

No End of Lessons?

Dien Bien Phu 60 Years On



Anthony Arnott and Greg Mills

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Contents

The Search for Victory	5
A Rice Bowl	6
Echoes of Other Wars?	9
Looking Ahead	12
Endnotes	14

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*'Let us admit it fairly, as a business people should,
We have had no end of a lesson: it will do us no end of good.
Not on a single issue, or in one direction or twain,
But conclusively, comprehensively, and several times and again,
Were all our most holy illusions knocked higher than Gilderoy's kite.
We have had a jolly good lesson, and it serves us jolly well right!'*

Rudyard Kipling on the British experience in the Boer War from *The Lesson 1899–1902*



60th anniversary commemoration of the Viet Minh victory at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu, honouring Grand General Von Nguyen Giap and President Ho Chi Minh.

Dien Bien Phu, a 1992 film directed by Pierre Schoendoerffer, broodingly depicts the 1954 battle of the same name, the last major engagement of the French colonial army in Indochina.

Produced with the then unprecedented co-operation of the French and Vietnamese armies, Schoendoerffer follows carefully the chronology of the unfolding military and social drama, the harsh accuracy of the battle scenes relying on his own experience as a Dien Bien Phu veteran. The docudrama flicks between the realism of the front near the Laotian border and the surrealism of colonial Hanoi, 320 kilometres away to the south-east, a world of opera and opium, distanced from the battle by both censorship and a careless attitude. The action in the capital follows the attempts of reporter Howard Simpson (played by the English actor Donald Pleasence) to determine the situation at Dien Bien Phu. The closest thing to facts that the journalist manages to find is the chatter at a bar frequented by the increasingly melancholic military men or reports from his Vietnamese nationalist contacts.

Just as Western politicians and publics alike have allowed the military blunders that marred the Iraq and Afghanistan missions to distort political judgements around key strategic questions, so too did the battlefield calamity suffered by the French at Dien Bien Phu taint the way France viewed the world in the years and decades that followed.

On 9 October 1954, elements of the Viet Minh's (abbreviated from *Việt Nam Độc Lập Động Minh Hội*, or 'League for the Independence of Vietnam') 308th Division, which had fought and won at Dien Bien Phu, entered Hanoi as liberators.



The Viet Minh's 308th Division enter Hanoi, 9 October 1954.

In this year of anniversaries – the 100th since the start of the First World War, 75th since the advent of the Second, and 25th of the fall of the Berlin Wall – it is perhaps inevitably overlooked that 2014 is also the 60th year since the defeat of French forces at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu. Veterans of that battle are in their dotage, their famous commander and 'master strategist' Grand General Von Nguyen Giap having passed away in 2013 aged 102.

In part this is because the Vietnamese have left war behind. Dien Bien Phu has transformed since 1954 when there were just 100 houses. Now it is a bustling market town of at least 100 000 inhabitants, reflecting the threefold increase in Vietnam's population over these 60 years to the current 90 million. Nearly 95 per cent of the population is under 65, and 35 million are under 24 years old.



Grand General Giap in his pomp, 1965.

As the veterans fade away, Dien Bien Phu is a battle most Vietnamese have only read about in history books. The town boasts a respectable museum to the conflict across the road from one of four cemeteries for Vietnamese (French soldiers who fell in the Indochina conflict were exhumed and repatriated in 1982¹) and the French stronghold of Eliane 2 is maintained as a museum along with their command post and a nearby 'informal' French memorial, while a 'socialist realist' sculpture was built atop the town centre for the battle's 50th anniversary.

The Dien Bien Phu battle triggered American involvement in Vietnam, which then became the longest war of the 20th century. Despite its significance, this is nevertheless no Somme with its plethora of guide-books, signposts and visitors.

The Search for Victory

Perhaps the most notable feature of Vietnam is that its people spend little time looking backwards or for external reasons for failure, despite having very good reasons to do so.

Not only did Vietnam endure 1 000 years of Chinese domination and nearly 70 years of French rule interspersed with a period of Japanese control during 1945, but the 'American War' which followed the French withdrawal in 1955 until the fall of Saigon 20 years later cost it perhaps as many as three million dead. In the process, three times the tonnage of bombs was dropped on Vietnam than were on both Japan and Germany in the Second World War.

