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Vietnamization
 by [Joe Escobar](#) - Tuesday, 23 November 2010, 01:39 PM

- What problems surfaced to hamper efforts to conclude the war?
- Was President Nixon right in de-coupling Vietnamization and American troop withdrawals from negotiations or were the two strategies essential complements to each other?
- Similar to the accounts you've read in the Appy book, what effect do the statements made by former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara (from the 2003 documentary film Fog of War) have on your understanding of the war?
- What if LBJ or Nixon were still alive and had been filmed in a documentary similar to Fog of War? Would they be able to add to our understanding of the war? **(Be very careful on this one... Did you really learn *anything* from McNamara in the video? Why would you expect to learn more from a former president after the fact? Think Clinton. Think Bush.)**

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

 When addressing the questions, put something descriptive like "Problems", "Nixons Strategy", or "Robert McNamara" in the subject line of your post. DO NOT leave the subject line of your posts unchanged.

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Robert McNamara
 by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Monday, 22 November 2010, 05:06 PM

The statements made by former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara (from the 2003 documentary film Fog of War) is quite similar to the accounts read in the Appy book. We get a one-on-one story from the main person being questioned. I think I got a little better view of the war by him just by certain questions he did not want to answer about the war, questions such as, did you feel guilty about being any part of the war? do you feel responsible? questions like those he said he did not want to get into. I can imagine he knows much more than the public knows, and he doesn't want to get caught up in anything or say something he shouldn't.

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Re: Robert McNamara
 by [Jaymie Skeslien](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 10:53 AM

i agree with you.mcnarma did have similer accounts in the fog of war as in the appy book.

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Re: Robert McNamara
 by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 08:52 PM

I do not really feel like I learned a whole lot more about the war through McNamara though. I feel as though he was just talking and I didn't really get any more knowledge from it other than the fact of there being some things he did not want to talk about, which in my eyes could be something more to learn about, but he did not talk about it. So no, I did not necessarily learn anything new from the movie.

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Re: Robert McNamara
 by [Sheila Daughtry](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 10:35 PM

Kate-Thanks for pointing out his avoidance of discussion of what actually went on during the Vietnam war. I reviewed the film again and noticed a couple of times when McNamara made reference to "all he knew," but he did not see a point in discussing it further, he thought he would be misunderstood.

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Re: Robert McNamara

by [David Verner](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 11:27 AM

Had the same thoughts. I made the point in my other post about Nixon and LBJ that i felt we wouldn't have learnt anything much more had they been alive to speak, and thats the same thing here with McNamara.

In my opinion, and im sure most would agree, there is probably many things about the Vietnam war that we do not know - and we may never know - that McNamara may well know some of them. But regardless of time gone by since the war, things that are hidden behind the scenes would still create a lot of renewed controversy dependent on how damning it is.

So basically what was said in the program was a rehashing of what has been revealed already, especially what we have already seen in the Herring text. It wasn't completely unnecessary viewing though for me, as i do enjoy seeing the words spoken from them. You can gauge a lot about a person from the way they speak and their body-language, so it is always nice seeing a spoken interview. However, as far as new material goes - there was nothing really.

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Re: Robert McNamara

by [Kelley Allender](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 01:25 PM

I had a really similar response to watching the interview and I can only assume that if LBJ or Nixon were still alive to give an interview, they would take a similar approach. I was disappointed this he avoided the tough questions asked and when he did admit some mistakes being made or feelings of regret it seemed half-hearted.

I also agree that there is probably a lot about Vietnam that the American public will never know. As much as I find it frustrating to accept that, in some ways I also think it is probably for the best. Like the expression says, "ignorance is bliss". It is never my first choice to be ignorant on any topic, but seeing as how I dont think an abundance of new information about Vietnam will surface anytime soon we don't have much of a choice. As you said, enough if we did learn new information it would likely spark a controversy all over again, so for this reason it also may be better that those secrets stay buried.

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Re: Robert McNamara

by [Jaymie Skeslien](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 02:20 PM

i agree with you there was no materials that were new. but the interview was nice specally it being spoken. good job.

