

Clifford Case: The Unknown Maverick of the Vietnam War

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Forty years after its conclusion, the war in Vietnam remains fresh in the memory of many Americans. Tens of thousands of young men never returned home; many more returned wounded, disabled, or with permanent psychological damage. The war caused some politicians to completely alter their views of foreign policy, becoming either anti-war, or pro-war. These changes continue to reverberate today. Political scientists, historians, politicians, and people who directly witnessed or were somehow affected by the events of this war, have tried to make sense of what happened fifty years ago abroad, at home, in politics, and in the minds of people. Countless books have been written about presidents, generals, and members of administrations; however, there has been surprisingly little written about a very important member of the United States Senate, the distinguished Senator from New Jersey, Clifford P. Case II. Case also took an early leading role in the debate over Vietnam War. Yet, the point is not merely that Case was an important participant in the debate over the Vietnam War, but also that his positions regarding the war were complex and have not been well understood. In scholarly literature on the American political history of the Vietnam era, there is very little discussion of Case, and what does exist is inadequate to fully grasp the complexities of Case's positions on the issue of U.S. intervention in Vietnam. Based primarily on examining a substantial amount of Case's documents from the 1950s into the early 1970s, this paper will shed light on and develop a more complex, sophisticated and nuanced understanding of Clifford Case's positions at different moments in the debate over U.S. intervention in Vietnam. A supporter of the war at first, Case took an increasingly somber view of American involvement in Vietnam as the war progressed.

Several historians have addressed the relationship between the Republican Party and the

Vietnam War. Terry Dietz, in a very limited earlier work, *Republicans and Vietnam, 1961-1968*, provided a study of opposition politics at the time when John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson held the White House and Congress.¹ Dietz argues that the question that concerned Republicans most at that time was "How could the minority party challenge Lyndon Johnson's prosecution of the war, not undermine America's international standing, protect the men in the field, and still perform its role as the loyal opposition?"² He investigates whether the Vietnam War could have ended differently if the Republican leaders' positions arguing for national unity in regard to U.S. foreign policy in Vietnam had been heard. Dietz concludes that the war could have indeed ended differently if the Senate had worked with the House Republicans, led by then Michigan Congressman Gerald Ford. While providing an early insight into the Republican Party's politics and raising important questions about its role on the national level in light of the conflict in Vietnam, Dietz says nothing about the role of Clifford Case.

In *Congress and the Cold War*, Robert David Johnson describes the changes in Congress, and the roles Congress played during various periods of the Cold War. Johnson challenges the common argument that the U.S. Congress was weak in handling the Cold War. Instead, Johnson argues that understanding the Congressional response to the Cold War requires a more flexible conception of the Congressional role in foreign policy.³ He focuses on three facets of legislative power: the use of spending measures, the internal workings of a Congress dominated by subcommittees, and the legislators' ability to indirectly affect foreign affairs through public opinion. While his argument is sound, Johnson fails to provide appropriate attention to Clifford Case, specifically to his position on the overall question of U.S. intervention in Vietnam. Instead, Johnson briefly points to Case's criticism of the Johnson administration, and Case's position on the issue of the arms race, neglecting the many nuances of Case's complex positions.

In a more recent book, *Vietnam's Second Front: Domestic Politics, the Republican Party, and the Vietnam War*, Andrew Johns focuses on the American presidency during the period of war in Vietnam. He looks at the push and pull that took

¹ Terry Dietz, *Republicans and Vietnam, 1961-1968*, (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1986), Xii-Xii

² Dietz, Xii.

³ Robert David Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1.

place between the Republican and the Democratic parties as they attempted to maintain their presidents in power, diminish their political opponents, and prevent the grim news about the real situation in Vietnam from seeping through to the American public. Johns examines the choices Presidents John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Richard M. Nixon made in light of the Vietnam War, arguing that their political needs were driving their decisions concerning Vietnam. He discovers that presidential policies of all three presidents in regard to Vietnam were driven by one thing: the fear of becoming the first American president to lose a war. Johns focuses primarily on Republicans, devoting the latter half of his book entirely to Nixon and his party's political maneuvering. Johns' work provides the best indication, to date, of Clifford Case's positions on the debate over intervention in Vietnam at different moments of time, beginning with his view on the issue with the Mansfield-Aiken report of 1966, and ending with the Case-Church amendment and the antipathy that it created among the right wing anti-communists.

However, while Johns does describe Case's positions at different moments in the debate over the Vietnam War, he does not paint a full picture of Case's views and his positions on Vietnam throughout the period of the entire war. Instead, Johns only briefly refers to Case's stance and actions from 1965 to 1973, without going into much detail about Case's overall positions, his arguments, or the laws and amendments that he supported or passed. Furthermore, some of Johns' positions are contradictory. For example, early on in his book, Johns asserts that Case was neither hawk, nor dove.⁴ Toward the end of the book, however, Johns calls Case a Republican Dove, contradicting his previous statement.⁵ In this context, a hawk is someone favoring the war in a debate over whether to go to war, or whether to continue or escalate an existing war. A dove on the other hand is the opposite of hawk. Dove is someone in politics who prefers peace and discussion to war and works actively to resolve international conflicts without the threat of force. While providing the best representation, to date, of

Case's important role and his opinion on the issue of U.S. intervention in Vietnam, the book still fails to take into account the complexities of Clifford Case's opinion, or to devote substantial space to him. Case's role in the Republican Party and the Senate was more substantial and important than Johns portrays.

