Week 2 Forum

Why Vietnam? and The Longest War

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Why Vietnam? and The Longest War

by Joe Escobar – Saturday, October 3, 2015, 10:23 PM

This forum thread is for Why Vietnam? and The Longest War posts and replies.

After studying the required materials, address the various questions. To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT – SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post. Do NOT simply leave it RE: Why Vietnam? and The Longest War

Sum of ratings: –

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[redacted]

Ho Chi Minh: Satan or Saint?

by Andrew [redacted] Sunday, [redacted] **<—— This is the Sunday BEFORE the Wednesday deadline**

In the "Herring Book" Ho Chi Minh is seen as a man of the people. He wants to see Vietnam prosper and thrive as an independent state. He is noble and loved by the people of Vietnam. There are many reasons for this. First he attempted to gain Vietnam's independence through legal and diplomatic means. He tried to argue his position to the French government wasn't even allowed into the proceedings. He eventually went back to Vietnam where his people lauded him as their savior and gave him the nickname "Uncle Ho." All he wanted was a liberated Vietnam. He was happy to accept help from any party that would give it. He nearly had the support of the United States initially. If France hadn't demanded that they continue their colonialism in Southeastern Asia the US may have even helped prop him up, and although China and the Soviet Union gave his party support he never allowed himself or his party to be swayed by them.

This is where the propaganda film "Why Vietnam" comes in. It labels Ho Chi Minh as China and the Soviet Union's puppet in Southeast Asia. He is the evil face of communism. He is shown in the video to be a suppressor of his people even though 20 years prior the United States almost supported an independent Vietnam potentially under his rule.

After my first paragraph I could be seen as a North Vietnamese sympathizer, and that might be true, but in reality they were only trying to become an independent state, and it's hard to miss the similarities to the United States in 1776. Ho Chi Minh's own version of the declaration of independence even had many familiarities to the United States' declaration. It's understandable that the propaganda video had to demonize Minh the way it did in order to gain popular support for the war. Had they had his actual history, the American people may have seen his attempt toward independence as a noble endeavor, and the US might never have entered the war.

What do you think? Was he truly the man that the US claimed him to be in the video? Or is he "Uncle Ho," the

noble leader of Vietnam?

Sum of ratings:3 (1) 3

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[redacted]

Satans all around

by Ken [redacted]

Herring definitely enlightens us to Ho Chi Minh's perspective of wanting a unified Vietnam independent of imperialism, which doesn't sound bad at all, but both the *Patriot* book and *Why Vietnam* mention Ho Chi Minh's dark side. Herring mentions Ho Chi Minh as "radiating warmth and serenity," which puts Ho Chi Minh in a good light, but then Herring mentions, "He was also willing to sanction the most cold-blooded methods to achieve his aims" (6). *Why Vietnam* gives me chills thinking about Viet Cong's methods when it describes, "Political Action Centers with trained agitators infiltrated from the North", and then abhorrently shows an image of a car with bullet-holes through the windshield (08:30). The film was made to instill a bit of fear of the North, but even realizing the film's bias, it's hard to praise a leader whose organization is allowed to go to such lengths. The infiltrators also come at a time when North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese called an armistice under the agreements of a Geneva Convention.

After the Geneva Convention Vietnam was split up and people fled from North Vietnam to South. The reason I bring it up is because Herring also mentions how deep rooted the differences between North and South Vietnam has been since the Muslim kingdom of Champa, where the Viets together destroyed the Muslim capital Indrapura (Herring 4). Civil war plays into why Ho Chi Minh's idealistic single nation would not go easy, and his dark side is why I say Ho Chi Minh's determination left unleashed and supported may have led to harsh treatment of opposition even to his own people. His noble cause just hadn't castigated a large group of people for their beliefs yet. With that said though, France atrociously oppressed the entire Vietnam with what the French called "*'mission civilisatrice*" (5). France was chipping away at Vietnamese identity while dealing with dissident groups in a massacre-like fashion, and exploiting Vietnam for its resources. Fortunately or unfortunately France is finally out of the equation after the battle of Dien Bien Phu.

