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The Tet Offensive: Are We Mired in a Stalemate?

“To say that we are mired in stalemate seems the only realistic, yet unsatisfactory, conclusion” were the now famous words of Walter Cronkite when describing the Tet Offensive in his February 27, 1968 news broadcast.¹ After three years of being told they were winning the Vietnam War—since the Battle of Ia Drang—the American public found the North Vietnamese offensive shocking. As a result, public support began to rapidly decline.

The effects of the Tet Offensive on the “home” support for, and interpretations of, the American war in Vietnam have long been studied. The vocal anti-war movement used the Tet Offensive as validation to their argument that the American intervention in Vietnam was a lost cause. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the American military and its South Vietnamese allies saw the Tet Offensive as an unsuccessful tactical gamble on the part of the North Vietnamese that would have no impact on the long term. In this paper, I will present the “turning point” of the Vietnam War from the point of view of those fighting, with a focus on the opening months of this complex event.

The Tet Offensive represented a dramatic shift in the strategy of the North Vietnamese forces. Very soon after the official entrance of the United States as a combatant in the conflict between North and South Vietnam, the North Vietnamese learned that they could not defeat the Americans as they had the French in 1954 at Dien Bien Phu. The larger Battle of Pleime in 1965, particularly the subsequent Battle of Ia Drang in November of that year, made the North Vietnamese commanders realize that they could not combat the mobility and firepower of the Americans in large confrontations.² Reverting to guerilla strikes and small-scale raids, the North

¹ Walter Cronkite, “Report from Vietnam (1968),” YouTube Video, 0:53, posted by “tpleines,” May 22, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nn4w-ud-TyE>.

² Col. Hoang Ngoc Lung, *The General Offensives of 1968-69*, (Washington, D.C: Department of the Army, 1981): 15.

Vietnamese had to focus on a conservative and defensive strategy in order to cope with the increasing number of soldiers from America and their allies.³ By late 1965, plans of a “decisive offensive” were being discussed in the upper echelons of the Communist Government in Hanoi.⁴ General Nguyen Chi Thanh, the commander of Communist forces in the south, called for a “big unit” conventional war, which would destroy large American units and installations, while General Vo Nguyen Giap argued for the continued guerilla campaign to wear down the Americans over time.⁵ However, both strategies would fail to reduce the amount of North Vietnamese losses: the conventional war would place the majority of the losses on the North Vietnamese Army whereas the guerilla war would place the losses on the Viet Cong.⁶ Not sitting idle while their enemy deliberated on how to counter, the U.S. forces launched into their “search-and-destroy” operations as implemented by General William Westmoreland, the head of the American Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV). General Thanh studied the American’s strategy in South Vietnam and concluded that their military effort had five main goals, which were described by ARVN Colonel Hoang Ngoc Lung:

1. To disperse Viet Cong and NVA units, thereby forcing the Communists to revert to guerrilla warfare. This clearly was the goal of the large-scale search-and-destroy operations of the U.S. forces.
2. To spread Viet Cong and NVA forces thin over the entire territory of South Vietnam and destroy them piecemeal with superior firepower. This effectively amounted to forcing the Communists to fight the war on U.S. terms, while making the guerrilla forces more vulnerable.
3. To expand the RVN (Republic of Vietnam) rear areas through pacification, consolidate territorial control, and use these pacified areas as platforms from which to launch attacks against Communist-controlled areas.

³ Liên-Hang T. Nguyen, “The War Politburo: North Vietnam’s Diplomatic and Political Road to the Têt Offensive,” *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 1, no. 1–2 (2006): 4–58.

⁴ T. L. Cabbage II, “Strategy and Rationality in the Vietnam War: Hanoi’s Decision making and the Tet Offensive,” (U.S. Army War College, February 1991): 13.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ For the sake of consistency with American military sources from the time, North Vietnamese Army, or NVA, will be used to refer to the standing military forces of North Vietnam, and Viet Cong will be used to refer to the insurgent forces within South Vietnam, regardless of their actual affiliation.