While the above books make important contributions, through my archival research I've found that Case was much more complex in terms of his position on the war in Vietnam than either Johns or Johnson portrayed him to be. For example, Andrew Johns calls Case a dove; However, Case was alternately a hawk and a dove at different moments in the Vietnam conflict. To advance our understanding of Clifford Case and his positions on the U.S. involvement in Vietnam War, I am going to demonstrate the complexities and shifts in Clifford Case's opinion on the war in Vietnam. Through better understanding Clifford Case's positions in regard to Vietnam, we better understand the complexities of American politics during this time period.

Clifford Case was born in 1904 in Franklin Park, New Jersey.⁶ In 1925, Case graduated from Rutgers University, and, in 1928, received a degree in law from Columbia University.⁷ Case, later, worked in the New York law firm of Simpson, Thatcher, and Barlett, where he rose to the rank of partner.⁸ In 1937, Case ran for his first position in public office, winning a seat on the Rahway Common Council.⁹ Five years later, in 1942, Case was elected as a Republican to the New Jersey Assembly, and in 1944, won the 6th Congressional District race for the U.S. House of Representatives.¹⁰ Being a staunch advocate of human rights throughout his political career, Case resigned his House seat in 1953 in order to become the president of the Fund for the Republic, a part of the Ford Foundation dedicated to eliminating restrictions on freedom of thought and expression.¹¹ In 1954, Case was chosen by Republicans to represent their party in the U.S. Senate.¹²

While in the Senate, Case became a champion and an ardent supporter of civil rights and social legislation.¹³ He was the only Republican in

⁴ Andrew L. Johns, *Vietnam's Second Front: Domestic Politics, the Republican Party, and the War*, (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 103.

⁵ Johns, 237

⁶ John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, *American National Biography*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 531.

⁷ Garraty and Carnes, 531.

⁸ Garraty and Carnes, 531.

⁹ Garraty and Carnes, 531.

¹⁰ Garraty and Carnes, 531.

¹¹ Garraty and Carnes, 532.

¹² Garraty and Carnes, 532.

¹³ Garraty and Carnes, 532.

the Senate to endorse President Kennedy's proposal to provide medical insurance for the elderly.¹⁴ A supporter of President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs, Case eventually found himself at odds with Johnson's Vietnam policies.¹⁵ Just like with Johnson, Case initially supported the policies of Richard Nixon. However as time went on, Case became increasingly critical of Nixon's political decisions, voting against and overriding several of Nixon's proposals and appointments.¹⁶ Even though Case disagreed with two presidents, he was still very popular with constituents, comfortably winning senatorial reelections in 1960, 1966, and 1972, and setting several election records in the process.¹⁷

In accordance with the majority of politicians at this time period, Clifford Case was anti-communist.¹⁸ However, Case's form of anti-communism was different from that of more conservative, right wing, extreme anti-communists, such as those which Joseph McCarthy and Barry Goldwater espoused. Case opposed and critiqued McCarthy's political stance, announcing in 1954 that if elected in the U.S. Senate, he would "vote to deny Senator Joseph R. McCarthy membership on any committee with investigative functions."¹⁹ Case's form of anti-communism was more liberal. First of all, the fact that Case was an advocate of civil rights differentiated him from more conservative figures in the Republican Party who were not enthusiastic about the civil rights movement. Some of these radicals regarded the civil rights movement as penetrated by communists, and a part of the world communist movement. Secondly, Case was less concerned with the danger of communism inside the United States. His anti-communism was directed towards communism outside the United States.²⁰ At the same time there were anti-communists, such as Joseph McCarthy who focused on the danger of

communism inside the United States.²¹ This demonstrates the tensions that existed between conservative and liberal anti-communists within the Republican Party. Republicans, similar to the Democrats, felt an obligation to be loyal to their party, despite different views within the GOP. Some scholars argued that the reason Kennedy and later Johnson were reluctant to deescalate the war in Vietnam was their fear of being criticized for losing South Vietnam to communism. Therefore, it is important to be attentive to Clifford Case's form of anti-communism from the standpoint of Kennedy's, and later Johnson's, fear of criticism for their loss of Southeast Asia to the communists.

After nearly twenty-four years in Congress, and nearly forty years in politics, Case was ultimately defeated in a 1978 Senatorial election.²² The main reason for his defeat was that Case became quite distant from his constituents, especially in failing to respond to the concerns of people in his state and about the high taxes they confronted. As Garraty and Carnes put it, in a sense, Case "was becoming a remote figure in his home state... and New Jersey, the nation's most suburbanized state, was ripe for the taxpayers' revolt beginning to sweep the country."²³ Despite his defeat, Case remained politically active, serving as the head of Freedom House and leading a successful fight against the Reagan administration's decision to sell AWACs to Saudi Arabia.²⁴ Case died in 1982 from lung cancer at the age of 77.²⁵

The 1950s

The 1950s was a decade of increased prosperity for American citizens. World War II, the largest and bloodiest war that mankind ever waged, had recently ended. The United States was left with enormous production capabilities, generating increased revenue which was spent on education,

¹⁴ Garraty and Carnes, 532.

¹⁵ Garraty and Carnes, 532.

¹⁶ Garraty and Carnes, 532.

¹⁷ Garraty and Carnes, 532.

¹⁸ Clifford Case, Speech at Colby Junior College, 1963, Clifford Case Papers Box 14, Alexander Library, Rutgers University, 4.