But rather than seek blame or excuses, Vietnam has sought only ways to develop. Its record in this regard is particularly impressive considering that US sanctions were only lifted in 1994. It spends little time playing on colonial guilt despite, like many African states, having to manage a complex inheritance of 54 ethnic groups and 63 languages, not to mention a French administrative culture. Then again, unlike Africa, Vietnam's

self-confidence and its nationalist cause can only have been enhanced by the definitive military victory it managed over its erstwhile colonial master at Dien Bien Phu.

That battle was the first time that an independence movement had evolved from a guerrilla to a conventional force able to defeat a modern European army in battle. Indeed, this was not just any army, but that of one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council.

Dien Bien Phu occurred, ironically, because the French wanted a military victory to enable a political solution to the end of their empire in Indochina. Comprising Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, this was an empire that Paris had sought to retain after the Second World War as much for reasons of prestige after the ruin of the German occupation as for the rubber and rice economy and cheap labour it offered. In spite of Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh's declaration of independence on 2 September 1945, he first advocated co-operation with the French, whose response was to make Vietnam semi-autonomous. After a fruitless trip by Ho to Paris to negotiate independence in 1946, the war began in November of that year.

Although Washington initially opposed the French attempt to keep its colonies, this outlook changed with Mao Tse Tung's creation of the People's Republic of China in October 1949 and the advent of the Korean War in June 1950. When the Soviets and Chinese recognised the Viet Minh as the only legitimate government in Vietnam – also in 1950 – the Cold War was brought to the country, and the US responded by recognising the French-run government in Hanoi and increasing its support for the French military effort. By 1953 the Viet Minh guerrillas numbered 120 000 troops and 200 000 auxiliaries, and were receiving Chinese-supplied arms and technical training. Also by that time, the United States was paying three-quarters of the costs of keeping the 190 000 man French army in the field, amounting to US\$1 billion in 1950 terms.

Even so, the war was already not going well for the French, with the Viet Minh controlling large chunks of Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam by the end of 1953, save for an enclave around Hanoi. Before Dien Bien Phu even began, the French army had already suffered 50 000 casualties.

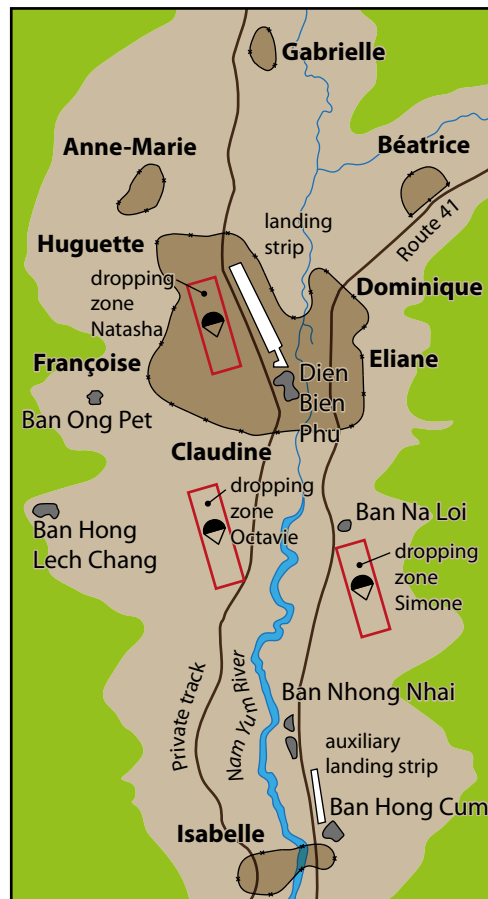
A Rice Bowl

The French plan for the battle was to establish a fortified area around an old airstrip built by the Japanese during the Second World War in Dien Bien Phu in order to interdict Viet Minh supply lines to Laos, drawing them into a conventional fight that would enable superior French fire- and air-power to cripple the nationalists. The Commanding General of French Union Forces in Indochina, General Henri Navarre, selected the area of Dien Bien Phu as a strategically vital one to win the war, despite the protestations of his senior subordinates. The French plan was based on their experience at the Battle of Na San in November–December 1952, when Giap had repeatedly attacked a remote, fortified French outpost at Na San that was supplied only by air, but where he had been beaten back with heavy losses.

