



The Perfect War: Technowar in Vietnam (Military History Series)

By James William Gibson

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In this groundbreaking book, James William Gibson shatters the misled assumptions behind both liberal and conservative explanations for America's failure in Vietnam. Gibson shows how American government and military officials developed a disturbingly limited concept of war -- what he calls "technowar" -- in which all efforts were focused on maximizing the enemy's body count, regardless of the means. Consumed by a blind faith in the technology of destruction, American leaders failed to take into account their enemy's highly effective guerrilla tactics. Indeed, technowar proved woefully inapplicable to the actual political and military strategies used by the Vietnamese, and Gibson reveals how U.S. officials consistently falsified military records to preserve the illusion that their approach would prevail. Gibson was one of the first historians to question the fundamental assumptions behind American policy, and *The Perfect War* is a brilliant reassessment of the war -- now republished with a new introduction by the author.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Gibson, Fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C., believes that much of the blame for the debacle in Vietnam is attributable to the introduction of "managerial science" into the war effort. He attempts to show that by the fall of 1967, the war managers had constructed an Orwellian double-think of "multiple systematic falsifications" in which credit, debit and progress were gauged by a body-count index. (The author's personal outrage occasionally spills over into questionable generalizations: "Management did not care whether labor lived or died, only about producing a high body-count.") The study includes quotes from participants and close observers of the war, illustrating in a shockingly concentrated manner how demoralizing to the troops were the ruthless and impersonal management techniques of business accounting imposed on them. Gibson warns that this managerial mind-set is still very much in evidence at the Pentagon and that "the redeployment of Technowar can only result in another massive defeat."

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From Library Journal

According to Gibson, Vietnam was a "technowar," conceived and waged by U.S. war managers as "a high technology, capital-intensive production process." It was neither a mistake nor a problem of ailing national will. It was rather the perfect expression of the American logic of making war on invented enemies through highly rationalized industrial management. Gibson's argument is not altogether new; and he introduces no new evidence in support of his position. He does, however, argue his case with great energy and inventiveness, exploring the dimensions of this "technowar" from Vietnamese cities and countryside to the U.S. air war over Indochina. His analysis should be of interest to anyone seriously interested in the social and intellectual sources of Washington's war effort. Charles DeBenedetti, History Dept., Univ. of Toledo, Ohio
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Users Review

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