



# The Afterlife of America's War in Vietnam: Changing Visions in Politics and on Screen

*Gordon Arnold*

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When Saigon fell in 1975, it signaled the end of America's longest war. Yet in many ways the conflict was far from over. Although the actual fighting ended, the struggle to find political justification and historical vindication for the Vietnam War still lingers in American consciousness after more than three decades. A plethora of images from America's first "televised war" has kept the conflict all too fresh in the memories of those who lived through it - and all too familiar for those whose generational gap should allow them to regard the conflict as history. The political process of attaching meaning to historical events has ultimately failed due to the lack of consensus - then and now - regarding events surrounding the Vietnam War.

Reviewing a combination of political, social and artistic media, this volume provides a brief overview of the war's appearance in America's political and media culture since 1975. It examines the ways in which this conflict has consistently resurfaced in social and political life, especially in the arena of contemporary world events such as the Soviet misadventure in Afghanistan, the gulf war and the 2004 presidential campaign. To this end, the work explores the contexts and uses of the Vietnam War as a recurring subject. The circumstances and symbolism used through the rhetoric of the political elite and the news media including the "New York Times", the "Washington Post", "Time", and "Newsweek" are discussed. Emphasis is also placed on the role of the entertainment-oriented mass media, primarily film and television, which accounts for the most substantial penetration into American culture. Works reviewed are chosen based on social influence rather than critical acclaim.

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