This 'hedgehog' concept involved air-lifting what numbered ultimately 16 000 French and colonial (mainly Algerian, Moroccan, Senegalese and Vietnamese loyalist) troops beginning in November 1953 and, under the command of Colonel Christian de Castries, dispersing them across satellite positions, each apocryphally named after a former mistress of the commander: 'Anne-Marie', 'Béatrice', 'Claudine', 'Dominique', 'Eliane', 'Gabrielle', 'Huguette', 'Françoise' and 'Isabelle'.² Facing the nine French infantry battalions and two crack parachute battalions were five divisions (the 304th, 308th, 312th, 316th, and 351st) of Viet Minh to the north and east, along with artillery, mortars and other support elements.

Far from destroying the Viet Minh, the battle sealed the French retreat from Indochina, though not as it turned out, the end of the fighting. It offered a perfect opportunity for the Viet Minh to progress to the third of Mao's stages of guerrilla warfare and seek out decisive conventional battles.³

Likened by General Giap to a 'rice bowl', with his forces on the mountainous rim and the French at the bottom on the plain and its hillocks, Dien Bien Phu proved indefensible, despite carefully-dug French trenches and fortifications. These were never built to withstand shellfire of the sort the Vietnamese were able to bring to



bear from more than 200 artillery pieces and anti-aircraft weapons. Unlike Na San, the French did not control the high-ground. And unlike Na San, where Giap had squandered his forces in costly frontal attacks, he would carefully amass his troops and supplies before the battle commenced and aim, quickly, to put the French airfield out of business. By the time the French realised they were in a trap and could not win, it was too late to get out.

In a feat of logistics and human endeavour, much to the surprise of the French, Giap's forces were able to haul large weapons up and over the never-ending series of mountains and install them in burrows on the hillsides, making them virtually impervious to French counter-fire and air-strikes from the 100 aircraft the French had available for offensive operations. The Viet Minh had been well supplied by China ever since the end of the Korean War in 1953, including US artillery captured from General Chiang Kai-Shek's Nationalist Kuomintang Army such as radar-controlled anti-aircraft guns and communications equipment, along with trucks and technical advisers.⁴

The original French plan had called for defensive sweeps into the surrounding areas from the fortified strongholds. However, the large number of Viet Minh surrounding the flat valley made this suicidal. Colonel Piroth, the one-armed French artillery commander, blamed himself for this failure and misjudging of the Viet Minh, and committed suicide in his bunker with a hand grenade. Today a stone monument in a bog by the main market marks his demise, its existence seemingly invisible to the surrounding fish and vegetable sellers. Notably, this memorial was erected not by the French, but more latterly by the Vietnamese.

Starting with a massive artillery barrage on 13 March 1954, the battle raged over 55 days, with the French losing, sometimes reclaiming and then ultimately losing again the defensive positions. To the north, Béatrice, Gabrielle and Anne-Marie fell in the first four days. By late April Françoise had been abandoned, Dominique and part of Eliane lost. The noose tightened remorselessly. 'We decided to destroy pockets of resistance one by one,' Giap wrote in one account of the battle, *Dien Bien Phu: The Most Difficult Decision*, 'and gradually, in our own way, at a time and place of our own choosing, launch attacks with overwhelming superiority in each

battle and at the same time consolidate our bunker system and cut the enemy's supply line until the base camp was strangled.' It was not easy: the French resisted heroically, conditions were worsened by the Viet Minh having just one doctor in their ranks, the hills covered with dead and dying, and even Giap admits to 'negative thoughts' that affected troop performance.⁵

When shelling of the airfield rendered it unusable from 15 March, the French were reliant on air-drops for resupply, which were increasingly difficult as their perimeter shrank and the Viet Minh's anti-aircraft guns kept planes high in often foggy conditions. When in late April a relief column of 3 000 troops failed to break through the cordon of 50 000 Viet Minh, the end was nigh. On 7 May the last transmission to the French headquarters in Hanoi was sent: 'The enemy has overrun us. We are blowing up everything. *Vive la France!*'

