



 CHIPS

CAMERON UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH JOURNAL  
OF HISTORY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE





## **Cameron University Undergraduate Research Journal of History and Political Science**

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# NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

Wendy Whitman Cobb

Another exciting year has passed and it has brought significant but exciting changes to the former Department of History and Government. Over the past year, the Department of Criminal Justice and Sociology has merged with us to create the Department of Social Sciences. Offering six degree programs and serving all of Cameron University's student body, this has allowed us to reach across the bounds of our various disciplines and take advantage of each other's expertise to provide students with a quality educational experience.

That educational experience continues with the publication of the second volume of *CHiPS: The Cameron University Undergraduate Research Journal of History and Political Science*. While our journal continues to grow, our mission remains: to encourage student research both in and outside of the classroom. As professors, we are privy to the research experiences of our students but through *CHiPS*, that unique perspective is shared with those outside of our classrooms. We continue to hope that this not only

encourages our students but rewards them for their continuous hard work.

This year's edition features a wide variety of research pieces in both history and political science. The first piece, by history major Sandi Colby, examines the life of Mercy Otis Warren in colonial America and the origins of her political attitudes. The research reminds of us of the role that women played in the American Revolution even though much of it is overshadowed by the Founding Fathers themselves.

Dreama Black's research on the Tet Offensive asks if the North Vietnamese actually intended to stir up South Vietnamese civilians in their attack during Tet or whether it was a ploy designed to affect public opinion about the war in America. The Vietnamese experience and the influence of public opinion and the media says much about democratic politics; indeed, the democratic peace theory is partially predicated on the fact that democracies may be less likely to go to war precisely because they are constrained by their citizenry. Although it

## Notes From the Editors

may not have been the North Vietnamese's direct goal, as Black argues, American public opinion was certainly influential in determining both the fate of the war in Vietnam and the presidential fate of Lyndon B. Johnson.

The final paper examines the impact of the minimum wage on unemployment for low skilled demographics. Luis Jaquez takes a detailed look behind the politics and demagoguery to pinpoint exactly what happens to unemployment levels when the federal minimum wage is raised. Not only does he find evidence for a strange statistical anomaly but he demonstrates that unemployment levels for minorities, young people, and those with lower education levels is indeed enlarged as the minimum wage level rises.

These three papers together show the not only the quality of undergraduate research at Cameron University but the hard work and dedication of our students. The research they have undertaken is at times difficult and at other times frustrating but the result of the hours of labor put into the research shows in the pages of *CHiPS*.

The editors continue to encourage all Cameron students to pursue independent research and we remain committed to publishing it here. The editors wish to thank Dr. Caroline Peyton for assisting with the reviews as well as the entire Department of Social

Sciences for their continued support for the journal. Finally, we acknowledge the financial support received from the Katherine D. Lacy Endowed Lectureship in History which allows us to print and publish *CHiPS*. We are grateful for the support.

# MERCY OTIS WARREN: ANTI-FEDERALIST BY CIRCUMSTANCE AND FOR LIFE

Sandi M. Colby  
Senior History Major

Thirty years after the first shots were fired at Lexington and Concord, Mercy Otis Warren released her "life's work," a complete historical record of events, collected and presented in three volumes she titled *History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution*. While not an immediate commercial success, the books were enthusiastically supported by many people who knew her, especially those who had similar political leanings. Much to Warren's disappointment, her long-time friend and mentor, John Adams, was not among the admirers of her history because he felt Warren's portrayals of his person and his role in events were unflattering and insulting. One of his many objections concerned a passage that insinuated the time he spent in Europe, "under the despotism of kings [and] monarchic principles and manners," reconciled him to such principles and manners.<sup>1</sup> In his letter to Warren addressing

the slight Adams was quick to point out that while he accepted such things as part of life in Europe, mostly because they were too ingrained to dispose of, he still believed, as he always had, that they were "inadmissible in America."<sup>2</sup>

The reason Warren's insinuation stung was because Adams had played a significant part in the revolution as one of the earliest people to seriously consider colonial independence and he felt he had fought as hard as anyone to secure it. Just like Warren, he feared and despised governments whose national authority came from a distant country and whose power rested in a single person or group. To Adams, Warren's insult was the equivalent of being called a loyalist or a traitor by someone he thought was his friend and political ally. Two years after the book's release, Warren and Adams completely dissolved their already strained friend-

ship and did not correspond again for many years.

Politically, Warren wholeheartedly believed that small, local governments run by the people were better than large, remote, monarchical types of government. Her anti-monarchy/anti-federalist convictions developed and remained unwavering because her father, brother, and husband were all involved in local politics that often clashed with British policies and political figures and because she grew up surrounded by important colonial revolutionary and political figures who significantly influenced her. Warren's political stance was the motivating influence for her written contributions before and during the American Revolution and Early National period. Her work included poetic and dramatic publications, a critical historical account of the war and the struggle to create a functioning government, and a treatise opposing the new American Constitution. While Warren did ultimately reconcile herself to the new form of American government, particularly after the addition of the Bill of Rights, she retained her staunch anti-federalist philosophy until her death.

Warren's political ideology developed according to the circumstances of her life building up to the American Revolution. She grew up in Barnstable, a small Massachusetts farming community of conservative Puritans where her family, the Otises, had lived for generations. The men of her family, going back many years, were among those Barnstable community members who "tended to be elected and re-elected to positions in town and colonial governments."<sup>3</sup> Warren's own grandfather, father, and brothers were "prominent figures in business and local politics." Both insti-

tutions suffered negatively from British interference during the period leading up to the Revolution and Warren witnessed it firsthand.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to being aware of her family's feelings on British interference in their business interests, Warren, from a very young age, was also exposed to many political discussions held by her father in the family home because he believed children should not be excluded from the knowledge.<sup>5</sup> When they married, Warren's husband James carried on the same open door policy for political meetings and discussions in their home so she was able to meet and speak with many of the prominent revolutionary thinkers of the time. In a letter to John Adams she entreats him to recall a discussion that took place "by the Plymouth fire side, where many political plans originated."<sup>6</sup> It was the combination of continual exposure to both the personal aggravations of British intrusion into her family's affairs and the influence of early revolutionary thinkers, especially that of her brother James "The Patriot" Otis, which shaped her political views.

Coming from a family of lawyers, politicians, and merchants, Warren felt the direct impact of the British Parliament's attempts to get the colonies to help pay war debts and, when those were met with resistance, to re-assert British authority over the colonies. The Stamp Act was a particular annoyance, both personally and professionally, to the Otis and Warren families. Personally, they believed in education for their children and in staying informed about current events, which required books and various printed documents that were all subject to taxation. Professionally, they worked as lawyers, judges, and shipping merchants so all

their legal documents and paperwork were subject to taxation. Political figures in the families were frustrated because they were powerless to legally intervene in any way. In her *History*, Warren refers to the Stamp Act as “the first innovation that gave general alarm throughout the continent.”<sup>7</sup>

The repeal of the Stamp Act was some relief, but the Declaratory and Townshend Acts, which angered the colonists again, came soon after. Of Parliament’s Declaratory Act, Warren said the colonists were reluctant to believe the government would “soon endeavor to avail themselves of the dangerous experiment” of enforcing Parliament’s right to tax Americans whenever it wants. Therefore, they were especially upset when the Townshend Acts were put into effect. Warren points out that the tea tax in particular became “an object of high importance and altercation” because it felt like a sneaky tax that would “ruin [colonial] trade, corrupt the morals of the people, and was more abhorrent to [colonial] eyes than a direct demand.”<sup>8</sup> Warren’s reaction, at John Adams’ prompting, to the Boston Tea Party was to write the poem “The Squabble of the Sea Nymphs; or the Sacrifice of the Tuscararoës,” in which she described the imaginary ruler, based on King George III, as a factious, tyrannical, promoter of “base oppression o’er the virtues.”<sup>9</sup> She also wrote of “the servile train, the pimps and sycophants of George’s reign,” referring to the British Parliament colonists blamed and feared more than they did the king.<sup>10</sup> This poem was Warren’s first political statement to be published, albeit anonymously, and it was the only way she, or any woman of the period, could have an authoritative voice in the discussion about staying with Britain or

claiming independence.

Warren insisted it was not the actual amount of the taxes that angered colonists, but the precedent it set. Colonists feared that if they accepted taxation by Parliament or the king doing so would lead to their enslavement to Britain. Enslavement, according to the colonists, meant becoming a source of income to Britain, being subject to “wanton exercise [and abuse] of power in the crown officers,” and losing the liberty and power of self-government which they felt was their natural right.<sup>11</sup> Just the idea of enslavement frightened many colonists into thoughts of revolution. In a letter written in 1773 Warren expresses hope that “Heaven may yet avert the dread calamity of Civil War; and prevent the sad alternative of either bowing beneath the bands of slavery or of repurchasing our plundered rights by the blood of *the* virtuous citizens.”<sup>12</sup> Her fears about colonial “enslavement” seemed reasonable based on Warren and her family’s personal clashes with a powerful loyalist named Thomas Hutchinson.

Animosity between the Otises and Hutchinson started as early as 1757 when James Otis, Warren’s father, lost a coveted position on the Governor’s Council to Hutchinson. According to historian Katherine Anthony, Hutchinson, appointed as Lieutenant Governor while still holding his position on the Governor’s Council, took his newest office at the same time the British were pushing for tighter rule over the colonies, making him part of “the abhorred team who administered the new British policies.”<sup>13</sup> In 1760, Hutchinson, who had no legal experience, was awarded another position Otis wanted, a position he had been promised—the position of Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Su-

perior Court. Hutchinson concurrently served as a judge on the Suffolk probate court and as commander of Boston Harbor's Castle William. The Otises considered Hutchinson's multiple appointments as an "insidious concentration of power in the hands of one person" and feared it was the "harbinger of a dangerous trend."<sup>14</sup>

Further confrontations between the Otises and Hutchinson supported their distrust of him. James "Jemmy" Otis, Warren's brother, fought in Hutchinson's court against the writs of assistance used to allow forcible acts of search and seizure against merchants suspected of violating the resurrected Molasses Act that dated back to 1733. Jemmy made an impassioned speech based on colonial beliefs that the writs were "instruments of arbitrary power [that were] most destructive to English liberty and the fundamental principles of the Constitution." His final conclusion was that "taxation without representation was tyranny."<sup>15</sup> Hutchinson and the court ruled in favor of Britain and declared the writs legal. This was not his only transgression though. Over the next few years, he took the position of governor, requested a standing army to be sent into the region, violated the Massachusetts Charter of 1691, refused to address questions by the assembly about new British laws, accepted his pay from taxes raised by the Townshend Acts, and, worst of all, was caught and exposed for writing a series of letters between 1767 and 1769 to the secretary of the British treasury recommending punitive actions against the colony.<sup>16</sup> Hutchinson, according to historian Rosemarie Zagari, "hinder[ed] the Otis's quest for power, impugn[ed] their reputations, and stymie[d] their hold over the legislature," thus becom-

ing Warren's mortal enemy who "would come to personify the threat of British tyranny."<sup>17</sup> He became the ideal scapegoat to bear the guilt of the British government's abuses of its colonial children. In a private letter to a friend Warren wrote of Hutchinson, "May a speedy and sincere repentance obtain forgiveness from heaven for crimes too big and too far spread to expect the pardon of their fellow-men."<sup>18</sup> Publicly, Warren vilified him in several plays she wrote that were designed to stir up revolutionary sentiment.