4. To mop up and protect strategic lines of communication, especially vital links between bases in order to facilitate troop movement and ensure the effectiveness of offensive operations.
5. To isolate North Vietnam from the South and seek ways to cut off North Vietnamese military assistance for the South.⁷

To counter the efforts of the American forces, while keeping in mind their advantages in firepower and mobility, General Thanh determined that the best course of action was to “conduct determined and continuous offensive operations throughout South Vietnam.”⁸ This plan of offensive operations would remain in limbo until the members of the 13th Plenum of the North Vietnamese Government were tasked with devising a military strategy that would return offensive initiative.⁹ The Plenum came to the agreement that a military offensive, followed up by simultaneous attacks on all the major cities of the South and a popular uprising, would be a reasonable “gamble” in order to “snatch victory from defeat”.¹⁰

To achieve strategic surprise, the North Vietnamese chose to officially launch the attack on the morning of January 31, 1968, during the Vietnamese holiday of Tet and breaking the usual mutual ceasefire.¹¹ To keep the Americans pre-occupied, as they remained on alert throughout the holiday, the NVA attacked and laid siege to the U.S. Marine Khe Sanh Combat Base on January 21, 1968.¹² The offensive had three primary objectives, as provided by historian James H. Willbanks:

1. To break down and destroy the bulk of the puppet troops [AVRN], topple the puppet administration [RVN] at all levels, and take power into the hands of the people.
2. To destroy the major part of the U.S. forces and their war materiel and render them unable to fulfill their political and military duties in Vietnam.
3. On this basis, to break the U.S. will of aggression, force it to accept defeat in the South, and put an end to all acts of war against the North. With this, we will achieve the

⁷ Lung, *General Offensives*, 14-15.

⁸ Cubbage II, “Strategy and Rationality in the Vietnam War,” 16.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ James H. Willbanks, *The Tet Offensive: A Concise History*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007): 26.

¹² *Ibid.*, 25.

immediate objectives of our revolution—independence, democracy, peace, and neutrality for the South—and we can proceed to national reunification.¹³

The North Vietnamese objectives were founded on a large number of assumptions made by General Giap: (1) that the North Vietnamese forces would be strong enough to accomplish their mission; (2) that the South Vietnamese government had no public support and would collapse if pressured; (3) the people of South Vietnam would rise against their government if given the chance; (4) that the people of South Vietnam would support the invading forces; (5) that the ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) would not fight back if hit hard enough; (6) the people of south Vietnam would turn against the American and South Vietnamese forces; (7) that the firepower and mobility of the Americans could be countered by having multiple large attacks happen simultaneously; and (8) that Khe Sanh was a similar situation to Dien Bien Phu.¹⁴

These assumptions were ultimately proven as false, which was detrimental for the North Vietnamese forces. NVA General Tran Van Tra put it as such: “We [the North Vietnamese] did not correctly evaluate the specific balance of forces between ourselves and the enemy, did not fully realize that the enemy still had considerable capabilities and that our capabilities were limited, and set requirements that were beyond our actual strength.”¹⁵ Of the three objectives that had been laid for the offensive, only one could possibly be claimed as partially completed. The South Vietnamese government and Army had not been broken, and the American Forces had not been crippled in personnel or material. However, the offensive did have an effect on the American “will of aggression” in the long run. On February 8, 1968, General Westmoreland noted in his situation report to President Lyndon B. Johnson that the “enemy had scored a

¹³ Ibid., 90-91.

¹⁴ Cubbage II, “Strategy and Rationality in the Vietnam War,” 50-51.

¹⁵ Willbanks, *The Tet Offensive*, 81.

psychological blow, possibly greater in Washington than in South Vietnam.”¹⁶ American military records put the North Vietnamese losses between 40,000 and 72,000 out of a total force of 80,000, which is a massive cost to pay for an offensive that did not bear fruit until almost five years later.¹⁷

Due to the sudden outbreak of fighting within the major population centers of South Vietnam, there was unprecedented and uncensored access to the brutal conflict for the members of the media. The U.S. military immediately lost the ability to control, censor, and prepare the narrative for members of the media due to the immediate proximity of the fighting. Daniel C. Hallin describes the effects of the coverage during the Tet Offensive as such:

A faithful television viewer, watching the evening news five nights a week, would have seen film of civilian casualties and urban destruction in South Vietnam an average of 3.9 times a week during the Tet period (January 31 to March 31), more than four times the overall average of 0.85 times a week. Film of military casualties jumped from 2.4 to 6.8 times a week. Tet was the first sustained period during which it could be said that the war appeared on television as a really brutal affair...¹⁸