Despite the *elan*, it was an inglorious defeat. The French threw everything into the battle, even contemplating the use of American nuclear weapons under 'Operation Vulture' in a desperate last-minute move. However, although there was American support in the form of material and pilots, President Eisenhower refused to escalate involvement without the engagement of other allies.⁶

French casualties totalled over 2 200 dead, 5 600 wounded and 11 721 taken prisoner, of which just 3 390 were repatriated months later. Bernard Fall, author of the definitive account of the battle *Hell in a Very Small Place*, wrote that the 40-day forced march to POW camps undertaken by French prisoners from Dien Bien Phu 'caused more losses than any single battle of the whole Indo-China war'.⁷ Viet Minh casualties are estimated at 8 000 dead and 12 000 wounded – depending on whose version to accept – with, like their French foe, many of the fighters swallowed up forever by the soggy ground where they fell.



Eliane 2 fell on the battle's second last day – the crater is the result of a 1 000kg mine laid by the Vietnamese.

The day after the French surrender, 8 May 1954, at the Geneva peace talks, Paris announced its intention to withdraw from Vietnam. Under the final Accord, a result of Chinese pressure encouraging compromise, Laos and Cambodia would receive their independence, but Ho Chi Minh agreed to Vietnam being temporarily divided at the 17th parallel, with elections to be held two years later. While the Viet Minh controlled an estimated three-quarters of the countryside, 80 000 of its troops would move temporarily to the North and the French forces South. Knowing that 'Uncle' Ho would win elections if they were held as scheduled, the South's US-supported Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem subsequently refused to allow the elections, citing intimidation by the North. This led to the next phase of the conflict, known as the Vietnam War, which saw 500 000 Americans in theatre by 1968 and in which 58 000 US troops and many more Vietnamese were to lose their lives.

The situation quickly deteriorated. As Diem cracked down on opponents using the army and police, and built up his family's wealth and power in the process, the Viet Minh once more ramped up its activities, attacking government installations and murdering officials. By January 1961, when John F Kennedy was inaugurated as the 35th president of the United States, the situation was spiralling towards chaos with around 20 000 Viet Minh operating in the South, building up their political support and military capacity. In September 1961 alone there were 450 attacks, some involving hundreds of guerrillas. The aim of the guerrillas, christened the 'Viet Cong' or 'Vietnamese Communists' by then-President Diem, was to follow the same combined diplomatic, military and political strategy that had defeated the French.

As the guerrillas tightened their grip on the countryside, the South Vietnamese army grew increasingly defensive, despite the presence of some 900 American advisers by 1961. By the end of that year, with 1 000 deaths from guerrilla actions every week, Saigon was clearly facing an all-out war. Despite a reluctance to be drawn into an Asian war, fearing the impact of Chinese and Soviet support, in November 1961 President Kennedy agreed to an increase in funding and advisory support to the South, upping the numbers to 3 000 men, including 300 helicopter pilots. It proved to be the thin end of the wedge.

The pretext for a massive increase of American involvement was the Gulf of Tonkin naval encounter in August 1964. The outcome of this saw the US Congress pass the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, granting President Lyndon Johnson the authority to assist any Southeast Asian country considered to be jeopardised by 'communist aggression'. That was to lead to what future President Barack Obama described in 2002 as one of the 'dumb wars',⁸ which eventually ended with the collapse of the South Vietnam government on 30 April 1975 and the reunification of the country.

Echoes of Other Wars?

The speed of the collapse of the Republic of South Vietnam's Army (ARVN) reflects in the contemporary performance of the Iraqi Army against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS). Despite billions of dollars being lavished on its recreation since 2003, like the ARVN, the Iraqi Army (as well as the Iraqi State) has been exposed as overmatched against ISIS, a force built on the expertise of Saddam Hussein's army and that has more than 20 000 well-funded and motivated Islamic fighters. The Iraqi Army, hollow and corrupt, is said to be little more than a 'checkpoint force',⁹ a means of extortion and employment, echoing the corrupt and inept officers of the ARVN.

