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978-0-521-00876-1 - America, the Vietnam War, and the World: comparative and international perspectives

Edited by Andreas W. Daum, Lloyd C. Gardner and Wilfried Mausbach

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America, the Vietnam War, and the World

COMPARATIVE AND INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

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.

Andreas W. Daum is currently Professor of History at the University at Buffalo, State University of New York. He is the author of *Wissenschaftspopularisierung im 19. Jahrhundert* (1998) and *Kennedy in Berlin: Politik, Kultur und Emotionen im Kaltern Krieg* (2003).

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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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Preface

“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

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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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