Amongst the chaotic reporting, the attack on the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, the Saigon execution, and the attack on Ben Tre became lasting examples of the brutality of the Vietnam War that the American people could not ignore. The Saigon execution saw Brigadier General Nguyen Ngoc Loan, a South Vietnamese police chief, executing a captured Viet Cong guerrilla on the streets of Saigon with his service pistol, becoming a symbol of the “frontier justice” and extreme measures being used to try to control the situation in Vietnam. The Ben Tre incident is epitomized by the words of the American officer in charge of the attack, who said, “It became necessary to destroy

¹⁶ Gen. William C. Westmoreland and W. W. Rostow, “Memo To President Lyndon B. Johnson From W. W. Rostow: General Westmoreland’s Assessment Of Enemy Activity And Strategy,” (LBJ Library, November 30, 1968): 2.

¹⁷ Willbanks, *The Tet Offensive*, 81.

¹⁸ Daniel C. Hallin, *The “Uncensored War: The Media and Vietnam*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986): 171.

the town in order to save it.”¹⁹ These captured incidents conflicted with the public reports that the situation in South Vietnam was under control and that victory was well in hand. Although the brutality of the conflict was well known within the country, the Tet Offensive brought images of the fighting home to the American public in an unprecedented manner.

For the American and South Vietnamese troops on the receiving end of the North Vietnamese attack, the Tet Offensive was an almost total surprise. Throughout 1967 and early January of 1968, American and South Vietnamese intelligence had picked up indications of a change in the North Vietnamese strategy. Rumors and rough guesses at this change could be based on gathered information as early as March of 1967, when rudimentary plans for attacking Saigon were found in a Viet Cong headquarters that was raided by ARVN units.²⁰ However, more substantial evidence of a change did not start appearing until the final months of 1967. On October 25, 1967, a Viet Cong document was found that detailed “the strategy of ‘three-pronged offensive’ designed to: (1) defeat the RVNAF; (2) destroy U.S. political and military institutions, and; (3) instigate a country-wide insurrection of the popular masses.”²¹ The rate of this incoming information and evidence increased as the Tet holiday drew nearer.

If all this information suggesting a massive general offensive was gathered, some may ask how the Americans and South Vietnamese failed to see the Tet Offensive coming. Colonel Lung summarizes this best:

From hindsight, it appears that our failure began with a wrong estimate of the enemy, and intelligence methodology may have been to some extent responsible for it. Our intelligence theory taught us that in estimating the enemy’s probable course of action we should be primarily concerned with his capabilities and not his intentions... Understandably, they [the ARVN intelligence analysts] were primarily interested to know whether the enemy had the capabilities for it.²²

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Lung, *General Offensives*, 32.

²¹ Ibid., 33.

²² Ibid., 38.

The intent of a countrywide attack on South Vietnam conflicted with the more concrete intelligence that the North Vietnamese lacked the capabilities to mount such an offensive effectively; therefore, the idea of a “Tet Offensive” was deemed a low probability and then dismissed.²³

The CIA fell into the same methodological trap that Colonel Lung outlines. Analysts at the Saigon Station, the CIA’s office in Saigon, published a report on December 8, 1967 highlighting that the North Vietnamese would “unleash a large offensive in an attempt to achieve decisive victory” and that the “...communist strategy sought to draw American forces to the border areas and away from the urban locations.”²⁴ On December 10, a memorandum was released by the Saigon Station that “reiterated warnings expressed in the previous reports, but... that the enemy had misread the military situation in South Vietnam in believing it could defeat American forces in a country-wide show of force.”²⁵ These warnings would then be dismissed when George Carver, Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs (SAVA) to the Director of Central Intelligence, asked for opinions on Saigon Station’s assessment, to which the OCI, the Office of Current Intelligence, responded to by saying that the “analysts in Saigon had overreacted to the captured documents, adding that they did not have clear evidence suggesting that the communists actually believed that they could mount a decisive campaign against American forces.”²⁶ Some basic precautions were taken for an enemy offensive during the Tet Holiday based on elements of the available intelligence reports, but most were either too late to be effective or were done on the judgement of individual unit commanders.