This condition raises doubts about a strategy which centres on deepening the Western commitment to further equipping and mentoring local anti-ISIS forces, including the Kurdish *Peshmerga* and Iraqi Army, as a bulwark against the Islamic movement. After all, has this not already been attempted since 2003? According to data gathered by a private arms-tracking organisation, most of the 1980s' ammunition used by ISIS came from China, most probably captured from Syrian forces. The majority of the ISIS cartridges from the 2000s, however, were made in the United States, and were most likely taken by the Islamic State from Iraqi security

forces.¹⁰ This suggests that the problem is deeper, fundamentally political, and not simply solved by more military and materiel assistance.

There are other, ominous parallels with the war in Vietnam.

Dien Bien Phu's remote location made it entirely dependent on air power for support and resupply. The most dangerous course of action for the French forces was if the Viet Minh found a way to move their artillery to within range, as did indeed play out. There was little they could do except rely on their ability to bomb these gun positions from the air. However, the Viet Minh employed both dummy guns and extensive camouflage and, together with the ubiquitous low cloud that hung across the plain and into the mountainous jungle, this made it extremely difficult for French bombers to find their targets. As Gary Anderson has written, President Obama is making a mistake if he believes that he can destroy the military forces of the Islamic State by airpower alone. 'Airpower can help in defeating the expansion of the would-be Caliphate's territory, but it will not root them out of the cities and towns that they have already captured. Their light infantry will embed itself in the population and use the civilians as shields subjecting us to the grinding pictures of dead women and children which will eventually obscure the war crimes of [ISIS leader Abu Bakr] al-Baghdadi and his minions'.¹¹ Already there are indications that ISIS fighters are minimising their use of mobile phones and conspicuous convoys of trucks in order to avoid being targeted from the air.¹² Air-strikes also pose other, related problems concerning the Free Syrian Army rebels, with whom there must be coordination of plans and capacity. Without this, Western actions risk at best not assisting the rebels and, at worst, alienating and turning these erstwhile allies.

Indeed, rooting out ISIS, in both Syria and Iraq, will inevitably require door-to-door operations and boots on the ground, for which it seems the Iraqi Army cannot be relied, nor the rebels in Syria. More than anything, there is a need for a comprehensive grand strategy to deal with ISIS, on land as from the air.



In the end, the inability to resupply doomed the French effort, the Vietnamese caption on this photograph reading: 'Parcels were parachuted by French planes in Dien Bien Phu but were tightened by our artillery that enemy didn't dare to take'.

Another striking feature of the Dien Bien Phu battle, and from other campaigns of the last decade, was the importance of the 'home advantage'. The French surely knew this at the time – they did after all have some locally raised battalions of their own – but the isolation, terrain and proximity to the Viet Minh heartland was a significant advantage to Giap's forces. A great number of Viet Minh were not even fighters at all but the local population called to arms. More than 20 000 peasants and tribesmen alone laboured to open up trails for the Viet Minh. Their ability to hide, live and hunt off the land was instinctive.

Giap's capacity to conduct resupply, especially of artillery ammunition, and Colonel de Castries' reliance on resupply from the air reminds us that war is more often a match of logistics than of sheer firepower. The latter can only exist with the former. The reliefs on the monuments en route to Giap's remote mountain headquarters 35kms north of Dien Bien Phu depict the heroic scenes of moving guns and supplies. Bicycles, strengthened with bamboo, were game-changers, increasing six-fold the load each soldier could move, up to 300kgs.¹³ It is said that Giap kept a chart next to his desk in his thatched hut recording supply deliveries rather than casualties.¹⁴



The memorial to Giap en route to his HQ, 35kms north of Dien Bien Phu.

France's belief that all that was needed to defeat the Viet Minh was to present its troops as a target is an arrogance that has played out many times subsequently, not least in Iraq and Afghanistan. The notion that a professional army will always defeat an irregular force, given a fair fight and maybe a little time, is not a safe assumption. Recent history has shown that it can often lead to some of the core principles of war fighting, such as surprise and sustainability, being disregarded. The comparative advantages of the local fighters has proven on more than one occasion to be more than a match for the hi-tech, remote and network-enabled capabilities of the developed world. Home will nearly always defeat drone.