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Re: Robert McNamara

by [Jennifer Wilson](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 08:24 AM

McNamara is going to take the information he has about the war to his grave. i sounded to me like every thing he said was a rehearsed answer given to him by the government. i am sure that the information that we would like to hear is classified it would be interesting to see if he rights a book before he dies and call it the truth about Vietnam.

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Rate... **Re: Robert McNamara**by [Jaymie Skeslien](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 02:22 PM

yes i feel the same way i do to feel that he was being told what to say.

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Rate... **LBJ or Nixon**by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Monday, 22 November 2010, 05:09 PM

I think if either of he two, LBJ or Nixon were still alive and participated in a documentary similar to Fog of War I think we would be able to get some more knowledge or understanding of the war, but I feel like it may not be the best knowledge. I think they would maybe try and say more to make themselves still look good and maybe not bring out the dirty truths that nobody knows that they do. I think it would definitely be interesting to watch and see how their character and personality is to this day and to just see what they have to say about the war years after.

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Rate... **Re: LBJ or Nixon**by [Justin White](#) - Tuesday, 23 November 2010, 12:43 PM

I agree that if Nixon or LBJ were still alive today and could get a chance to be in a documentary and talk about the years after the war we could definetly get alot more knowledge and a better understanding of why they made the decisions they did. If either of those two knew what we know now about the war and the decisions that they made I bet that they would admit to some of their mistakes, but of course it easier to see what was done wrong after the fact.

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Rate... **Re: LBJ or Nixon**by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 04:15 PM

That's very true to admit after the fact, But I also think that they would not let some information out on some of the secret knowledge fo the war out that may have happened or certain decisions that may have gone down. But I think they would be great videos and interviews.

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Rate... **Re: LBJ or Nixon**by [Daniel Bonner](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 08:31 PM

Justin,

I to am quite certain that if either President Johnson or President Nixon were alive we could get a different insight on the Vietnam War and the decisions that were made by them. Also as you mentioned it is much easier to see what was done wrong after the fact. That is why it would be so nice to get their perspective on the war after it had ended, when their is no consequence for the decisions that have already been made. Then they would be able talk a bit more candidly.

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Rate... **Re: LBJ or Nixon**by [Sheila Daughtry](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 10:44 PM

Daniel-After reviewing the "Fog of War" film again, I noticed how McNamara did a superb job of avoiding the questions. He had nothing to lose at this point in his career and he chose not to shed any light about the Vietnam war. I think Nixon and LBJ would have avoided any sort of public acknowledgment of what actually

happened and what they would have done differently.

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Re: LBJ or Nixon

by [Daniel Bonner](#) - Thursday, 25 November 2010, 11:40 AM

Shelia, You are absolutely right, In fact I replied to another thread on the forum mentioning the fact that McNamara was eluding the majority of the questions, just like a good politician does, but I still feel just seeing his body language and emotions helps us to gain some insight

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Re: LBJ or Nixon

by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Friday, 26 November 2010, 10:49 PM

I think you have a great point, but I still think they would find a way to weasel out of the questions they would not like to answer that may be looked down upon.

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Re: LBJ or Nixon

by [Tracy Allen](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 06:00 PM

Daniel

I don't really think that we would get a new insight on the Vietnam war if LBJ or Nixon were alive mostly by looking at their past actions that we have already read about in the books assigned in this class. LBJ did not want to look like Truman and be accused of "losing Vietnam" like Truman had "lost China". Nixon was afraid to be like LBJ and Truman, especially since he had been one of the leading Republicans who had denounced Truman. Both men were paranoid and insecure about their Presidency. I doubt that we could get anything new out of them because people do not change. A slight in the past would still feel like a slight now, to either of them. I mean, Nixon created the "plumbers" to deal with Daniel Ellsberg after he had released the Pentagon Papers. Papers that has nothing at all to do with Nixon.

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Re: LBJ or Nixon

by [Jaymie Skeslien](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 10:55 AM

I feel that the knowledge could have been better in the fog of war.

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Re: LBJ or Nixon

by [Tracy Allen](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 08:37 PM

It would be interesting to see a modern day interview from either LBJ or Nixon and then compare it to their past speeches. To know more about their inner stresses and their true feelings about the war. But maybe they would avoid answering those questions like McNamara. His avoidance about guilt I found odd because of the entry in one of the past chapters of the Patriots book. In it a woman who had lost her son wrote a letter to McNamara and he told her how sorry he was. I don't have my book on me at the moment, so does anyone know the entry I am talking about?