Warren's first political satire play, *The Adulateur*, was a jab at Hutchinson and served as part of the revolutionary attack against British infringements of colonial rights. Her play was a thinly veiled warning about the evil Rapatio, the character based on Hutchinson, and his greedy ambitions. Warren expresses what the colonists most feared and opposed about loyalists in powerful positions in a monologue she wrote for Rapatio where he says,

Dispotic [sic] rule my first,  
my sov'reign wish.

Yet to succeed, beyond my  
sanguine hope,

To quench the generous  
flame, the ardent love

Of liberty in Servia's free born  
sons

Destroy their boasted  
rights, and mark them  
slaves.<sup>19</sup>

Warren also warns readers that violence is coming, either from the loyalists and British henchmen as they attempt to subdue the colonists or from war when the colonies finally rebel.

Her second play, *The Defeat*, also featured Hutchinson's character, Rapatio. She wrote this one right after his letters to the secretary of the British treasury were intercepted and the Massachusetts Charter repealed. Hutchinson is again portrayed as the villain, a native born man who sells out his country to despotism for his own personal gain. Author Edmund M. Hayes explains that Warren uses her literary talent to portray Rapatio as Judas, Satan, and mad- Nero in his opposition of colonial freedom.<sup>20</sup> Warren also attacks anyone involved with Rapatio, calling one character the "dirtiest dupe of all the venal race, Who sells their country for a pension'd place, Who barter conscience for a gilded straw, Riot on right, and trample on law."<sup>21</sup> It was these first two plays that really showed Warren's strong anti-monarchy, anti- outside rule sentiment. The plays also contributed to her description as the Muse of the Revolution, armed with a secret pen as deadly as any sword.

While sole credit for the literary aspects of her poetry and plays deservedly goes to Warren, the anti-British rhetoric was not hers alone; it was the result of her political discussions and interactions with many of the brightest and most enthusiastic supporters of colonial independence. Her brother Jemmy was one of the men who heavily influenced her political philosophy. Growing up, they were very close and they retained that relationship even as adults. Warren followed her brother's career and his rise as "The Patriot" closely. She would have heard, or heard about, his four- hour long argument against the writs of assistance, in which he made the argument about natural rights and constitutional principles, not just legal precedent.<sup>22</sup> She also would

have read all of his written propaganda, including his famous "circular letter" which was designed to stir up other colonies over their own natural and constitutional rights being infringed upon by British taxation.<sup>23</sup> Jemmy was completely outspoken about his beliefs regarding the tyranny of Britain and the need for revolution to free the colonies—it would have been incredibly difficult for Warren to avoid the influence of his passionate beliefs. When her brother was attacked and beaten she wrote to him asking, "is it possible that we have men among us under the guise of officer of the Crown, who have become open assassins?"<sup>24</sup> His near death encounter affected her deeply and by the time Jemmy started suffering from mental and physical health issues, Warren was fully prepared, and felt an obligation, to continue his work spreading the flames of independence and revolution.

John Adams was another man who had a significant influence on Warren's politics. A friend and political ally of Jemmy's, Adams was a frequent visitor in the Otis and Warren households, as his political beliefs generally fell in line with theirs. Warren and Adams' wife, Abigail, became friends, which eventually allowed Warren access to Adams, with whom she also developed a strong friendship. The three exchanged letters often and they regularly exchanged ideas about the political state of affairs. Early in 1776 Adams and Warren had written dialogue concerning a future American government. Warren expressed her wish "never to see a Monarchy established in America" and her preference for a republican government "established in the genuine principles of equal liberty."<sup>25</sup> John Adams eventually became a mentor to Warren

and was involved in one way or another with many of her literary contributions to the revolution. "Squabble of the Sea Nymphs" was originally proposed and outlined by Adams via a letter requesting her to flesh it out because he believed the event needed to be memorialized in a satirical poem.<sup>26</sup> Pleased with Adams' praise for the quality of her finished draft of the poem, Warren became more reliant on his approval of any political pieces she wrote. *The Group*, her third satirical play was much like the other two in its criticism of British rule and loyalists, but it included a secondary, pro- female theme about the difficulty of war on women married to greedy men.<sup>27</sup> She submitted it to her husband for approval first because she was very nervous about the content, but it was Adams' opinion she was more concerned about. Even after he had the work published in two newspapers and it was picked up and distributed as a pamphlet, Warren was not satisfied until she received word from Adams, via a letter to her husband followed by one addressed to her, expressing his appreciation. In his letter he tells her, "of all the genius's [sic] which have yet risen in America, there has been none, superior to one, which now shines, in this happy, this exquisite faculty...I know of none...which has reached the tender, the pathetic, the keen and severe, and at the same time, the soft, the sweet, the amiable and the pure in perfection."<sup>28</sup> Adams was an enthusiastic supporter of Warren and her writing for many years, but after the war their political beliefs diverged and created a strain in their relationship.

Most of the people who influenced Warren were men who already held political power within their own towns or within the independent, or

confederated, colonial governments, much like her own family. Few of her politically based relationships were with people who fell outside of that parameter, but two of the most important and influential ones that did were with Abigail Adams and Catherine Macaulay. The Warrens and Adams had a friendship that spanned forty years and the two women often relied on each other during periods when their husbands were absent. Most of the women's correspondence included discussion of politics and government, but also included many domestic issues. The women were able to console each other while their men were away, discuss the war in relation to feminine worries about supply scarcity, republicanism, Republican Motherhood issues, and address, even if it was one-sided, feminist and abolitionist philosophy.<sup>29</sup> Warren began her correspondence with Macaulay, a British Tory who supported American independence, when her brother's mental illness prevented him from continuing his. The women began their written communications in 1773 and developed a close friendship that lasted until Macaulay's death. Warren developed a very straight-forward and authoritative voice in her letters to Macaulay, a tone much different from her communication with men, and some women, with whom she felt obliged to make excuses for overstepping her female role to write about politics. Macaulay provided Warren with the opportunity to get an "outsider" viewpoint on the war and the creation of the new government and she served as Warren's first outlet, besides family, for her political writing.<sup>29</sup> Both Abigail Adams and Macaulay supported and encouraged Warren and contributed to the creation of her political identity.

Warren's relationship with her husband was another important part of her political philosophy. James and Mercy Warren did not run their home on the traditional model of a "little commonwealth" that restricted many women. She was encouraged by her husband to pursue her interest in politics and her desire to be part of the revolution, despite her pretense to convince everyone that she fit the traditional idealize female role she promoted to other women.<sup>31</sup> James treated his wife as his equal and shared authority with her instead of running the house like a king or tyrant. In a letter to James dated June 15th, 1775 she questions him about what is happening in the Continental Congress and how close to war the colonies are. She further directs him, "Don't write anything for the sake of keeping up my spirits but Let me know Exactly how present Appearances are in your Eye [...]"<sup>32</sup> If her husband could share power inside the home with her and treat her as an equal, why would a government not be able to share power with the people? It was this question combined with her previous experiences that led her to identify with the anti-federalist movement.

After the war, Warren watched the new colonial confederation government, formed from revolutionary ideals, as it struggled against the restrictions the colonists placed on it. As early as 1782 she wrote to John Adams advising him of a new tax imposed on American importers and complaining that "Congress, or rather a Financier whose Mandates are in the style of regal Authority, were to receive this as a permanent revenue to be appropriated by Congress without control [sic] or inquiry forever."<sup>33</sup> She was not pleased with the direction the government was heading.

In a letter written to Catharine Macaulay a few years later, just after Shay's rebellion, Warren shared her concern over the failings of the Articles of Confederation and discussed the need for a stronger government. However, she countered her own observations by arguing that "we have struggled for *liberty* and made costly sacrifices at her shrine and there are still many among us who revere her name too much to relinquish beyond a certain medium, the rights of man for the dignity of government."<sup>34</sup> Warren was not interested in becoming enslaved to another government so when she learned that the convention tasked with strengthening the Articles created a whole new constitution instead she felt it was her duty to pick up her pen and challenge what she perceived as a threat to independence and the rights of man.<sup>35</sup> The result was a treatise, *Observations on the New Constitution and on the Federal and State Conventions*, that inspired arguments for creating the Bill of Rights.

Upon learning of the proposed Constitution of 1787, Warren, with others who opposed it, began a campaign to convince Americans that it was not in their best interest. Her first objection was to the "high-handed, authoritarian procedure of the secret Convention" which felt reminiscent of British Parliament's disregard for colonial inclusion.<sup>36</sup> Warren's second objection was to the extent of the power, over the states and the people, the Constitution gave to the federal government. Her fear was that the new Constitution would undermine everything the revolutionaries fought and died for, including most, if not all, of their personal freedoms and natural rights. In *Observations*, Warren provided nineteen pages of itemized arguments against the Con-

stitution. One of her criticisms of the Constitution was its obfuscatious nature, which prevented everyone except the men who wrote it from understanding it. She called it a "many-headed monster, of such motley mixture" that nobody can rightly identify whether it is democratic, republican, monarchy, oligarchy, or aristocracy.<sup>37</sup> She further argued that the system was open to abuse and despotism because its structure for governing, including the systems for representation and electorates, its inadequate for the large expanse of territory the federal government will be responsible for. Other problems Warren pointed out included no security for rights of conscience or the press, ill-defined judiciary powers and "dangerously blended" executive and legislative powers, abolishment of trial by jury procedures, allowance of a standing army, Congressional approval of its own salary and no preventions against "perpetuity of office," and no bill of rights guaranteeing individual rights that will keep government encroachment at bay.<sup>38</sup> It is obvious that most of Warren's objections to the Constitution are based on her own experiences prior to and during the American Revolution. She has a legitimate fear of the new government becoming the same as the old government.

In her *Observations*, Warren noted that the Constitution was written to appeal to the younger generation. She accuses the creators of using "dark, secret, and profound intrigues" and "ideal projects of young ambition" to convince them to adopt the new and experimental government.<sup>39</sup> Mercy Otis Warren and her generation became the "Old Patriots, Old Republicans, or Old Revolutionaries" and their experience-based concerns were dismissed by the

men who reaped the hard-won benefits of their parents' challenge to British rule.<sup>40</sup> The republicanism that led to revolution was dying and Warren had a hard time reconciling herself to a national government she believed was born from self-indulgent, greedy men who were destroying public virtue.<sup>41</sup> Her and her husband's vocal opposition of the Constitution cost James the seat he wanted on the Massachusetts ratifying convention and the Warren's, already struggling with accusations of being supporters of Shay's Rebellion, lost much of their political influence.

