballads', Olive Burt Woolley's *American Murder Ballads and their Stories* (New York, 1958), states that 'verse dealing with crimes for profit, crimes of religious or racial prejudice, or crimes to flout the law were so agreeable with the southern way of life'. p.272.

‘it forms part of a regional heritage linking southern working people across many generations’.⁷³ Robert Cantwell’s research examines the folklore and music of the region throughout the Cold War era affirming that southern music remains a vital part of the American historical imagination. Cantwell contends that ‘country singers are patriotic, and during the Vietnam War especially, they reinforced the nation’s commitment to the Asian conflict’.⁷⁴ In contrast to the largely supportive genre of country music, ‘electrified’ compositions, and anti-Vietnam War tracks such as Barry McGuire’s 1965 *Eve of Destruction* and Jim Morrison’s *The Unknown Soldier* (1968), sought to de-mystify the honour of fighting and dying in battle. Notwithstanding, southern music of the Vietnam era remained distinguishable by its promotion of martial behaviour and cultural audacity in the face of northern ‘doves’. This was in contrast to much of the rest of the nation’s more modern, and arguably more socially liberal musical contributions, which referred to the war in Vietnam.

While southern country music was essentially the domain of white audiences — albeit predominantly the working class — the South’s African-American population cultivated the genre of the southern blues music, which mirrored some of the same sentiments of country music. Both of these musical narratives recounted how decent people suffered adversity through no fault of their own, while also continually referring to past, simpler better days. Originating from the Deep South towards the end of the nineteenth century, Blues was developed by the African-American communities through religious spiritual singing, enslaved workforce songs, and simple narrative ballads that told of their difficult daily lives in the South especially. Though similar in outlook, the previous decades of enforced emasculation from the South’s white populace resulted in the lyrics of blues music being largely devoid of

⁷³ James C. Cobb, ‘Redefining Southern Culture: Mind and Identity in the Modern South’, *Journal of Southern History* Vol. 67, No. 4, (2001), p.2.

⁷⁴ Pete Daniel, *Standing at the Crossroads: Southern Life in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1986), p.186. Cantwell’s research and subsequent book, *Bluegrass Breakdown: The Making of the Old Southern Sound* (Illinois, 1984), discusses how the South’s love of music is inextricably linked with poverty and past myths. He also alludes to the clear link with African American blues music having much in common culturally with country music.

the penchant for personal violence and fervour of military service. In this respect, Blues music remained somewhat void of the flag-waving, proud-to-be southern sentiments, which country music purveyed throughout the Vietnam era. This racially-influenced factor, which deprived blacks of their own martial identity, was subsequently played out in numerous ways in Vietnam.

Despite country music's overall support of their men in the Vietnam conflict, the increasingly popular genres of rock, more notably southern rock and blues began to express lyrical trends often associated with northern attitudes, which indicated signs of political weariness and anti-war assertiveness towards the Vietnam War as it pursued an ineffectual path.⁷⁵ Regardless of the genre, white southern music remained largely supportive of the region's role in Vietnam up until the end of the war. Music that typically referred to the war in Vietnam in a negative light was generally from the northern states, adopting an anti-war stance. Protest songs, such as Bob Dylan's iconic *Blowin' in the Wind* and Phil Ochs's *What are You Fighting For* and *I Ain't Marching Anymore* (all released 1963) remained secondary to southern country, in terms of airtime and record sales in the South. Consequently, protest songs in the South were not only few, but also never gained regional support as the South's populace wrestled with their own cultural myth-based conscience, which was becoming increasingly antiquated. In much the same way as southern music, this distinct evasive attitude towards the realities of twentieth century life was also evident in much of the literature produced throughout the 1960s and 1970s, especially with regard to novels that integrated the Vietnam War from a southerner's perspective.

⁷⁵ A sub-genre of rock and roll and now established as part of U.S. 'Americana', southern Rock generally merges the basic tenets of rock 'n' roll, country and blues music. The genre often incorporates long instrumental sessions; dance rhythms and fast lead guitar solos, with lyrics often relating to the mythic values and excesses of the southern working class. Ironically, despite the genre's claim to the excesses of the working classes, much of this music's producers came from privileged backgrounds.

The Vietnam War in Southern Literature

Since the mid-nineteenth century, southern literary works of all genres have rarely missed an opportunity to refer to the influence of ‘their’ military loss in the Civil War and ensuing Lost Cause mentality. Owen Gilman claims that as a result of these factors, it is no surprise that writers from the South are more inclined to lament on the loss of honour associated with military defeat than authors from other regions of the United States. Regarding Vietnam War literature, Gilman affirms that the common denominator in the southerner’s mind means that ‘the [southerner] typically does not approach Vietnam as an anomaly – or a weird mutation on an otherwise spotlessly good American record in war; the southerner knows better.’⁷⁶ Gilman’s reference that southerners’ ‘know better’ is a direct insinuation to the region’s nineteenth century Civil War loss. Consequently, in a viewpoint similar in many ways to that of Gilman, southern authors tend not to write about Vietnam as a narrowly defined personal experience, as ‘their’ sense of martial history inevitably returns to their region’s collective military loss a century before Vietnam.

Statistically, on average, a Vietnam War-related work has been published every three days over the past four decades. This accounts to approximately 5000 books that are currently available, which covers the war from numerous perspectives.⁷⁷ Literary outputs that feature southerners overwhelmingly adhere to the region’s tradition and memories, and the old Lost Cause permeates the literary interpretation of the southern soldier in Vietnam. Although often taking longer to provide a response to the conflict, due to the retrospective philosophical nature of writing, prose on the Vietnam War can be grouped into three distinct periods of discourse.

⁷⁶ Gilman, (1992), p.15.

⁷⁷ Statistics from Phillip D. Beidler, ‘The Legacy of Vietnam’, *American Studies* Vol 16 (2010), p. 12.

Throughout the active years of America's involvement as a combat force in Vietnam, prose typically took the style of personal memoirs of combat and general military life overseas. Consequently, a steady stream of ambiguous novels, memoirs, and sentimental poems emerged from authors and servicemen even as the war was still being fought. This style could be considered to be the first generation of the American literature on the Vietnam War. With many of these works mirroring the literary styles of World War I and II. Thus, the disposition on the topic was almost certain to change, as the war had not reached its conclusion, thus lacking the benefit of retrospective analysis. Despite the understandable tendency to adhere to a style emphasising America's more 'honourable' participation and victory of the two World Wars, the South's distinct 'code of honour' was evident in many of these works and essentially remained a recurrent theme in Vietnam literature.

The tradition of the southern warrior in fictional form is presented most completely in James H. Webb's novel *Fields of Fire*, which has currently sold over one million copies. In 1985, the author and former U.S. serviceman accused intellectual military critics and academic institutions of 'suffering from a monolithic, antimilitary, and anti-government view towards America's involvement in Vietnam'.⁷⁸ Southern characters dominate *Fields of Fire*, with Webb attributing 23 initial pages in detailing every possible cultural facet of the story's main character, II Lieutenant Robert E. Lee Hodges. Webb presents the lead character as a typical white southerner coming from a long lineage of former Confederate soldiers.⁷⁹ Despite Webb's birthplace of Missouri merely bordering the South, Webb remains keen to discuss the

⁷⁸ A U.S. Marine Vietnam combat veteran, James H. Webb, was also Secretary of the Navy under President Ronald Reagan as well holding office as the Democratic Senator for Virginia for six years until 2013.

⁷⁹ Although not published until 1978, *Fields of Fire* was in the process of being written a decade earlier according to the book's author. In Webb's novel, the character of Hodges relies heavily on the methods and myths of southern honour established by authors over the past century. The southern warrior so espoused in Webb's novel has also been cited in academic works such as John Hellman's *American Myth and the Legacy of Vietnam* (Columbia University, 1986) and Susan Jeffords' *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War* (Indiana University, 1989). *Fields of Fire* has also spawned an online Vietnam War gaming community with over 70% of its members originating from the U.S. South (as of April 2014), <http://fieldsoffireonline.freeforums.org/portal.php>.

influence of his southern ancestry as key inspirations on his novels narratives. Owen Gilman affirms that throughout Webb's works on Vietnam, 'southernness resonates throughout'.⁸⁰ Webb's narratives also discuss the problem of black and white tensions in Vietnam (specifically from the southern context), as well as the fragging (murdering) of commanding officers due to their cowardly, un-southern behaviour.

Southern literature of the Vietnam War overwhelmingly adheres to this kind of narrative, underlining age-old notions of southern masculinity and bravado seemingly preserved within the region's recalcitrant nature. Bobbie Ann Mason's 1985 book, *In Country* is another prime example of the strength of southern identity in printed works. The narrative's lead characters, all men, are presented over three generations of personal struggle. The men all stemming from the South repeatedly refer to their beloved Kentucky customs and southern way of life, which had remained the same for over a century. The result is effectively a paean to a particular code of regional ethics and martially motivated remembrance. Mason's *In Country* utilises the surroundings of Louisiana's Fort Polk, known as the 'Birthplace of the Combat Infantryman for Vietnam' to inform her readers of the strength of southern distinctions. Her narrative tells how the Civil War loss bequeathed the wisdom of learning to love a military loss as well as victories are a uniquely southern characteristic.⁸¹

Distinct to Webb's and Mason's style of narrative, a new style of books on the Vietnam War from Northern authors were also released. Notwithstanding, texts such as Larry Heinemann's *Paco's Story* (1986) and Robert Stone's *Dog Soldiers* (1974), although concise in their description of the war, are lacking in establishing a cultural edge to their stories characterisation. Gilman affirms that both Stone and Heinemann's works 'reflect scant concern for deep history — time in America before the Vietnam era — and the protagonists

⁸⁰ Gilman, p.47.

⁸¹ The signage 'Tigerland: Welcome to Fort Polk, the Birthplace of the Combat Infantryman for Vietnam' was displayed at the base until 1974.

are not deeply rooted in any one place in America'.⁸² Other texts follow in this style. Jayne Ann Phillips 1984 book *Machine Dreams*, portrays the lives of a southern family's men struggling through the Great Depression, and World War II before climaxing in Vietnam. Typically southern in a culturally retrospective sense, the lead character of Jean Hampson states at the climax of the nation's loss in the war in Vietnam, 'it's strange what you don't forget, for us, only memory endures'.⁸³ Similarly, Clyde Egerton's *The Floatplane Notebooks*, (1988), tells of a traditional southern family's isolation from modernity over a twenty year period, before the war in Vietnam is 'imported' in to their lives. The seismic cultural shift caused by Vietnam is presented as very much 'the end of time as they know it'.

The second genre of Vietnam literature largely stems from the period when the war took a downturn in popularity publically — both domestically and abroad — as many Americans realised their mission in Vietnam was doomed to failure. The catalyst to this period is largely recognised as the January 1968 Tet Offensive, to the time immediately after the fall of Saigon to North Vietnamese forces in April 1975. For America as a nation, this period was one fraught with increasing anguish and embarrassment, as the population came to terms with the possibility, and then inevitability of facing its first defeat in war on an international scale. Notwithstanding this national blight on U.S. history, many southerners reflected on the loss in Vietnam as their second defeat, not being able to resist an association with the Confederacy's loss a century earlier. Throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, a bulk of fictional and factual literature was produced as the war's veterans wrote passionately of their service in Vietnam. Due to the outcome and unpopularity of the war, generic themes of loss,

⁸² Despite Gilman's view that Stone's *Dog Soldiers* did not represent deep-rooted regional identities, the character of 'Antheil' was defined in the book as a southern cowboy. Antheil often alludes to his rural southern upbringing while quoting martial folklore such as 'if someone is doing you wrong, it's not for you to judge. Kill them first, and then God can do the judging, (p.338). This brusque, yet pious-based reaction to violence is typical of the southern man's demeanour. Larry Heinemann Vietnam *Paco's story* also describes how the lead character washes dishes in a Texas diner, while often reflecting on his 'Huck Finn'-like upbringing and distaste for modernity.

⁸³ Jayne Anne Phillips, *Machine Dreams* (New York, 1984), p.11.

anger, and despair permeated the majority of both fiction and non-fictional works that covered the war from personal, military, and political perspectives.

Gustav Hasford's *The Short-Timers* (1979), is commonly referred to as one of the significant Vietnam War narratives, due to the adaptation of his book in to a movie eight years later. As an Alabamian Vietnam veteran, Hasford's work incorporates well-recognised Southern idiosyncrasies on numerous levels throughout its narrative.⁸⁴ South Carolina's Parris Island Marine Corps barracks was home to the characters during their training. Taking its name from the British colonial slave-owner Alexander Parris, the island-based facility was particularly suitably for the training of Marines, due to its similar climate and topography to that of Vietnam – a point some southern veterans mentioned when serving in Vietnam. In Hasford's book, the base plays host to the ruthless Mississippian Gunnery Sergeant Gerheim who 'breaks' the men's spirit and rebuilds them into masculine fighting machines so identifiable with that of the Southern model of manliness. The story's lead characters are easily identified for their southern mannerisms with names such as 'Cowboy', a gun-toting laid back Texan and the bumbling South Carolinian Leonard, nicknamed 'Gomer' because of his slow mental demeanour. The book's black lead role, Alabamian 'Eightball' is particularly interesting character who epitomises the 'savage' black man 'set free' often warned of in the South's nineteenth century literature. Consequently, Eightball is duly given license by the military to kill and fornicate at his own will. Gilman affirms that *The Short Timers* lead characters 'represented the unique character of the South, because their sense of history provided them with knowledge carried to the heart'.⁸⁵ Notably, although Vietnam War literature from northern authors such as Timothy O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* (1990) contains characters from all regions of America, their ancestral influence and culture are

⁸⁴ In 1987, film director Stanley Kubrick adapted *The Short Timers* into the movie *Full Metal Jacket*. Now established as a Vietnam War classic, the movie is currently rated at 95 in the American Film Institute's top 100 years, 100 thrills <http://www.afi.com/100years/#.U3oVno>

⁸⁵ Gilman, (1992), p.139

explored to a much lesser degree. Despite the northern states having proud military histories, shared traditions, as well as poor and wealthy regions, southern authors are far more likely to probe in detail the southern way of life and how it influenced the consciousness and actions of men serving in Vietnam.

As the outcome of America's war in Vietnam proved to be a bitter and somewhat sobering experience for the nation as a whole, the third genre of literature focused primarily on the political and psychological effect Vietnam had on Americans over the past 40 years. Perhaps unsurprisingly, in this third generation, many southerners remain quick to draw on their region's prior military loss to deal with the moral dilemmas that defeat brings. The persistence of the South's Lost Cause ideology saw it easily incorporated into a wider national lost cause in the 1970s. Notably, this historic theme was utilised in some northern works, thus acting as a reparative narrative in helping to heal the wounds of the nation's loss. Interestingly, unlike the two genres of writing previously examined — in which southerners portrayed themselves as martially superior — this most recent reflective era of discourse, which laments defeat in a less masculine sense, is somewhat lacking with regard to works from southern authors or typically southern characterisations.

In concordance with the refusal of many southern authors' to adopt a similar outlook to the North towards the war in Vietnam, Winston Groom's *Better Times than These* (1978), reflects on the violent similarities of the Vietnam War to the southern way of life. Manifestly, Groom writes how both 'nations' — the U.S. South and the Vietnamese — were unwillingly subjected to attempts to modernise to the American way of life. The protests from these two 'groups' refer to western capitalism in the case of Vietnam, and northern standards and federal interference in the case of the U.S. South. Because of America's war loss, sentiments of defeatism and negativity are ultimately unavoidable with regard to this subject. Thus in the case of southern authors, re-examination is most unlikely, due to the region's discomfort to

re-tread painful ground once thought of as a just cause, which would ultimately open up the wounds of social, political, and military capitulation from a century earlier.

After the Vietnam War, southern newspapers and periodicals remained acutely aware of the political, economic, and cultural investment their region contributed in Vietnam. In 1980, publishing magnate H. Brandt Ayers stated that, the region's martial history is impossible to separate from any form of modernity as 'the past is like a viral weed of mythology that has been allowed to grow like kudzu (a destructive weed) over the South'.⁸⁶ From a southern perspective, news and magazine articles continued to promote the region as culturally distinctive from the rest of the United States. A 1976 edition of *Time* magazine incorporated an article titled '*THE PEOPLE: The Spirit of the South,*' writing favourably of the region as 'a lion of prides, a place apart. It is the last American arena with a special, nurtured identity, its own sometimes unfashionable regard for the soil, for family ties, for the authority of God and country'.⁸⁷

For the United States as a whole, the Vietnam War remains an uncomfortable, problematic, but undeniably rich topic of many forms of research. The three genres of writing from authors encompassed the Vietnam experience, but revealed how military service, immediate post-war analysis and retrospective studies follow very similar narratives incorporated in discourse from the Civil War period. Similar factors are apparent in prose on both the American Civil War and Vietnam War. From a southern perspective, both narratives reveal intense personal and collective pride in fighting for a controversial but 'just' cause, and in being able to accept defeat with honour, while still defending the supposed cause. While works of literature has the page space to convey such detailed sentiments, the media of film is

⁸⁶ Charles Reagan Wilson, *The Southern State of Mind* (University of South Carolina, 1999), p.8. References to the clinging and aggressive-growing kudzu weed are referred to in numerous works on southern history. Both troops and students from the South titled their anti-war Vietnam War pamphlet KUDZU, in the hope that their anti-war message would spread in a similar fashion to that of the weed.

⁸⁷ *Time Magazine*, 27/09/1976, p. 34

challenged to deliver such moods and actions on a shorter time scale. Consequently, due to the considerably higher budgets from demanding studios, this genre is always motivated to placate their employers as well as national and international audiences.

Depictions of Southerners in Vietnam War Films

Similar to literature, television and film representations of America's mission in Vietnam have also been plentiful over the past four decades. Aiming to personify the 'Vietnam experience', film productions range from amateur and network-funded documentaries, long running weekly television serials and television films, to large budget Hollywood movies. Narratives of the southerner, as distinct from 'outsiders' is ever-present and covered to varying levels in many of these productions. Typical on-screen characters from the South follow a well-recognised narrative previously portrayed in songs and literature. Apart from the broad 'slack jawed' accent recognised as the southern drawl, white characters — usually carrying the largest weapon — often reminisce of their good old slow-paced life in the South, while being relied upon to commit reckless yet honourable acts of bravery to set them apart from their fellow comrades. Many southern black characterisations in Vietnam follow the pattern of the less educated and lower ranked soldier unwillingly being part of this white man's war, or the 'unleashed' formerly socially and racially repressed individual who is keen to show the potential of his black ancestry. While northern characters are often portrayed as 'city-boys' usually lost or unprepared for the jungles of Vietnam, their martial demeanour is diminished. This North/South, rural/urban contrasts easily portrayed on film, such as the Californian character of 'Joker' in *Full Metal Jacket* in contrast to that of Mississippian 'Eightball' and 'Gomer' are largely reminiscent of manifestations of the 'typical' Southern

male so celebrated — or ignored in the case of the black man — in southern literature since the nineteenth century.

As of 2010, over 600 television and studio-funded films have been released on the topic of the Vietnam War. Well-recognised titles such as Francis Ford Coppola's 1979 epic *Apocalypse Now* and Oliver Stone's 1986 *Platoon* cover the dark brooding nature of the American soldier's tortured consciousness serving in Vietnam. Despite the popularity of these films, many veterans of the war state that the plots offer little convincing indications of how Vietnam really was.⁸⁸ Notwithstanding, Vietnam movies usually draw from standard narratives of southern identity and indeed offer some interesting insights into the distinctiveness of southerners. Stanley Kubrick's 1987 adaptation of Gustav Hasford's *The Short Timers* into the movie *Full Metal Jacket* is a prime example of how regional-nuances are displayed in film. The characters of Private 'Gomer Pyle' Lawrence, Gunnery Sergeant Hartman, Private 'Cowboy' Evans, Sergeant 'Animal' Mother and the black Corporal 'Eightball' are distinctively Southern for their slow, aggressive, gun-loving, racist and racially and socially oppressed natures respectively.⁸⁹ The narrative of the lead character 'Joker's liberal Californian upbringing and least masculine role as a journalist is commonly mocked by his comrades for his inability to act aggressively or perform the 'intimidating thousand yard stare', serving to highlight the martial gulf from his comrades southern upbringings.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Despite the popularity of Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, from a ratings perspective my research of Vietnam Veterans oral interviews at Texas Tech University revealed that many veterans consider the movie to be the least realistic representation of the Vietnam experience. Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* was given high praise for its realism of training in the United States, while John Irvin's 1987 movie *Hamburger Hill* received similar acclaim for its depiction of service in Vietnam.

⁸⁹ The character of Corporal Eightball makes a clear reference to the racial inequality of his southern upbringing in the movie stating that when it becomes "too dangerous for white men to fight", they simply "put a nigger behind the trigger". The southern character of 'Animal Mother' also tells Eightball that "all fucking niggers must fucking hang" when Eightball presents himself as sexual competition for a Vietnamese prostitute. These depictions of black men as animal-like also concur with nineteenth-century southern narratives.

⁹⁰ The 'thousand Yard Stare' alludes to the looking through the obvious, or a stare beyond the immediate. It is generally regarded as the stare all combat veterans possessed after prolonged trips into the jungles (boonies) of Vietnam, and is usually related to extreme consciousness during the most devastating of experiences.

Although not entirely based on the Vietnam War, the multi-award winning 1994 movie *Forrest Gump* was Robert Zemecki's adaptation of Winston Groom's 1986 book of the same title. The movie presented lead characters that are unquestionably influenced by their southern origin. The slow-minded yet brave and honourable character of Gump was perfectly suited to the southern way of life so lauded for the past century. The Vietnam War acts as the catalyst for much of the movie's scenes, in which Gump strikes up an intimate friendship with an equally slow-minded southern African-American soldier named Bubba. Much of the movie was set in Georgia, and North and South Carolina in a period where the racial and social discontent was at boiling point, though anti-Vietnam War protests were few in comparison to the northern states. Gump's never-give-up attitude, maintaining personal honour and slow and simple outlook on life is personified as a distinct trait that only the South could produce convincingly. Owen Gilman affirms that, 'no matter what kind of setback Forrest encounters, he intuitively knows how to cope with adversity. His is a southern habit'.⁹¹ These depictions of the southerner are typical characteristics, which are concurrent with many movies that tell of the war in Vietnam and America's cultural division of the era. From the aggressive gun-toting 'Tex' and racist 'Redneck' characters, to the uneducated 'Bubba' and black oppressed individuals, the southerner in films of Vietnam adheres to a common cultural trait, making sure they are easily recognisable to all audiences, not least themselves.

The depiction of the South, be it through the works of academics, politicians, journalists, directors, musicians or authors, projects a unique model of masculine bravado and traditional values as part of the southern narrative. Myths of the Lost Cause, of southern honour and of manly behaviour remained a crucial — albeit fluctuating — facet well in to the twentieth century and beyond. The southern preoccupation with white masculine identity and male bravado remained an ever-apparent trait in historical discourse on the South throughout

⁹¹ Gilman, (1992), p.123

the period of the two World Wars, the Korean War, and the war in Vietnam. The honourable descendant of Confederate veterans, be they poor or rich, the dependable good ol' boy, the uneducated redneck and subjugated and potentially dangerous black man – remain stock characters within the South's narrative. These distinct social and racial groups upheld their ancestors' prestige, displayed their masculine prowess, were proud of their simple ways, and fought for their own civil rights and cultural identities accordingly. Despite the apparent gulfs in social standing, education, employment, and racial prejudice; throughout the Vietnam War era, each group personified their own brand of southern identity that distinguished them apart, yet unified them in a cultural sense, through the region's distinctive history. That is, in myth and fiction anyway.

This chapter has demonstrated that since the nineteenth century, and into the Vietnam War era, southern identity was focused on a version of martial masculinity that was culturally individualistic and distinct from men in the North. In a region long obsessed by its own constructed history, contemporary performances of masculinity borrowed heavily from their ancestral archetypes. In her seminal book on the subject of masculinities in different societies and periods, leading sociologist, R. W. Connell, argues that there is no such thing as an objective masculinity, either universal or innate, observable in male society as a whole. Connell argues that 'instead, masculinities are constructed through relations of gender, sexuality, race, and class and are located in specific intersections of place, time, and

culture'.⁹² As Connell writes, although there is no singular model of masculinity to which all men subscribe, a particular model of masculinity will develop within a particular cultural environment, utilising various forms of influence over subordinate and marginalized expressions of gender. This model of sustaining an ultimate social and racial patriarchy over specific groups personifies the southern white male in the periods examined in this chapter.

The creation and upholding of the myth of the 'Lost Cause' has proved to be a significant impetus to both white people and black people, albeit for divergent reasons, in defining southern identity throughout the region's self-proclaimed separatism. When the Confederacy experienced military defeat, in conjunction with the ensuing attack on the southern way of life at the hands of its northern neighbours, much of the South's white elite were intrinsically obligated, to justify its martial and cultural behaviour and 'honourable' cause. The plight of poor whites remained largely unchanged, while the oppressed black population fought to gain both social and cultural recognition as well as racial equality. In 1994, historian Fitzhugh Brundage reiterated that 'for more than a century, individuals and groups have laboured and invested themselves to become custodians of southern heritage, to keep the memory alive and vibrant'.⁹³ For individuals and collectives alike, this memory provides a genealogy of social identity, and many southerners of the Vietnam era were imbued with a generational duty to express themselves as culturally apart from much of their northern brethren.

⁹² R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (California, 1995), p.17

⁹³ Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Massachusetts, 2005), p.23.

Chapter II

Invested Interests:

The Southern Economy and Politics in the Vietnam Era

This chapter analyses the dynamic economic and political role of the southern states during the culturally turbulent Vietnam War era. It establishes how influential southerners, affiliated with the region's political and economic spheres, wielded considerable power in these areas, and in turn, directly affected the administration of their nation's role in Vietnam. This chapter also identifies the influence of the South's somewhat mythic and 'peculiar' characteristics and the effect this aspect had upon the region's prominent politicians and businessmen.¹ An in-depth analysis of the region's changing industries throughout the Vietnam era will also reveal the major influence that America's war in Vietnam had upon the South commercially. Through analysing economic changes and employment dynamics, specific attention will be attributed to war-related industries such as ordnance production and associated supply businesses.

Correspondingly, the role of key southern politicians affiliated with their nation's strategies in Vietnam will receive specific attention. In examining political and military decisions made by southerners such as Lyndon Johnson, Dean Rusk and General William Westmoreland, any regionally-influenced motivations in their responses will be identified. To

¹ Frequently utilised to describe the culture of the South, the word 'peculiar' is present in many texts in southern discourse. In this context, 'peculiar' largely denotes the uncharacteristic – in an American sense – 'peculiar institution' of the South's culture, which was noted for its slave trade and condoning of racism. Clyde N. Wilson writes that the South 'is a peculiar repository of intangible qualities in a society peculiarly preoccupied with the quantifiable', *Why the South Will Survive: Fifteen Southerners Look at Their Region a Half a Century after I'll Take My Stand* (Georgia, 1981), p.2. Bertram Wyatt-Brown stated that 'our place in the union's provincial, and as such our peculiarities will have to be defended, excused, ridiculed, pardoned', quoted in John Hope Franklin, *The Militant South* (Harvard, 1956), p.9. Craig Friend and Lorri Glover's research on the topic also affirm that the South's peculiar institutions will haunt America for many years to come. Accordingly, C. Vann Woodward wrote that 'the South is thought to be hedged about with peculiarities that set it apart as unique. As a standpoint from which to write American history it is regarded as eccentric and, as a background for an historian, something of a handicap to be overcome'. *The Burden of Southern History* (Louisiana, 2008), p.187.

what extent was southern identity a crucial factor in the actions of key individuals directing the Vietnam War? While southern identity has always been fluid and dynamic, and notoriously difficult to pin down because of its changing nature, it did influence key actors within the southern theatre in tangible ways, having notable ramifications – particularly as the Vietnam War lost popularity amongst the American people. Despite the gradual eroding of political and public support for the war at the national level, this occurred at a much slower rate in the South, due in large part to its adherence to martial codes and long-established obstinacy to cultural change. Drawing on arguments from chapter 1, this chapter evaluates southern identity and the ways in which it impacted on economic and political policy into the Vietnam War.

Carl N. Degler states that this southern political recalcitrance has played an important part in American history over the past century, arguing that ‘American foreign policy has been heavily influenced if not even moulded by the South. Without the South, in short, American activities in the world would have been different, and perhaps in some instances even reversed’.² Southern, political and cultural obstinacy continued throughout the Cold War era, duly affecting America’s southern-led administration in its management of the war in Vietnam. With prominent politicians in government, such as President Johnson and Secretary of State Rusk, as well as many outspoken southern senators and congressmen, the course of the nation’s governance would be subject to the unique and often controversial impulses for which southerners were noted. In many cases, aside from undermining the power of northern politicians, this political recalcitrance was utilised to gain the support and unity of southern business leaders who were eager to cash in on Cold War-related ordnance production. This shift from a largely agrarian-based economy to modern industrialisation created a new, more

² Regarding the American South, Carl Degler states that the region ‘is ultimately involved in creating the American experience. Rather than an outsider or adversary, the South becomes instead a co-creator of the nation’s history’. ‘Thesis, Antithesis, Synthesis: The South, The North, and the Nation’, *Journal of Southern History* Vol 53, (February 1987), p.17.

modern and economic South, yet one that was still keen to retain and maintain its own cultural distinctions on a national stage.

The 'New' South's Economic Transformation

A study of any nation's history typically reveals that periods of military conflict often act as catalysts for change in social, economic and political ideals, as well as encouraging a collective reinvigoration of nationalist fervour, statehood or jingoism on numerous levels.³ The United States' involvement in Vietnam was not immune to these change-inducing and influential factors, as political divisions — many stimulated by southerners — often became evident. Throughout the twentieth century, the southern economy experienced considerable growth in productivity and commerce, specifically with regard to military ordnance and its associated industries. Much of the reason for the industrial growth in the South throughout the twentieth century was, in large part, due to the region's exploitable employment conditions, which were geared towards manipulating a largely socially and economically deprived populace. Coupled with this factor, inexpensive land acquisition that came with little to no concern for the environment or planning restrictions, witnessed government ordnance spending transform the southern states.⁴ Although not initially comparable with the multi-industrial northern states, which at the time led the world in terms of manufacturing output, the thriving armaments trade proved to be an imperative constituent in the modernisation of the South's previously agriculture-dominated economy. By 1960, modern mass-producing

³ Particularly in the case of southern history, 'statehood' is augmented by the effective portrayal of suitably chosen past events within a state or nation; this enforces and thus institutionalises a social norm. Taken to its extreme, as was the case with many aspects of southern nationalism, an aggressive exceptionalism or 'jingoism' can be an extremely powerful cultural tool used to instil pride, passion and remembrance. The jingoistic intentions of post-Civil War southern white elites specifically, had succeeded in keeping the South's memories of martial prowess and a 'just' Lost Cause alive well in to the next century.

⁴ In *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace and War 1760s-1880s* (North Carolina, 2001), Bertram Wyatt-Brown examines how southern business-leaders were less interested with the needs of the immediate population, choosing to employ more suitably educated northern immigrants in many cases.

ordnance plants dominated the economy throughout the southern states. The region's low rates of pay, negligible trade unions and high number of black people and white people living on the brink of poverty, made the South a prime place for industry.

Results of National Salary Surveys (NSS) from the first decades of the twenty-first century reveal the extent of the southern worker's exploitation, while also highlighting the North/South disparity in the average wages paid to America's blue-collar workers. Studies from national average salary (NAS) statistics reveal that in 1900, southern employers paid only 51% of the national average wage.⁵ Accordingly, despite America's participation in World War I, which resulted in considerable economic growth nationally, the South's average wage had only reached 62% of that of the North's by 1920.⁶ Forty five years later, as American troops landed on Vietnam's beaches, southern employers were still only paying 72% of the national average income, with 30% of southerners earning less than \$3000 per annum.⁷ These disparities in regional salaries, as well as the harsher living and working conditions in the South only served to compound the long-established economic and cultural rift apparent between the politicians of the North and South, as well as the region's inhabitants who were aware of the gulf in wages.

⁵ In 1900, the national average salary (NAS) paid in the United States ranged from \$300 to \$400 a year. In the South, the average equated to around \$200 per annum, and up to 30% less for poor whites and blacks in the South. Information retrieved from the Department of Commerce and Labor: National Census Files <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cu56779232&size=100>

⁶Fry, (2002), p.141. A poll by the United States Census Bureau from 1922 described the South, on the whole, as the nation's 'most complete social problem, with poor agriculture, exhausted soils, small crops, poor roads and decaying bridges'. Despite the conclusions of census polls, some areas of the South did experience commercial growth following America's participation in World War One.

⁷ National salary information retrieved from <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/popscan/p60-043.pdf>

Pre-Vietnam Southern Politics

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the Democratic Party was to all intents and purposes the South's sole functioning party. Regarding the Democrat Party's monopoly upon the South, Michael Perman states that 'up until the Vietnam era, other competitive parties were not just unusual, they were an aberration.'⁸ Through the 'traditionalist' efforts of many of the region's outspoken southern politicians, the South's common attitude towards foreign policy resembled that of its domestic stance, one of staunch conservatism, often vehemently opposed to the political opinions of 'outsider' northerners.⁹

By the time war broke out in Europe in 1939, despite the apparent disinclination of many Americans' to become embroiled in another World War, a June 1940 poll concluded that 70% of southerners — in contrast to 40% of northerners — endorsed assisting Great Britain in its war against Nazi Germany, even at the risk of direct American involvement in the form of troops stationed abroad.¹⁰ By December 1941, President Roosevelt was unequivocal in aiding the Allied war effort against Nazi Germany. Roosevelt himself cited southern poverty in particular as the nation's prime economic problem. Throughout this period, due to the South's economic needs, the building or expansion of permanent military bases in the South, such as Georgia's Fort Benning, Fort Worth Naval Base, South Carolina's

⁸ Michael Perman, *Pursuit of Unity* (Chapel Hill, 2009), p. 4.

⁹ Previous conflicts, such as the 1898 Spanish/Cuban-American War and the Philippine-American War of 1899 witnessed southern politicians proclaim the need for southern patriots to unite in a national cause. Despite this clarion call for national unity, the South's stance towards foreign policy remained largely isolationist into the twentieth century.

¹⁰ Figures from Alfred O. Hero, *The Southerner and World Affairs* (Baton Rouge, 1965), p.221. It could be asked, if southerners were more martially inclined, why they did not respond more aggressively to their nation's position in World War I? Most likely, relations with both Germany and Great Britain were amicable pre-World War I, with neither country being particularly 'in favour' to many southerners as the region contained many immigrants from these two countries. This reluctance to 'take sides' was evident in the amount of policy-blocking or filibustering made by southern politicians that took place against President Wilson's attempts to sever ties with Germany following the sinking of the passenger ship RMS Lusitania in 1915.

Parris Island, North Carolina's Camp Lejeune and Virginia's Quantico, all played a crucial role in the South's journey to becoming the nation's military epicentre within three decades.¹¹

Despite the economic boost to the nation as a result of America's enormous requirement for World War II ordnance, Roosevelt's 12 year tenure as president proved to be a constant battle with southern Democrats in Congress. Much of Roosevelt's wrangling with southerners stemmed from his attempts to shift his party more to the political left with his New Deal policies that would decrease profit margins and power industrialists and politicians, had upon the region. James C. Cobb affirms that the sentiments of the more liberal-minded president and his conservative southern contingent were surely set to clash, stating that 'President Roosevelt had an unlikely marriage of convenience with the South, which began to unravel during the late 1930's'.¹² Some 30 years later, Roosevelt's loyal protégé Lyndon Johnson, would face similar challenges from his fellow southerners, as many of his own attempts to aid and socially modernise the South often resulted in prejudiced, regional objectors informing Johnson to avoid trying to fix what was not broken.¹³

Throughout the 1940s, the procurement of multi-million dollar contracts for the construction of military bases in the region, witnessed southern politicians and industrialists prosper while much of the region's poor white and black populace struggled. As a result of southern political influence, by 1946, the states of the former Confederacy were awarded 67 of the 102 new army, marine and naval bases; this did not include the substantial

¹¹ Military bases are often temporary and transitory in order to adapt to a nation's requirements in times of war and peace. In contrast, the establishment of permanent military bases requires significant investment in its infrastructure with regard to the local economy in order to remain feasible post-war.

¹² James C. Cobb, *The South and America since World War II* (Oxford, 2011), p.9.

¹³ Following Johnson's launching of his Great Society bill, in a phone conversation referring to FDR's successful implementation of numerous policies, Roosevelt Jr told Johnson that 'I'm predicting you're going to break all the records, and that [Johnson] was magnificent'. Johnson replied by stating that he has never made a speech on the subject without mentioning the influence of FDR on his own presidency. Miller Centre, Tape (WH6411.02). Regarding Johnson's Great Society, measures such as the Neutrality Acts, the Natural Gas Act, and the Fair Labor Standards Act often failed to pass at first attempts as a result of southern-inspired vetoes (filibusters) in Congress. Much of the filibustering was implemented in order for the South's political outlook to remain unique from the northern style of policy-making.

modernisation of all of the South's existing military training centres.¹⁴ The disparity in ordnance-based growth from North to South was apparent to many Americans. One army recruit from Chicago echoed the sentiments of many northerners, stating to a journalist in 1947 that 'the whole business (war) is just a southern trick... put over by southern merchants to hold the big trade they get from the training camps'.¹⁵ Through Roosevelt's enthusiasm for war spending, supported by the South's politicians and business leaders, the nation's military soon adopted a southern physicality. A factor only referred to in the field of architectural history, was that the ordnance factories and assembly plants existent in the North were built from cheaper materials to hastily meet the needs of World War II output. Southern politicians and businessmen utilised this fact, thus convincing and procuring the vast majority of Cold War era contracts for their region. Decisively, due to the ordnance associated investments implemented in the South throughout the 1940s, the region now stood poised to yield the benefits from unparalleled war-related expenditure on the eve of the impending Cold War.

The South of the Cold War Era

The transformation of the southern economy during the Cold War period is a crucial development in the socio-economic history of the United States. Nevertheless, despite the economic growth in the South, much of this new industry was not to the benefit of the region's indigenous population. The different skill-sets required for this new industry meant that immigrants from the northern states were attracted to the region, thus further hindering the chances of employment for the South's poor and largely unskilled population. Although development in urban house-building and increased welfare spending directed much-needed resources to the parts of the South where industry was being established, southerners

¹⁴ Figures from Fry, (2002), p.212.

¹⁵ John Temple Graves, *The Fighting South* (Alabama, 1985), p.104.

experienced little benefit. This was due to the fact that new urban homes in the South, were destined for white ‘immigrants’ — and in some cases blacks — from the North.¹⁶ To add to the unlikelihood of employment, between 1957 and 1968, contractors demolished over 300,000 traditional households in the South. Local business owner from the period, Leroy Beavers, protested how this modernisation was disastrous for typical southerners — both economically and culturally — stating that ‘it was murder...A type of genocide of social life’.¹⁷ Consequently, the South’s poor suffered, as they remained reliant on diminishing agricultural work, in contrast to the immigrants into new urban areas.

John Shelton Reed described this defining period in the region’s history by stating ‘that if ever a society can be said to have repudiated agrarianism, the South, to all appearances, has done so. And increasingly, that way of life is industrialism’.¹⁸ Notably, and a factor not previously apparent in the South to such a degree, was that this commerce functioned without the capital or intervention of northern business magnates. Southern commercial leaders, who had previously made their fortunes from agriculture, relished the opportunity to gain another economic foothold in the region’s ordnance industries. Aided by the South’s lack of trade union representation and both longer and harsher working conditions, in comparison to those of the North, the South’s astute business leaders prospered.

On April 7th 1954, four weeks before the communist-backed North Vietnamese Army defeated the occupying French forces in Vietnam, President Dwight D. Eisenhower addressed the American nation to warn of the now recognised ‘domino theory’ and its consequential

¹⁶The protests and actions from southern segregationists such as the Massive Resistance group, who resented jobs and new homes going to the region’s poor blacks only served to compound the plight of the region’s blacks needing employment.

¹⁷ Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Massachusetts, 2005), p. 269.

¹⁸ Clyde N. Wilson (ed), *Why the South Will Survive: Fifteen Southerners Look at Their Region a Half Century After I’ll Take My Stand* (Georgia, 1981), p.13.

threat to Western civilisation.¹⁹ Termed the ‘Red Scare’, this period was one of unprecedented national fear and paranoia towards communism that gripped all strata of American society.²⁰ Regarding communism, George Lewis affirms that ‘in the South, many stereotypes were purposefully shaped to reflect the region’s traditional demons, thus by the 1950s, most shared a common set of fears about Communists’.²¹ Accordingly, southern politicians, eager to maintain the racial divide never, missed the opportunity to associate the cause of blacks and anti-segregationists to the cause of communism. Journalist Harry Ashmore wrote of the region’s prejudice during the period stating that ‘the Southern political system has reached its lowest ebb’.²² Consequently, by 1960, every state of the former Confederacy had established committees to investigate any presence of Communists.²³ Southern politicians, such as Mississippi Senator James Eastland, used many of these speculative cases to accuse proponents of racial integration of colluding with Communists. With the country’s politicians and particularly its media warning that the whole of Indochina and parts of Europe were at risk to the rise of Communism, the South’s role as capital of America’s military-industrial complex was primed to benefit from the impending involvement in Vietnam.²⁴

¹⁹Noted for coining this most recognised of the Cold War era phrases, in his 1954 television address to the American nation, Eisenhower stated that, ‘You have broader considerations that might follow what you would call the ‘falling domino’ principle. You have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is a certainty that it will go over very quickly’. Four weeks later when the North Vietnamese defeated the occupying French forces at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu ultimately paving the way for American forces to become involved in South-east Asia.

