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**Abstract:** While much is known about the anti-Vietnam War activities of senators William Fulbright, Mike Mansfield, Wayne Morse, and others, not much has been written about Tennessee senator Albert Gore's views on this conflict. The author discusses Gore's reservations about possible US involvement as early as 1954 and his opposition to the war from 1964 to 1970.

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## **THE COOING OF A DOVE: SENATOR ALBERT GORE SR.'S OPPOSITION TO THE WAR IN VIETNAM**

As a senator from Tennessee, Albert Gore Sr. became one of the leading congressional critics of American involvement in Vietnam during the 1960s and early 1970s. Weary of many aspects of American containment policy, Gore voiced concern over military assistance to dictators, secrecy in foreign aid programs, and the viability of sending American troops to fight in the jungles of Vietnam. He privately opposed sending U.S. soldiers to relieve the French garrison at Dienbienphu in 1954, and his anxiety mounted during the widening U.S. role in Vietnam during the Kennedy years, although Gore did not express any public reservations. After supporting the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, Gore quickly broke with the Johnson administration and began advocating as early as December 1964 a negotiated settlement of the war. In October 1967, he called for the "neutralization" of Southeast Asia. Gore's often-ignored role as a high-level congressional critic of the Vietnam War deserves further exploration in examining the reasons for and impact of congressional opposition to the conflict.

Senator Albert Gore Sr.'s struggle with the war in Vietnam serves as an instructive example of how, at the individual level, the goals of America's cold war foreign policy disintegrated in the jungles and rice paddies of

Southeast Asia. Gore's disenchantment with American actions in Vietnam led him to reject the policy of globalized containment that undergirded U.S. foreign policy. Yet the Tennessee Democrat's opposition to America's involvement in Vietnam has gone virtually unnoticed. He has been overshadowed by either those senators with more direct influence on policy, such as J. William Fulbright (D-AR) or Mike Mansfield (D-MT), or those with more notoriety, such as Wayne Morse (D-OR), Ernest Gruening (D-AK), George McGovern (D-SD), Eugene McCarthy (D-WI), or Robert Kennedy (D-NY).[ 1]

Gore did not decide any significant war-related issue, nor did he bring the conflict to an end. But as an early and vocal critic of the war, and as a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, his became a crucial vote in maintaining Chairman J. William Fulbright's dovish majority. The committee became the nexus of congressional opposition to the war. As one of only a dozen or so persistent congressional opponents of American activities in Southeast Asia, Gore's struggle with the war contributes a significant piece to the mosaic of political contention in Washington. This opposition, mounting over time and to which Gore frequently contributed and occasionally led, served to limit the ability of the chief executive to wage war as he saw fit; and, ultimately, there emerged the critical mass to bring the conflict to an end.

In 1953, when Gore took his seat in the Senate, he had already served for seven terms in the House. He was a New Dealer, and that liberalism carried over into the foreign policy arena. In the post-World War II era, he was part of the liberal interventionist bloc that dominated the foreign policy debate. Gore believed that the United States could-indeed should-export the advantages of America's political and economic system to the underdeveloped world. This goal was made more crucial by the perceived threat such poor nations faced from communist aggression. "In the final analysis," he said, "the battle of the free world against the Communist world, is a battle between the concept of freedom against the concept of despotism."! 2] It was these twin impulses of anticommunism and genuine altruism that ultimately led the nation into war in Southeast Asia. Through most of the 1950s, Gore accepted the doctrines of globalized containment and the goals of a liberal internationalist foreign policy with which it was entwined.

With regard to Vietnam itself, Gore initially supported U.S. commitments in Indochina along with almost everyone else in Congress and the nation. Like others in government, Gore was unwilling to see concessions made to the communists, yet he was also extremely cautious about committing American military forces abroad. When the Eisenhower administration, for example, began exploring the possibility of rescuing the French forces at Dienbienphu in 1954, Gore was very reluctant to see American soldiers involved. Ultimately, he indicated he would support the president if such action were taken.[ 3] Gore's position resembled that of most of his colleagues on both sides of the aisle: he was torn between the fear of another unpopular war in Asia and the fear of "losing" another nation to world communism.[ 4]

Gore's first serious study of the situation in Southeast Asia came in 1959 when he assumed a seat on the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and made a five-day trip to South Vietnam. While there, he proclaimed his support for U.S. assistance to Vietnam in words suffused with the containment doctrine: "I believe Vietnam is a sensitive area, that this, so to speak, is the front line between the Communist world and the free world." [ 5] He was not alone, for even among congressional critics of the way American aid to South Vietnam was administered, support for that assistance remained strong.