Once the Constitution received the required nine-state ratification Warren outwardly seemed to accept it but her account of the change of government in her *History* belied her façade. Resentful over her family's decline in status and angry about her own exclusion from political access by people who sacrificed republican principles for monetary interests, she set aside her life's work, the *History*, under the pretense of not being able to get at the "truth" from the Federalists in power.<sup>42</sup> To many people, it appeared as if she had finally given up resisting the newly formed government but privately she continued expressing her disapproval, claiming in 1789 that under the new leadership the nation was "too poor for Monarchy, too wise for Despotism, and too dissipated, selfish, and extravagant for Republicanism."<sup>43</sup> When Jefferson won the presidency in 1800, putting Warren's party back in power, she unhesitatingly picked her pen back up and worked on her book until it was finished, making no attempt to soften or eradicate the Anti-Federalist bias she wrote under. Examples of her bias include references to some of the delegates at the convention as "men of shin-

ing talents and doubtful character” and insinuations that they were less concerned with the “greatest happiness of the greatest number” than with private ambition. She repeatedly called the Federalists “monarchists,” described the presidential role as “princely,” and denounced proposed economic plans of being “monopolies.”<sup>44</sup> She also stubbornly refused to amend her personally motivated and malevolent misrepresentation of the politics of John Adams, which directly contributed to the severance of their friendship.<sup>45</sup> She made it clear to everyone that she had not embraced to new government.

Mercy Otis Warren formed her political beliefs at an early age and during a tumultuous period in her own life, as well as in American history. Her convictions were based on the widespread fear of tyranny and her personal hatred for men like Hutchinson who represented the evils of a monarchy whose restrictive laws harmed her family. She never wavered in her convictions, although occasionally she was less forthcoming about them than at other times. During her later years, Warren was part of the older generation and was expected to sit back and let younger men make all the political decisions for the new country—decisions she strongly, and publicly, opposed. In 1809, Warren confronted her own nephew, Harrison Grey Otis, who was the president of the Massachusetts Senate and a life-long Federalist, about a plot concerning Federalist secession. He replied that she would be his favored confessor of all the Anti-Federalists, but insisted that if he was a “conspirator against the State, I ought not put it...in your power to hang me.” He then assured her of his affection for her before announcing that their political beliefs were so far apart that he

planned to continue avoiding political conversations with her at all.<sup>46</sup> As she continued into old age, her nephew’s affections were not the only affections she craved though. In September of 1813, six long years after their last communication, Warren finally received the first of several letters written and sent by her old friend John Adams. Their reunion was the result of both a collaboration between Warren, Abigail Adams, and several other mutual friends and from John Adams’ own withdrawal from politics and his growing sense of mortality. Regardless of how it happened, the receipt of his letter was a joy to Warren. A year later, in October of 1814, Mercy Otis Warren “expired with great calmness & perfect recollection of mind,” happily reunited with her dear friend John Adams and comfortably secure in her Anti-Federalist convictions.<sup>47</sup>

### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Mercy Otis Warren, *History of the American Revolution*, 1805 (Middletown, DE: The Perfect Library), 276. John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, July 28, 1807 in, *Correspondence Between John Adams and Mercy Warren*, ed. Charles F. Adams, *American Women: Images and Realities*, reprint (New York, NY: Arno Press, 1972), 376.

<sup>2</sup> John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, July 28, 1807, Adams, *Correspondence*, 376.

<sup>3</sup> Rosemarie Zagari, *A Woman’s Dilemma: Mercy Otis Warren and the American Revolution*, *American Biographical History Series* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1995), 6.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>5</sup>Katherine Anthony, *First Lady of the Revolution* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1958), 27.

<sup>6</sup> Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, December 16, 1778 in *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters*, ed. Jeffrey R. Richards and Sharon M. Harris (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009) letter 41. This book is an Amazon Kindle E-book and does not have page numbers, but each letter is numbered which will be the easiest way to locate them.

<sup>7</sup> Warren, *History*, 21.

<sup>8</sup> Warren, *History*, 28-29.

<sup>9</sup>Mercy Otis Warren, "The Squabble of the Sea Nymphs; or the Sacrifice of the Tuscararoes" in *Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous* (Boston, MA: I. Thomas and E.T. Andrews, 1790), 204, *Google Play Books*. This poem was also to show support for the dumping of the tea and it encouraged people to hold fast to the tea boycott.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 204.

<sup>11</sup> Warren, *History*, 29-30. Warren lists some of the abuses they feared, including lack of trial by jury, forced quartering of soldiers, and search and seizure of colonial homes and properties without cause or repercussions.

<sup>12</sup> Warren to Catharine Sawbridge Macaulay, June 9, 1773 in *Selected Letters*, letter 6.

<sup>13</sup> Anthony, *First Lady of the Revolution*, 52. The other part of the team was Governor Francis Bernard.

<sup>14</sup> Zagarri, *A Woman's Dilemma*, 30-31.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Nancy Ruben Stuart, *The Muse of the Revolution: The Secret Pen of*

*Mercy Otis Warren and the Founding of a Nation* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2008), 24-25.

<sup>16</sup> Stuart, 23-48.

<sup>17</sup> Zagarri, *A Woman's Dilemma*, 30.

<sup>18</sup> Warren to Hannah Fayerwether Tolman Winthrop, Jan 31, 1774 in *Selected Letters*, letter 9.

<sup>19</sup> Zagarri, *A Woman's Dilemma*, 57.

<sup>20</sup> Edmund M. Hayes, "Mercy Otis Warren: The Defeat," *The New England Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (1976), 440.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Hayes, 450. The entire play is included within this article.

<sup>22</sup> Zagarri, *A Woman's Dilemma*, 33.

<sup>23</sup> Stuart, *The Muse of the Revolution*, 36.

<sup>24</sup> Warren to James Otis Jr., ca. Sept 10, 1769 in *Selected Letters*, letter 1.

<sup>25</sup> Warren to John Adams, March 10, 1776 in *Selected letters*, letter 27.

<sup>26</sup> Stuart, *The Muse of the Revolution*, 55-56.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Stuart, 70.

<sup>29</sup> Abigail Adams, "A List of Female Grievances," April 27, 1776, in *Abigail Adams: Letters*, The Library of America series, ed. Edith Gelles (New York, NY: Literary Classics of the United States, 2016), *Amazon Kindle*.

<sup>30</sup> Anthony, *First Lady of the Revolution*, 158. Stuart, *The Muse of the Revolution*, 46. Zagarri, *A Woman's Dilemma*, 55.

<sup>31</sup> Lawrence J. Friedman and Arthur H. Shaffer, "Mercy Otis Warren and the Politics of Historical Nationalism," *The New England Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (June 1975), 207-8.

<sup>32</sup> Warren to James Warren, June 15, 1775 in *Selected Letters*, letter 19.

<sup>33</sup> Warren to John Adams, December 18, 1782 in *Selected Letters*, letter 65.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Zagarri, *A Woman's Dilemma*, 118. Italic is Warren's.

<sup>35</sup> Anthony, *First Lady of the Revolution*, 155.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Mercy Otis Warren, *Observations on the New Constitution and on Federal and State Conventions*, Sabine Americana, Print Editions 1500-1926, 7.

<sup>38</sup> Warren, *Observations*, 9-12.

<sup>39</sup> Warren, *Observations*, 7.

<sup>40</sup> Zagarri, *A Woman's Dilemma*, 120.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>42</sup> Judith B. Markowitz, "Radical Feminist: Mercy Otis Warren and the Historiographers" *Peace and Change* 4, no. 2 (April 1977), 10.

<sup>43</sup> Warren to Catharine Sawbridge Macaulay Graham, July, 1789 in *Selected Letters*, letter 87.

<sup>44</sup> Warren, *History*, 556-559. Her derogatory name calling, quoted above, is scattered throughout these pages, but is not limited to them.

<sup>45</sup> Stuart, *The Muse of the Revolution*, 248, 252.

<sup>46</sup> Quoted in Stuart, *The Muse of the Revolution*, 258.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Stuart, *The Muse of the Revolution*, 268. The quote was from her son Henry.



# THE AFTERMATH OF THE TET OFFENSIVE: NORTH VIETNAM'S PLAN A OR A CONVENIENT SEQUENCE OF EVENTS?

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With the Vietnamese New Year, Tet, soon approaching at the end of January, the North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong agreed upon a cease fire with the Army of the Republic of Vietnam and the United States forces for the duration of the celebration. Here begins many of the controversies concerning the Tet Offensive and the Vietnam War in general. The attacks committed by the North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong on January 30, 1968 during the New Year celebration, commonly known as the Tet Offensive, quickly became a contentious topic in America and an internationally known tactical defeat of American forces. Historians have debated the impact that Tet had on public opinion of American involvement in the Vietnam War for decades. One of the

most important debates resulting from the Tet Offensive is what the true intentions of the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong were. In the few decades since the decisive American defeat historians, journalists, and political scientists have examined many possible intentions, ranging from an attack on public opinion of American involvement in Vietnam, the entire attack only succeeding due to American intelligence failures, or an attack with the only intention of saving North Vietnam from the aerial attacks President Lyndon B. Johnson authorized.<sup>1</sup> North Vietnam planned that the attack during Tet would incite a revolt of civilians in South Vietnam, which would then create a domino effect across the country and push the Americans out of South Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh

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would then unite the North and South Vietnamese under Leninism.<sup>2</sup>

Before discussing the attack, it is important to understand what happened to place the belligerents of the Vietnam War in the position that led to the Tet Offensive. After World War II ended, there was a small time lapse between the end of the Japanese occupation and the French reclaiming their colonies in Vietnam. During this time, Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam a free nation, establishing the Vietnamese Nationalists also known as the Viet Minh.<sup>3</sup> The decision by the Western powers to not consider independence for the colonial territories and to return the colonies to French colonialism instead, pushed a wedge between the Western powers and Vietnam causing many Vietnamese to seek refuge in Leninism and its confidence in peasant revolutionaries.<sup>4</sup> The First Indochina War ended in 1954 with the Geneva Accords and culminated with the official rise to power of Ho Chi Minh as Prime Minister of North Vietnam; this is viewed as official because the Western powers acknowledged it, unlike his first rise to power after World War II.<sup>5</sup> The Geneva Accords divided the country into North and South Vietnam, divided at the 17th parallel.<sup>6</sup> The media played a large role in forming public opinion on the war in Vietnam largely because of the information kept from the public. The different explanations and summaries of the fighting in Vietnam opened the door for many interpretations of the causes, re-

sults, and intentions of the Tet Offensive. Both the media, government, and military officials withheld information from the public which is an influencing factor on the extent of how controversial the Tet Offensive was viewed. The media neglected to give any sort of acknowledgment to what the intent of the Tet Offensive may have been, while military officials appeared to have a single intent and neglected any other options.