²³ Ibid., 39.

²⁴ Alexander Ovodenko, “Visions of the Enemy from the Field and from Abroad: Revisiting CIA and Military Expectations of the Tet Offensive,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 34, no. 1 (February 2011): 119–44.

²⁵ Ibid., 127.

²⁶ Ibid.

The Tet Offensive achieved its goal of strategic surprise against the American and South Vietnamese forces. Even those that had tried to prepare were surprised by the size and scope of the North Vietnamese attack. General Westmoreland's preliminary report to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Earle Wheeler on January 31, 1968 reveals his initial thoughts on the matter: "Enemy attacks during the Tet Holidays reveal an emphasis on dramatic results in heavily populated areas and damage to friendly air installation... The enemy attempts have thus far produced no significant military results and have cost the enemy heavily."²⁷ Westmoreland maintains that the purpose of the offensive was to act as a diversionary action for a follow up attack on the de-militarized zone, particularly the Khe Sanh combat base.²⁸ Westmoreland's insistence on the Viet Cong's attacks being the diversion shows his misread of the situation and the North Vietnamese plans. The next day, February 1, 1968, Westmoreland sent a complete report on the situation to General Wheeler, stating,

The enemy conducted simultaneous attacks against major cities and air facilities south of the DMZ area during the Tet holidays... to divert attention from what I believe will be his main effort, the Khe Sanh/DMZ area. Certainly he hoped to secure and hold a major city at least for awhile[sic]. He sought to also obtain a favourable psychological effect on the SVN [South Vietnamese] (and probably U.S.) populace. ... His results were pyrrhic...²⁹

While Westmoreland may have had an incorrect read on the order of the importance of the objectives, he was correctly able to generalize the situation. Of the three main objectives for the Tet Offensive, none were able to be counted as accomplished by the North Vietnamese. The attack failed to "break down and destroy the bulk of the puppet troops," to which Westmoreland notes that "the ARVN has demonstrated that it can and will fight valiantly to stem this enemy

²⁷ Gen. William C. Westmoreland, "Situation Report to Gen. Wheeler Feb 1, 1968," (LBJ Library, December 16, 1983): 2.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

surge.”³⁰ The reports do admit that “a tremendous challenge had been posed to the GVN to restore stability and to aid the people who have suffered.” However, this is far from “toppling” the South Vietnamese government.³¹ Through his reports, Westmoreland conveys that the situation in Vietnam after the Tet Offensive was “bad but could be worse.” The North Vietnamese were able to strike South Vietnam and inflict casualties on both civilians and those fighting, but this came at a higher cost for the North. In the end, the North Vietnamese failed all of their objectives and suffered far more losses.

Initially, the Tet Offensive did catch the Americans and South Vietnamese off guard, but they were able to regroup quickly and counter the North Vietnamese. By February 8, 1968, General Westmoreland was able to compile a complete report on the North Vietnamese strategy. To gauge the accuracy of the report, the first two principle objectives of the offensive will be compared directly to Westmoreland’s assessment. The first North Vietnamese objective was “to break down and destroy the bulk of the puppet troops, topple the puppet administration at all levels, and take power into the hands of the people.”³² Westmoreland’s report says, “The enemy sought first, to destroy the Government of Vietnamese governmental apparatus, second, to intimidate the people, and third, to bring about large scale defections from ARVN. All of these would add up to a ‘general uprising’ in which the citizens would join the Viet Cong ranks and thus permit the enemy to take over the control of major cities and areas.”³³ The second objective of the Tet Offensive was “to destroy the major part of the U.S. Forces and their war materiel and render them unable to fulfill their political and military duties in Vietnam.”³⁴ Westmoreland

³⁰ Gen. William C. Westmoreland, “Message From General Westmoreland To General Wheeler: Situation In South Vietnam Feb 4 1968,” (LBJ Library): 2.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

³² Willbanks, *The Tet Offensive*, 90-91, 122.

³³ Gen. William C. Westmoreland and W. W. Rostow, “Memo To President Lyndon B Johnson,” 1.