²⁰ The Red Scare is documented as having two periods. The first starting 1919, two years after the Russian Revolution. The Cold War Red Scare, approximately 1947 to 1957 was a much more publicised affair that permeated the lives of most Americans.

²¹ Lewis, (2006), p.75.

²² Grantham, Dewey W, Jr ‘Politics Below The Potomac’, *Current History* (November, 1958), p.262.

²³ Commonly referred to as HUAC (House Un-American Activities Committee), the taskforce was originally created in 1938 to uncover Nazi citizens within the United States. However, HUAC is better known for its role throughout the 1960s in investigating disloyal and subversive activities on the part of private citizens.

²⁴ The term ‘military-industrial complex’ gained notoriety when used by Eisenhower in his farewell speech of January 1961. As a result of his military and political experience, Eisenhower felt obligated to warn the nation of the potential risk of relying too much on martially inclined legislators, the arms industries, and the armed forces. Source <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/primary-resources/eisenhower-farewell/>

The Vietnam Era Southern Economy

From the 1960s, ordnance manufacturing accounted for 70% of federally financed industrial output in the South, a figure that was maintained throughout the Vietnam War period.²⁵ The South's politicians and business-leaders presented a common chorus, of martial oratory linking their region's brave past to that of the present, directly drawing on a nineteenth-century heritage. As the output in the new ordnance industries swiftly grew, along with subsequent technological advancements, the South's reliance on relatively unskilled men and women who worked on farms diminished significantly – transforming the dynamics of its population.²⁶ Despite the onset of these new military industries and immigration of northerners, from the mid-1940s up to the decade after the Vietnam War, employment figures for native southerners plummeted. This skills-based shift resulted in almost 14 million people leaving the South, while the new urban areas grew with northerners.²⁷ Historian, Pete Daniel states that 'during the Cold War era, the number of southern farms declined rapidly from 2.1 million (in 1950) to 722,000 by 1975. The southern life had been epitomised by farming, but that standard had disappeared'.²⁸ By the time of America's involvement in Vietnam, only 15% of the South's population relied on farming for its income, in contrast to 65% three decades earlier. Consequently, by the end of America's involvement in Vietnam, the

²⁵ Robert Lewis, 'World War II Manufacturing and the Post-War Southern Economy', *Journal of Southern History* Vol. 73 (2007), pp.837-866. Lewis affirms that the southern states benefitted from the majority of the 3.5 billion dollars invested in armament manufacturing for the nation's involvement in World War Two. Aeronautical, naval and army vehicle manufacturers who set up plants in the South were all serviced by the region's vast oil fields and off-shore wells in the Gulf of Mexico.

²⁶ The migration of huge numbers of southerners, especially blacks, vastly outnumbered the amount of 'outsiders' moving into the region during the twentieth century. Despite this loss of workforce in agricultural-related industries, through the technological advancements in farming methods, food output in this sector actually increased. Notwithstanding this, Bertram Wyatt-Brown states that 'the urbanisation and immigration of the North weakened the force of the small-scale community culture existent in the South'. *Yankee Saints and Southern Sinners* (Louisiana, 1985), p.9.

²⁷ Figure from Fry, (2002), p.208.

²⁸ Pete Daniel, *Standing at the Crossroads: Southern Life Since 1900* (New York, 1986), p.221.

agricultural industry represented a meagre 3% of the South's domestic product, a statistic all southerners would have deemed unimaginable just five decades earlier.²⁹

This reduced need for employment in the South's agricultural industry benefitted the region's military recruitment offices gearing up for war in Vietnam. Historian, Eric Foner contends that 'those who could not migrate were faced with a desperate future, with thousands clambering for over-subscribed factory jobs or the prospect of service in the nation's military'.³⁰ Nonetheless, military service was not the 'social saviour' promoted by recruitment boards and politicians. Commonly, 'national service' often conjures up notions of skilled occupations in a modern military such as the United States. For southerners, many of who were under-educated, military life was somewhat different. As the bulk of southerners were only ever suitable for service in infantry regiments, requiring little tutelage, black and white southern men filled these ranks. From an employment perspective, southern black men were especially enticed, as many of the region's new industries were owned by whites and operated on the same racist ideals as the farming industry it replaced. Except for industries such as timber cutting, naval stores, meat processing and sanitation work — much like menial military service roles — southern skilled manufacturing jobs were held in reserve largely for white people, with only the most tedious and unpleasant chores offered to the region's poor white and black populace.

Through the efforts of southern politicians in procuring military contracts, along with subsequent tax breaks, many northern manufacturers were destined to closure, as they could not compete with the abundant low-priced labour in the South. Correspondingly, inexpensive land, lax planning permits and negligent consideration for the environment, meant that the

²⁹ From the 1950s, America's farming population fell from 23 million to 15 million, yet agricultural production rose by 50% as a result of new machinery, chemical fertilisers and effective insecticides. This less manpower-intensive industry witnessed more than three million low-skilled 'hired hands' migrate out of the region for work in the northern states. Figures retrieved from Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty: An American History* (New York, 2006), p.807.

³⁰ Foner, (2006), p.811.

South was well-suited to large companies eager to cash in on the Vietnam War. Senator for South Carolina, Ernest F. Hollings, unashamedly vowed in 1964 that ‘we are not going to have labour unions; the NAACP and New England politicians blemish the Southern way of life’.³¹ Because of these economic benefits, southern employers and many of the region’s politicians remained muted on issues of social progressiveness often debated by their northern counterparts, thus enforcing the South’s multi-faceted distinctiveness further still.

Throughout the 1960s, the South’s growth in military-related economies was both substantial. In Huntsville, Alabama, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) established the Marshall Flight Centre, resulting in population growth from 16,000 to more than 72,000 in seven years. The circumstances of the poor were unchanged however, as educated, skilled ‘outsiders’ filled the jobs.³² The Textron Corporation, which produced a myriad of armament products during the Vietnam War era, provides a similar example of how the South became reliant on ordnance industries. In 1961, the Textron conglomerate had fifteen major manufacturing plants in the northern states and nine small auxiliary factories in the South. Less than three years later, due to the efforts of astute southern politicians, all northern plants were closed down and relocated to newly-built plants in the South. In the same period from 1961 to 1964, southern congressmen granted Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina and Kentucky approximately \$144 million in tax exemptions for these new industries alone, actions unmatched in the failing ordnance plants of the North.³³ In 1950, national defence spending constituted 7% of America’s total expenditure. By 1970, as a result of the South’s stimulus in the Vietnam campaign, this figure had rose to 25%, constituting billions of dollars for the southern economy. In the same year, ‘Fortress Dixie’, as some titles it became home to seven of the nation’s ten largest defence contractors.

³¹ Cobb, *Redefining Southern Culture: Mind and Identity in the Modern South* (Georgia, 1999), p.18.

³² Numan V. Bartley, *The New South, 1945-1980: The Story of the South’s Modernization* (Louisiana, 1995), p.123.

³³ Cobb, (2011), p.59.

Aside from the massive army facilities, new air and naval bases were established in the South. Alabama's Redstone Arsenal became home to the United States Army Missile Command Centre (MICOM) and nuclear test laboratories in 1962. Accordingly, huge naval shipyards, military hospitals, submarine stations, and the headquarters of the Coast Guard were all newly established across areas of Georgia, and North and South Carolina. In Georgia alone, 15 military installations accommodated over 100,000 servicemen. Throughout the 1960's, Georgia consistently ranked in the government's top ten military contractors, receiving \$792 million, with over 33,000 employees.³⁴

In many respects, the Charleston area of South Carolina was a microcosm of America's military-industrial complex. Military industries constituted 40% of the labour force, investing \$200 million into the local economy annually.³⁵ James Wilson states that Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Texas and the Carolinas 'greatly fed war induced prosperity; and that by 1967, 42% of the nation's overall military payroll was going to soldiers stationed throughout the southern states.'³⁶ James C. Cobb affirmed how South Carolina's 'new economy transmogrified Charleston into a microcosm of military-industrial civilisation'.³⁷ Opinion polls revealed that southerners were willing to pay higher taxes for increased defence spending, in contrast to northerners.

The Brown and Root Construction Company of Texas became practically the sole supplier and builder of the military's infrastructure in Vietnam. With manufacturing plants in Texas, Virginia, and Alabama, as well as vast installations in Vietnam, the company was America's largest construction company by 1969. Co-owner, George R. Brown, remained a

³⁴ Figures from, Caroline F. Ziemke 'Richard B. Russell and the Lost Cause in Vietnam, 1954-1968', *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* Vol. 72 (1988), p.32.

³⁵ Alexander Macaulay, *Marching in Step: Masculinity, Citizenship, and the Citadel in Post-World War II America* (Georgia, 2009), p. 91.

³⁶ Wilson, (1990), xi.

³⁷ Cobb, (2011), p.59. Referring to the effect of the military industrial complex, Alexander Macaulay adds that 'by 1970, the military and related industries constituted 40% of Charleston's payroll, and pumped about \$200 million annually into the local economy', (2009), p.91.

close friend and sponsor of Lyndon Johnson's political career, thus the company's owners remained allied with the president providing Johnson with funds throughout the Vietnam era.³⁸ The South's smaller cities also benefitted from indirect military-related commerce, with the crucial elements of oil, rubber, aluminium and chemical production all greatly aiding the southern economy. Louisiana's Baton Rouge was soon titled 'the chemical city', due to its production of oil and other biological solutions needed for the war effort. Throughout the 1960s, Baton Rouge was America's fastest-growing city, while also being awarded the ominous distinction of being the Soviet Union's number one target for a nuclear strike.

The Pentagon, situated in Arlington Virginia, compounded the South's grip on defence spending also. With over 24,000 employees during the Vietnam era, the building attracted a further \$4.4 billion in government investment to the South.³⁹ Chairman of the House of the Armed Services Committee, Mendel Rivers, a staunch adherent for a more belligerent course in Vietnam, stated in 1969 to Mississippi Senator John Stennis that, 'I don't believe the Yankees will pick a fight with us again, because when we get through there'll be precious few installations left north of the mason Dixon line'.⁴⁰ Ordnance-related occupations in the South rose by over 40% during the 1950s and 1960s, ensuring that by 1971, the South produced 27% of the nation's ammunition, 52% of its naval ships and 46% of its aircraft along with 42% of the oil and 62% of the coal required to sustain the ordnance industries.⁴¹ Consequently, in the three decades following the end of World War II, non-agricultural

³⁸ In a phone conversation with George R. Brown, Johnson voiced his concerns that 'American mothers no longer think it is honourable to go to war (and in the case of Vietnam) it is a terrible thing to do, so pretty soon they will be no fighting, just preaching, and they (communists) will come and eat us'. Miller Centre, Tape (WH6606.04). In *The Path to Power* (California, 1988), Robert A. Caro, states that Brown & Root donated large sums of money towards LBJ's political career and that the company violated Inland Revenue Service (IRS) rules with its dubious campaign contributions.

³⁹ Information provided by the documents held at the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs, 1400 Defense Pentagon Washington, DC 20301-1400. Dated 12/04/2013.

⁴⁰ James Batten, 'Why the Pentagon Pays Homage to John Cornelius Stennis', *New York Times Magazine* (23/11/69), p.16.

⁴¹ Statistics utilised from David L. Carlton and Peter A. Coclanis, *The South, the Nation, and the World: Perspectives on Southern Economic Development* (Virginia, 2003), p.151.

related employment rose from 7.8 million to almost 26 million. Despite the rise of 19 million new job positions in the South, native southern employment only rose by 3.4 million.⁴²

Defence contracts had become the key element used by congressmen to reward themselves and their constituents. Numerous northern politicians, businessmen and economists bemoaned these aggressive tactics of southerners that bordered on unlawful business practice. In 1961, when American involvement in Vietnam was purely fiscal support, Massachusetts Senator John F. Kennedy protested that ‘the southern states were essentially engaging in industrial piracy’.⁴³ Southern congressmen, raised on their region’s pugnacious morality, used their political seniority and regional affinities to transform the nation's least democratised region — in terms of equal and employment rights — into a microcosm of American military industrialism that could not be matched by the efforts of northern industrialists.

Southern Political Sentiments towards Vietnam

The political influence of southern Democrats are notable for their distinct sentiments towards Vietnam, thus playing a crucial role in the implementation of foreign policy throughout the period. As well as the presidency and secretary of state, southerners such as Richard Russell, John C. Stennis, James O. Eastland, George Wallace, Mendel Rivers, Allen J. Ellender, and Russell B. Long all weighed in to varying degrees with their support for a more military proactive stance on Vietnam.⁴⁴ Rivers’ opinion towards Johnson’s restricted warfare policy

⁴² Figures retrieved from Dewey W. Grantham, *The South in Modern America: A Region at Odds* (New York, 1994), p.260.

⁴³ Cobb, (2012), p.57.

⁴⁴ The amount of congressional support for the war from southerners is exhaustive; hence just seven of the more well-known politicians are detailed. Positions held by stated individuals. Richard Russell Jr (Dem) Senator for Georgia. John C Stennis (Dem) Senator for Mississippi. James O. Eastland (Dem) Senator for Mississippi. George C. Wallace (Dem) Governor of Alabama and leader of the American Independent Party in 1968. L. Mendel Rivers

was particularly corrosive with the South Carolinian stating that he ‘did not give a damn about world opinion’ and that a ‘definitive victory is the only acceptable objective’.⁴⁵ These much-publicised political outbursts’ ensured that southern politicians remained prominent and vocal on the government’s course throughout this key period of twentieth-century warfare. The recalcitrant approach of the region’s politicians towards their northern colleagues persisted dogmatically throughout the Vietnam War era. In C. Vann Woodward’s 1968 persuasive essay, *‘The Burden of Southern History’*, the author accused Lyndon Johnson and his Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, of deliberate ignorance, for failing to learn from their region’s own tragic history of struggle and defeat. In Woodward’s view, the Johnson administration’s lack of appropriate action to aid the whole of Vietnam meant the men had betrayed their regional heritage by ‘rejecting the South’s history of defeat and failure ... frustration and poverty... slavery, and its long aftermath of racial injustice’.⁴⁶ Woodward contended that this pre-ordained knowledge from their past should have led both to a more intimate understanding of subjugated nations, and thus engendering sympathy towards the plight of the Vietnamese. Nonetheless, Woodward’s critique overlooks the possibility that these influential southerners may have actually felt obligated to help the South-Vietnamese — in a manner they thought was fit — as a result of the two regions shared similar hardship. These telling factors are revealed in numerous references made by Johnson, Rusk and Fulbright, who related the plight of ‘their’ South’s past struggles to that of the northern Vietnamese intrusion into the South of Vietnam.

Although separated by thousands of miles and centuries of history, it could be argued that southerners alluded to a fictive kinship between the two regions. Ironically, a northerner, Henry Cabot Lodge II, a Harvard-educated former Senator for Massachusetts, made this

(Dem) Representative for South Carolina. Allen J. Ellender (Dem) Senator for Louisiana. Russell B. Long (Dem) Senator for Louisiana.

⁴⁵ The obituary of Mendel Rivers, *The Spartanburg Herald*, (30/12/1970), p.4.

⁴⁶ Woodward, (1968), p.229.

important point. In 1966, Lodge was instructed by Johnson to provide a detailed and realistic impressionistic account of the South Vietnamese people, in an attempt to understand their collective sentiments.⁴⁷ Despite the fact that Lodge reported solely on Vietnamese socio-economic and political culture, the historical similarities and regional tensions experienced by the American South and Vietnamese South were salient. Lodge recounted that the southern Vietnamese had suffered both a civil war defeat and economic domination at the hands of their Chinese-backed and more economically progressive northern brethren. This North/South cultural polarity resulted in a vociferous patriotism based around the agrarian lifestyle and adherence to upholding family traditions so prominent in the poorer southern region. Lodge also stated that '[the South Vietnamese] have had one hundred years of (French) colonial domination, and in their subconscious is the feeling that they don't have to take responsibility for [belligerent] actions. Because of their past, they are touchy about independence and about face', meaning the preservation of their dignity.⁴⁸

The Vietnamese mannerisms presented by Lodge are both recognisable and comparable to those that traditionally define the American South. Because of reoccurring through the generations, and reliance on seasonal agriculture, the Vietnamese — like American southerners — were strongly family-orientated; making their living came from farm tenancy and sharecropping. The fiscal dominance and governmental power of Vietnam's northern regions, largely inspired and supported by the Chinese model, ultimately ensured that the South Vietnamese clung to their well-established socio-political dogma, resulting in the region being impervious to further cultural transformation.

⁴⁷ In a phone conversation recorded in March 1965, Johnson confided to Cabot-Lodge that he 'always thinks of him and liked to philosophise with him' and that Johnson would like Lodge to research other American aid programs 'before they eased themselves into a strategy starting in Saigon'. Miller Centre, Tape (WH6503.12).

⁴⁸ Henry Cabot Lodge, *Memo to President Johnson, April 29, 1966*, National Security Files-Memos to President, Walt W. Rostow Papers, Box 7, (Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, Texas), accessed August 2014.

The Political South from a Racial Perspective

Inherent in the economic and political situation of the South was the plight of blacks and civil rights activism. Indeed, studies of southern culture throughout the Vietnam War era often discuss the civil rights movement, showing that the South's black population experienced significant employment and electoral changes throughout the Vietnam period. The signing of the Civil Rights Act in July 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of August 1965 pledged to bring some aspects of social equality to the nation as a whole, albeit at a much slower pace in the American South.⁴⁹ By embracing and pushing through the cause of Civil Rights, President Johnson was well-aware that the Democrats' political monopoly of the South would wane as much of the party's voters viewed his decision as a step too far towards northern-orientated liberalism. As a result, the Democrats' supremacy, as the firm political party in the South would rapidly decrease from this period.

Despite the emergence of African-Americans into the political arena, disappointment ensued especially in the South as black men and women were largely unprepared, professionally, for roles in such a white-dominated arena. African-Americans who were politically active in an electoral sense, tended to be middle-aged and well-educated urbanites, many of who were largely content with the political/economic state, thus not wanting to jeopardise their immediate surroundings. Consequently, a form of selective racial amnesia — based on social mobility — ensued, further retarding any possibility of black people gaining equal status in the South. As a result of the class-based divide increasing amongst black people, the remainder of the South's black men stood to be prime targets for the Vietnam draft

⁴⁹ In 1962 the United States Congress adopted the one person – one vote rule. This more constitutionally fair process of voting sapped much of the power of the white southern Democrats' monopolies. Formerly over-represented small rural counties in the South were no longer allowed the same power as much larger counties across the nation. Within two years of the act being enforced, the number of congressional districts in the South had plummeted from 214 to 130. Figures from Michael Perman, *Pursuit of Unity* (2009), p.326. For more information consult <http://www.theconstitutionproject.com/portfolio/one-person-one-vote>.

boards that were so abundant in the Southern states.⁵⁰ Joseph Fry argued that from a southern perspective, ‘African-Americans agonised over the desire to serve their country as their own government opposed a program of self-determination in Vietnam, black attitudes towards military service, were understandably secondary to civil rights issues’.⁵¹ Despite Fry’s claim that black people were undecided regarding military service, the reality for southern black people especially, was that they had little to no choice on the matter. Thousands of poor black people — much like their white counterparts — realised that the prospect of decent regular employment in the South remained largely unachievable, despite the region’s economic boom. Black people who were employed and knowledgeable of the situation in Vietnam, were also well aware of the risk of showing anti-war sentiments, such was their fragile economic dependence on white employers.

Regardless of the attempts of the Johnson administration to promote a national consensus towards the war in Vietnam, the South’s economic and political spheres remained largely discriminatory towards their region’s poor, both black and white. As the war in Vietnam escalated and men were drafted at an alarming rate, founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) Dr Martin Luther King Jr, used the war in Vietnam as a definitive example of how white people continued to oppress black men. In January 1967, in reference to the lack of electoral support for the nation’s black people, Dr King lashed out against the government for ‘sending black soldiers to fight in Vietnam for liberties denied them at home’.⁵² King’s sentiments would reverberate amongst the black population of America, none more so than its southern contingent. In the autumn of 1967, King noted how

⁵⁰ 1967 was the peak year for Americans drafted for Vietnam. National draft figures reveal that 64% of eligible blacks were drafted for Vietnam in comparison to 31% of eligible whites. In the same year, of the 17,123 employed in the nation’s draft boards, black men accounted for just 278. Not a single black soldier worked in any of the South’s draft boards. Figure retrieved from James E. Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts: African Americans and the Vietnam War* (New York, 1997), p.21.

⁵¹ Fry, (2002), p.282.

⁵² Lawrence Baskir and William Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance: The Draft, The War, and The Vietnam Generation* (Toronto, 1978), p. 133.

the need for men and a booming military-reliant economy outweighed any prospect of social equality stating that ‘I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in the rehabilitation of its poor so long as Vietnam continues to draw men and skills and money’.⁵³ Accordingly, when Louisville-born world boxing champion Muhammad Ali was tried for draft evasion in 1966, he stated that his reason for refusing to go to Vietnam was that ‘[he was] not going 10,000 miles to help murder, kill and burn other people, to simply help continue the domination of white slave masters over dark people the world over’.⁵⁴ Civil Rights groups, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), also utilised the war in Vietnam for highlighting the exploitation of America’s black population.

Alabama’s George C. Wallace delivered his characteristic pro-white sentiments while ensuring his state remained infamous for its racial relations, stating at a rally that ‘all these countries with niggers in them have stayed the same for a thousand years’.⁵⁵ The outwardly reported racism from some southern politicians would only fester as the number of black nations grew to outnumber those of white countries in the overall membership of the United Nations. While African-Americans struggled to establish and defend their own place and identity within southern culture, many whites remained staunch supporters of their region’s historical distinctiveness utilising their ancestry to emphasise their place in society by connecting themselves to the past. In 1965, senator for Louisiana Allen J. Ellender publically stated that ‘he had never met any Africans who have the capability to run their own affairs’,

⁵³ David R. Goldfield, *Black, White, and Southern: Race Relations and Southern Culture, 1940 to the Present* (Baton Rouge, 1990), p.214.

⁵⁴ Quote from, ‘Muhammad Ali, The Measure of a Man’, (New York, 1967), *Freedomways*, Issue 7, p.101. Ali received his draft notice to enlist in the US Army. Although Ali would have easily been granted exclusion from military service on the grounds of his boxing career, he specifically chose to object the draft on the grounds that his Islamic religious beliefs forbade killing in all forms, and that America’s mission in Vietnam was based on racial hatred. He was subsequently arrested and fined \$10,000 for draft evasion. He was sentenced to five years’ imprisonment, later quashed on appeal.

⁵⁵ Dan T. Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics* (New York, 1995), p.237.

thus only serving to cause further embarrassment to the face of American cultural ideals.⁵⁶ Whereas these caustic sentiments largely stemmed from older members of southern society, it could be assumed that the region's younger population were more forward-thinking. Notwithstanding, much of southern youth remained cautious in expressing liberal views towards Vietnam, with many — albeit probably as a result of peer pressure — sustained the South's cultural distinctiveness within American society of the period.

The Reaction of Southern Youth

A brief examination of the attitudes of southern youth towards 'outsiders' will help clarify the extent of influence that the region's politicians and culture had upon them. This warrants further attention as student protests formed a large part of the Vietnam experience – though in the South, this was distinctly different. Throughout the Vietnam period, students protested on many university campuses across America. Notwithstanding the actions of the nation's youth protest, a clear North/South divide of opinions was evident on the subject. The years of 1968 and 1969, arguably the two most destructive years for America in Vietnam, northern student protests were regularly held, with student attendance on some campuses as high as 50%. In contrast, student protests in the South were infrequent, and castigated by the region's politicians as dangerously liberal-minded and defeatist, ensuring that many southern protests barely reached 35% attendance at their peak. College and university staff in the South showed similar restraint as, out of 445 educational establishments, seven anti-Vietnam War strike or

⁵⁶ In numerous phone conversations with President Johnson, Ellender offered to be the president's 'hatchet bearer regarding foreign policy towards Africa', while warning that 'we have entirely too many military missions abroad, and it is my belief that if we don't get out of Vietnam, it will be another Korea, where we can't leave'. Source: Miller Centre, Tapes (WH6601.09) and (WH6411.13) respectively. Wallace and Ellender quotes utilised from Thomas A. Becnel, *Senator Allen Ellender of Louisiana: A Biography* (Louisiana, 1996), p.209. Paul Gordon Lauren's *Power and Prejudice: The Politics and Diplomacy of Racial Discrimination* (Chicago, 1990), confirms how throughout the 1960s, many politicians from the American South were especially vocal on their distaste for increased membership of African nations in to the United Nations.

protest days were reported.⁵⁷ On a national scale, young people became more socially aware, and in turn, became more critical of government agendas. Notwithstanding, the South's resilient cultural stimuli ensured that many of the region's youth remained subdued in comparison to their northern counterparts.

In 1957 and again in 1971, Gallup researchers questioned hundreds of southern students from across the South. In the study, participants were asked to choose from a list of 84 adjectives that best described 'typical traits' of southerners. In order to present a comparative analysis, the groups were then asked to do the same for northerners and to choose those adjectives that most suitably defined Americans. In fitting with the white South's partiality for socio-political recalcitrance, the five most prevalent words utilised to describe the South were 'conservative', 'tradition-loving', 'courteous', 'loyal to family ties' and 'conventional'. In contrast, the top five descriptions of their northern brethren were 'conceited', 'ostentatious', 'industrious', 'sophisticated' and 'progressive', with 'arrogant' and 'boastful' the sixth and seventh most popular term.⁵⁸ Notably, the characterisation of Americans in general by southern students was essentially indistinguishable to their stereotype of northerners, thus bearing no resemblance to their depictions of themselves as southerners. In reference to these studies, John Shelton Reed argues that 'if similar studies were carried out with northern students, the resemblance between typical Americans and northerners would have been almost identical'.⁵⁹ These choices made southern students reveal how apparent regional distinctiveness remained in the consciousness of the youth of the Vietnam era. It should be noted that these studies have numerous drawbacks. Though the age group examined was similar to those adults sent to Vietnam, the fact that these candidates

⁵⁷ Figures from Durand Long and Julian Foster, *Protest! Student Activism in America* (New York, 1985), p.83.

⁵⁸ Gallup Poll results retrieved from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States Series C*, p.23. http://www.census.gov/prod/www/statistical_abstract.html.

⁵⁹ Reed also points out that a cultural divide was also clearly evident on the description of 'typical Negro traits', with the southern group showing more animosity towards blacks. *The Enduring South: Subcultural Persistence in Mass Society* (Chapel Hill, 1974), p.28.

were male and female, and in higher education, means they were certainly not representative of those serving in Vietnam. Through the sentiments and efforts of the South's influential adults, the region's more privileged youth were predisposed to this distinctive philosophy.⁶⁰

Southern Public Opinion

By 1965, the South's seemingly outdated cultural philosophy — in the eyes of many non-southerners — would be further tested as many of their region's white and black men were faced with the reality of fighting alongside their northern brethren in Vietnam.⁶¹ For much of the South's white populace, the prospect of a second defeat in war was inconceivable. This was especially evident in the minds of the South's influential politicians, even with 'their' weakened Democratic party in power. Opinion polls conducted throughout the Vietnam era consistently revealed that the southern public and politicians expressed considerable reservations over the limitation of arms production and the possibility of a peaceful co-existence with the Communist countries supported by the Soviet Union.⁶²

By the end of 1967, the conflict in Vietnam was looking ominously worse, with no real progress made in a military sense. In addition to this, and unknown to the nation, the humiliation of the enemy's Tet Offensive was only weeks away. The South's fervour for martial behaviour and heightened concern for loss in Vietnam was evident in various opinion polls from the period. Simon Hall's research of political opinion during the Vietnam era states

⁶⁰ The use of the term 'white elite' is utilised throughout this and previous chapters. However, despite the considerable influence of southern whites upon their region, the term elite white becomes increasingly defunct from the mid-twentieth century. This powerful group, often attributed as commanding the 'new South' retained much of their old influence, but from a more widespread economic and political standpoint. Stephen A. Smith argues that throughout the 1960s, irreparable cultural fault lines appeared in the South leading much of the region's previous elite to pursue and construct a New South less alienated nationally, yet traditionally distinctive. *Myth, Media, and the Southern Mind* (Arkansas, 1985), p.35.

⁶¹ Despite the United States' massive military/technological advantage in Vietnam, America as a fighting ground-force had little previous experience in jungle and counter-insurgency warfare.

⁶² Information from, *The Gallup Opinion Poll: Public Opinion, 1935-1971* (New York, 1971), p.1,699.

that ‘evidence in the form of polls in 1967, shows how the war in Vietnam increasingly replaced Civil Rights as ‘the issue’ in the consciousness of politically aware white people’.⁶³ Accordingly, the reactions of southern politicians who dictated much of U.S. foreign policy throughout this era was increasingly dissimilar from their northern colleagues, as they were somewhat at the mercy of the traditionalist opinions of their own electorate.

The Stimuli of Southern Political Power

Throughout the Vietnam era, southern politicians frequently displayed familiar regional traits. Allan Dafoe and Devin Caughey’s research documented the influence of regional identity upon the social, economic and foreign policies of five twentieth-century southern presidents. On foreign policy, Dafoe concluded that ‘presidents from the South are likely to place greater emphasis on honour and reputation for resolve, as honour has long been recognised as one of the ordering principles of Southern society.’⁶⁴ Caughey’s statistical research concluded that ‘southern presidents behave substantially and significantly differently in interstate militarised disputes: they are twice as likely to use force, experience disputes twice as long, and are three times more likely to achieve victory’.⁶⁵ Notwithstanding the elusiveness of a standard definition of ‘the South’, the region’s established cultural recalcitrance played an identifiable part in influencing the ideas and practices of its key politicians throughout the Vietnam era. None of who were more influential than Lyndon Johnson himself.

It is crucial to determine how and to what extent southern identity influenced, both consciously and unconsciously, President Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ), during the Vietnam

⁶³ Simon Hall, *Peace and Freedom, The Civil Rights and Anti-War Movements in the 1960s* (Philadelphia, 2005), p.55.

⁶⁴ Allan Dafoe and Devin Caughey examined the policies of Lyndon Baines Johnson (Texas), Jimmy Carter (Georgia), George H.W. Bush (Texas), Bill Clinton (Arkansas) and George W. Bush, (Texas). *Honor and War: Southern US Presidents and the Effects of Concern for Reputation* (Yale, 2013), p.15.

⁶⁵ Dafoe and Caughey, (2013), p.37.

War. While it can never be revealed for certain that Johnson's explicit judgments were made because he was from South, nonetheless through his tangible behaviours, his southern upbringing was noteworthy and in a non-instrumental way, 'southernness' cannot be disentangled from his intellectual outlook and responses. Johnson's hometown of Stonewall, Texas, was historically linked to the South's Lost Cause. Gaining its name in 1870, in memory of Confederate hero General Thomas J. 'Stonewall' Jackson who died seven years earlier, the town's dignitaries chose the name following the general's comments that the men from this area had fought gallantly during the Lost Cause. Located on the Pedernales River, this subtropical hill country is not typical of the dusty oil fields of lowland Texas, which many visualise when they think of this state. Johnson's ancestors and immediate family were very much country folk, familiar with the struggles of agrarian life and detached from many of the aspects of modernity such as running water and electricity available in the North. Emblematic for many southerners, Johnson was exposed to tales of individualism and gallantry as well as traditional bible teachings.⁶⁶ According to Johnson's chief biographers, his father and grandfather's unwavering Christadelphian denomination played a particularly prominent role in infusing Johnson with the recalcitrance towards other groups and influences who did not agree with his own principles.⁶⁷

Many of Johnson's biographers, such as Robert Caro, Philip Roulon and Robert Dallek, all assert that LBJ exhibited southern mannerisms and that he was not only shrewdly aware of the impression this had upon those around him, but that he utilised his 'southernness' as a point of leverage in the White House.⁶⁸ Accordingly, Johnson was well

⁶⁶ Numerous conversations recorded at the White House confirm how Johnson regularly sought the counsel of the Reverend Billy Graham. In one such dialogue recorded in October 1964, the president expressed how he 'required God's guidance and the company of [Graham] as I have the Russians and Chinese on either side of me with this situation in Vietnam'. Source: Miller Centre, Tape WH6410.13.

⁶⁷ Source <http://www.thechristadelphian.com/christadelphiansonline.html>.

⁶⁸ Robert Caro's multi-volume research examines Lyndon B. Johnson's rise to power, where Johnson is often portrayed as a shrewd opportunist as well as an individual well aware of the benefits and drawbacks of 'being' southern. While Robert Dallek's research on Johnson offers similar insights to those of Caro, Dallek reiterates

aware of how non-southerners were keen to use his region of birth as a weapon against him. Despite Southern Baptist pastor, Pat Robertson stating that ‘Johnson possessed the easy morality and arrogance of a Texas wheeler-dealer’, Johnson was determined to prove he was perceived differently.⁶⁹ Journalist, Ronnie Dugger argued that Johnson embraced and utilised the South’s religious zealotry, culturally-driven martial ways and passion for independence throughout his political tenure. Despite LBJ’s relatively open-minded stance on race and voting rights - in comparison to the views of many southern politicians - Dugger contends that Johnson’s southern upbringing destined the president to be more inclined to belligerency, arguing that ‘in Lyndon B. Johnson, the powerful story of the Alamo was structured into the president's character, it was one cause of Vietnam. The Alamo became Khe Sanh, San Jacinto the Tet Offensive... and victory and defeat’.⁷⁰ Consequently, as a result of southern stimuli Lyndon Johnson held a deep personal conviction to win the war in Vietnam ‘his’ way.

As examined earlier, through his conversations with fellow southerners, Johnson came to see the war and struggle in Vietnam as a corollary and not as a contravention of his quest for a great society. The paradox of Johnson as a ‘typical southerner’ still endured depending on the opinions of individual who knew him. While Lyndon Johnson may have regarded himself as southern, especially in the presence of non-southerners, Louisianan F. Edward Hebert, of the United States House of Representatives stated that ‘Johnson ceased being a Southerner, the moment he signed the Civil Rights Bill of 1957’.⁷¹ Whereas when Senator for New Mexico, Clinton P. Anderson was asked if he considered his president as a southerner,

how Johnson was possessed by personal insecurities, which ultimately guided some of his political policies. Phillip Roulon establishes how Johnson’s pragmatism was very-much guided by his simple and relatively poor Texas hill country upbringing.

⁶⁹ David, L. Holmes. *The Faiths of the Postwar Presidents: From Truman to Obama* (Georgia, 2012), p.19. Holmes adds that Johnson was effectively paranoid about the influence of the Kennedy’s, often referring to them as ‘that Eastern crowd’.

⁷⁰ Ronnie Dugger, *The Politician: the Life and Times of Lyndon Johnson, the Drive for Power, from the Frontier to Master of the Senate* (New York, 1982), p.35. Khe Sanh was a five month-long battle against North Vietnamese forces from January 1968. San Jacinto was a decisive battle in the Texas Revolution of 1836.

⁷¹ Fry, (2015), p.73.

he proclaimed that ‘oh yes, he was as Southern as hominy grits’.⁷² As the preceding quotes suggest, LBJ’s ‘southernness’ had its paradoxes, though often regarded as a liberal nationalist, and one of only three men from the former Confederate states to refuse to sign the Southern Manifesto of 1956 that supported racial segregation, Johnson’s steps into liberalism frequently contrasted with his more southern conservatism.

As Senate Majority Leader from 1955 to 1961 and Vice-President from 1961 to 1963, LBJ was acutely aware that his birth south of the Mason-Dixon Line would, in some manner, affect his political future career. Post-presidency, Johnson told his biographer and private secretary Doris Kearns-Goodwin that he had almost pulled out of the 1964 election campaign, as he was convinced that influential northerners would never let him achieve the presidency as a result of his origin. The most concise statement as to how Johnson felt his place of birth and social background would affect his run for the presidency is summarised in a statement given to Kearns-Goodwin in 1972 with the retired president stating that:

The burden of national unity rests heaviest on one man, the president. And I did not believe, any more than I ever had, that the nation would unite indefinitely behind any Southerner... My experience in office had confirmed this reaction. I was not just thinking of the derisive articles about my style, my clothes, my manner, my accent, and my family. I was thinking more of a deep-seated and far-reaching attitude-a disdain for the South that seems to be woven into the fabric of national experience.⁷³

The fact Lyndon Johnson believed that northern politicians, the media and political commentators held a ‘deep-seated and far-reaching attitude of disdain for the South’ is crucial

⁷² William E. Leuchtenburg, *The White House Looks South: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, Lyndon B. Johnson* (Louisiana, 2005), p. 288.

⁷³ Doris Kearns-Goodwin, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream* (New York, 1976), p.130.

in determining whether Johnson's decision-making as president was influenced by well-established North/South cultural animosity. Johnson frequently surrounded himself with fellow southerners, often flown into Washington D.C. for southern-styled social gatherings. One regular get-together with the president was nicknamed 'the Suite 8F Group', after the hotel room where they originally met. An attendee, Alvin Wurtz, recalled the event as being 'rowdy, hard-drinking...typical of old times back in the South'.⁷⁴ Although social-related gatherings are expected to some extent, the fact that Johnson sought the exclusive counsel of southerners not associated with or even knowledgeable of government, does allude to the president's own affection for the mannerisms of his southern kinfolk.

Appeasing the electorate of the assassinated President Kennedy was crucial once Johnson became commander-in-chief by default. Even before deploying ground troops as a fighting force in Vietnam, and only five weeks into his presidency, Johnson stated to an aide that 'I gotta figure out how to pay for these fucking wars and keep my commitment to feed, educate, and care for the poor people of this country'.⁷⁵ LBJ revealed numerous insights into the influence his rural southern upbringing and his dislike for the well-educated northerners of the period had upon him. Typical LBJ ripostes offer an insight into the president's consciousness, with presidential-period statements such as 'a lot of people have written a lot of nonsense about my private meetings; that's because most of the writing is done by intellectuals, who can never imagine me, a graduate from poor little San Marcos, engaged in actual debate with words and arguments'.⁷⁶ Johnson's bitterness towards the largely northern-educated intellectuals that derided him was an obvious matter of contention. Post-presidency Johnson informed Kearns-Goodwin that 'they those educated (Harvard types) never think

⁷⁴ Originally initiated in Houston's Lamar Hotel, then frequently held in Washington D.C., Members of Johnsons Suite 8F Group consisted solely of southerners such as Gus Wortham, George and Herman Brown, James Abercrombie and Alvin Wurtz; insurance, construction, Iron and hydro-electricity tycoons respectively. Quote from, Harry Hurt III, 'The Most Powerful Texans'. *Texas Monthly* (September, 1976). p.4.

⁷⁵ Lloyd C. Gardner, *Pay Any Price: Lyndon Johnson and the Wars for Vietnam* (Chicago, 1995), p.11.

⁷⁶ Kearns-Goodwin, p.74.

about what really goes on in those one-to-one sessions because they've never been involved in persuading anyone to do anything.⁷⁷ Confidantes and colleagues of Johnson, such as Dean Rusk, Clark Clifford, John C. Stennis and William F. Fulbright, also shared and exhibited similar pride in the eccentricities of the Old South. In a conversation with Houston's civic leader and fellow member of Johnson's suite F8 group, Gus Wortham, the president stressed to Wortham that he required more support to push through a bill on poverty stating that 'I've got the support of all the Democrats from up North and the Midwest, but I can't be having 35 southerners join with the Republicans to give me a whipping'.⁷⁸ Joseph Fry states that 'the Southern allegiance was likened to something like an army in which the colonels must follow the lead of their general' adding that Johnson and his men were dedicated to 'strong national defence policies and the benefits they created for the Southern economy'. These regional and socially-influenced political agendas were the cause of much consternation amongst non-southern politicians involved with foreign policy throughout the Vietnam era.

Numerous recorded transcripts from his conversations with southerners offer an insight into LBJ's contempt of the denizens of Martha's Vineyard, that 'female island' as he often coined it. For LBJ, this region was where wealthy-from-birth Harvard types gathered to ridicule anyone not of their own class and culture. As Vice-President, Johnson stated to Kearns-Goodwin that Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara had confided to [LBJ] regarding his policy towards Vietnam that [McNamara] felt like a murderer.⁷⁹ Despite Johnson's venture into liberalism, the president gave a typically southern riposte to Kearns-Goodwin affirming that, 'I never felt like a murderer, that's the difference. We can't let the

⁷⁷ Kearns-Goodwin, p.78.

⁷⁸ Source: Miller Centre, Tape WH6408.08. The poverty bill referred to by Johnson was part of his administration's Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which was a keystone in Johnson's war on poverty and Great Society plans.

⁷⁹ The statement made by Johnson that Robert S. McNamara 'felt like a murderer' is almost certainly from the initial period of the Vietnam War. McNamara soon took ownership of his nation's role in Vietnam and rarely showed remorse for his subsequent actions.

Kennedys be peacemakers and us (Southerners) war-makers simply because they came from the Charles River'.⁸⁰ In 1967, following a debate on troop numbers in Vietnam, Johnson derided the cultural experience of Robert Kennedy, by stating to an aide that 'Bobby Kennedy thinks I'm an ignorant Texas hayseed, but I know more about what the little people of America need than he does. When did that sumbitch (son of a bitch) last miss a meal'?⁸¹ Again, the language utilised by Johnson was one of disdain towards northern intellectually-influenced politicians. Notwithstanding these regional-based defamations, Johnson was well-aware that many of his northern colleagues, such as Robert S. McNamara and Deputy Secretary of Defense Cyrus Vance to name but two were invaluable to his presidency, regardless of their origin and place of education. This contradictory approach, where Johnson would deride an individual, because they were not southern, but then relying on their northern-educated academic skill was evident throughout LBJ's presidency.