¹⁹ Garraty and Carnes, 532.

²⁰ Clifford Case, *Statement for Star Ledger*, April 30, 1959, Clifford Case papers, Box 1, Alexander Library, Rutgers University.

Clifford Case, *Article for 1965 Republican Review of Union County*, 1965, Clifford Case papers, Box 14, Alexander Library, Rutgers University.

Clifford Case, *Article for morning newspapers of Friday, February 4, 1965*, Clifford Case papers, Box 34, Alexander Library, Rutgers University.

Clifford Case, *Article for Red Bank Register*, January 19, 1965, Clifford Case papers, Box 14, Alexander Library, Rutgers University.

Congressional Record, 5 May 1965

Trenton Times, *Case hails Senate's cut off of Angola aid*, December 29, 1975.

²¹ Garraty and Carnes, 848-849.

²² Garraty and Carnes, 532.

²³ Garraty and Carnes, 532.

²⁴ Garraty and Carnes, 532.

²⁵ Janet Podell and Steven Anzovin. *The Annual Obituary 1982*, (London: St. James Press, 1982), 103.

housing, transportation, and other necessities. The United States also became a participant in two conflicts during this decade: the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

At this time, most politicians supported U.S. involvement in Vietnam, without realizing that the United States was committing itself to a seemingly endless conflict. However, there is little record available currently of Clifford Case's positions concerning Vietnam in the 1950s. It appears, based on some statements that he made, that Case supported U.S. involvement in Vietnam as an anti-communist. After all, there are multiple documents where Case spoke of Communism as a menace, and of the United States as a cure and defense against the communist aggression. In one such statement in February of 1959, Case stated, "We are the champions of freedom in a world which in considerable part has never experienced its blessings. We are the chief bulwark of defense against totalitarian aggression, aggression against the moral and intellectual as well as military level."²⁶ As can be seen, not only does the above statement demonstrate Case's anti-communist stance, it also portrays the United States as a defender against the communist aggression. Therefore, based on the evidence above, it seems plausible that Case supported the war in Vietnam, but we do not have much direct evidence of that.

The 1960s

The 1960s were difficult years for the United States, during which several traumatic events took place. The escalation of the war in Vietnam, emerging protests, and several catastrophic failures of the Johnson administration, were among the most significant of these events. It was also an interesting time period with regard to Clifford Case's position concerning the Vietnam War. The decade started with Case continuing to support the war. Yet, it was not long before he began to question the policies of presidential administrations regarding Vietnam.

In 1963, Case had not given any public statements on Vietnam. Case, like most politicians in Congress, continued to vigorously attack the foreign policy and politics of Communism. This fact is well

demonstrated in the following excerpt from a Clifford Case speech, delivered repeatedly during several inaugural ceremonies. In his speech, Case pointed out,

...To the Communists every problem is something to exploit, every difficulty an opportunity to create more difficulty, every smoldering grievance or frustration an invitation to stir up turmoil and unrest. The free world's faith in itself and in the survival of freedom in a world at peace is pitted against the faith of the Communists that freedom is outdated and that the triumph of their grimly materialistic philosophy is inexorable...²⁷

Furthermore, there is evidence that at this time the majority of politicians and American citizens continued to support the policies of the Kennedy and later the Johnson, administration in Vietnam. As Adam Berinsky points out, "the first real hints of opposition within Congress came... in 1966."²⁸ In addition, Osgood and Frank assert that the public consensus for the Cold War and Vietnam eroded only in 1966, "leading the opponents of U.S. Vietnam policy to point to American support for dictatorial anticommunist governments in South Korea, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala... as evidence that American assertions that it supported freedom throughout the world were false."²⁹ Therefore, at this time, even though he has not yet spoken publicly regarding Vietnam, Case continued his anti-communist stance, while both Congress and the public maintained their support for the war in Vietnam.

Lyndon B. Johnson, as John F. Kennedy before him, and Richard Nixon after him, feared becoming the first president in American history to lose a war. With that in mind, Johnson escalated U.S. involvement in Vietnam, but was still not able to harvest the fruits of glory. With such a platform, it is understandable that eventually Congress began to question the policies that these presidents were pursuing, and the objectives they were hoping to achieve in Vietnam.

²⁶ Clifford Case, Draft Statement, 1959, Clifford Case Papers, Box 14, Alexander Library, Rutgers University.

²⁷ Clifford Case, Speech at Colby Junior College, 1963, Clifford Case Papers Box 14, Alexander Library, Rutgers University, 4.

²⁸ Adam J. Berinsky, *In Time of War: Understanding American Public Opinion from World War II to Iraq*, 112. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009).

²⁹ Kenneth Osgood and Andrew K. Frank, *Selling War in a Media Age: The Presidency and Public Opinion in the American Century*, (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2010), 107-108.