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**Re: LBJ or Nixon**by [Jaymie Skeslien](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 02:24 PM

i agree i think nixon and lbj would have made more since and explained it alot better. in there speaches then the ones that spoke in the fog of war.

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**Re: LBJ or Nixon**by [Kelley Allender](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 01:31 PM

I agree with you that while they may admit to making some mistakes or having regret over certain issues, I think they would prioritize portraying themselves in the most favorable light possible. It would be really interesting to me to see just how much they are actually willing to divulge. I wonder if a stubborn, hard-headed man like LBJ would finally have reached his breaking point if he were still alive today. Although he never officially admitted that some of his decisions were mistakes or that he regretted them, I have to think that he felt an immense personal responsibility and maybe even guilt for many of the lives lost. That's a lot of weight for someone to carry on their shoulders. So it would be interesting to see him give an interview almost 40 years after the war ended and see if he would be able to admit some wrongdoing and/ or responsibilty for the lives lost or if he would stick to the positions that he took on the war while he was still in office.

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**Re: LBJ or Nixon**by [Jesse Long](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 05:50 PM

I agree that if they were willing to be honost and open up about things we could really learn a lot. I do however think that since they are poloticians they would try to protect there image and not reveal any truths that could put them in bad light, but it would be interesting to speak with them if it were possible.

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**Problems**by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Monday, 22 November 2010, 05:15 PM

Some problems that surfaced to hamper the efforts to conclude the war were that North Vietnam was rejecting certain policies and initiatives America was trying to make in the peace side of things. Our first defeat would cause a decrease in confidence from the people towards American leadership throughout the world. If we were to just give up and leave the communist could easily take over because the south was so weak. We could not just give up and leave right away, there were things that needed to be taken care of first. These are some problems that took effect in concluding the war.

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**Re: Problems**by [Tracy Allen](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 08:45 PM

North Vietnam did reject every proposal sent out by the United States. They would not negotiate and "they demand our unconditional acceptance of their terms, which are that we withdraw all American forces immediately and unconditionally and that we overthrow the Government of South Vietnam as we leave." That is an excerpt from Nixon's address in 1969 in the class handouts. I found it to be eloquently worded and thought I would share.

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**Nixon's strategy**by [Tracy Allen](#) - Monday, 22 November 2010, 08:29 PM

First I just have to note the irony in Nixons address to the American public in November of 1969. He called the war in Vietnam Nixons war.

Now on to his policy in Vietnam after his inauguration; it sounds like a good idea. Slowly remove American troops from Vietnam while training the South Vietnamese ARVN to replace them. Eventually leaving the fate of the South in their own hands. After "four" years, of declared war, South Vietnam was going to have to fight the war. Instead of the U.S.A fighting it for them. I am not implying that they could not fight it own their own but am referring back to Nixons address where he admonishes the american public for being the do-it-yourself people that we are.

Three principles were outlined in the Nixon Doctrine; the U.S. was going to keep to its treaty promises, they would provide a shield from "nuclear powers" to allies or other nations deemed vital to security and finally "in cases involving other types of aggression, we shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested in accordance with our treaty commitments. But we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense"(Nixons address class handouts). This was to be his policy for Vietnam. And his reduction of American troops did lead to less casualties in the field. Even with the reduction in troops and the increase of training and equipment for the ARVN I think Nixon moved too fast for South Vietnam. Instead of strengthening the government and the army, allowing them to protect themselves, these new policies led to confusion. After all of this time the ARVN was used to American reinforcements, almost dependent upon them. People would look around and wonder "Where are the Americans?"

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Re: Nixon's strategy

by [Justin White](#) - Tuesday, 23 November 2010, 04:26 PM

In the Appy book (pg497) Frank Snepp a CIA operative and intelligence analyst talks about the morale and extreme corruption in the South Vietnamese army. "I believed the South Vietnamese had plenty of material on the ground to hold the line but their commanders were stashing it away in the rear to sell for their own profit." Unfortunately until the corruption was weeded out of the South's Government there would have been no chance to gain stability for them (In my opinion). So in short I definitely agree that Nixon moved to quick for South Vietnam, the corruption had to be dealt with.