When examining the works of scholars concerning the Tet Offensive, one of the most commonly overlooked views is the perspective of the offensive from the North Vietnamese Army and other North Vietnamese Communists supporting the movement. Ang Cheng Guan points this out in James Wirtz's book, *The Tet Offensive: Intelligence Failure in War*, where Wirtz analyzed the intelligence failure on behalf of the American military. Guan argued that despite the continuous attacks and military operations, by 1966 there had been no evidence indicating that the North Vietnamese government or military officials made any sort of decision about an attack on the South Vietnamese Army or the United States forces. The North Vietnamese Army focused on their need for a decisive victory and the need to stop the aerial bombing of North Vietnam. In May of 1967 the political bureau of North Vietnam met to discuss their next actions; at this meeting the officials decided one of their primary goals was to unify Vietnam before Ho Chi Minh passed.<sup>7</sup> Guan explains that the plan of

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North Vietnam was extremely methodical, reorganizing the regions into military zones that received instructions to boost the infantry in each zone to assist the Special Forces on the attack while also mobilizing guerilla forces. Later in 1967, Ho Chi Minh met with Mao Zedong, the leader of China. At this meeting, Zedong urged Ho Chi Minh to pursue a policy of annihilation, which Ho Chi Minh agreed with and viewed as reasonable.<sup>8</sup>

Wirtz confronts two different interpretations of the Communist goals for launching the Tet Offensive. The first is that the intended goal behind the attack was to shift opinion in America concerning American involvement, that the attack was more than just a fortunate coincidence for the Viet Cong. Wirtz argues that this idea is reflected in General William Westmoreland's belief that the opinion and attitudes of the public as well as the Johnson Administration were the intended targets. The other argument that Wirtz poses is the idea of improving the military situation in South Vietnam, an argument that is in step with Guan.<sup>9</sup> Wirtz ultimately argues that the American public viewed the attack in such a degree of shock that the U.S. government had no choice but to reevaluate their approach to the handling things in Vietnam. The extreme degree of surprise that the Viet Cong had achieved put the political balance in their favor.<sup>10</sup> The Viet Cong hoped to either replace the Saigon regime with a

more neutral coalition or to destroy the South Vietnamese government to a point that even with U.S. aid it would not be able to function properly. This would simultaneously improve the position of North Vietnam, allow for control of the two most Northern provinces in South Vietnam, and eventually lead to authority over the entire country.<sup>11</sup>

A large reason for the intelligence failure, Wirtz argues, is that the combined intelligence system the South Vietnamese Army and U.S. forces used failed. The allied forces often withheld important information from each other. South Vietnamese Army officers reported to South Vietnamese politicians before going to intelligence personnel. U.S. commanders, likewise, withheld information from their South Vietnamese counterparts. In addition to the intelligence failure, the communication system bogged down easily. Wirtz uses the example from the attack on Hue in northern South Vietnam; the officials there intercepted radio transmissions prior to the attack and sent them off to be analyzed, but received the transcripts after already receiving fire.<sup>12</sup> Wirtz's main argument is that the U.S. relied only on sources that arrived in a timely manner, resulting in the U.S. military focusing on the North Vietnamese Army on the northern border, while the Viet Cong quietly moved in to place to attack. As a consequence, the goal of affecting public opinion in the United States with a hope to alter America's policy on Vietnam resulted in the re-

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assessment of American policy in Vietnam, not as a result of the military surprise attack.<sup>13</sup>

James Arnold sets the scene for the Tet Offensive a bit differently. In *Tet Offensive 1968: Turning Point in Vietnam*, Arnold argues that the attack was intricately planned six months in advance and that the North Vietnamese Army intended for the attack to force Johnson to de-escalate the war. The high command of the North Vietnamese Army hoped the attacks led by the Army and the Viet Cong would spark a general uprising of those in South Vietnam to turn against the Americans.<sup>14</sup>

Although the surprise attack was initially successful, Arnold stresses that the attack did not defeat the American combat soldier on the battlefield, but it did defeat the strategy the Americans used, the politicians and their tactics, and changed the public support for the war in the States, making it one of the few battles rightfully deemed as decisive.<sup>15</sup> Arnold argues that Tet was designed to impress the South Vietnamese, not Americans.

The articles the Associated Press printed almost immediately following the attack misled the public. Arnold argues that a green reporter did not understand how the Communists successfully pulled off the surprise attack and assumed they had received help from civilian sympathizers in South Vietnam, further undercutting the government's claims about progress during

the war. The press was not aware that the Communists used the surrounding foliage to conceal their movements, so it went unreported to the American public. In addition, the South Vietnamese troops that the AP reported on happened to be the units that performed worst, furthering the thought that Americans were in the fight alone.<sup>16</sup> The aforementioned arguments of Arnold, Wirtz, Guan and others have stood for decades and have gained the support of many from all types of academic and professional backgrounds, but by combing the arguments, the defeat of America on the political sphere but not the battlefield, allows for the true intentions of the North Vietnamese to be seen.

James Robbins also believes that the U.S. government had planned the strategy to include strategic fighting that ensured the U.S. would not lose, but instead tried to force a stalemate between North and South Vietnam.<sup>17</sup> In *This Time We Win: Revisiting the Tet Offensive*, Robbins takes a stance that not many others have. He writes that the United States had the ability to win the Vietnam War and that the Tet Offensive was not a surprise. Robbins' view, although differing greatly from others, is supported in the news articles after Tet. Baldwin reported that General Westmoreland viewed the developments in Vietnam as occurring along the predictions he previously made. Prior to Tet, U.S. forces expected the enemy to be utilizing the time during the Tet truce to

build up their forces. What the military did not expect was the skill and latitude of the attacks that followed the massive resupply.<sup>18</sup>

When combining the arguments, it is reasonable to believe that the North Vietnamese Army intended to provoke an uprising in South Vietnam to force a withdrawal of American forces. In December 1967, the Politburo issued a resolution which took action to move the revolution south and lead to a decisive victory. Two months earlier, they suggested using Tet as the date for the attack. At the 14th Plenary Session in early January of 1968, the committee passed the resolution for both the actions for decisive victory and the October motion deciding on the Tet Holiday as the date of execution for the attack.<sup>19</sup> Following the session, Le Duan wrote a letter to the Communist Vietnamese in South Vietnam detailing the leadership's ideology on the General Offensive-General Uprising, what North Vietnam referred to the attack to occur on the Tet Holiday as. In the letter, Duan explained that the American war effort in Vietnam had reached its climax and formed a stalemate. The North Vietnamese leadership had three possible outcomes they anticipated: their best option was an outright win in Saigon, the other two choices consisted of winning in some cities, but not the target city of Saigon, or winning some cities but not enough to dismiss American forces. Duan stated that if the second or third option ensued, the war would be-

come prolonged.<sup>20</sup> In the letter, Duan says that the primary objective of the offense is to shake the aggressive will of U.S. imperialism in hopes of changing the U.S.'s strategy toward de-escalating the war. The North Vietnamese planned the attack very strategically by stretching the enemy forces across South Vietnam to ultimately take control of the countryside throughout the south. After accomplishing the takeover of the countryside, they planned to welcome Ho Chi Minh in the south, unifying Vietnam.

American intelligence learned of the many meetings the political and military leaders of North Vietnam were having but never thought too much of them. In July 1967, the leaders of North Vietnam held a meeting which American intelligence assumed was to consider their options for peace negotiations. This assumption is one of the first mistakes made concerning intelligence because at this meeting a North Vietnamese general first proposed the idea of constructing a general offensive on U.S. forces in South Vietnam.<sup>21</sup> North Vietnam called all of its ambassadors who were overseas to return to Hanoi and when the U.S. heard of this, they continued to believe the reason was to discuss the beginning of peace negotiations.<sup>22</sup> The western press reported the July meeting but the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) failed to mention the meeting in their monthly report and the Defense Department declined to make any public speculation about the meeting either. The meeting

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was not acknowledged by U.S. officials until the end of February 1968.<sup>23</sup>

Wirtz argues that the allied logistics system had many weak points that made the system extremely vulnerable to an attack. In addition to this, Wirtz argued that the Communists knew that support for the war in America was key to the extent of American involvement in South Vietnam and that the relationship between the U.S. military and the South Vietnamese Army had been very unstable. An attack on South Vietnam, the Communists hoped, would affect public support for the war back in the States while also putting more pressure on the relationship between the U.S. and the South Vietnamese.<sup>24</sup> The arguments Wirtz posed, that the attacks only intention was to target American public opinion or that the only goal was to overthrow the Saigon government, have their own failures. The first argument is inadequate because it does not even consider the possibility of a communist victory, it is as if the North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong felt that if they withstood the enemy firepower, they won the political advantage. In addition, the first theory has no real military objectives. The second theory refuses to acknowledge the situation the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong faced and that they were no longer making progress to unification under Communist rule.

Despite what official reports from the U.S. government mentioned or

failed to mention, the media filled the headlines of major newspapers with their own interpretation of the attack and what it meant. The *New York Times* printed an article that contradicted many things that Arnold argued, possibly explaining why many historians argue that the media manipulated public opinion.<sup>25</sup> The article Hanson W. Baldwin wrote for the *New York Times* argued that the South Vietnamese were not entirely surprised by the attack on Tet, playing into the theory of sabotage. In contrast to Arnold's statement about reports of only those South Vietnamese units that performed poorly, Baldwin reports that officials in Washington spoke very highly of those who participated and their swift response to the attacks. Rather than viewing the attack as a dramatic loss for the U.S., the military did concede that the U.S. and South Vietnam had some losses, but they paled in comparison to the losses that the Viet Cong suffered. The local guerilla units were all but wiped out and the attempt to cause the diversion of American troops from the military bases failed.<sup>26</sup>

Arnold provides an in-depth look at the attack on the American Embassy in Saigon while also examining the results of having reporters on the battlefield and the headlines they constructed based on their beliefs of the intentions of the attack. Thirty-five battalions consisting primarily of Viet Cong with some North Vietnamese Army, prepared for attacks against six primary targets in the Saigon area, one being the

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American Embassy. The U.S. military knew that civilians in South Vietnam had become sensitive to the American presence, so the U.S. began to draw back on the number of U.S. Army military police in Saigon and drastically decreased the number guarding American installations across South Vietnam, yielding responsibility for the defense of Saigon to the South Vietnamese Army.

Fifteen minutes after the first attack, a reporter for the Associated Press had a bulletin typed out which led other reporters to rush to Saigon to see the combat up close, resulting in the distorting of the actual significance of the attack. The reporters could not see over the walls into the embassy forcing them to rely on the excited, rushed comments from the MPs outside the walls. A reporter overheard a rushed comment from a soldier that "they're in the embassy" and rushed headlines stating the embassy had been raided and that the attack targeted public opinion in America.<sup>27</sup> The report stated that the Communists penetrated the supposedly impregnable building under the combined power of artillery and guerilla assault.<sup>28</sup>

Back in the States, the bulletin arrived just before the deadline for the first editions of the morning papers and writers quickly revamped the headlines to spread news of the attack and the capture of the American Embassy. After the six-hour operation, reporters stormed the gates of the embassy fight-

ing to speak with military spokesmen. Discussion focused on whether the Viet Cong actually entered the embassy or if they had only infiltrated the walls but never entered the building. The Associated Press stood by their statements, which discredited official statements from the government. Later that morning, General Westmoreland held a press conference, reassuring the American public that the Viet Cong never infiltrated the embassy building as well as claiming that the allies were now back on the offensive.<sup>29</sup> Many of these official statements are full of assumptions that have no evidence to support them.<sup>30</sup>

During this press conference a reporter for the *Washington Post* stated that the reporters were shocked at Westmoreland's statements. He stood in the midst of a scene filled with blood, death, and battle damage, but said that everything was great. Another reporter wrote a piece which explained how the public placed little faith in Westmoreland's words based on past statements in comparison to the actual events taking place in Vietnam. As Americans read their morning papers they received two messages: the Viet Cong seized the embassy and General Westmoreland lied.<sup>31</sup> The reporter likely came to the conclusion that Westmoreland lied about the situation in Vietnam post-Tet because of a speech Westmoreland gave in November, months before the attack. In the speech, Westmoreland stated that the South Vietnamese government began to

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steadily improve its stability, progress and unity continued to spread across South Vietnam, and the Viet Cong had been experiencing morale problems; just a few reasons why he argued the war began to turn in favor of the allies.<sup>32</sup> When the attack occurred two months later, the press and the public became skeptical of Westmoreland's word from then on.