Even so, the 1959 visit to Indochina had a profound impact on Gore. Upon his return, he publicly questioned for the first time the wisdom of American aid. He was increasingly concerned about those governments that enjoyed U.S. support but were as authoritarian as any communist regime. He saw little difference between a right-wing dictator and a communist overlord and concluded that, even in the short term, American support for the former could hasten the rise of the latter. Gore believed that the citizens of dictatorial regimes were either unaware of American support or identified the United States with local oppression. He warned that Washington could pay a severe price for its continued alignment with South Vietnam's Ngo Dinh Diem, who showed little

interest in progress toward democracy. Gore was disturbed by the 1955 referendum between Diem and Bao Dai (in which Diem received 97.8 percent of the vote), saying that the elections had a "certain Iron Curtain flavor." As a liberal interventionist, Gore contended that the U.S. foreign aid program was misdirected, leading to results that contradicted the nation's long-term goal of a "world order in which human beings everywhere shall enjoy individual freedom and increasing benefits of a free and productive society." [6] By 1959, Gore still subscribed to American globalism, but had significant reservations about involvement in Vietnam. He had not yet connected the two policy threads.

The inauguration of John F. Kennedy in 1961 brought Gore's close friend and fellow Democrat into the White House. Friendship and party allegiance prompted a noticeable softening of Gore's public stance toward Vietnam; but Kennedy's escalation of the American role in the region intensified the Tennessean's deepening concern over U.S. commitments throughout the region. Gore kept quiet in public, but behind the closed doors of the Foreign Relations Committee his questions grew ever more pointed and his criticisms increasingly severe.

During the Kennedy years, Gore rejected the intellectual rationale that underlay U.S. policy in Vietnam, though publicly he remained supportive of the administration. He saw Kennedy's steady increases in the number of American personnel in Vietnam from a few hundred to many thousands as a fundamental change, not an incremental boost. Such action represented a departure from an advisory role and the adoption of a much more interventionist stance. It was no accident that Attorney General Robert Kennedy's comment that "we" would win in Vietnam caught Gore's attention. As the president set the stage for making Vietnam a U.S. war, Gore refined his earlier criticisms of American policy in the region, connecting them with broader questions about the efficacy of containment. He grew increasingly skeptical about the nation's ability to achieve its goals. [7]

Gore identified numerous problems with U.S. policy. He suspected that Washington could not overcome China's strategic advantages in the region. He said the struggle in Vietnam ran much deeper than the simplistic notion of aggressive North Vietnamese infiltrating an otherwise stable south. He voiced his belief that more military aid to Saigon would not end the conflict or make the 150,000-man South Vietnamese army any more effective in defending the countryside. As early as June 1961, Gore regretted having voted for the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO), set up by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in 1954. "I am sorry I voted for it," said Gore. "I did. And I stand as equally responsible as anyone else, because I voted for this." Having examined the region closely, he had become convinced that America's technological and military superiority could not win this war. France, he pointed out, had fought with a large, better-armed force for nine years and lost anyway. [8]

Furthermore, and more importantly, Gore had come to see the conflict as a civil war in a neocolonial context. "It was a very great mistake," he remarked, "for the United States of America to pick up the chips of a disintegrating French colonial empire." He looked in vain for a way out of the conflict. "I do not know how we disengage," the senator went on to say, but he saw any amount of military aid directed against an indigenous guerrilla army as a dubious undertaking, particularly when the people of South Vietnam did not support the Diem government. [9]

Having realized the futility and risks of America's deepening involvement in Vietnam, Gore questioned the strategic value of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. "I know of no strategic material that it [Vietnam] has," he told Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. "I know of nothing in surplus supply there except poor people and rice. It seems to me we have no need for either." [10] Gore also challenged the domino metaphor itself, observing that the importance of Vietnam "rests on the falling domino theory—that if Laos falls, then everything else is going to fall, or if Vietnam falls, then everything is going to fall. This is the same thing we have had—hold every inch." Echoing Fulbright, he doubted "our ability to hold every inch." [11]

As the American presence increased, Gore advised President Kennedy, with increasing urgency, to avoid further entanglement. These personal appeals climaxed in 1963 after Diem's widespread persecution of Vietnamese Buddhists. Seizing on this provocation, Gore set up a White House meeting and urged the president to withdraw all U.S. advisors from, and end all military aid to, Vietnam. But Gore failed to convince Kennedy of the opportunity presented by the Buddhist uprisings, and escalation continued.! 12]

During the Kennedy years, when Gore openly questioned the character of American commitments in Southeast Asia and broke with the policy of globalized containment, he conveyed his misgivings only to the president and in closed sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. In public, he refrained from criticizing Kennedy and often parroted the party line. He later regretted his silence. [13]

