

played a heroic role in 1954, helping to organize and then co-chairing a conference in Geneva that ended the Indochina crisis without military intervention, by means of agreements that featured a ceasefire in the war and a set of accommodations between France and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Ruane and Jones reject as phony the claim that the United States never really intended to intervene in Indochina. The importance of this book (which might more manageably be titled just *Anthony Eden*) is that the authors have mined the record in depth to show how Eden's steadfast opposition to the U.S. intervention bid really did stop Eisenhower and Dulles from bullying their way into war. Ruane and Jones argue that Eden feared the Indochina crisis could lead to nuclear war, a fear that stoked his determination to foil U.S. plans to internationalize the conflict (p. 255). Along the way the authors present British policy—and its effects on Washington's enterprise—in exhaustive detail.

This is the most important treatment of the Dien Bien Phu crisis that has appeared in a very long time. Do not miss it.

Ruane and Jones do one better, though. They push ahead to Suez and actually attempt to contrast Eden in the annus mirabilis of 1954 with the year of disaster 1956. Interestingly enough, they dismiss claims of a linkage between the Dien Bien Phu and Suez crises. "It makes greater sense," the authors conclude, "to root Eden's Suez decision-making—including his mistakes and misjudgments—wholly in 1956" (p. 261). The authors also reject the idea that Dulles sought revenge in the Suez crisis for the U.S. failure at Dien Bien Phu. In Eden's memoir *Full Circle* he devotes more than a hundred pages to the Indochina war, including the full trajectory of the conflict, the conferences at Berlin and Geneva, and intervention. That public account, published in 1960, is ably confirmed in this book. Those who have constructed artificial visions that exalt Eisenhower and denigrate Eden now have an evidentiary mountain to climb.



Edwin E. Moïse, *Tonkin Gulf and the Escalation of the Vietnam War*, rev. ed. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2019. 362 pp. \$39.00.

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In 1996, Edwin E. Moïse published a landmark study of the Tonkin Gulf incidents of August 1964. Those incidents spurred President Lyndon B. Johnson to order the first set of aerial attacks on North Vietnam, thereby significantly escalating the ongoing Vietnam War and the involvement in it of the United States. The 1996 volume established beyond any reasonable doubt that, on 2 August 1964, three North Vietnamese torpedo boats attacked the *USS Maddox*, a naval destroyer engaged in a reconnaissance mission just off the North Vietnamese coast. The ship's mission, he emphasized, was directly connected to a highly classified operational plan known as

OPLAN 34A, which authorized covert raids against North Vietnamese territory by South Vietnamese commandos. The plan had been approved by Johnson earlier that year and fully supported and directed by U.S. military personnel. Johnson and Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara did not reveal to the public or to the Congress the obvious, and crucial, link between a recent covert raid on North Vietnam, the *Maddox's* presence in the area, and Hanoi's retaliation against the destroyer. To do so might have suggested a defensive move by North Vietnam at a time when the Johnson administration was determined to depict the Communist state as guilty of unprovoked aggression.

On 4 August another incident occurred in the murky waters of the Tonkin Gulf that proved to be even more consequential. That episode formed the heart of the author's narrative in his 1996 monograph, as it does in the carefully revised, more finely detailed, and more fully documented account presented here. Over two decades ago, Moïse challenged—and largely overturned—conventional wisdom that North Vietnamese torpedo boats had attacked the *Maddox* and the *USS Turner Joy* on that evening. That is precisely what the Johnson administration had charged in its public statements and in its meetings with senior members of Congress. Moïse showed in painstaking detail that that claim was false; that unusual weather patterns tricked U.S. sailors into misreading their ships' sonar and reporting an attack that never occurred. In a rush to use the purported second incident of torpedo shelling to justify aerial bombardment of North Vietnam, the president and his chief advisers chose not to wait for various strands of intelligence reports, intercepts, and first-hand observations to be collated and interpreted before acting.

President Johnson also used the two episodes—the one that had actually occurred and the one that many on the scene were skeptical about from the first—to send Congress a resolution that gave him authorization to use whatever military force he deemed necessary to stem Communist aggression in Southeast Asia. On 7 August, the House and Senate passed the resolution with only two dissenting votes. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution thereafter became the principal statutory justification for the full-scale war the United States waged in Vietnam.

This book further clinches the case set out so thoroughly and relentlessly in the first edition of *Tonkin Gulf and the Escalation of the Vietnam War*. In the intervening years important new documentation has become declassified or otherwise accessible to scholars. Moïse makes excellent use of that material here to add greater nuance and precision to the basic story. At the same time, he wields that documentary evidence as a club to demolish alternative explanations for the imaginary attacks of 4 August set forth in government sources and by less-careful scholars. The result is as definitive a study as we are likely ever to have about the events of 2–4 August 1964 and the duplicitous use that the Johnson administration made of them to achieve several pre-determined goals. Not only was the president able to move with apparent toughness, speed, and resolution against a nettlesome Communist adversary; he also managed to neutralize Vietnam as an election issue while gaining a veritable blank check from Congress for future escalation, if needed.

The strengths of this fine-grained exposition and analysis are considerable. Historians of the Vietnam War will long be in debt to Moïse for devoting so many decades of his scholarly career to tracking down all the extant evidence, supplemented by his own personal interviews with key U.S. and Vietnamese officials, needed to recover the particulars of a critical international episode—one that helped sanction the Johnson administration's deepening intervention in Vietnam. Readers may well be frustrated, however, by Moïse's failure to flag the changes made in the first edition of this monograph for the newly revised one. What, specifically, is new here? Where, precisely, do the narrative and analysis contained in this edition differ from those presented in the version published 23 years earlier? Unfortunately, Moïse and his publisher have chosen not to tell us.

The staggering amount of granular detail and technical specificity herein concerning everything from U.S. and North Vietnamese naval protocols to ship equipment, communications issues, time-keeping procedures, and much more will likely leave all but naval history buffs overwhelmed. Clunky sentences such as the following, moreover, suffuse the narrative: "But [Lt. Gerrell] Moore says—and some recently declassified documents support this—that the main mission of the Naval Security Group detachment put on the *Maddox* to operate the comvan was not to gather intelligence for future use by other forces but simply to give Captain [John] Herrick the intelligence he needed, coming from San Miguel via the online teleprinter at least as much as from the intercept capabilities of the comvan itself, to reduce the risks involved in a patrol so close to hostile shores" (p. 60).

In sum, *Tonkin Gulf and the Escalation of the Vietnam War* may not be a user-friendly book and is certainly not recommended for general readers, but it belongs on the bookshelves of all serious students of the Vietnam War.