Arnold argues that the papers inflicted psychological damage to the American war effort, with the resulting damage becoming much clearer in the coming weeks. Arnold also argues that Tet completely surprised the Americans and the South Vietnamese Army. The initial attacks were considered successful but it ultimately failed. The failure is attributed to the civilians in Saigon not participating in the uprising as the Communists planned. In addition, the surprise attack caught the allies short of weapons because of the drawbacks instituted in the preceding weeks and without the tactics needed for the type of urban warfare that resulted from the attack.<sup>33</sup>

When examining public opinion on America's policy for dealing with Vietnam, it is easy to get carried away with the numbers reflected in polls and the words from military officials that show up in headlines across the nation. One thing that appears to have been overlooked is the relationship between public opinion and where government and military officials stood on American

involvement in the Vietnam War. Towards the end of 1964, John McNaughton and William Bundy were placed in charge of planning the strategy for Vietnam. They both believed that committing the U.S. to a war in Vietnam and losing was better than withdrawing from an "impossible situation."<sup>34</sup> McNaughton and Bundy believed that if the U.S. showed its willingness to use military force to enforce their foreign policy, win or lose, the United States would benefit on the international scene and ultimately be a stronger world power.<sup>35</sup>

In contrast to the skill and level of preparedness that Robbins argues the Viet Cong exhibited in the attack, a CIA report in the middle of February 1968 argued differently. The CIA report argued that although the Viet Cong successfully pursued the attack as a surprise, the reaction, or lack thereof, from the civilian population in South Vietnam quickly resulted in the cancellation of additional forces intended to reinforce the original attacking Viet Cong.<sup>36</sup> The CIA report explained the failure to accomplish several goals including destabilizing the South Vietnamese and allied forces, overthrowing the South Vietnamese government, creating an uprising among the civilians, and establishing a revolutionary government in Saigon. The North Vietnamese overestimated their own military abilities and underestimated the force the allied forces retaliated with.<sup>37</sup> North Vietnamese Army

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General Tran Do commented that the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong did not achieve the main objective of causing a civilian uprising and revolt throughout South Vietnam, while the impact in the U.S. turned out to be a fortunate outcome, not the main intention.<sup>38</sup> Johnson reiterated the failure of the offensive in an address to the nation in late March, stating that the attack did not collapse the government or produce an uprising like the Communists hoped and predicted.<sup>39</sup>

McMaster proposes that the U.S. government planned for a loss even before Tet and before the public changed their opinion on the war. By September 21, 1965, a Gallup poll showed that Johnson had a 58% approval rating for his war policy, with only 22% disapproving. A poll done by Gallup in July 1965 revealed that 70% of Americans believed that the situation in Vietnam continued to get worse.<sup>40</sup> The numbers presented seem contradicting at first glance; if such a large percentage of Americans felt that the situation in Vietnam continued to go down-hill, then why did Johnson's war policy have a rather high approval rating? It can be deduced that public opinion focused more on the condition of affairs between North and South Vietnam rather than with the war policy.

In the early 1980s W.W. Rostow, a special assistant to President Johnson, wrote a letter to *The New York Times*. In the letter Rostow explained

that Johnson knew at least three months in advance that North Vietnam planned an offensive with the intention to induce a general uprising of South Vietnamese civilians. He also states that Westmoreland approached Johnson with a request to cancel the Tet truce and to place troops on alert, which Johnson declined to allow. The extent of the attack on close to forty cities had been the only surprise about the Tet Offensive, just as Wirtz argues Westmoreland believed.<sup>41</sup>

By January of 1968, most Americans did not approve of Johnson's policy of limited war. A policy he implemented, McMaster argues, as an attempt to silence the public outrage of the extent of American involvement in Vietnam in order to gain approval for his social program, the Great Society.<sup>42</sup> In March 1968, with support for the war dropping drastically, Johnson started limiting the U.S role and shifted more of the burden to the South Vietnamese Army, a strategy known as "Vietnamization". He also started restricting aerial attacks on North Vietnam, hoping these actions would incite peace talks.<sup>43</sup>

Many of the news articles released in the days following Tet supported the argument that public opinion in America and South Vietnam had been the initial target. In the February 1st edition of *The New York Times*, one of the many articles concerning Tet and the Vietnam War stated the "attacks in South Vietnam by the Communist

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guerillas and sabotage and terrorist units . . . are focused squarely on public opinion in [America] and in South Vietnam. The enemy hopes to foster war-weariness to strengthen the opposition to the war in the United States and in South Vietnam."<sup>44</sup> Tom Buckley, reporting for *The New York Times*, reported the enemy death toll at roughly 5,800 men compared to the allied loss of 535; he quotes an American general that the enemy would not be able to stand many more days taking losses to that extent. Buckley also argued that the logic behind the attack on the American Embassy only made sense as an attempt to humiliate American forces. "They didn't achieve anything militarily. It was obviously just a propaganda thing."<sup>45</sup>

In an interview almost a decade after the Tet debacle, General Maxwell Taylor acknowledged how crucial the understanding or misunderstanding of the situation in Vietnam affected the war effort. Taylor argued that the American government had not been organized for a situation in which public opinion plays such a major role except for in war time. Taylor stated that many of the newspapers and the television networks were adamantly opposed to American involvement in the war from the start and made their stance on the war openly known through headlines. Allowing television crews to be on the battlefield quickly created an uncontrollable situation in the States. President Lyndon B. Johnson had few options available to his disposal when it came to

the press and since war against Vietnam had never been officially declared, he could not enact wartime censorship.<sup>46</sup>

Taylor made a striking comparison, arguing that if the media exposure that existed during the Vietnam War and the Tet Offensive existed during World War II, America would have left Europe. The lack of censorship of the media resulted in making the Vietnam War the most widely visible war in America's history. General Westmoreland stated that the media had no experience dealing with war being shown on television, although it cannot be ignored that the media and Westmoreland had a "hate-hate relationship." The issue of the Vietnam War being widely displayed on all forms of media affected public opinion of the war, military officials, and the media. The Viet Cong became virtually wiped out and the North Vietnamese forces took years to recover. This point was overlooked by the media in the days following the attack and the media portrayed the situation as if it were a disastrous defeat of American and South Vietnamese forces.<sup>47</sup> This fostered an even more uncomfortable relationship between the media and the military.

As a result, the military began to report more positive aspects and outcomes of the operations in the battlefield in an attempt to counteract the press which explains why the press instructed the public to take the words of military officials with a grain of salt, like the aforementioned example with

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Westmoreland.<sup>48</sup> Westmoreland argued that the media created a misconception of U.S. troops portraying them as scavengers and hellions who destroyed and burned villages. Although Westmoreland makes many self-serving statements, they are important because they demonstrate that the controversial relationship between the media and the government was fed from both sides. The reports from the military and the reporters conflicted and media warnings to the public made them skeptical of the military's statements which often portrayed the scene in Vietnam to be much better off than it actually was.<sup>49</sup> Westmoreland focused on the American progress he mentioned in his November speech as well as the collection of forces at Khe Sanh, which consumed his attention to the point that any suggestion of an attack elsewhere seemed unbelievable.<sup>50</sup>

Despite how the military tried to portray the media, this proved even less successful with Walter Cronkite, whom a majority of Americans considered to be the most trusted man in America. His reputation made his criticism of the Vietnam War a turning point in shaping public opinion. After reporting on the events of Vietnam for years and being exposed to the stories coming from other news stations, Cronkite concluded that the media not only reported the news, they shaped it.<sup>51</sup> After spending time in Vietnam, Cronkite returned to New York and reported his take on the situation in Vietnam. He argued that

having faith in the optimism of the American leaders both in the States and in Vietnam would result in nothing but disappointment. Cronkite believed the war worked itself into a stalemate and negotiations were the only way out.<sup>52</sup>

The media, specifically television news, had the upper hand concerning what the public was exposed to. Daniel Hallin argues that the direction of public opinion was directly correlated to the headlines and stories the news presented. Initially, it appears that the press slowly became opposed to the war, but with a closer examination it is seen that before Tet the stories supporting the war greatly outnumbered those opposing; after Tet, the stories shifted a dramatically opposed series of headlines until the drawback and withdrawal of troops began.<sup>53</sup> At this point, it became clear that the American public no longer considered the war to be worth the cost, whether the cost measured the actual number of lives lost, U.S. prestige, or domestic social unity. Tet destroyed the remaining gumption of U.S. military success.<sup>54</sup>

An article in the *Daily Oklahoman* on February 3, 1968 terms the Tet Offensive as "suicide raids" and acts of "desperation."<sup>55</sup> In the article, Lieutenant General Victor Krulak, commander of Marines in the Pacific and Vietnam, argued that the raids merely resulted from the type of war being fought, as a last chance effort to gain some ground back and subdue the

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South Vietnamese people.<sup>56</sup> The *Daily Oklahoman* printed an article which argued that the attack was an attempt to “foster war-weariness, to strengthen the opposition to the war in the U.S. and in South Vietnam, and to force the allies to enter negotiations at a disadvantage.”<sup>57</sup> Another article in the *Daily Oklahoman* stated that officials from Hanoi claimed to have placed revolutionary forces in Saigon to overthrow the government there.<sup>58</sup> These examples are just a glimpse at the variety of opinions the public saw on a daily basis. The lack of support for the war is found in the media because the media did its job. The journalists freely exercised their right to the freedom of the press against the wishes of many military and government officials. The failures of the Johnson Administration resulted in the media headlines focusing on the failures of the Department of Defense and the US military in Vietnam.

Exposure to arguments ranged from an attack intended to target American public opinion to a last-minute effort to push the American presence out of South Vietnam, some even argued that the attack occurred simply because everything aligned perfectly for the North Vietnamese. Although many of the arguments presented have some truth to them whether it is as an intention or a coincidence, the true intention and the priority of the Tet Offensive was creating a revolt and uprising among the civilians in South Vietnam. If the uprising had been successful, then the Amer-

ican presence would have been pushed out and the government overthrown. The reaction to the attack, largely fueled by the media, led the public who already dissented on the Vietnam War, to further disapprove of American involvement and increased the public desire to bring the troops home. The Tet Offensive and the Vietnam War in general are examples of the extent to which assumptions and the continuous underestimation of the enemies’ ability play fatal roles in military settings.

### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> James S. Wirtz, *The Tet Offensive: Intelligence Failure in War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), Hanson W. Baldwin, “Public Opinion in U.S. and South Vietnam is Viewed as Main Target of New Offensive by Vietcong”, (*New York Times*, February 1, 1968), Ang Cheng Guan, “Decision-Making Leading to the Tet Offensive (1968): The Vietnamese Communist Perspective” *Journal of Contemporary History* (33, no. 3 July 1998).

<sup>2</sup> R.B. St John, “Marxist-Leninist Theory

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and Organization in South Vietnam" *Asian Survey* (20 no. 8, Aug, 1980), 812-813.

