Have Faith in the â€œProcessâ€• â€“ Vietnam and the GWOT

Description

This â€œthreadâ€• of consciousness began as I chased a link on Chapomatic.

He referenced an editorial Iraq: Learning the Lessons of Vietnam, posted in Foreign Affairsfrom Melvin Laird, who was Richard Nixonâ€™s SECDEF.

Having been closely related to that war from 3rd grade, and having just missed it when I was graduating from high school, I have read quite a lot, trying to merge in my mind the conglomeration of first person stories, the Stars and Stripes view and that of the â€œMain Stream Media.â€• To this day, it seems all three repoprted a different, but the same war.

default watermark

In Melvin Lairdâ€™s editorial, he discusses how our Vietnamization plan (turning over the ground warfighting effort to the ARVN) was coupled with negotiaions with the Soviets, which would limit our and their direct and financial interplay in the Vietnam War. Melivin also points out that the ARVN soldiered on for about two full years, despite our withdrawal, and relatively light funding (which was in compliance with the negotiated settlement of the Superpowers. The contrast is more remarkable whne you find oout the Soviets, from before the ink was dry, never conformed to the spending limits and kept pumping resources and money to the NVA. Our allies still held the line for a few years, despite this egregious violation. That gives me new respect for the ARVN. Here is an excerpt of his analysis that supports my comments above:

> â€œThe truth about Vietnam that revisionist historians conveniently forget is that the United States had not lost when we withdrew in 1973. In fact, we grabbed defeat from the jaws of victory two years later when Congress cut off the funding for South Vietnam that had allowed it to continue to fight on its own. Over the four years of Nixonâ€™s first term, I had cautiously engineered the withdrawal of the majority of our forces while building up South Vietnamâ€™s ability to defend itself. My colleague and friend Henry Kissinger, meanwhile, had negotiated a viable agreement between North and South Vietnam, which was signed in January 1973. It allowed for the United States to withdraw completely its few remaining troops and for the United States and the Soviet Union to continue funding their respective allies in the war at a specified level. Each superpower was permitted to pay for replacement arms and equipment. Documents released from North Vietnamese historical files in recent years have proved that the Soviets violated the treaty from the moment the ink was dry, continuing to send more than $1 billion a year to Hanoi. The United States barely stuck to the allowed amount of military aid for two years, and that was a mere fraction of the Soviet contribution. â€œ

One particular sentence jumped out at me:

> â€œDocuments released from North Vietnamese historical files in recent years have proved that the Soviets violated the treaty from the moment the ink was dry, continuing to send more than $1 billion a year to Hanoi.â€•

For the last few days, Iâ€™ve thought about that one comment and here some of my thoughts as a result:

1) Vietnam is referred to as a war. I think in a greater context, it was an over a decade long battle in the greater conflict between the Superpowers. I believe most people follow and subscribe to that, but it makes me think of today and the naysayers. Vietnam was one of the hot points in the Cold War, something that came to center stage and captured our attention.

2) As Melvin points out in the beginning of his editorial, one must be careful in drawing parallels, yet I have one. It speaks to me that we have faced a fearsome enemy before. It was the Soviet Bloc/Communism. In that conflict, ranging from the fall of Berlin in 1945, up to the falling of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent demise of the Soviet Union, we confronted an enemy that followed no rules, and readily violated treaties when possible. We most certainly had moments when our moral compass needle was bent, too, yet Iâ€™ll submit that that was the exception, rather than the norm. Between oversight from Congress and pressure from our citizens, we played fair. Along the way to winning the Global War, our media labeled us as losers and imperialists. In the grand scheme, we won the Cold War and never resorted to nuking any one. Considering the thermonuclear firepower â€œpotential energyâ€• in both ours and the Sovietâ€™s arsenals, Iâ€™d say the casualties, each one being a lost life, were far, far less by many orders of magnitude that it could have been. We, as humainty, should rightly pat ourselves on our collective back for this accomplishment.

default watermark

Hereâ€™s my connection between now and then: We are once more faced with an enemy who follows no rules. They do what ever they can, from hiding behind children, to dressing as women, to driving cement mixers full of explosives towards a hotel full of reporters, as well as chopping off civilians heads with dull knifes. We keep playing by the rules. I suggest, that despite what the press says, and even knowing there is some heartfelt opposition to the war that does not involve the simplistic and obsessive hatred of President Bush, should take heart in seeing how the high road taken has proven the best once before in our not too distant history.

If Congress pulls funding, and we have to come home, and we have to endure a president or two who force us into an virtual, or practical isolationist/non-interventionist mode, we still have a fighting cnahce of winning the bigger battle. I certainly donâ€™t want to think about â€œgoing there,â€• but if we do, we soldier on.

Thanks, Melvin for pointing out that the light at the end of the GWOT is maybe brighter than we perceive right now.

Category

1. Geo-Political
2. History
3. Military
4. Military History

Date Created

November 5, 2005
Author

default watermark