Clifford Case was among the first members of the Senate to actively critique Lyndon B. Johnson's Vietnam policies. In fact, judging from his papers, and contrary to Berinsky, Case began to speak out against the Johnson administration's policies in Vietnam as early as June 1965. In one speech, Case provides such a critique, stating:

President Johnson spoke Tuesday of new and serious decisions in the making and the Secretary of Defense intimated Wednesday that these decisions would be forthcoming upon his return from Saigon next week. All indications point to requests by the President for additional defense appropriations and—more importantly—specific legislative authority to call up a large number of reservists and to extend the terms of service of members of the Active Forces. These are grave steps for the country and will affect directly the lives and families of thousands of our citizens... I have taken the position that, so long as our military operations remain compatible with our stated objective of negotiations, there has been no real alternative to our present course—and I have supported that course. Now that we are to be asked in all probability for a fresh mandate, we shall look to the President to give us a full account both of the existing situation in Vietnam and of his administration's aims. We, in the Congress, must and will examine his proposals with the utmost care and deliberation.³⁰

Though not as elaborate and thoughtful in its content as some of Case's other speeches, this speech nevertheless demonstrates a critique of, and a concern about, the Johnson administration's decision to further escalate the war in Vietnam. Case indirectly showed his disagreement with Johnson's decision to further escalate U.S. involvement in Vietnam, arguing for a thorough review of the President's proposal. Some can argue that, at that moment in time, Case was relatively inactive in his efforts to critique Johnson's policies in Vietnam. That is certainly true, however, this was merely the beginning of Case's long battle against Johnson's, and later Nixon's, policies in Vietnam. Additionally,

this speech also demonstrates that Case's previous position supporting Johnson's policies in Vietnam had shifted toward a more cautious, more deliberate position.

A more substantial criticism of Johnson's policies came from Case in November 1965, when he charged Johnson with misinforming the American public in regard to public policy. An editorial in *The New York Times* summarized the charge as such: "Senator Clifford P. Case of New Jersey complained today that the Johnson administration had misled the American people by denying having received a bid for negotiations with North Vietnam last year. He said it was 'completely intolerable that our government should deliberately misinform our citizens.'"³¹ After his criticism, the Department of State admitted that North Vietnam had been offering negotiations in August of 1964, but that request was rejected. Case responded by saying that "there may well have been good reason for doing so... There can be no justification; however, for the subsequent and repeated denials by the highest officials of our Government that any such offer had ever been made."³² Case wanted negotiations to be public, and clearly did not trust the clandestine actions of the Johnson administration. Furthermore, the fact that Johnson and his administration lied to the American people that the North Vietnamese were not interested in negotiations demonstrates that the President and his administration did not want the peace to take place. Not only that, but the government actually did not want the American citizens to know that there were attempts made to come to peaceful solution. In this context, Case also wanted the President and the administration to admit that there was already a chance to end the war, but the government was reluctant to take that chance.

Despite his relatively slow start as a critic of President's policies in 1965, Case was not alone. Senators Frank Church, Jess Miller and Ernest Gruening were among a group of senators who also expressed their disapproval of the situation in Vietnam. Senator Church, in one of his Congressional speeches, praised the *New York Times* for its ability to "restrain itself" from joining the president's bombing bandwagon. Instead, the newspaper, in its editorial "Negotiate or Escalate",

³⁰ *Congressional Record* S 16489, 16 July 1965

³¹ *New York Times*, *Case Says Capital Misinforms Public on Foreign Policy*, November 21, 1965.

³² *New York Times*, *Case Says Capital Misinforms Public on Foreign Policy*, November 21, 1965.

urges the United States to push for negotiation, rather than bombing and escalation.³³ Senator Miller, in his Congressional speech, pointed to the inadequacy of American troops' military equipment in Vietnam. Miller alluded to the growing complaints from U.S. servicemen in South Vietnam of being forced to fight with shoddy weapons, shortages of ammunition and a lack of equipment. As evidence, Miller provided a full article by Peter Arnett, "Weapons in Vietnam Shoddy, Soldiers Say- New American Complaints Also Include Shortage of Ammunition," discussing the problem to which Miller pointed.³⁴ Senator Gruening, in his speech in the Senate, expressed his opinion about the President's request for additional funding in Vietnam, deeming such request as unnecessary; and critiqued the policies that President Johnson was following in Vietnam.³⁵ Case was not the only critic of presidential policies, as he was joined by Senators Church, Miller, and Gruening.

There were also senators who supported President Johnson on his decisions about Vietnam. Senator McGee, in his speech regarding Vietnam, pointed out, "...we have seen increasing signs in recent weeks which indicate that the restrained yet forceful policies of the Johnson administration are beginning to have a positive effect upon the outcome of the conflict in Vietnam..."³⁶ As further support of his position, McGee provides an article entitled "Red China's Adamant Opposition to Negotiated Vietnam Accord Leading to an Isolated Peiping..." Most senators supported President Johnson and his policies in Vietnam during 1965.

As the war continued, Case's criticisms became more severe. In January of 1966, Case critiqued President Johnson's decision to resume the halted bombing of North Vietnam. Case argued that "all Americans will regret, as I do and as I am sure the President himself does, the necessity for his decision to resume the bombing in North Vietnam."³⁷ Regardless of his increasing critique of Johnson, Case's position regarding Vietnam remained largely the same. In 1966, he continued to

believe in the importance of Vietnam in the resistance against communism, and that the war could yet be won through the adoption of new policies. In his remarks, prepared for delivery at the annual Congressional dinner of the New Jersey State Chamber of Commerce, Case pointed to what he believed were the objectives of the United States in Vietnam. Case argued;

...For my part, I believe [that our objectives in Vietnam are:] to contain Red China and block her from over running all of Southeast Asia and outflanking India, and to help South Vietnam resist a take-over by terror from within or aggression from without- and thus to prove that the West is not as helpless as a sitting duck against the Communist technique of aggression in the nuclear age: the 'war of national liberation....'³⁸

To Case, fighting communism in Vietnam was essential in the pursuit of containment. He believed that the United States had to protect South Vietnam from what he perceived to be communist aggression for its own sake, and also to prove that the United States could resist communist aggression. Additionally, Case began to argue for a negotiated political settlement to the crisis in Vietnam. In his statement on October 19, 1966, Case stated, "A negotiated settlement in Vietnam is, I am convinced, in the best interests of all concerned. As a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I shall continue to press for those initiatives that are most likely to bring peace with security and stability to Vietnam and all of Southeast Asia."³⁹ It is clear that, in 1966, Case continued to sincerely believe in the importance of Vietnam and its security to American foreign policy, and also, that the United States could still win the war through the adoption of new policies, particularly negotiations.

