



ENDURANCE

*A Parallel History of the
American Experience in Vietnam -
the Why, the How, and the
What of it All*

(Afterword)

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Afterword

Well, you got through it. Great. I hope you found it engaging and worthy of your time and attention.

The first cut of *Endurance* was completed in 2006. As the 50th anniversary of the fall of Saigon approached, though, I found myself going back to it and, over the last several months, have undertaken a rewrite.

In this, I found myself coming to a deeper sense of it all, a greater awareness of the Vietnam era, its times and forces, the risks faced, the truths unbounded, those confronted, the weight of nuclear holocaust our daily read on the way to work.

Spawned by the Cold War, Vietnam may have been the worst part of it, the day-to-day of real, raw war itself, out there, somewhere, twelve thousand miles away and the nation at home so grievously torn and split over it.

From the nineteen years in time from first writing the book and back a further thirty years to Vietnam itself, 1975, the sense of *endurance* that came to mind may have been spurred by an appreciation of the strength of the nation required to have gotten through it all, back then and from then till now, and now out to the future.

History comes in several sorts, certainly that to be celebrated, and just as certainly that to be endured. And of that to be endured, there is also that to be celebrated *as endured*, as in *gotten through*, as in met then and now *done*.

Of note -

- A Russia bogged down in an ethnocentric war, reduced to seeking military assistance from North Korea as it ponders the

challenges of an aging/declining population while shackled to a worldwide 2022 per capita GDP ranking of 52.

- China as a regional hegemon whose impact is measured increasingly in financial and trade balances, with population issues of its own, a compound shrinking metric the prospects of which being unique in the history of the world.
- India, the world's most populous country (1.429 billion vs. China's 1.411); anxious for a tier-one geopolitical ranking – a place at the table – though lacking the circumstance/wherewithal to make much trouble in forcing one.
- A Communist country world-count down to five (China, Cuba, Laos, North Korea, Vietnam) with Leninist-Marxism eclipsed as a national organizing principle and the absence of a similarly destabilizing force on the horizon.
- Colonialism, the remote subjugation of whole continents and subcontinents of peoples and persons, estimated in 1920 to comprise nearly one-third of the world's total population, now done and gone, never to be reprised.
- The United States and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam having established full diplomatic relations in 1995, followed in 2023 by the *U.S.-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP)*.
- The Socialist Republic of Vietnam was admitted to membership in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in 1995, as was the Lao People's Democratic Republic in 1997.
- The Cold War itself ended in 1991 on the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics amid the failure of communist regimes across Eastern Europe, events signaled and hastened by the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1999.

And, further, that we – the *we* of all of us now at the table of nations – knowing reliably so much more about what each other is doing now, right now, what we each of us wants, what each of our needs are, as well as each of our own capabilities and interests,

all with the continuing prospect of still newer, more powerful technologies driving the process still further ahead.

Indeed, as issues and imbalances do arise, which is the historical imperative, they are now increasingly given to identification and analysis, to understanding and exchange – to *working out* – and thus all the more likely to be met and managed, to be ameliorated and overcome.

Let's hope we can all live with that.

February, 2025

For those wishing to know more about Vietnam as a war, as an era, and most notably for deep background on what those in charge were thinking as they were doing, in their own voices, I recommend without reservation *The Vietnam War*, a documentary film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick. Through ten episodes of two hours duration each, the viewer is rewarded with taped conversations among the principals (LBJ, JFK, Nixon, Kissinger, McNamara, Westmorland, majors, lieutenants, non-coms and privates, among others) as they worked their way through it all.

ENDURANCE was written and intended for those of the era as a structuring and telling of the American experience in Vietnam, most especially as an element of the Cold War.

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