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Re: Nixon's strategy

by [Samantha Mccourt](#) - Tuesday, 23 November 2010, 07:00 PM

I agree completely with you Justin. I think Nixon's ideas are made out to seem a lot worst then they really were. From all the readings its clear that you are right, corruption of the South Vietnamese government had always been what made it hard for them to govern themselves and the longer that America stayed involved, the longer they would have to deal with this. He was correct in choosing to get out of Vietnam, there was no way to win this war the way that South Vietnam wanted, because America couldn't govern for them and when left they couldn't either.

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Re: Nixon's strategy

by [Tracy Allen](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 06:11 PM

South Vietnam was indeed very corrupt. There was really no way to deal with it either except completely taking over the country ourselves. Which is not what we wanted and it wouldnt have worked in the long run either. Each time a corrupt official was replaced a worse one took his position. Thieu took aid for his country and didn't listen to the advice given by the Americans. He was one of the main reasons that the peace treaty in 1972. Kissinger had been secretly negotiating with the North Vietnamese for awhile and finally got conditions to a point where they and the United States could agree on some major issues (311), but Thieu would have none of it. Nixon took his refusal as a chance to remind Kissinger of his rank and avoid the chances of the peace treaty being called a political ploy for his reelection.

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**Re: Nixon's strategy**by [Jaymie Skeslien](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 10:58 AM

i have to say that i think nixon went a little far.

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**problems**by [Justin White](#) - Tuesday, 23 November 2010, 12:37 AM

Problems that surfaced to hamper efforts to conclude the war was the North's inability to come to a peaceful compromise with the United States. They refused to settle for anything less than full independence for their country. In my opinion I believe that as long as there were foreign invaders in their country the fight would not stop from the North Vietnamese. From what I have read from the Appy book, even the South Vietnamese resented the fact that the Americans were in their country and many of them would desert to fight for the north to fight alongside the communist because in some of their minds at least the communist North were Vietnamese fighting, and not puppets of the Americans.

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**Re: problems**by [Samantha Mccourt](#) - Tuesday, 23 November 2010, 06:33 PM

I agree with your opinion, honestly I have gotten the felling from the first hand accounts that both the north and south were becoming fed up with American participation in their war. This said I do think that not all of the Vietnamese in the south would simply desert from the communists, because I do think that they must have had some belief in the anti-communist movement or else they would have stopped fighting earlier in the war. I don't think that the south necessarily wanted the north to just take over because in essence they would still be ruled under a government over shadowed by another countries rule, because the communists were closely allied with the Russians who were supplying them with weapons and support, though of course to a much lesser extent than the Americans were to the south.

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**Re: problems**by [Tracy Allen](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 08:55 PM

Not all South Vietnamese hated the Americans presence but it is true that many of them did. There were some who were proud to fight for their country and were as afraid of the Communists as we were. Also when the Communists did take over in 1975 there were many South Vietnamese who fled the country. In Chapter five there was the dentist who brought his chair with him on the boat.

The North's inability or refusal to accept anything but complete independence was one of the biggest problems to ending the war peacefully and pulling out was a good choice for the Nixon administration. There were thousands of deserters from the ARVN, anyone could have been a communist, there was increasing division at home over the war, soldiers were acting out and losing faith in the government and the South Vietnamese government was still unstable.

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**Re: problems**by [Sheila Daughtry](#) - Thursday, 25 November 2010, 10:33 PM

Great post Tracy! I think you are right on with North Vietnam's government refusal to accept anything but complete independence.

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**Re: problems**by [Kelley Allender](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 01:33 PM

You make a great point about how many South Vietnamese fled the country because they feared the Communist rule. It reminds me of World War II when so many people fled from Germany to escape Hitler and his army.

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**Re: problems**by [Tikoya Wiget](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 04:47 PM

I completely agree with you. The North was unwilling to accept anything but complete independence. Because of this Nixon's choice of withdrawal was the best situation. Yes the South was still unstable, but staying there longer would have done nothing more to help them. They would have continued to depend on us.