Beginning in March 1966, Clifford Case abruptly halted his critique of President Johnson to become his "strong supporter on Vietnam."⁴⁰

³³ *Congressional Record* S 4223, 8 March 1965.

³⁴ *Congressional Record* S 4403, 9 March 1965.

³⁵ *Congressional Record* S 9392, 6 May 1965.

³⁶ *Congressional Record* S 8958, 3 May 1965

³⁷ Clifford Case, *Statement by Senator Clifford P. Case On the President's statement of January 31, 1966 Regarding operations in Vietnam*, 1966, Clifford Case papers, Box 34, Alexander Library, Rutgers University.

³⁸ Clifford Case, *Partial Text of Remarks by Senator Clifford P. Case, member, Foreign Relations Committee, prepared for delivery at annual congressional dinner of the New Jersey*

States Chamber of Commerce in the hotel Statler-Hilton, Washington, D.C., Thursday Evening, February 3, 1966, Clifford Case Papers, Box 34, Alexander Library, Rutgers University.

³⁹ Clifford Case, *Statement by Senator Clifford P. Case on Vietnam*, October 19, 1966, Clifford Case papers, Box 14, Alexander Library, Rutgers University.

⁴⁰ *New York Times*, "Case 'a Strong Supporter' of Johnson on Vietnam", April 3, 1966.
<http://search.proquest.com.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/hnpnew>

Suddenly, Case voted for the authorization of funds for President Johnson's Vietnam campaign, and voted to table the amendment to repeal the Tonkin Gulf resolution of 1964.⁴¹ The resolution granted President Johnson a full set of powers and the support of Congress for all actions necessary to respond to the North Vietnamese attacks on U.S. vessels in the Tonkin Gulf, and to prevent further communist aggression in that region.⁴² In its editorial *Case 'a Strong Supporter' of Johnson on Vietnam*, New York Times also points to the shift. The editorial read,

Senator Clifford P. Case said today he had 'come to be a quite strong supporter' of the administration's general line of policy in Southeast Asia. The New Jersey Republican, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee which has conducted public hearings on both Vietnam and China policy, said in an interview taped for television use in his home state: 'After a great deal of consideration and thought, I've come to be a quite strong supporter of the general line that the administration here is following in the war in Vietnam.'⁴³

There are however, not any clear indications in Clifford Case's papers for the reasons behind his shift in support of President Johnson's Vietnam policies. One possible explanation could be the shift in President Johnson's policies in Vietnam, which is highly unlikely considering that criticisms of the administration continued unabated. The other possible explanation could be that Case ran for reelection. At this time, the majority still continued to support the President, and Case's opposition to the majority position would have hurt his popularity and undermined his reelection. Yet, no information was found to support this possibility. Still, it is interesting that Case shifted his criticism of Johnson and became

his supporter. The reasons behind this shift though need to be investigated further.

Clifford Case's support for the Johnson Administration's policies on Vietnam was rather brief. As soon as June, 1966, Case resumed his critique of President Johnson, working this time together with fellow Republican Richard Nixon. Evidence that points to their collaboration is the friendly content of the letter, written by Nixon and addressed to Clifford Case. The letter reads,

Dear Cliff:

In a recent column I wrote for the North American Newspaper Alliance I tried to summarize some of the issues of 1966. I am sending a copy to you with the thought that you may find some good ammunition for your campaign.⁴⁴

Additionally, Nixon's critique of President Johnson in his article for the North American Newspaper Alliance is surprisingly similar to the critique Case made in February, in his remarks at the annual congressional dinner of the New Jersey State Chamber of Commerce. Similar to Case, in his remarks, Nixon argues that Johnson was losing the support of the people over the Vietnam crisis "not because the people oppose his policy, but because they simply do not know what that policy is."⁴⁵ Similarly, Case asserted in his remarks,

The American people... are deeply disturbed and disquieted about Vietnam not because they do not understand...or disagree with our objectives or our motives [in Vietnam]...What they are disturbed about... is whether we are going about those objectives in the right way, whether they are attainable at all or without unacceptable cost by the means we are using... Our nation's objectives and intentions must be known to and approved by the whole people.⁴⁶

yorktimes/docview/117187988/7B2C06CBE2014D8FPQ/1?ac
countid=13626 (accessed March 25, 2014)

⁴¹ Clifford Case, *Floor statement by senator Clifford P. Case on bill to authorize supplemental defense appropriations for Vietnam*, March 7, 1966, Clifford Case papers, box 34, Alexander Library, Rutgers University.

⁴² 88th Congress, Second Session, Senate, Report No. 1329, *Promoting the Maintenance of International Peace and Security in Southeast Asia*, 6 August 1967.

⁴³ *New York Times*, "Case 'a Strong Supporter' of Johnson on Vietnam," April 3, 1966.

