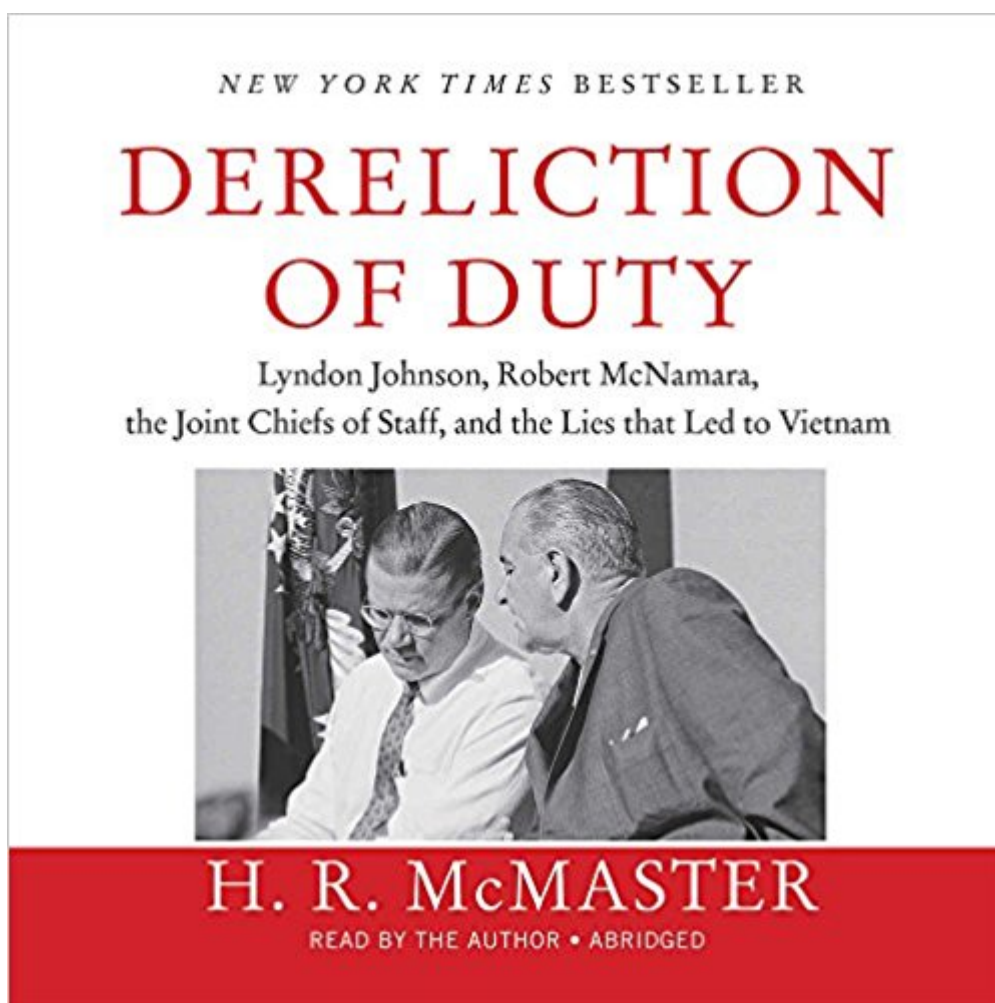


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# Dereliction Of Duty: Johnson, McNamara, The Joint Chiefs Of Staff, And The Lies That Led To Vietnam