³⁴ Willbanks, *The Tet Offensive*, 90-91.

assesses that “the military objectives of this phase appear to be secondary. Here the attacks were directed primarily against Headquarters, air installations and aircraft with the view of injuring our control and our air power so as to hamper reinforcement and air support.”³⁵ Westmoreland does not make mention of a third objective directly but does state that there was a psychological aspect and impact to the attacks.³⁶ The third objective, which was “to break the U.S. will of aggression, force it to accept defeat in the South, and put an end to all acts of war against the North,” is a largely abstract and political objective that could not be deciphered from the opening moves of a failed offensive.³⁷

General Westmoreland’s February 8, 1968 report on the situation in Vietnam ends with an assessment of which areas were still under threat of North Vietnamese attack. He writes that “the enemy poses serious threats” at Saigon, Hue and Khe Sanh.³⁸ Saigon was the then capital of South Vietnam, to which an attack could be both psychological and strategic, and Hue was the old imperial capital of Vietnam, which was important to South Vietnamese history. Khe Sanh was a U.S. Marine Firebase near the Laos border just south of the de-militarized zone (DMZ). Constructed in 1966, the Khe Sanh base allowed the Americans to monitor and stop NVA movement into the two northernmost provinces of South Vietnam and to strike the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos.³⁹ A January 18, 1968 memo to the President contains General Westmoreland’s and CJCS General Wheeler’s thoughts on withdrawing from the Khe Sanh region and base, to which Westmoreland says,

Regarding a withdrawal from Khe Sanh, I consider this area critical to us from a tactical standpoint as a launch base for Special Operations Group teams and as flank security for the strong point obstacle system; it is even more critical from a psychological viewpoint.

³⁵ Gen. William C. Westmoreland and W. W. Rostow, “Memo To President Lyndon B Johnson,” 1.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁷ Willbanks, *The Tet Offensive*, 90-91.

³⁸ Gen. William C. Westmoreland and W. W. Rostow, “Memo To President Lyndon B Johnson,” 1.

³⁹ Moyers S. Shore II, *The Battle for Khe Sanh*, (Washington, D.C: USMC Historical Branch, 1969): 10.

To relinquish this area would be a major propaganda victory for the enemy. Its loss would seriously affect Vietnamese and U.S. morale. In short, withdrawal would be a tremendous step backwards.⁴⁰

The base at Khe Sanh was important to American war planning for both the offensive and defensive against the North Vietnamese. General Giap recognized the threat of the Khe Sanh base as a launching point for American offensives into both Laos and North Vietnam. In planning the Tet Offensive, Giap looked at the Khe Sanh base like the French base at Dien Bien Phu.⁴¹ The attack on the base would remove the strategic threat it posed to the North Vietnamese war effort and would serve as a huge blow to the American's morale and war support. This "American Dien Bien Phu" became central to Giap's plan, as the forces committed to take the Khe Sanh base would then march south to assist taking Hue and Da Nang.⁴² It must be said that there were some similarities between the two battles: the Khe Sanh base was isolated amongst a series of hills, the American forces were outnumbered, and the North Vietnamese forces surrounded the base just as they had at Dien Bien Phu.⁴³ With that said, there were major differences between Khe Sanh and Dien Bien Phu, the most striking of which was the amount of firepower that the Americans could utilize against the North Vietnamese. For example, at the time of Dien Bien Phu, the French used the B-26 bomber to support their forces, which could carry a maximum bomb load of 5,000 pounds. In contrast, the Americans used the B-52 bomber at Khe Sanh, which could carry a bomb load of 27,000 pounds.⁴⁴ By the end of Operation Niagara, the air operation to support and supply the Khe Sanh base, there had been 2,500 B-52

⁴⁰ Gen. William C. Westmoreland and W. W. Rostow, "General Westmoreland's Comments on Khe Sanh Operation Jan 13 1968," (LBJ Library): 3-4.

⁴¹ Cabbage II, "Strategy and Rationality in the Vietnam War," 50-51.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 40.

⁴³ Maj. Gregory C. Kane, "Air Power and Its Role in the Battles of Khe Sanh and Dien Bien Phu," (Air Command and Staff College Maxwell AFB, 1997): 3-6, 15-16, 19-24.