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**Re: problems**by [Jesse Long](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 05:54 PM

I agree with you completely. The Vietnamese people are very patriotic and are willing to die before giving up their country. They will stick together and fight no questions asked, and because of this I don't think they would have ever stopped fighting until they were all done in.

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**Problems**by [Samantha Mccourt](#) - Tuesday, 23 November 2010, 06:53 PM

There were many problems that surfaced which hinder America in their efforts to end the war in a timely matter. The first was the fact that the North Vietnamese were not willing to negotiate peace treaties in Paris. They were unwilling to hear any kinds of peace talks from the Americans until they had fully withdrawn their troops from the south. They said that they would be willing to sit in their chairs until they rotted in order to wait for this to happen. The north hoped that failing public opinion the war from the American people would help this to happen faster. (Herring, 278). The second biggest issue that the American government faced was the ever mounting discontent from the war in their own country. In Nixon's speech he addressed the fact that he understood the people's want for immediate withdrawal, but knew that it wasn't possible. He said that they could not simply pull out and leave the South Vietnamese who had been their allies for so many years. He knew that being loyal to their allies was important to American foreign policy, and leaving without any aid left behind would be a disloyal act and show that they were not good allies. (<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3401804843.html>)

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**Re: Problems**by [Daniel Bonner](#) - Thursday, 25 November 2010, 12:57 AM

It seems to me that in chapter five in *patriots* in the section titled *Paris* many of the accounts suggest that one of the major problems was all of the countries to reach an agreement on some of the simplest things. For instance, one account states, "Saigon would not have to sign that page since they refused to appear on the on the same page with the Provisional Revolutionary Government." To me this seems so juvenile, it is no wonder the peace talks lasted nearly five years. The second complication that you addressed is also critical and I imagine it was difficult to withdraw effectively with America's overall disapproval of the war as well as Vietnamization not going so smoothly either.

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**Re: Problems**by [Samantha Mccourt](#) - Friday, 26 November 2010, 12:49 PM

It is extremely juvenile in my opinion as well, it seems like they could have come to some agreement, but North Vietnam was simply not willing to think that there could be any views except their own. Yeah, when your own country is against a war your fighting it makes it difficult to get out effectively. I mean you see now with Iraq and Afghanistan, people hate the war and want it to end but there isn't an easy way to do that. Eventually they will probably leave in much the same way, because politics plays a huge part in any conflict.

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Re: Problems

by [Todd Lowry](#) - Friday, 26 November 2010, 02:11 PM

This can be looked at from another perspective as well. I see North Vietnam's reluctance to make any concessions as a brilliant strategy. One that in the end actually worked. The reason the north first stalled the talks in the beginning was to wait out the end of Johnson's administration. Nixon, rather than pull out of Vietnam, continued with the hope for an independent South Vietnam using many of the same policies as the former administration. All the while, the concessions America was willing to give the north grew. Not only that, Saigon was well aware of the divisiveness within Nixon's administration, the mounting public protest against the war, and the fact that Nixon no longer enjoyed the support of Congress.

If they waited and did nothing in Paris, they would have time to rebuild and organize their weakened forces to continue the fight. By stalling the peace talks they were also given concessions by Nixon that Johnson would never have considered. By stalling and waiting further, they could sit back and watch America tear itself apart from the inside and were nearly assured of getting the American pullout from Vietnam they had been insisting on.

In my opinion, the North won huge victories by doing nothing, or giving nothing in Paris. It was an incredibly impressive and fruitful strategy for the northern government.

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Re: Problems

by [Samantha Mccourt](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 04:09 PM

I think your right, the North did win a huge victory. It does seem like this was some sort of strategy to stall and eventually make the American's leave. It really was well thought out, because sadly it worked. In the end the North was always going to win out, because it seems to me that they were always more organized and well formulated than the south, who were only making it because of American involvement.

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Re: Problems

by [Tracy Allen](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 06:20 PM

Well they did make a concession, they agreed to two rectangular tables and a circular table in between during peace talks. Of course that was during LBJ's time. I agree that the North Vietnamese were much better about waiting us out. That's why Nixon hated taking troops out of there because he felt that he was giving in to the Communist forces and letting them win. Yet it was the only way to keep the peace at home, or at least to keep there from being any more accidents during protests. Like the ones at Kent State.