I guess it comes down to whose cause nobler? A nation divided but allowed to hold elections under the agreements made at Geneva, or an ironfisted communist regime?

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[redacted]

War's Demons

by Andrew [redacted] *Thursday, October 8, 2015, 1:10 PM*

I couldn't agree more the the majority of what you said about both sides committing major atrocities. And although a million refugees left the north once the 17th parallel was enacted, it was still apparent to the US and France that if fair elections were to be held the next day, Ho Chi Minh would have still been victorious. The main problem with Ho Chi Minh that I see is he wanted to get rid of one oppressive state for his own.

He proclaims that Vietnam should be free, but says nothing about the people of Vietnam. While reading the "Appy Book", Malcolm Brown explains that when he went back to visit Vietnam and see some of the Buddhists that he had ties with during the war, he has to meet his friend in a bathroom in secret inside a Buddhist temple. When he does, Thich Tri Quang tells Brown that the oppression of the Buddhist people is still very real and just as bad as it was when under Diem's rule.

When it comes to war it seems that neither side can claim righteousness. Both are clearly fighting for what they believe in, whether it's freedom, religion, ideology or territory. To me, the people who were truly on the right side of the war were the peaceful protestors. Before Vietnam and even Korea, wars were won with bombs and men. In hindsight we can clearly see that this was not true in Vietnam. Yet even today we still fight in this old way. What will it take to learn the right way? And what is the right way?

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[redacted]

Re: War's Demons

by Sara [redacted] *Thursday, October 8, 2015, 1:50 PM*

Freedom comes at a cost. I do however agree on each country was fighting for their right of religion and their territory. They both wanted freedom and their county to be just they way they pictured and worked for it. Whether a person is a Buddhist, Christian, Muslim or any other religion it should be able to be practiced but never to do so to harm another person because they have a different religion. In "Appy Page XIX" it states; "The idea was not to create two separate Vietnams, North and South, but to establish the peaceful condition that would allow for nationwide reunification election in 1956". This statement points as to what you were addressing meaning this war was not to create hatred towards one another but to come together and unify. Believing that it would happen was very predictable on Vietnamese and Americans part. Learning the right way of a war is a very hard because its like how do you put a stop to it if putting are already fighting? I think maybe if whatever country is fighting then to have a civil conversation on how to stop whatever might turn the countries into the war themselves.

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[redacted]

Bad Policy

by Andrew [redacted] *Saturday, October 10, 2015, 11:28 AM* **Saturday**

I think the problem is the fact that many still objected to Ho Chi Minh's ideology, and even though they may not have been his original ideas to persecute religious minorities, it ended up that those religious minorities were still being oppressed up to the late nineties according to Malcolm Brown. The Viet Minh wanted unification, but they wanted it to be under their rule. They wanted the elections because they new the would win. They had massive support of the people.

America had good ideas when it came to training the the Vietnamese to fight the war against the north but they failed to support their ideals. The southern Vietnamese weren't very excited about French rule either. They were poorly treated when it came to the farmers and villagers. Many of them turned to Ho Chi Minh because of American policies. America tried to be the "good guy" but failed to win the support of the people.

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[redacted]

Re: War's Demons

by Madison [redacted] *Sunday, October 11, 2015, 3:48 PM*

I agree with what you had to say about religion even though everyone fights for different beliefs they are all fighting for what they truly believe in. All freedom does come with a cost. many men and women in our lifetimes have lost there lives fighting for what they truly believe in and for what they want this country to be. like the book states war is not be hated and to fight but it is to stand up and fight for what you believe in. that theory is one that may be truly hard to understand when so many lives are lost from this battle.

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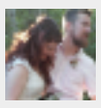

American Propaganda

by Andrew Strout – Thursday, October 8, 2015, 3:46 PM

I think the video "Why Vietnam" was extremely skewed in its description of Ho Chi Minh. Sure he was brutal against the people who were trying to declare the country he loved as their own, but toward the Vietnamese in general he was generous and kind. He banded the hill tribes together to fight against the Japanese near the end of WWII and the French in the 50s and 60s. He had the support of a majority of the Vietnamese. The ones he didn't have the support from were the religious minorities (Buddhist and Catholic/Christian).

