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H. R. McMaster

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DERELICTION OF DUTY

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H. R. McMaster : Dereliction of Duty : Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Dereliction of Duty : Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam:

103 of 111 people found the following review helpful. White House IntrigueBy Richard C. GeschkeThe 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.108 of 116 people found the following review helpful. A must read if you served in Vietnam.By D WOutstanding 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.132 of 139 people found the following review helpful. A history of twisted thought and the Coppola Four-Star ClownsBy Dr. Lee D. CarlsonFor 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.

"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.

.com For years the popular myth surrounding the Vietnam War was that the Joint Chiefs of Staff knew what it would take to win but were consistently thwarted or ignored by the politicians in power. Now H. R. McMaster shatters this and other misconceptions about the military and Vietnam in Dereliction of Duty. Himself a West Point graduate, McMaster painstakingly waded through every memo and report concerning Vietnam from every meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to build a comprehensive picture of a house divided against itself: a president and his coterie of

advisors obsessed with keeping Vietnam from becoming a political issue versus the Joint Chiefs themselves, mired in interservice rivalries and unable to reach any unified goals or conclusions about the country's conduct in the war. McMaster stresses two elements in his discussion of America's failure in Vietnam: the hubris of Johnson and his advisors and the weakness of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Dereliction of Duty* provides both a thorough exploration of the military's role in determining Vietnam policy and a telling portrait of the men most responsible. From Booklist The "error not of values and intentions but of judgment and capabilities" to which Robert McNamara admitted in *In Retrospect* (1995) leaves out his deceptions that helped plunge America into the Vietnam War. McNamara may not have remembered them in his memoir, but army officer McMaster found them in the Joint Chiefs of Staff's archives for the crucial decision-making years of 1964 and 1965. Distilled to its essence, McMaster's thesis proposes that the plans and advice on Vietnam prepared by the nation's military advisers were systematically sidetracked by McNamara. Two facts exemplify the whole dense forest of facts McMaster explores: the prediction of the Joint Chiefs of the Army and Marine Corps that "victory" would require five years and 500,000 troops only reached LBJ's ears once (he didn't listen, obviously), and the Pentagon war games of McNamara's theory of "graduated pressure" eerily ended in stalemate. McNamara suppressed all such warning signs, theorizes McMaster, because he was responding to LBJ's anxiety to keep Vietnam's "noise level" down until the 1964 election was over and the Great Society safely enacted. As damning of the civilian leaders as he is, McMaster doesn't blithely exonerate the brass. They didn't heed their own warnings and acquiesced in McNamara's incrementalist policy, in the hope of eventually getting the huge force they diffidently advised would be needed to win. Writing about an ocean of memos, meetings, and reports as he does, McMaster delivers a narrative more diligent than dramatic, but his take on pinpointing the architect(s) of the Vietnam fiasco should prove, nonetheless, of high interest. Gilbert Taylor From Kirkus sAn intriguing analysis that challenges the view that Cold War anticommunism was primarily responsible for American military intervention in Vietnam. In his first book, McMaster, a US Army major and Persian Gulf war veteran, and a historian who has taught at West Point, zeroes in on the actions of Lyndon Johnson and his top advisers from the time LBJ became president in November 1963 to the July 1965 decision to escalate the war drastically. The author makes a convincing case that domestic political considerations were behind the development of the failed strategy of graduated military pressure. The actions of Johnson, his top civilian advisers, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) were, moreover, characterized by "arrogance, weakness [and] lying in the pursuit of self interest." President Johnson heads McMaster's culpability list, which also includes Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, JCS head and US ambassador to South Vietnam Gen. Maxwell Taylor, Taylor's JCS successor, Gen. Earle Wheeler, and top advisers William and McGeorge Bundy. McMaster's touchstone is the unchallenged fact that Johnson wanted to fight the war on poverty, not the war in Vietnam. McMaster interprets virtually all of LBJ's actions as chief executive in that light. From November 1963 to November 1964 Johnson's overarching goal was to win the presidential election. After that, his main concern was enacting his Great Society programs. The fact that Johnson made Vietnam policy based on domestic-policy implications, McMaster believes, was a recipe for disaster in Vietnam. David Halberstam promulgated similar arguments in *The Best and the Brightest* (1972). McMaster, using newly released transcripts and other primary source material, pays more attention to the JCS's role. Unsparing in his analysis of the chiefs, McMaster takes them severely to task for their "failure" to provide LBJ with "their best advice." A relentless, stinging indictment of the usual Johnson administration Vietnam War suspects. (illustrations, not seen) -- Copyright 1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.