## THE COOING OF A DOVE

On November 27, 1963, five days after taking office, President Lyndon Johnson vowed to maintain U.S. commitments from South Vietnam to West Berlin.[ 14] His decision would have tragic consequences. By the end of his administration, the United States had committed well over half a million troops to Vietnam with no clear end in sight. At home, opposition to the war grew steadily and the nation was embroiled in social conflict, lending irony to the 1963 advice of Sen. Richard Russell (D-GA) to "do whatever it takes to bring to power [in South Vietnam] a government that would ask us to go home." [ 15]

In September 1963, shortly before Kennedy's death, George McGovern, then a freshman senator, publicly called for withdrawal of U.S. forces. Wayne Morse declared that South Vietnam was not worth the life of a "single American boy." [ 16] In December 1963, Senator Mansfield urged Johnson to disengage and by February 1964 had endorsed Charles DeGaulle's plan for the neutralization of all Vietnam. By March, Senators Morse, Mansfield, and McGovern were joined by Ernest Gruening, Frank Church, and conservative Southerner Allen J. Eilender (D-LA) in announcing their opposition to U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Fulbright and Sen. Jacob Javits (R-NY), as well as the much more hawkish House of Representatives, continued to support the war effort. Gore clearly opposed the war, but he did not speak out.[ 17]

Then, in early August 1964, came the naval firefight in Tonkin Gulf. The incident precipitated Gore's public break with the U.S. policy he had earlier abandoned in private. Opponents of the war were knocked off-balance, however, by the administration's deft (indeed deceitful) handling of the situation. Gore was no exception. Johnson immediately asked Congress for approval of a resolution that would authorize the president "to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression." The resolution also gave Johnson a free hand in expanding the war by authorizing the president "to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom." [ 18] The Tonkin Gulf Resolution sailed through Congress without serious opposition. In the House, the vote was 416-0 after only forty minutes of debate. In the Senate, Fulbright used his immense prestige to shepherd the measure through the floor debate, after which it was overwhelmingly approved 88-2, with only Morse and Gruening in opposition.[ 19]

Senator Gore voted for the resolution and supported it on the Senate floor. But he also expressed openly for the first time since the Eisenhower years his mounting concern about affairs in Indochina. "Although I have not publicly voiced my doubts," he said, "I have, in the executive sessions of the Committee, expressed deep concern and I have raised critical questions ... about U.S. policy in Vietnam. Perhaps I was remiss in not giving public expression to these views." Despite his misgivings, Gore believed that the United States must respond to the presumed North Vietnamese attacks. "When U.S. forces have been attacked repeatedly upon the high seas ... whatever doubts one may have entertained are water over the dam. Freedom of the seas must be preserved. Aggression against our forces must be repulsed." He concluded by calling for Johnson to "act with prudence, caution, and wisdom." [20]

Hence, Gore's vote for the Tonkin Gulf Resolution was not a statement of support for the war; Gore was as deeply opposed to the American intervention as Morse and Gruening. Rather, Gore saw the resolution as a statement in support of freedom of the seas, not for an adventure in Vietnam. Other factors no doubt influenced his vote. He was up for reelection in 1964, and he had great respect for Fulbright, who assured the Senate that Johnson had no intention of using the measure to escalate the Vietnam conflict.

Realizing within months that the resolution was little more than a pretext for Johnson's widening of the war, Gore continued in his role as critic. In December 1964 he again openly questioned the wisdom of continuing the war. Speaking in Miami, he asserted that the United States should accept a negotiated settlement in Vietnam. He made the suggestion again in Washington the following month, attracting the attention of all three television networks, as well as a displeased president.[ 21]

But Gore was not alone. The opposition that had emerged before the Tonkin Gulf incident quickly reawakened. By January 1965 McGovern and Church had joined Gore, Morse, and Gruening in calling for an end to the war. That month an administration survey of Congress noted "a fairly definable Senate group who should be watched closely.... They are the Church-McGovern-Pell-Gore-Nelson bunch, which is partially dormant, and could expand." The same report took note of both Fulbright's and Mansfield's concerns about the war and advised disregarding the strident opposition of both Morse and Gruening as too radical to be taken seriously by most members of the legislature.[ 22]

The initiation of a massive bombing campaign against North Vietnam in February 1965 was soon followed by the commitment of U.S. combat troops to South Vietnam. On March 8, 1965, Marines landed at Danang, ostensibly to protect U.S. air bases. By April, the administration had sent another forty thousand soldiers to Vietnam. Rising congressional criticism of Johnson's policy prompted the president to request a \$700 million appropriation from Congress to wage war in Vietnam. The president explicitly stated that a vote for the request also meant support for continuing the American role in Southeast Asia.f 23]