## Synopsis

[\*Read by the author - H. R. McMaster] From respected Lieutenant General and Trump Administration National Security Adviser H. R. McMaster, an authoritative, highly critical analysis of the arrogance, deception, and controversial decisions at the highest level of government that led to America's involvement in the Vietnam War "The war in Vietnam was not lost in the field, nor was it lost on the front pages of the New York Times or the college campuses. It was lost in Washington, D.C." --H. R. McMaster (from the Conclusion) Dereliction Of Duty is a stunning analysis of how and why the United States became involved in an all-out and disastrous war in Southeast Asia. Fully and convincingly researched, based on transcripts and personal accounts of crucial meetings, confrontations and decisions, it is the only book that fully re-creates what happened and why. McMaster pinpoints the policies and decisions that got the United States into the morass and reveals who made these decisions and the motives behind them, disproving the published theories of other historians and excuses of the participants. A page-turning narrative, Dereliction Of Duty focuses on a fascinating cast of characters: President Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, General Maxwell Taylor, McGeorge Bundy and other top aides who deliberately deceived the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the U.S. Congress, and the American public. McMaster's only book, Dereliction of Duty is an explosive and authoritative new look at the controversy concerning the United States involvement in Vietnam.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

For years the popular myth surrounding the Vietnam War was that the Joint Chiefs of Staff knew what it would take to win but were consistently thwarted or ignored by the politicians in power. Now H. R. McMaster shatters this and other misconceptions about the military and Vietnam in *Dereliction of Duty*. Himself a West Point graduate, McMaster painstakingly waded through every memo and report concerning Vietnam from every meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to build a comprehensive picture of a house divided against itself: a president and his coterie of advisors obsessed with keeping Vietnam from becoming a political issue versus the Joint Chiefs themselves, mired in interservice rivalries and unable to reach any unified goals or conclusions about the country's conduct in the war. McMaster stresses two elements in his discussion of America's failure in Vietnam: the hubris of Johnson and his advisors and the weakness of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Dereliction of Duty* provides both a thorough exploration of the military's role in determining Vietnam policy and a telling portrait of the men most responsible. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The "error not of values and intentions but of judgment and capabilities" to which Robert McNamara admitted in *In Retrospect* (1995) leaves out his deceptions that helped plunge America into the Vietnam War. McNamara may not have remembered them in his memoir, but army officer McMaster found them in the Joint Chiefs of Staff's archives for the crucial decision-making years of 1964 and 1965. Distilled to its essence, McMaster's thesis proposes that the plans and advice on Vietnam prepared by the nation's military advisers were systematically sidetracked by McNamara. Two facts exemplify the whole dense forest of facts McMaster explores: the prediction of the Joint Chiefs of the Army and Marine Corps that "victory" would require five years and 500,000 troops only reached LBJ's ears once (he didn't listen, obviously), and the Pentagon war games of McNamara's theory of "graduated pressure" eerily ended in stalemate. McNamara suppressed all such warning signs, theorizes McMaster, because he was responding to LBJ's anxiety to keep Vietnam's "noise level" down until the 1964 election was over and the Great Society safely enacted. As damning of the civilian leaders as he is, McMaster doesn't blithely exonerate the brass. They didn't heed their own warnings and acquiesced in McNamara's incrementalist policy, in the hope of eventually getting the huge force they diffidently advised would be needed to win. Writing about an ocean of memos, meetings, and reports as he does, McMaster delivers a narrative more diligent than dramatic, but his take on pinpointing the architect(s) of the Vietnam fiasco should prove, nonetheless, of high interest. Gilbert Taylor --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The makings of the Vietnam War upon serious study and retrospect will make one want to scream. How our White House under the leadership of Lyndon Baines Johnson gradually and without the advice of the Joint Chiefs of Staff got involved in a land war in Vietnam. In a period of two years of constant arguing and intrigue the United States found itself hopelessly entangled in a war. Much of the military leaders advised against getting involved in the war. The only White House official who argued against military involvement was George Ball who did not bring his dissent outside the walls of the White House. H.R. McMaster brings forth the wrong thinking and mistake prone analysis of President Johnson and Robert McNamara who stumbled their way in making a full military commitment. In doing so in a stealthy way and lying to the American public they found themselves fully immersed in a political civil war in which we could not win.

Outstanding book. I served in Vietnam and thought I knew a lot about the politics of the war. After reading this book I now have a much better understanding. No blood and guts or description of the battles. Just the politics.