"Why Vietnam" is definitely American propaganda in order to get the support of the American people. It showed Ho Chi Minh perpetuating famine and disease, but the same could easily be said of the Americans and their policy of moving people into these hamlets that were poorly defended and had little to no agriculture and couldn't support the people in them.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) 2

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Re: Ho Chi Minh: Satan or Saint?

by Madison McCrory – Friday, October 9, 2015, 11:58 AM

My feeling on Ho Chi Minh are very strong. he was very two faced. He wanted to come off to his peers as this great outstanding citizen he wanted to help out his country and wanted people to know he was helping. But as him being a communist he wanted control. HIs personality to me made it seem like by being nice he could push people into be communist. It was like he wanted people to see it wasn't all bad. But as a communist he just wanted people to follow him and then he would take control. I believe he was a saint at all cost. he tried to trick people into being a communist.

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Re: SEATO, Good Idea or Bad?

by Alanna Argentino – Tuesday, October 6, 2015, 10:18 PM

In the video we learn that in 1955, the United States and a few other countries all signed a document known as the, Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, or also known as SEATO. By doing this, the United States and the other countries guaranteed South East Asia the safety against armed forces.

In the Herring book, we learn about SEATO. We also learn that the United States involvement was legitimized for the presence of being in South Vietnam, so that they could fight the communist movement against North Vietnam.

In 1961, when South Vietnam sent a call for help, because the communists invading their part of the country, and with the war starting, the SEATO was used. The United States came over and helped teach the Vietnamese how to fight in a war. There was no actual combat unit, just people willing to give advice and hands on learning.

I think that both the video and the book gave the same information and that there is no conflict. I feel that by the United States signing the SEATO, North Vietnam saw an opening. Since they did not have that many people on their sides, they had to take a quick action and attack the South before any alias were able to help. The United States should have, at that time, brought a combat unit with them. President Eisenhower made the United States look vulnerable. By taking the time to teach AND fight instead of just teach, the South could have made a lot more progress. And the United States could have been more helpful.

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Re: SEATO, Good Idea or Bad?

by Sara LeJeune – Thursday, October 8, 2015, 2:46 PM

SEATO was a very good idea for both the North Vietnamese and Americans during the Vietnam War. In the book "Herring", people were feeling very satisfied because they had a way out when the war became really

dangerous and people had a way of security. Teaching the people before the war even started would have helped out a lot more than what the damage the war did. But in times like these of war there is hardly to no time to prepare for such a tragic events to take place, meaning people were even drafted in this war to come help fight for their country. SEATO can only do so much and when they had the chance they took it, but for some people it was too late and lost their lives. I do however agree on the United States needed to be more helpful then to ruin their country because all of the money going into the war was over a million of dollars of damage. Most meetings then wars could have helped prevented it.

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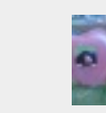

Re: SEATO, Good Idea or Bad?
by Alanna Argentino – Saturday, October 10, 2015, 10:40 PM

I completely agree with you. I like what you said about "Teaching the people before the war even started would have helped out a lot more than what the damage the war did." I did not even think about it like that. Then again how do you even know that a war is about to break out and when they will strike. I mean, look at Pearl Harbor. Japan gave less than a 24 hour warning of when they were going to attack. At least the United States were nice enough to go over and to help them and teach them, even though it came at such a loss for our soldiers.

SEATO was a good idea on Vietnam's part, very smart actually. Knowing that something could and most likely will happen, hurry up and make some big friends and try to scare everyone away. Well that's at least how I portrayed it, not that is seemed to help that much.

You are very right, if countries had meetings with one another and had better communication then there would be a lot less Wars. Somethings though, you can talk until your blue in the face, and no one will listen and then you have to make a drastic move to be heard.