Johnson's strategy deliberately left Gore and the other doves in the awkward position of either supporting the escalation of a conflict they opposed or denying funds to troops already in the field. During Senate debate on the appropriation request, Gore declared, "We are bogged down in a commitment to a major war, the tragedy and consequence of which no one can foresee." He stated emphatically that by voting for the Tonkin Gulf Resolution he did not intend to approve the escalation of the war or the deployment of combat troops in South Vietnam. But Johnson's tactics for quelling congressional opposition were effective. Jacob Javits, Frank Church, Robert Kennedy, George Aiken (R-VT), and John Sherman Cooper (R-KY) joined Gore in voting for the request while publicly announcing reservations about the conflict. Unlike most other doves who eventually were willing to use the power of the purse, Gore never voted against an appropriation bill for the war.[ 24]

As the situation in Vietnam worsened, Gore became ever more skeptical that American goals could be attained. In May 1965 he called for the United States to "undertake a peace offensive," and praised Johnson's offer to "negotiate for peace without conditions" advanced in an April 7 speech at Johns Hopkins University. 25] Then, on July 28, Johnson announced that he had ordered still further troop increases in Vietnam. Congress reacted with acquiescence, leaving Gore and Morse virtually alone in criticizing the action. The Tennessean, for his part, minced no words. He termed Johnson's decision the continuation of a failed policy. "The situation in Vietnam is worse than it was 10 years ago; it is worse than it was 1 year ago," he said. "It is worse than it was 1 month ago. And it is worse today than it was 1 week ago." In a passage that shows Gore grappling with fundamentals, he continued:

We now find ourselves involved in a war that defies analysis in traditional military terms; in a war that makes little sense as it is being waged; in a war that we have scant hope of winning except at a cost which far outweighs the fruits of victory; in a war fought on a battlefield suitable to the enemy, in a place and under

conditions that no military man in his right mind would choose; in a war which threatens to escalate into a major power confrontation and which could escalate into nuclear holocaust.[ 26]

Thus, at a time when many doves, like Fulbright, still tacitly supported the war, Gore had already come to see the war not only as disastrous, but as the source of a potential superpower conflict at a time when detente seemed possible.

By the end of 1965, there were 184,000 American troops in South Vietnam, with over 1,000 battle deaths. At home, opposition to the war crystallized. Teach-ins began on college campuses across the nation, and antiwar demonstrations erupted in Washington, New York, and Berkeley. In January 1966, the increasingly dovish Senate Foreign Relations Committee began a series of nationally televised hearings on Vietnam, with Gore playing a prominent role but toeing a surprisingly moderate line. Sensitive to the possibility that many Americans would see the hearings as a challenge to the president's role as commander-in-chief and a threat to the nation's war effort, he solicited from witnesses praise for the informational value of the hearings to the democratic process and defended the televised proceedings in Senate floor debate[ 27]

Gore's moderation in the televised hearings reflected his concern that opposition to the war in Vietnam would be misunderstood and counterproductive. He was not personally averse to the broader antiwar movement that developed, but he believed that the more extreme elements hindered progress by alienating moderates. While his remarks increasingly reflected a neocolonial critique of U.S. policy, Gore nonetheless remained within the liberal interventionist fold--he never, for instance, saw Vietnam as the result of a capitalist quest for markets. He never saw the war as a deliberate imperial venture. Instead, he believed that Vietnam represented a corruption of globalism. Hence, he shared little common ground with the New Left wing of the antiwar struggle. While Gore rejoiced at moderate elements turning vocally against the war, he did not work to further that aim. As a career legislator, he saw Congress as the appropriate forum for protest, not college campuses or city streets. Thus, he was certainly a part of the American public's growing disapproval of the war, but not of the antiwar movement per se.[ 28]

As the U.S. war effort in Vietnam continued to expand, Gore became steadily more outspoken, and his opposition shifted to concern about tensions between the superpowers. He increasingly stressed the impact of the war on relations among the Soviet Union, the United States, and the People's Republic of China. He feared a repeat of Korea and expressed grave misgivings about air operations in Vietnam, fearing a wider war with China. In an April 1966 speech at American University, he attacked the administration's "no-sanctuary" policy (which meant that American planes might follow Vietnamese planes into China) by raising the possibility that Johnson was preparing the country for an "aerial invasion of China" that "might be a torch to the tinder box of World War III." Gore worded that the president had "the Alamo complex in a nuclear age."[ 29]

More and more, Gore saw America's strategic interests tied to improved relations with the two major communist powers rather than in the defense of Third World states such as South Vietnam, where America's stakes were, at best, marginal. Gore believed that the Soviet Union sought a rapprochement with the United States, a move that the Vietnam conflict jeopardized. In February 1968 Gore lamented that "we are destroying any basis for cooperation with the two other major powers upon which the future of world peace depends--the Soviet Union and China." [ 30] Gore's increasing focus on superpower detente demonstrated how far he had strayed from the containment party line.