Much like his changeable sentiments towards non-southern politicians, LBJ's relationship with his military during the Vietnam era was one of growing cynicism. The southern contingent in the White House increasingly clashed with the more northern-led management in command at the Pentagon and other defense-related departments. The more simplistic, and what could be described as culturally-inclined conducts of Johnson, Rusk, Clifford and even Fulbright during the early period of the war, regularly conflicted with the statistical-based methodology utilised by McNamara, Deputy Secretary of Defense Cyrus Vance and their largely Yale and Harvard-educated analysts. Much of the President's changing mood stemmed from the fact that Johnson felt that the military had deceived him regarding the Gulf of Tonkin incident three years earlier. This occurrence, generally regarded as the precursor to the war in Vietnam, claimed that North-Vietnamese patrol boats fired upon

⁸⁰ Gardner, (1995), p.404. The Charles River is often associated with the University town of Cambridge, Massachusetts, located on the Eastern seaboard.

⁸¹ Lloyd C. Gardner, (1995), p.130.

American warships in neutral waters.⁸² This cohesively destructive environment resulted in secretive micromanagement on both military and political levels, resulting in disinformation and failed tactics towards the war's administration. The president's wariness towards his Pentagon team and military is evident in a May 1965 telephone conversation with Cyrus Vance, Johnson instructs the Deputy Secretary of Defense that 'all speeches regarding military intervention in Vietnam are to be 'run by [him] first and that those boys down there [at the Pentagon] need to keep their mouths shut'. Johnson then turns his attention to the topic of military leadership, stating that 'Westmoreland may be the best, but I don't know him, he may be just another West Point academic statistician'.⁸³ The distrust between Johnson and his military was evident on a public scale, which in turn, led to fluctuating support from the populace. A Gallup poll commissioned in February 1966 revealed how Johnson's own Southern electorate were wary of his restricted warfare strategy with 42% of the South agreeing with their president, in comparison to 59% of the remainder of the region's population. By October of the same year, Southern support of Johnson's Vietnam tactics dropped to 35%, in comparison to 56% outside of the South.⁸⁴ A 21% regional disparity is significant given the context of the subject. Correspondingly, this suggests that the reduced support for Johnson's policy highlights that the southern populace was more belligerent in a push for an all-out victory, in contrast to the opinions of their northern brethren. By the end of his presidency in 1968, as a result of his decision to not stand for re-election, Johnson's dislike for the dissenting northern political 'liberals' and 'academics', as well as his distrust in his military, was widely known, and is often cited by his biographers as one of the main reasons he chose not to run for another term.

⁸² The validity of the military's account of events is still debated. As of 2015, the general consensus is that the incident never occurred as no evidence of enemy torpedoes was found and also that the U.S. ships involved were actually in North-Vietnamese waters on a covert reconnaissance mission.

⁸³ Miller Centre, Tape WH6505.34

⁸⁴ Statistics retrieved from *Gallup Opinion Index* No.9 (February, 1966), and No.18 (October, 1966).

Critically, from his childhood through to his retirement spent at his Texas ranch, Lyndon Baines Johnson regarded himself as a southerner from the hill country. His political discourse incorporated stories of his relatively poor southern upbringing which in turn, through his own insecurities, nurtured a strong dislike of northern intellectuals and born-wealthy politicians. Johnson undoubtedly believed that his southern origin prevented him from being taken seriously in the eyes of the northern intellectuals he so despised yet sought to impress. Harry Williams argues that Johnson frequently flaunted his ‘white Southern exuberant arrogance’ to prove a point yet concludes that Johnson ‘was aware that by not getting (northerners) approbation he ascribed his failure to their prejudice against the South, but at the same worried that they might be right’.⁸⁵ Frederik Logevall argues that, if the northerner John F. Kennedy had remained in power throughout the Vietnam era, ‘[JFK] would not have escalated the war as Johnson did, in part because, unlike LBJ, Kennedy did not view the conflict as a test of personal manliness’.⁸⁶ Johnson’s obstinacy towards taking advice on Vietnam matters is evident regardless of the origin of those attempting to advise the president. On July 27th 1965, Senate Majority Leader, Mike Mansfield — an individual who had served under and succeeded Johnson in the position — compiled a report authored by Mansfield, John Sherman Cooper, George Aiken, John Sparkman and William Fulbright to advise Johnson on the current situation in Vietnam.⁸⁷ Presenting the report to the president, Mansfield detailed how ‘the United States is deeply enmeshed in a place where we ought not to be; and that the situation is rapidly going out of control, and every effort should be made to

⁸⁵ Harry Williams, ‘Huey, Lyndon and Southern Radicalism’, *Journal of American History*, Vol. 60, No. 2 (1973), p.283.

⁸⁶ Frederik Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (Los Angeles, 2001), p.393.

⁸⁷ When Mansfield replaced Johnson as leader of the Senate in 1961, *The Washington Post* reported that ‘Senate observers had shed a master and gained a servant. Instead of Johnson’s browbeating tactics, Mansfield led by setting an example of humility and accommodation’. *The Washington Post*, 03/16/1993. As Senator for Kentucky, Cooper was well respected regarding foreign relations following his ambassadorial post to India and later East Germany. Senator for Vermont, George Aiken was also well respected for his foreign relations work in Congress. Accordingly, Senator for Alabama, John Sparkman’s knowledge of cultural affairs saw him replace William Fulbright as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

extricate ourselves’.⁸⁸ Notwithstanding the sentiments of this knowledgeable group, the following day, Johnson announced his intentions to send ground forces to Vietnam.

Secretary of State throughout the Vietnam War era, Dean Rusk, also displayed typically southern characteristics to those of his friend and president. Born in Georgia’s Cherokee County, Rusk was the son of a Southern Presbyterian minister and a graduate of North Carolina’s Davidson College, two aspects he shared with his political mentor, Virginian Woodrow Wilson. Rusk’s strong upbringing was laced with poverty and religion, meaning that he intimately related to and shared LBJ’s similar convictions. Johnson and Rusk’s dialogue often reflected on their ‘good old time’ experiences in the South. William Espinosa wrote that the South influenced the Georgian greatly, stating that ‘Rusk dug deep into the Georgia clay, into that southern Protestant upbringing which left a profoundly engraved conviction of the polarity of right and wrong’.⁸⁹ Rusk’s own memoirs are peppered with statements offered to colleagues such as ‘pray as if it were up to God, work as if it were up to you’, a term coined by the South’s struggling farmers. Thomas J. Schoenbaum stated that Rusk’s hometown was very much part of the Civil War’s history and that as a child ‘Rusk collected shell fragments and other war relics, which could easily be found nearby’. Even as an adult, Rusk ‘idolised the old general (Lee) for his courtly manner and aristocratic bearing’.⁹⁰ As Secretary of State under JFK, Rusk increasingly showed his distrust with the Central Intelligence Agency and the military, following the lack of and falsified information the two groups gave the White House throughout the Cold War period. Regardless of Rusk’s origin, the Georgian would later divulge and share his opinion with his friend and new president, Lyndon Johnson. Historian, John B. Henry compounds the Secretary of State’s

⁸⁸ *Senator Mike Mansfield to the President, enclosure to Robert S. McNamara, 07/28/1965.* White House Confidential Files, box 71, LBJ Library.

⁸⁹ William Espinosa and John B. Henry, ‘The Tragedy of Dean Rusk’, *Foreign Policy* No. 8 (1972), p.23. Rusk was noted for his religious quotes given to colleagues at the State Department. Herbert Y. Schandler, *Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam: The Unmaking of a President* (Princeton, 1977), p.172.

⁹⁰ Thomas J. Schoenbaum, *Waging Peace and War: Dean Rusk in the Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson Years*, (New York, 1988.), p.34 and p.144.

southern distinctions, stating that ‘Rusk was never completely comfortable with the jet-set Bostonians: there was never the bond he had with Lyndon Johnson, a fellow southerner’.⁹¹ While in office, Rusk often made comparisons in which he likened the Vietnam War and the American Civil War to one another.

Historian, John B. Henry argues that for Rusk, ‘the charge that Vietnam had become a southerner's war had more than a grain of truth.’⁹² Throughout their early lives, both Johnson and Rusk experienced poverty typical to the South and encountered racial exploitation, political ignorance and human degradation. These sympathies engendered a drive in both men for reform that culminated in such actions as the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965, the Medicare bill of 1966 and LBJ's War on Poverty, termed his ‘Great Society programs’.⁹³ Rusk, with the support of LBJ, planned similar relief programmes for Vietnam, albeit unsuccessfully. In phone conversations with his president, Rusk alluded to the plight of Vietnam's exploitation by French imperialists as a corollary to their downtrodden South's manipulation by the union of the U.S. northern states.

The influence of Arkansas Senator William J. Fulbright offers another further insight into the shared beliefs of the southern mind-set of key southern-influenced individuals associated with the war in Vietnam. Although now noted for his anti-war stance towards Vietnam, Fulbright was a fervent supporter of Johnson's early policies in Vietnam. The Arkansian's early support for action against the North-Vietnamese is evident in his signing and sponsoring of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution on August 7th 1964, which gave the go-ahead for military action. Notwithstanding, by 1968, Fulbright admitted that ‘I regret it more

⁹¹ Henry and Espinosa, p.15.

⁹² Henry and Espinosa, p.24.

⁹³ The ‘Great Society’ programs were a set of domestic acts launched by the Johnson administration in 1964-65. These major spending programs aimed to address shortfalls in education and medical care. Johnson would later lament that the cost and effort of Vietnam drained and ultimately ruined the total implementation of his program.

than anything I have done in my life'.⁹⁴ In his 1967 book, *The United States and the Arrogance of Power*, Fulbright highlights the injustice of American egotism and dominance of right and wrong over poorer countries. Fulbright hints that his later sentiments towards U.S. policy actually stemmed from the deeply held resentment of what [Fulbright] felt were northern attempts to dominate his own southern states.⁹⁵ Like many southerners of political influence, Fulbright's ethos often embraced opposition for the sake of political dissent, as well as embracing the familiar political dichotomy towards race and social standing so supported by many white people of the region.

An unrepentant segregationist and a signatory of the Southern Manifesto of 1956, Fulbright was articulatory gifted, classically educated, and from an aristocratic background based on the same European imperial approaches of his ancestors, who had achieved wealth through the subjugation of others.⁹⁶ A close aide to Fulbright, Fred Panzer was asked about the South's influence on Fulbright's decision-making. Panzer stated that 'his region most definitely influenced him. He identifies with the antebellum southern gentry, still wrangling from the seething hatreds of the Civil War; Vietnam is his ancestral plantation, the Vietcong are an amalgam of his tattered gallant Rebels and those hated carpet baggers and damn Yankees'.⁹⁷ This uncomfortable amalgam was evident throughout Fulbright's political career. Historian, Randall Bennett Woods affirms this view stating that 'Fulbright's perspective on Vietnam and the sharpness of his critique of American policy grew out of his southern

⁹⁴ Gardner, (1995), p.442.

⁹⁵ In *The Arrogance of Power* (New York, 1967), Fulbright criticised his country's foreign policy towards smaller, less advanced nations, stating that 'if we can bring ourselves so to act, we will have overcome the dangers of the arrogance of power. It will involve, no doubt, the loss of certain glories, but that seems a price worth paying for the probable rewards, which are the happiness of America and the peace of the world'. p.198.

⁹⁶ The Southern Manifesto, known officially as the Declaration of Constitutional Principles, was a document written in early 1956 opposed such issues as racial integration at public places and was signed by 101 politicians from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. Source, <http://www.enotes.com/topics/southern-manifesto>.

⁹⁷ Transcript of Fred Panzer to Mr Hayes Redmon, May 10, 1966, Office Files of Fred Panzer, Box 361, LBJ Papers.

background and his commitment to Wilsonian internationalism as he defined it'.⁹⁸ Indeed, both Dean Rusk and Walt W. Rostow (Special Assistant for National Security Affairs) have argued that Fulbright's opposition to the Vietnam War was actually as a direct result of his southern-inspired racism. According to Rusk and Rostow, 'Fulbright thought it simply abhorrent that white men should have to spill their blood to safeguard the freedom and independence of yellow men'.⁹⁹ Despite Fulbright's political shift from conservative 'hawk' to liberal 'dove' regarding Vietnam, his questionable stance on race and nationalism remained tainted by his southern elitist upbringing which he refused to denounce, in spite of its increasing cultural unpopularity.

Fulbright had never experienced the hardship of his president and secretary of state, yet he still utilised the plight of 'his' South with that of the southern Vietnamese. In February 1965, LBJ reprimanded Senator George McGovern and Fulbright over their liberal stance to end the war quickly telling them 'goddamn it George, you and Fulbright and all you history teachers down there in the senate, I haven't got time to fuck around with history, I've got boys on the line out there'.¹⁰⁰ Consequently, in a February 1965 phone call to Maxwell Taylor, Johnson complained that 'as a military man and as a political man, I went along with the [bombing] pause because Bill Fulbright, McGovern, and Mansfield said that if you pause long enough to give us a chance, we can bring them to the peace table. And all we got was a big fat chunk of nothing'.¹⁰¹ Johnson concluded the call by affirming that the U.S. will still be blamed for being warmongers. Correspondingly, attitudes towards Fulbright's changed view towards Vietnam angered other. When Fulbright was made chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC), ex-president Harry S. Truman dubbed Fulbright 'an

⁹⁸ Randall Bennett Woods, 'Dixie's Dove: J. William Fulbright, The Vietnam War and the American South', *Journal of Southern History* (August, 1994), p.534.

⁹⁹ Walt W. Rostow Interview with Randall Bennett Woods, November 15, 1988, Austin, Texas. Transcript of interviews with Walt W. Rostow and Dean Rusk both in possession of author.

¹⁰⁰ Joseph A. Fry, *Debating Vietnam: Fulbright, Stennis, and their Senate hearings* (Maryland, 2006), p.25.

¹⁰¹ Miller Centre, Tape WH6602.01

overeducated son of a bitch'.¹⁰² As chairman of the SFRC, Fulbright would ultimately come to denounce American policy in Vietnam as essentially a civil war in which the United States was supporting one side against the other. Fulbright's paradoxical political views were fuelled by his southern conviction to display martial pride and regionally-inspired racism, while lamenting on the effect of cultural oppression through defeat in war.

In conclusion of this study of southern politicians, the influence of Senator Richard Russell from Georgia is a key example of how the self-assumed distinction of 'southernness' influenced governmental policy in Vietnam. Russell's official role regarding Vietnam was merely peripheral, as he never held a position directly related to the war's administration. Despite this, Russell's 38 years in the Senate and close relationship with many fellow southern politicians ensured he moulded — albeit to varying degrees — many of America's Cold War policies.¹⁰³ The influence of Russell on LBJ's political career is well documented, and both men remained close friends into the early 1960s, although publically, their friendship suffered, as LBJ realised it was necessary to adopt a more nationally-inclusive platform to forward his political career. The decision of Johnson to detach himself from southern-specific confirms the notion that LBJ was well-aware of the 'backward-looking' attitude often attributed by his northern counterparts. Notwithstanding, in a 1965 birthday greeting to Russell, LBJ affirmed that, 'there is one thought that never deserts me. It is that without your judgment, your wisdom, and your friendship, Lyndon Johnson would be in pretty bad shape'.¹⁰⁴ Notwithstanding the potential pitfalls of being labelled 'southern', through the influence of their regional upbringings, both men shared a commonality of the purpose and

¹⁰² Randall Bennett Woods, *Fulbright: A Biography* (New York, 1995), p.163.

¹⁰³ Russell held this highly influential seat from 1933 until his death in 1971, serving as chairman of the Armed Services Committee through most of the Cold War era.

¹⁰⁴ Johnson to Russell, October 31, 1956, Lyndon B. Johnson Archives, Congressional File, 'Russell, Richard B'. Box 53, folder 1, Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library.

values so espoused by many southerners that ensured they remained in regular private contact until Russell's death in 1971.¹⁰⁵

Russell's efforts to influence foreign policy throughout the Vietnam era displayed many southern characteristics. When Senator for Massachusetts, Leverett Saltonstall stated to Russell that there was no need for an increase in the defence budget for the campaign in Vietnam, Russell retorted that 'hell, you'd be more military minded too, if Sherman had crossed North Dakota'.¹⁰⁶ Deeply influenced by his roots, Russell's mannerisms often made him vulnerable to misinterpretation by non-southerners for his archaic views. Historian, Jeff Woods argues that Russell believed there was a culturally-oriented corollary between the two Souths of Vietnam and America, with Russell affirming, 'that nationalism in Vietnam, as in the U.S. South... was about tangible things like blood, soil and tradition, not abstractions like progress, human rights, and civil liberties'.¹⁰⁷ As a result, many northern politicians dismissed Russell's analysis of Vietnam as being somewhat tainted by his 'good old boy' southern prejudices. Regardless of how Russell's views were interpreted by northern politicians, through regular phone calls, LBJ kept Russell well-informed on Vietnam matters, especially with regard to the American public's shifting opinions to the war.

In May 1966, Johnson asked Russell for his opinion regarding the prospect of victory in Vietnam. The 69-year-old Georgian cautioned his president with a response only a southerner would think of, stating that 'we could win it eventually, but we could be headed for our second great Lost Cause in our history, unless we get some cohesion of purpose in

¹⁰⁵ Despite the long friendship between LBJ and Russell, as their careers developed, crucial differences on their views on race relations, the role of the federal government, and foreign policy intervention eventually drove the two apart politically. Privately, their friendship was strained over Civil Rights legislation and the Warren Commission. Russell also believed Johnson's presidential campaign of 1964 was disloyal to their South as Johnson referred to the need of the whole country too much.

¹⁰⁶ Jeff Woods, *Richard B. Russell: Southern Nationalism and American Foreign Policy* (Maryland, 2007), xix. Russell's reference to Sherman was a quip that General Sherman's advance into the South was very much a crossing of 'national' borders.

¹⁰⁷ Woods, (2007), p.114.

South Vietnam, it will be a pyrrhic victory'.¹⁰⁸ Russell's rural southern upbringing was a key factor in opposing American interference with Vietnamese farmland. When the Strategic Hamlet Program was being implemented throughout the period of the war, Russell warned Johnson that 'I don't know these Asian people, but they tell me they worship their land and ancestors and so I wouldn't play with their land if I were you'.¹⁰⁹ Russell correctly assumed, as was the case with many American southerners, these historic factors meant more to the average Vietnamese peasant than intangible notions of nationalism and the benefits of capitalism.

In spite of the undoubted pride white southern politicians exhibited in their own culture and their longstanding, reflexive opposition to the political process of Northern politicians; the fluctuating influence of southern identity — especially that most closely associated with the Civil War and subsequent Lost Cause era — could be overemphasised in relation to the Vietnam War. Nevertheless, for many politically interested southerners, albeit for differing reasons, both the Civil War and the Vietnam War offered many segues for North and South cultural comparisons that served to reinforce southern distinctiveness. This narrative was a result of the continuing effort of southerners, and in some cases northerners, to remain politically and ultimately ideologically separate as a result of their region of birth. The aforementioned politicians formed part of an influential southern conglomerate that consciously chose to communicate and associate these two traumatic eras of American history, interpreting Vietnam through a southern lens that consistently drew from formative experiences from below the Mason Dixon line.

¹⁰⁸ Caroline F. Ziemke, 'Senator Richard B. Russell and the Lost Cause in Vietnam, 1954-1968', *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* Vol. 72, No. 1 (1988), p.25.

¹⁰⁹ David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (New York, 1972), p.641. The Strategic Hamlet Program was the forced relocation of thousands of southern Vietnamese from their villages into secure fenced-off areas constructed and guarded by American and South Vietnamese troops.

Accordingly, the vast majority of the government's southern politicians remained united on numerous unpopular decisions regarding the war in Vietnam. This standpoint was often in opposition to the growing, largely northern-based consensus, which generally favoured a less belligerent approach to hostilities in Vietnam. The pugnacious nature of southerners was evident on numerous occasions when votes and bills in Congress were presented by the government to guide foreign policy in Vietnam. The southern predisposition for individualism was exemplified by acts such as when the region's politicians voted unanimously 22 to 0 on the use of potentially lethal chemical defoliants against the Vietnamese, in stark contrast to the opinions of senators representing northern states.¹¹⁰ Southern senators were also strongly opposed — in contrast to northern senators — to furnishing Congress with copies of the Pentagon Papers, which ultimately revealed that American policy in Vietnam was heavily flawed and corrupted.¹¹¹ Even as the war was effectively lost, in 1971, southern politicians gave unanimous support to President Nixon's unpopular decision to extend the military draft for a further two years, ignoring their Democratic loyalties to and policies of their presidential nominee, George McGovern.¹¹²

Frequently, the southern populace both publically and politically set themselves apart from the views of northerners over the war in Vietnam. The region's politicians and their electorate downplayed the uncovering of the My Lai Massacre, which had gone unreported for 20 months. This atrocity, which took on a particular southern nuance, convicted only one

¹¹⁰ The United States' use of chemical defoliants in Vietnam remains a controversial subject today. Known as 'agents' these chemicals were named by the colour markings on the drums which contained the fluids. Agent Orange is the most widely recognised chemical of the defoliants, due to its effectiveness in quickly stripping away the forest canopies that were so effective in hiding the enemy.

¹¹¹ Officially titled 'Report of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force', the Pentagon Papers were commissioned by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara in 1967. In 1971, RAND Corporation employee Daniel Ellsberg leaked a proportion of the documents, which were subsequently discussed in the *New York Times* in June of the same year. The article claimed that the Johnson Administration had 'systematically lied, not only to the public but also to Congress'. (*New York Times, Sunday Edition, 13/06/71*).

¹¹² On September 28th, 1971, President Richard Nixon signed H.R. 6351 in to law. This act extended the military draft for a further two years until June 1973, despite much of Nixon's past election campaign promising to end the draft in June 1971. Often described as a proponent of American liberalism. McGovern denounced Nixon's policy of Vietnamisation, while referring to Ho Chi Minh as Vietnam's George Washington.

individual, Second Lieutenant William Calley, a southerner, for his part in the atrocity. A more limited war that required fewer men in Vietnam as well as less aggressive tactics always had greater support in the North than it did in the southern states. The South's support of the Bay of Pigs fiasco was evident in opinion polls, both before and after its failure to depose Cuban leader Fidel Castro.¹¹³ Similar polls revealed that southerners, in contrast to much of the northern populace, were also comfortable with the use of nuclear weapons in Vietnam and elsewhere to contain any threats of Communism. White southerners specifically were prone to express their cultural characteristics based on their region of birth, and proudly embraced their uniqueness as descendants Civil War participants. The role and sentiments of southern politicians and their electorate inextricably influenced the role of the military, which in turn affected the state of affairs and industrial output of the nation's economy. Although 15 years old by the outbreak of the war in Vietnam, the National Security Council's NSC-68 manifesto remained pivotal in shaping U.S. foreign policy throughout the Vietnam era.¹¹⁴ The manifesto effectively described the ensuing years as a crucial political, economic and cultural struggle between the 'good' powers of capitalism against the evils of Communism. The influence of NSC-68 is relevant to this thesis, as Southern politicians such as Richard Russell, John C. Stennis and Mendel Rivers staunchly utilised the manifesto's martial language to conjure up both public and private support in gaining prosperous military contracts. Through the dissemination of anti-Communist propaganda and prejudiced lobbying, southern politicians and businessmen succeeded in producing a dramatic increase in military expenditure, as the

¹¹³ The Bay of Pigs invasion, commonly referred to as the fiasco, took place on 17th April 1961. The American CIA trained and funded the Democratic Revolutionary Front (DRF) of Cuba in a failed attempt to overthrow Cuban leader Fidel Castro.

¹¹⁴ The NSC-68 manifesto reveals how U.S. foreign policy-makers in the Cold War period recognized the need for militarization. The language used in the document incorporates martial themes and motifs in order to provoke its readers in to gearing up for a war against Communist countries. NSC-68 is a source of much historical debate, as is the escalation of the Cold War. Successive administrations have used the manifesto as an effective example of policy. Source: www.trumanlibrary.org/study_collections/coldwar/10-1.pdf.

suppression of Communism in Vietnam increasingly became part of the government's prime directive.

Following the Gulf of Tonkin incident in August 1964, the use of military force — in the form of ground troops in Vietnam — increasingly topped the agenda of governmental discussions. Southern politicians unashamedly led the call for a more belligerent stance in Vietnam, as all of the 93 southerners in Congress voted for swift military action in a 1965 congressional vote. This turnout was in stark contrast to that of northern Congressmen of whom fewer than 30% offered support for military aggression.¹¹⁵ Through effective media coverage and political debate, the government's southern-managed propaganda machine was successful in creating a mood of national paranoia against the looming 'red threat' that was apparently closing in on American soil.¹¹⁶ As the federal budget for war grew considerably in the decade leading up to Vietnam, in a fashion representative of those who mourned the South's rustic heritage, William Faulkner lamented to his southern brethren that 'our economy is no longer agricultural. Our economy is the federal economy.'¹¹⁷ The southern penchant for political distinctiveness was reinforced, as much of the region's populace showed greater enthusiasm in paying higher taxes for services than their more financially affluent northern neighbours, in order to fuel the massive increase in defence spending for Vietnam.

Throughout the 1960s, the proud white South's zeal for another military campaign, and the economic benefits that duly ensued, singled out the region's attitude to Vietnam as distinct to that of the North's. Southern manufacturing industries had become so successful in pursuing defence dollars that all strata of Southern society vehemently opposed any dialogue

¹¹⁵ Figures retrieved from *CQA Congressional Reports Quarterly* Issue 1 (1965), p.517.

¹¹⁶ In conjunction with the 'Red Threat', the South's economic reliance on military industry, as well as their population's pride in martial behaviour, witnessed the region termed as Fort or Fortress Dixie or Dixieland. More recently, the term has been rejuvenated by the region's media and politicians to symbolise the return of Southern Democrat 'values' to the South.

¹¹⁷ Bruce J. Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South, 1938-1980* (Durham, N.C., 1994), p.145.

regarding reform of restriction on the procurement of military contracts in the region. All sections of the South's population duly welcomed this new industry, as defence-related jobs paid, on average, one and a half times the national average salary. Notably, this new industry paid up to four times more than the South's previous agricultural-based wages, which were barely at subsistence level in many cases. Regrettably, despite the apparent economic boom, many of the region's poor whites, as well as the vast majority of the region's African Americans still suffered as a combination of existing southern prejudice and racism, along with immigration from the North, deemed life for many long-suffering southerners as unaffected. As a result of the South's economic boom, albeit for a select group and astute tactics of its politicians, much the region's populace believed America's entry into the war in Vietnam as economically beneficial. Consequently, by the early 1960s, the region formerly referred to as the 'sunbelt South' due to its reliance on tourism, added ordnance production to its economy, transforming the geographic and industrial landscape of the region.¹¹⁸

Although less influential and vocal than the South's politicians and businessman, military men from the region still singled themselves out with their distinct southern attitudes towards the campaign in Vietnam. Chapter III examines this in detail, but even the military's highest-ranking soldier in Vietnam could not resist mentioning America's ideological divide from the previous century. General William Westmoreland stated that 'how to win the war advice came from Bob McNamara's northern whiz kids. Since these people usually didn't know what they were talking about, I conveniently ignored many of their cables'.¹¹⁹ In November 1967, South Carolinian Westmoreland was summoned back to the United States by President Johnson in an attempt to convince the American public that the war could and

¹¹⁸ The original source for the term 'sunbelt' derives from a study conducted by the United State Army Air-force (USAF) in to finding the most suitable region to train pilots and test new aircraft. The South's predominantly fine weather, with short periods of intense storms proved ideal testing grounds for the United States military. The Sunbelt is now a term used to describe the tourist region of the southern United States.

¹¹⁹ Wilson, p.17.

would be won. Like so many influential southerners of this period, Westmoreland soon reverted to the southern penchant for historical reminiscing. With an audience at the National Press Club in Washington, Westmoreland told that the war in Vietnam ‘was like similar ‘just’ struggles for the Confederacy in the Civil War’, belligerently stating that ‘I hope they (the North Vietnamese) try something, because we are looking for a fight’.¹²⁰ The South’s Vietcong forces and the North Vietnamese Army granted Westmoreland his wish within weeks of his speech, as the New Year beckoned, along with the Vietnamese holiday of Tet.

In 1968, five weeks before his retirement, Harold Johnson, then America’s youngest Army Chief of Staff — a position that outranked that of Westmoreland’s — remonstrated that the cost of ammunition alone for the war in Vietnam was ‘astronomical and a staggering volume’, while revealing that ‘as much as 85% of the ammunition used was unobserved fire’.¹²¹ This year also witnessed the death of almost 17,000 U.S. personnel in Vietnam, the highest for any year of the war. These potentially crippling factors were heavily censored by both the military and political leaders, while being of little concern to the burgeoning profits of the South’s industrial complex.¹²² As southern industrialists prospered, the distinct loyalties, preconceptions and culture evident in the region compounded the self-identity of thousands of ‘typical’ southerners.

Concurring with Westmoreland, Texan and Acting Chief of Staff in Vietnam Lt General Bruce Palmer wrote of his pride in his ancestors’ Confederate participation during the American Civil War and its similarities to battle in Vietnam. In his own memoirs, Palmer

¹²⁰ Wilson, p.18.

¹²¹ Lawrence Baskir and William Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance: The Draft, The War, and the Vietnam Generation* (Toronto, 1978), p.191. Unobserved fire is the military term used to describe the wasting of ammunition on targets that cannot be seen or determined. This figure has slowly dropped over the past century’s military engagements.

¹²² In the first twelve months of ground troops being deployed in Vietnam, 1,928 Americans lost their lives. This figure rose to high of 16,899 three years later in 1968, now considered to be the pivotal year in Vietnam. In the war’s final year, technically 1975, sixty two men lost their lives. Figures retrieved from www.archives.gov/research/militaryvietnam-war/casualty-statistics.html.

summed up the economic benefit that wars create and the anguish of a military loss, stating with regard to Vietnam that ‘arms manufacturers couldn’t lose, [the military] had no material problem; and anything they lost, was replaced. Still, I just couldn’t see any way of winning the war.’¹²³ Historian, Numan Bartley poignantly wrote that ‘Southerners permeate a community ancestor-orientated belief system, and that it was little wonder Southern political and military leaders tended to be a trifle backward-looking’.¹²⁴ From a political and military perspective, throughout the Vietnam War era, groups of ‘hawks’ and ‘doves’ were apparent originating from both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line. Notwithstanding, southern ‘doves’ were much fewer than those from the North, and the sentiments from this small group were familiarly based on the tragic past of their South, and not the more liberal outlook based on past and present foreign policy adopted by northern doves. Accordingly, this ‘belief system’ referred to by Bartley was, in the opinions of many southerners of the Vietnam War era, a quality that was regionally exclusive, hereditary and compounded by the southern models of education, moral character and martial behaviour based on an historic defeat.

This chapter has demonstrated how influential white southern politicians and businessmen drew from the South’s history and culture, the main elements of which date back to the American Civil War era, to bolster and re-establish their region’s political and economic standing during the Vietnam era. As a result, the South as a region, invested significant interests in the Vietnam campaign in the form of key politicians and businessmen who wasted no opportunity to reinvigorate the region’s cultural myth’s to garner the support of its distinct populace. These groups procured a whole new military industry by utilising the unique culture that the South had previously prided itself on, one of martial behaviour, and a passion for maintaining honour. This was achieved primarily because of their loss in the Civil War that created the North/South cultural rift a century earlier. The war in Vietnam never

¹²³ Gardner, (1995), p.416.

¹²⁴ Bartley, (1995), p.110.

gaining support of the American populace, but the South's politicians and majority of its white electorate vehemently supported controversial decisions on Vietnam policy in the face of northern opposition.

This was evident not only in the distinct decisions made by southerners themselves, but also in the opinions of those born north of the Mason-Dixon Line. In terms of the economic landscape, a very different South had emerged by the end of the 1960s from the agrarian-reliant region of the past two centuries. This new model of industrialised growth in the South prioritised martial-related business activity, for which the region was mythically renowned. Notwithstanding, a factor evident to those who were familiar with the dynamics of this 'new South' was that, socially and culturally, the region largely retained its controversial stance towards race and class. As a result of the fiscal benefits to the aforementioned select groups, this new industry still expressed the prejudices of the agrarian one it replaced, with the true beneficiaries being the military-industrial complex and the individuals who benefitted from its associated companies.

While the majority of white southerners would have still concurred with their vision of the martial past, the conclusion of the Vietnam War cast the very basis of the southern tradition and identity and its pugnacious approach to foreign policy into doubt. As a politician, Lyndon Johnson largely defined himself as a 'typical' southerner with his many references to the fact, and through the individuals in which he surrounded himself. Paradoxically, the populist instinct that distinguished Johnson from his more die-hard southern traditionalists contributed to his suspicion of the military's course in Vietnam. This uneasy political/military alliance was further pressured, as those in the Pentagon that advised Johnson were the educated northern intellectuals so despised by the president. The economic benefits to the South meant that while some southerners provided resistance to the war, it was largely token opposition predominantly from white students not affected by poverty. Southern

anti-war protests paled in comparison to the amount of northerners from all classes and colours who opposed American involvement in Vietnam. The long-established notion of southern honour was disgraced further as the region's black people remained largely unemployed and treated as second-class citizens. Accordingly, the South's contradictions and hypocrisies were further highlighted as the region's black people fought for Vietnamese independence abroad yet received little-to-no liberties at home.

Domestically, for the South, the Vietnam War served to highlight and compound much of the political pugnacity and vehement dedication to maintaining a distinct model of economic dominance displayed by the region over the past two centuries. Joseph Fry affirms that southerners undoubtedly influenced the war in Vietnam as 'they were looking abroad through distinctly southern eyes and calculating the potential impact of national policies from a decidedly sectional perspective'.¹²⁵ Through this adherence to cultural individualism, the South remained the nation's most self-conscious region, reliant on and hardened by specific economic practices that the agriculture industry demanded. This economic model was applied to the region's new burgeoning output for industrial ordnance, ensuring that influential southerners remained — somewhat proudly in many cases — both politically and economically 'southern' throughout America's Vietnam War era.

¹²⁵ Fry, (2002), p.296.

Chapter III

'In Country': The Southerner in Vietnam

This chapter will study the accounts and actions of southerners' serving 'in country' during the Vietnam War. Through an examination of various aspects of military service, this chapter will elucidate how white and African-American southern identity played out amongst soldiers on the front line and in camps, evaluating how southerners saw themselves and in turn were perceived by others.¹ An investigation of three important themes associated with military service will evaluate ways in which 'being southern', was received and upheld in a military setting. The chapter will then move on to an examination of oral testimonies from southerners, in order to present in-depth sentiments of servicemen from the region.

The first theme presents an in-depth analysis of military enlistment records, in order to clarify if North/South statistical variances were apparent in these figures, as a result of the southerner's supposed heightened patriotism for military service. The second theme examined will be utilisation of data of military commendations and medal recipients in order to determine if southern-born men were likely to outperform non-southerners, as a consequence of their region's supposedly more violent and martially-influenced cultural stimuli. Thirdly, the subject of military insubordination and acts of violence committed by American personnel in Vietnam will also receive specific attention. This quantitative analysis will clarify if a southern identity promoting a strong commitment to honour, defending oneself and one's comrades, and in general, a heightened attachment to martial values, revealed differing levels

¹ A portion of this chapter covers the sentiments and actions of African-Americans serving in Vietnam. Given the subjugation and non-integration of blacks in previous wars, notions of honour and martial behaviour are less apparent. It is also beneficial to bear in mind that many African-Americans delineated themselves as distinct from one another based on North/South distinctions. Many black northerners considered themselves more radical and less compliant, while many black southerners – regardless of their efforts – were still considered less effective/subservient in the opinions of much of the military contingents in Vietnam.

of violence among southern soldiers. This takes into account the ways in which those in the front line experiencing combat nurtured a markedly different form of camaraderie — regardless of cultural background — in comparison to those in relatively safe support camps. A focus on quantitative evidence attempts to substantiate any statistical discrepancies revealing a North/South divide towards military service in Vietnam.

This chapter will then examine the testimonies of six Vietnam veterans interviewed with the intention of gaining a specific insight into the southerner's experience in Vietnam.² Five of the men questioned were born and raised in the South, considering themselves southerners to varying extents, with the remaining candidate originating from Connecticut but spending his adult life in the South. In order to achieve a racial-diverse perspective in the interviews, two of the interviewees are African-Americans. While all the subjects were asked the same set questions specific to military service, some naturally offered protracted answers based on their own explicit experiences. The correspondence with these men was carried out over a course of approximately three years through e-mail and online messenger media. The remainder of this chapter will then interpret how regionally-based discrepancies arose and subsequently played out in Vietnam. Accordingly, this chapter will focus upon the testimonies from men and women who cited their region of birth, social standing and race as a causal factor that affected personal beliefs and group cohesion.

Given that this chapter is largely dependent on the personal accounts of men and women throughout, the sentiments of these individuals needs to be considered in their context. When bearing in mind the validity of oral testimonies — especially those that recount military service in such an unpopular war as Vietnam — the physical and mental stress of combat and the monotony of camp life can often result in exaggerated or ambiguous personal accounts.

² The interviewees were Rick Roll (Connecticut), Ben Sewell (North Carolina), Rick Owen (Kentucky), Ben Humphries (Tennessee), Eldson McGhee (Georgia) and Solomon Smith (Mississippi). Mr Smith's surname is a pseudonym, as requested.

These testimonies that recount periods of combat or military service are often retrieved from potentially uncertain, fading and changeable recollections in an attempt to validate their own actions through contemporary dialogue. Despite these potential pitfalls, Lynn Abrams affirms that ‘oral histories have a well-deserved reputation for giving a voice to the voiceless, and can be an effective way of empowering the weak, the disenfranchised and the victim’.³ This weakening or suppressing, and in some cases nullifying of the ‘official’ version of events can be of notable benefit to historians seeking to compile a more subject-specific narrative. This approach can be particularly valuable when researching a futile and controversial military campaign, such as the Vietnam War. As confidence in America’s military directive in Vietnam waned almost immediately from their official involvement in 1965, cases of military insubordination and anti-war sentiments from troops within Vietnam grew. Despite actions from the military to stem further discontent, and the efforts of the U.S. Defense Department to subdue or dispel such incidents as typical to wartime conflict, the ‘Vietnam experience’ proved to be dissimilar from any of the nation’s previous military conflicts.⁴ Consequently, as verbal dissention increased, the American government altered or suppressed many of the more accurate accounts of the war, due to the failure of their military directive. As a result of the subdual of actual events — especially relevant to this chapter — personal ‘unofficial’ testimonies are invaluable, in order to gain a more reliable and concise perspective of the southerner’s military service in Vietnam.

Private accounts of servicemen that reflect frustration and discontent are abundant, increasing in frequency as the apparent futility of the American effort in Vietnam became more widely accepted. This culminated with the agony of defeat. Consequently, the majority of Vietnam’s veterans’ sentiments towards their nation are generally more controversial and

³ Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London, 2010), p.28.

⁴ A term often used by the men and women who served their during the period, ‘the Vietnam Experience’ largely refers to the war’s domestic unpopularity, apparent futility to the fighting and continuing bad reception the war remains subject to.

scathing in nature, than accounts from Americans involved in previous conflicts such as the First and Second World War. Probably because of this acrimony, the sheer number of individuals willing to give their accounts of Vietnam service outnumbers those of victorious World War II veterans who shared in their nation's triumph. Historians, Paul Budra and Michael Zeitlin affirm that much of the reason for Vietnam veteran's need to speak out stems, 'from the deeply felt recognition that there is something unfinished and incomplete, perhaps even something false, about the official accounts of the [Vietnam] war'.⁵ The testimonies from the southern individuals utilised in this chapter forms just part of a vast national archive that contradicts the American government's 'official' account of Vietnam at practically every level. When examined from a southern perspective, a distinct consensus of feeling or being treated differently — stigmatised even — is clearly in the testimonies of many southern Vietnam veterans.

The white South's well-established model of heroic masculinity encouraged the region's men to demonstrate bravery and fortitude, culturally-inspired archetypal behaviour that honoured the memory of their forebears in previous wars. Regardless of the period of southern history examined, this exaggerated masculinity often results in testimonies being prone to rhetoric of machismo that celebrates masculine physical excess, while hiding genuine fear and insecurities. Notwithstanding these potentially misleading issues, when examined collectively, the use of such oral accounts can still convey reasonably accurate accounts of wartime. Michel Foucault argued how these subjugated and unofficial reports are ultimately more truthful and insightful, in comparison to the biased rhetorical contributions of official sources. As this chapter discusses both the unpopular and previously un-researched perspectives of the war in Vietnam, the sentiments of the masses of lower echelon soldiers

⁵ Paul Budra and Michael Zeitlin, *Soldier Talk: The Vietnam War in Oral Narrative* (2004), p.2.

from the American South are invaluable in forming a coherent account of the southerner's Vietnam experience.

As well as being America's first military loss as a nation, another crucial detail that still affects the dialogue of the Vietnam War is that the many veterans are still alive 40 years after the fall of South Vietnam. Consequently, the fluctuating sentiments of these individuals towards Vietnam means many servicemen still feel stigmatised or let down by their country. Thus, their interpretations remain subject to change. These factors can be problematic when trying to achieve a consensus of how the war in Vietnam is deliberated on a personal level. Regarding the difficulties of interpreting these changing attitudes to such significant events as wars, Marita Sturken examined the sentiments of war veterans, concluding that 'history operates more efficiently when its agents are dead. Yet the survivors of historical events are often figures of cultural authority and values'.⁶ The unchanged recorded testimonies of the deceased and ever-changing recollections of the living continue to vie for their place in Vietnam War discourse through their own interpretation of patriotism, masculinity, class, race and culture.