But the most important lesson of Vietnam, both from the French and American periods of the war, relates to clearly defining the objective of the operation. 'It is nearly impossible to completely destroy a movement,' Colonel Gary Anderson observes with regard to the current actions taken by the Obama administration against ISIS, 'as we have seen with al-Qaeda for thirteen years. It is possible to destroy the armed forces that allow the enemy to occupy territory and protect his seat of power. The president did not make it clear which goal he has in mind.'¹⁵ Without such a clear definition, the ISIS operation runs the risk of remaining as open-ended as Vietnam became, and being dependent less on the facts on the ground than the political temperature in Washington. As General William Westmoreland, Commander of US Forces in Vietnam from 1964–1968, put it, 'time tends to obscure the fact that a tactical defeat for the French was turned into strategic victory for the Viet Minh not so much by what happened on the battlefield as by lack of support in Paris for a seemingly interminable colonial war.'¹⁶

Taking on ISIS, to bring this up to the present time, cannot therefore be done only with military force, and will also have to be sensitive to the difficult ideological struggles – between modernising forces and those of radical extremism – taking place in Arab nations that form a fundamental pillar of the political support necessary for the campaign against ISIS.¹⁷ As Schoendoerffer's film depicts, the gulf that developed between the political and military arenas proved lethal to both the French and American-backed campaigns in Vietnam. A similar lesson should be heeded in the fight against ISIS and its corollary, support for the rebels in Syria.

Looking Ahead

After retiring from government in 1991, General Giap became a critic of government reform. But by looking forward and shaking off the colonial legacy and the subsequent ideological claustrophobia of its communist regime Vietnam has transformed itself into an industrial power in less than three decades since the process of free-market renovation, known as *doi moi*, began in 1986. The result has been over 6 per cent annual growth for 30 years, and the country attaining middle income status in 2011. This is felt not just in statistics alone, however, but also in other, obvious symbols of rising wealth, notably the proliferation of consumer goods, including cars and the motorbikes weaving through Vietnam's streets and stacked on the pavements.

The presence of giant Yamaha, Canon and Panasonic factories, among many others, on the road to Hanoi's airport, hint also at these dramatic changes, built on a combination of cheap skills and an openness to capital and markets. The textile sector alone, for example, provides employment for 2.5 million people directly and another 2.7 million in related sectors.¹⁸ There are darker aspects however. Corruption has increased to 'spectacular' levels, reportedly negatively impacting every aspect of public services that are provided to citizens and businesses. Vietnam ranked 116th (of 177 countries and territories surveyed) on Transparency International's 2013 Corruptions Perception Index, the same as Nepal and Albania.¹⁹ The *Socialist* Republic of Vietnam has been consumed by capitalism.

Ironically, the South has outstripped the North in this economic revolution. The city's population has more than doubled to 7.8 million since the end of the war in 1975 and its economy has grown at 9.3 per cent in 2013, pushing its per capita income to US\$4 513 – more than twice the national average – and contributing a quarter of the country's GDP.²⁰ Now, Saigon is planning a new airport, as the existing one is at bursting point with 20 million passengers annually, almost twice the number that flies in and out of Hanoi.

Drivers of growth are not the problem in Iraq – it receives \$90 billion in oil revenue annually from an estimated production of 2.6 million barrels per day. The country has 115 billion barrels of proven oil reserves, the fifth-largest in the world. Indeed, the fact that ISIS is said to be ‘making millions’ out of stolen and smuggled oil sold principally to Iraqis and to Turkey paradoxically illustrates this point.²¹ While there are longer-term challenges in the Iraqi economy, such as to diversify (oil accounts for 97 per cent of exports), the principal short-term problem with this wealth is one of rent-seeking and a failure of redistribution:²² Iraq is less Norway than Nigeria in this regard.



Last laugh in Dien Bien Phu?

Of course there are differences between the situation in Vietnam and that in Iraq today. The former was an indigenous popular insurgency; the latter an extremely unpopular insurgency involving a substantial participation of foreign fighters. However, the parallels in terms of the role of outside powers, and in particular the United States, in lacking a coherent strategy or understanding the situation are poignant. Conceptualising adversaries as ‘terrorists’ risks missing the point and, at times, can vastly underestimate the threat and overall impact.²³

As for Vietnam, it has quickly left its own violent past behind. In the irony of ironies, on the once fortified French post ‘Dominique’ in Dien Bien Phu sits a replica Eiffel Tower erected a decade ago as a radio and television mast. Someone has had the last laugh – but of which side? It just shows that for Vietnam, yesterday and the war was another country.