Gore continued to urge Johnson to seek a negotiated settlement. The senator was unrelenting in his efforts to obtain peace. In February 1966, he argued that "we must continue and intensify our efforts to bring about negotiations, under the auspices of the United Nations or any acceptable forum." In 1967, he voiced strong support for a resolution sponsored by Mike Mansfield to submit the Vietnam issue to the United Nations [ 31] But by late 1967, Gore realized that Johnson's strategy actually precluded a negotiated settlement.

In a major Senate speech on October 24, 1967, Gore adopted an even more radical position. In effect, he advocated unilateral withdrawal. He asked the probing question, "If in fact we are in mortal peril in Vietnam what is to negotiate?" Claiming that the United States could not negotiate an "American colony in South Vietnam," he argued that it must either send more troops immediately to secure the area, or be willing to bargain on less ambitious terms. The solution he proposed was the neutralization of Southeast Asia.[ 32]

By publicly calling for the withdrawal of U.S. troops and the neutralization of the region as a means of reaching a negotiated settlement, Gore was now espousing Charles DeGaulle's January 1964 proposal. The French president's plan had received the support of such establishment pillars as Senator Mansfield and journalist Walter Lippmann in 1964, but that was before the conflict in Vietnam became an American war. In the stormy context of 1967, Gore's advocacy of the DeGaulle formula was indeed radical. The New York Times declared that, except for mavericks Morse and Gruening, the nation had not yet seen a senator shift so drastically his position on the war.[ 33]

The Tet Offensive of January-February 1968 had a tremendous impact in the United States. The illusion of success held by millions of Americans and fostered by the Johnson administration degenerated into a feeling of hopelessness and distrust. By March, 78 percent of the American public felt that the war was a stalemate, and 49 percent felt it was a mistake. On March 31, after a dismal showing in the New Hampshire Democratic primary, Lyndon Johnson announced that he would not seek reelection and that the United States would begin an immediate unilateral deescalation of the conflict in Vietnam. He offered to stop the bombardment of North Vietnam and asked that negotiations for peace begin as soon as possible.[ 34]

Members of Congress praised Johnson's decision and his sacrifice. Gore called Johnson's withdrawal from the presidential contest "the greatest contribution toward unity and possible peace that President Johnson could have made." He joined Mansfield and Cooper in applauding the President's decision not to seek reelection, claiming that as a candidate Johnson could not make the concessions necessary to end the war without "charges of appeasement and ugly questions of being soft on communism." But Gore qualified his remarks, pointing out that Johnson had revealed no real change in policy and that little had changed as yet on the battlefield.[ 35]

Gore's caution proved to be well founded. By the time of the Democratic convention in late August, the peace talks in Paris had accomplished virtually nothing. And although he was not a candidate, Johnson maneuvered behind the scenes to secure the nomination of Vice President Hubert Humphrey over doves Eugene McCarthy and George McGovern. The Tennessee delegation, a virtual who's who of the state party, was almost unanimously committed to Humphrey, while Gore supported McGovern.

Though the move was hardly politic, Tennessee's senior senator delivered a passionate and provocative speech in support of the antiwar provision that had been proposed by Senators McCarthy and McGovern. His speech clearly reflected his mushrooming opposition to American involvement in Vietnam and his disillusionment with the administration. Although everyone else in the debate had politely refrained from referring directly to Johnson, Gore chose not to moderate his remarks:

Four years ago our party and the nominees of our party promised the people that American boys would not be sent to fight in a land war in Asia. The people made an overwhelming commitment for peace. They voted for our distinguished leader, President Lyndon B. Johnson, but they got the policies of Senator Goldwater. Almost immediately combat troops were sent to fight in a steadily widening Asian war. Twenty-five thousand American men have died.

