

Marsteller

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War and what may be to come for many of his students.

Students can't understand the gulf crisis without partly understanding the Vietnam War, he said.

Before Vietnam, the soldiers were told they were fighting to bring a better life through democracy to the people, Marsteller said.

"We were told we were fighting communism," he said.

But the government lied about what the Vietnamese people wanted, he said.

In 1954, the Geneva Accord recommended that free elections be held in Vietnam. Marsteller said that if those democratic elections had been allowed, 80 percent of the people would have voted for Ho Chi Minh, the communist rebel.

Similarly, President Bush talks about ideologies such as naked aggression, American resolve and principle, Marsteller said, but the real reason the United States is getting involved in the Persian Gulf is oil.

"It's deja vu all over again," he said.

Marsteller said Bush would be better off to tell Americans the real reason for the build-up of troops in Saudi Arabia than to disguise the reasons in idealism.

"I think if he (Bush) was honest," he said, "he would say we're in Iraq for oil, o-i-l."

"It frustrates leaders when they're called into account. Be accountable, be responsible."

Marsteller said his concern is that Bush has backed Saddam into a corner. Bush has said he will settle for nothing less than Saddam backing out of Kuwait, restoration of the Kuwaiti emirate, release of all foreign hostages and punishment for Saddam's naked aggression, he said, leaving no way for Saddam to get out without war and still save face.

Some compromises suggest letting Saddam keep a strip of land in northern Kuwait and giving him access to a port, but that is seen as a reward for aggression, Marsteller said. Still, these options must be discussed, he said.

He said Saddam's invasion of Ku-

wait correlates with Vietnam on a basic level because Vietnam wanted its own country. The Vietnamese were tired of imperialism.

"We basically supplanted the French as colonists," Marsteller said. "They had been fighting colonists for centuries."

In Vietnam, America was trying to impose its view of the world on everyone else, Marsteller said. And, it is doing so now with Iraq.

But if the gulf crisis escalates into war, it will be different from Vietnam "because that was such a guerrilla war — hit and run," Marsteller said. The average fight in Vietnam lasted 90 seconds, he said.

But in the gulf, it will be more of a

him a madman is "bizarre," Marsteller said. Although Saddam's tactics are wrong, he is trying to modernize his country, and his only resource is oil, Marsteller said.

Bush is trying to get the public behind him by dehumanizing the enemy, he said. But he added that he's not sure the public is buying Bush's rhetoric.

The public supported the Vietnam War until the Tet Offensive in 1968, Marsteller said.

"Up until then, the government said we were winning the war, that there was a light at the end of the tunnel," he said.

Then in January 1968, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong coordinated

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—Marsteller
UNL professor

unit war, with large battalion-size groups engaging each other, Marsteller said.

That's why a peaceful solution is so important, he said.

"I firmly believe that let's sit down and talk about it," Marsteller said. "We're going to deal with his (Saddam's) aggression by out aggressing them?"

Marsteller said he thinks there should be a peaceful solution because those Americans who will fight and die in the gulf will be the "poor men and the poor women," because the sons and daughters of the elite aren't motivated to join the volunteer military.

And, if the draft were reinstated, Marsteller said he wants it to cover all people.

"I want the rich boys and rich women dying, the rich men and women's sons dying, too," he said.

If a war is waged, it would be fought in Saddam's field, but for Bush to call

a massive overnight attack, breaking into the U.S. Embassy, Marsteller said. Even though Tet was a military victory for the American troops, public support waned seriously.

During the first 60 days of U.S. involvement in the gulf, Bush had about 80 percent of public support, he said. In the past 30 to 35 days, his support dropped to about 50 percent.

"That's a massive erosion in 30 to 35 days," he said.

Marsteller said support for Bush's Persian Gulf policy has mirrored that drop in his popularity.

"If he is going to fight a war, he has got to have the support of the public," Marsteller said. "If he doesn't, there's no way to win the war."

"You've got to have the public behind you. Armies don't go to war. Societies go to war . . ."

On the whole, Marsteller said, recent polls show that Nebraskans are

more supportive of Bush than the rest of the nation.

