

## The Lies Our Leaders Tell About Our Past Wars To Justify Our Current Ones

*(The following is excerpted from “Biden Latest President to Tout the Vietnam War as Proud History,” by Norman Solomon, The Progressive, September 20, 2023. Read the entire article at: <https://portside.org/2023-09-20/biden-latest-president-tout-vietnam-war-proud-history>.)*

When Joe Biden flew out of Hanoi last week, he was leaving a country where U.S. warfare caused roughly 3.8 million Vietnamese deaths. But, like every other president since the Vietnam War, he gave no sign of remorse. In fact, Biden led up to his visit by presiding over a White House ceremony that glorified the war as a noble effort...

You might think that—after killing such a vast number of people in a war of aggression based on continuous deceptions—some humility and even penance would be in order. But no. As George Orwell put it, “Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.” And a government that intends to continue its might-makes-right use of military power needs leaders who do their best to distort history with foggy rhetoric and purposeful omissions. Lies and evasions about past wars are prefigurative for future wars.

And so, at a press conference in Hanoi, the closest Biden came to acknowledging the slaughter and devastation inflicted on Vietnam by the U.S. military was this sentence: “I’m incredibly proud of how our nations and our people have built trust and understanding over the decades and worked to repair the painful legacy the war left on both our nations.” In the process, Biden was pretending an equivalency of suffering and culpability for both countries—a popular pretense for commanders in chief ever since the first new [war] after the Vietnam War ended...

When President George H.W. Bush celebrated the U.S. victory in the 1991 Gulf War, he proclaimed: “By God, we’ve kicked the

Vietnam syndrome once and for all.” Bush meant that the triumphant killing of Iraqi people—estimated at 100,000 in six weeks—had ushered in American euphoria about military action that promised to wipe away hesitation to launch future wars...

Mainstream political discourse has paid scant attention to the deaths and injuries of Vietnamese people. Likewise the horrendous ecological damage and effects of poisons from the Pentagon’s arsenal have gotten very short shrift in U.S. media and politics.

The pretenses that falsify the past are foreshadowing excuses for future warfare. Telling central truths about the Vietnam War is a basic threat to the U.S. war machine. No wonder the leaders of the warfare state would rather keep pretending.

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**\*De-fund the oligarchs and war profiteers everywhere**