What harvest do we reap from their gallant sacrifice? An erosion of the moral leadership, a demeaning entanglement with a corrupt political clique in Saigon, disillusionment, despair here at home, and a disastrous

postponement of imperative programs to improve our social ills.[ 36]

Gore's outspokenness did not reflect the views of his fellow Tennessee Democrats. The Nashville Tennessean reported that while Gore received rousing cheers from other state delegations, his own was silent. The Tennessee delegates read newspapers and others chatted and walked around while Gore attacked Johnson's policies. Despite Gore's efforts, the Tennessee delegation voted overwhelmingly against the dove amendment. The count was 49 to 2. With that defeat, Gore was almost alone among the Tennesseans at the convention in opposing the party plank on the war. Furthermore, neither his speech nor his influence as one of the state's two most important Democrats could persuade his fellow delegates to vote otherwise.[ 37] Events at Chicago indicated that Gore no longer enjoyed the support of the Democratic Party machinery in his home state. Governor Buford Ellington opposed the senator's antiwar position, and the Tennessee delegation followed him. Gore was flirting with political disaster, yet maintained his vocal opposition to the war.[ 38]

Richard Nixon came to the presidency in January 1969 promising to end the war in Vietnam without allowing South Vietnam to fall to the communists. His plan combined increased offensive pressure on Hanoi and a redoubled effort to "Vietnamize" the war by increasing the role of the South Vietnamese Army. For Gore, Nixon's approach represented no fundamental departure from the failed policies of the Johnson years. Nixon's increased secrecy and reckless disregard for congressional authority did, however, trouble Gore.

Gore opposed "Vietnamization" and phased withdrawal from the beginning, declaring Nixon's plan "not a formula for peace, but, rather, for prolonged war and indefinite involvement" in Vietnam. He encouraged Nixon to move immediately toward a political settlement in Paris, rather than continue to seek military solutions to an inherently political problem-"the trap that ensnared President Johnson." Asserting that U.S. power could not "stop the tide of history" which was ending Western control of Asia, he believed that neither ideology nor the fate of the regime in Saigon should be allowed to prevent a negotiated settlement. "The truth is," he said, "that too many of the South Vietnamese have no stomach for the fight and no sense of identity with the ruling clique." Nor did he believe that America could win the war. "No matter how pure our motives," he said, "the United States cannot master the revolutionary, nationalistic tide that is sweeping the world." He began attacking what he called the "Johnson-Nixon" policy, claiming that the only difference in the two administrations was that Nixon relied more on secret actions.[ 39] Again, the stress on policy continuity and the rhetoric about a tide of revolutionary nationalism resonated with the more radical element of the antiwar protest, although Gore never in fact identified with that movement.

By June, Gore's plea for peace assumed a new and passionate twist that also harmonized with the approach of much of the antiwar movement. Having for years used reasoned arguments evoking long-term national interests to no avail, Gore became more emotional in his speeches, focusing on the cost of the war in purely human terms. No longer believing in the cause for which the war was being waged or the nation's ability to win, Gore saw the further loss of American life as useless. In a Senate speech, he cited the forty thousand Americans killed and wounded in Vietnam during Nixon's first year in office alone and exclaimed: "Mr. President, this war must end. It must end because it is immoral and because it is wrong. It must end too, because it threatens to destroy us." [ 40] As a dramatic effort to call attention to this senseless loss of life he entered the number of casualties into the Congressional Record each week for the remainder of his term.

Gore's concerns about the Nixon administration's disregard of the Constitution came to the fore in March 1970 when a pro-American regime overthrew the neutralist Cambodian government headed by Prince Norodom Sihanouk. The subsequent U.S. troop movements into that nation unleashed a furor of domestic protest. Over 100,000 protesters gathered in Washington. Campus protests at Kent State and Jackson State turned into violent and deadly clashes with National Guardsmen and police. Congress boiled. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted to repeal the Tonkin Gulf Resolution.

For Gore, the Cambodian invasion presented several problems, not the least of which were the constitutional questions raised by the invasion of a sovereign country without the approval of Congress. He expressed concern about the widening of the war only ten days after Nixon himself had forecast peace in the near future: "Can it be possible that this major military operation was not in preparation 10 days ago?" The obvious duplicity of Nixon and his top aides outraged Gore. On April 27 he accused Secretary of State William Rogers of misleading the Foreign Relations Committee as to the President's intentions. Pointing to Nixon's "unprecedented" interpretation of executive power, Gore supported both the subsequent Cooper-Church Amendment of 1970, to prohibit the use of U.S. forces and funds in Cambodia, and the repeal of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution.[ 41] Despite his goal of bringing the Vietnam war to a rapid end, and his deepening concern over the constitutional propriety of the administration's conduct of the war, he ultimately decided not to support the Hatfield-McGovern Amendment, which would have removed all American troops from Indochina by the end of 1971. Gore seriously considered voting for this radical exercise of the congressional power of the purse, but ultimately concluded that it would tie the president's hands in negotiations with Hanoi. In addition, uncertainty over his own reelection in November contributed to his decision to vote against the Hatfield-McGovern Amendment.] 42]

### DOVE SEASON IN TENNESSEE

As early as 1968, Gore had alienated the Democratic Party organization in Tennessee, and he would feel the effects in 1970. He faced a primary challenge from Hudley Crockett, Governor Ellington's press secretary. It boded ill that the political unknown—who was obviously the governor's man—came within 30,000 votes of unseating the well-known senator for the party's nomination. Furthermore, party luminaries made no effort to rally around Gore for the November election, and both Ellington and Crockett conspicuously refused the customary endorsement of the nominee. Gore would face Republican candy baron Bill Brock without the support of his party.