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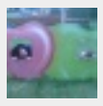

SEATO Cop Out
by Ken Barrett – Sunday, October 11, 2015, 12:14 AM

I'll be the devil's advocate to SEATO. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was a busy man around the time of SEATO without doubt, but for what purpose? Was it worth his time to seek a "cop out" solution? While Dulles toiled away politically for an answer, he was tightening two nooses. One around the neck of the French who were obviously in more need of U.S. support by admission of "Operation Vulture", so I gather the U.S. administration knew a lot about what was happening around Dien Bien Phu. The second noose is around the neck of the U.S. by guaranteed intervention. The SEATO agreement was putting our name on a ticket saying that the U.S. will get involved directly, unlike the current France curtain we were behind. Dien Bien Phu lost thousands of lives, but it seems to me that the U.S. put those lives lower on the priority list than covering the way it would look if the U.S. got directly involved. SEATO was another cold-war move. It raised the stakes but no real action was taken except the loss of many French lives.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) 2

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Re: Why Vietnam? and The Longest War
by Madison McCrory – Wednesday, October 7, 2015, 2:54 PM

Americans went to Vietnam because they needed help. America want a free country and wants to help when needed. American solders went in risking their lives to help and save the people from dictatorship. American solders could speak the langue and they taught the other solders how to shoot and protect themselves. America has a strong hardworking a loyal army. We are lucky enough to be protect by men and women that give up there lives to protect us. america went in to protect Vietnam and teach them how to have an army that could protect.

Sum of ratings: (1) 0

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Re: Why Vietnam? and The Longest War

by Sara LeJeune – Thursday, October 8, 2015, 1:30 PM

Well done and good points that were being made. In Vietnam I do however agree that America wanted to help Vietnam, but they really didn't do a lot of good when it came to starting a war with Vietnam. With this being said Hi Cho Minh tried to take over the country and turning everyone into a communist country. Also when America started to become involve, it came as a cost;" In the late 1950's, the administration committed more than $133 million and ordered large quantities of arms, ammunition, ships, aircrafts, and military"(page27, Herring). On top of that being said thousands of lives were killed to really not help out the country in a lot of ways.

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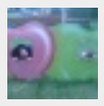

The French background

by Ken Barrett – Wednesday, October 7, 2015, 6:33 PM

Both sources give credence to the U.S. background in Vietnam lying heavily through the French. Herring talks in depth and in great detail of how we became more and more involved through the French. *Why Vietnam* at 4:10 segues from President Johnson's speech of why our American soldiers "toil, suffer, and sometimes die in such a remote and distant place" to images of Dien Bien Phu, the last battle the French fight in Vietnam and suffer a massive loss. The end of President Johnson's speech ends with him saying, "Retreat does not bring safety, and weakness does not bring peace"(03:50), which the documentary may be implying the French were of the same mindset when they so confidently tried to defend Dien Bien Phu, but Herring is a little more straight in his book – Herring introduces a theory on French leaders' mindsets coming from a "formidable inferiority complex" (P. 8). Either way they both agree U.S. background is heavily set through the French and it's what interest me, so please reply with thoughts, comments, critiques etc...

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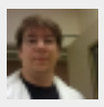

Re: The French background

by Joseph Ragsdale – Thursday, October 8, 2015, 9:50 PM

Ken,

Excellent point about our involvement in Vietnam coming so directly from the French. In a lot of ways we inherited their problems with Vietnam and the people there, in large part because we treated the Vietnamese the same way the French did, after a while. We did not seek to let Vietnam govern itself, but decided that it needed to be governed, although it wasn't by us directly (like France) it *was* by a puppet that we set up and supported.

When you add into the mix that Diem was extremely unpopular, likely very corrupt and increasingly brutal towards his own people, it is hard to imagine the Vietnamese holding much love for us. When it comes right down to it, we tried to colonize Vietnam with one of their own leaders who's strings we could pull, and the people saw right through it.

I think your insights were very good, and it definitely got me thinking about our entrance into the country and it's conflict in a new way, from a new direction. Thank you very much for the insightful post!

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Ho Chi Minh cause over 1 million to flee

by Brady Goodman – Wednesday, October 7, 2015, 8:19 PM

I want to start by saying I hope this is done correctly on my part. Sorry if it isn't, I am not able to see an example before I turn it in, so here I go.

