Disputes over definition and function within the global society have provided much room for loop holes and speculation over what does and what does not meet the criterion to constitute the crime of genocide. The ambiguity and unclear wording of the UNCG definition of the atrocity gives way to the possibility of alternative applications and interpretations of the term. In the same vein, the multitude of definitions that have been created by scholars, scientists, politicians and the like in an attempt to understand and prevent genocidal crimes has created a vagueness about the potential relationship between wartime political actions and what some might interpret as being a form of genocide.   
 If one recognizes that civilian fatalities are inevitably present within the context of war, the question brought about by Helen Fein is then quite relevant. Should, Fein explores, the “bombardment of civilians in war” have genocidal connotations (52-53)? The problem with examining such a possibility lies within the rhetorical uses of the term “genocide” in contrast to its legal or political implications. “Genocide” is used for its rhetorical effect when one is attempting to relay the severity of a human rights violation or mass crime. This complicates the evaluation of wartime trespasses against civilians of a targeted country, in that a by-stander may consider the mass deaths of non-military persons in a war to be “genocidal” in nature simply because of the atrocious implications that the use of the word genocide brings about. This statement however holds no value from a political standpoint.   
 Fein examines the Vietnam War in her exploration of civilian fatalities and the possibility of genocide. In this, she brings up the argument of Bassiouni who contends that the actions of the US in Vietnam could not have been considered genocide because they lacked three essential elements regarding the opposing parties and their identities, and the pre-meditations and intentions of the perpetrators. However, I wonder if while the US, as a country and a military group, might be innocent of genocidal actions during the Vietnam War, under other definitions and analysis some US soldiers might not be as innocent.

In Roger Smith’s analysis of genocide in the twentieth century (40-43), it is mentioned that as early as medieval times genocide was embedded in the very notion of warfare. While the function of war has evolved since ancient times, the motives and nature of war, it seems, has stayed intact. That being said, my curiosity about soldiers in Vietnam and other wars stems from this notion as well as the argument of Gregory Stanton that “an individual criminal may be guilty of genocide even if he kills only one person, so long as he knew he was participating in a larger plan to destroy the group” (35). Though it is not my contention that US soldiers are criminals, in responding to the text and considering the different, albeit conflicting and vague, interpretations and definitions of genocide, especially those which place emphasis on intent, I wonder if the motivations of some soldiers whose minds and motivations were planted firmly in what they believed to be the goal of their mission, might be guilty of genocide in that they are, to their minds, participating in, what they believe to be a larger plan to destroy a group which stands in the way of that mission. In this way, while war itself might not be considered genocide simply because civilians are affected, the actions of soldiers whose intentions might differ, though perhaps unconsciously from the intentions of the countries at war, may be guilty of carrying out genocidal actions when they target the members of the country against whom they are fighting.

This idea, though perhaps not sound under the UNCG definition of genocide is an interpretation which I believe could be argued for when one places the consequences of war within the contexts of the different definitions that have been provided by scholars and scientists involved in the research and analysis of genocide.