⁴⁴ "Historical Snapshot: A-26/B-26 Invader Light Bomber," Boeing, <http://www.boeing.com/history/products/a26-b26-invader-light-bomber.page> (accessed March 28, 2018).

sorties in support of the base in addition to the 24,400 sorties conducted by various other aircrafts.⁴⁵ Giap's incorrect assessment that Khe Sanh was similar to Dien Bien Phu—and that the Americans would fight as the French had—led to the failure of the North Vietnamese in achieving one of the major objectives of the Tet Offensive, rendering them ultimately incapable of implementing the rest of the plan.

The situation in South Vietnam after the Tet Offensive was far more optimistic than the American media or the anti-war movement portrayed it. The Tet Offensive was a resounding defeat for the North Vietnamese, as they never captured a city or town entirely, were driven out of any holdings they did have, and suffered great losses in both manpower and material.⁴⁶ For the South Vietnamese, the victory expanded past the front lines. ARVN Colonel Lung best describes this when he writes,

In addition to military victory, the RVN also achieved other gains which, though less visible, were perhaps far more important for its long-term survival. First and foremost, the RVNAF had gained self-assurance; they were confident they could defeat the North Vietnamese Army... The South Vietnamese people, at the most critical moment of the situation when the enemy was at their very doorsteps, had made a clear-cut decision as to their political inclination. They had unwaveringly opted for the regime of South Vietnam and declined the invitation to join the Communists, although this invitation was wrapped under such appealing concepts as Neutrality, Democracy and Peace... But the South Vietnamese people did not only vote by their feet; they also voted by their hands which picked up weapons and by their will which told them to use these weapons for defense... Without being told, they voluntarily co-operated with the government in organizing themselves for defense, protecting their households, their communities against the VCI [Viet Cong Insurgents] whose members they tracked down and eliminated. The surprising fact about it all was that never before had the rapport between the people and the armed forces and between the people and the government been so close. Without much effort, the GVN had thus definitely won the battle of the hearts and the minds.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Warren A. Trest, *Khe Sanh (Operation Niagra) 22 January - 31 March*, (Christiansburg, Va.: U.S. CHECO Division, 1989): 1, 5.

⁴⁶ Lung, *General Offensives*, 150.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 150-151.

In the aftermath of the offensive, the South Vietnamese government introduced a new mobilization law, which would bring the RVNAF an additional 268,000 men by December of 1968.⁴⁸ Colonel Lung points out that

The popular response to mobilization was unprecedented [sic], and it overwhelmed the RVNAF processing and training capabilities. By September, 240,000 draftees had beaten the deadline by volunteering or reporting to draft centers ahead of time; among them, 161,000 were volunteers who enlisted in combat arms or service branches of their choice. Most remarkable was the fact that about half of that manpower consisted of urban youths, again an unprecedented record. . . . It simply stemmed from a sincere desire to serve, to contribute something at a time when the nation's survival was at stake. And in their decision to join the military services, these youths had unquestionably expressed an un-flinching faith in the future of South Vietnam, which they felt they had a duty to defend and believed that it was defensible.⁴⁹

For the American Military in Vietnam, there was an opportunity to counter attack after the Tet Offensive; however, this was coupled with a request for an additional 200,000 U.S. soldiers from General Westmoreland.⁵⁰ This request was interpreted by the anti-war movement as a requirement to repel the North Vietnamese in the aftermath of the Tet Offensive. While the American and South Vietnamese ground soldiers held a position of strength, the American public and government lacked the will for approval.

To reiterate the words of Walter Cronkite, the belief that the U.S. was “mired in stalemate” was the only “realistic, yet unsatisfactory, conclusion.”⁵¹ However, his claim was wrong. The Tet Offensive was a complete military failure for the North Vietnamese. The only claim to success could be that the attack had enough of a psychological impact on the American public to stop an immediate counter-attack, which was used by the anti-war movement to delegitimize the war effort. Despite being caught off-guard by an attack that was deemed

⁴⁸ Ibid., 135.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 135-136.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 151.

⁵¹ Cronkite, “Report from Vietnam (1968).”

improbable, the Americans and the South Vietnamese reacted successfully, repelling a major offensive and inflicting considerable damage to the North Vietnamese Military. Although in hindsight it may appear as the “turning point” of the Vietnam War, the Tet Offensive was just another strategic move on the chessboard rather than the start of a stalemate or the beginning of the end for the South Vietnamese.

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