In *Why Vietnam?* it says more than 1 million Vietnamese fled South to avoid living under a communist regime. In *America's Longest War*, Herring starts off the book with "the independence of Vietnam from French rule on September 2, 1945"(3). Ho Chi Minh, a communist leader of the North, used some of Thomas Jefferson's words

from the United States Declaration of independence as he addressed his country.After Ho Chi Minh declared independence and the conference in Geneva divided Vietnam into two, more than 1 million Vietnamese realised they would rather start a new life all over again then live under his communistic rule. The two events happen in an order so they don't go against the others information. In fact, the information adds up and shows that it does make sense why all those people went south.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) 1

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Re: Ho Chi Minh cause over 1 million to flee
by Sara LeJeune – Thursday, October 8, 2015, 2:25 PM

Well done and good points that were added here! Vietnam was always divided in two places such as the North and South. But they were all the same country just different beliefs on both sides of the country. This is where I feel like part of the war was already being started and that it was needing to come to an agreement or conflict was to occur. Hi Cho Minh was already trying to pull apart both sides of the country but in confusion, trying to make the country an independence one. The Americans however were trying to form close ties with Ho, according to "P. 11 Herring". I do not agree on however it was said the events were in order so they had to go against each others information. I believe they whether the events such as during when the war took place it would bond to happen no matter what and Americans were going to try to help out Vietnam and not a single person was going to stop them. This was a good read though keep up the good work!

Sum of ratings: (1) 0

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Re: Why Vietnam? and The Longest War
by Sara LeJeune – Wednesday, October 7, 2015, 9:14 PM

In these two books the war of Vietnam really changed the world in a different way. In the "Herring" book, it was very detailed as to what had happened towards the beginning of Vietnam. Herring really puts the reader into the situations and makes the person as if they are living in the scene. As Ho Chi Minh became more of power the communist in all the countries really started to break out. Indochina as they called it really unfolding into more of a communist country, which that wasn't good. In the book, " National Archives, really stood out the French and how they were too involved so heavily in the war. These two books really showed how the war became as we went further into the Longest War of any kind. Yes both books agree on the same ideas as what the war was going to turn into and how we were going to either stop it and or have a sense of control. They both explain what the vietnamese were getting themselves into along with the war and how the economy was being in major affect because of how much money was spent towards just the war alone. When the French catholics started to come into action," Herring did a great job at showing what they were to except from that moment on.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) 1

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Re: Why Vietnam? and The Longest War
by Madison McCrory – Friday, October 9, 2015, 11:52 AM

The herring book to me was very sad. I felt like i was actually living in the book. the writer makes it very real and understanding. It made my heart hurt for the people that were actual in the war. So many lives were lost and people were controlled and flat out robbed of there freedom. While the war was going on even people that had there freedom could not live there life. it was a horrible place to be. The book was sad and depressing.

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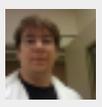

Portrayal of North Vietnam vs South Vietnam
by Joseph Ragsdale – Wednesday, October 7, 2015, 10:31 PM

I found the portrayal of North Vietnam, especially Ho Chi Min in the 'Why Vietnam?' clip to be spot on with what the Herring book said the US was doing to describe the conflict in Vietnam as a battle between good and evil. At about 6:40 they talk about 'The Communist Leader' Ho Chi Min who 'Plays the kindly, smiling grandfather, but behind the smile is a mind which is planning a reign of terror in South Vietnam.'.

It contrasts this by talking about how great and free, and peaceful South Vietnam is. Reading the Herring book we saw that it was anything but, the Diem regime was waging bloody war with the local gangs and brutally oppressing their own people, while in the north the Communist party undertook some brutalities, but eventually drew back from that, while the South continued to escalate and spiral into a more and more corrupt and dictatorial regime.

The video aims to paint the conflict in simple black and white, and uses emotional appeals to stop communism and stop the slaughter of the innocents seen in the video. Looking back we know that it was a political concern that brought us there, and kept us there: fear of communism. The video goes on to portray South Vietnam as a producer of many vital goods, which it was, but that wasn't the main reason that the North sought reunification, instead it was the fierce nationalism and pride that the Vietnamese harbor for their country, but this is not touched on in the video, at least not concerning how the North is portrayed.