<sup>3</sup> Allan R. Millett, Peter Maslowski, and William B. Feis, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States from 1607-2012* (New York: Free Press, 2012), 511.

<sup>4</sup> Ho Chi Minh achieved high levels of peasant participation in the revolution against the French after the adoption of Leninism. Minh encouraged participation by emphasizing the traditional morals, needs, social patterns, and social structures. The authoritarian rule under the French never appealed to the peasants of Vietnam, as the government only allowed for advancement via merit. Leninism incorporated local government with the central government, which allowed the peasants to be more involved. R.B. St John, "Marxist-Leninist Theory and Organization in South Vietnam" *Asian Survey* (20 no. 8, Aug, 1980), 812-813.

<sup>5</sup> Allan R. Millett, Peter Maslowski, and William B. Feis, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States from 1607-2012* (New York: Free Press, 2012), 511.

<sup>6</sup> Mark Atwood Lawrence, *The Vietnam War: International History in Documents*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2.

<sup>7</sup> Ang Cheng Guan, "Decision-Making Leading to the Tet Offensive (1968): The Vietnamese Communist Perspective"

*Journal of Contemporary History* (33, no. 3 July 1998), 341-343, 347.

<sup>8</sup> Guan, "Decision-Making Leading to the Tet Offensive (1968)" 347-349.

<sup>9</sup> James S. Wirtz, *The Tet Offensive: Intelligence Failure in War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 17-18.

<sup>10</sup> Wirtz, 275.

<sup>11</sup> Wirtz, 25.

<sup>12</sup> Wirtz, 97-98.

<sup>13</sup> Wirtz, 275.

<sup>14</sup> James Arnold, *Tet Offensive 1968: Turning Point in Vietnam*, (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 1990) 9.

<sup>15</sup> Arnold, 91.

<sup>16</sup> Arnold, 88-89.

<sup>17</sup> James S. Robbins, *This Time We Win: Revisiting the Tet Offensive*, (New York: Encounter, 2010), 20.

<sup>18</sup> Hanson W. Baldwin, "Public Opinion in U.S. and South Vietnam is Viewed as Main Target of New Offensive by Vietnam", (*New York Times*, February 1, 1968) 12.

<sup>19</sup> Guan, "Decision-Making Leading to the Tet Offensive", 351.

<sup>20</sup> Le Duan, *Letters to the South*, (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishers House, 1986), 93-100.

<sup>21</sup> Arnold, *Tet Offensive 1968*, 7, 9.

<sup>22</sup> Dan Oberdorfer, *Tet!: The Turning Point in the Vietnam War* (New York:

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Doubleday, 1971), 45.

<sup>23</sup> Oberdorfer, *Tet!*, 45-46.

<sup>24</sup> Wirtz, *The Tet Offensive*, 53.

<sup>25</sup> Daniel C. Hallin, "The Media, the War in Vietnam, and Political Support: A Critique of the Thesis of an Oppositional Media", *The Journal of Politics* (46, no. 1, February 1984). Baldwin, "Public Opinion in U.S...". Wirtz, *The Tet Offensive*.

<sup>26</sup> Baldwin, "Public Opinion in U.S..." 12.

<sup>27</sup> Arnold *Tet Offensive 1968*, 54-55.

<sup>28</sup> Arnold, 54-55.

<sup>29</sup> Arnold, 55-57.

<sup>30</sup> Huynh Kim Khanh "The War in Viet Nam: The U.S. Official Line" *Pacific Affairs* (42, no. 1, Spring 1969), 65.

<sup>31</sup> Arnold, *Tet Offensive 1968*, 55-57.

<sup>32</sup> William Westmoreland, "Speech at the National Press Club, Washington D.C.", November 21, 1967, In *The Vietnam War: International History in Documents*, ed. by Mark Atwood Lawrence, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 119-120.

<sup>33</sup> Arnold, *Tet Offensive*, 90.

<sup>34</sup> H.R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 180.

<sup>35</sup> McMaster, 180.

<sup>36</sup> Central Intelligence Agency Report, "The Tet Offensive---A Plus or a Minus?", February 12, 1968. In *The Vietnam War: International History in Documents*, ed.

by Mark Atwood Lawrence (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 122.

<sup>37</sup> Central Intelligence Agency Report, 122.

<sup>38</sup> Arnold, *Tet Offensive 1968*, 86.

<sup>39</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson, "Address to the Nation Announcing Steps to limit the War in Vietnam and Reporting his Decision to Not Seek Reelection" (speech, Washington D.C., March 31, 1968), LBJ Library, <http://www.lib-jlib.utexas.edu/john-son/archives/hom/speeches.hom/68/>. In the address, Johnson announces his decision to not seek reelection. He goes on to say that his reasoning behind that decision is to avoid the politically correctness that comes with running a campaign. Without having to worry about an election, Johnson felt he would be able to make choices concerning Vietnam without having to satisfy his party as well.

<sup>40</sup> Robbins, *Revisiting the Tet Offensive*, 43.

<sup>41</sup> W.W. Rostow, Letter to the Editor, (*New York Times*, February 7, 1982).

<sup>42</sup> McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 180 <sup>43</sup> Michael H. Hunt, *Lyndon Johnson's War: America's Cold War Crusade in Viet-nam, 1945-1968*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997), 116.

<sup>44</sup> Baldwin, "Public Opinion in U.S. . . .", 12.

<sup>45</sup> Tom Buckley, "Offensive said to Pin-

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point Enemy's Strengths" (New York Times, February 1, 1968), 12.

<sup>46</sup> Michael Charlton and Anthony Moncrieff, *Many Reason Why: The American Involvement in Vietnam* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 150-151.

<sup>47</sup> William Westmoreland, Interview. <http://www.columbia.edu/itc/journalism/cross/westmoreland.html>. April 27, 1981.

<sup>48</sup> Charlton and Moncrieff, *Many Reasons Why*, 151-152.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 152-153.

<sup>50</sup> Christopher R. Leahey, *Whitewashing the War: Historical Myth, Corporate Textbooks, and Possibilities for Democratic Education* (New York: Columbia University, 2010), 70-71. Leahey explains that American Intelligence intercepted a letter written by North Vietnamese General Giap. The letter described the attack at Khe Sanh as a distraction. The attack there meant to pull U.S. and South Vietnamese forces toward the border which allowed the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong to penetrate into South Vietnam cities. Westmoreland dismissed the letter as a propaganda attempt, assuming that the enemy forces did not have the power to construct such an attack.

<sup>51</sup> Mark Kurlansky, *1968: The Year that Rocked the World* (New York: Random House, 2004), 57, 102.

<sup>52</sup> Walter Cronkite, "Mired in Stalemate", Commentary, CBS News, February 27,

1968. In *The Vietnam War: International History in Documents* ed. by Mark Atwood Lawrence (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 125.

<sup>53</sup> Daniel C. Hallin, "The Media, the War in Vietnam, and Political Support: A Critique of the Thesis of an Oppositional Media", *The Journal of Politics* (46, no. 1, February 1984), 6.

<sup>54</sup> Khanh, "The War in Viet Nam", 67.

<sup>55</sup> "Reds' Suicide Raids Termed 'Desperation', *Daily Oklahoman* (February 3, 1968), 8.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>57</sup> Hanson W. Baldwin, "Latest Viet Cong Guerrilla Attacks Focused on Public Opinion in U.S.?" *Daily Oklahoman* (February 3, 1968), 4.

<sup>58</sup> "Hanoi Claims Revolutionary Force in Saigon", *Daily Oklahoman*, (February 3, 1968), 12.



# MINIMUM WAGE POLITICS: HALF BAKED OR THE FULL POTATO?

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It is no secret that in today's political climate there is someone to be found on every street corner, television channel, and radio station that is red-faced and shouting at the top of their lungs that they know what is best. An individual does not have to invest any more effort than turning a knob or pushing a button to find some political pundit, journalist, or politician on either side of the ideological spectrum who claims to know the struggles of society and offers their two cents on how to remedy them. Minus the lavish lifestyles and fame of these individuals, one may be inclined to believe that such characters truly do sympathize with them. Still, the question must be asked, which are half-baked and which offer the full potato? This question is especially pertinent in dealings with economic policy and how it relates to the people. To narrow the scope of this research, the issue discussed here

centers on the question of how raising the federally mandated minimum wage affects laborers with low investment in their human capital.

To research this question the hypothesis that will be tested is that people with low human capital will be more likely to be negatively affected in employment by increases in the federally mandated minimum wage versus those with medium or high investments in their human capital. This hypothesis will be tested against aspects like demand for labor, demand for productivity, employment, and comparisons between various groups of the middle and upper working class. Human capital will be defined as what one invests into themselves in education, work experience, and general job skills. Also, the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between the independent variable of human capital and the dependent

variable of the negative effect due to increases in the federally mandated minimum wage will be considered, along with the possibility that there could be a positive effect.

There are various explanations that can be had for this hypothesis, one being that a business's purpose is to be as productive and efficient as possible with whatever investment it makes. Considering labor is an investment and the federally mandated minimum wage affects the cost of labor, businesses will be less likely to take the risk of decreasing their productivity by hiring a laborer with a low amount of human capital versus one with a medium or high amount when the cost of labor is higher.

Another explanation is that when competition in the workforce is present, a business or employer will be looking to hire a laborer with a greater amount of human capital versus one with lesser if the minimum cost of labor has increased. This is due to what they will consider a better allocation of resources. Along with these possible explanations, increases in the federally mandated minimum wage could make low skilled human labor altogether unprofitable causing businesses to either lay off a portion of their workforce, relocate to a cheaper operating area, shut down, or invest into technology to replace their human laborers. All of these explanations of the possible causal links of increasing the federally mandated minimum wage would have a negative effect upon the employment of the individual who maintains a low human capital.

### Literature Review

In discussing the idea of a federally mandated minimum wage and minimum wage politics, one must first

identify the intent behind said statute. There are two arguments that are commonly utilized by minimum wage proponents. The first is that the federal minimum wage establishes or grants the main earner, or earners, of a household the ability to uplift their families and themselves from poverty. The second is that the implementation of a minimum wage redistributes, as best as possible, income and wealth towards low income households. These arguments frame and explain the intent of minimum wage laws the best (Sobel 1999).

A vital note must be made here in that the intent of minimum wage laws and the effect of such laws can be drastically different. Various forces that lie outside the stated intent of a federal minimum wage also influence wage policy. Russel Sobel (1999) discusses this issue in, "Theory and Evidence on the Political Economy of the Minimum Wage." This article explains the ideas behind minimum wage law and the massive influence that these ideas and special interests can have on minimum wage policy through the workings of Congress and their partisan politics. It pointedly explains that the federally mandated minimum wage bill, as established by the Fair Labor Act of 1938, was overtly altered to give Congress the power of regulation while stripping it from the separate entity of the Wages and Hours Board. This leaves minimum wage law to the mercy of both big businesses and labor unions who lobby Congress per their agenda (Sobel 1999).