For those of age during the Vietnam war, there is no doubt that objectivity is difficult as to why America got involved and eventually pulled out. The view of those who fought the war is usually quite different from those who instigated it and were responsible for its disastrous outcome. It takes courage to go into battle and fight for a cause that through the detestable bureaucratic legislation called the draft one is forced to fight for. It takes just as much courage to voluntarily fight in a war that has been marketed as being necessary, unavoidable, and winnable. This book gives further evidence that the disaster of the Vietnam war was not the result of those who fought it, but rather with the DC clowns who feigned competence in military matters and those who remained silent or acquiesced in the horrible circus of political maneuvering. There are some who may hold to the premise that Lyndon Johnson and his closest advisors showed real guts in attempting to fight against the Vietnamese Communist threat and to "save American face". But it does not take any intestinal fortitude or keen intellect to indulge in the deceit and verbal machinations that are delineated in meticulous detail in this book. For those readers who want the raw, naked truth about Vietnam, this book is highly recommended, and its study will reveal that the author has definitely done his homework. Having its origin in the National Security Act of 1947, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) during the Vietnam war is portrayed in this book as more of a collection of "technicians for planners" than a body of individuals who carefully thought out strategies and tactics. Some readers may be shocked as to

what little influence the JCS had on actual policy decisions during the buildup of the war and its actual execution in the years that followed. One can only wonder whether this was the result of tacit agreement with those policies or rather from an excess of veneration for the Presidency and his cabinet officers. The author seems to argue for a superposition of both of these, and frequently the JCS is accused of placating the president. Robert McNamara is rightfully portrayed as an evil demon in this book, as a government bureaucrat who cannot engage in self-criticism and smug in the certainty of his analysis and assessments of progress in the war. McNamara's dwelling at the time was definitely a cesspool of apodictic certainty as is well brought out in this book, especially in the manner in which he interacted with the president and the JCS. Johnson failed along with his vision of the Great Society. The JCS failed. Robert McNamara and Cyrus Vance failed. The only success of that time was the drive to end the debacle of the Vietnam war. This book is a microscopic view of these failures, and the biggest lesson to take away from the study of this book is an appreciation of just how removed from reality a government bureaucracy can be, and how uncritical adulation for a president or an idea can result in horrible destruction and heartache.

This book is simply excellent: if you're interested in the Vietnam War, or more broadly in military-political history, you cannot find a more significant book to deepen your understanding. I've read extensively on the Vietnam war, both ground-level accounts by soldiers, as well as higher-level perspectives that cover the political context and strategies. I don't know why it took me so long to get to this one, but I'm really glad I did. The writing is lucid, detailed, and honest throughout. The account is completely believable, because it is fully consistent with other information that is available, this feels at once like a more detailed account of what has been known, and at the same time a brilliant revelation of the lies and incompetence (and arrogance) that led to the military and political disaster, and so many lives lost (on all sides) for no purpose. There are many detailed reviews of the book available, so there's not much I can add that would likely be useful. I strongly recommend reading the book.

This account is undoubtedly factual. I was in Vietnam as a fighter pilot, F-4 Phantom, We were often loaded with bombs and in late 1965 were given the most ridiculous targets--small farms in creeks, etc. McNamara said we had plenty of munitions, but I remember going after a small wooden bridge with air-to-air rockets! It was the silliest use of air power imaginable and the book spells out why. I found it interesting and a good explanation of why we lost that war. I think the book could have been shortened, but it is an interesting read... Makes me want to dig up LBJ and hang him. Imagine him

looking over a map of Vietnam and picking targets while the Chiefs of Staff of the armed forces were kept away. The book should be required reading for any politician who is forced to wage war.

Excellent review of the causes of disastrous policies. Highlights the individual failures by numerous experts, two uncommitted war Presidents and the unwieldy national security structure as developed after WWII. But for the exact military disaster from a Clausewitz point of view tactically and strategically regarding execution of the U.S. policies and of the relentless and successful North Vietnamese military war plans you will need another book. There are several excellent military books available as companions to "Dereliction of Duty".

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