And, he said, he is not sure what will happen to Bush's support if war breaks out.

But, he said, "I would expect (support) to go up until their daughters and sons start coming home in body bags."

Casualties will be high in a war against Iraq, Marsteller said, because of the number of U.S. troops that will be in the gulf. More than 400,000 U.S. troops are expected to be deployed by January.

And Saddam's forces, estimated to be near a half million, outnumber the U.S. troops, Marsteller said.

"It would be curious to me what is an acceptable loss of troops to the U.S.," he said.

In his class, Marsteller said he tries to present only the facts and let the students come up with their own answers.

"I refuse to draw conclusions," he said. "That's way too easy. I don't think education should be giving you the answers."

He said he got interested in teaching the class when he was doing his doctorate dissertation about the social reconstruction of the Vietnam veteran.

Marsteller said he noticed public perception of veterans changed from thinking they were baby killers and villains to good guys.

"I do that (teach) for personal interests being a vet, but I would hate to see young men and young women faced with that moral decision of killing someone or being killed, he said.

He said the skepticism of government by this college generation is a direct result of the Vietnam War. Vietnam is the reason people don't vote, Marsteller said, because the government lied during the Vietnam era.

"The government told people we were winning the war — just a few more bullets, a few more planes, a few more troops, and we'll win the war," he said.

But, he said, if college students don't vote, they will find themselves with guns in their hands.

"Some people say I am too cynical," he said. "All I can tell you is I used to be a Republican. I got lied to."

— Jennifer O'Cluka
Senior Reporter

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On the cover

An Army reservist tries on a battle dress uniform, desert scarf and goggles at Fort Riley, Kan., in October. His Reserve unit is stationed about 25 miles from the Kuwait-Saudi Arabia border.

Photo by Al Schaben.
Cover design by Jana Pedersen.

Families

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Hussein. He's insane . . . I wouldn't mind assassinating him," he says. "We should just drop bombs on the whole place. It's gonna be a quick and fast war."

But, Jerry Fredenburg, Clarice's husband and president of the group says, "I want my son home tonight, but I don't want no bullets flying. If he has to stay over there for three years, let him stay. We don't want people coming back in body bags."

"So, how are you guys gonna cope with the holidays?" Clarice Fredenburg asks.

"Now that the holidays are here, I've seen all those commercials where the son comes home and surprises his parents. I sit there and bawl for 10 damn minutes," Strobbe says as tears begin to form in her eyes.

A member sitting nearby hands her a box of Kleenex.

"It's our baby's first Christmas," says one young woman whose husband is in the gulf. "It's also our anniversary on

December 26."

"I think the men and women over there are just as discouraged as we are," says another member.

"We need to try to keep them pumped up with as much fun things as we can to send over there."

The group meets on Saturdays to make care packages to send to the gulf troops.

"My son pretends to be a D.J. and sends Jason the top-25 hits every week. He loves it," Fredenburg says.

Group member Genie Briese expresses her concerns about rural Nebraskans with family members in the gulf who don't have support groups like the one in Lincoln.

"They have nobody to lean on," Briese says.

Fredenburg agrees.

"I wish we could just reach out and find all these hurting people. There's got to be tons of them," she says.

Next, group members toss around more ideas for supporting gulf troops.

"When a unit leaves, we need everyone out there waving American flags with our thumbs up," says Jerry Fre-

denburg.

The discussion continues, and group members begin talking among themselves.

As the conversation dwindles members dry their eyes and gather their belongings.

Some still huddle together to talk more; others exchange friendly hugs and kisses.

Fredenburg picks up papers, introduces herself to new members and addresses concerns from the line of people waiting to talk to her.

"It was a good meeting," she says. "It's good whenever people who need support feel they can open up."

Strobbe comes back in the room and grabs the Kleenex box.

"I may need this," she says as she walks out the door.

Strobbe, Fredenburg and the other group members file out of the building one by one until the last, and the sheltering comfort of Operation Desert Shield Support Group is stolen away by the cold of the night.

— Dionne Searcey
Staff Reporter