And Gore badly needed that support, not just because of his unpopular stand on the Vietnam War. The senator's progressive record on race relations made him a prime target of Nixon's "Southern Strategy," an attempt to win over the conservative South for the Republican Party largely through race-based appeals. Gore had refused to sign the Southern Manifesto in 1956; he had been a proponent of the civil rights legislation of the 1960s; and, finally, he had opposed the confirmation of two Nixon nominees to the Supreme Court, conservative white southerners Clement Haynsworth and Harold Carswell, branding them racists. Writing for *The New Yorker*, Richard Hams reported that many white Tennesseans connected Gore with black interests.] 43] Brock successfully built on Gore's antiwar remarks and his stand on racial issues by portraying him as "anti-Southern" and associating him closely with northern liberals personified by the Kennedys. Indeed, Brock campaigned by saying, "I want to represent you, not Massachusetts," and criticized Gore for his support of "the Chappaquiddick kid" for the office of Senate majority leader over fellow southerner Russell Long (D-LA).] 44]

The Vietnam war was obviously an issue in the 1970 Senate race, even though it was played down by both Gore and his opponent. Brock's campaign manager argued that the war was not as significant as the media reported. Yet, for an unimportant issue, Brock's speeches regularly praised Vietnamization—a policy that Gore had frequently and vocally opposed—and he routinely returned to the theme that Gore's opposition in the Senate prevented the president from protecting American boys in Vietnam. Brock argued that Gore's position shamed the people of Tennessee.] 45] At a speech in Memphis, the Republican candidate pledged to stand by every American soldier regardless of where he served. He also stated that, unlike Gore, he would have voted against the Cooper-Church Amendment because it tied the president's hands in Southeast Asia. Brock's campaign produced six-foot signs, moreover, with the phrase "Birds of a Feather Flock Together" followed by the names of Senators Edward Kennedy, George McGovern, J. William Fulbright, and Albert Gore—all leading doves.] 46] While much of the nation had begun to oppose the war, Tennesseans still hoped for a victory in

Vietnam. Gore himself conceded that his state's electorate was more hawkish than the nation as a whole and disliked giving up in the middle of a fight.[ 47]

In the end, the 1970 election followed up the presidential election of 1968, again presenting voters with a chance to throw out liberal leaders. As historian Alan Matuso argues, liberal promises to make the economy work for everyone and reduce poverty, to end racial strife, and to maintain peace had failed all around, and the electorate turned elsewhere for leadership.[ 48] Despite Gore's attempts to highlight Brock's conservative, elitist voting record in the House, Brock defeated Gore, 559,000 to 513,000, who thus became one of three liberal doves pushed aside that year (Charles Goodell [R-NY] and Joseph Tydings [D-MD] also lost to more hawkish challengers). Although it is impossible to determine precisely what caused the voters to choose Brock over Gore, an antiwar record was certainly a part of the liberal package that they rejected.

In his 1972 memoir, Gore looked back at the election of 1970 and wrote that his family had lacked enthusiasm for his seeking a fourth term. As painful as the war was politically, it also hurt Gore personally. His son, Al Gore Jr., reached draft age as his father faced reelection. Gore Jr., who shared his father's opposition to the war, considered going to Canada to evade military service; and the senator's wife, Pauline, offered to accompany him. But Gore Jr. realized that the spectacle of a shattered family and a draft-dodging son would cripple his father's chances for reelection. In the end, he cut his hair and volunteered for duty in Vietnam because he believed that the best thing he could do to end the war was to help his father retain a seat in the Senate. Realizing the political difficulties his father faced largely as a result of Viet-nam—but also because of his liberal economic and social policy positions--Gore Jr. appeared in uniform in his father's television commercials. Ultimately, the senator decided to seek a fourth term because he was the only leading antiwar Democrat with any chance of electoral success--and like his fellow Tennesseans, he did not relish giving up in the middle of a fight.[ 49] Given the forces arrayed against him, Gore came surprisingly close to retaining his seat, certainly much closer than J. William Fulbright would come four years later when he was unseated by a landslide in Arkansas's Democratic primary.f 50]