Despite historiography on soldiers in the Vietnam War being voluminous, specific consideration from a southern, or indeed a regional perspective are scarce. Correspondingly, studies on racial tensions within the military, acts of insubordination and internal violence 'in country' are readily available, but rarely approach this problem from a regional perspective. The few authors who do discuss a southern view of the Vietnam War tend to take a strongly pro-southern stance. In Owen Gilman's opinion, the unavoidable fact is that the South's nineteenth-century culturally recalcitrant and martial past means that 'the turmoil of the Vietnam War era brought the southern tradition of honor into prominence and with it the

⁶ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories, The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (California, 1997), p.5.

related spirit of violence. Thus, Vietnam became a revelatory mirror of their cultural heritage'.⁷ Gilman affirms the influence of this formative century stating that 'once Southern culture embraced the [nineteenth century] concept of honor in one generation, its associations with family and with the individuals' position of respect in the larger community made it almost impossible to abandon'.⁸ It is Gilman's conclusion that people from the South are both historically and inescapably part of a 'warrior nation' based upon the region's controversial past and recalcitrant culture. Although somewhat subjective, this is a recurrent interpretation, which many southerners serving in Vietnam reiterated during their own recollections of military service.

Similarly, James R. Wilson's work, which examined the sentiments of a selected number of Vietnam era southerners, argued that, in contrast to much of the remainder of the nation, southerners welcomed military action in Vietnam more than any other region of the United States. Wilson concluded, albeit somewhat subjectively that 'without in any way denigrating the sacrifices made by other regions of the United States, it may be fairly said the South shouldered more than its share of the human cost of Vietnam'.⁹ Wilson states that the prime motivation for his work stemmed from learning that with regard to Vietnam, southerners served in much greater numbers than from other regions of the United States – a statement my own research will contest. Concentrating on the South's foreign relations, Joseph Fry attests that, the traditional pro-war stance, as well as distinct values and cultural perspectives, meant that southerners were destined to play a significant part in their nation's military involvement in Vietnam.¹⁰ This chapter will examine the claims of Gilman, Wilson and Fry amongst others to determine if southerners actually did enlist in much greater

⁷ Gilman, p. 21.

⁸ Gilman, p.25.

⁹ James R. Wilson, (1990), p. xii.

¹⁰ Joseph A. Fry, (2002), p.261.

numbers as a result of their 'historic' ancestry, and if they outperformed their non-southern brethren in Vietnam.

On March 8th 1965, two battalions, equating to 3,500 U.S. Marines landed on the beaches of Da Nang South Vietnam, initiating America's direct military involvement in Vietnam. By the end of that year, over 200,000 American troops were based in military camps south of Vietnam's 17th Parallel demarcation line.¹¹ Evidently, as the conflict became protracted, the American military presence continued to grow, peaking with approximately 544,000 men on operational duty in Vietnam by 1969. Notwithstanding the typical command and logistical difficulties in maintaining such an enormous military presence thousands of miles from domestic bases, the military experienced noncompliance amongst the ranks of their armed forces to a degree previously not experienced. Much of the military's command problems in Vietnam stemmed from the statistical imbalance between combat and support troops. These numerical disparities, served to compound not only typical military complaints, but also enhance the socio-cultural inequalities evident amongst the contingent. Throughout military campaigns, those men generally serving on the front lines in battle often malign the men in the rear support camps. In Vietnam, this issue was magnified, with the relatively safe and modern rear echelon camps contributing to approximately 90% of total American manpower.¹² As a result of this 9 to 1 support/combat ratio, those in the rear zones were able to emulate much of their domestic lifestyles in contrast to their comrades in combat.¹³

¹¹ The 17th parallel demarcation line was established in 1954 at the Geneva Peace Accords. The intention of the line was to allow the Communist-backed North and Capitalist-supported South to co-exist until nationwide elections could decide the fate of the nation in 1956. President Diem's southern government and the United States never supported the accords agreement.

¹² In *An Intimate History of Killing: Face to Face Killing in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1999), Joanna Bourke reveals that support troops ratios for previous wars were also high, World War I revealed a ratio of approximately 8 to 1, while World War II ratios reached 12 to 1 at some periods. Despite these high figures, the close proximity to combat and way of life of the support camps in Vietnam made the soldier's experience considerably different from previous U.S. military campaigns.

¹³ America's war in Vietnam never consisted of a 'front line' of battle like many other wars. Combat was largely one that constituted small patrols or the ambushing of convoys. New to the American military, this type of counter-insurgency war was the cause of much of the frustration and feeling of futility to troops serving there.

Correspondingly, in the case of southern troops serving in the rear echelons, the South's particular and often recalcitrant customs were permitted to exist 'in country' with little interference from inexperienced and quickly promoted commander officers. As a result of this replicating of cultural practices in Vietnam, the social and racial grievances apparent domestically in the American South were often played out amongst the thousands of men in support roles.

Domestically, the pressure on the white South in this period was under threat as the region's lifestyle was increasingly portrayed as archaic and repressive. For southerners, however these opinions were far less apparent within the military environment of Vietnam. Thus the South's cultural prejudices and distinctions proliferated in country, despite the supposed homogeneity of army life promoted by the draft boards. Alongside the huge discrepancy in combat/support figures, the sheer abundance of traditional food and drink available to support troops — as well as other domestic luxuries — deemed life for many in these areas as relatively easy-going and crucially, safe, in comparison to the 10% of men in the combat zones. Domestic luxuries such as air-conditioning, television and refrigeration would have been especially embraced by southern troops, as many of the men came from regions that would have still lacked the basic utilities of clean running water and electricity. As a result of this 'have and have not' environment, men in the support areas were characterised as 'REMFs' (Rear Echelon Motherfuckers) by their comrades who were subjected to regular combat. As the derisive tone of the acronym suggests, the clash between combat and support troops was corrosive. Long-established socio-cultural divisions were especially poignant to blacks, as many mistakenly expected improved treatment from their white superiors as a result of their military service. This anticipated social mobility and masculine acceptance proved to be equally elusive for many poor whites also.

The lack of being regarded as distinctly masculine or brave by their superiors — as a result of their southernness — compounded the animosity of many southerners who felt they were inherently dissimilar from their northern comrades. Since the South's inception, masculine pride and personal virtue have served one another to compound the white martial ethic, thus evoking an undying attraction for military service and a distinct model of individual heroism. This martial ethos encouraged an individual's capacity to remain supercilious to the 'un-southernly' characteristics of others, even during military service. Such mannerisms were evident domestically throughout the twentieth century, as the acceptance of irrational acts of violence amongst many of the South's white populace supported a mentality that led to significantly higher use of personally-owned weaponry, in contrast to the northern populace. Historian John Hope Franklin, argues that the region's fascination with deadly weapons and violence towards another is perpetual, stating that 'in the South, handling a gun is part and parcel of growing up and becoming a man. It has become part of the national mythology'.¹⁴ Consequently, southerners' willingness to use weapons to deadly effect was an apparent natural manifestation as opportunities to portray individual and collective heroism in Vietnam developed.¹⁵

Most damaging to any nation's military are acts of individual cowardice or unnecessary surrender, be it collective or otherwise. These 'unmanly' actions have been especially derided throughout southern discourse that examines martial masculinities. In order to maintain group cohesion on both a small and large scale, an effective military force requires attributes such as martial aggression, personal valour, group camaraderie and obedience to hierarchical commands. Alongside these attributes, belief, dedication and concordance to your nation's cause forms an imperative part of the soldier's consciousness.

¹⁴ John Hope Franklin, *The Militant South* (Massachusetts, 1956), p.62.

¹⁵ A Gallup study of gun ownership in America since 1960 reveals that on average, 56% of the rural population owned firearms in contrast to 29% of urban areas. regions: www.gallup.gun-owners.aspx.

The ambiguities apparent in America culture at the time regarding its involvement in Vietnam meant that many southerners bound for Vietnam were well-aware that their 'southern duty' contradicted much of what the rest of the nation was expressing about military action against North Vietnam. Despite the American government's efforts to convince the nation that its cause was a just one, many troops remained sceptical on an individual level. Consequently, America's unclear mission in Vietnam rested heavy on the minds of the many sent to serve there, but none more so than that of southerners who were keen to replicate their ancestors past military endeavours.

Frequently, group unity and objectives within the immediate surroundings of those fighting relegates national causes and cultural disparities to a considerably less important role. This was especially the case during the Vietnam era, where social, racial and cultural divisions were evident at home. In contrast to the comfort and relative safety of the rear echelon areas — where domestic grievances could be replicated — the men subjected to combat in isolated search and destroy (SnD) patrols referred notably less to the social/racial divides evident in their society. On this topic, black combat veteran Solomon Smith alluded to nullification of social and racial slurs under fire stating that 'when you were taking fire from gooks (enemy Vietnamese), nigger, white boy, dumb redneck and greasy spic quick become your closest bro'.¹⁶ Interestingly, when I asked Mr Smith as to why he referred to redneck and white boy as different groups, he replied that by redneck he was referring to 'those southern dumbasses, there were plenty of them there'.¹⁷ U.S. Brigadier-General and military historian S.L.A. Marshall agreed the sentiments of Mr Smith while affirming the importance of analogous sentiments between men in combat. Regarding group cohesion during times of conflict, Marshall argues that colour, class and nationality are quickly forgotten, stating that 'I hold it to be one of the simplest truths of war, that the thing which enables an infantry soldier

¹⁶ Correspondence with Mr Smith, 27/07/2013

¹⁷ Correspondence with Mr Smith, 07/08/2013

to keep going with his weapons is the near presence or the presumed presence of a comrade'.¹⁸ Despite the unity that results in times of combat referred to by Marshall and Smith, the fact that many southern troops, both black and white still mentioned how they were singled out by their comrades and superiors during training and actual service, attests to the stigma that 'southernness' had upon the national populace at home and abroad.¹⁹

The patriarchal role of the white southerner established during the nineteenth century came under increasing threat throughout the Vietnam era, as previously submissive black people — especially those in the south — fought to establish their own form of masculine ideal in Vietnam. As a result of these conflicting stimuli, race, social and regional prejudices was the cause of much consternation throughout the Vietnam era, when for the first time in U.S. military history, both black people and white people were fully integrated and armed on an equal status.

The Effect of Conscription upon Southern Culture

The national conscription of men for military service, commonly referred to as 'the draft', ensured a supply of males in the years leading up to the war in Vietnam. As in previous wars, government enlistment drives utilised selective propaganda resources that characterised both those volunteering and drafted men as brave, patriotic, and typically masculine. In 1958, when much of the American populace was being subjected to continual streams of Cold War propaganda from their government, Selective Service Director General Lewis B. Hershey stated how effective this nationalistic misinformation could be on the tentative male consciousness. Hershey assertively stated to government officials that, 'for every man drafted,

¹⁸ Darryl Henderson, *Cohesion: The Human Element in Combat* (Washington, 1985), p.5.

¹⁹ Throughout the course of research on this thesis, hundreds of testimonies from men and women from all areas of the United States were examined. Interestingly, inhabitants of the northern states who referred to their region of origin as an influence on their military character were practically non-existent.

three or four more were scared or pressured into volunteering'.²⁰ In 1967, Hershey compounded the pressure on men to show patriotism by enacting a reclassification rule, which threatened individuals who held draft deferments with service in Vietnam if they exhibited anti-Vietnam War sentiments.²¹ Aside from the South's ambiguous historic predilection for its 'proud' white men to serve in the military, in reality, many southerners — regardless of cultural stimuli — proved to be as equally reluctant to go to Vietnam as their northern brethren, with many largely citing the same reasons.²²

The South's high proportion of socially deprived black and white men, many of who were largely under educated and impoverished proved to be an expedient pool of manpower for their government's needs for Vietnam. Both northerners and southerners with the money, guile and relevant knowledge used medical, family and educational exemptions to their benefit to avoid military service. Susan Jeffords discussed how a select and privileged few could however maintain their masculine status while also avoiding military service in Vietnam. Arguing that social class and wealth was the true deciding factor, Jeffords states that 'during the Vietnam era specifically, the draft boards chose those individuals who were most vulnerable... Unlike Middle America, many of the poor minorities did not have the money for frivolous type deferments'.²³ Accordingly, John Kenneth Galbraith, one of America's biggest proponents of Political Liberalism throughout the period of the Vietnam War was under no illusion as to the true motives and objectives to which his government used their propaganda machine to entice largely undereducated and impressionable men for military service affirming that, the draft serves principally as a device by which we use compulsion to get

²⁰ Preliminary Inventory of the Records of the Committee on Appropriations: *Special Subcommittee, 1958* www.archives.gov/legislative/guide/house: accessed 15/10/13

²¹ For further information on the Hershey act see 'Legality of Hershey Directive Urging Draft Boards to Reclassify Participants in Illegal Demonstrations Is Justiciable before Enforcement'. *Harvard Law Review* Vol. 83, No. 3 (Jan., 1970), pp. 690-698.

²² The statistical 'tracking' website NNDB states that a total of 1,857,304 men were drafted between August 1964 and February 1973, with around 60,000 men dodging the draft. According to their figures regional discrepancies were not clearly apparent. <http://www.nndb.com/event/806/000140386/draft/deferment/stats>.

²³ Susan Jeffords, *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War* (Indiana, 1989), p.57.

young men to serve at less than the market rate of pay. We shift the cost of military service from the well-to-do taxpayer, who benefits by lower taxes, to the impecunious young draftee.²⁴

Despite scathing criticism of America's conscription policy from academics, politicians and the clergy, their protests had little-to-no effect on the drafting of deprived, socially discriminated and low-educated men for military service. In 1970, military sociologist, Professor Charles C. Moskos affirmed that those who avoid service in Vietnam a very much part of the more privileged and educated white classes. Moskos singled out how the South's poor whites were particularly vulnerable stating that 'the army has been attracting not only a disproportionate number of minorities but also a representative regional segment of white youth, who are more uncharacteristic of the broader social mix that are minority soldiers'.²⁵ As a result of the siphoning of selected social and cultural classes for military service, Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) were unknowingly setting the scene for social and racial-based tensions to come to the fore amongst the thousands of men serving in Vietnam. These pressures were especially prevalent amongst southern troops, as domestic racial and social tensions were duly acted in various ways amongst the region's men serving in Vietnam.

²⁴ Eugene Groves, An Acceptable Plan for National Service, *The Phi Delta Kappan*, Vol. 48, No. 9 (May, 1967), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20371886>, p.4.

²⁵ Charles C. Moskos, *The American Enlisted Man* (New York, 1970), p.91.

The Southerner's Vietnam Experience

The harsh reality for most southern recruits was that their inferior circumstances in terms of education and social standing virtually assured them of the most menial and degrading jobs in military support camps or deadly combat positions, regardless of race.²⁶ In support areas they were given tasks of clearing or cleaning unimportant military zones that were perpetually filthy. One such task involved the incineration the tons of human excrement in open barrels with noxious diesel oil, hence the derogatory term 'shit-burner' was often directed at 'inadequate' soldiers. Those who managed to evade the degrading chores in the support camps, often as a result of physical fitness, were commonly assigned positions in combat missions that entailed high mortality figures. Solomon Smith affirmed the inequality present within the command structure stating that 'you could pretty-sure guarantee black people or the damn-near retarded white guys got latrine work or were ordered to walk point on patrols' – the position most at risk of tripping a land mine, booby trap or being the recipient of sniper fire.²⁷ As a black soldier, Private Reginald Edwards stated how cultural and racial slurs tended to disappear on dangerous patrols, but in the rear support camps 'mostly southerners liked to call you chocolate bunny and brillo (a scrubbing pad) head, that kind of shit'.²⁸ Despite the subjectivity of personal testimonies, numerous personal accounts corroborate that southern white men were especially eager to continue their racial prejudices while in Vietnam. It is also notable that non-southerners were just as likely to stigmatise white southerners with insults

²⁶ Although much of Vietnam's oral history discusses the war from the perspectives of white and black men, Chicano (Mexican-American), Italian dissent and Native Americans were also a significant part of the American contingency in Vietnam.

²⁷ E-mail correspondence with Mr Smith, 12/10/2013. As certain defeat became apparent to the troops in Vietnam, officers in command of patrols became increasingly aware of the risk of walking in front of their own men due to the risk of being deliberately killed (fragged) by one of their comrades.

²⁸ Wallace Terry, *Bloods, Black Veterans of the Vietnam War: An Oral History* (New York, 2006), p.5.

such as ‘hick’, ‘redneck’, ‘cornpone’ and ‘good ol/ole boy’ as a result of their region’s distinct and increasingly mocked cultural practices.²⁹

Notwithstanding the difficulties of achieving a clear consensus with respect to Vietnam, many southern veterans are unanimous — albeit for varying reasons — that their southern identity weighed heavily upon them during their military service. Testimonies from southerners serving in Vietnam range from voluntary Red Cross nurses (known as Doughnut Dollies) to army generals. Mary Laraine Hines of North Carolina stated how the South’s mythical past weighed heavy upon the minds of southern white men of the period. As a volunteer Red Cross nurse, Mrs Hines stated that the South’s white men were extremely culturally aware, and were considered of high moral character, thus travelling to Vietnam preloaded with historical expectancies. Regarding the South’s white soldiers, Mrs Hines reiterated that ‘the Kappa Alphas (social/academic fraternity), for example, were very gung-ho about the South’s military tradition, Robert E. Lee and the Lost Cause, but Vietnam was different. I knew a lot of them were feeling conflict inside because they weren’t living up to the heritage of our region’.³⁰ The highest-ranking commanding officer in Vietnam, South Carolinian, General William ‘Westy’ Westmoreland also lamented on his region’s historic Lost Cause in relation to America’s mission in Vietnam. Stating in 1989 that, ‘In much the same way as the Civil War, Vietnam was a war of attrition. Distances covered were also similar. As it was not a static war, troops were only briefly tied down, like we (the Confederate Army) were at Richmond in 1862.’³¹ Under analysis, Westmoreland’s claims to similarity to the American Civil War are somewhat unfitting as the enemy’s attrition

²⁹ Notably, ‘Good Ol Boy’ remains a term of endearment in southern vernacular. The insult ‘corn pone’ was often directed at Lyndon Johnson — albeit unbeknown to him — by northern politicians. Redneck derives from the sun burn effect the sun had on the white southerner’s neck, while hillbilly and hick largely describes somebody who is parochial and hails predominantly from the countryside.

³⁰ Wilson, p.169.

³¹ Wilson, p.18. The Battle of Richmond Kentucky was fought on August 29–30, 1862. A Confederate victory, it was the first major battle in the Kentucky Campaign.

(crossover) rate was never a decisive factor in Vietnam, while standing battles where forces were 'tied down' were also extremely few. The relationship drawn by Westmoreland between the Vietnam War and the American Civil War may well be as a result of his frustrations. As a southerner, he was not able to perform to his ancestral expectations and could not live up to the valour of past Confederate generals.

Consequently, many white southerners testified in numerous statements that they travelled to Vietnam possessing a distinct image of their region as deliberately separate from and somewhat guarded of mainstream American 'ideals'. Virginian, Edward Bridges, who served as a Special Forces operative in Vietnam, claimed how his region of birth specifically affected his sentiments towards America's failed mission. Referring to his region's 'honour code' warrior image, Bridges stated that 'being a Southerner has something to do with it, but I deeply believe in honouring commitment. We didn't do that in Vietnam'.³² As part of the United States Marine Corps (USMC), William Tant of Texas highlighted his region's nineteenth century Lost Cause, while contentiously associating it to that of the enemy's undertaking in Vietnam. With some verity to his argument, Tant stated that 'the North Vietnamese reminded me a lot of what I think the old Southern troops [were] like. They were fighting for a cause that they believed in and they just [weren't] going to give up'.³³ Notably, Tant's view is counter to the general consensus that the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) were reluctant to engage in standing battles, instead adopting guerrilla insurgency tactics, a factor considered cowardly by many American troops.

Southern peer pressure constantly compounded the expectance of white southerners to maintain and fight for honour and a 'just' cause. Author and former Vietnam draft evader, James Dickerson reiterated the influence of his region stating that 'good families in the South

³² Wilson, p.10.

³³ Wilson, p.126.

always do what is expected of them'. Dickerson affirmed how his Mother reminded him that, 'as a Mississippian, he came from a good Southern family' and on becoming aware of the military situation in Vietnam, Mrs Dickerson effectively commanded him 'to report as ordered to the military'; Dickerson reiterated that he swiftly made his way to the neutral safety of Canada.³⁴ Nurse, Mary Hines recalled that once southerners arrived in Vietnam 'there just seemed to be an instant bond between people from the South because of our common cultural heritage. People from the South found each other in a hurry'.³⁵ Notwithstanding this statement from Hines, this regional unity was not as enticing as many white southerners assumed, as social class, race and even origin from within the South still exhibited clear disparities amongst the southern contingent in Vietnam, dispelling notions that all southerners served in unison.

Racism, social subjugation and cultural elitism were readily apparent in America's military of the period. In 1967, as soon as he was old enough to enlist for military service, Roosevelt Gore stated how he was eager to leave his home state of South Carolina in the hope of escaping the racism he remained subjected to during the period. Throughout his training at Fort Jackson, Gore stated that 'our white drill instructor didn't like black people; because he was from the South and considered us all to be illiterate. He used to spit on us and kick us and call us niggers and say all you black sons-of-bitches are going to Vietnam'. An insightful factor that attests to the stigma of being black and southern was revealed when Gore stated that at the Louisiana training facility, 'most black people were from the South, but for some reason they didn't want to admit it. Not a single one of them would admit it. They wanted people to think they were from the North'.³⁶ Gore's testimony advocates the extent to which

³⁴ John Ernst and Yvonne Baldwin, 'The Not So Silent Minority: Louisville's Antiwar Movement, 1966-1975' *Journal of Southern History* Vol. 73, No. 1 (2007), p.29.

³⁵ Wilson, p.176.

³⁶ Wilson, p.80 and p.82.

southern black people even felt additionally socially inferior to their black northern brethren as a result of their region's cultural stigmatism.

Just as the South's black men were seemingly ill-fated from the start of their military training, accordingly, the region's white men travelled to Vietnam with their own cultural burdens. Prominent southerners such as Senator Richard B. Russell, Governor Louie B. Nunn, Governor Herman E. Talmadge and U.S. representative for South Carolina Mendel Rivers, all refer to the South's proud martial past, thus compounding the pressure on the South's white men bound for Vietnam. In 1965, Nunn, Kentucky's first Republican governor for over twenty years asserted that 'once his boys (southerners) were in (Vietnam), they have to finish it with honor.'³⁷ Historian, John Ernst affirms that as a typical belligerent southerner 'Nunn, who was a World War II infantry veteran, viewed Vietnam through a martial, patriotic, Southern lens.'³⁸ Ernst also points out that Nunn's home state of Kentucky 'enthusiastically welcomed troops being trained at the state's two military installations of Fort Campbell and Fort Knox, where local residents clashed with the few [Vietnam] war opponents'.³⁹ This historic expectancy so espoused by the constructors of the nineteenth century southern myth evidently persisted a century later, thus resulting in a greater psychological burden on denizens of the South to a greater degree than the North.

Unlike America's 'just' two World Wars, where the Allied victory largely created a consensus of who or what was right and wrong, the Vietnam War is markedly different. Much as a result of the war's loss, agreement on how Vietnam veterans perceive their own service is far from concordant, and current research advocates this view will likely endure. Individual accounts of the multifarious roles in Vietnam — compounded by the regional philosophies

³⁷ Ernst and Baldwin, (2007), p.105.

³⁸ In 1967, Louis B. Nunn was one of the key victors in the Republican Party, winning in Kentucky for the first time in over twenty years. He is also attributed with giving President Nixon the famous 'Silent Majority' quote that Nixon used to great effect in the South.

³⁹ Ernst and Baldwin, p.108.

and sub-cultures of individual states — means a generic account of the war remains difficult to decipher. The presence of so many variables to Vietnam War discourse continually challenges current scholarly analyses; this factor makes the growing oral history of the war ever-more important as previously untold accounts of Vietnam are revealed and vie for their own valid place within the historiography.⁴⁰

Perspectives on the war from Six Southern Veterans

In order to establish a more coherent view, a series of interviews with southern Vietnam Veterans was carried out over a period of three years from August 2011. All 66 Vietnam Veterans Association (VVA) chapters based in the southern states of America were contacted. A request for men and women to informally discuss their regional identity in relation to service in Vietnam was forwarded to the headquarters of all corresponding chapters, also appealing for northern candidates to offer their own view of possible regional disparities.⁴¹ Following a period of approximately four months of exchanges, six men from separate veteran's chapters kindly offered to begin an in-depth dialogue on the subject.

Despite best efforts to achieve the most accurate accounts as possible from the interviewees, it needs to be taken into consideration that this method of collecting personal testimonies is problematic. As pre-set questions are particular in their initial intention, answers to such questions may be overtly subjective to match the dialogue. Accordingly, due to the nature of both individual and collective remembrance — especially in matters related to

⁴⁰ Further studies that utilise oral histories can be found in works such as Lynda Van Devanter's *Home Before Morning: The Story of an Army Nurse in Vietnam* (New York, 1984), Peter Goldman, *Charlie Company: What Vietnam Did to Us* (New York, 1983), Mark Baker, *Nam: The Vietnam War in the Words of the Men and Women Who Fought There* (New York, 1982) all discuss the first hand experiences of Vietnam service. Works such as Philip Beidler, *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam* (Georgia, 1982), Jerry Lembcke's *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam* (New York, 1998) all examine the interaction of national expectancies on the minds of those who served there.

⁴¹ According to chapter directors, as of January 2014, my questionnaire had been forwarded to approximately 2,300 Veterans

war — veterans' accounts of all wars are often retold in order to make both the contributor and recipient accept the decisions and actions of the interviewee. The manner of this dialogue is often reached in order to corroborate the present character of his past actions. Historian, Alistair Thomson discusses how the extrinsic influences of a subject's environment, both intimate and nationalistic, is extremely influential, stating that 'the construction of memories using public language and meaning requires a cultural approach to remembering'.⁴² This cultural approach is all the more pertinent when the cultural sentimentality instilled in southerners is taken into account. Thomson affirms that a form of uniformed and collective remembrance is practically unavoidable at this level, affirming that 'the basis of this approach is that there is no simple equation between experience and memory, but rather a process in which certain experiences become remembered in certain ways.'⁴³ Despite the potential drawbacks of one-to-one interviews, the specificity of the questions posed does reveal pertinent points relating to the effect of regional identity. Further still, the fact these men volunteered to answer explicit questions on their ancestral-related sentiments towards military service, reveals the existence of a supposed North/South split in ideals towards their sentiments of military service in Vietnam.

Encouraging individuals to discuss their wartime experiences can be psychologically perplexing to those involved, as past historical research has proved. As is particularly the case with America's loss in Vietnam, the war's veterans can prove to be sensitive to discussing a conflict in which many of those serving perceived themselves as powerless to perform at their best.⁴⁴ Notwithstanding these implications, the questions posed to the six interviewees remained set and explicit to this chapter's intention. This method was chosen in order to avoid the generic responses other southern-centric research on this subject usually incorporates,

⁴² Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* (Oxford, 1996), p.8.

⁴³ Thomson, p.10.

⁴⁴ Many Vietnam Veterans today still attest that their government's restricted warfare strategy prevented the military from performing to the best of its ability throughout the war's course.

usually entailing such topics as the Lost Cause and the supposed southern monopoly of true American values. A fundamental factor to consider when reviewing the statements of these men is that apart from Solomon Smith — who was contacted through a colleague — all the candidates are or have been members of VVA chapters. Thus, their membership of the associations indicates that these men still consider themselves part of a fictive brotherhood. Considering the outcome of the war in Vietnam, many veterans attest that they remain a misunderstood, embattled group, many of who are seeking acceptance and in some ways repatriation for their loyal service.

In order for the interviewees to consider their answers thoroughly before offering their response, each of the requests were posed at approximate weekly intervals. As individuals tend to recount their memories chronologically from childhood, the initial question put to the men referred to the influence of their childhood upon military service.⁴⁵ *Request one asked: Did any members of your immediate family or ancestors serve in the military, and if so, to what extent - if at all - did their service influence your own decision to volunteer for Vietnam, if not drafted?*

Retired Army Officer, Benjamin Sewell III stated, ‘I volunteered as soon as I was old enough. Military service tends to run in southern families. I am the sixth straight generation of my Sewell family to have served in the Army’. A characteristic that is evident in many southerners, Benjamin emphasised the credentials of his southern lineage by stating the influence of the American Civil War in affirming that, ‘My Great Grandfather, G.W. Sewell (1841-1930) fought bravely, having been a proud Confederate’. Mr. Sewell was also keen to point out that before the Civil War period ‘his Grandfather, Joseph Sewell (1753 to 1847), was a member of a North Carolina Mountain Militia unit, who also fought the Indians (Native

⁴⁵ The questions posed to the interviewees commenced after regular acquaintances not related to the aims of the thesis had been established.

Americans), and Tories (Royalists), from 1780 to 1787'.⁴⁶ In Benjamin's conclusion to the initial question, he suggested that I research the opinions of the members of the historical society, the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV). The frontispiece of the organisation's newsletter states that 'Today, the Sons of Confederate Veterans is preserving the history and legacy of these heroes so that future generations can understand the motives that animated the Southern Cause'. According to Mr. Sewell, who is a member, the organization has many ex-Vietnam members.

A former sergeant who served in Vietnam as a pilot in the United States Air Force, Mr Rick Owen, was asked the same initial question. Mr. Owen stated that, 'I'm from Louisville, Kentucky, which is considered the South by most of us here, but is sort of a border state, with ambiguous views and opinions'.⁴⁷ Despite the geographical uncertainty of Kentucky as a state of the South, Rick alluded to the influence of his region upon him by stating that 'Southerners are a different type of person from the rest of the United States'. Rick stated how the sentiments of his border state education, 'were more pro-South, when the centennial (celebrations) of the beginning of the Civil War occurred' and that regarding his school's education on the Civil War, 'It seemed that any kids who exhibited any pride (in the Civil War) were supporters of the South generally'. Regarding the influence of 'southernness' upon his family, Rick stated that 'I had a great-uncle who was so North/South biased, he told me that he wouldn't even ride in a Lincoln brand automobile', simply because the manufacturer carried the name of an American president who is generally derided in the South.

Ben Humphries, who served in Vietnam as a Specialist Grenadier and Communications Chief, was asked the same question regarding the influence of his southern ancestry. Ben replied that 'yes, there was an influence there, I was born in the South and came

⁴⁶ Correspondence with Mr Sewell dated 29/12/2012.

⁴⁷ Correspondence with Mr Owen dated 14/01/2013.

from a patriotic family. My family has fought in every conflict America has been in from the American Revolution'. Ben affirmed that his 'childhood in Memphis was typically southern' while reiterating that 'my dad, uncles and grandfathers that I was raised with, all served in one branch of the military, southern military service is expected'. The 'expectation' of military service for southerners referred to by Mr Humphries is the distinct characteristic apparent in the sentiments of many southern white males who were eager to mention their own motivations when the topic of martial conduct is raised.

Now a war veteran's rights worker, Former Airborne Infantryman who served in Vietnam, Eldson McGhee wrote that throughout his Georgia upbringing, martial influences were always apparent. Photos of his grandfather and great grandfather in military uniform were always proudly and 'prominently displayed on the living room mantle'. Alluding to the influence of his martial upbringing, Eldson reiterated that 'I had my first shotgun by the time I was thirteen'. Discussing his motivations for volunteering for duty in Vietnam — as opposed to being drafted — Eldson stated that 'military service played a part in what I believed to be an induction into manhood. I had stepped into a tradition with the men in my family'.⁴⁸ Mr McGhee's sentiments are all the more poignant when considering that he was the third generation of black men in his family to serve in the United States military.

In contrast to the patriotic and regionally distinct martial sentiments of Mr Humphries, Owen, Sewell and McGhee, former United States Marine Corp Private Solomon Smith told how his reasons for military service were somewhat different. Solomon stated that 'I joined the Marines to show them all (white people) what I was made of, and could do. My father said I was dumb to do so, because the nation and Alabama (their home state) had done nothing to help us ever.' Throughout our e-mail correspondence, Mr Smith's sentiments reflect that he considered himself a socially repressed black southerner. Regarding Solomon's ancestral

⁴⁸ Eldson McGhee correspondence with author, 07/01/2013.

influence, he replied that ‘no, in our family, we all labored to get where we were’.⁴⁹ As Rick Roll does not hail from the South, the question of the influence of southern ancestry did not apply to him.

Considering the responses to my initial question, it is clear that their ancestors’ military service — like thousands of other southerners — played a part in the decisions of many servicemen and women to join their nation’s military. Notwithstanding, it could be rightly argued that all military veterans convey a distinct tendency to affirm the influence of their ancestry when considering military service. With this in mind, my research at Texas Tech University’s digitised Vietnam Centre and Virtual Vietnam Archives examined if this was the case. By using the search words of ‘south’, ‘southern’ and ‘north’, ‘northerner’ along with ‘ancestors/ancestry’, the records of approximately four million pages of scanned documents, which consisted largely of written testimonies and typed transcripts were searched. As the key search words were so specific, the archives revealed approximately 700 articles that referred to these search topics. Based on the number of positive finds the archive revealed, the results revealed a striking willingness for southerners to state their origin in relation to military service; a feature which was nothing like as apparent in the testimonies of Northerners’ in the archive.⁵⁰

As the initial question confirmed, southern ancestry played some part, to varying degrees in the interviewees’ decision to volunteer for military service in Vietnam. Bearing this influence in mind, the second request asked if this cultural distinction was played out in Vietnam. *Question two: In a military sense, was your own behaviour or performance as a combatant serving in Vietnam affected by your own region’s cultural history?*

⁴⁹ Correspondence from interviewees on this question received from 29/12/2012 to 14/01/2013.

⁵⁰ My own research of Texas Tech and other oral history archives equates to just over 700 individual relevant testimonies, with hundreds more searched for evidence which supports this thesis. Of this number, many interviewees stated the influence of their family and nation’s military history, yet not a single one of the testimonies researched stated the influence of a Northern martial culture, in huge contrast to that of the South.

Rick Owen stated that the South's penchant for martial behaviour was visibly apparent during his service in Vietnam. Rick stated that he 'found that most Southerners were more familiar with firearms, were naturally more aggressive when presented with a common foe, and were more patriotic, "usually falsely" as well as being more conservative politically'.⁵¹ As a Kentuckian, Rick's observations affirm all the pre-supposed constructed southern distinctions discussed in southern historiography from the past two centuries. Rick's statement that southern men were usually 'falsely patriotic' also offers a pertinent and valid insight into the fabricated consciousness that men from the American South were instilled with from infancy. Rick added that in 1968, while on duty in Vietnam 'when the wife of the Governor of Alabama (George Wallace), Lurleen died, the Southern folk [in Vietnam] acted as if the president had died'.⁵² I was amazed to see such a reaction'. Consequently, the white southerner's partiality for mourning the death of 'one of their own' southern belles offers another insight into the how the region's unique culture lamented the loss of traditions and individuals who typified them.

Solomon Smith reflected how after 'being treated like an animal throughout his army training', he was hoping to be shown greater respect once on duty as an American serviceman. According to Solomon, the inequalities apparent domestically, remained present in Vietnam. Regarding his treatment, Solomon stated that, 'I was always trying harder to do good in the first few months in Nam but soon realised it was like back home, SSDD (slang abbreviation meaning 'same shit, different day') only in uniform and for longer hours'. Like many black men travelling to Vietnam, the influence of 'their South' was not a positive sentiment espoused by the region's white people to be proud and 'act' like a southerner. As

⁵¹ Correspondence from interviewees to author 14/05/2013 to 28/05/2013.

⁵² Lurleen Wallace also served as 46th Governor of Alabama for 16 months, replacing her husband who was unable to run for re-election due to the state's consecutive terms ruling.

established earlier, for the region's black people especially, military service was mistakenly seen as an escape from the racial oppression so embraced by the South.⁵³

Ben Humphries noted that for him '[his] place of birth never had much of an influence on my performance in the military, although I was part of many stand-downs in Vietnam with black people and Hispanics, who tended to mingle together'. Ben Sewell stated that for him, undeniably 'the Confederate influence of his ancestry is still inescapable today'. Eldson McGhee stated 'how the military is one of the best entities for matching personnel to need. As Southerners, we grew up coping with intense heat and humidity, which made it easier to cope with Vietnam's hostile condition'.⁵⁴ The comment that southerners were better-suited to Vietnam as a result of the region's climate and agricultural toil is evident in numerous testimonies of other soldiers from the south. Eldson added that before Vietnam service, 'draftees more than likely, picked cotton or were familiar with sharp, prickly bushes in the cotton fields of the south'. Again, the supposition made by many southerners that they were more suited to military service — as a result of their toil — than their northern brethren is a reoccurring theme in southern historiography. The influence of such a statement is only compounded as similar claims from northerners, many of who had equally deprived upbringings, are not apparent in the testimonies of their own military service.

This study's only northerner, Rick Roll was asked if he witnessed disparities in military performance from a North/South perspective, Rick replied that 'I can honestly report that I detected negligible differences in performance, dedication, and competence between the 'Yankees' or 'Rebels' I served with'. Interestingly, despite Rick's conclusion, the fact he defined his countrymen as 'Yankees' and 'Rebels' affirms how these cultural identities were apparent in Vietnam. Rick highlighted how his failure to witness regional disparities in

⁵³ Correspondence from interviewees to author 16/01/2013, 10/06/2013.

⁵⁴ E-mail reply from Eldson McGhee, 16/01/2013.

performance may have been as a result of his occupation's higher aptitude requirements. Rick reiterated that 'keep in mind, however, that as helicopter pilots, crew chiefs, and door gunners, we were a very select group of soldiers and had passed rigorous physical & intellectual examinations'. This remark from Mr Roll reveals the crucial difference that mental aptitude made when being commissioned a position in the military. This fact also highlights how much of the South's less-educated and largely poor population were in many aspects pre-destined not to reach the positions and higher ranks on offer to servicemen.

The topic of racial discord within the military of the Vietnam era is well researched within the field of cultural and military history. Notwithstanding, racial conflict is invariably linked to social and class disparities evident within a nation's culture. Previous research reveals that southern Vietnam veterans have never been questioned on this topic from their regional perspective. With this in mind, the interviewees were asked: *Can you recall any instances of social or racial discord that may have been the result of a presumed North/South divide, which resulted in tensions while serving in Vietnam?*

With Native American ancestry, Ben Humphries commented that his own regionalism never proved to be a factor for himself personally in Vietnam. Nonetheless, Ben did recall that 'when [he] was later in 9th Division, [he] was in a large base camp where there was racial tensions directed towards black southerners in particular'. As established earlier in this chapter, these racial/cultural altercations were magnified — much as a result of boredom — as the numbers of men residing together markedly increased and attack from North Vietnamese and Vietminh forces decreased.

As a black soldier, Eldson McGhee stated that 'the camaraderie among the troops, especially the blacks in Vietnam is legendary'. Eldson offers an interesting point that this unity may have been exaggerated as they wished to enforce that the 'misnomer about black

soldiers in Vietnam were the drudge of our [base camp] community'. Eldson concludes that when news of the assassination of Dr Martin Luther King reached Vietnam, 'riots exploded like bombs among the troops in Vietnam, totally disrupting every notion I ever thought about racial harmony. In a day we destroyed relationships we'd been building in Vietnam for months'. Solomon Smith replied how racism was evident within the ranks in Vietnam stating that 'it was rare to see a white dude on shit-burning detail. Where I was, after a while I didn't salute any white officers and they would mostly let me be'.⁵⁵ While Both Solomon and Eldson's accounts refer to the racial tensions existent in Vietnam, they do not attribute these occurrences as having a regional-based dimension.

Rick Owen offered a detailed response to his experience of racial and regional-based disparities in both the combat and support areas of Vietnam. Rick stated that 'I witnessed many examples of forced segregation, and wilful segregation. Black recruits were occasionally treated badly by the good ole' Southern boy recruits'. These double standards towards military service were soon noticed by the black troops in Vietnam, as a result they chose to display their contempt in various ways. Rick states that black people would 'set themselves apart socially and by the items they would wear. They had their unique 'handshakes' and would keep their hair as 'large' as possible. This was often flaunted to the point where they would be reprimanded'. Rick also commented on cases where some white southerners he knew displayed some of the South's undesirable mannerisms affirming that 'I knew a guy from North Carolina who couldn't wait to get back home and join the KKK (Ku Klux Klan) when he was discharged. I knew other Southerners who had views similar to his, but he seemed rather proud of it'. Mr Owen concluded that 'most of the rowdy drinkers and fighters-when-drunk were usually from the South too'.⁵⁶ These sentiments add gravitas to the

⁵⁵ Correspondence 14/05/2013. The 'shit-burning' detail Mr Smith refers to is the act of burning the raw sewage created by the men in the support camps with diesel in large pits dug by selected troops.

⁵⁶ Correspondence from interviewees to author 30/11/2013, 10/12/2013 and 16/01/2014.

white South's much-lauded belligerent, masculine-driven and racist past boasted by its denizens since the nineteenth century.

Rick Roll replied that due to the relative ease in which home life could be recreated in the support camps he stated that 'in [Vietnam] Southerners clung to their guns, fundamentalist religions and fought segregation almost as hard as they fought the Civil War'. Ben Sewell stated that men from the South were ideally suited to Vietnam as, 'the majority of Southerners have British, German or Scot/Irish ancestry and that we/they have been fighting regularly for at least 1000 years'. These views, regardless of their subjectivity, still offer pertinent insights into how white and black southerners regarded their own, and the service of their fellow brethren in the theatre of war in Vietnam.