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Problems

by [Raina Kelley](#) - Tuesday, 23 November 2010, 07:10 PM

Some of the problems that surfaced to hamper efforts to conclude the war are the North Vietnamese's unwillingness to compromise and except the United States offers, the United States not wanting to look weak in the world wide view, and making sure the South Vietnamese could stand alone and have some chance continuing the fight against the North. It was important to the North Vietnamese to get total independence and be their own country. However, the United States needed to make some kind of a stand after the four years of war and all the lives lost. It was important to the United States not to have a poor reputation in the eyes of the rest of the world. The South had become so dependent on the United States that if they were to just pull out it would leave the South in bad shape, therefore it was important to continue some aid to the South so they could eventually stand on their own.

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Re: Problems

by [Benjamin Trautman](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 04:43 PM

Good points. I do agree that because of the United States sacrifices they made, had a responsibility to at least aid the South after we started to withdraw troops. Though technically it may have not been our war to fight, but rather we fought for the cause. This trend seems to follow the U.S. in many wars, being a guardian to those in need.

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Nixon's strategy

by [Samantha Mccourt](#) - Tuesday, 23 November 2010, 07:19 PM

I think that the the two strategies are essential to one another. Obviously the American people wanted the troops to be taken out of Vietnam immediately, but the fact of the matter was that they had been deeply involved in the governing and fighting in Vietnam for essentially the last 25 years. This meant that they couldn't simply walk away without any regards to the people they had been attempting to support. It was obvious that without aid it would be difficult for South Vietnam to win against the north. For this reason America had to keep troops there long enough to train them, and help keep them armed in order to help them win and not allow a victory for communism. Nixon very much wanted the war stopped, just as the American people did, he is quoted to say "I'm not going to end up like LBJ, holed up in the White House afraid to show my face on the street. I'm going to stop that war. Fast." (Herring, 273). He still knew that leaving in the right way was important and that leaving the Vietnamese completely unprepared would result in a loss. He didn't involve these pieces in negotiations because they didn't have anything to do with the North Vietnamese, had they been willing to find a peaceful agreement than America would have no reason to continue aiding South Vietnam.

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Re: Nixon's strategy

by [Tracy Allen](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 09:01 PM

I agree with you Samantha. Except I think Nixon took the troops out too fast and the ARVN were not prepared. It became a sink or swim situation and they sank.

The removal of troops (when it would happen) was not involved in the negotiatons because if the North knew when the troops were leaving they could halt activities until that time. And if the American public knew what the number of troop removals was supposed to be and it didn't happen or more were sent in then Nixon would be in even more hot water at home.

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Re: Nixon's strategy

by [Samantha Mccourt](#) - Friday, 26 November 2010, 12:53 PM

I think that the fact that when we America left ARVN wasn't prepared just shows that America should have left earlier. There was no reason why they should not have been more prepared with years of fighting, its simply because they were relying on American soldiers to fight their war and when they were left on their own they couldn't do it. I'm not Nixon's hugest fan, but I do give him credit for getting out of a clearly losing battle that America had been sunk to deep into by the previous presidents.

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Rate... **Re: Nixon's strategy**by [Jaymie Skeslien](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 02:26 PM

yes they should have been more prepared for this, i mean all the years of war and fighting you would think they would have been prepared for all this.

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I think Nixon allowed the publics opinion to push him around. He should not have tried to stop the war fast because he would have lost everything (and he did). I think Nixon got carried away with the removal of troops.

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I think it would have been a fool's errand to continue fighting, they had been stuck in South Vietnam's civil war for years and the fact that when they left it all fell apart is farther proof that America needed to leave, clearly they were fighting to keep alive a government that would never be able to run itself and wasn't stable enough. South Vietnam needed to fight by themselves to win, or else they would never stand on their own. Nixon pulled out because the people wanted it, but also because America didn't need to continue to be involved. The South Vietnamese government didn't trust America and was corrupt, when nothing was able to be decided with the north there was really nothing more America could have done to ensure a victory without years of more fighting.

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In a way though America was responsible for the Civil war in Vietnam, we stepped in to protect a country from a nuclear power and it came to all of this. Lives lost on both sides, massive destruction of Vietnam and billions of dollars spent. They depended upon on us, because we enabled them too.