The influences of special interests and minimum wage intent take part to sway minimum wage politics and contribute strongly to the debate that surrounds the idea of a mandated price floor for labor. However, there are other pertinent aspects of the discussion like

the idea of poverty in general, the effect on the workforce, and effect upon employment. It is within these categories that much of the controversy regarding the minimum wage occurs as both the proponents and opponents of the minimum wage argue their grievances with one another. As stated before, those who are for the federally mandated minimum wages argue that it will help the working poor by redistributing a larger portion of wealth towards their households to diminish poverty immensely (Sobel 1999).

The opposing argument is that no such distribution would occur, or that it would occur at an insignificant and inefficient rate compared to its free market alternatives. This argument takes into account the relationship between market efficiency and its own impact on decreasing poverty. The argument, as seen in "The Minimum Wage and the Poor: The End of a Relationship" by Richard Burkhauser and T. Finegan (1989) states that the concept of a federally mandated minimum wage ending poverty was once a valid idea but as market efficiency improved, low income households' standards of living improved with it and the poverty line was more than surpassed thus making the relationship between low income and poverty defunct. They go on to argue that increases in the federally mandated minimum wage may, in fact, negatively harm the low skilled and low income earners through possible adverse affects on employment. These researchers tracked the average household incomes of low wage workers and compared the effects of minimum wage laws to those who resided below and above the poverty line. They concluded that increases in the federal minimum wage did not equate to a significant increase

in wealth for those below the poverty line as they would only recoup 11% of the gains from an increase in the minimum wage. Low wage workers above the poverty line would only recoup 40%. They concluded that there was no clear indication that increases in the minimum wage made any effective headway against poverty due to the increase in the price of goods that raises in the minimum wage brought about, and they also found that the state of an advanced and changing market economy eliminated poverty at a far greater pace (Burkhauser and Finegan 1989).

Proponents of the federally mandated minimum wage argue that with increases in wages, economic growth will aid low skilled workers with low human capital during downturns in the economic business cycle. Those who argue against this principle state that the minimum wage will actually distribute resources and wealth away from the low skilled (Sabia 2015). Some also argue that the potential of economic growth for the low skilled upon an aggregate scale is extremely ambiguous because there are numerous possibilities that could occur in combination with being unemployed that could improve or harm the workforce and those with minimal human capital. For example, Joseph Sabia makes the point in that although the low skilled may be adversely affected by being unemployed, through an initial minimum wage increase they could go on to invest into their human capital through formal schooling in their off time. This would improve their economic condition and their skill level which would make them more marketable. He also argues that low skilled workers could be negatively affected by the institution of a minimum wage because of the rise of technology

that reallocates industry specific productivity away from the low skilled whenever labor costs rise. This effectively eliminates low skilled job positions altogether. This reallocation of industry resources is tied to an increase in structural unemployment, or the unemployment level that occurs naturally in an economy. These are just a few of the many circumstance pointed out in Sabia's article that could possibly occur to change the demographics of the workforce and that contribute to the ambiguity surrounding the minimum wage question (2015).

Another common argument is that the minimum wage only truly affects a small number of the American workforce, those affected being the working poor and those with very little invested into their human capital (Barnes 2009). This argument, as delivered by Ben Barnes suggests that the federally mandated minimum wage adversely affects those with low investments in their human capital upon a grand scale. It goes as far as stating minimum wage laws disproportionately detach groups of various non-white races and the youth from the workforce due to socioeconomic conditions not within an individual's control. This detachment also occurs because of inexperience (Barnes 2009).

The idea that those with lower human capital than their counterparts will be harmed by increases in the federal minimum wage is also prevalent in Peter Linneman's, "The Economic Impacts of Minimum Wage Laws: A Look at an Old Question" (1982). This article also makes the argument that those with little human capital will suffer a dwindling number of employment opportunities if the federally mandated minimum wage is increased. He also

adds that those low skill workers who are already employed and manage to keep their jobs will have their hours reduced. Linneman concludes that women suffer the most severely under the effects of the minimum wage's redistribution of wealth away from the low skilled. This conclusion is drawn because of the article's focus upon the adult population instead of the youth or teen population.

Still, because of the level of ambiguity that was explained earlier when the effects of unemployment and resource allocation are included in the minimum wage question, some argue that the prospect of employment and supply side economics in relation to the workforce should be ignored entirely. Utilizing this method of economic observation, those of this perspective are able to create a scenario where a federally mandated minimum wage improves the condition of the low skilled worker. They do this by ignoring any adverse effects that the minimum wage could have on employment or the price of goods. In this model, the amount of wealth that low human capital individuals can attain increases dramatically (Addison and Blackburn 1999).

David Neumark and William Wascher (2001) deal with training in the workforce through their article, "Minimum Wages and Training Revisited." It states that opportunities for on the job training are greatly diminished as raises in the federally mandated minimum wage occur. Their reasoning for this relationship takes into account the many low skilled workers who require training and the decrease in productivity that results from the training period. It states they will lose their jobs and that those who manage to maintain their jobs will not receive the training they need due

to the company's inability to afford the loss in productivity. The article also suggests that the amount of training needed to be qualified for a certain position before it can be applied for will increase with no evidence of cost offsetting for the training that occurred prior to application. One argument that opposes this relationship arises from the idea that the decrease in on the job training is largely dependent upon the firm and the type of training that is required (Ferris and Pedace 2004).

Another aspect to consider that deals with training and employment is job turnover. In, "Legal Minimum Wages and Employment Duration" by Adam Grossberg and Paul Sicilian (2004), the argument is made that as the minimum wage is increased, turnover rates increase because separation hazards for low skilled workers propagate. Along with this, it is also argued that a company cannot properly train nor prepare someone below a certain skill set due to the little value said worker brings to the employer. Due to this, either the employer or the worker becomes dissatisfied with the low skilled laborer's work and a separation from employment occurs.

Effects upon the non-wage factors of employment are also key in discerning the effect of a federally mandated minimum wage upon employment. Kosali Simon and Robert Kaestner (2004) observe that there are no measurable effects in the aspect of fringe benefits being decreased for low skilled workers as the federally mandated minimum wage increases. They also thoroughly explain their methodology using federal, state, and local data.

A few variables that are not observed in the prior research are that of

the corporate tax rate, economic confidence due to the partisan leaning of the government, and the amount of spending that goes toward advancements in technology. These must be accounted and controlled for due to the fact that they possibly influence the main relationship. If they are not controlled for, they may inadvertently be misrepresented as a relationship to the federally mandated minimum wage which would taint the research. Also, if these variables do happen to be interactive or additive with one another or the variables listed early within the article the reason they are so must be explained. In order to build upon the already available research, employment of minorities, youth, and adults with less than twelve years of education will be considered as independent variables in order to try and eliminate some of the very prevalent ambiguity on the topic of federally mandated minimum wage.

### Methodology

In aiming to determine the relationship between the federally mandated minimum wage and its effect on the low skilled, this research will focus upon addressing the hypothesis that mandating minimum wage increases on the federal level in the United States will adversely affect individuals who maintain a low investment within their human capital. The independent variable of this hypothesis is the federally mandated minimum wage and the changes that are made to it, and the dependent variable is the overall effects had upon the demographics of those individuals most likely to maintain low human capital within the United States.

The independent variable, the federally mandated minimum wage and the changes that occur to it, will be

measured in dollars and represented by the federally established price floor for labor between 1969 and 2016. This figure also represent the additional natural labor costs and business overhead that any establishment with employees had to undertake within this time period. Since this value consists of numerical values that occur in an order it will be best discussed as an interval variable. This data has been retrieved from the United States Department of Labor (2016).

The dependent variable of the effect on those low investments within their human capital will be measured through unemployment values that these demographics faced during the period between 1969 and 2016. The conceptual definition of low human capital is based on the definition of human capital found in *The Foundations of Macroeconomics*, by Robin Bade and Michael Parkin (2015). This definition lists human capital as, "the knowledge or skill that one is able to obtain either through formal schooling, on the job training, or work experience" (Parkin and Bade 2015). Using this definition of human capital, the operational definition of those with low human capital will be established as an individual who maintains little to no work experience and little to no formal schooling.

This study will focus on the youth, specifically those between the ages of 16 and 19, individuals with less than twelve years of education, and the Hispanic and African American population. These demographics will be the focal point of this study because of various physical and socioeconomic factors that may impact them. Factors such as age, underfunded and over-crowded educational facilities, and possible implicit discrimination have all been studied

and linked as potential limitations to these groups' ability to obtain work, work experience, training, or adequate formal schooling. The U-3 unemployment rate for these specified groups will be the dependent variable and will be used to depict how the federal minimum wage effects the employment of those with low human capital. The U-6 unemployment statistic was not available by demographic but both the U-3 and U-6 national averages of employment will be utilized as a comparisons to further illustrate the effect on the before mentioned variables. The U-6 data set and the data set for those with less than 12 years of education are both limited in their time frame to the period of 1994- 2016 while all other data has been collected for 1969 to 2016.

The U-3 statistic of unemployment is the most commonly referenced method of labor utilization. It counts all persons who had no employment but were available to work, as unemployed up to a four week mark where they then fall out of the statistic's measurement capabilities. The U-6 statistic recoups these individuals and labels them as either marginally attached or discouraged workers, and it also includes those who are working part time for economic reasons. This statistic is favored by economists because they believe it to be a more complete indicator of economic health, and it is utilized here because those with low human capital are more likely to be captured by its sampling frame (Parkin and Bade 2015). Due to unemployment over time being a numerical value organized by year, each of these demographics respective unemployment levels will be best observed as being interval. The data for these variables has been taken from the United States Bureau of Labor and Sta-

tistics (2016).

There are also various controls that must be considered to fully evaluate the relationship between the federal minimum wage and its effect on the low human capital worker. These controls include the maximum corporate tax bracket, the partisan leanings of the presidency, the House, and the Senate, and the total aggregate funds invested into domestic research and development for technological innovation. Partisan leaning is observed because of the potential influence of the legislative and executive branch upon the market that could increase or decrease costs for firms or effect economic confidence due to regulation. Research and development spending is controlled for because as spending in this area increases, new and more efficient technology is produced some of which makes human labor inefficient and obsolete, in thus, having the same effect on low skilled occupations. This inadvertently harms the low human capital worker.

These variables must be considered because in combination with the federal minimum wage, they each increase, or have the potential to increase, the structural operating costs of firms. Structural operating costs are the concrete costs that firms must pay to remain in business. These include mandated minimum wages, regulations, and the cost of day to day operations. These costs are impossible, or nearly impossible, to cut thus firms tend to cut employment to maintain profitability (Parkin and Bade 2015).

These controls will also be considered in order to eliminate as much ambiguity as possible from the independent and dependent variable relationship. Each will be utilized to evalu-

ate the significance of the control variables, in combination with the independent variable, on the overall relationship of employment. The maximum corporate tax bracket and the amount spent on research and development are both interval variables while the partisan leanings of the presidency, the House, and the Senate are all nominal variables. Partisan leaning is observed as a dummy variable coded 0 for Republican and 1 for Democrat.

The data for the tax rate has been taken from both the United States Internal Revenue Service and the Tax Foundation, while the partisan leanings of the presidency, the House, and the Senate have all been taken from PresidentsUSA (2016), The History and Art Archives of the United States House of Representatives (2016), and the Presidency Research Group (Renka 2010). In addition to these variables, the data for the national aggregate investment into research and development spending for United States domestic industry has been taken from the National Science Foundation (2016).