Endnotes

- 1 Numbering 25 000.
- 2 As the battle progressed, these were later to be supplemented by two more strongpoints, Sparrowhawk and Juno. The map is sourced from <http://histoire-militaire.pagesperso-orange.fr/cartes/dienbienphu.htm>.
- 3 These being, first, the organisation and consolidation of base areas as defensive sanctuaries and as springboards for attacks; second, progressive expansion including attacks on isolated enemy units to obtain arms, supplies and political support, with the enemy increasingly becoming defensive and static; and third, the destruction of the enemy in decisive battles, combined with uprisings in the cities and towns, leading to the downfall of the regime. Mao Tse-tung. *On Guerrilla Warfare*. (First Illinois Paperback, 2000).
- 4 For details on these supplies, see Robert I. Branyon and Lawrence H. Larsen, editors. *The Eisenhower Administration 1953–1961. A Documentary History*. 2 Volumes. (New York, Random House, Inc. 1971), pp. 308–309, cited in the excellent summary by N.C. Smith, ‘The American Reaction to Dien Bien Phu’, *South African Military History Journal*, Vol 6, No 3, June 1984, at <http://samilitaryhistory.org/vol063ns.html>.
- 5 See the Sky TCV documentary at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFMcvHQIpHY>, 18 May 2012.
- 6 As cited in ‘The War in Vietnam’, at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPcbwswxbzw>, 11 December 2013.
- 7 Cited in Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam*. (New York. Oxford University Press. 1978), pp. 341.
- 8 As per his description on 2 October 2002 of the impending war in Iraq. See <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=99591469>.
- 9 For a discussion of the impact of governance on Iraq and especially on the Kurds, see Dexter Filkins, ‘The Fight of Their Lives: ISIS, Iraq and the Kurds’ big opportunity’, *The New Yorker*, 29 September 2014, pp. 42–55.
- 10 C.J. Chivers, ‘ISIS’ Ammunition Is Shown to Have Origins in US and China’, *The New York Times*, 5 October 2014, at http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/06/world/isis-ammunition-is-shown-to-have-origins-in-us-and-china.html?emc=edit_th_20141006&nl=todaysheadlines&nliid=59921691&_r=1.
- 11 See Gary Anderson, ‘If You Liked Vietnam, You’ll Love the War With the Islamic State’, *Small Wars Journal*, 12 September 2014, at <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrn/art/if-you-liked-vietnam-you%E2%80%99ll-love-the-war-with-the-islamic-state>.
- 12 See ‘Isis extremists “changing tactics to avoid death”: Jihadists “are banned from Twitter and start using motorbikes instead of convoys in attempt to avoid bombing”’, *Daily Mail*, 1 October 2014, at www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2776899/RAF-Tornados-destroy-two-Islamic-State-targets-airstrikes-continue-support-Kurdish-Iraqi-forces.html.
- 13 We are grateful to Professor Do Duc Dinh for this insight.
- 14 For a very useful guide to the battlefields, see Peter Hunt’s three-part series on ‘Going back to places I have never been’, at <http://hksw.org/Dien%20Bien%20Phu.htm>.
- 15 Anderson, op cit.
- 16 William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1976), pp. 404–405.
- 17 For a discussion of this, see ‘What it’ll take to defeat ISIS’, *The Straits Times*, 30 September 2014, p. A22.
- 18 Cited in *Heritage*, September 2014, p. 112.
- 19 *Corruption Perceptions Index 2013*, Transparency International, at <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2013/results>.
- 20 See ‘Saigon beats Hanoi four decades after Vietnam war’, *Bloomberg*, 4 September 2014, at <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-09-03/saigon-beating-hanoi-four-decades-after-vietnam-war.html>.
- 21 See ‘ISIS “making millions” out of stolen oil revenues in Iraq’, *RT*, 23 July 2014, at <http://rt.com/news/174880-oil-revenue-iraq-isis/>.
- 22 See, for example, ‘Iraq sees hefty return to oil growth in 2014’, *Reuters*, 23 October 2013, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/10/23/iraq-oil-idUSL5N0ID2K820131023>.
- 23 We are grateful to an anonymous reviewer for this insight.