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Robert McNamara's account in the 2003 documentary "Fog of War" was obviously similar to the stories that we have read in Appy's book. He knows that hind sight is 20-20, after living through the war already he can see that many things which occurred during that time were horrible, though he still has trouble admitting this in a way because of how involved he was in it. My understanding was changed a little by his interpretation of events and how he still talks about the war. He seemed to regret the way which the war was fought at times, such when he was talking about Agent Orange and how he would never have let it be used if he had known, of course he than goes on to defend that he doesn't even think he did authorize this. I think the biggest impact in my understanding of the war is the things that he wasn't willing to say. He still isn't willing to say certain things, which just shows how much still isn't really known about the policies and the goings on during Vietnam if he is still unwilling to fully open up about what happened during that time.

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I think that Nixon had some very hard decisions to make as to how to get the United States out of Vietnam. I think it was essential to help the South Vietnamese get on their feet. It seems like the war is a total waste if they didn't try to at least leave it in a way that maybe the South could defeat the North on their own. However, it was also important to start getting the troops out of Vietnam. There had been enough years, money, and lives spent on the war. I also think the American public were demanding swift action. Nixon had a lot to consider at that point. His decision may not have been perfect but with all things considered I think he did his best. Something had to be done and Nixon was the one to do it.

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Re: Nixon's strategy

by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 04:11 PM

Nixon was the one to do it, but also the war was ending. The South obviously couldn't have even put up a fight and we did help them get on their feet, but I feel that they were still lost soldiers and weren't really fighting their own war as much as they should have. Nixon's decision was probably a better decision that could have been made, but there may have been better ways of going about it.

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Re: Nixon's strategy

by [Raina Kelley](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 01:04 PM

Kate,

I agree that there may have been better decisions that could have been made, however I think anyone could say that about any decision. I think the United States made the mistake of getting way too involved and took over the war effort. It made it seem like the South was simply a puppet of the United States. The United States taking so much into their own hands to me, seemed to have only weakened the South further. They started to depend too much on the United States and thus resulted in them unable to keep the North out after the United States started to pull out.

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Re: Nixon's strategy

by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 08:41 PM

That is true we can say that about any decision, but like you said, we did make the mistake of getting way too involved in the war and they were super dependent on us.

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Re: Robert McNamara

by [David Ross](#) - Tuesday, 23 November 2010, 07:46 PM

The statements made in the McNamara video don't really change my understanding of the war. The facts of the war will forever be unchanged and the reasons that we went to war will always be the same. The video however does give me insight into the thought processes of our leaders at the time. At one point in the video Mr. McNamara is talking about the use of agent orange and in effect says that because agent orange wasn't illegal it wasn't wrong to use it even knowing what the effects of it were. It seems to me that that was a lot of the type of thought at the time. Many of our leaders thought that they could get away with something so it was ok, that thought was demonstrated with the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and then again later in watergate, although Nixon did get caught in that he thought he could get away with it so why not.

McNamara goes on to admit that there were mistakes made but some of these were pretty obvious mistakes, like agent orange and a bombing campaign that lasted 3 years and produced no results. We may never know what was really going through his head, what he really felt about what was going on in Vietnam. At the end of the video he said he didn't want to talk about it any more for the risk of opening up a huge can of worms so there are probably many things that Mr. McNamara will take to the grave with him such as his private feelings on certain topics but in the end it is all opinion and conjecture, it doesn't change the facts of what happened.

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**Re: Robert McNamara**by [Justin White](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 03:31 PM

I agree with you completley, the facts of why we went into the war will never change, no matter what anyone says after the fact. We will never Know the true thought process that went on in McNamara's head.

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**Re: Robert McNamara**by [Tracy Allen](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 06:50 PM

I happened to be looking at the Kim Phuc photograph when Mcnamara voiced his opinion on agent orange. It's not illegal so it was pretty much okay to use it in the field. Well that screaming little girl would say differently. AS the caption says it appears that she has forgiven, at least the soldiers, for the harm that was done to her.