### Findings

In testing the main hypothesis, I ran the specified data through various statistical analyses, and a few noteworthy relationships arose. The first of these relationships is the impact of the federal minimum wage and the respective controls on both the U-3 and U-6 measures of unemployment. I ran a correlation on these individual data sets and noticed an anomaly; neither the federal minimum wage, nor the respective controls, maintains a statistical significance with the U-3 national average of unemployment, but both the federal minimum wage and research and development spending were significant when

compared to the U-6 data set. This is noteworthy because the U-3 data set would prove the null hypothesis and lead to the conclusion that any increases or decreases in the dependent variable are due to chance or the business cycle, but the U-6 data set contradicts this observation. It leads to the conclusion that both the federal minimum wage and research and development spending are directly correlated with unemployment increases.

When I observed the U-6 relationship, as it is depicted in Table 1, I also noticed that the federal minimum wage and research and development spending maintained a relatively strong positive correlation on unemployment with the Pearson's  $r$  statistics measuring 0.712 for the federal minimum wage and 0.730 for research and development spending. The Pearson's  $r$  for the corporate tax control could not be calculated for the U-6 data set due to the tax being a constant 39% for the entire span of the acquired data period.

I also tested the relationship between the partisan leanings of the House, the Senate, and the presidency, on both the U-3 and U-6 unemployment data sets. I utilized the Chi-Square test since these are interval/nominal relationships. These tests proved that the partisan leanings of both the executive and legislative branches were insignificant in their relationship to both unemployment measurements.

Since the U-6 values are significant, they warrant the scrutiny of a linear regression test. I tested the relationship between the federal minimum wage and the U-6 statistic alone first and it confirmed the stand alone significance. This relationship is depicted in Table 2. The adjusted  $R^2$  shows that

48.4% of the effect on the dependent variable of unemployment is due to the independent variable of the federal minimum wage, and it depicts a positive relationship. Both correlation and linear regression show that the federal minimum wage impacts the U-6 statistic in a strong, direct, and significant manner.

This data raises the questions of why the U-6's unemployment relationship is significant and strong whereas the U-3's relationship is non-significant and what other variables could be considered to further explain the dependent variable. A possible answer to the first question is the U-3's limiting factor of four weeks which causes marginally attached workers and discouraged workers to fall out of the statistic's measuring capabilities. Also, the U-3's exclusion of workers who are part time for economic reasons could contribute to the variance. These two possibilities demonstrate why the U-6 is favored by economists and make the U-6 a better statistic to measure the effect of economic decisions on low human capital workers.

Using this information, I attempted to answer the second question of what else could contribute to the U-6's relationship with the federally mandated minimum wage. To do this I ran a linear regression test on the relationship including all the predetermined controls. These controls caused the entire relationship to become insignificant and leads to the conclusion that although the federal minimum wage does seem to increase the U-6's unemployment rate there are other outside variables besides the controls I utilized here that could be considered with the minimum wage to gain a more fuller understanding of what effects the dependent variable.

## Minimum Wage Politics

**Table 1: Correlations**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Pearson's r</b>
Federal Minimum Wage/U-6 Unemployment	0.712***
Research and Development Spending/U-6 Unemployment	0.730***
Federal Minimum Wage/>12 Years Education	0.431*
Research and Development Spending/>12 Years Education	0.509*
Federal Minimum Wage/Youth Unemployment	0.392*
Research and Development Spending/Youth Unemployment	0.424*

\*\*\*<.0001, \*\*<.001, \*<.05

**Table 2: Regression: Federal Minimum Wage with U-6 Unemployment**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Coefficient (Std. Error)</b>
Constant	-0.233 (2.377)
Federal Minimum Wage	1.850 (0.398)**
R <sup>2</sup> =0.507 Adj. R <sup>2</sup> =0.484	

\*\*\*<.0001, \*\*<.001, \*<.05

## Minimum Wage Politics

As stated before, I was not able to obtain U-6 unemployment statistics that were broken down by demographic so I utilized U-3 average unemployment and its demographic break down to fully evaluate the hypothesis. I did this despite the disparity between the statistics because I felt that without performing these tests an accurate conclusion could not be had, and the research would also fall short of its intended goal if the tests were not conducted on the demographics that are most likely to be described as having low human capital.

The relationship between the federal minimum wage and the U-3 national average proved to be insignificant when tested on a standalone basis through linear regression but, as seen in Table 3, it becomes significant when the predetermined controls are all considered. Each control, except for the partisan leanings of the Senate and presidency, is also significant. The data seems to show that the federal minimum wage and the maximum corporate tax bracket both increase unemployment while research and development spending and the partisan lean of the House decreases unemployment. According to the adjusted  $R^2$ , the independent variable and the controls explain 46.4% of the dependent variable, but due to the potential of falling out of the U-3 statistic, it is unclear how much unemployment actually increases as well as whether unemployment is decreasing or if the variables that cause a decrease are significant enough to cause individuals to fall out of the U-3 statistic into the U-6.

The relationships between the federal minimum wage and U-3 unemployment for both African Americans and Hispanics on a standalone basis were also insignificant, but when the

controls were added they also became significant. This can be seen in Tables 4 and 5. The federal minimum wage and each predetermined control, except for partisan leanings of the Senate and the presidency, produced a significant relationship with both African American and Hispanic unemployment, and they each seem to cause an increase in unemployment except for research and development spending, which is once again shown to cause a decrease. This data suffers from the same uncertainty that the average U-3 unemployment statistic did whenever its relationship was tested. While it can be determined from the adjusted  $R^2$  values that 53.8% of the effect on African American unemployment and 43.4% of the effect on Hispanic unemployment is due to the independent variable and its controls, exactly how much unemployment increased or decreased cannot be determined. It also cannot be determined if research and development spending actually decreased unemployment for these minority groups, or if it is merely impacted the two demographics so significantly that it caused individuals to fall out of the labor force altogether.

I also performed correlation and linear regression tests on youth unemployment and the unemployment of those with less than twelve years of education. From Table 1 it can be seen that both are significantly correlated to the federally mandated minimum wage. The Pearson's  $r$  for youth unemployment is 0.392, and it is 0.431 for those with less than twelve years of education. This depicts a weak positive correlation. In order to gain an understanding of how much of the correlation is due to the independent variable, I ran standalone linear regression tests on the data which can be seen in Tables 6 and 7. These

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**Table 3: Regression: Federal Minimum Wage and Unemployment with Controls**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Coefficient (Std. Error)</b>
Constant	-6.588 (4.052)
Federal Minimum Wage	2.020 (0.655)*
Maximum Corporate Tax	0.176 (0.077)*
Research and Development Spending	1.977 (0.629)*
Partisan Lean House	-2.79e-5 (0.000)*
Partisan Lean Senate	-0.090 (0.572)
Partisan Lean Presidency	-0.203 (0.441)
R <sup>2</sup> =0.537 Adj. R <sup>2</sup> =0.464	

\*\*\*<.0001, \*\*<.001, \*<.05

**Table 4: Regression: Federal Minimum Wage and U-3 African American Unemployment**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Coefficient (Std. Error)</b>
Constant	-10.5852 (6.872)
Federal Minimum Wage	2.980 (1.147)*
Maximum Corporate Tax	0.356 (0.131)*
Research and Development Spending	-4.410e-5 (0.000)*
Partisan Lean House	3.806 (1.058)*
Partisan Lean Senate	-0.943 (0.959)
Partisan Lean Presidency	-0.328 (0.733)
R <sup>2</sup> =0.605 Adj. R <sup>2</sup> =0.538	

\*\*\*<.0001, \*\*<.001, \*<.05

## Minimum Wage Politics

**Table 5: Regression: Federal Minimum Wage and U-3 Hispanic Unemployment**

Variables	Coefficient (Std. Error)
Constant	-6.124 (5.745)
Federal Minimum Wage	2.398 (0.996)*
Maximum Corporate Tax	0.221 (0.109)*
Research and Development Spending	-3.987e-5 (0.000)*
Partisan Lean House	2.740 (0.878)*
Partisan Lean Senate	-0.225 (0.796)
Partisan Lean Presidency	0.223 (0.610)
R <sup>2</sup> =0.545 Adj. R <sup>2</sup> =0.464	

\*\*\*<.0001, \*\*<.001, \*<.05

**Table 6: Regression: Federal Minimum Wage and Youth Unemployment**

Variables	Coefficient (Std. Error)
Constant	14.910 (1.085)
Federal Minimum Wage	0.671 (0.232)**
R <sup>2</sup> =0.154 Adj. R <sup>2</sup> =0.135	

\*\*\*<.0001, \*\*<.001, \*<.05

**Table 7: Regression: Federal Minimum Wage & Education**

Variables	Coefficient (Std. Error)
Constant	3.961 (2.379)
Federal Minimum Wage	0.930 (0.406)**
R <sup>2</sup> =0.186 Adj. R <sup>2</sup> =0.150	

\*\*\*<.0001, \*\*<.001, \*<.05

**Table 8: Regression: Federal Minimum Wage and U-3 Youth Unemployment**

Variables	Coefficient (Std. Error)
Constant	-6.823 (7.556)
Federal Minimum Wage	3.216 (1.221)*
Maximum Corporate Tax	0.311 (0.143)*
Research and Development Spending	-2.925e-5 (0.000)
Partisan Lean House	3.669 (1.173)*
Partisan Lean Senate	-0.186 (1.067)
Partisan Lean Presidency	-0.024 (0.822)
R <sup>2</sup> =0.597 Adj. R <sup>2</sup> =0.534	

\*\*\*<.0001, \*\*<.001, \*<.05

tests upheld the results of both relationships being directly related and significant, but they only explained 13.5% of the effect on youth unemployment and 15% of the effect on unemployment for those with less than twelve years of education, according to their respective adjusted R<sup>2</sup>s. I then attempted to account for a greater percentage of both relationships by including the predetermined controls into the linear regression analysis. This caused the relationship between the federally mandated minimum wage and those with less than twelve years of education to become wholly insignificant whereas it improved the overall measurement of the impact of the federal minimum wage on youth unemployment taking the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> to 53.4% which can be seen in Table 8.

### Conclusion

When analyzed, the data support the hypothesis that increases in the federally mandated minimum wage negatively affect individuals with low human capital. It did this by showing that the federally mandated minimum wage appears to increase unemployment averages over time when it is raised. This point is furthered when the tested low human capital demographics are considered and their unemployment is shown to increase with increases in the minimum wage and increases in the controls when they are included. The controls that are significant play a substantial part in explaining the effect on the dependent variable that is caused by the relationship with the independent variable.

There is room for improvement

in the results as there are other variables and demographics that can be included in the methodology of this study. One could observe the employment of women over time and control for variables like the implementation of fees on trade. This could be done in combination with those variables tested here and may potentially deliver a more complete picture of what harms the employment of low human capital individuals.

The most significant finding that occurred in this research is that of the disparity between the U-3 and U-6 values of unemployment. The research shows that a link between the U-6 statistic of unemployment and the effects of raises in the minimum wage is more likely to be detected than in the U-3 statistic. This finding calls into question the validity of the U-3 measurement at measuring economic health because of the potential for unemployed individuals to fall out of the U-3's measuring capabilities.

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