Nothing settled in Vietnam, panel at Harvard decides

By Mike McNamara

The place: Burr Hall at Har- 
vard's Leverett Room B. The room gives you a feeling of 
vertigo as you enter—it looks like a pit with the sides sloping 
sharply to the center. Arranged in no particular order:

The crowd: Young, but not as freaky as one might expect.

Sitting around, with all attention centered on the bottom of the 
pit, on... Why? A panel discussion, of course.

What is Settled in Vietnam?

It started, as all seminars, panel discussions, etc., must - 
ten minutes late. Hoffman even mentioned the fact. ("Now that 
the required ten minutes have passed...") Laughter. Introdu-
ces the members of the panel; Holbrooke speaks first.

"I think there is one thing 
that we are all agreed on here, and that is that fighting is settled in 
Vietnam. I think that what we will 
end up discussing is the different ways of interpreting 
what did happen in the January Accords, and what the Accords 
say about the US's policies in Indochina.

(Well, I don't suppose they could have billed it as 'What Isn't 
settled in Vietnam and What That Means, could they?)

Wars are caused by people having the resources to fight and 
hating a cause that they feel strongly enough about to go out 
and kill people over, according to Holbrooke. When one con-

siders that the people of Viet-

nam still have the resources, and 
many of them still have the will to fight, one concludes that the January 
Agreements settles nothing for the people of that embattled 
country.

US, Holbrooke goes on, is a different story. "The US will 
probably go on pursuing its po-
litical goals in Vietnam. Briefly 
stated, this means that South 
Vietnam will not go Communist during the next three years 
and ten months. (Why did everyone 
laugh?) After that, it's hard to 
talk."

The anti-war movement, according to Holbrooke, is re-

sponsible for the fact that the US has galed in the Accords: the removal of the ground troops from Vietnam. "From 
May of 1970, when the Cambo-
dian invasion sparked such wide-

spread protest, Nixon knew that he couldn't expand the ground 
war in Indochina." Of course, 

one finds it impossible to rule out all further military steps by 
the US, but no more ground troops, Holbrooke concluded.

Pool, who spoke next, stated 
that the war was and still is about two issues: who will have 
control of Vietnam, and what the US's role in world affairs will 
be. Neither of those issues were settled, because war never settles 
anything. Did the US settle any questions of racial prejudice or 
equality? Pool asked.

The Vietnamese have a politi-
cal concept, according to Pool, 
called "mandate of heaven": the 
man currently in power has the 
mandate of heaven, and it re-
mains with him unless he proves 
up or becomes too weak to hold 
it. The North Vietnamese recognize that Thieu currently 
has the mandate of heaven, and that, for the moment, he 
will stay in power. 

Pool said. One the long term, Pool would make no predictions; 
the Vietcong seems to want to pro-
mote the Indochinese War any longer than necessary. So, South 
Vietnam's economy is on the rise, he 
said, "The North Vietnamese are 
recognizing that Thieu currently 
has the mandate of heaven, and that, for the moment, he 
will stay in power."

FitzGerald continued, "on 
the other hand, wants to maintain 
military tension; he must keep 
the people in the government-
backed areas, and maintain state of emergency to justify his 
actions.

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