As personal recollections and opinions are subject to change with one's age, especially those sentiments related to the already ambiguous memories constructed in military conflict, the veterans were asked to conclude with their retrospective thoughts on service as a southerner. *Can you offer an insight into how your home state treated their Vietnam Veterans, and was their subsequent treatment display southern distinctiveness?*

Solomon Smith replied how upon return to his home state of Mississippi as a Vietnam Veteran, he only felt further tainted in the eyes of civilians. When asked if his neighbourhood welcomed their veterans home, Solomon answered 'hell no, fact it was even easier to get arrested once they knew you were a Nam vet'. On the topic of how he now feels regarding his home state and nation's response to Vietnam, Solomon replied 'I don't have any thoughts; I don't blame anyone then or now for dodging service. I hear the odd dumb redneck brag about this and that in Nam, but they are sure as lying as they probably avoided it in the first place'.⁵⁷ Solomon's response to Mississippi's subdued arrival of its veterans from Vietnam was typical

⁵⁷ Correspondence with Mr Smith, 17/01/2014.

of many American states in the aftermath of the war. In many instances — such was the case within Mississippi — it was often up to thirty years before many states remembered their men and women of Vietnam in the form of war memorials.

Soon after Eldson McGhee returned home to the anonymity of Georgia he was implicated in the Marshallville bank robbery of September 1972, found guilty and sentenced to life in prison where he was released on parole after ten years. Eldson told how he was also invited to Washington D.C. to testify on the plight of incarcerated veterans before the U.S. senate committee on veterans' affairs. Eldson's sentiments towards his nation remain unfavourable still today, with him stating that 'as a result of the Vietnam War being defined as a 'conflict' rather than a war, my generation of combatants were set apart from the honourable service and recognition of generations before us'. Consequently, many Vietnam Veterans today still campaign for official recognition of the part they played in representing their country in conflict.⁵⁸

Veteran Rick Owen offered a succinct response to this final question, while sustaining many of the traits so lauded in the works of southern authors from the past two centuries. Rick states that 'before it became 'popular' to treat [Vietnam] Veterans with respect and to 'welcome' them home, I would say that the South did a better job of treating returning veterans decently'. Rick reiterates a phenomenon largely only spoke of by Vietnam veterans from the northern states, expressing that 'I never experienced it, but I've talked to guys who were spit on or otherwise abused in other parts of the country, primarily upon return to the States, but never in the South'. This statement reveals how the more liberal-thinking northern states regarded veterans as the 'baby-killers' and 'murderers' which the region's protestors and media often characterised them. Rick concluded his answer on the topic of the South's

⁵⁸ As the war in Vietnam was not deemed an official act of war, but a defence resolution, the appropriate title for the conflict in Vietnam remains contested.

treatment of its veterans by stating that ‘perhaps it's because of the Civil War and the pride that they viewed their soldiers with back then, or because the South didn't have as much to be proud about’.⁵⁹ These two pertinent quotes made by Mr Owen offer an insight into how much of southern history remains both haunted and tainted by the region’s past actions.

Ben Humphries offered a differing perspective on his return home to Tennessee stating that ‘the South treated their veterans the same as the rest of the country, shitty. Our biggest beef (complaint) was with the various Veteran Service Organizations who would not allow [membership]’.⁶⁰ Ben wrote of the dejection and anguish his comrades experienced from the sentiments of veterans from previous wars, stating that ‘when we were accepted, the veterans from WWII would not have anything to do with us, saying we didn't fight a war. Not being accepted by our peers hurt the most’.⁶¹ This reluctance by some to accept Vietnam veterans as true war veterans, may go some way in explaining the far greater number of southern VVA chapters evident today, in relation to northern ones. The apparent burden of southern martial history placated southern veterans who shared their ancestral and own experiences of war.

Ben Sewell’s sentiments were presumably supportive of his region as his brief reply to the question stated that ‘as a proud Confederate descendent, I know how the South thinks of its brave Vietnam Vets more’. As a northerner, yet spending much of his adult life in the south, Rick Roll gave an interesting insight into the closing question of my study. Rick stated that regardless of the supposed southern fervour for martial service ‘southerners are as guilty as northerners for paying lip service to the plight of our soldiers who came home’. Describing Texas as ‘the quintessential Southern state’ — in terms of masculine characteristics — Rick

⁵⁹ Correspondence from interviewees to author 14/05/2012 and 22/11/2013.

⁶⁰ The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) states that the organisation’s mission is to foster camaraderie among United States veterans of overseas conflicts and to ‘serve our veterans, the military, and our communities’. <http://www.vfw.org/Common/About-Us/>.

⁶¹ Correspondence from interviewee to author 10/12/2013.

argued that ‘Southerners seem to be totally unaware of the inexcusable hypocrisy in the way they actually react to change on a political level’.⁶² Despite the amount of oral testimonies available from veterans of the war, the diverse views given by these six men attests to the ambiguous, yet resilient influence southern identity had upon their Vietnam experience.

Along with my correspondence with the aforementioned men, I also received numerous brief e-mail replies that recommended websites, songs and poems that refer to the war from Veterans who felt these sources best explained their sentiments. Although these sources were useful, none offered an insight into the war from a distinct southern perspective. Contrary to this assistance, I also received some interesting and revealing replies in my request for help with this thesis. The following replies reveal the level of anger and distrust many veterans still hold against ‘outsiders’. One message stated, ‘Fuck off, I bet you’re a Yankee’, despite no reference to my origin apart from my United Kingdom e-mail address. Another stated that ‘There were no problems, we all fought as one, End of Story’, again my initial contact e-mail never asked for evidence of ‘problems’, just regional perspectives. Another reply may have been regionally nuanced as the gentleman’s reply stated ‘Kiss my ass, you N.H. asshole’. The N.H. may have been a reference to Manchester, New Hampshire, not noticing the U.K. email address, thus a different country. And an interesting response from a prominent southern VVA official who had ‘guessed’ ‘you’ (myself) was English and had a ‘girl’s name’ and that ‘you’ (the United Kingdom) was guilty of ‘cowardice for deserting the western mission to save the world from Communism.’⁶³ The oral testimonies and replies received during this study clearly point to a distinct cultural influence the south had and still has upon these men. As the key aim of this thesis was to acquire regional perspectives towards the Vietnam War, archived testimonies from all regions of the United States were examined by the method previously detailed. Notably, this revealed that

⁶² E-mail correspondence with Mr Roll, 01/06/2015.

⁶³ Replies to author dated 12/04/13, 15/11/2013, 02/09/2012 and 05/09/2012 respectively.

testimonies from non-southerners were far less apparent than those of southerners. Consequently, those non-southerners who did cite their own region in their own testimonies rarely referred to it in a historical sense, usually just stating where they grew up. With these statistical disparities in mind, an examination of military figures from a regional perspective will highlight if this trend was apparent in the number of men serving in Vietnam.

Statistics on the Vietnam War from a Southern perspective

A quantitative study of the American South's participation — in terms of manpower — in Vietnam will assist in determining if the region's contribution was sizeably different from other regions of the nation. Using official military statistics, an examination of the approximate figures of southern men who served in Vietnam from each southern state will be given. Consequently, by then comparing these figures to statistics of casualties and awards for acts of valour, a cliometric summary can be comprised which may infer that southerners were prone to particular regionally-orientated behaviour, be it brave, belligerent or otherwise.

According to 2008 official government statistics, the war in Vietnam claimed the lives of 58,212 men and 8 women. Statistics on the war's dead vary as some government departments interpret 'died as a result of military service' differently depending on cause, time and place of death.⁶⁴ Notwithstanding these discrepancies, the 2008 figure remains the most up-to-date and reliable figure. By utilising the information provided by the national archives statistical information service on the Vietnam War, figures are available that present the South's contribution of manpower to the war. The eleven states of the former Confederacy provided around 825,000 men, equating to approximately 31% of the total armed forces in Vietnam. The South's population figures at the height of the war in Vietnam (1967 to 1969)

⁶⁴ Death toll figures retrieved from www.archives.gov/research/military/vietnam-war/casualty-statistics.html.

was approximately 50 million men and women, with around half of that figure being men. This amount reveals that southern men constituted to approximately 25% of the nation's male populace during the period of the war.⁶⁵ When comparing the figures of the southern male populace to the total amount of personnel who served in Vietnam, it can be calculated that the states of the former Confederacy contributed no more than approximately 150,000 or 0.3% more men than the remaining U.S. states.⁶⁶ Although the discrepancy of approximately 150,000 appears considerable, the disparity is readily explainable given the economic, social and racial conditions of the South of the period. As established in chapter two, although the South was experiencing considerable economic change at this time, benefits at a grass roots level had not reached the lower levels in the region. Consequently, the South's greater population of poor — when compared to northern statistics — goes some way in explaining the higher proportion of southerners who enlisted or were drafted for military service. Adding to this factor was the grossly prejudiced efforts of the region's draft boards that exploited the large number of subjugated black people and disenfranchised white people. Taking these factors in to account, the figure of 150,000 could be considered surprisingly low, given the South's circumstances. The sentiments of Wilson, Gilman and Fry deduce that these higher statistics prove that southerners were more martially inclined as a result of their origin and more eager to go to war than other regions of the United States. Nonetheless, my research contests that the depressing socio-economic conditions of the region must be taken into account at least as much, as the region's historic proclivity for military service, if not more so.

A further statistical analysis of the recruitment and casualty figures from each of the southern states will assist in establishing whether the South's men were actually imbued with

⁶⁵ American population figures from a 1969 census. Retrieved from www.multpl.com/united-states-population/table.

⁶⁶ As is the case with many military statistics, these figures are prone to vary considerably. The total figure is based on an average of 2.5 million men and women who served in Vietnam. This figure ranges from 2.2 million to 3 million depending on sources investigated.

a greater proclivity to display bravery — as a result of their region’s past — while serving in Vietnam.⁶⁷ Throughout narratives of military history, regardless of how acts of heroism are portrayed, the overriding theme tends to focus on individuals who were imbued with the capacity to risk their life in battle to a greater degree than normally expected of soldiers. In many cases of documented bravery, a direct consequence of the individual or group action means those involved are more susceptible to suffer serious injury or death. These resulting actions magnify the personification of military service to that of heroism. The following table presents the recruitment figures from each southern state, along with the subsequent casualty statistics of the region’s men serving in Vietnam. As heroism beyond the call of duty typically reveals higher than normal casualty rates, the figures on the following page reveal to what extent, if at all, southern soldiers showed any increase in recruitment versus casualty ratio.

⁶⁷ In *The Vietnam War on Campus: Other Voices, More Distant Drums* (Connecticut, 2001) Stephen H. Wheeler writes about the strength of the military tradition in the Deep South stating ‘almost 10% of the Americans killed in Vietnam were from Georgia alone, a statistic that reflects the degree to which military was a profession in the South’, (p.156). In actuality, the figure was less than 2.64 % or 1585 men.

State	Enlisted	Casualty rate	Percentage
Alabama	59,000	1216	2.06%
Arkansas	30,000	592	1.97%
Florida	117,000	1619	1.38%
Georgia	60,000	1585	2.64%
Louisiana	59,000	887	1.50%
Mississippi	30,000	643	2.14%
N-Carolina	89,000	1614	1.81%
Tennessee	58,000	1302	2.24%
S-Carolina	58,000	902	1.55%
Texas	205,000	3427	1.67%
Virginia	60,000	1309	2.18%

Fig 1: Table of statistics revealing numbers of serving men from each of the southern states in relation to casualty figures for each state.

With a ratio figure of 2.64%, the state of Georgia had the highest recruitment/casualty rate relation in comparison to that of Florida, which revealed the lowest ratio with 1.38%. Taking into account the socio-cultural conditions in the Deep South of the period, Georgia's high proportion of black people (who would have undoubtedly been exploited by their military in Vietnam) goes some way in explaining the higher ratio figures. Florida's lower casualty rate figure could be as a result of the region being less dependent on agriculture and its growing economies related to tourism and retirement living, hence a lower number of poor black people and white people turned to military service. Department of Defense records

confirm that approximately 15,400 southerners lost their lives in Vietnam, which accumulates to around 28% of the total fatalities.⁶⁸ Taking these figures in to account, on average, the southern states reveals an approximate recruitment/casualty figure of around 2%. My research carried an identical study of veterans who served and were designated as casualties in the northern states of Illinois, Oregon and California. The results from these states, which were culturally diverse from one another and resoundingly not southern, revealed that the 2% ratio remained consistent.⁶⁹ From a racial perspective, national archive statistics reveal that approximately 275,000 African Americans served in the nation's four military divisions. With a figure of 7,243, it can be calculated that approximately 12.5% of the total casualties in South-east Asia were African Americans, a figure which is consistent with the amount of black troops serving overall. Despite state by state research on the southern contingent serving in Vietnam, black casualty figures by state cannot be determined.⁷⁰

To summarise this examination of enlistment and casualty statistics, the southern states constituted of approximately 25% of the nation's population during the Vietnam era. Around 31% of servicemen who served in Vietnam were from the South, with 28% of the southern total contingent recorded as casualties. Both southern and non-southern casualty rates fluctuated around the 2% margin, but remained consistently close to this percentage regardless of state. As these statistics suggest, the number of personnel from the south, along with each state's casualty figures, are not overtly out of proportion with their comrades from the northern U.S. states. If the South's proclivity to show martial bravery so espoused

⁶⁸ Southern casualty figures retrieved from Vietnam Conflict Extract File record counts by Home of Record State Code: (April, 2008), gov/research/military/vietnam-war/casualty-lists/.

⁶⁹ When researching how many men served in Vietnam in order to attain an average percentage, many sources presented grossly inflated figures. Numbers varied from 2.5 million to over 8 million were revealed. Considering that in fact, just over 2.5 million actually served, statistics from the numerous veterans associations cannot be considered wholly reliable. Consequently, state by state governmental statistics from the National Archive were utilised throughout this particular analysis.

⁷⁰ Statistics retrieved from <http://www.archives.gov/research/military/vietnam-war/casualty-statistics.html>. Throughout the Vietnam era, Civil Rights groups claimed that blacks were dying in significantly higher number than whites. Notwithstanding, despite an irregular number of African Americans, in comparison to whites dying in 1967, figures remained consistent with other races throughout the period of the war.

throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century was distinguishable in times of war, then their participation in the Vietnam War is not a reliable case to sustain this claim.⁷¹

Consequently, as the contribution of servicemen from the southern states is not overtly out of proportion with that from the remainder of the U.S., then an examination of the causes of insubordination may reveal if such occurrences were regional or culturally influenced, given the South's theoretical penchant for acts of violence.⁷² As the war became increasingly ineffective, the breakdown of morale in Vietnam is mentioned to varying degrees in the majority of the oral testimonies of veterans. Insubordinate acts such as desertion, AWOL's and assaults on fellow comrades have been present in armies since records began. Military Historian William Allison, researched this topic from an American perspective over the past two centuries. His results revealed that since the nineteenth century, even during times of peace, desertion rates in American forces reached as high as 50%. Allison's statistics deal a particular blow to the concept of nineteenth century southern honour with him confirming that, 'during the Civil War, the Confederate Army often had up to two thirds of its men illegally absent from service'.⁷³ Similarly during the World War II period, the American Bar Association concluded that considering the amount of insubordinate acts committed by U.S. soldiers, the military justice system's response to mutinous behaviour was grossly inadequate for a democratic society. In 1947, a report conducted by the Advisory Committee on Military Justice, published a 400 page report concluding that any 'breakdown' in the military was compounded by the inefficient justice system in operation. By the time of the Vietnam era, the military's legal structure had undergone numerous, albeit minor revisions, but was ultimately

⁷¹ Although there are possible pitfalls in using statistics to form a coherent conclusion, the preceding figures were retrieved from the most up to date national and official sources available.

⁷² Government sources usually labelled the cause of any internal dissent as a result of 'the fog of war'. This military term was used to denote the situational ambiguities of human error that arise during times of war. Karl Von Clausewitz used this term when describing potential military mistakes in his pivotal book 'Vom Kriege' in 1837.

⁷³ Allison, (2007), p.11.

in a state of disarray and ill-prepared for the problems which 1960s culture posed for military service.

Statistics on American AWOL's and desertions occurring in Vietnam highlight the decline in morale as the war dragged on.⁷⁴ In 1966, army desertion rates in Vietnam were 17.7 per thousand; by 1971 these figures had risen to 73.3 per thousand. Similarly, cases of AWOLs increased from 57.2 per thousand in 1966 to a disturbing 176.9 per thousand by 1971. Desertion rates for the more disciplined and better utilised Marine Corp during the same period are equally perturbing, as the desertions grew from 16.1 to 56.2 per thousand in the same five year period.⁷⁵ Unfortunately, the origin of the men charged is not available.

For the white southerner travelling to Vietnam, tales of his forefather's bravery in standing for the Confederacy a century earlier often formed the basis southern martial honour. National propaganda along with much-publicised personal testimonies from the two previous victorious World Wars only served to increase the pressure on men travelling to Vietnam. Historian, J. T. Hansen affirms how the American public and new recruits were grossly misinformed about the facts and realities of the two World Wars and as a result, 'soldiers went to Vietnam with expectations that were an imaginative projection, based on their nation's lingering memories of World War II, especially those in the popular media'.⁷⁶ Factors that were particularly relevant to 90% of the men stationed in Vietnam ruled out any chance of achieving the 'glory' of their ancestors from World War I and II. The media's increasingly negative reporting of the war, including the nation's civilian outcry was broadcasted daily to the thousands of television and radio sets owned by troops in Vietnam.

⁷⁴ Although AWOL's and desertion appear similar. Desertions are considered more serious by the military as it incurs that the individual deserted his posting during service with no intent to return. AWOL status is usually attributed to men who have not returned from leave on time, or have not immediately reported for duty.

⁷⁵ Notably, the higher aptitude rate and less combat fatigued U.S. Air Force witnessed their desertion rates remain at less than one per thousand throughout the war. Allison, pp.73-73.

⁷⁶ J.T. Hansen, Susan Owen, and Michael Patrick Madden, eds. *Parallels: The Soldier's Knowledge and the Oral History of Contemporary Warfare* (New York, 1992), p.236.

Such biased reporting, poor utilisation of manpower, which in turn offered little chance of promotion, eroded any imaginings soldiers may have retained to personify the masculine, usually southern ‘John Wayne’ ideal in the theatre of war so promoted throughout the decades of the 1940s and 1950s.⁷⁷

Alongside the mundane similarities to civilian life for the vast majority, the martial ethic of combat was resolutely undermined by the realities of counterinsurgency warfare in Vietnam. The majority of combat units operated in relative isolation, resulting in numerous breakdowns in proficiency due to personal disputes that were resolved unofficially thus undermining rank of command. This covert mentality within small units was ultimately corrosive to the cause as it propagated distrust of not only their comrades outside of their circle, but also the Pentagon’s directives and politicians. The average age of men in battle was also different to that of their ancestors who fought in previous American wars. The average age of a G.I. serving in Vietnam was 19 years old, 7 years younger than his World War II counterpart and 9 years than those in World War I. Respectively, Vietnam witnessed the presence of hundreds of inexperienced commanding officers (COs), many as young as 20 years old. A common joke often told amongst the young troops revealed the sentiments many had for such young commanders: ‘what’s the difference between the Marine Corp and the Boy Scouts? The Boy Scouts have adult leadership’.⁷⁸ The lack of coherent military directives from high command, sheer inexperience of their immediate superiors — which ultimately led to distrust of them — and inexperience of youth led to growing dissent amongst the troops. This psychologically unstable and fearful outlook led many troops to often recite the phrase

⁷⁷ Throughout the course of the research of this thesis, many southern troops regularly referred to the actor John Wayne as the ideal man to mimic when portraying the masculine hero. Many also lamented how the reality of war and especially Vietnam, was nothing like the screen version.

⁷⁸ Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (New York, 1978), p.101.

‘don't mean nuthin (nothing)’ as many gave up any aspirations of honour and proving their bravery through martial acts.⁷⁹

The dismal portrayal of the young G.I. in Vietnam warrants greater explanation to determine if social and cultural upbringing can elucidate the negative and often tragic figure of the Vietnam veteran. As discussed previously, men with lower educational credentials, as a result of the racial and social disparities in U.S. education at the time, were more prone to being drafted. The military utilised the poor white people and black people of the South to fill combat arms assignments to make up the numbers in increasingly desperate units. Many commanding officers considered the drafted men as a waste of time and government funds as the men were not ‘committed army material’ and could not wait to return to civilian society after their 24 months of service. Vietnam veteran and author David Cortright wrote of the general dismal expectations of the soldier in Vietnam stating that, ‘draftees expect shit, get shit, and aren’t even disappointed. Volunteers expect something better, get the same shit, and have at least one more year to complain about it’.⁸⁰

The relative absence of lawful repercussions following criminal acts served to fuel the resentment between soldiers in combat and those in support positions. Swayed by the growing cases of insubordination in Vietnam, the military took the step to considerably revise the Military Judicial Code (MJC) in 1968. By allowing the establishment of independent judiciaries, judges familiar with the accused’s responsibilities could now be replaced by ones who were unfamiliar with the suspect’s duties – if requested; an offer that was routinely taken advantage of by accused men. Thus, the cohesive relationship formed between a soldier and his direct superior who served alongside him was undermined, as the accused could avoid the

⁷⁹ ‘Don’t Mean Nothing/Nuthin’ was a term regularly used by troops as a coping mechanism to deal with what many men saw as the pointless death of comrades in a meaningless war. It was also the title of a 2008 book on the war by Ron Lealos as well a 2003 poem by Gary Jacobson: <http://namtour.com/nuthin.html>.

⁸⁰ David Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt: GI Resistance during the Vietnam War* (Chicago, 2005), p.223.

interrogation of their immediate superior in the courtroom. Further destabilising the military's judicial code was the decision to allow civilian legal representation for the first time. As a result, many of these private lawyers adopted an anti-military and pro-liberal perspective, which was increasingly fuelling the dissent against the mission in Vietnam at home and abroad.⁸¹ The low regard that both commanders and their subordinates held for one another was transferred to the field of operation, further compounding the breakdown in command of MACV. Determining to what extent these changes affected the sentiments of the southerner in Vietnam is difficult to ascertain. Notwithstanding, based on the heightened expectations that the region's black people and white people took to Vietnam — albeit with differing intentions — it could be acknowledged that southerners were especially disgruntled by their nation's failing course in Vietnam.

Though sentiments vary, many Vietnam veterans reflect upon their contribution with disappointment and negativity. Regardless of their role, the majority of serving men had little to boast about as America's mission floundered. Combat soldiers regularly voiced disdain for their comrades in the rear support camps as well as their higher echelons of military and political authority, while support troops complained of the monotony of camp life, racial and cultural tensions and the desire to return home. Michael Herr describes how the majority of such camps, many named after the commanding officer's wife, were 'posh, fat, air conditioned camps like comfortable, middle class scenes with the violence tacit'.⁸² The individual Service Rotational System (SRS) employed in Vietnam never allowed time for effective group cohesion to become established. Thus, acts of bravado — often only enacted once a group knew each other — was never endorsed in this environment. The typical soldier travelled to Vietnam alone, as cohesive groups formed in basic training were disseminated

⁸¹ One of the most successful groups of lawyers was the military defense committee of Cambridge Massachusetts (LMDC). With low fees and even pro bono representation, the LMDC defended dozens of soldiers including a high-profile case where 10 black soldiers had allegedly planned to murder their commanding officer.

⁸² Herr, (1977), p.9.

across the military spectrum. The basic ‘grunt’ also had to integrate alone as the ‘fucking new guy’ (FNG), in what were increasingly stressed and disillusioned units, and then return home alone while other members of his unit remained.⁸³ This discordant and uninspiring system of rotation was often alluded to in soldiers testimonies, which served to feed the dissatisfaction amongst men who had hoped to continue and uphold ancestral expectations of military service.

Insubordinate Acts and the Southern Soldier

By 1969, such was the level of internal discontent in Vietnam, some units were awarded commendations and leave passes for having the fewest cases of AWOLs. Not surprisingly, some commanding officers simply lied to their superiors regarding cases of insubordination in order to avoid reprisal themselves. Veteran, Solomon Smith recalled how military superiors allowed cultural tensions to proliferate, stating that ‘CO’s (commanding officers) were scared shitless, you’d see confederate flags on one side of the camp and white power flags on the other, and he knew that he better keep quiet’.⁸⁴ One of the most damning statements towards America’s mission in Vietnam came from former director of the United States Marine Corp, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Heinl:

By every conceivable indication, the army in South Vietnam is approaching a state of total collapse, with individuals and units avoiding or having refused combat. Murdering their officers, drug-ridden, and dispirited, where not near mutinous ... the morale, discipline, and battle-worthiness of the U.S. armed forces are, with a

⁸³ Jonathan Shay discussed how fragmented unit rotation where men rarely serve their full tour together is one of the major causes of combat related Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Shay, (1995),p.198.

⁸⁴ Correspondence from Mr Smith 13/06/2013.

few salient exceptions, lower and worse than at any time in this century and possibly history.⁸⁵

Insubordination in Vietnam followed a clear trend when examined linearly. Although racial tensions, assaults, animosity towards missions and crime were present throughout the Vietnam period, such accounts are relatively few and were recounted with shock in the first years of the war. Notwithstanding, post-1968, such cases became increasingly prevalent, with many being somewhat boastful in nature when recollected.⁸⁶ The fact that internal violence with deadly weapons, or ‘fragging’, became apparent and later on a practically accepted response from troops reveals the severity of breakdown of command in Vietnam.⁸⁷

Acts of violence from subordinates upon their military superiors are as old as the institutions in which they occur. Military historian, Richard Holmes wrote of one such case that occurred in 1704, when the victorious commanding British Officer at the battle of Blenheim was shot through the head by one of his own men for subjecting his battalion to unnecessary danger. Examining twentieth century statistics, by the end of the First World War, more than 4.7 million American men had served in Europe, yet fewer than 370 cases of suspected ‘fraggings’ led to trials by Court Martial.⁸⁸ Remarkably, this minute ratio remained approximately consistent throughout the theatres of World War II and the Korean War. Contrastingly, it was during the Vietnam War that the use of weapons — primarily explosives

⁸⁵ H. Bruce Franklin, *Vietnam and Other American Fantasies* (Massachusetts, 2000), p.64.

⁸⁶ 1968 is regarded as a pivotal year for the downturn in fortunes for the U.S. military in Vietnam. The enemy’s Tet Offensive is often cited as a crushing blow for MACV. Domestically, the decision by President Johnson to not run for a second term of office, the assassinations of Dr Martin Luther King and presidential candidate Robert Kennedy, capture of the USS Pueblo by North Korean forces and American urban and anti-war war riots all compounded the discontent in the United States.

⁸⁷ The term ‘fragging’ or ‘fragged’ derives from the use of fragmentation grenades to cause injury. The M-14 phosphorous incendiary grenade nicknamed the ‘willy pete’ was used as well as the M-18 ‘claymore’ directional mine. However, the most common grenade used was the M-26 ‘frag’ fragmentation grenade, which was easy obtainable and in plentiful supply.

⁸⁸ Richard Holmes, *Acts of War: The Behaviour of Men in Battle* (London, 1985), p.317.

against military superiors — became a well-known means for troops to voice their disdain. Disturbingly, Richard Holmes reiterated that ‘over 250 years after Blenheim, and only a decade after Korea, as many as 20% of American Officers who died in Vietnam may have been assassinated by their own men’.⁸⁹ Attaining whether the frequency and motives for these often deadly attacks contained any regional nuance may reveal if intrinsic sentiments, based on origin played any part in the men’s motives to commit such acts.

In January 1966, the first fragging case was documented in Vietnam. This incident took place in a rear support camp when an Army Sergeant received extensive injuries as a result of a fragmentation grenade being thrown into his sleeping quarters. Investigators of the crime recorded an earlier altercation between the sergeant and one of his private’s regarding an unnecessarily dangerous mission directive. Though the suspect was identified as being near the scene at the time of the incident, no action was taken due to lack of solid proof. It was a further 11 months, in December 1966, when a number of fragmentation grenades were thrown into a commanding officer’s accommodation. The man found guilty, a disgruntled private, confessed and was sentenced to two years imprisonment, which was later overturned on appeal. Despite a handful of similar cases in the year following — all of which were treated leniently — by the end of 1968, fraggings became frequent and increasingly deadly as the term became a part of military vocabulary still recognised today. Precise numbers on cases of fraggings vary according to sources investigated and what constitutes a fragging. Historian David Cortright, quotes 551 confirmed cases, George Lepre, who studied the phenomenon specifically, quotes a number of several hundred. Military law historian, William Allison estimates a figure of 800, along with military psychiatrist Dr Thomas C. Bond. Historian, Richard A. Gabriel gives the highest figure, stating that at least 1,013 documented killings or

⁸⁹ Holmes claim that 20% of officers may have been fragged would equate to around 1575 of the 7878 of officers killed on duty, p.329. This figure appears excessive as the highest number of number of total fraggings around is 1000 at greatest.

attempted killings of superiors were reported.⁹⁰ Because of the military command structure, officers in Vietnam were targeted, predominantly Captains, First and Second Lieutenant and First Sergeants (non-commissioned officers) being the main victims of fraggings. Much of the reason for the targeting of these ranks was due to their own agendas while on command in Vietnam. A factor only evident in this period was that the system of promotion for Lieutenants and Captains had never been so immediate and relatively simple. These officers were well-aware that effective patrols and enemy engagements — many that were falsified — led to swift promotion out of Vietnam. Despite the disparity in fragging statistics presented, a definite atmosphere of fear permeated the minds of many commanders of various rank, as lower ranked soldiers felt motivated to gain revenge through deadly violence as a result of the treatment they deemed unfair.

Determining if an individual who committed a fragging adhered to a certain psychological profile is difficult due to the numerous circumstances and extreme pressures the theatre of war has upon individuals. Author and Army Veteran of 22 years Richard A. Gabriel, wrote how almost any man, regardless of his past, ‘who deemed their CO to be incompetent, would always ponder disposing of him, and therefore soldiers throughout history have resorted to the simple yet effective device of killing them’.⁹¹ Mark Lane’s 1970 book *Conversations with Americans* interviewed thirty-two men who had served in Vietnam. Lane quotes the sentiments of one Louisianan veteran James D. Nell to highlight the ease of being fragged while on duty:

You are out in the field with a bunch of grunts for security and sometimes [superiors] got on your nerves too much or mess you around too much. Grunts will put a price on his head, \$100 or \$200. The first one that kills him got that money. I

⁹⁰ Statistics retrieved from Cortright, (2005), p.43. Lepre, (2011), p.13. Allison, (2007), p.67. Bond, (1976), p.12 Gabriel, (1982), p33 respectively.

⁹¹ Richard A. Gabriel, *No More Heroes: Madness and Psychiatry in War* (New York, 1987), p.55.

think [other officers] knew about it after it happened. They started using their heads real quick. They would stop messing with the troops.⁹²

Similarly, former U.S. Marine Richard S. Ensminger stated how as a result of his typical masculine-fuelled North Carolina upbringing, many of his region's brethren travelled to Vietnam as aspiring 'John Wayne' characters. Ensminger affirmed how this perception was soon dispelled once men encountered the low-skilled and dangerously motivated commanding officers, stating that 'lieutenants were a dime a dozen. A Second Lieutenant who screwed up twice was a dead man, and not because of the enemy. He'd get killed by his own men'.⁹³ The performance of CO's on patrols was also subject to the judgement of their own higher ranked officers. Even if sergeants, lieutenants and in some cases captains survived assaults from their own men, high command considered these officers and non-commanding officers as ineffective, in a expertise-sense and no longer competent of effective command – thus they were demoted or punished accordingly. The realities of service in Vietnam, along with the motives of CO's to achieve swift promotion out of Vietnam, served to fuel the disappointment of many troops, but none more so than the historically-burdened men of the South.

In 1976, Army Psychiatrist Dr Thomas C. Bond presented the most quantifiable evidence on the motives and mind set of convicted fraggers. Interviewing 28 men convicted of fragging who served in Vietnam, Dr Bond discovered several predominant characteristics within his studies that could be attributed to socio-cultural stimuli. Present in the backgrounds of the majority of the men in Bond's study was social deprivation as well as little to no education. Many of the men also witnessed, or were subject to violence throughout their pre-military service lives. Lack of critical self-observation, that entailed adherence to cultural expectations, feelings of vulnerability and insecurity of their own masculinity were also cited

⁹² Mark Lane, *Conversations with Americans* (New York, 1970), p.242.

⁹³ Wilson, p.30.

as motivating factors. Although alcohol and drug use were factors in a few of the subjects interviewed, these influences were not judged the deciding cause. Dr Bond revealed that the average age of the assailants he examined was 20 years old, and they had been in the military for around 27 months. A notable factor is that 26 of the 28 men studied had enlisted for service in Vietnam voluntarily, i.e. not drafted. This high number of enlisted guilty men may well suggest that these individuals felt somewhat 'let down' by the realities of military service in not delivering the masculine ideal portrayed by the service boards. Unfortunately, Dr Bond's research does not state the origin of the men interviewed.

Compounding this view, sociologist, Kurt Lang wrote how in contrast to those drafted, the heightened expectancies of enlisted men, who were generally of a higher aptitude and more duty-bound, as a result of peer pressure were more psychologically damaged when the reality of their role in Vietnam was comprehended. Lang affirms that as a result of the disparities evident in class and educational dynamics, some individuals were prone to protesting their grievances by influencing the actions of others.⁹⁴ Accordingly, Lang concludes that:

Open criticism was more concentrated among the educated. This same characteristic makes them less prone to commit a disciplinary offence. Nevertheless, their presence/influence served as a catalyst for the delinquency in others, who depend on firm authority to keep their own dispositions in check. Units with large numbers of draftees had higher delinquency rates than those whose numbers were small, yet it was the regulars not the draftees who committed most of the offences.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Kurt Lang, 'American Military Performance in Vietnam: Background and Analysis', *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* (1980), p.284.

⁹⁵ Lang, (1980), p.284.

The southern reputation of a volatile and emotional temper could be ideally suited to the psychological model of the typical fragger. Through contact with Historian, George Lepre, whose 2011 book on this topic studied 71 convicted fraggers, Lepre provided me with information on the regional origins of the perpetrators, a factor not covered in Lepre's own research. Of the 71 men utilised in Lepre's study of fraggers, 19 or 26% were deemed southern as a result of their origin. Remarkably, these figures are concordant with the South's enlistment figures and military service statistics. As with the subsequent studies in this chapter, these results suggest that southern men were no more prone to show illegal or violent behaviour in Vietnam — as a result of their cultural distinctiveness — than their northern comrades.

Evidence that fraggings entailed racial motives is equally infrequent when statistics are examined. Despite General William Westmoreland's statement that 'the first report of such conduct was in 1968 (incorrect by two years), and cases were related to a mostly black army transportation corps unit'.⁹⁶ Lepre also attests that race — as a precursor for fragging — is generally weak, although he states that 'race-motivated attacks on white people by black people did account for 9.5% in 1969 and 5.9% in 1970, and no cases of white people fragging black people as a result of their race were recorded'.⁹⁷ The highest number of recorded fraggings throughout the course of the war appeared in 1971, with 222 definite cases being documented. Notably, by this period, the nature of the attacks had become increasingly indirect towards particular individuals and random in their motives. This high number of fraggings, at such a relatively low period of enemy activity, advocates that fraggings took on more of a role of protest regarding the nature of America's role in Vietnam, than a personal vendetta or retaliation against a command orders. This lethal and potentially fatal nature of protesting with deadly weapons clearly offered little scope for mutual relations amongst the

⁹⁶ Lepre, (2011), p.23.

⁹⁷ Lepre, (2011), p.102.

ranks to progress or exist amicably. Although fraggings as a means of protest did not adopt a racial nuance, black soldiers became increasingly empowered during their tours in Vietnam. As a result, race-based riots, strikes and mutinies increased as America's black and non-white servicemen voiced their disdain of their nation's treatment towards them. Much of the motivation for these protests stemmed from the dichotomy of camp life where white people and black people separated themselves, thus engendering the displaying of cultural-racial symbols, equally provocative music and the dissemination of racially charged information through printed articles. These factors served to augment the social/racial tensions many southerners were subjected to throughout their own lives pre-military service.

The Role of Black Southerners in Vietnam

The character and sentiments of America's black servicemen in Vietnam offers an interesting twist on the theme of southern distinctiveness as well as the social tensions of this period. The majority of America's black population of the Vietnam era were financially poorer, less educated and arguably still subjugated in social terms, so military service offered an attractive alternative to domestic life for much of the nation's black population. This was especially the case with the South's black population, where the region's relatively new ordnance-related industries boomed, yet remained largely discriminatory towards African Americans, while de-homing many of them in favour of skilled immigrants from the North. Regrettably, precise statistics on the numbers of southern black men serving in Vietnam are not available. However, given that a large majority of the American south's contribution to Vietnam consisted of unemployed and low aptitude men, southern black men would have undoubtedly formed a large part of the draftees and enlisted men.

The service of black men in the U.S. military has a long past. During the Civil War, black troop fatalities contributed some 38,000 in the Union Army of the North.⁹⁸ Historian, Herbert Aptheker discussed how despite their late participation in the Civil War, ‘the mortality rate amongst the United States colored troops was 35% greater than that among other troops’.⁹⁹ A century after the Civil War, Dr Martin Luther King would make similar claims regarding the disproportionate service numbers and deaths of black men serving in Vietnam. During World War I and World War II, thousands of black American troops served in segregated units throughout the world. The turning point, in terms of racial integration, was in 1948 when President Truman ordered the complete desegregation of all the armed forces. Accordingly, from 1949, the percentage of black soldiers in the U.S. Army rose significantly from 5.9% to 30% by the mid-1980s.¹⁰⁰ The racial integration of the armed services remained a controversial issue following Truman’s proclamation and took six years reaching its completion in 1954, only five years before America’s involvement in Vietnam. Author, Herman Graham argued how the U.S. government’s recruitment offices were ‘eager to sell manhood’ during the Vietnam era, while affirming that ‘African-American men were eager to buy. Recruiters enticed [black people] into the military with their manhood hustle’.¹⁰¹ Regardless of race and origin, most men bound for Vietnam would have been under intrinsic and extrinsic pressure to express their manhood through masculine camaraderie and martial honour. For the southern black man in particular, these sentiments would in many ways, have been compounded due to the south’s history of black emasculation and its notably higher black population in relation to that of the north.

⁹⁸ Figure retrieved from R. Severo and L. Milford, *The Wages of War: when America’s Soldiers came home-from Valley Forge to Vietnam* (New York, 1989), p.165.

⁹⁹ Herbert Aptheker, ‘Negro Casualties in the Civil War’, *Association for the Study of Negro Life and History* Vol 1, (January 1947), p.16.

¹⁰⁰ Figures from Henderson (1985), p.70.

¹⁰¹ Herman Graham III, *The Brothers Vietnam War: Black Power, Manhood, and the Military Experience* (Florida, 2003), p.15.

As the Vietnam era was such an unsettling, turbulent period, in the South, for many military service seemed a suitable means for achieving social mobility, racial equality, or at the very least an escape for many black southerners. Since the emergence of military propaganda drives, martial valour has been lauded as a route to social equality in the rhetoric of many governments. Following the lowering of the standards of the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) — which accepted disturbingly low aptitude men for Vietnam — disenfranchised black men saw this as further incentive to serve in the military.¹⁰² Designed to rapidly increase induction figures in to the military, the remodelling of the AFQT standards spawned a controversial program titled Project One Hundred Thousand Men (P100k). The incentive's manager, Adam Yarmolinski concluded that the men serving under this programme would 'return to civilian life with new confidence in their ability to contribute to civilian society'.¹⁰³ In reality, as a result of the military's desperation to fill the ranks of men for Vietnam, 40% of the programme's men were poor uneducated black men who scored in the lowest ten percentile of the lowered standards. Although figures on the men's origins of this group are unavailable, Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara's statement that despite the extremely low aptitude required to pass, 'Negro failure rates are exceeding 80% in some states'.¹⁰⁴ Given the plight of the southern black man during the Vietnam era, McNamara's statement is indicative of the black man's southern experience.

Research of medical surveys from the Vietnam period also reveals that poor black people and many white people received considerably less medical care than other Americans did. This factor is especially apparent in the South, where many of its regions had no form of medical aid whatsoever. As the majority of black people were underprivileged during the

¹⁰² In 1967, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara stated that 'the failure rate for draftees run as high as 60%; and for Negroes in some states it exceeded 80%. The burden of military service is not being shouldered equally'. No evidence of these figures quoted by McNamara is available. Source: NAEB: <http://www.virtual.vietnam.ttu.edu/cgi>, p.3.

¹⁰³ Paul T. Murray, 'Local Draft Board Composition and Institutional Racism', *Social Problems* (1971), p.129.

¹⁰⁴ McNamara speech to NAEB, <http://www.virtual.vietnam.ttu.edu/cgi>, p.3.

Vietnam era, many receiving little-to-no healthcare, this would ordinarily suggest that the black population would have been more likely to receive medical deferments. Nonetheless, wealthy and in many cases poor white people consistently received around 50% more medical deferments from military service than did black people.¹⁰⁵ The National Guard (N.G.) also served as a ‘suitable’ substitute to full-time service, while providing exemption from eligibility for Vietnam. White people from all over the nation flocked to the N.G.’s ranks as black men found it virtually impossible to enlist due to the N.G.’s ‘unofficial’ white people only policy. Thus, for black people, service in Vietnam was virtually inevitable as the National Guard was effectively transformed into a haven for privileged white people wishing to evade service in Vietnam.

Induction figures from the Vietnam period also reveal that enlistment drives remained racially biased thus impacting the South’s black people. Military enlistment statistics from 1966 to 1975 reveal that, 64% of eligible black people were enlisted for military service, in comparison to 31% of equally eligible white people.¹⁰⁶ Echoing the sentiments of black World War II veterans, many Vietnam era black people suggested that they had expected that their service in the armed forces would have resulted in better treatment from their white comrades both in Vietnam and domestically. Accordingly, Civil Rights proponent Whitney Young asserted that black men volunteered for elite combat units — in higher proportion to white people — in an effort to prove their courage to white commanders.¹⁰⁷ Combat Specialist with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, Lawrence Harkness stated that ‘[black men] joined because of pride and the \$55 extra a month, it’s a challenge, the brother likes the challenge, and we

¹⁰⁵ Murray, (1971), p.131.