Sum of ratings:3 (1) 3

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Re: Portrayal of North Vietnam vs South Vietnam

by Robert Johnson – Friday, October 9, 2015, 9:22 PM

I would have to agree with you on everything.

There is no lack of contrast between the Herring book, and the *Why Vietnam?' clip*. The clip does seem like a one sided propaganda add, trying to sell U.S. support of South Vietnam, and the war against communism. Paints a real pretty picture of what they (U.S. Govt.) wanted South Vietnam to look like here at home and abroad. Interesting though, what I read about this type of support in the Herring book.

Under the title heading *NATION BUILDING IN SOUTH VIETNAM,* Herring book p.68; it is mentioned that for the preservation of an independent South Vietnam, the U.S. supported it lavishly.

I would say that the *Why Vietnam?'* clip is a good example that lavishness.

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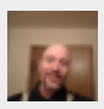

Going South

by Robert Johnson – Friday, October 9, 2015, 5:32 PM

After the Geneva cease-fire, Diem had U.S. support to accommodate all the thousands of North Vietnamese fleeing south to escape harassment, and communist rule. (Herring book, p.62)

The *Why Vietnam* video covers this refugee situation, at about 5.5 minutes from the beginning. It shows real life visual images of all those people fleeing from the north.

I feel like the book and the video's information regarding these refugee's was fairly close to being the same, although I think the Herring book was more descriptive. However, I did notice a small difference between the two sources on their numbers. The video says there were over 1 million refugees, the Herring book claims only 800,000.

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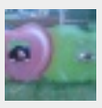

Migration Discrepency

by Ken Barrett – Sunday, October 11, 2015, 1:52 PM

The migration numbers show the difference between an educational book and a propaganda video. Math can't be perfect on counting people that were migrating because the lack of border controls and the actual logistics it would take to set up such an administration in the terrain of Vietnam would have been enormous. Some probably took cars and vehicles, but a lot were farmers that had no need for vehicles, especially not enough that would fit the entire family. Vietnam is very close-knit with grandparents to grandchildren all living under the same roof. Neither the video or book really do justice to the long journey it would take to travel South. The discrepancy of numbers is general census numbers with the video erring on the side that favors its propaganda direction.

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Sum of ratings:2 (1) 2

Showcasing America to the Rescue

by Robert Johnson – Saturday, October 10, 2015, 1:42 PM

According to the clip from *Why Vietnam?,* it seems rather obvious this film was created with the purpose of convincing America that our help was needed in South Vietnam. America needed to help squash and conquer the spread of evil communism, rebuild, teach, and support free South Vietnam.

From start to finish this clip I think is intended to not only answer the question- *Why Vietnam?,* it also attempts to justify Americas presence and efforts in Vietnam. America to the call of rescue in 1961, (video time 12:40). Although I see a different perspective in the video than I do in the Herring book, one thing both sources have in common is the need and, or use of American Aid. However the difference here is the video claims the need, whereas in relation the Herring book explains the details of how it was wastefully used.

Examples:

In the video there is mention of U.S. dollars being spent in Vietnam, such as the footage in 1954 when Eisenhower pledged economic aid to South Vietnam, at about mid-point of the video (Video time 7:33). Related to this from the Herring book, from 1955 to 1960 the U.S gave over $1.5 billion in economic and military aid to South Vietnam, in order to assist them in becoming a nation strong enough to resist aggression through military means, p. 69-70.

In the Video; with American economic aid, the south began to prosper, and there was hope for peace, (Video time 8:11). Related to this from Herring book, the U.S forked out over $127 million in direct economic assistance, p. 73.

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Re: Showcasing America to the Rescue

by Brady Goodman – Saturday, October 10, 2015, 9:45 PM

I agree with you on the video, Why Vietnam. It does seem like they put it together not only to make them understand, but to make them believe they needed to be there. I didn't really get that until you pointed it out, but it makes sense now. The book goes into much more detail about our financial aid then the video. U.S. gave France $150 million in new aid after they demanded it (30). France looked at the U.S. as a checkbook with unlimited funds available.

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Why Vietnam? and The Longest War ▶

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