This book presents new perspectives on the Vietnam War, its global repercussions, and the role of this war in modern history. The volume reveals “America’s War” as an international event that reverberated all over the world: in domestic settings of numerous nation-states, combatants and noncombatants alike, as well as in transnational relations and alliance systems. The volume thereby covers a wide geographical range – from Berkeley and Berlin to Cambodia and Canberra. The chapters address political, military, and diplomatic issues no less than cultural and intellectual consequences of “Vietnam.” The contributors also set the Vietnam War in comparison to other major conflicts in world history; they cover more than three centuries and develop general insights into the tragedies and trajectories of military conflicts as phenomena of modern societies in general. For the first time, “America’s War” is thus depicted as a truly global event whose origins and characteristics deserve an interdisciplinary treatment.


Lloyd C. Gardner is the Charles and Mary Beard Professor of History at Rutgers University. His recent publications include Pay and Price (1995) and Spheres of Influence (1993).

Wilfried Mausbach is Assistant Professor of History at the John F. Kennedy Institute, Free University of Berlin, and a Research Fellow of the Volkswagen Foundation. He is the author of Zwischen Morgenthau und Marshall (1996).
Edited by Christof Mauch
with the assistance of David Lazar

The German Historical Institute is a center for advanced study and research whose purpose is to provide a permanent basis for scholarly cooperation among historians from the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States. The Institute conducts, promotes, and supports research into both American and German political, social, economic, and cultural history; into transatlantic migration, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; and into the history of international relations, with special emphasis on the roles played by the United States and Germany.

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Frontmatter
More information
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contributors</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detlef Junker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Introduction: America’s War and the World**  
*Andreas W. Daum, Lloyd C. Gardner, and Wilfried Mausbach*  
1

## PART ONE  RELOCATING VIETNAM: COMPARISONS IN TIME AND SPACE

1. **A Colonial War in a Postcolonial Era: The United States’ Occupation of Vietnam**  
   *Michael Adas*  
   27

   *Fabian Hilfrich*  
   43

3. **The Challenge of Revolutions and the Emergence of Nation-States: British Reactions to the Foundation of the United States and American Responses to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 1780–1980**  
   *T. Christopher Jespersen*  
   65

4. **Peripheral War: A Recipe for Disaster? The United States in Vietnam and Japan in China**  
   *John Prados*  
   89

5. **The Panmunjom and Paris Armistices: Patterns of War Termination**  
   *Jeffrey Kimball*  
   105

6. **Versailles and Vietnam: Coming to Terms with War**  
   *Sabine Behrenbeck*  
   123
Contents

PART TWO INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND THE DYNAMICS OF ALLIANCE POLITICS

8 America Isolated: The Western Powers and the Escalation of the War Fredrik Logevall 175
9 Bamboo in the Shadows: Relations Between the United States and Thailand During the Vietnam War Arne Kislenko 197
10 The Strategic Concerns of a Regional Power: Australia’s Involvement in the Vietnam War Peter Edwards 221
11 People’s Warfare Versus Peaceful Coexistence: Vietnam and the Sino-Soviet Struggle for Ideological Supremacy Eva-Maria Stolberg 237

PART THREE RECASTING VIETNAM: DOMESTIC SCENES AND DISCOURSES

12 The Center-Left Government in Italy and the Escalation of the Vietnam War Leopoldo Nutti 259
13 Auschwitz and Vietnam: West German Protest Against America’s War During the 1960s Wilfried Mausbach 279
14 The World Peace Council and the Antiwar Movement in East Germany Günter Wernicke 299
15 All Power to the Imagination! Antiwar Activism and Emerging Feminism in the Late 1960s Barbara L. Tischler 321
16 Vietnam: Many Wars? Lloyd C. Gardner 341

Index 357
Contributors

Michael Adas is a professor of history at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey.

Sabine Behrenbeck is Programmdirektorin for Sonderforschungsbereiche at the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft in Bonn.

Andreas W. Daum is a professor of history, University at Buffalo, State University of New York.

Peter Edwards is a visiting professor at the School of Politics of the University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra.

Lloyd C. Gardner is a professor of history at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey.

Fabian Hilfrich is a researcher at the Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Auswärtiges Amt, Berlin.

T. Christopher Jespersen is a professor of history at North Georgia College and State University.

Jeffrey Kimball is a professor of history at Miami University of Ohio.

Arne Kislenko is a professor of history at Ryerson University, Toronto.

Fredrik Logevall is a professor of history at the University of California at Santa Barbara.
Contributors

Wilfried Mausbach is an assistant professor of history at the John F. Kennedy Institute, Free University of Berlin, and a Research Fellow of the Volkswagen Foundation.

Leopoldo Nuti is a professor in the Department of Political Institutions and Social Sciences of the University of Rome.

John Prados is an analyst compiling the Vietnam Documentation Collection for the National Security Archives in Washington, D.C.

Eva-Maria Stolberg is an assistant professor of history at the University of Bonn.

Barbara L. Tischler teaches at the Horace Mann School in Riverdale, New York.

Günter Wernicke is an assistant professor at the Institute for the Historical Sciences at the Humboldt University of Berlin.

Hubert Zimmermann is an assistant professor of history at the University of Bochum.
“The whole world is watching,” went the rousing chant of demonstrators at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in August 1968. Directed primarily at the unfolding violence of the police and National Guard, the slogan also applied to the very American actions in Vietnam that the protesters wanted Democratic delegates to confront. But people around the world were not merely passive observers of the American war in Southeast Asia and its repercussions within the United States. As this book vividly demonstrates, the Vietnam War, in affecting governments and ordinary citizens way beyond the principal belligerents, represented in fact nothing less than a global event.

In presenting international and comparative perspectives on an important subject in American and – as it turns out – world history, this book dovetails nicely with the research agenda of the German Historical Institute (GHI) in Washington, D.C. Committed to the study of cultural, economic, political, and societal interaction between the United States, Germany, and Europe, the GHI has found it rewarding to take a global perspective on occasion. Most recently, the success of 1968: The World Transformed (edited by Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert, and Detlef Junker) has been a prime example of the scholarly merits of such endeavors. The present collection continues on this path.

America, the Vietnam War, and the World grew out of an international conference held at the GHI on November 19–22, 1998. I extend my warmest thanks to all those colleagues who participated in the conference as chairpersons, contributors, or discussants. Although the lively discussions following each session could not be included here, numerous remarks and comments are reflected in the published essays. The staff of the GHI did a superb job of assuring that yet another scholarly meeting at 1607 New Hampshire Avenue would be a smooth and enjoyable affair. For this, I particularly thank
Christa Brown, Dieter H. Schneider, and Bärbel Thomas. During the conference, the conveners were also able to rely on the unwavering support of Uta Balbier.

Turning a collection of papers into a book is always a challenge. Several colleagues helped to meet this challenge. At the GHI, Thomas Goebel and Annette Marciel carefully read the manuscript. As always, a special thank you must go to Daniel S. Mattern, the series editor at the Institute, whose expertise in creating chapters out of conference papers and then molding them into a concise and readable book manuscript remains unsurpassed. Outside of the GHI, I thank the two anonymous reviewers for reading the entire manuscript and for providing valuable comments and criticism. Last but not least, I would like to thank Frank Smith, the Institute’s editor at Cambridge University Press, for his support of this project from the start and for expertly guiding the manuscript through to publication.

Detlef Junker

Heidelberg, Germany

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