<http://search.proquest.com.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/hnpnew>

yorktimes/docview/117187988/7B2C06CBE2014D8FPQ/1?ac
countid=13626 (accessed March 25, 2014).

⁴⁴ Richard Nixon to Clifford Case, June 16, 1966, in Clifford Case papers, Box 2, Alexander Library, Rutgers University.

⁴⁵ Richard Nixon, "Vietnam." *North American Newspaper Alliance Column*, June 4, 1966.

⁴⁶ Clifford Case, *Partial Text of Remarks by Senator Clifford P. Case, member, Foreign Relations Committee, prepared for delivery at annual congressional dinner of the New Jersey States Chamber of Commerce in the hotel Statler-Hilton, Washington, D.C., Thursday Evening, February 3, 1966*, Clifford Case Papers, Box 34, Alexander Library, Rutgers University.

The friendly content of Nixon's letter to Case and the relative similarities between their criticisms of President Johnson and their approaches to that topic make it plausible that Case and Nixon were working together against President Johnson.

1967- The Beginning of an end

In 1967, Case's overall position with regard to Vietnam changed profoundly. The most important event to account for this shift was Case's trip to Vietnam in May. The purpose for this mission was to "assess for [himself] the situation as it [was] and the alternatives that may be open to [the United States]."⁴⁷ Case visited Japan, China, Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, and the Philippines.⁴⁸ While in Vietnam, he met with a variety of people: army generals, servicemen, journalists and politicians.⁴⁹ Upon his return, Case gave a speech on his mission, relating his somber views on the overall situation in Vietnam:

I return with a view of the war that, I regret to say, can only be described as somber. The scope and intensity of the conflict in South Vietnam show no sign of diminishing... I saw and heard nothing to indicate any possibility of a negotiated peace in a foreseeable future, short of a willingness upon our part to abandon our objectives... we are left with that 'long, slow and painful process' of helping the government of South Vietnam to bring security and stability to the countryside and to win the confidence and support of its people... Over-optimism and misleadingly cheerful reports of progress, of which we have had an over-abundance, serve not only to deceive the American people but to deepen the cynicism of the war-weary people of South Vietnam and to hamper the development of a viable political system there...⁵⁰

As can be seen, the old cheerful Clifford Case, who argued for the continual pursuit of American objectives in Vietnam, and who sincerely believed in these objectives himself, has suddenly given way to a more skeptical, more realistic politician, who realized the whole complexity, endlessness, and political complications that American involvement

in Vietnam entailed. Case saw firsthand that the conflict was nowhere near its end, and that the American tactics were not delivering any significant results. The war was still at its peak and there were no peace negotiations between North and South whatsoever. The United States, on the other hand, was bearing astronomical costs, both in people and money. Additionally, the government of the South Vietnam backed by the United States, was continuously losing the support of its people. Furthermore, the increasingly optimistic reports on American involvement in the war were not only putting in jeopardy the trust of American people in their government, but also hampering the developments of democracy in the South Vietnam itself. These are just some of the aspects Clifford Case witnessed firsthand while on his trip that made him change his views.

It is important to point out that Case's speech was a dramatic moment in the developing criticism of the Johnson Administration policies. That fact is reflected in a political cartoon published in the *Washington Post*. The cartoon titled, "Hello- Is This My Good Old Friend And Fellow- Democrat, Bill Fulbright?" shows President Johnson bruised, wearing a cast with a phrase "Sen. Case Speech on Vietnam" and calling someone (presumably Bill Fulbright).⁵¹ To the cartoonist, Case's speech clearly represents a pivotal, damaging moment for Johnson's Vietnam policies and his presidency. But the cartoon also serves as evidence that Case's speech received much attention; therefore, the cartoon demonstrates that Clifford Case's speech was a dramatic moment in the developing criticism of the Johnson administration policies that attracted the attention of Americans.

The speech is not the only evidence of the pivotal role Case's mission played in shifting his position toward American involvement in Vietnam. Case's records after his trip reveal how his experiences changed his approach in the Senate. Case began to argue for the transition of military operations to South Vietnam, with the South Vietnamese taking a more active role in the military operation in Vietnam. In his remarks for Sunday newspapers, on June 25, 1967, Case argued, "Our

⁴⁷ Clifford Case, *Report by Senator Case on his fact-finding mission to Southeast Asia*, Congressional Record S7663, June 5 1967.

⁴⁸ Clifford Case's schedule, *Senator Case's Appointment: May 5-27*, Rutgers University Libraries.

⁴⁹ Clifford Case's schedule, *Senator Case's Appointment: May 5-27*. Rutgers University Libraries.

⁵⁰ *Congressional Record* S 7663- 7664, 5 June 1967.

⁵¹ Herbert L. Block, *Hello- Is This My Good Old Friend And Fellow- Democrat, Bill Fulbright?*, Cartoon, *Washington Post*, 28 September, 1967, (April 12, 2014).

goal should be to insist upon, and assist in getting, maximum effectiveness from the very large numbers of men in the South Vietnamese forces... otherwise, we risk losing the very objective we seek—an independent and viable nation in South Vietnam.”⁵² Even though Case was arguing for the handoff of the initiative to the South Vietnamese army, he did not believe that the United States should withdraw from Vietnam. Case asserted, “I do not believe we can withdraw. I came to this position with great reluctance because like so many of us I had been hoping against hope that I would find it possible in some way to justify our cutting our losses and ending our involvement in Vietnam at one stroke...”⁵³ At this moment in time, Case believed that the United States should not withdraw from Vietnam.