¹⁰⁶ Figures retrieved from John Ernst and Yvonne Baldwin, ‘The Not So Silent Minority: Louisville’s Antiwar Movement, 1966-1975’ *Journal of Southern History* Vol. 73, No. 1 (Feb, 2007), p. 135.

¹⁰⁷ Leader of the National Urban League which campaigned for civil rights, Whitney Young served in a segregated unit in World War II. Young’s achievements in the fields of social work and equal employment rights saw Young as one of the Vietnam era’s most respected civil rights activists.

wanted everybody to know it'.¹⁰⁸ Re-enlistment figures of African Americans throughout the Vietnam era were twice the rate of white men, signifying that despite the unfulfilled promises of social and racial equality, military life still shielded black men from many of the racial injustices apparent in civilian life, especially in the racially recalcitrant South. Politician and sociologist, Daniel Patrick Moynihan argued how the role of the media reporting on Vietnam, may have improved domestic race relations when he affirmed that 'history may record that the single most important psychological offence in race relations in the 1960s, was the appearance of Negro fighting men on TV screens of the nation'.¹⁰⁹ Despite the positive outlook adopted by those such as Moynihan, military service — especially in Vietnam — as an effective model for positive racial integration was ultimately flawed as non-white people soon realised.

As African-Americans' had suffered and laboured to gain some form of racial and social equality throughout the twentieth century, black soldiers — especially southerners — were particularly aware of their role in such a masculine and martial-dominated environment as the military.¹¹⁰ As a result of the racial segregation of troops in America's involvement in both World Wars and the Korean War, Vietnam was the first conflict where African Americans truly served alongside white troops. Consequently, black soldiers who travelled to Vietnam were more aware of their place in military society than their more segregated descendants of previous wars. Commenting on his own experience as a black man in military service in 1956, Major Wardell C. Smith stated 'no one was raising any hell about the prejudice and discrimination going on. The Negro soldier didn't know which way to go as far

¹⁰⁸ Graham, (2003),p.25.

¹⁰⁹ Graham, (2003),p.19.

¹¹⁰ Throughout the twentieth century, African Americans served in all of the nation's military conflicts. In World War I, 350,000 served in support roles with the American Expeditionary Force in Europe. Throughout World War II, over 125,000 black men served in all of America's armed forces, ultimately leading President Truman to order desegregation in July 1948. Notwithstanding, despite the service of 600,000 African Americans in the Korean War, Truman's act took as long as six years in some cases to come to fruition. The Vietnam War was the first American conflict which saw true assimilation of white and black troops within the armed forces. Enlistment figures for each war retrieved from <http://www.army.mil/africanamericans/timeline.html>.

as speaking out against it. Every time he tried to, he got kicked in the head'.¹¹¹ Although racism was still apparent throughout the ranks during the Vietnam era, black recruits were increasingly empowered to voice their disdain, as domestic protests gave non-white people a greater stage to voice their disdain. Wallace Terry's book *Bloods: Black Veterans of the Vietnam War*, describes the struggle faced by black men fighting in Vietnam while simultaneously attempting to bridge the racial gulf apparent in their own armed services. Private First Class Reginald Edwards, a black Marine from Louisiana spoke of his military experience in 1963:

You don't have integration really in the South. You expected them to treat you bad.

The Marine Corps was the last service to integrate... It was clearly his war (the white man's). If it wasn't, you wouldn't have seen so many Confederate flags as you saw; and the Confederate flags were an insult to any person that's of colour on this planet.¹¹²

As career soldiers — referred to as 'lifers' by troops — in Vietnam were promptly transferred to other posts around the world, draftees were increasingly required. As a result, black men, some of who were aware of the situation filled these positions, ultimately gaining a stronger sense of pride and purpose while refusing to succumb to the racial hierarchy of American culture. Lieutenant Commander, William S. Norman from Virginia stated that these men were living in a period that was 'far more outspoken than any generation of black men before them. They got over there (Vietnam), got introduced to the drugs, the killings, the uncertainty, and they still had to put up with racism within the service'.¹¹³ Similarly, in a letter

¹¹¹ Oral Testimony from Wardell Smith, source Texas Tech University's 'Virtual Vietnam Archive' Item Number: 2132506120, p.4.

¹¹² Wallace Terry, *Bloods: Black Veterans of the Vietnam War, an Oral History* (New York, 1984), p.12. Despite Terry's topic of research, less than 10% of the oral testimonies utilised in his were from black southern veterans. Thus, the Vietnam War from a regional perspective was not apparent in *Bloods*.

¹¹³ Terry, (1984), p.199.

written home to his mother in Georgia, black Marine David Parkes wrote that ‘his white comrades would bug [him] more than Charlie (the enemy). I’m learning one hell of a lesson here’.¹¹⁴ The necessity of black men to show aggression against the enemy was equally transferred towards his white comrades both in Vietnam and upon return home as America’s black population became increasingly empowered to demand racial equality through protests and violence if necessary.

The most famous and publically vocal black man to resist the war in Vietnam was Heavy Weight World Boxing Champion Cassius Clay. Nicknamed ‘the Louisville lip’ due to his oratory outbursts, Clay, who later changed his name to Muhammed Ali — following his conversion to the Nation of Islam — regularly repeated the well-known mantra ‘hell no, I won’t go’ used by Vietnam War opponents. Ali’s draft case remained a prominent story in the media, and ultimately resulted in him being stripped of his world title for four years. Through his efforts, Ali established himself as a prominent role model for black men by proving that resisting military service did not deprive a man of his masculinity. Fully aware that many white Americans only accepted positive black men in the theatre of sport, Ali commented, ‘you are just another boy (emasculated black man) when you come out of the ring’. Ali reiterated the plight of the black man serving in Vietnam — especially emphasising the southerner — by stating that he had ‘no personal quarrel with those Vietcong’s’ and that African Americans should refuse the draft as ‘Asian brothers never lynched you, never called you nigger, never put dogs on you, and never shot your leaders’.¹¹⁵ Ali’s anger at the south’s treatment of black people was evident from the age of thirteen when the young Kentuckian vandalised ‘Uncle Sam Wants You’ posters and laid trees on railway tracks to ‘get back at

¹¹⁴ Bourke, (2000), p. 354.

¹¹⁵ Graham, (2003), p.68 and p.73.

white people' following the death of Emmett Till.¹¹⁶ Despite Congressman for Pennsylvania Frank Clark identifying Ali as a 'complete and total disgrace to the land that has provided him with the opportunities to make millions of dollars, Muhammed Ali continued to strike significant blows for black masculinity, nationally throughout the 1960s and 1970s.¹¹⁷

Amongst black troops serving in Vietnam, militant individuals who were the most outspoken on the topic of racial equality were the most revered by their brethren. Interviewed in 1967, Lance Corporal Roddie Latimer stated 'white people think we're starting some sort of black power movement, we want [white people] to know that we are definitely together. Mess with one of us, and you mess with all of us'.¹¹⁸ Controversial black individuals such as Black Panther Party leader Eldridge Cleaver, radical Black Nationalist Malcom X as well as Muhammed Ali received the most approval from black radicals serving in Vietnam. While America's first black Senator, Edward Brooke, received little support from black men in Vietnam as many labelled the senator an 'Oreo cookie': black on the outside, but white on the inside as a result of his support of government policy.¹¹⁹ These racially-charged sentiments from black men are reminiscent of how even black more liberal-minded northerners such as Brooke, who hailed from Massachusetts were never attributed the credit they deserved from their brethren.

The efforts of Civil Rights activist Dr Martin Luther King received a subdued response from black men stationed in Vietnam. Much of this was due to Dr King's largely non-violent, piously liberal approach to gaining equal rights. Thus black men in Vietnam, although supportive, remained frustrated by the passivity of King's efforts. In a speech

¹¹⁶ Cobb, (2012), p.51. Emmett Till's murder was emblematic of the disparity in southern justice cases involving race. Till's plight is often referred to as the incident that encouraged blacks to begin their revolt against the presence of modern racism.

¹¹⁷ Graham, (2003), p.73.

¹¹⁸ Wallace Terry, '*Angry Blacks in the Army*', TTU, Vietnam Archive, file no- 18700401007.pdf p.5.

¹¹⁹ The Black Panther Party was a black radical Socialist movement founded in 1966, which promoted Black Power and unity at international level.

delivered in April 1967, Dr King spoke of the fate of black men subjected to the government's policy on Vietnam as being 'like some daemonic, destructive suction tube, black people are dying in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in South-west Georgia'.¹²⁰ Despite the relative lack of support from black troops in Vietnam, in 1968, black activists still used the assassination of Dr King to further assert their masculinity with protests throughout military bases in Vietnam. General Creighton Abrams, who replaced Westmoreland as commander of MACV from 1968, voiced his concern following the King Assassination, 'the racial unrest now exhibiting itself in our country could in some way infect our own troops over here in Vietnam'.¹²¹ Symbols of white supremacy were recreated in the support camps of Vietnam as white troops burned crosses at the U.S. Naval and Air force base in Cam Ranh Bay, and defiant white people paraded in KKK dress at a base in Que Viet. Accordingly, Confederate flags were regularly flown at bases throughout Vietnam. Journalist, Michael Herr described that following the death of King, a southern colonel on the general's staff stated 'that it was a shame, a damn shame, but I had to admit, that he'd (Dr King) been a long time asking for it'.¹²² At Long Binh Prison, black people retaliated by rioting and hijacking the stockade, holding it in their control for ten days in protest of their country's treatment towards its black population both in Vietnam and domestically.

Efforts from Civil Rights activists regarding the plight of the black man in Vietnam served to fuel the racial discontent, especially in the war's latter years post 1969. Marine Rifleman Reginald Edwards stated that 'Post Tet, black people were different from before. At a time when white boys were reading novels and listening to hillbilly or rock music, we were

¹²⁰ Tom Wells, *The War Within: America's Battle over Vietnam* (California, 1994), p.129. Dr King's speech can be accessed at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Qf6x9_MLD0.

¹²¹ Lepre, (2011), p.21.

¹²² Herr,(1977), p.158.

reading black history'.¹²³ U.S. Marine Jack Harrington wrote how life in the support camps became increasingly dangerous, 'racial confrontations in the rear were becoming so common by 1969, it was common to joke to say, I'm going back out to the bush where it's safe'.¹²⁴ As black awareness along with casualties rose in Vietnam, black radicals even suspected that the American government was using the war as a means to 'kill off' the nation's black population. In the same period, General Westmoreland statement that he had 'an intuitive feeling that the Negro servicemen have a better understanding than white people of what the war is about' proved to be inappropriately timed.¹²⁵ Black Marine Infantryman, Clarence J. Fitch stated 'we knew we were dying at a higher rate, (than white people) so we felt very-much justified not to add to this fucking figure'.¹²⁶ The racial disparities of the period were compounded in Vietnam as many white people still either viewed black people as secondary citizens or as dangerous troublemakers. Similarly black people viewed white people as dangerous oppressors trying to uphold the racial hierarchy from the past.

The research of Dr Jerome Kroll does support the heightened likelihood for black men to be involved in acts of insubordination in Vietnam. Kroll examined approximately three hundred soldiers who were sentenced to more than six months for committing various crimes in Vietnam. Though Kroll's results are revealing, he does not state what the crimes were, or what percentage of his candidates were white and non-white. Notwithstanding, his study concluded that 'black soldiers were twice as likely as white soldiers to be imprisoned for crimes against fellow soldiers'.¹²⁷ William Allison also notes 'that black soldiers were ten times more likely than white soldiers to refuse to go to the field, an indication of black feelings toward white authority', Allison does not back his statement with statistics; though it

¹²³ Budra and Zeitlin, (2004), p.194.

¹²⁴ Lepre, (2011), p.32.

¹²⁵ Terry, (1985),p. xiv.

¹²⁶ Lepre,(2011), p.101.

¹²⁷ Jerome Kroll, 'Racial Patterns of Military Crimes in Vietnam', *Journal of Psychiatry* (1976), <http://psychnews.psychiatryonline.org/newsarticle.aspx?article 103467>. p.51.

is well known that black people were openly radical within the military post 1969.¹²⁸ Because of the increasing racial tension between white people and non-white people in Vietnam, testimonies of some soldiers attest how they felt sympathetic and related to the plight of the Vietnamese being oppressed by white people. Black soldiers David Parkes and Stanley Goff suitably summed up the regional and racial sentiments of many black men in Vietnam. Parkes stated, ‘when we stand out there and salute the flag, or march, we’re together. Other times – forget it. I can imagine some of the Southerners not Liking me any better than the Vietcong’. Goff’s opinion of his white southern comrade in Vietnam was that ‘their parents taught them that a nigger ain’t shit, and nigger can’t do shit. You [could] see it in their eyes’.¹²⁹ As a result of national propaganda and conscription, the majority of men were deceived from the moment they signed up or were drafted for military service. Historian, Christian Appy states how recruitment officers informed men that ‘fewer than 20% of them would go to Vietnam’. In reality, of the amount of men drafted during the Vietnam era, 98% were sent to Vietnam.¹³⁰ The draft boards of the southern states greatly outnumbered those in the north, due to the South’s larger pool of poor white people and black people. From 1964, the United States had over 4,000 draft boards in operation, with approximately 70% of them based in the South. Depending upon their location, each draft board had from three to six staff managing the enlistment procedure. Bearing in mind that the South contributed over 2,500 of these establishments, of the thousands of employees working in them, not a single one in the South employed a black individual on their military staff.¹³¹

As the progress of the Civil Rights Movement exposed the racial prejudices in the South throughout the 1960s, these same grievances were played out in Vietnam as black men

¹²⁸ Allison, (2006), p.77.

¹²⁹ Graham, p.34 and p.45.

¹³⁰ Christian Appy, *Working Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (North Carolina, 1993), p.111.

¹³¹ Draft board figures retrieved from James E. Westheider, *Fighting in Vietnam: The Experiences of the U.S. Soldier* (Pennsylvania, 2011), p.32.

fought to establish their own model of national identity and masculinity. Ultimately, it was exemplary military performance, equal to that of his white comrades, which ensured a more inclusive role for black people within the American military today. In a speech given in Texas in 1969, Lyndon B. Johnson stated that the role and performance of America's black population who served in Vietnam was to be greatly admired, affirming that 'the nation should be proud of the Negro fighting man in Vietnam'.¹³² On a domestic level, the racial integration of the military intended to amalgamate the cultural and racial distinctions evident in American society throughout the Vietnam era. Notwithstanding, non-white people of all regions were aware of the fact that prejudice within the military remained a prevalent occurrence, especially within the confines of the support camps in Vietnam that replicated the social and racial prejudices evident at home. Consequently, black people in particular remained second-class citizens, with the South's black men subjugated further still by their brethren as their regional distinction characterised them as slower-thinking and more subservient to white people as a result of their region's historic subjugation of them.

By examining the enlistment statistics of southern troops, along with available data on performance and casualty figures of the region's men, this chapter set out to discover whether the southern soldier went to Vietnam with a different approach to that of his northern comrade. This chapter established that, the resulting cases of insubordination, acts of commendable performance did not reveal significant differences that could be attributed to regional characteristics. This chapter also utilised the sentiments of southern veterans of the

¹³² Lloyd C. Gardner, *Pay Any Price: Lyndon Johnson and the Wars for Vietnam* (Chicago, 1995), p.367.

Vietnam War to delve further into discovering whether their origin affected their decisions before, during and after military service.

Nonetheless, the lingering influence of the Civil War, and Confederate defeat, remained a powerful presence in the minds of many southerners. The racial and cultural upheavals of the Vietnam period served to rejuvenate this historic legacy of the Lost Cause in the hearts and minds of many of the South's white and black population, albeit with different sentiments. As a result of the thousands of American men from different social, cultural and racial backgrounds serving in Vietnam, cohesion was impossible. Notwithstanding the numerous discrepancies detailed throughout this chapter, and regardless of the relatively low quantifiable differences between the North and South, it is the case that the ancestral past and regional identity was far more prominent for southern soldiers, regardless of colour, than those from other regions of the United States.

Chapter IV

The Mỹ Lai Massacre and the American South

This chapter analyses the South's political, public and military response to the massacre of Vietnamese civilians at the hands of U.S. troops at Mỹ Lai, Vietnam in March 1968. Through examining the region's reaction to Mỹ Lai, an understanding of how southern identity — moulded from the region's distinctive culture and history — affects, and in some cases determines the opinions of thousands of southerners will be demonstrated.¹ The chapter examines how the South's political and military elites led wider southern public opinion in forming a distinguishing regional response to the massacre. It focuses upon Second Lieutenant William Calley, the soldier most associated with guilt following the massacre. As a native southerner, Calley's background will be examined in order to assess what part his southern identity played a part in influencing events at Mỹ Lai. A similar approach will be used when assessing the conduct of Warrant Officer Hugh Thompson, another southerner closely related to the massacre, although for different reasons to those of William Calley. An examination of these two men, alongside scrutinising the reaction of the southern public, serves to corroborate or dispel the notion that southern men were fated — because of their origin — to demonstrate martial behaviour when their honour or safety was threatened.

This chapter also analyses the response of the national media towards the massacre, considering how regional constructs of 'southernness' played out in the press. The response of the South's provincial newspapers will be discussed as a point of comparison. An examination of over 800 local southern newspapers dating from November 1969 to December 1972 reveals that the southern media reacted distinctly different the northern provincial press.

¹ As with preceding chapters, when this thesis uses the term Southerner, it is largely referring to the opinions of white southerners. Where this is not the case, it will be stated.

This comparative analysis highlights that the actions of Calley were largely supported by the southern press in contrast to that of the North. This disparity highlights southern distinctiveness in supporting martial behaviour in service of a cause. From the moment the Mỹ Lai atrocity was exposed; the southern media duly investigated, reported and influenced local opinion that was largely supportive of Calley's actions at Mỹ Lai. This stood in stark contrast to the manner in which the story was both reported and received by the press outside of the South. Northern news reports either presented Mỹ Lai as typical of war-time occurrences, or were largely critically of military actions at Mỹ Lai while offering no regional nuance to their reporting other than citing how differently the southern press reported the massacre.

As established in preceding chapters, influential southerners commanded much of the nation's political and military power throughout the Vietnam War period. The Presidency, Secretary of State and head of MACV were occupied by southerners Lyndon B. Johnson, Dean Rusk and William Westmoreland respectively, while other southerners were also influential holders of numerous political and military posts. The reaction to Mỹ Lai of southern politicians such as Mendel Rivers, Felix Herbert and George Wallace will also be examined to highlight the region's political recalcitrance in comparison to the damning indictments elsewhere. This military and political alliance led by southerners, all of whom alluded to, and drew from, classic elements of southern identity, proves to be a striking example of how regional distinctiveness operated in the Vietnam era.

An examination of the three autonomous investigations into Mỹ Lai will also be presented to determine the extent southern distinctiveness had upon these proceedings. The location for the court martial trial of William Calley, Georgia's Fort Benning, proved to be fundamental in how the court martial trial was conducted and received both locally and nationally. Following calls from governmental officials for an investigation, the resulting

Armed Services Select Committee (ASSC) was intended to be a more impartial inquiry into Mỹ Lai. Notwithstanding hopes for an objective examination, southerners, Mendel Rivers and Felix Hebert who headed the investigation ensured that the ASSC's conclusions were blatantly one-sided in their efforts to not only support the actions of Calley, but also condone his actions as patriotic. From the military's perspective, the Peers Commission Report, was the U.S. army's own investigation into what occurred at Mỹ Lai. Conducted at Colorado's Fort Carson army base, and led by Iowan, General William R. Peers, the verdict — in which no southerners played a part — was ultimately more damning than Calley's court martial and the ASSC investigation. An analysis of these three investigations will reveal how the 'vocal' South responded to each inquiry contrarily to that of northerners. This chapter will demonstrate that while the massacre was regarded as a war atrocity by individuals such as the story's initial reporter, Seymour Hersh — and endorsed as so by Senators Barry Goldwater and Edward Brooke — the southern press, political elites and the military interpreted as routine during wartime. This highlights how two versions of a nation's military campaign can be modelled to conciliate a region's populace, according to local cultural traditions. While William Calley was largely regarded by northern reactors to Mỹ Lai as a war criminal or a cold-blooded killer, southerners largely exonerated his actions, and in some cases suggested they were actually expected and part of the southern military tradition. The manner in which southerners reacted to the massacre at Mỹ Lai provides an overdue insight into the continued significance of southern distinctiveness.

Tracing historians' debates about Mỹ Lai and its Consequences

Historiography of the Mỹ Lai Massacre has generally followed two themes over the past five decades. Understandably, the deliberate and unwarranted massacre of hundreds of Vietnamese women, children and elderly men at the hands of American soldiers dominates interpretations. On a secondary level are works that question whether William Calley and his fellow troops were perceived as heroic, vilified or used as scapegoats by their own government's military judicial system. Notably, with the exception of one brief account from Kendrick Oliver, no historiography on Mỹ Lai has examined the massacres from a southern perspective. Moreover, despite the large number of works available on the subject, within a decade of the event, historian Christian Appy argued in the 1990s that, 'though exceptional in its scale, the Mỹ Lai massacre had virtually disappeared from public debates on memory'. Appy stated that, as a teacher of military history throughout the 1980s, 'few of his students even recognised the name'.² The national amnesia towards remembering Mỹ Lai suited the South's fervour for commemorating 'honourable' causes such as the region's role in the American Civil War. Exploring Mỹ Lai from a military judicial perspective, James S. Olsen and Randy Roberts 1998 research concluded that 'the systematic and temporarily successful cover-up of Mỹ Lai leaves the door open to another possibility: that the abuse of Vietnamese civilians was the rule, not the exception, of America's longest war'.³ In response to Appy's call for greater research into how the incident is remembered, the work of Kendrick Oliver more recently examined how the massacre was discussed and remembered in the United States in the past 40 years. Oliver utilises theologian Reinhold Niebuhr's reaction to Mỹ Lai in his research on the subject to reiterate that 'the episode had caused rupture in modern

² Christian G. Appy, *Working-class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (North Carolina, 1993), p.277.

³ James S. Olsen and Randy Roberts, *My Lai: A Brief History with Documents* (New York, 1998), p.114. Despite army reports that Mỹ Lai was unique, the Winter Soldier investigations held in New York in 1971 documented that 'the indiscriminate slaughter of Vietnamese women and children was commonplace in his [Calley's] unit'. Larry Colburn, who witnessed the massacre, stated to Seymour Hersh, 'I'd seen it happen before, but just not with that many people'. According to Hersh, numerous reporters knew of similar incidents before Mỹ Lai occurred. Transcript of the *Winter Soldier Investigation*, p.4

American consciousness. This is a moment of truth when [America] realised [it was] not a virtuous nation'.⁴ Niebuhr's statement is pertinent as the 'rupture of consciousness' he refers to, was all the more painful for southerners to accept, due to their obstinate attitude towards maintaining martial honour. From the accounts of these historians, remembrance of Mỹ Lai — from an American perspective — remains somewhat veiled as the nation's conscience still wrestles with the subject.

From a political viewpoint, Michael R. Belknap's research builds on that of Olsen and Roberts' military analysis, by arguing that the officers who made up the Court Martial of Calley were inevitably prone to support the accused as a result of their military background. Belknap states that '[fellow soldiers] were trained to accept obedience to orders as a complete defense for Calley, the overall undermining of the prosecutor's case was inevitable'.⁵ Belknap concludes that the Nixon presidency was also suffering from its own political crisis. As a result, his administration downplayed the Court Martial against Calley solely for reasons of political self-preservation. In his 1976 analysis of the *Peers Commission Report*, American law historian, Henry W. Van-Deventer delivered a damning conclusion of the 'official' enquiry. Despite the military's best efforts to curtail details of the massacre, Deventer concluded that Peers' judgments was 'more telling for its unemotional recital of the wealth of facts unearthed in the face of the mendacity, silence, of those who engaged in the killings or who had had knowledge of them'.⁶ Notwithstanding the attention attributed to various aspects of the massacre, the South's publicised support of not only the accused — but also in justifying the massacre itself — presents an insight into the regional differences that existed within the United States. This chapter argues that the South, as a distinct region, must be factored into discussions on the American reaction towards Mỹ Lai.

⁴ Kendrick Oliver, *The My Lai Massacre in American History and Memory* (Manchester, 2006), p.2.

⁵ Michael R. Belknap, *The Vietnam War on Trial: The My Lai Massacre and the Court-Martial of Lieutenant Calley* (Kansas, 2002), p.226.

⁶ Henry W. Van Deventer, *American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 70 (1976), p. 865.

A brief account of the Mỹ Lai Massacre

A brief narrative of what occurred at Mỹ Lai in March 1968 will assist in understanding why the massacre generated so much media attention as well variable degrees of news coverage. For strategic purposes, American military maps are colour-coded to signify areas of varying levels of hostility or security. Accordingly, in Vietnam, areas coloured pink symbolised regions of high enemy activity, whether it be either the Vietcong/Vietminh or NVA/VPA.⁷ As a result, the word 'Pinkville' became the accepted term for areas that were likely to involve combat with the enemy. The maps of the Mỹ Lai region depicted the zone in bright pink. On March 16th 1968, Charlie Company of the 1st Battalion was assigned to a search and destroy patrol in Mỹ Lai village.⁸ Despite the absence of any form of resistance from the villagers and no designated enemy, within four hours, hundreds of Vietnamese women, children and men were singled out, rounded up and executed.⁹ Over the course of the same day, more killings and the decimation of property took place within the area of neighbouring Son Mỹ village. Two days later, on March 18th, the mission was routinely reported as successful and typical of combat procedure by command and recorded as so in the U.S. military objective records in Vietnam.

In order to substantiate the argument that southern distinctiveness is crucial to understanding events at Mỹ Lai, it is essential to examine two key southern protagonists associated with the massacre. William Laws Calley was born in 1943 in Miami, Florida. From the 1960's, Florida was noted by Americans as a tourism destination where visitors could experience an accessible and largely unspoilt part of the 'Old South'. The son of a World War

⁷ Predominantly used by the U.S. forces, the acronym NVA referred to the North Vietnamese Army. Many Vietnamese both North and South used the title VPA, meaning Vietnamese People's Army.

⁸ A 'regular' army infantry company, the unique title, 'Americal,' was used as a contraction of the American New Caledonian Division; the company is also noted for being the last battalion to leave Vietnam in August 1972.

⁹ Despite a figure of 128 enemy Vietminh troops being killed in action (KIA), this figure was later dismissed to zero. By 1600 hours on the day of the massacre the American military had retrieved the following enemy supplies: 1 M1 Rifle, 2 M1 Carbines, 10 hand grenades, 8 M-26 U.S. hand grenades and 410 rounds of small arms ammunition. Figures retrieved from Olsen & Roberts (1998), p.30.

II U.S. Navy veteran, Calley dropped out of Palm Beach Junior College in 1964, after seven weeks where he decided to enlist into the U.S. Army. However, as Calley was tone-deaf, this made him ineligible to meet the existent military service criteria of the period. Consequently, Calley remained in the South where he held short spells of employment in Florida, Georgia and Texas. In 1966, as a result of the military's lowering of medical enlistment standards for the U.S. Army, Calley was eligible for military service.¹⁰ Having scored adequately on his Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT), Calley was subsequently sent to Fort Bliss, Texas to complete the nine week basic training course.¹¹

Following his basic military training, Calley applied to the Officer Candidate School (O.C.S.) located at Fort Benning, South Georgia. The southern-based 24 week officer training programme would be subject to considerable controversy post-Vietnam, as 'quantity over quality' was subsequently revealed to be the school's zeitgeist for Vietnam-bound officers. Throughout America's involvement in Vietnam, Georgia's O.C.S. graduated approximately 7000 officers annually, a number equal to that of the total quantity of officers utilised for America's three year participation in the Korean War.¹² Nicknamed by many lower ranked troops as 'shake and bakes' — due to their instant promotion — the poor performance of these officers is often cited in narratives that discuss military leadership in Vietnam. The standard of Calley's southern-based training was a subject raised by the prosecution during his trial. A fellow southerner from Mississippi serving under Calley, stated at the accused's court-martial, 'I wondered how he ever got through O.C.S. He couldn't read no darn map and

¹⁰ Calley information from 'Average Guy Calley Found Niche in Army' *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 12/01/1969, <http://25thaviation.org/id299.html>.

¹¹ The AFQT was used to determine the intelligence level and suitability for combat in the U.S. Armed Forces. With a maximum score of 99%, men were grouped into categories from 1 to 5, category 1 being the highest aptitude and category 5 the lowest. This criterion was used throughout World War II, the Korean War, and the war in Vietnam. The AFQT was replaced in 1968 with the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), a multiple-choice examination that is considered to reflect an individual's ability more coherently.

¹² Statistic retrieved from Lepre, (2011), p.13.

a compass would confuse his ass'.¹³ Similarly, an article in the British newspaper, the *Daily Mail*, reported that, 'a number of men assigned under Calley claimed that because he was so disliked, some secretly discussed assassinating (fragging) him,' such was their aversion for his dangerous, inept weak command.¹⁴ Evidently, William Calley's upbringing, education, work experience and military training retained a distinct southern nuance. Notwithstanding Calley's southern identity, Vietnam scholars have disassociated their traditional-centric discourse from attributing his actions at Mỹ Lai as a result of his origin. Unsurprisingly, as Calley's ultimate place in history is no longer considered an honourable one — given the support he received from the South — the research outlined in this chapter reveals how dishonourable acts or cowardice remain absent from the narratives of works on southern martial history on the whole.

The character of First Warrant Officer, Hugh Thompson Jr offers another pertinent southern angle to Mỹ Lai. Born in Atlanta Georgia, in 1943, Thompson was subjected to a pious-inspired upbringing that was typical for many in the South of this period. Military ethics academic, Dr Albert C. Pierce, who examined Thompson's actions at Mỹ Lai states that '[Thompson] grew up in the rural area of Stone Mountain, Georgia, raised in typical fashion by his strict Southern parents.'¹⁵ Pierce affirms that his 'strict southern' parents would have instilled the region's honour code into Thompson early in his life. Notwithstanding his firm southern upbringing, Thompson dropped out of Troy State University in 1961 and followed his father's footsteps by enlisting in the U.S. Navy. Thompson spent the next three years in Rhode Island serving with a 'Seabee' construction unit until 1964.¹⁶ Following his three years of routine naval service, Thompson returned home to Georgia to study mortuary science and

¹³ William Wilson, 'I had Prayed to God that this thing was Fiction', *American Heritage.com*, <http://www.americanheritage.com>, p.5.

¹⁴ Accounts from colleagues under Calley's command from, The *Daily Mail*, 'The Monster of the My Lai Massacre,' (06/10/2007), p.4.

¹⁵ Dr Albert C. Pierce, '*Moral Courage in Combat*', source: www.usna.edu/Ethics/Thompson, p.12.

¹⁶ The 'SeaBees' are a Naval Construction Battalion that has been in operation since 1942.

subsequently ran a funeral home. Two years later, in 1966, Thompson stated that ‘much as a result of family tradition, at the outbreak of the Vietnam War, I felt obligated to return to military service and decided to join the army to train as a helicopter pilot’.¹⁷ Thompson’s flight school was situated at Alabama’s Fort Rucker, named after the Confederate Colonel, Edmund Rucker.¹⁸ Achieving the rank of pilot First Warrant Officer, in December of 1966, Thompson was assigned to the 123rd Aviation Battalion flying transport and reconnaissance missions in the Da Nang area of South Vietnam.

On the morning of March 16th, 1968, Thompson was on a low altitude routine patrol over the hamlet of Mỹ Lai in an unarmed scout helicopter. In his testimony at the court martial of William Calley, Thompson stated how he observed what appeared to be fellow soldiers ‘needlessly executing civilians’. Upon landing close to a ditch, which Thompson testified was being utilised as a mass grave, he issued the following radio orders to his men in two accompanying combat-ready helicopters, ‘Y’all cover me, if these bastards (American comrades) open up on these people, or me, you open up on them. Promise me’.¹⁹ Exiting his helicopter, Thompson approached the officer in charge on the ground, identified in the court room as Lieutenant Calley. The following dialogue that ensued between the two southerners gives an insight into the dissimilarity in attitudes towards military service between the men:

Thompson: What's going on here, Lieutenant?

Calley: This is my business.

Thompson: What is this? Who are these people?

Calley: Just following orders.

Thompson: Orders? Whose orders?

Calley: Just following...

Thompson: But, these are human beings, unarmed civilians, Sir.

¹⁷ Trent Angers, *The Forgotten Hero of My Lai: The Hugh Thompson Story* (Louisiana, 1999), p.47.

¹⁸ Although officially a Colonel in the army, Rucker’s actions in the U.S. Civil War resulted in the southern forces honouring him unofficially as ‘General Rucker’.

¹⁹ Angers, (1999), p.124.

Calley: Look Thompson, this is my show. I'm in charge here. It ain't your concern.

Thompson: Yeah, great job.

Calley: You better get back in that chopper and mind your own business.

Thompson: You ain't heard the last of this.²⁰

The fact that Thompson chose to confront Calley, his military superior attests to the gravity of the situation, and horror of what he was witnessing. On his return to base, Thompson duly made an official and impassioned report of the killings he observed to his military superiors. The results of the Peers inquiry, concluded in March 1970, confirmed that MACV chose to take no further action on Thompson's concerns. Lawrence Colburn was a door-gunner in one of the accompanying helicopters under Thompson's command. Raised in Washington State, where he also received his military training, Colburn provided evidence at Calley's trial that concurred with that of Thompson's. Colburn's testimony attested that American troops willingly murdered unarmed civilians during their occupation of Mỹ Lai. It was also revealed in the trial that the military tried to mask the massacre; by awarding Thompson and Colburn good conduct citations, albeit unknown to the two men as their signatures were forged on the documents.

Throughout the Calley trial, southerners showed their hatred of Thompson and Colburn's actions in numerous ways. Both Thompson and Colburn who resided in Louisiana and Georgia respectively at the time, received numerous death threats from locals and had their residences vandalised regularly. In a lecture given to an audience of World War II veterans in 2003, Thompson told how the southerners treated both he and Colburn, stating that they 'received considerable amounts of hate mail, and found mutilated animals on their

²⁰ Dialogue used as official testimony during the prosecution and Court Martial of William Calley and the Peers Inquiry, http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/ftrials/mylai/MYL_Peers.html.

doorsteps.’²¹The third man accredited for his heroism at Mỹ Lai and later posthumously received the Bronze Star for bravery, was Crew Chief Glenn Andreotta, from New Jersey. His sentiments on the court martial are unavailable as three weeks after Mỹ Lai, Andreotta was killed in his helicopter as a result of enemy gunfire. Along with the public intimidation, Thompson and Colburn became targets of vilification by southern politicians such as Mendel Rivers and F. Edward Herbert as well as many of the region’s servicemen and veterans. The Southern political backing of Calley was compounded as the South’s media sources increasingly supported the actions of Calley in contrast to those of Thompson and Colburn.

Initial Responses to Mỹ Lai from National Media

Much of the praise for the uncovering of the massacre is attributed to efforts of Ronald Ridenhour, a young Californian on duty in Vietnam at the time. Ridenhour learned of the massacre and its subsequent cover-up, through hearsay and conversation with comrades at his base camp in Vietnam. On returning home to California, a state then particularly noted for its anti-Vietnam War sentiments and counterculture, Ridenhour collated the accounts he had gathered and duly informed over thirty members of Congress as well as Pentagon officials. Such was the apathy for an investigation, for almost 20 months, the events at Mỹ Lai remained unremarkable to the military and thus, unreported to the national media. Notwithstanding, on 12th November 1969, after studying the claims of Ridenhour, Chicagoan Seymour Hersh — an independent investigative journalist and former soldier in Vietnam — had his own article released through the Associated Press (A.P.) wire service, which detailed an alleged atrocity committed by American troops.²² The first newspaper to print the story

²¹ Transcript of interview with Hugh Thompson at the ‘United States Naval Academy, Class of 1949’ USNA http://www.usna.edu/ethics/publications/documents/ThompsonPg1-28_Final.pdf.

²² A major source of news during the Vietnam War, the Associated Press Wire Service (A.P.), is a news organisation whose up-to-date news reports can be purchased by other media services.

was Ohio's *Cleveland Plain Dealer* that headlined how 'U.S. Army troops indiscriminately and wantonly mowed down civilian residents of a tiny South Vietnamese hamlet on March 16th 1968'.²³ Utilising pictures taken by Ohioan army photographer, Ronald Haeberle, the newspaper printed what they described as 'a clump of bodies on a road in South Vietnam.' The next day, the *Plain Dealer* reported how they had received over 200 hundred complaints from readers who expressed that the paper should not have shown such graphic images.²⁴ Within eight days of the story being publicised, the New York-based CBS television network chose to air Hersh's story and the northern-owned publications *Time*, *Life*, and *Newsweek* all headlined the alleged incident. Notably, at this early stage of the story, no southern media sources reported on the story to any extent. Notwithstanding, as a result of the efforts of both Ridenhour and Hersh, a media storm ensued, which in the opinion of the *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times*, compared the actions of the American military to the crimes of the German Wehrmacht.²⁵ While northern print and television media titled the incident as the 'My Lai Massacre', subsequently reporting that American troops had murdered up to 500 Vietnamese civilians, initial reports from southern media gave brief mentions of 'a possible shooting of civilians by American troops'.²⁶ Consequently, from November 1969, the world's media duly focused its attention on the actions of the United States Army's Americal Division, 'Charlie' Company.

Following an examination of numerous provincial newspapers, a multiregional approach to the reporting of the Mỹ Lai massacre is available in archives; such was the extent of media coverage. This regionally-determined method reveals just how distinct the South's

²³ The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* (20/11/1969), p.1.

²⁴ Editor's response column, *Cleveland Plain Dealer* (21/11/1969), p.12.

²⁵ In the case of the German atrocities, an eleven month trial in Nuremburg beginning in November 1945 prosecuted 23 of the most prominent members of Nazi Germany's administration for atrocities committed throughout World War II.

²⁶ Exact figures on the death toll vary depending on sources investigated. U.S. military records state that 347 lives were lost, while official Vietnamese government figures report that 504 were murdered. Initial southern reporting of Mỹ Lai, *Fort Pierce News Tribune* 28/11/1969. p.1.

media was in comparison to those of northern reports. The high volume of stories attributed to Mỹ Lai advocates how newsworthy the story was, albeit for different reasons below the Mason-Dixon Line. From late 1969, column space attributed to the massacre ebbed and flowed, as details remained unclear. Much of the reason for this was because — from an American perspective — the war in Vietnam had effectively become a lost cause by the time of the news of the massacre broke. Notwithstanding, as news of the events at Mỹ Lai subsided, much due to the surreptitious conduct of the military, a more publically palatable story was taken up as the court martial of William Calley gained momentum. The South's news sources presented this more newsworthy story as a case of an honourable southern soldier performing his duty for his country. The South's adoption of Calley as innocent, regardless of his actions at Mỹ Lai were typical of the region's cultural recalcitrance in opposing the opinions of the supposed more liberal-thinking North in matters such as this.

Due to the medium's prompt ability to report of and change headlines, newspapers were the predominant source of information throughout the court martial of William Calley. The impact of newspapers was further compounded, due to the daily court room access their reporters were granted in contrast to that of televised media. Television reports that covered Calley's court martial specifically was scant, as the conflict in Vietnam had become a quagmire of embarrassment for the nation by 1971. Despite the low televised coverage, a local Georgia news network attended a rally in Columbus that was organised in support of Calley. The station's reporter interviewed the rally's organiser Reverend Michael Lord, who stated on camera that 'the region's emotion of sympathy towards Calley is comparable to that of the crucified Christ'.²⁷ The fact that the network only aired this quote from the reverend advocates how the region may have considered Calley, or at least how CBS considered the local sentiment towards the accused soldier. The pious statement which likened Calley's

²⁷ *CBS Evening News Report*, (31/03/1971), Vanderbilt Television News Archives, Accessed 22/07/2015.

plight to that of the crucified Christ is typical of how the South still considered references to religious testament as the most highest and honourable form of judgement.

On a national level, the *New York Times* conveyed that, ‘in the South specifically Congressional aides’ report that mail protesting the sentencing, and continues to run heavy’.²⁸ The *New York Times* story concludes that ‘[Calley] has available to him a variety of diversions and services on the base that is named after the southern Confederate General, Henry L. Benning’.²⁹ In an earlier report, the *New York Times* quoted the view of actor and highly decorated soldier Audie Murphy, who stated that ‘in similar circumstances, I might have done the same thing’.³⁰ Born in Texas and the subject of a tough upbringing, Murphy, along with fellow actor John Wayne were regarded as typical southern heroes by many men South of the Mason-Dixon Line. The *New York Times* association of Calley and southern heroes such as Murphy, General Benning and John Wayne suggests that the paper was aware of the southern interest in the trial. A February 1971 issue of the *Chicago Tribune* was more accusatory, detailing how Calley’s comrades had previously raised the fact that the second-lieutenant was ‘known for beating and shooting viets (Vietnamese)’ even before the events of Mỹ Lai.³¹ Journalist and historian, Rick Perlstein states that despite the military knowing early on that Calley was personally responsible for the death of innocent civilians, ‘he was released on his own recognizance to the splendiferous bachelor pad he had rented with the proceeds of his defense fund’. Perlstein concluded that the Georgia military base and its local populace promoted Calley’s celebrity status affirming that the soldier was living ‘with his comely girlfriend, a personal secretary and a mechanical letter-opener that helped him open some two-thousand “fan” letters a day’.³²

²⁸ Wooten, *New York Times*, (03/04/1971).

²⁹ Wooten, (03/04/1971).