Republican strategists did not achieve the watershed election they had hoped for when they launched the Southern Strategy. Brock lasted only one term. Democrat James Sasser recaptured the seat from Brock in 1976, and Gore's son won election to the other Tennessee Senate seat in 1984. Brock's amazing weakness, and the continued strength of liberal Tennessee Democrats through the 1980s and the Reagan years lends further credence to the contention that Vietnam was the crucial issue in bringing an end to the political career of Albert Gore Sr. Not until the Republican sweep of 1994 did the GOP again control both Tennessee Senate seats.[ 51]

Ultimately, however, it is difficult to say exactly how much the Vietnam war contributed to ending Gore's political career, or, for that matter, how much he contributed to bringing the war itself to a close. It can be said that Gore opposed the war earlier than most doves and that the character of his opposition gradually became more extreme. Yet, if he did not end the war, he certainly did more than mirror public opinion as it soured on the Vietnam endeavor. During the Kennedy years, while many future doves supported U.S. policy, and long before the antiwar movement took root on college campuses, Gore was asking tough questions about American policy in Southeast Asia and laying the foundation for a broader antiwar coalition in Congress. Later he worked with other doves and voiced the sentiments of an ever-growing segment of the nation's people, putting those conducting the war on the defensive. He helped end the war by probing not only the particulars of convoluted policymaking, but also by questioning the myopic assumptions that buttressed globalized containment.

Gore came a long way from the liberal interventionist who entered the Senate in 1953, who believed firmly that American aid could be used for uplifting the developing world. He had at that point also believed that communism was monolithic and that America could contain its expansion around the world. He still believed in liberal interventionism, in the end, but it was a belief tempered by experience with how such ends could be

distorted. Vietnam forced Gore to reevaluate and abandon containment as counterproductive. He questioned both the logic and the results of military support of repressive regimes in the name of democracy. Realizing that nationalism, fueled by political and economic repression, did more to inspire leftist revolutions than Moscow, Beijing, or Hanoi, he doubted America's ability to succeed in Vietnam where the French had failed. Albert Gore Sr. witnessed America's struggle to protect democracy abroad threaten freedom at home, and logically and consistently moved in the only direction his principled devotion to U.S. institutions would allow: opposition to American involvement in Southeast Asia.

## NOTES

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5. Gore is quoted in *Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on State Department Organization and Public Affairs, Situation in Vietnam: Hearings before the Subcommittee on State Department Organization and Public Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations*, 86th Cong., 1st sess., December 7 and 8, 1959, pt. 2: 241-44, 257. See also *Gibbons, The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War*, 1:321-23; "Senate Summary," a news release from Sen. Gale McGee, concerning the trip by himself and Senator Gore to Vietnam, tile 7052, undated, Albert Gore Collection, Albert Gore Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN (hereafter cited as *Gore Papers*); *Felix Belair Jr., "Gore Cites Abuse in Aid to Vietnam: Presses for Data," New York Times*, December 17, 1959.
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9. *Executive Sessions... Joint Session*, 87th Cong., 2d sess., February 8, 1962, vol. 14: 176-77; *Executive Sessions ... Foreign Relations*, 87th Cong., 1st sess., June 7, 14, and 17, 1961, vol. 13, pt. 2:117; and *International Development and Security: Hearings*, 87th Cong., 1st sess., June 14, 1961, pt. 2: 627-29.
10. *Albert Gore Sr., The Eye of the Storm: A People's Politics for the Seventies* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 7. See also *Executive Sessions ... Foreign Relations*, 87th Cong., 1st sess., June 14, 1961, vol. 13, pt.

2; 117-18.

11. *Executive Sessions ... Foreign Relations*, 87th Cong., 1st sess., June 14, 1961, vol. 13, pt. 2: 117-18.
12. Gore, *Eye of the Storm*, 6-8, 31-32; Herring, *America's Longest War*, 95-97; Albert Gore Sr., *Let the Glory Out: My South and Its Politics* (New York: Viking, 1972), 160-61.
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14. Lyndon B. Johnson, *Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency, 1963-1969* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 43.
15. Caroline F. Ziemke, "Senator Richard B. Russell and the 'Lost Cause' in Vietnam, 1954-1968," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 72 (Spring 1988): 47.
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22. Gibbons, *The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War*, 2: 394-97.
23. Herring, *America's Longest War*, 123-32. Gibbons, *The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War*, 2: 381, 3: 237-42.
24. *Congressional Record*, 89th Cong., 1st sess., May 5, 1965: 9497; Gore, *Eye of the Storm*, 27; Gibbons, *The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War*, 3: 246. See also *Congressional Record*, 90th Cong., 2d sess., June 26, 1968: 18831-32; and Herring, *America's Longest War*, 174.
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51. *With the single exception of the popular moderate Republican Gov. Lamar Alexander, the Democratic Party retained a remarkable strength in the state until the Republican sweep in 1994.*

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