It was in July of the same year that Case finally admitted that the United States should have a right to withdraw from Vietnam, but only if the South Vietnamese government and the military would not take an active part in doing their job. He argued, “We have, and we must maintain, the right to withdraw from Vietnam if it is clear that despite our best efforts the Vietnamese themselves will not permit the accomplishment of the objectives we both seek.”⁵⁴ This quote demonstrates a change in Case’s stance toward withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam. In September of 1967, Case openly started to push in the Senate the idea of the complete withdrawal of the U.S. forces from Vietnam. During his argument with Senator Brooke of Massachusetts, Case stated, “I am advocating that we break out of this dilemma into which the South Vietnamese Government has been allowed to draw the United States.”⁵⁵ Some might point to Clifford Case’s statement within the same argument that he was not advocating withdrawal.⁵⁶ However, considering the fact that Case alluded to and began urging to initiate the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam earlier, it is clear that Case was in fact advocating withdrawal privately, but not ready to call for it publically. In 1967, Case’s position concerning Vietnam began to

shift to one promoting peace and withdrawal, a direct result of his Asian tour.

In 1968, Case continued the overall political rhetoric that he began in 1967, arguing for the withdrawal and de-escalation of the war in Vietnam. In his interview entitled, “Senator Case Speaks to the Issue,” Case pointed out, “...my present feeling is that the time has come when we in Congress should make more clear than we ever have so far, and this is, I think, my position from here on out: it’s time to stop escalating and start de-escalating.”⁵⁷ However, in the summer of 1968, Case increased his pressure when he began urging President Johnson to initiate a program of U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam.⁵⁸ It is important to mention that partisanship is not relevant to understanding Case’s relationship to President Johnson’s decisions in Vietnam. Case agreed with the general policies President Johnson was following in Vietnam up to this point. As had been demonstrated earlier, Case mainly critiqued some of the Johnson Administration’s decisions in Vietnam. This would indicate that Case’s critique of President Johnson had little to do with partisanship, and more to do with Case’s analysis of what the correct policies were in Vietnam.

1970s- The End

In 1970, Case’s involvement in Congressional debates mysteriously stops for one year. While Congressional records for this time period are littered with discussions related to Vietnam, Case was not present for many of these. The reasons for Case’s passive nature in relation to Vietnam in this time period are unknown. It is possible to assume that Case simply wanted to give Richard Nixon time to integrate his plan to end the Vietnam War and implement his policy of Vietnamization. However, there is not any clear evidence indicating that possibility. Even with the lack of information, there nevertheless can be a sense of what Case was thinking about Vietnam. Based on the records of Case in 1970, he continued to maintain the same political position as in the previous several years; he continued to advocate for de-escalation and

⁵² Clifford Case, *Statements from the Office of Senator Clifford P. Case for release*, June 25, 1967, Clifford Case papers, Box 34, Alexander library, Rutgers University.

⁵³ Clifford Case, *Statements from the Office of Senator Clifford P. Case for release*, June 25, 1967, Clifford Case papers, Box 34, Alexander library, Rutgers University.

⁵⁴ Clifford Case, *Vietnam, Congressional Record S 9245*, 10 July 1967, Clifford Case papers, Box 14, Alexander Library, Rutgers University.

⁵⁵ *Congressional Record S 13523*, 22 September 1967.

⁵⁶ *Congressional Record S 13523*, 22 September 1967.

⁵⁷ University 300, Interview with Senator Clifford P. Case, *Senator Case Speaks to the Issue, 1968*, Clifford Case papers, Box 14, Alexander Library, Rutgers University.

⁵⁸ Clifford Case, *Unpublished Article*, 1970, Clifford Case Papers, box 14, Alexander Library, Rutgers University.

withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam. Case was arguing for setting a fixed date of U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam. Case argued, "...by fixing a date for our withdrawal and sticking to it so long as that date is reasonable, we will be taking the only course which might lead to successful negotiations..."⁵⁹ But it was not merely a withdrawal for which Case argued. As evidenced by the above quote, Case also supported the possibility of negotiations between the United States and North Vietnam. Furthermore, Case voted for the Special Foreign Assistance Act of 1971, prohibiting the financing of the Cambodian conflict by the United States. This also points to the continuation of Case's position in favor of de-escalation and withdrawal in regard to Vietnam, as the United States was involved in Cambodia as well as Vietnam. Furthermore, in December of 1970, Case presented the Senate Resolution 495- a resolution to establish a select committee on national security policy.⁶⁰ The resolution was intended "to provide an effective mechanism by which the Senate can regularly and continuously examine the foreign policy objectives and the security requirements of the United States and the military capabilities needed to meet such objectives and requirements."⁶¹ It is clear that the resolution was intended to prevent future manipulations of Congress by the President, as a way to prevent future wars similar to the one in Vietnam. As Case himself asserted,

More recently, aroused by the Vietnam War and now sharply heightened by the Cambodian incursion is a spreading awareness of [the danger of the power center created in the White house]. We are shocked by the apparent impotence of Congress to check the president's ability to expand or contract American commitment and to initiate military operations practically at will and on an almost instantaneous, ad hoc basis.⁶²

It is clear that in 1970 Clifford Case's position on Vietnam remained largely similar to his previous position at the end of the 1960s, even though his

activity in Congressional debates regarding Vietnam decreased significantly.

