



# The Tet Offensive: Politics, War, and Public Opinion (Vietnam: America in the War Years)

By David F. Schmitz

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On January 30, 1968 approximately 84,000 North Vietnamese Army and National Liberation Front forces launched nearly simultaneous attacks against over 100 cities and military installations in South Vietnam. The well-coordinated urban attacks came during the most sacred of Vietnamese holidays and caught American commanders by surprise. The results of the Tet Offensive were monumental, tens of thousands were killed and many more wounded. But its importance goes far beyond its military outcome to the powerful political, psychological, and economic impact in the United States.

In this new work, historian David F. Schmitz analyzes what is arguably the most important event in the history of the Vietnam conflict. Schmitz situates the Tet Offensive in the context of American foreign policy and the state of the war up to 1968 while carefully considering the impact of the media on American public opinion. Through his up-to-date analysis of recently available sources, Schmitz works to dispel myths and clarify the central debates surrounding this pivotal event that brought an end to American escalation of the war and led to LBJ's decision to withdraw from the presidential race.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

*The Tet Offensive* is a lucid and authoritative reexamination of a key moment in the Vietnam War. Schmitz is an intelligent and discerning historian, and he shows it in this excellent brief introduction to the subject. (Fredrik Logevall, Cornell University; author of *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam*)

*The Tet Offensive* is essential reading for scholars and students of the Vietnam War as well as general readers interested in one of the key turning points in post-1945 American history. Writing with remarkable economy and clarity, David F. Schmitz persuasively argues for a new understanding of U.S. decision-making during the critical early months of 1968. In the process, he dismantles the old and pernicious notion that the American media turned a military victory for the United States into a defeat by convincing the U.S. public that the war was unwinnable. This book will surely stand for years to come as the most authoritative brief account of American responses to the Tet Offensive. (Mark A. Lawrence, University of Texas at Austin; author of *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History*)

Schmitz offers a concise, convincing portrayal of the Tet Offensive's crucial significance in the history of the Vietnam War. . . . Highly recommended. (H. Shapiro, University of Cincinnati *CHOICE*)

David F. Schmitz has produced a compact and readable history of what is arguably the most important chapter in the American war in Vietnam. (Erik B. Villard, U.S. Center of Military History)

David Schmitz has provided a sound, compact, and fast-paced account of the critical phase of the Vietnam War, nicely blending military, political, diplomatic, and economic developments. This book should prove appealing to students and general readers alike. (Robert J. McMahon, The Ohio State University)

#### About the Author

**David F. Schmitz** is Robert Allen Skotheim Chair of History at Whitman College. He is the author of *Henry L. Stimson: The First Wise Man*, *Thank God They're On Our Side: The United States and Right-Wing Dictatorships, 1921–1965*, and *The United States and Fascist Italy, 1922–1940*.

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