³⁰ The *New York Times*, Audie Murphy quote, (02/04/1971), p.16.

³¹ The *Chicago Tribune*, online archives <http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1971/02/28>, p.3.

³² Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (New York, 2008). p.234.

Similarly, Army Colonel William Wilson, who interviewed all the suspects implicated in the case on behalf of the Inspector-General, spoke of how many southerners considered Calley. In an interview conducted in 1980, Wilson stated that, ‘I do remember being startled when the local public seemed to make a hero out of Rusty Calley or at the least a victim. It sure didn’t look that way to me from up close’.³³ During the trial, author and cultural philosopher, Michael Novak added his own response to the puzzling nature of how the deep southern state treated the accused. Referring directly to the South’s immoral history towards its black population, Novak argued that ‘if Calley had been black, the response to the trial might have been different. Would Athens Georgia, have rallied to his defense’?³⁴ William Calley’s southern-based court martial, shunned conviction — in the eyes of many southerners — and subsequent incarceration in the region were all subject to the mannerisms of southern distinctiveness. Whether or not the Lieutenant would have received such support from the South — had he been a northerner or subjected to a northern-based trial — is unresolvable. Though judging from the response of the North’s media and politicians, Calley was very much presented as a guilty man. Nevertheless, throughout his trial and incarceration, William Calley was subject to — and ultimately benefitted from — the honour-laden and culturally recalcitrant distinctions that southern culture entailed.

In view of the preceding verifications, to what extent was William Calley’s southern upbringing critical to his conduct at Mỹ Lai? Aside from his service in Vietnam, Calley was born, raised and currently resides in the South. Despite the much-lauded influence of southern culture upon their men, nothing in the testimony provided by Calley himself, his defence team, the prosecution or of those who served alongside him suggested that the Second Lieutenant displayed any mannerisms that are typical of ‘traditional’ white southerners. Notwithstanding Calley’s actual lack of these distinctions, the southern media validated

³³ Carol W. Lewis, *The Ethics Challenge in Public Service: A Problem-Solving Guide* (San Francisco, 1991), p.99.

³⁴ *The Commonweal*, web-news, article 14, (30/04/1971), p.24.

Calley's actions at Mỹ Lai because they were deemed reminiscent of how typical southerners remained loyal to a cause, regardless of controversy. Accordingly, many southerners who were undoubtedly white and conscious of their region's past, consciously chose to designate and thus adopt Calley as 'one of their own', despite his lack of southern characteristics. The following research will reveal how South's distinct attitude towards the massacre and the reception afforded to Calley is apparent and compounded in the column space of the region's provincial newspapers.

The Southern Media's Response

The section provides the first detailed, dedicated research evaluating the South's response to Mỹ Lai, the existing literature covering the massacre solely from a national or international perspective. By using the specific terms 'Mỹ Lai', 'Calley' and 'murder/massacre' as research words, the local newspaper archives from the southern states of Georgia, Florida, South Carolina and Texas, along with northern newspapers from New York State, Washington, Illinois were utilised to present a comparative analysis of the massacre and reception towards Calley from a North/South perspective.³⁵ This examination covers the period of news that first mentioned the story from November 1969, until the period when the story was no longer reported as an ongoing or newsworthy story, approximately December 1972. The results are presented in a state by state format in order to form a cohesive account of the reaction from different regions of the United States. Accordingly, in order for the reader to comprehend how the story was reported as it was played out in the nation's media, the results of the research will be presented in a month by month pattern.

³⁵ The archives utilised throughout this study were Newspaper Archive (subscription required), and Go Newspapers.com. Un-digitised news archives from the states of Texas, Florida and Louisiana were also utilised.

Beginning with an examination of the reports of newspapers from Calley's home state of Florida, three of the most popular dailies, *The News Tribune*, (NT) the *Playground Daily News*, (PDN) and Panama City's *News Herald* (NH) were researched. These three sources reported on Calley's court martial approximately 160 times over the period from November 1969 to August 1971. Promoted as 'the Voice of Indian Riverland,' the *News Tribune* circulated along the east coast of the state. The *NT*'s first report consisted of a four-lined column, mid-issue that mentioned the possible deaths of civilians in South Vietnam at the hands of American troops. Three days later, the *NT* reported for a second time on November 28, 1969 printing that a 'possible massacre committed by U.S. troops may well have been committed'. The *NT* closed this edition's report by printing that British Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, assured that 'President Nixon could continue to count on British backing of U.S. policy in Vietnam, even if the massacre had occurred'.³⁶ Before the media were fully aware of the events at Mỹ Lai, the December 5th 1969 issue of the *NT* printed its sole unbiased report by offering the opinion of respected U.S. Army Colonel and journalist, Ray Cromley.³⁷ The *NT* quoted Cromley stating that 'there is a lesson in the remarkable feat of Ronald Ridenhour, he saw what appeared to be an injustice and moved in an orderly, traditionally American fashion, using the democratic channels open in this country'.³⁸ Some months later, Cromley condemned and criticised the ethics of the U.S. Press Corp in Vietnam, as despite the presence of over 180 'official' reporters, the Mỹ Lai story remained unreported and unpublicised within the military theatre.

As the nature of the events of Mỹ Lai became more widely understood, the accounts became less perfunctory. In the remaining weeks of 1969, despite the increased knowledge of

³⁶ *The Fort Pierce News Tribune*, 28/11/1969, p.1.

³⁷ The oldest member of the Pentagon press corps, Raymond Cromley was a prominent member of the "Dixie Mission" who was commissioned to establish more harmonious official relations with China. The mission lasted from July 1944 until March 1947.

³⁸ *The Fort Pierce News Tribune* 05/12/1969, p.4.

the massacre, the *NT* only mentioned Mỹ Lai briefly a further five times, all superficially. The *NT*'s final on Mỹ Lai in 1969 was a quote from Senate Majority leader, Mike Mansfield of Montana, who affirmed that 'there probably should be further investigations, but as there's been so much smoke, regarding a supposed atrocity, it should not come until after the Calley case is over'.³⁹ Views from southern politicians regarding Mỹ Lai remained elusive during 1969. Regardless of their scant coverage, the *NT*'s end of year article for 'editor's Choice for the Top Stories of 1969' listed the 'alleged massacre' as the second most 'popular' story of the year behind the nation's quest to be the first to land a man on the moon.⁴⁰ Unlike the reporting of *Florida News Tribune*, whose angle on the Calley story soon became supportive of the soldier's actions, despite the soldier's growing infamy, neither the *Playground Daily News* nor *The News Herald* provided any reference to the massacre in 1969. Whether these two latter publications chose to omit the Calley story as a result of the South's honour codes and a reluctance to admit that 'one of their own' was responsible for a cowardly act remains unclear.⁴¹

South Carolina is also critical, often regarded as the most traditional southern state as stalwart defender of the southern way of life. The *Aiken Standard* (AS) and the *Florence Morning News* (FMN) newspapers discussed the Calley trial approximately 150 times throughout the period of the court martial. In the November 25th 1969 issue, the *FMN* initiated its reporting on Mỹ Lai by insinuating that a massacre never took place. Utilising a South Vietnamese Defence Ministry communique, the paper printed that 'reports that 527 civilians were massacred were completely inaccurate and that in fact, about 20 civilians were killed in

³⁹ The *Fort Pierce News Tribune* 25/11/1969, p.3.

⁴⁰ The *Fort Pierce News Tribune* 01/01/1970, p.8.

⁴¹ I contacted the *Playground Daily News*, (now titled the *Northwest Florida Daily News*) to enquire why the editors of the period did not report on the case in 1969. I was informed 'that kind of story about a local man was not popular in those days'. Phone conversation with New Media Investment Group archive employee, 12/10/2012.

a battle for the village.⁴² A week later, as the story unfolded further, the *FMN* reminded its readers that in times of combat, atrocities often occur, thus can be considered normal to war. Printing a quote from the 1946 Nuremberg War Trials attorney Telford Taylor, the *FMN* stated that ‘it is often very ordinary people that can get into circumstances where they behave like this’.⁴³ Any confusion as to how the paper may have considered the character of the accused was duly cleared up in the paper’s final report of the case in 1969, when the *FMN* printed that ‘Calley may be more of a scapegoat than an ogre. Calley is a perfect patsy for the army to offer as a sacrifice. The army shouldn’t be allowed to wipe its hands clean on a lowly lieutenant.’⁴⁴ The prose used by the *FMN* suggests that the paper considered the actions of Calley as acceptable, while criticising the military for its reluctance to accept that atrocities are equally tolerable. The *Aiken Standard* never offered any reference to either Mỹ Lai or the Calley court martial trial during 1969.

In Georgia and Texas, provincial newspapers reported on the topic of Calley’s actions only 80 times between November 1969 and July 1971.⁴⁵ Considering the state of Georgia’s direct involvement in the trial, and the much-lauded historicity of Texans for delivering justice with honour, these statistics are remarkably low. Aside from the small amount of references that Calley received, the content was equally telling in these two publications. Column space remained small and somewhat hidden within the pages, with detailed information not apparent. Interpreting why the newspapers of these two ‘traditionally’ southern states gave little attention to the story is somewhat difficult to determine. As southern historiography promoted martial behaviour and honourable acts as typical, a more

⁴² The *Florence Morning News* 24/11/1969 p.3.

⁴³ The *Florence Morning News* 01/12/1969 p.3. Telford Taylor acted as Counsel for the Prosecution at the Nuremberg Trials. His outspoken criticism of U.S. actions during the Vietnam War in the 1960s and 1970s is also well-noted.

⁴⁴ The *Florence Morning News* 04/12/1969 p.1.

⁴⁵ Calley was charged on September 5, 1969, with the premeditated murder for the deaths of 109 South Vietnamese civilians at Mỹ Lai. He was convicted on March 29, 1971, of the premeditated murder of 22 civilians and two days later sentenced to life imprisonment at Fort Leavenworth.

feasible reason for the failure of southern newspapers to report on the massacre was possibly due to the notorious nature and cowardly actions of the accused that were atypical of southern honour.

New York provides an important counterpoint to the southern reaction. Notably, local New York newspapers gave over 430 in-depth reports on the Calley court martial case alone, more than the states of Florida, Georgia, Texas, and North and South Carolina combined. The five most popular regional newspapers that discussed the events of Mỹ Lai were the *Dunkirk Evening Observer* (DEO), the *Middletown Times Herald Record* (MTH), the *Wellsville Daily Reporter* (WDR), the *Syracuse Post Standard* (SPS) and the *Canandaigua Daily Messenger* (CDM). The December 2nd issue of the *DEO* headlined the story with seventeen paragraphs on the subject. The *DEO* informed its readers that ‘in Mỹ Lai village on March 16th 1968, screaming men, women and children were begging for mercy as they were gunned down by American soldiers’.⁴⁶ Accordingly, the local newspapers of Illinois, Oregon and Washington showed similar coverage of the trial with regular stories which adopted an unvarnished approach to their reports. The December 4th headline of the *WDR* printed that ‘the military’s official reports that civilians were killed were unnecessarily whitewashed’.⁴⁷ The fact that northern newspapers reported on both the massacre and the Calley trial in such high numbers while presenting the story in a truer context attests to the cultural disparity between northern and southern media sources that covered the story.

From the story’s outbreak in late 1969, the contrasting reaction from the northern media was significant. As well as giving in-depth graphic depictions of the massacre, the *Syracuse Post Standard* delved further into the background of the accused Second Lieutenant. With a story that was duly adopted by other northern publications, and notably no southern

⁴⁶ *Dunkirk Evening Observer* 02/12/1969, p.1.

⁴⁷ *The Wellsville Daily Reporter* 4/12/1969, p.1.

ones, the SPS printed a front-page report that alleged that William Calley had been previously charged with, ‘the murder of one adult male, about one and a half months prior to the My Lai incident.’⁴⁸ Despite the fact that the Mĩ Lai story broke in the last few weeks of 1969, northern media publications immediately adopted an accusatory view towards both Calley and their nation’s military. The northern media’s penchant to state facts consistently conflicted with the South’s news media during 1970, even when the true horror of Mĩ Lai was exposed.

As the Mĩ Lai story gained momentum throughout 1970, albeit much of it reporting on the trial of William Calley, in-depth news reports showed a clear regional contrast in opinions towards the accused Second Lieutenant. In its March 1st edition, ten weeks into the Calley court martial, the *PDN* chose only to associate the events at Mĩ Lai in relation to current morale of troops in Vietnam at that time. The *PDN* quoted General Westmoreland as stating ‘the morale of the U.S. fighting man in Vietnam is excellent and always has been. I think every man in uniform is unhappy with the allegation that atrocities have been committed’.⁴⁹ In a similarly evasive manner, the March 18th edition, the *PDN* lamented on the retirement of Lieutenant General, Samuel W. Koster, the commander in charge of the Americal Division at the time of the massacre. After detailing the ‘illustrious and honourable career’ of Koster, the *PDN* printed that ‘the General announced to a hushed audience of 3,700 cadets at West Point, one hour before the release of the Peers report, that he will soon leave WestPoint.’⁵⁰ The *PDN* report never mentioned that Koster’s decision was as a consequence of action initiated by his superiors regarding his questionable leadership performance of his division throughout his tenure in Vietnam. Despite the notoriety and international attention afforded to the case, the *PDN* reported only a further five times on the trial for the remainder of 1970. A July edition questioned whether Calley could ever receive a fair trial, while a

⁴⁸ *Syracuse Post Standard* 09/12/1969, p.1.

⁴⁹ *The Playground Daily News* 01/03/1970, p.2.

⁵⁰ *The Playground Daily News* 18/03/1970, p.1.

November edition reminded its readers that ‘despite Associated Press articles utilising such damning sentences as “children were slaughtered indiscriminately” and “shot down in cold blood”, it should be remembered these are just alleged acts’.⁵¹ In December, the *PDN* ended its 1970 coverage of the trial by stating that ‘there was no indication yet when the prosecution will attempt to link the Florida soldier to the alleged killings at My Lai.’⁵² The *PDN*’s refusal to condemn the actions of Calley — while affirming that he was a fellow Floridian — supports the case that this region of the South was clearly more supportive of Calley’s actions at Mỹ Lai than that of northern states.

Awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service in 1962, for uncovering corruption amongst local government officials, Panama City’s daily *News Herald* described itself as ‘Northwest Florida’s most complete newspaper.’ Despite their acclaim, for the first eleven months of 1970, the *NH* attributed no column space to either the massacre at Mỹ Lai or the Calley court martial hearing. The first mention of a ‘so-called’ massacre was finally printed in the paper’s November 22nd edition. Written in a dramatic style, the *NH* headlined that:

Their endless search and destroy mission had drawn sniper fire. They had encountered land mines and booby traps. But on March 16, 1968, Charlie Company with Lt William Calley Jr. Leading its first platoon had yet to taste battle. So they stormed into Mỹ Lai that day, trigger fingers heavy, expecting to meet the crack Vietcong 48 battalion. But out of it grew the so-called Mỹ Lai massacre.⁵³

This vivid and misleading account offered by the *NH* clearly attempts to justify, and to some extent even sanitise the actions of Calley and his men on the day of the massacre, with no details given on the events and the eventual outcome of the day.

⁵¹ The *PDN*, 30/11/1970 p.1.

⁵² The *PDN*, 09/12/1970 p.2.

⁵³ The *Panama City News Herald*, 22/11/1970, p.1. This Associated Press release was also used by the *Playground Daily News* a day later.

The *Thomasville Times* presented a similar view towards Calley throughout 1970. In their January 5th edition, the paper attributed front page column space to support the effort of Mayor Norman Weber, of Collinsville, Virginia. The *TT* printed that ‘distinguished Virginia Mayor Weber... has announced a campaign to raise funds in the defense of Lieutenant Calley,’ the *TT* then provided information on how readers can support Calley.⁵⁴ Subsequent reports chose to ignore the events of the massacre, instead adhering to the fact that the ‘character’ of those involved could be forever damaged. The *TT*’s final report of 1970 was in its November 18th edition, where the paper quoted that photographer Ronald Haeberle’s statement that he only ‘allegedly, saw American G.I.’s fire at fifty to seventy five Vietnamese on the South side of the village’.⁵⁵ With southern publications often utilising words such as ‘allegedly’ ‘so-called’ and ‘scapegoat’, verbatim statements from prosecution witnesses were rarely mentioned. This method was in stark contrast to the newspapers of their northern counterparts, which printed the many of the testimonies given by Haeberle, Thompson, Colburn and other witnesses in the investigation.⁵⁶ Georgia’s *Macon Telegraph* supported the sentiments of Congressman Charles Weltner, promoted by the paper as ‘a public servant to be greatly admired,’ who duly accused the ‘Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of planning the deaths of all the adults killed at My Lai’.⁵⁷ Such unfounded accusations were increasing typical of the South’s journalistic preference to concentrate the blame on other parties, however obscure.

⁵⁴ The *Thomasville Times Enterprise*, 05/01/1970 p.15. A Missouri daily newspaper stated that Weber was ‘a man known for being master of the quick phrase and one to stir the pot all the time’, *St Louis Post Despatch*, Obituary of Norman Weber, 15/04/1993.

⁵⁵ The *Thomasville Times Enterprise*, 05/01/1970, p.1.

⁵⁶ Ronald Haeberle used two cameras on the day of covering the My Lai incursion. The most graphic photos of the atrocities, taken with his personal camera were not disclosed to his military superiors. Haeberle’s decision not to disclose his ‘private’ photos from My Lai to the military, and eventually sell them to Ohio newspaper *The Plain Dealer* was heavily criticised by the investigating sub-committee into My Lai.

⁵⁷ Billy Hathorn, "The Frustration of Opportunity: Georgia Republicans and the Election of 1966", *Atlanta History: A Journal of Georgia and the South*, XXXI (Winter 1987-1988), p. 42.

South Carolina's *Florence Morning News* largely ignored the Mỹ Lai trial throughout 1970, only reporting on the massacre when Calley's 70 year-old defence lawyer and former Supreme Court judge George Latimer implicated South Carolinian, General Westmoreland. Titling the story as 'Westmoreland also guilty?', the *FMN* quoted Latimer stating 'General Westmoreland, who was in command in Vietnam at the time of the My Lai incident, bears the same responsibility that Tomoyuki Yamashita did in World War II, even though Westmoreland might not have known of the alleged atrocity'.⁵⁸ Latimer's attempt to divert the guilt away from Calley only served to implicate the highest ranked southerner who commanded in Vietnam, while initiating subsequent angry complaints from South Carolinians. A December edition of the *FMN* remained sympathetic to the accused second lieutenant, reporting that 'post-January 1968, Calley's platoon was aware of the fact that there was a demand to get out in the field and show that the Americans had not suffered a setback'.⁵⁹ The 'setback' referred to in the report was the enemy's New Year Tet Offensive which, although numerically a defeat to Vietnamese forces, ultimately signalled the loss of American dominion on southern Vietnam.

Throughout 1970, northern media publications contrasted those of the South by continuing their criticism of Calley and their country's military. The April 28th edition of New York's, *Middletown Times Herald Record* reported how Republican candidate for Congress and former commander of the American Legion, Martin B McKnealy, urged 'the American Legion to block all local legion posts from raising money to help Lieutenant William Calley and others in their defence against the My Lai massacre charges'.⁶⁰ A November edition of the *Dunkirk evening Observer* and the *Dunkirk Fredonia*, damned the actions of Calley and

⁵⁸ Latimer was referring to the plight of a Japanese commander General Tomoyuki Yamashita who was tried and hanged for crimes committed by his men during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines during World War II. *Florence Morning News* 14/10/1970, p.13.

⁵⁹ The *Florence Morning News* 10/12/1970, p.32.

⁶⁰ The *Middletown Times Herald Record* 28/04/1970, p.64.

his unit at Mỹ Lai, by reporting that they ‘put no value at all on the lives of Vietcong or their sympathisers’.⁶¹ The *Syracuse Post Standard* gave a detailed report of the work of a Hong Kong attorney Paul Narkin who had filed a \$400 million lawsuit against Calley and the United States government on behalf of the 59 survivors of the massacre. Filing the lawsuit in the state of Georgia, Narkin stated that ‘The victims were dead by the personal actions and direct order of Lt Calley who shot, wounded, killed, assaulted, raped, robbed, butchered, dismembered and murdered’.⁶² The 1970 New Year's Eve edition of the *THR* printed another perspective — in contrast to Florida's *PDN* — perspective of the Americal Division's Lieutenant General Koster retirement speech. Both the *PDN* and the *THR* quoted Koster stating ‘I wish to say that from my military career the cherished principles of our motto and duty, honour, and country-have served as a constant guide to me’. The *THR* rebutted with a quote from an anonymous West Point officer who was appalled by Koster's leaving speech, stating that ‘why did he have to use that line, duty, honour, country? It will haunt him that one will.’ The *THR* concluded its report by concurring ‘it will indeed’.⁶³ Throughout 1970, a clear North/South disparity in the context of the reporting the Calley trial received is noticeably evident. While the provincial press of the northern states largely presented Calley as a war criminal and murderer, the southern press deliberately chose to present the incident at Mỹ Lai as routine for wartime and defend Calley's actions as soldier-like and honourable. This discrepancy festered as the court case reached its conclusion the following year.

⁶¹ The *Dunkirk evening Observer* 12/11/1970, p.12.

⁶² The *Syracuse Post Standard* 03/12/1970, p.2 .

⁶³ All three quotes retrieved from *Middletown Times Herald Record* 31/12/1970, p.76.

The Aftermath of the Calley Verdict

The most extensive coverage of the case came in wake of its resolution on March 29, 1971. In concordance with the past two years reporting, southern newspapers offered their own regionally distinct perspective on the verdict. Nine weeks before the outcome of the verdict, Florida's *Fort Pierce News Tribune* headlined their January 10th edition quoting that William Calley was 'looking forward to his murder trial, because I have a few things to tell them about war. Even though they hate me, I'd like them to listen to me for one minute'.⁶⁴ The local newspaper was the only publication to use this prominent and revealing quote from their fellow Floridian. Two days later, the *NT* printed another revealing quote from Calley regarding a soldier who served under him. Calley referred to Private Paul Meadlo, a man who admitted to shooting women and babies at Mỹ Lai, as 'a tremendous soldier... One of the best I had'.⁶⁵ The article continued their peculiar support for Calley and his colleague stating that 'on the witness stand, Meadlo stated that he felt the same way about his platoon leader'.⁶⁶ A February edition of Florida's *Playground Daily News* criticised the Geneva Convention outlines for not being detailed enough on how to treat civilians during times of war. Subsequent editions of the *PDN* continued to report favourably on Calley's character stating how 'his shoes are always shined and his right arm proudly snaps back at every G.I. salute'.⁶⁷ The newspaper also offered detailed explanations of how Calley was awarded numerous good conduct medals that 'adorned his tunic' throughout his trial. Despite the publication's inability to prove their quote, the April 2nd issue of the *PDN*, reported that 'Calley has the supporting weighing sentiments of an overwhelming majority of the people of Florida'.⁶⁸ Despite the

⁶⁴ The *Fort Pierce News Tribune* 10/01/1971. p.1.

⁶⁵ The *FPNT*, 12/01/1971. p.2.

⁶⁶ Two days after the Mỹ Lai massacre, Private Meadlo had his foot blown off after stepping on a landmine. Upon receiving a MEDEVAC from the scene, Meadlo shouted to Calley, "You'll get yours, God will punish you." Calley received a cut to his face from the explosion. Both men were awarded Purple Hearts for the incident. Quote taken from a CBS news report with Mike Wallace. <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/mylai>.

⁶⁷ The *Playground Daily News* 14/03/1971, p.1.

⁶⁸ The *PDN* 02/04/1971, p.2.

damning conclusive evidence and guilty verdict, details of the actual massacre at Mỹ Lai remained unreported in much of the South's newspapers, in stark contrast to the North's provincial press.

Following Calley's life sentence delivered on March 29th, Florida newspaper reports were quick to express their anger towards the verdict. The *Panama City News Herald* stopped using the term 'massacre' in subsequent reports; instead referring to the atrocity as 'the riddle of Mỹ Lai' or 'alleged killings'.⁶⁹ The *News Tribune* reiterated Calley's view, while insulting the civilians of Mỹ Lai by stating that 'it was just a small tragedy in a small place'.⁷⁰ The *NT* also reported on an unsuccessful attempt to firebomb the courthouse where Calley was sentenced, such was the discontent locals held towards the verdict. The March 31st headline of the *NT* stated that the 'Calley Verdict Stuns Many in Fort Pierce Area,' then continued by printing the opinions of many of their disgruntled readers.⁷¹ In a separate column, the same newspaper printed the view of a retired local Colonel Paul C. Holden — while revealing his name and address — who slated that 'no intelligent man would do that. A thinking man would not commit such a massacre.'⁷² The paper's decision to single out Holden's attack on Calley, in comparison to the paper's majority verdict, was exceptional, in a controversial sense, resulting in Holden's property being vandalised by locals. The *PDN News* concluded its reports on the day of the verdict by quoting and endorsing Calley's defence attorney George Latimer.

You will find no case in military justice that has ever torn America apart like this
has torn America apart. The flag may fly at full-mast over this region's military

⁶⁹ The *Panama City News Herald* 19/03/1971, p1.

⁷⁰ The *Fort Pierce News Tribune* 30/03/1971, p.3.

⁷¹ *FPNT*, 31/03/1971, pp. 1, 2, 3, 4.

⁷² *FPNT*, 31/3/71, p.4.

installations, but it will be drawn half-mast over the homes of people whose sons may be going into the military service. This case cuts very deep.⁷³

Latimer's decision to single out 'this region' is a reference to South's martial history and discontented populace. References to flags flying half-mast in the homes of military servicemen usually refers to the death of a soldier, but used by Latimer to symbolise the death of honour and justice that was so espoused in the South. The attorney's closing statement that the verdict 'cuts very deep' also highlights the divided opinions many Americans held towards the massacre, a contrast largely based on differing cultural distinctions defined by a geographic divide.

Along with basic reports on Calley, the April 1st edition of Florida's *Fort Pierce Tribune* reported how thousands of Floridians reacted angrily to the guilty verdict. The newspaper canvassed responses to the verdict utilising Western Union telegrams in Florida, to present their view on the level of support Calley received. Quoting the manager of the Miami-based Western Union office, the *FPT* stated that 'hundreds of telegrams have been pouring out of Miami that are being relayed to the White House, and are all very sympathetic on Calley's behalf. I haven't seen one in favour of the verdict.'⁷⁴ After 37 months of damning evidence and a unanimous guilty verdict, overall, the southern press never acknowledged the guilt of William Calley. Mỹ Lai continued to be referred to as an area where 'an alleged massacre' took place, while Calley's actions were deemed necessary according to the press from his state of Florida.

⁷³ The *Playground Daily News* 31/03/1971, p.2.

⁷⁴ The *Fort Pierce Tribune*, 01/04/1971, p.1.

South Carolina shared the same sympathy towards Calley. In a February 1971 report, the *Aiken Standard* printed defence attorney George Latimer's opinion that 'Lt Calley states that he did not feel as if he was killing humans, but rather they were the enemy with whom one could not speak or reason'.⁷⁵ Latimer's disturbing quote echoed the same distinct racial-based detachment associated with the disenfranchised black population from the past two centuries. The *Florence Morning News* defended Calley's actions by retelling readers that 'all military orders were to be assumed legal and that it was a soldier's job to carry out any order given to the best of his ability'.⁷⁶ The *FMN* went on to remind readers that 'you could be court martialled for refusing an order, and in the face of the enemy, you could get the death penalty'.⁷⁷ The *Aiken Standard* mirrored this support by printing that hundreds of telegrams are being sent to Fort Benning in supporting the guilty Lieutenant. The *AS* also highlighted the unfavourable sentiments of the north's opinion by stating that 'just a single telegram from an ill-informed New Yorker requested that they should Hang Calley'.⁷⁸ For days after the verdict, southern newspapers regularly reported that public opinion from the region remained favourable towards Calley. Only two brief negative views of Calley were found in one southern newspaper. Florence's *Morning News* stated that 'as the emotional tide recedes, the fact does not release the Lieutenant from accountability for his actions'.⁷⁹ Two days later, the *FMN* quoted 'an anonymous housewife' who stated that she 'cannot substitute sympathy for justice, and cannot reconcile my mind to senseless killing, no matter what the mitigating circumstances', the article was followed with more supportive comments towards Calley.⁸⁰ Notably, these two quotes, which ran against the tide of southern opinion towards Calley,

⁷⁵ The *Aiken Standard*, 22/02/1971 p.2.

⁷⁶ Despite Calley's statement, these military orders or 'articles' require the obedience of lawful orders. Executing unarmed civilians or combatants was and remains an illegal act. Notably Nazi leaders at the Nuremberg tribunals following World War II unsuccessfully used such statements as a legal defense in hundreds of cases.

⁷⁷ The *Florence Morning News*, 23/02/1971, p.1.

⁷⁸ The *Aiken Standard*, 31/03/1971, p.1.

⁷⁹ The *FMN*, 13/04/1971, p.6.

⁸⁰ The *FMN*, 15/04/1971, p.8.

received numerous letters and calls of complaints to the *FMN* editor's office. Such was the backlash, that the April 19th edition contained a 'note from the editor' that exonerated Calley from his actions, further explaining that the paper was obliged to show the opinions of 'a tiny ill-informed minority'.⁸¹ The apologetic stance shown by the *FMN* reveals how many of the southern public were willing to support a man convicted of the murder of 22 Vietnamese civilians.

In Georgia, prior to the verdict, the March 15th edition of the *Thomasville Times* informed its readers that 'the 27 year old balding First Lieutenant is charged with the premeditated murder of not less than 102 Oriental human beings.'⁸² The term 'oriental human beings' was never used in the testimonies of any of the individuals involved in the trial, and use of this racial epithet perhaps emphasised the South's casual use of racial distinctions. The *TT* continued its support printing that 'it's a disgrace (the verdict) to our state, country and our servicemen.'⁸³ In a separate column, the newspaper argued that 'was President Harry S. Truman guilty of premeditated murder when he ordered atomic bombs dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki No!'⁸⁴ The Georgia publication continued with the same journalistic theme by stating that 'we never should have never got involved with such a God-forsaken oriental nation,' concluding its report in a similarly racist fashion stating that 'we should have no concern for what happens to natives in foreign lands'. Three days later, on April 2nd 1971, the *TT* printed its final report on Calley until the soldier was released 34 months later. Evidently, the *TT* reminded its readers of the North/South animosity still evident with the southern states with its final closing statement:

⁸¹ The *FMN*, 19/04/1971, p.2.

⁸² The *Thomasville Times*, 15/3/1971, p.1.

⁸³ The *TT*, 30/3/1971, p.2.

⁸⁴ The *TT*, 31/03/1971, p.4.

Just one hundred years ago, Union General William T. Sherman destroyed homes and caused many deaths among the civilian population of Atlanta. Sherman left a highway of ashes in his march to the sea in the devastated Southern states. Perhaps the President will issue a full pardon to Lt Calley and pin a gold medal on him.⁸⁵

In harmony with the region's reports throughout the trial period, the northern press adopted a decidedly different view towards the William Calley verdict. New York's *Canandaigua Daily Messenger* reported to its readers that it should be remembered that Calley is 'sane and suffering no character or behaviour disorder,' and that he also 'encountered no enemy fire' but still stands 'guilty of the point-blank slaughter of 102 civilians.'⁸⁶The *Syracuse Post Standard* endorsed the actions of Calley's prosecutor Aubrey Daniels stating that 'the fiery young army prosecutor informed the jury there was no doubt, William L. Calley slaughtered unresisting and unarmed men, women, children and babies'.⁸⁷ The *Dunkirk Evening Observer* reported that two 'Deep South political leaders, Gov. George C. Wallace and Lt. Gov. Lester G. Maddox, urged a "Rally for Calley" to grant clemency for the accused, then followed this quote with readers reactions that asked 'is Calley our answer for being in Vietnam?' and that the American government 'should hang Calley for his crimes.' The *DEO* continued its reaction to the verdict with two statements, one from prosecutor Daniels who stated that 'It is not honor and it never has been considered honor, to kill unarmed men, women and children'.⁸⁸ The *DEO* closed their story on Calley by reminding its readers that 'Calley stands convicted of deliberately murdering Vietnamese women, children and old men who were unarmed, unresisting and were pleading for mercy and screaming as they died.'⁸⁹ Between March 1969 and April 1971, newspaper reaction

⁸⁵ The *TT*, 02/04/1971 p.4.

⁸⁶ The *Canandaigua Messenger*, 18/01/1971, p.2.

⁸⁷ The *Syracuse Post Standard*, 19/03/1971, p.3.

⁸⁸ The *Dunkirk Evening Observer*, 31/03/1971, p.1 and p.13.

⁸⁹ The *DEO*, 03/04/1971, p.1.

displayed a clear North/South divide towards the Mỹ Lai massacre and the court martial of Calley. Reports from the northern press discussed events more objectively and in depth. The region's overriding view towards the trial presented an American soldier who was convicted of a war atrocity, which was wholly avoidable.

In contrast, the South's newspapers showed little objectivity and endeavoured to construct an image of Calley as a scapegoat, a loyal soldier and in some cases a war hero, serving to emphasise the region's devotion to martial honour. Despite southern reports that 'a great body of Americans were able to extend compassion to [Calley],' evidence from the regional press from the North proves otherwise.⁹⁰ The southern press ignored details of the massacre, which revealed the extent of Charlie Company's brutality, while the actions of Calley were consistently represented as both normal and justified for combat situations; despite no combat actually taking place. Thus, the southern media's stance towards the massacre was distinct, and in some instances, even racist towards the plight of Vietnamese civilians. The South's long-historicised cultural heritage and social codes, through distinct traditions contrasted with the more partisan reporting of northern newspapers. To a certain extent, this self-conscious differentiation, revealed the region's alienation from the cultural consensus set by the north as it appeared in the national press. The verdict against William Calley was perceived by many southerners as a further threat to their distinct culture that had been subjected to a century of military, political and economic interference from the North.

⁹⁰ The *Florence Morning News*, 27/08/1971, p.4.

The Political Reaction to Mỹ Lai and William Calley

The political response to Mỹ Lai also reveals regionally-orientated dissimilarities in attitudes. When Ronald Ridenhour had gathered evidence regarding the massacre, the 23-year-old Californian was impelled to write to President Richard M. Nixon, Pentagon officials, the State Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as well as numerous members of Congress. Excerpts from Ridenhour's letter revealed the gravity of what took place at Mỹ Lai, as Ridenhour states 'exactly what did, in fact, occur in the village of "Pinkville" in March 1968 I do not know for certain, but I am convinced that it was something very black indeed'. The former Vietnam G.I. continued his correspondence by asking his letter's recipients that 'if you and I do truly believe in the principles of justice and the equality of every man, however humble, before the law... then we must press forward a widespread and public investigation of this matter with all our combined efforts.'⁹¹ Ridenhour's use of words such as 'justice and equality' would have been especially provocative to some of the letter's recipients, as they mirrored the terms used by Civil Rights supporters across many regions of the United States throughout the Vietnam period. Consequently, Ridenhour's terminology probably contributed to the lack of response his plea was given from southern politicians.

Given the gravity of the letter's details, the response was somewhat subdued. Republican Senator for Illinois, Charles H. Percy, and Democrat Senator for Ohio, Stephen Young, did call for a congressional investigation into the atrocity, but their requests were ignored at all governmental levels. As attention to the massacre became more intensified — largely as a result of Ridenhour's continued efforts — some weeks after the initial information was revealed, Senators Barry Goldwater (Republican, Arizona), Edward Brooke

⁹¹ Ridenhour Letter 29/03/1969.http://law2.umkc.edu/ridenhour_ltr.html. Accessed 18/06/2012. The term 'G.I.' is attributed to all men and women serving in the American Armed forces. The abbreviation stands for 'General Issue' denoting the surrendering of personal possessions upon joining the military in replacement for governmental issue uniforms and personal effects.

(Democrat, Massachusetts) and Congressman, Morris Udall (Democrat, Arizona) made increased efforts in supporting Ridenhour's pleas for an investigation. The reply provided by Senator Goldwater is the most notable of the three as he was the first Republican presidential nominee since Reconstruction, to win the electoral votes of the deep southern states of Louisiana, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and South Carolina in his efforts to become president in 1964. As a staunch Republican hailing from Arizona, Goldwater established himself on the political stage through his ultraconservative views on domestic and foreign policies that were typical of the anti-Communist and hawkish aggression displayed by many of the South's Cold War politicians. Portrayed by supporters of Lyndon Johnson and critics as a reactionary, and credited with generating a resurrection of conservatism in America, Goldwater was quick to respond to news of an alleged massacre. Despite his call for an in-depth investigation, when questioned on the massacre in a NBC television interview in South Carolina, Goldwater was quick to placate his electorate, asserting that 'I do not believe the incident occurred, and I want more evidence of atrocities than the published pictures'.⁹² Consequently, Goldwater's southern-sponsored conservatism remained paramount throughout his political career, thus assisting in paving the way for Nixon's southern strategy of 1968 that ultimately ended the Democrat party's reign in the South.

In contrast to Goldwater's reaction, Massachusetts Senator, Edward Brooke was the first politician to respond to Ridenhour directly, by offering his support for an investigation into Mỹ Lai. A World War II veteran who served in the segregated 366th Infantry Regiment, Brooke is also noted for being the first African-American to be elected to the Senate.⁹³ Following the news of Mỹ Lai, Brooke stated that 'the United States should now limit its

⁹² NBC Universal Archives, <http://www.nbcuniversalarchives.com>, Clip No: 5112466997_s01.

⁹³ The 366th Infantry Regiment was an all-African-American segregated Army unit, which served in both World War I and World War II. During World War II, the unit saw combat in Italy as part of the 92nd Infantry Division (colored), 5th Army.

search and destroy efforts in South Vietnam to defensive situations’.⁹⁴ As a recipient of the NAACP’s Spingarn Medal for outstanding achievement by a black American, Brooke’s disputes with Mississippi Democrat John Stennis — a staunch segregationist and pro-military supporter — were much-publicised throughout the Vietnam era. Born and raised in Washington D.C., Brooke’s efforts to aid his black countrymen, especially those in the South, and repetitive demands for an investigation in to Mỹ Lai characterised the culturally-based divide in opinions of northern and southern politicians.

Following on from the efforts of Brooke, Republican Congressman for Arizona Morris Udall, not only responded to Ridenhour’s plea for an investigation, but also forwarded his own sentiments on the atrocity to the Army’s Chief of Staff, General William Westmoreland. Affectionately known by his colleagues’ as ‘Mo’, Udall was a prominent liberal thinker who often endorsed the sentiments of Senator Brooke. Udall’s stance towards American strategy in Vietnam remained critical, despite the fact that his home state of Arizona was staunchly Republican and conservative throughout the Vietnam era. Noted for being the most active politician to push for an investigation into the Mỹ Lai massacre, Udall stated that ‘If I end up out on a limb, so be it. I would rather history branded me wrong than found me a coward or a fence-straddler’.⁹⁵ Udall’s continued efforts ultimately resulted in the Armed Services Committee investigation, and became a rare example of dissent against an abundance of opinions that were determined to overlook the incident. Notably, of the five politicians who voiced their concerns, none were representing southern states, and only Senator Goldwater could be typified as conservative in his views. The absence of southern politicians’ calls for an inquiry into the massacre reinforces the argument that southern politicians were largely hawkish on when the nation’s military reputation was under threat.

⁹⁴ Mark Goldman, ‘A Study of Message-Change and Reaction in Senator Edward Brooke’s Views in the Vietnam War’, *Today’s Speech*, Vol 17, issue 3, (1969), p.60.

⁹⁵ Morris K. Udall, Selected Speeches, *The United States and the Vietnam War*, Source: <http://www.library.arizona.edu/exhibits/udall/vietnam.pdf>.

The Influence of Southerners in the HCAS investigation

Beginning in April 1970, the 12 week political-motivated investigation was conducted by the U.S. House Committee on Armed Services (HCAS), and ran concurrent to the court martial of William Calley and independent to the military's own Peers commission inquiry into Mỹ Lai.⁹⁶ Established in 1946, with the direction to fund and oversee all governmental military matters, from its inception, HCAS has been headed predominantly by southerners, much due to their fervour for martial thinking. The chairman of the HCAS investigation into Mỹ Lai was the outspoken Democratic Congressman for South Carolina, Mendel Rivers. A staunch segregationist and signatory of The Declaration of Constitutional Principles (the 1956 Southern Manifesto), Rivers publically supported the actions of Calley and the American military throughout the investigation's proceedings.⁹⁷ The personal conduct and legal testimony of Hugh Thompson — the pilot who intervened at Mỹ Lai — was relentlessly criticised by Rivers throughout the HCAS's proceedings. On one occasion, Rivers stated to numerous press sources that 'Hugh Thompson ought to be the only soldier at Mỹ Lai who should be punished for turning his weapons on fellow American troops'.⁹⁸ The congressman also publically disregarded the accounts of other key witnesses, as well as the vivid photographic evidence in his defence of Calley, adding that 'Thompson didn't say he saw anybody shoot anybody, he did say he saw some dead bodies. From this testimony, I don't think anybody can be charged with anything'.⁹⁹ Rivers even took measures to have Thompson court-martialled for committing a traitorous act, an effort in which Rivers was ultimately unsuccessful.

⁹⁶ The U.S. House Committee on Armed Services, commonly known as the House Armed Services Committee. Its responsibilities include funding and overseeing matters related to the Department of Defense (DoD) and the United States armed forces. It is a standing committee of the United States House of Representatives.

⁹⁷ The manifesto was signed by 99 politicians, of whom 97 were Democrats from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia and Tennessee. The document contested the de-segregation of public schools as unconstitutional.

⁹⁸ *The Times*, obituary of Hugh Thompson Jr, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article787066.ece>. 11/01/2006

⁹⁹ *Arizona Republic*, 1/12/1969, p.20.

