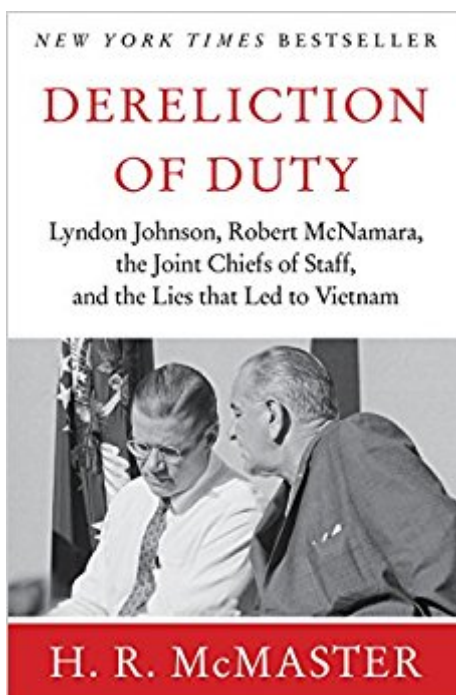


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# Dereliction Of Duty: Johnson, McNamara, The Joint Chiefs Of Staff



## Synopsis

"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

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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