In 1971, Case's position on Vietnam endured few, if any changes. As in the previous several years, Case continued to push for disengagement and for setting a withdrawal date of American military personnel from Vietnam.⁶³ Case also joined in his support for the Vietnam Disengagement Act, stating, "[I support this act] with understanding that the date set for withdrawal is subject to adjustment before the act comes to a vote... I believe that the middle of next year should be an appropriate time to fix the end of our involvement, and by this I mean a complete end to our involvement."⁶⁴ As a result, in 1971, Case continued his advocacy of disengagement and a withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam

Clifford Case's anti-war position culminated in 1973, when together with his fellow Senator Frank Church, Case authored the Case-Church amendment. The aim of the amendment was to stop and prevent any further U.S. involvement in South-East Asia. The Amendment said,

Notwithstanding any other provision of law upon enactment of this act, no funds heretofore or hereafter appropriated may be obligated or expended to finance the involvement of United States military forces in hostilities in or over or from off the shores of North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia unless specifically authorized hereafter by the Congress. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, upon enactment of this act, no funds heretofore or hereafter appropriated may be obligated or expended for the purpose of providing assistance of any kind, directly or indirectly, to or on behalf of South Vietnam unless specifically authorized hereafter by the Congress.⁶⁵

Within a few years, Case moved from the position of giving Nixon time to implement his policies, to openly working to undercut them. The amendment itself had a divisive effect on Congress, producing some heated discussions. The majority supported the amendment throughout the ratification process,

⁵⁹ *Congressional Record* S 14645, 31 August 1970.

⁶⁰ *Congressional Record* S 20377, 16 December 1970.

⁶¹ *Congressional Record* S 20377, 16 December 1970.

⁶² *Congressional Record* S 20377, 16 December 1970.

⁶³ Clifford Case, *CPC remarks supporting statement of Senator Brooke Calling for date for withdrawal from Vietnam*, April 14, 1971, *Congressional Record* S 4875.

⁶⁴ Clifford Case, *The Vietnam Disengagement Act*, April 15, 1971, *Congressional Record* S 4899.

⁶⁵ Amy Belasco, Lynn J., Hannah Cunningham Fischer, and Larry A. Niksch. *CRS Report for Congress: Congressional Restrictions on U.S. Military Operations in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Somalia, and Kosovo: Funding and Non-Funding Approaches*. Federation of American Scientists website, January 16, 2007, p. 34.

including Senators Biden, Clark, Eagleton, Hatfield, McGee, Percy, and others. There were of course Senators who had doubts, and others who vehemently opposed the amendment. Some Senators did not want to desert the South Vietnamese people and refugees, leaving them without help to defend against their communist neighbor. Senator Aiken, for example, during one discussion of the Case-Church amendment stated, "I was wondering whether any consideration was given to the welfare of the refugees in South Vietnam in the event North Vietnam overcomes that part of the country. Do we agree to let North Vietnam take over control of the people of South Vietnam?"⁶⁶ Aiken was not alone in his critique. Some Senators wanted to provide for a cease fire to protect the South Vietnamese. Senator Griffin, during the same debate, pointed out, "Frankly, I am disappointed that the Senator from New Jersey and the senator from Idaho would come in with a new proposal that leaves out one of the two important conditions... that there must be agreement to an internationally supervised cease-fire... as well as the release of our prisoners of war."⁶⁷

Even with the criticisms, doubts, and disagreements, Senatorial majority supported the amendment. This fact is well demonstrated in the many voting records for the amendment. One record shows fifty-four senators voting in favor of the amendment, with just twenty-eight voting against, and eighteen senators not voting at all.⁶⁸ The support of the amendment was in fact so strong that the critics of the Case-Church amendment eventually gave up their efforts of opposing it. As Senator Thurmond stated, "... the Senate and the entire Congress have approved this particular amendment several times... In view of that fact, I think it would be useless to oppose it. We will accept the amendment and take it to conference."⁶⁹ The amendment was passed, bringing to an end Clifford Case's crusade against U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

Conclusion- A Political Dinosaur

Clifford Case was a man of contradictions, in terms of his policies in regard to Vietnam, and yet a powerful and calculating Senator who enjoyed enormous respect from both his fellow Senators and his constituents. Case was a man who in his thirty-three years in federal office managed to break several election records and enact laws and services that New Jersey residents continue to enjoy to this day,

such as community colleges, Medicaid, Medicare, and others. An interesting aspect of Case's political career is that he represented a political figure who almost does not exist anymore, that is, a liberal, moderate Republican. Today, almost all Republicans are either conservative, or very conservative. In that respect, Case represents a political dinosaur. American political life has changed drastically since the Vietnam era. This paper demonstrates that through shedding light on the complexities of Clifford Case's positions in regard to Vietnam, and American participation in that war. Emerging as an advocate of American involvement in Vietnam and a supporter of American policies in that country, Case slowly but surely evolved into a firm anti-war advocate, arguing for the withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam and critiquing American policies in that country. This paper also demonstrates new aspects in understanding internal political dynamics of the Vietnam War period, such as how politicians' positions evolved over time and how Clifford Case influenced the American politics of Vietnam. Moreover, a better understanding of the internal workings of American political model during this time emerges. Clifford Case was a complex and important man who receives little attention in historical literature. Further scholarly attention to Case will help better explain not only domestic and foreign politics during the Vietnam era, but, also, how they have evolved in the years after.

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⁶⁸ *Congressional Record* S 17213, September 21 1973.

⁶⁹ *Congressional Record* S 17214, September 21 1973.

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