Present throughout the investigation, Seymour Hersh labelled the HCAS's treatment of Thompson as a 'shocking, heavy third degree interrogation', while reiterating that during Thompson's own testimony that 'Hugh Thompson acted like a true American'.¹⁰⁰ Despite requests from the prosecution team at Calley's court martial to provide transcripts of the HCAS investigation, Rivers refused to release all statements that would aid inquiries in to Mỹ Lai. HCAS concluded that 'Thompson's role in the action was not known until a much later date,' a blatant falsification on the part of Rivers' team as Thompson had reported the events at Mỹ Lai — in oral and documented form — to his superiors on the day of the massacre.¹⁰¹ Rivers was dubbed the 'granddaddy of the war hawks' and the 'serviceman's best friend,' by the largely southern-led military and remained an unrepentant typical southerner.¹⁰² Despite Rivers' clear obscuring of facts and withholding of pertinent information on the massacre, many South Carolinians still held Rivers in high regard. In a 1999 newspaper poll conducted by South Carolina's newspapers, Rivers was amongst the *'Ten Magnificent Charlestonians Who Shaped the 20th Century'*, as a result of his service to the military and his efforts to expand the influence of his South on national policies.¹⁰³ As the accolade suggests, Rivers' controversial sentiments were typical of the South's zeal for cultural recalcitrance that typified the views of many southerners regarding Mỹ Lai.

Similarly, politician Felix E. Hebert provides a further insight into the crucial role that southern identity played in the Mỹ Lai investigation. A 1974 edition of the *Washington Post* observed that Hebert was 'an authentic and irrepressible Southern personality, a very shrewd operator, and one of the country's most powerful men.'¹⁰⁴ While being the longest serving member of the House of Representatives, Hebert was a close acquaintance of Congressman

¹⁰⁰ *El Paso Herald*, 29/07/1970, p.10.

¹⁰¹ *The Des Moines Register*, 26/07/2012, p.4.

¹⁰² *The Washington Post*, Newspaper Excerpts, November 1969. Source: University of Charleston. p.10. <http://www.ucwv.edu/search.aspx?searchtext=archives>. Accessed 11/08/2012.

¹⁰³ Margaret Middleton, *Mendel & Me: Life with Congressman L. Mendel Rivers* (Charleston, 2007), p.207.

¹⁰⁴ *The Washington Post*, (05/04/1974), p.3.

Rivers. As a result their friendship, Hebert became the ‘unofficial chairman’ of the HCAS. Hebert also vehemently supported the southern Manifesto that opposed de-segregation in the South. Remaining practically unchallenged throughout his thirty 36 year career, Herbert proudly described himself as ‘the last of old Dixie’s unreconstructed rebels’.¹⁰⁵ In a statement given to the national press in 1971, Hebert angrily stated that ‘it is terrible to let Cassius Clay walk the streets of America, while William Calley, who was trying to do his duty, is incarcerated’.¹⁰⁶ Historian, Charles Rivet affirmed that Hebert ‘was a typical exponent of Southern style Americanism’. Rivet continued his summation stating that ‘like the majority of Southern politicians of the period, their worldview was framed by four basic tenets: the defence of Southern racism and Southern state rights, fierce anti-communism, super patriotism, an enthusiastic support of the American military.’¹⁰⁷ In an action unconnected to the HCAS investigation, Rivers and Hebert released a terse unofficial 53-page report that rejected any notion of criminal culpability towards Calley, despite the recording of over 1000 pages of official HCAS testimonies proving otherwise.

Emphatic southern-styled patriotism was also evident in the actions of Governor George C. Wallace during the Mỹ Lai investigations. As a fervent supporter of racial segregation and a staunch anti-communist, Wallace established a reputation for his distinct southern populist views to criticise the nation’s treatment of William Calley.¹⁰⁸ In 1971, Governor Wallace visited Fort Benning’s military stockade where Calley was incarcerated to publically and ‘officially’ offer Lieutenant Calley his personal support. Days later, in a television interview, Wallace appealed to President Nixon to grant Calley a pardon for what

¹⁰⁵ Mark D. Carson, F. Edward Hébert and the Congressional Investigation of Mỹ Lai, *Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* Vol. 37, (1996), p.3.

¹⁰⁶ Carson, p.14.

¹⁰⁷ Carson, p.3.

¹⁰⁸ Southern Populism, a term often used to describe the re-emergence of the old traditional believed to represent south from the Nineteenth Century. From the 1950s, the term came to signify the support for racial segregation and also anti-liberalism which is regarded by some historians as the strongest factor in the ascendancy of the Republican Party in the South.

was an ‘alleged’ role in the incident. Along with the pro-segregationist Governor for Mississippi, John Bell Williams, Wallace gave speeches at numerous rallies throughout the South to defend the actions of American troops at Mỹ Lai by stating that ‘there was no hue and cry when civilians were killed in World War II’.¹⁰⁹ Historian Kendrick Oliver noted that Wallace’s efforts to have Calley released were resolute, affirming that ‘Governor Wallace directed his officials to investigate whether he could suspend the draft in the state as a means of forcing a pardon’.¹¹⁰ In a *New York Times* interview in 1971, Wallace stated that his current furore over Mỹ Lai was not politically motivated, proclaiming that he ‘was confident that President Nixon will do the right thing and pardon Calley’.¹¹¹ Nixon’s own sentiments towards the Calley trial were revealed in a phone conversation held with Henry Kissinger in August 1971, in which Nixon stated that ‘most of the people don’t give a shit whether he killed them or not’.¹¹² The Nixon administration laissez faire attitude towards the massacre only served to aid the southern support for Calley. The efforts of Wallace, Hebert and Rivers served to compound the southern character that many of the region’s politicians purveyed towards the trial of Calley; a theme utilised further by other selected southern politicians who were aware of the political benefit of adopting this recalcitrant stance towards Mỹ Lai.

Aside from the efforts of the aforementioned politicians, other southern political responses to Mỹ Lai highlight the North/South divide in attitudes towards the massacre and the portrayal of Calley. Kendrick Oliver argues that as a result of the South’s distinct attitude to martial conduct, ‘the trial of William Calley exacerbated a long-gathering crisis in southern attitudes towards the Vietnam conflict’. Oliver continues that ‘the South’s win at any cost’ axiom had been ignored by the administrations of Johnson and Nixon, leading Oliver to

¹⁰⁹ James T. Wooten, *New York Times*, (03/04/1971).

¹¹⁰ Oliver, p. 161.

¹¹¹ Wooten, (03/04/1971.)

¹¹² Richard Nixon phone conversation to Henry Kissinger, (08/04/1971), Conversation No 475, Tape Reference No- 453. White House NACP.

conclude that ‘it seemed apparent that not only was the national leadership not in the war to win, but that it was also intent on the persecution of any American soldiers who were. If that was the case, then the South wanted out’.¹¹³ Following the sentencing of Calley, Georgia’s Governor and future president, Jimmy Carter, came forward to voice his concerns regarding the negative coverage the national press had attributed to Calley. As a result, Governor Carter proposed the inception of ‘American Fighting Man’s Day’ requesting that ‘motorists drive for a week with their car headlamps on as a sign of protest towards Calley’s conviction’.¹¹⁴ Consequently, the Democrat Governor of Mississippi, John Bell Williams angrily objected to the Calley verdict by requesting that all state flags should be flown at half-mast. A pro-segregationist, Williams would later support the Republican nominees of Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan over Carter’s ‘soft-handed’ candidacy for the presidency. The points expressed by historians such as Oliver and Rivet highlight just how distinct the South — albeit the more vocal individuals — were in comparison to the remainder of the United States on the subject of Calley’s guilt.

While politicians from other regions of the United States remained decidedly quiet following the Calley verdict, their southern colleagues did not. South Carolina’s Senator Ernest F. Hollings repeatedly criticised the nation’s military for prosecuting Calley. As a graduate of the renowned southern military college, the Citadel, Hollings questioned ‘if all soldiers who made a mistake of judgement, were going to be tried as common criminals, as murderers’.¹¹⁵ During his career as governor, Hollings sparked national controversy by insisting on flying the Confederate flag outside the state’s courthouse, this emblem, which

¹¹³ Oliver, (2006), p. 161.

¹¹⁴ David Frum, *How We Got Here: The 70s* (New York, 2000), p. 84. Carter’s liberal approach witnessed him abolish the death penalty, support racial desegregation and push for legalised abortion, all during a period when such actions were deemed decidedly ‘un-southern’ by much of the population of the U.S. South.

¹¹⁵ Kevin Hillstrom and Laurie Collier, *The Vietnam Experience: A Concise Encyclopedia of American Literature and Songs* (London, 1998), p.69.

symbolised a segregated United States remained there for 38 years.¹¹⁶ Following the Calley verdict, Democrat Governor for Georgia, Herman Talmadge Sr, declared that he was ‘saddened to think, that a person could fight for his flag and then be court-martialled and convicted for apparently carrying out his orders’.¹¹⁷ Similarly, 81 year-old Democrat Senator for Louisiana Allen Ellender, stated that ‘all the civilians at Mỹ Lai had just got what they deserved’.¹¹⁸ Democrat representative for Louisiana, Joe D. Waggoner, believed that ‘a scapegoat was made of Calley throughout his trial’, while Louisiana’s District Court Judge, John R. Rarick, described Calley as a ‘true soldier and great American’.¹¹⁹ Republican member of the House of Representatives, William L. Dickinson of Alabama, urged the president to grant Calley executive clemency and suspend his sentence, a request which Nixon would later grant. Evidently, southern political support for Calley came from both political parties and all ages of the region’s vocal populace.

Because of marked southern discontent towards the Calley verdict, April 1971 witnessed resurgence in the column space the South’s newspapers awarded to Calley. The *Panama City News Herald* headlined the sentiments North Carolinian, Jimmy Johnson (Republican), who stated that ‘the guilty soldier had the guts for taking the dishonour this nation has now put upon him in the name of justice’.¹²⁰ The *Playground Daily News* reported that Georgia Republican, John Flynt’s primary concern was that ‘the verdict constitutes a dangerous step toward destruction of morale in the army and could harm efforts to establish an all-volunteer force.’¹²¹ A report on the front page of Florida’s *Fort Pierce News Tribune* told how the state’s congressional representative, Don Fuqua, invited William Calley to

¹¹⁶ The state's Confederate flag on the state capitol building was the last ‘officially’ displayed in America, following a successful lawsuit to have it removed in July 2000.

¹¹⁷ Fry (2002), p. 288.

¹¹⁸ Fry, (2002),p. 288.

¹¹⁹ Hillstrom and Collier, *The Vietnam Experience*, p.69. Rarick would go on to lead The American Independence Party, which was originally founded by Alabamian Governor, George C. Wallace in 1968.

¹²⁰ The *Panama City News Herald*, 31/3/1971, p.1.

¹²¹ The *Playground Daily News*, 31/03/71, p.3.

address Congress in person to ‘say in his own words what he feels about military justice’ – an offer Calley subsequently turned down.¹²² As reports on the Calley trial petered out, *The Florence Morning News* concluded that despite the verdict, Republican Senator for Tennessee, William Brock stated that ‘support for Calley was stronger than anything he had experienced in his eight years in Congress’. Alabamian Democrat, Walter Flowers concurred with Brock stating that in his home state ‘the sentiment is virtually unanimous against the outcome of the trial’.¹²³ As the views of these aforementioned politicians prove, the factor that united their sentiments was not one of political party or even their stance on foreign policy, but their alliance to adhere to the recalcitrant model of southern conservatism, that was established on a fictive kinship of ‘being’ southern. After the verdict, support for Calley from northern politicians was virtually non-existent, while the super-patriotism of southern politicians remained emphatically in support of the guilty Lieutenant.¹²⁴ Southern politicians also remained vociferous in opposing a motion that directed President Nixon to furnish Congress with a text of the *Pentagon Papers*, a classified Defense Department document that detailed the Mĩ Lai cover up amongst other incidents.¹²⁵ This fact attests to the power southern politicians — along with their supportive electorate — held in governmental procedures during this period, an influence that was not nearly as effective in the military’s own investigation in to Mĩ Lai.

¹²² *The Fort Pierce News Tribune*, 01/04/1971, p.1.

¹²³ *The Florence Morning News*, 08/04/1971, p.4.

¹²⁴ A term increasingly used in studies of national patriotism, ‘extreme or super-patriotism’ explains the emphatic and in some cases misguided patriotic belief held by many Americans who favour their country’s supremacy in war policies over all other domestic issues. Michael Parenti’s 2004 book *Super Patriotism* examines the growing influence this mindset is having upon growing numbers of Americans.

¹²⁵ Discovered and subsequently released by RAND employee, Daniel Ellsberg, the Pentagon Papers demonstrated that the Johnson administration had lied to the electorate and Congress throughout the course of the Vietnam War.

The Military's Peers Commission Inquiry

Operating separately from the HCAS investigation, the United States Army carried out its own inquiry into the incidents at Mỹ Lai. On November 26th 1969, Secretary of the Army Stanley R. Resor, and Army Chief of Staff General William C. Westmoreland, issued a joint memorandum directing General William R. Peers to explore the nature and scope of what occurred in the village of Mỹ Lai a year earlier.¹²⁶ Notably, even before the commission was formed, the army's chief of information officer, General Winant Sidle from North Carolina requested that the committee members not use the word 'massacre' at all during their inquiry, asking to replace the term with 'a tragedy of major proportions'.¹²⁷ Commonly known as the Peers inquiry, the investigation was neither to include evidence from, nor to interfere with the court martial investigations that were also in progress. Born and raised in Iowa, achieving the rank of 2-star Lieutenant General, Peers had established a reputation for thoroughness and straight-talking throughout his military career. Peers stated that the reason for his appointment was because 'the army were not satisfied with the scope and the nature of the investigation by the 11th Infantry Brigade of the army's Americal Division', adding the fact that the initial report 'only concluded 20 civilians had been killed in exchanges of gunfire between allied and enemy troops'.¹²⁸ Kendrick Oliver affirms that 'commanders of the Americal Division were privately purging their files of important material pertinent to the operation of March 16th 1968 and subsequent investigative activities'.¹²⁹ Conducted in Colorado Springs, under the management of Peers, the inquiry was not subject to the southern influence of the HSAC investigation court martial trial.

¹²⁶Information retrieved from *Military Legal Resources, Peers Inquiry*. www.loc.gov/MilitaryLaw/Peers_inquiry.html. Accessed 24/01/2013.

¹²⁷ Oliver, p.83.

¹²⁸ *The Wellsville Daily Reporter*, 04/12/1969, p.1.

¹²⁹ Oliver, p.200.

Notably, despite daily updates on the Peers inquiry appearing in northern newspapers, only Florida's *Panama City News Herald* mentioned the inquiry directly, and then only before the report was publicised. The paper 'pleaded to General Peers, not to strip future soldiers of their honor, with a conclusion that would ultimately demoralise the nation'.¹³⁰ In contrast, New York's *Time* magazine stated that the inquiry would reveal 'the lies and subsequent cover up of Mĩ Lai' then continued its derision of General Westmoreland's commendation of Calley's unit for 'performing an outstanding job in defeating the enemy'.¹³¹ After a 14 week investigation, Peers concluded that 'the failure to bring justice to those who inflicted the atrocity, casts grave doubts upon the efficacy of our justice system'.¹³² As the commission's conclusions were published before the Calley court martial verdict, the southern reaction to the inquiry was less vociferous, due to the fact that the blame was attributed to the military and government as a whole. Despite Peers' final damning conclusion, the war weary American populace exhibited little reaction, thus ensuring that Army's reputation emerged relatively unscathed as media networks chose to not take the Peers' findings any further in future reports. This subdued response to the Peers report was in stark contrast to the sentiments of much of the southern populace upon learning of William Calley's fate.

Further Results of Opinion Polls to the Massacre

An analysis of opinion polls related to Mĩ Lai will assist in understanding how the public viewed the massacre. Given the selective nature of this process, historian, Kurt Lang states that 'whether the interviewer who contacts a stranger elicits a true statement is difficult to

¹³⁰ The *Panama City News Herald*, 31/3/1971, p.1.

¹³¹ *Time Magazine*: www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,903831,00.html. 12/02.1973

¹³² William Wilson, 'I had Prayed to God that this thing was Fiction', American Heritage.com, p. 7.

convey accurately'.¹³³ Notwithstanding these potential pitfalls, within five days of Calley's conviction, over 5,000 telegrams were sent directly to the White House, with approximately 4,950 in favour of leniency on Calley.¹³⁴ A telephone survey conducted by the Opinion Research Corporation (ORC) asked 1,100 Americans on their opinion to the verdict. The poll - commissioned by President Nixon's White House team, revealed that 79% disagreed with the guilty verdict against Calley - with 15% having no opinion of the case. The ORC also posed the question, 'do you think President Nixon should free Lt. William Calley, substantially reduce his sentence, or uphold his life imprisonment sentence'? Results revealed that 51% believed Calley should be freed, 28% thought his sentence should be significantly reduced, with 12% offering no opinion. In the same period, Gallup conducted an opinion poll on behalf of *Newsweek*, which revealed that 56% believed [military comrades] should share the blame with Calley, and 70% stating that Calley was made a scapegoat by his own military. The same poll stated that 79% believed his life sentence was also too punitive.

In July 1974, three years after Calley's sentencing, President Nixon tacitly pardoned Calley leaving him a free man. A poll conducted by Louis Harris and Associates asked 1,600 Americans if the President's pardoning of Calley undermined the military judicial process. The results revealed that 58% thought the judicial system was weakened, with 28% agreeing it had been damaged and 14% offering no opinion.¹³⁵ Although the results from the preceding polls largely reveal that Calley had the support of those polled, regional statistics as to which American states were utilised are not available, though it is known that Nixon's ORC polls were conducted predominantly in the South, due to his mission to retain the trust of the southern electorate.

¹³³ Kurt Lang, 'The Impact of Opinion Polls', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol. 472, (1984), p.129.

¹³⁴ Retrieved from: www.law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/mylai/SurveyResults.

¹³⁵ Retrieved from www.law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/mylai/SurveyResults.

Opinion polls containing regional statistics reveal that the South's populace remained most particularly undisturbed by their military's actions at Mỹ Lai in comparison to other regions. In a February 1971 Gallup poll, over 50% of those polled in the south considered Calley's shooting of apparently innocent civilians to have been justified, in comparison with 36% in the Midwest, and just 25% in the East'.¹³⁶ Following the guilty verdict — in their protests to the White House — many chairmen of the nation's military veterans' chapters retorted to government officials 'that the feeling in the South is near revolt'.¹³⁷ This angry consensus from the nation's military veterans raises an interesting point in to how collectively, veterans felt aggrieved. Although it may be expected that veterans of previous wars would come to the support of Calley, it is pertinent to remember that Vietnam veterans were not permitted to join any of the nation's chapters, as Vietnam was not considered by some as an official war by veterans from previous wars. Consequently, the nation's war defeat and ensuing embarrassment was more likely to be the principal factor in their decision to criticise the government. Arkansian Herbert Rainwater, then the commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), stated to the press that 'there have been Mỹ Lai's in every war. Now for the first time in our history we have tried a soldier for performing his duty'.¹³⁸ Even when the most candid evidence of what actually occurred at Mỹ Lai was presented, many southerners refuted that a war atrocity was ever committed. Oliver affirms that 'if the people of any particular region were especially exercised by the conviction of William Calley, it was the people of the South'. Oliver argues that distinctiveness of southerners most certainly played a part in their sentiments concluding that 'what southerners thought about Mỹ Lai, may well have been informed by sectional memories of the Civil War'.¹³⁹ The impetuous opinions so established by the white South's historical 'guardians' succeeded in concealing

¹³⁶ Mary McCarthy, *Medina* (London, 1972), p. 3.

¹³⁷ Oliver, (2006), p.159.

¹³⁸ 'Herbert Rainwater to Commanders', 01/04/1971, *Veterans of Foreign Wars Correspondence*, Box 120, White House NPM Special Files.

¹³⁹ Oliver, (2006), p. 160.

and accommodating the gruesome facts of Mỹ Lai, without altering the region's overall attitude towards war as southern support was exhibited in other ways.

Additional Southern Support of Calley

At a practical level, across the southern states, numerous protest rallies took place objecting to the Calley verdict. Georgia Governor, Lester Maddox — known for his position as a staunch segregationist — led many of the southern-based rallies. In one speech, at a rally in Georgia in April 1971, Maddox proclaimed that ‘the [Calley guilty verdict] has brought to this country a calamity such as we have not witnessed since the attack on Pearl Harbour. But America has responded; America has expressed public and national indignation’.¹⁴⁰ Despite the governor's claim of national indignation, research on rallies that were organised in support Calley reveals that these demonstrations only took place below the Mason-Dixon Line. The response from some Georgians to the guilty verdict was further revealed two weeks after the verdict, when the members of Georgia's Selective Service Board (SSB) resigned their positions, stating that ‘our conscience will not allow us to continue when our men are treated like that’. The chairman of the Georgia SSB, George Pugh continued by stating that ‘he hoped other draft boards throughout the country will follow suit.’¹⁴¹ Although none went as far as Georgia's selective service board, Florida's branch of the American Legion called for a mass protest against the Calley verdict, which resulted in sporadic demonstrations across Calley's home state.

¹⁴⁰ The *Thomasville Times*, 03/04/1971, p.1.

¹⁴¹ *Panama News Herald*, 31/3/1971, p.1. Selective Service Boards, are an independent agency of the U.S. government that maintains information on those potentially subject to military conscription. All male U.S. citizens and male adults between the ages of 18 and 25 are required by law to have registered within 30 days of their 18th birthday.

Along with the political and civil efforts following the guilty verdict, the outcry of southern support for Calley was even evident in the popular music scene of the time. In Alabama, musician Terry Nelson released a recording titled “*The Battle Hymn of Lieutenant Calley*” that — according to a review in the local news — ‘laments the fate of a young soldier who dedicated his life to serving his country.’¹⁴² By the end of 1971, Nelson’s version had sold over two million copies. The track’s distributors, Atlanta’s Southland Music, stated that ‘their first one hundred thousand copies were selling like a goldmine.’ The song’s popularity across the state of Georgia made it the topic of a television programme on Atlanta’s WSB station.¹⁴³ Because of Calley’s southern popularity, Nashville artists Tex Ritter, Nelson Truehart and John Deer all released their own versions of ‘The Battle Hymn’ within three months of the original recording. Notably, Tex Ritter’s version, owned by Los Angeles based Capitol Records, withdrew their track from sale, with the company’s president, Stan M. Gortikov stating to *Billboard* Magazine in an April 1971 interview that ‘if we want to glorify a war hero, let’s find someone other than Lt. Calley’.¹⁴⁴ In the North, sales and radio airtime of the song were practically non-existent. Pennsylvania record suppliers, D&H Music Distributors stated in April 1971 that ‘they haven’t got any copies of the track on order;’ while Chicago’s Rose Radio reported that ‘they never have, and do not plan to have, any versions of the track on hand’.¹⁴⁵ In the three decades following the verdict, a further 30 tracks were released which referred to the subject of My Lai at varying levels, with two tracks as late as 2005 and 2007. Notably, as time passed, the compositions hailed from northern artists who criticised the actions of Calley, while ensuring that their lyrics were in favour of Hugh Thompson, Lawrence Colburn and Glenn Andreotta.

¹⁴² *The Thomasville Times*, 06/04/1971, p.7.

¹⁴³ *Billboard* Newspaper, 17/04/1971, p. 3.

¹⁴⁴ *Billboard* Newspaper, 19/06/1971 p.7.

¹⁴⁵ *Billboard* Newspaper, 17/04/1971, p. 3.

In spite of southern efforts, Calley's prosecutors were in no doubt as to the Lieutenant's guilt. Despite the verdict, with the intervention of President Nixon — who was well aware of the power of the southern electorate — Calley was granted a limited presidential pardon.¹⁴⁶ As a result, Calley, who was originally sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labour, served just three and a half years, all under house arrest in his apartment at Fort Benning.¹⁴⁷ Unperturbed by the actions of President Nixon, lead prosecutor in the Calley trial, South Carolinian Aubrey M. Daniel, still expressed his dissatisfaction of Nixon's pardon. The 29 year-old lawyer, who led the case against Calley — which at its termination had become the longest court case in military history — sent a letter to President Nixon in April 1970, expressing his own dismay towards the public's response. In his explanation as to why so many complained following the guilty verdict, Daniel's stated to the president that 'these people have undoubtedly viewed Lieutenant Calley's conviction simply as the conviction of an American officer for killing the enemy'.¹⁴⁸ Daniel continued regarding the ignorance of people stating that 'I believe that most of the public criticism has come from people who are not aware of the evidence as it was presented, or having followed it they have chosen not to believe it'. Daniel's sentiments point largely to the distinctive support Calley received from much of the southern populace. Daniel concluded his criticism of the president's lack of criticism of Calley by stating the fact 'that a large percentage of the population could believe the evidence which was presented and still approve of the conduct of Lieutenant Calley was as shocking to his own conscience, as Calley's act itself'.¹⁴⁹ Following Nixon's pardon, the *Thomasville Times* of Calley's home state printed that 'a bitter Daniel accused the president of

¹⁴⁶ A limited presidential pardon restores various rights lost resulting from the offense and lessens to some extent the stigma arising from a conviction. It does not erase or expunge the record of that conviction.

¹⁴⁷ Including William Calley's detainment during his trial, he served three and a half years of house arrest in his quarters at Fort Benning. He petitioned the federal district court for habeas corpus on February 11, 1974, which was granted on September 25, 1974, resulting in his immediate release.

¹⁴⁸ Aubrey Daniel quotes retrieved from the '*United States Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the Congress*' Volume 118, Law Part 11, 1972, p.14,381.

¹⁴⁹ Daniel, Congressional Record, (1972), p.14,381.

damaging military justice by enhancing the stature of a convicted murderer as a national hero.' Daniel was also quoted in the newspaper as stating that 'such a decision can only have been prompted by the response of a vocal segment of our population.'¹⁵⁰ The 'vocal segment' referred to by Calley is undoubtedly the efforts and subsequent influence of the South's distinct politicians and media sources who remained predisposed in support of Calley's plight throughout the 1970s, before opinion towards Calley began to change.

A brief examination of how the South perceives Mỹ Lai from the 1980s reveals how many southerners have undergone changes in attitude towards the Mỹ Lai. Through the efforts of southern politicians, evidence suggests that southerners are increasingly sympathetic towards the massacre.¹⁵¹ In 1998, Lawrence Colburn, Hugh Thompson and Glenn Andreotta (posthumously) received the Soldier's Medal.¹⁵² Presented to them by southerner, Major General Michael Ackerman at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM), Ackerman reiterated that 'Mỹ Lai was one of the most shameful chapters in the army's history'.¹⁵³ In the same year, in a contrasting view from that of Georgia's politicians three decades earlier, Senator for Georgia, Max Cleland stated how Andreotta, Colburn and Thompson were 'true examples of American patriotism at its finest'.¹⁵⁴ In 2002, Lawrence Colburn attested that the bond between Thompson and himself was forged during the men's interrogation throughout the Calley trial and experiences in Georgia. Following Thompson's death in 2006, Congressional Representative for Louisiana, Charles Boustany, announced in Congress that 'the United States has lost a true hero, and the State of Louisiana has lost a devoted leader and dear friend'.¹⁵⁵ Lawrence Colburn has since been the recipient of numerous peace and valour

¹⁵⁰ *The Thomasville Times*, 07/04/1971, p.1.

¹⁵¹ BBC News, *Murder in the Name of War*. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/6434>.

¹⁵² The Soldier's Medal, introduced in 1926, and is awarded to any person of the Armed Forces of the United States or foreign nation who distinguishes himself or herself by heroism not involving actual conflict with an enemy.

¹⁵³ Charles Aldinger, *Veterans Honored 30 Years After My Lai*. www.michaelsherwood.com

¹⁵⁴ Congressional Record Senate Statement: www.resource.org/gov/record/1998/S01709.pdf.

¹⁵⁵ Congressional Record House Remarks: www.bulk.org/gpo.gov/record/2006/E00088.pdf.

awards, from his home state of Georgia. In 1999, Chief Chaplain of the United States Army Donald Shea, stated that ‘we stand in honor of their heroism, and we have taken too long to recognize them’.¹⁵⁶ Major General Ackerman added that ‘we now finally recognize these men for their heroic actions...that clearly capture the essence of Army values’.¹⁵⁷ The fact that much of the amendment in attitude towards Calley’s actions and support of Thompson, Andreotta and Colburn comes from southerners, highlights how the South’s political and military men made efforts to reverse the once caustic representation the region gave to actions at Mỹ Lai.

In conclusion, by examining the media sources that reported on the Mỹ Lai massacre, and then presenting their overall input, this chapter has revealed how the southern media played a key role in presenting the massacre as acceptable during war time, while supporting William Calley’s actions as honourable and patriotic. In turn, southern politicians did their upmost to dumb-down the massacre. Through the efforts forthright southerners such as Mendel Rivers, Felix Herbert and George Wallace, along with the contrasting views of Morris Udall, Edward Brooke and Barry Goldwater a distinct North/South divide in attitudes towards Mỹ Lai was apparent. On a military level, an examination of the Peers inquiry — the least southern influenced of the three investigations in to Mỹ Lai — revealed how General Peers concluded that the military justice system was in need of significant amending, as a result of American actions. Despite Peers’ conclusions, southern politicians and their media still chose to single out the enquiry as damaging to their nation’s model of honour.

James C. Cobb’s statement that ‘self-flagellation became almost a national pastime as the United States backed out of Vietnam’, does adhere to consensus of the Vietnam War, though

¹⁵⁶The *Annapolis Capital*, 07/03/1998, p.7.

¹⁵⁷Retrieved from, SMDC Headquarters, Redstone, Alabama, 08/11/2008.

in the South, this self-flagellation was to a much lesser extent.¹⁵⁸ Much as a result of the region's cultural distinctiveness, the vocal part of the southern electorate was never as critical of the American involvement in Vietnam as northerners. The white South chose to adopt the plight of Calley as heroic and the events at Mỹ Lai as typical to wartime. Notwithstanding the efforts of the South's political and public actions to treat Calley as 'one of their own', Calley himself never referred to his southern upbringing or his actions at Mỹ Lai as a causal factor of 'being' southern. The South's support for a military cause — which was ultimately a lost one — stems from a long history of southern culture and regional identity that reflected significant tensions within the national construct of the United States since the Civil War, in which the South remained a distinct region.

¹⁵⁸ James C. Cobb, *Redefining Southern Culture* (1999), p. 3.

Conclusion

The South and Vietnam: Distinct and Convoluted

By May 1974, the Vietnam War was officially over. This concluded what was, for the United States, its longest involvement in any of the nation's military campaigns. Though acknowledged as a humiliating loss, as well as the nation's first war defeat, this thesis has demonstrated that southern distinctiveness shaped the perceptions and reactions from the region's politicians, businessmen and electorate. Through an examination of historic narratives, cultural practices, distinct political stances, economic and military factors, as well as the response from media and the arts, I have argued that the region's distinctive philosophy and proud military tradition commanded a notable influence on the nation's foreign policy throughout the Vietnam era.

Chapter one established that the outcome of the American Civil War was a catalyst for the construction of a powerful southern identity that remained important over a century later. From the nineteenth century, southern elites promoted this distinctiveness as it endured through the white classes as the decades past. The persistence of southern whites to espouse a specific model of martial honour and bravery nurtured a distinct philosophy that ultimately isolated the region from the remainder of the nation. Inculcated from childhood, this sentimentalism that promoted and justified white ancestral history pricked the conscience of the population creating a generation of white men, and supportive women, who remained belligerent against the interference of northern 'outsiders' and committed to maintaining the 'southern way' regardless of the region's controversial ways. Through the dissemination of the South's somewhat peculiar folklore, the region maintained an antagonistic relationship

with the remainder of the United States, a regional behaviour that had been apparent for much of the South's history.

Although the power and longevity of these distinctions were subject to numerous challenges throughout the twentieth century, through the combined efforts of white southern 'traditionalists', the Lost Cause myth and the region's fervour to uphold white racial supremacy remained apparent and was duly disseminated, thus ensuring that southern identity remained alive and distinct within American culture. David R. Goldfield reminds us that the Lost Cause myth was an impressive body of intellectual alchemy that transformed the Civil War defeat into a glorious crusade of heroism and sacrifice for many decades to come.¹ Despite the South's Civil War loss, the demise of slavery and later an end to racial segregation — arguably the three most significant topics that still define the South today — many southerners still displayed vehemence to maintaining the region's historical individualism by justifying and defending these controversial differences.

This thesis analysed the character and distinct influence southern politicians and businessmen had upon the political and economic landscape of the Vietnam era. My research established how the political and public sentiments of northerners remained largely dovish, thus, frequently clashing with the more belligerent hawkish views of many southerners. Correspondingly, through an analysis of personal testimonies and political decision-making, chapters two and four highlighted how the culturally-distinct opinions of southern politicians such as President Johnson, Dean Rusk, Richard Russell and Mendel Rivers repeatedly conflicted with the more academic and statistically-driven ethos of northern educated officials operating in the Pentagon. Alongside the South's political influence, this thesis demonstrated how the South's economic transition from agrarian to industrial owed much to the course of the nation's military role in Vietnam. Joseph Fry's analysis on the South's foreign policy

¹ Goldfield, pp.15-19.

throughout the Cold War period affirmed that, from Presidents' Truman through to Nixon, the South's newly established ordnance factories were awarded with massive defence contracts forever altering the region's economic landscape.² The South's abundance of cheap, unrepresented and relatively unskilled workforce, numerous tax grants and inexpensive land that was devoid of environmental regulations played a vital part in making the South the capital of the nation's military industrial complex during the Vietnam era. Accordingly, my own analysis detailed how, through the regionally-imbued sentiments of influential southern politicians and businessmen, these individuals still considered themselves as somewhat separate from — and suspicious of — the political and economic objectives of their northern contemporaries.

Determining to what extent, the South's cultural distinctiveness affected its servicemen in Vietnam era was examined in chapter three. Military enlistment and performance figures were analysed from a regional perspective to determine if, and how, southern martial consciousness was distinguishable from that of non-southerners. Accordingly, these determining factors were compounded for white southerners as many of the region's men travelled to Vietnam carrying the emotional 'baggage' and subsequent expectancy of their ancestors martial past. Thus, many southerners were likely to be more imbued, because of their regional identity to emulate or uphold their ancestral history. Consequently, in the case of the South's black recruits, this identity took on a different aspect as the men fought to establish their own, racially instilled martial behaviour.

The distinct model of southern martial behaviour was evident in the hearts and minds of many of the region's men and women serving in Vietnam. Notwithstanding, my own research established that — despite comparable sentiments from many southern men and women attesting to the views of the preceding authors — results of statistics on recruitment,

² Fry, (2002), pp.259-264.

performance and insubordination cases did not signify a marked difference in any of the categories studied from those of non-southern recruits. My investigation concluded that the slightly higher percentage of southerners serving in Vietnam is explainable, given the widespread poverty and large population of subjugated black people in the South of the period. As a result of the social and economic conditions examined in chapter two — which exploited poor white people and black people — along with the equally prejudicial selective service system operating in the South at the time, the region's vulnerable populace would have surely inflated the statistics of southerners in military service in this period.³

Chapter three also examined the oral accounts of a number of Vietnam veterans who offered their opinions on questions specifically posed to gain more explicit sentiments to the aims of this thesis. Whereas James Wilson conceived of southern servicemen as somewhat culturally unique in relation to other Americans, my own interviews with Veterans reveal that, although the South's martial past was often cited as an initial influence, once 'in country', southern men were subjected to and thus responded to the same practices as that of their non-southern brethren. Regardless of regional allegiances, the social and cultural preconceptions of southerners mattered little in the American military's overall objective in Vietnam.⁴ Notwithstanding the potential pitfalls of oral testimonies outlined in the chapter, many southern servicemen and women did attest to 'feeling' that their region of birth affected their experience in Vietnam on numerous levels. As reiterated throughout the thesis, these sentiments that referred to origin of birth were practically non-existent from the testimonies studied from northerners. This collective identity was based upon the region's whites to

³ Figures on military service figures differ according to source. My research from these sources concludes that approximately 8.6 million men were serving in the United States military forces during the Vietnam era, with around three million actually serving in Vietnam. The highest number 'in country' was in 1969 with 543,000 troops present.

⁴ John Rowe and Rick Berg argue that preference for social class, race and education actually magnified the problems apparent in American society stating that 'the Vietnam War exposed the illusion of a "classless" America committed to cultural diversity and equal opportunity'. *The Vietnam War and American culture* (New York, 1991), p.6.

collectively commemorate its own distinct model of history. John Shelton Reed reminds us that the South's distinctive cultural position is a result of the continuing efforts of generations who ensure that the South will 'exist in people's memories for as long as they think and talk about it.'⁵ Accordingly, as much of the South's cultural individualism is based upon masculine acts, distinct social behavioural characteristics and political autonomy, my own analysis of this topic revealed how the re-telling of these old myths, regardless of authenticity was subsequently disseminated through the twentieth century narratives of the Vietnam era.

The final chapter of this thesis presented a case study of the Mỹ Lai Massacre from a southern political, public and media perspective. Despite the international attention this event received, the American South's reception and subsequent response to the massacre revealed a distinct culturally nuanced perspective to the story. By utilising the official testimonies from key individuals involved in Calley's trial and the concurrent political and military investigations, my research revealed the extent to which the 'southern consciousness' contrasted to those of many northerners. Through a quantitative analysis of approximately 800 newspaper stories that mentioned Mỹ Lai to varying degrees, significant disparities in the way the trial against Calley was received and reported in the South was subsequently revealed for the first time. These disparities were all the more apparent, as northern media publications sought to present a more lucid approach to the massacre and trial of Calley, in contrast to southern newspapers that largely suppressed the shocking events at Mỹ Lai. An analysis of how the southern music scene was supportive of Calley's actions was also examined. The Mỹ Lai study concluded with an analysis of how since the 1980s, the political and media-orientated South reversed its support of Calley in favour of Thompson and his colleagues, while taking measures to remember the dead at Mỹ Lai with compassion.

⁵ Reed, p.26.

The presence of long-established cultural myths, individualistic economic and political factors and the discourse of a co-existent old and new South remains a prevalent and contentious theme in southern historiography that still offers pertinent insights into the southern psyche. Accordingly, many southerners both black and white, still possess, to varying degrees, ingrained emotions of ‘their’ region as culturally unique, due to the South’s distinct history. Historian, Paul Gaston affirms that ‘the [Civil War] defeat and despondency called forth a collection of romantic pictures of the Old South, and the cult of the Lost Cause that still fuses southerners’ imagination today’.⁶ Accordingly, C. Vann Woodward stated that the Vietnam War’s outcome was inextricably linked with the South’s past, asserting that ‘the South’s defeat in the Civil War created a unique southern experience, making the region emblematic of the entire nation, as Vietnam stripped away the country’s sense of innocence and invincibility.’⁷ These opinions form part of a plethora of literature that discusses the varying influence the South’s Civil War defeat had upon the psyche of the region’s twentieth-century populace.

As soldiers returned home, the plight of the South’s veterans was further compounded, as the men were not given the reception accorded to their honourable ancestors of previous generations. Joanna Bourke detailed that, for the populace of the American South in particular, ‘Vietnam dealt a death blow to the concept of the warrior’.⁸ Consequently, the conception of southerners as natural combatants so lauded throughout southern historiography was thus redundant in the narratives of the region’s men who served in Vietnam.

Despite the efforts of southern ‘traditionalists’ to attribute a generic distinct character to ‘their South’, their efforts to remain culturally distinct are somewhat problematic and prone

⁶ Paul Gaston in *The American South* (ed) Daniel Letwin, (Edinburgh, 2013), p.228.

⁷ C. Vann Woodward, quoted in “The Not So Silent Minority: Louisville’s Antiwar Movement, 1966-1975” John Ernst and Yvonne Baldwin, *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 73, No. 1 (2007), p.80.

⁸ Bourke, p.50.

to numerous fallacies. Although the Lost Cause myth, political and federal obstinacy, love for their agrarian past and cultural individualism did exist in the minds of many southerners of the Vietnam era, my research has established that the effect of these sentiments remain ambiguous and prone to subjectivity. Historians John Ernst and Yvonne Baldwin maintain that, even in 2007, white southerners retain an urge to self-obliterate their region's past 'causes'. The power of southern identity in the hearts and minds of white southerners remains in the present today. Regardless of increasingly archaic credibility of these causes, Ernst and Baldwin observe that 'the usual academic and journalistic suspects convene with amazing frequency at innumerable symposia dedicated to kissing the South goodbye one more time'.⁹ Notwithstanding, while recognising that the region below the Mason-Dixon Line has distinguishing Souths within a South, throughout the Vietnam War era, a commonality of purpose and values existed — albeit exclusively to southern whites — based on a specific cultural sentimentalism. John Shelton Reed alludes to the region's continuing efforts to uphold a particular collective identity by concluding that 'for a long time to come, we can expect that the South will be something more than simply the lower part of the country'.¹⁰ Adding to this view, Kari Frederickson contends that 'the powerful economic, social, cultural and political forces that were present in the Cold War era South has left an indelible imprint on the landscape of the modern South'.¹¹ Correspondingly, as many Americans continue to recognise that the Mason-Dixon Line is somewhat of a cultural 'border', in many aspects, the South's geographic and historic identity remains remarkably static in the twenty-first century.

⁹ John Ernst and Yvonne Baldwin, *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 73, No. 1 (2007), p.105

¹⁰ John Shelton Reed, *The Enduring South: Subcultural Persistence in Mass Society* (North Carolina, 1986), p.90.

¹¹ Kari Frederickson, *Cold War Dixie: Militarization and Modernization in the American South* (Athens, 2013), p.176.

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