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**LBJ or Nixon**by [Samantha Mccourt](#) - Tuesday, 23 November 2010, 07:56 PM

I don't think I can truly say that I learned many definitive from the interviews by McNamara. He wasn't very willing to open up with tons of details, because he mostly seemed concerned about preserving his own image. It would obviously be very interesting to hear comments in hindsight to the war from either LBJ or Nixon because they were both so incredibly integral to the way that the war progressed. I think it would be interesting to see if either of them was willing to admit to the places they were wrong, or to give some clarity to the policies they instated. I do think that as politicians they would still stand by what they did, even in hindsight an ex-leader would not want to seem like they didn't know what they were doing, even if what they did wasn't necessarily good for the war in the long run. That said they probably could have added to my understanding of the war, they incredibly entrenched in the decisions that lead the war, and thus they both obviously could shed new light on the debates surrounding the war.

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**Robert McNamara**by [Raina Kelley](#) - Tuesday, 23 November 2010, 08:02 PM

I think the effects of statements made by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and the personal accounts of the war in the Appy book help me understand the war more because I get to think more about what it was like to be there. Watching the documentary film Fog of War helped me to more fully understand what the government officials were going through. The hard decisions they had to make and what some of the pressures were for them. Most of the personal accounts of the war have been from soldiers, generals, reporters, playboy girls, etc. So it was interesting to hear of a man who made some very huge and critical decisions talk about his experiences. I liked that McNamara said that he was proud of what he did for his country even though he knows he made some mistakes. He spoke of now having hind sight and how much that changes the way things look. I liked that in that moment he seemed very humble.

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**LBJ or Nixon**by [Raina Kelley](#) - Tuesday, 23 November 2010, 08:11 PM

I think that it would have been interesting to see LBJ or Nixon in a documentary film like Fog of War. I like to see everyone's perspective, especially since I was not personally there. I think there could be more light shed on the war and it would help with a deeper understanding of the war. I also realize though that even still only so much information would be shared. As McNamara mentioned it is the feeling that they are damned if they do and damned if they don't. I think there are certain things about this war that will never be open for the public to view. However, I still think hearing certain things from them would be useful in understanding everything that went on in the Vietnam war. But, I also think that they may not be so willing to share too much as now that hind sight is a factor.

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**Re: LBJ or Nixon**by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 04:07 PM

I could definitely agree with you on the fact that there are just some things LBJ or Nixon or people such like McNamara who has seen or known certain things that we will never know. It will be a big secret for us for all we know. But it would be interesting to see them and hear them speak about it once again, I love to put a more visual side to a person after hearing and reading about them for so long. See how they are afterward and what they would be like now!

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**Re: LBJ or Nixon**by [Raina Kelley](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 01:07 PM

Kate,

Yes I agree it is always nice to see someone more "in person" on a movie or something because it allows you to see their mannerisms and such that you can only see so well in your own mind when you read about them. I think there would be a lot that would be kept secret but like you I would like to just seem them speak of these historical events. It would be interesting to see their reactions to some of the things they could be asked.

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**Re: LBJ or Nixon**by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 08:43 PM

That would be interesting to see their reactions to some of the things they could be asked, I bet in videos such as the fog video there was a lot said that was cut out that we couldn't see.

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**Problems**by [Sheila Daughtry](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 01:47 AM

The first problem that came to mind for me was power. Nixon and Kissenger were more concerned with their own obsessions, "...they shared a love of power and a burning ambition to mold a fluid world in a way that would establish their place in history" Herring (p272).

The North Vietnamese and the South Vietnamese people had been fighting this battle for far too long than to allow this latest American leader to dictate what would become of their land.

I also think the overthrow of Cambodia's neutralist Prince Sihanouk, and Nixon's decision to send American troops into Cambodia furthered the delay in concluding the war, as well as fanning the flames of the anti-war movement.

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**Nixon's Strategy**by [Sheila Daughtry](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 01:46 AM

No! I struggle with the concept of "negotiations" since the South Vietnamese government did not have a say in the decision or planning of the Vietnamization and Thieu "bitterly" opposed the withdraw of U.S. troops. (Herring p. 283)

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**Re: Nixon's Strategy**by [Samantha McCourt](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 02:03 PM

That may be true, but honestly South Vietnam shouldn't have had any say in the troop withdrawal, it wasn't their troops and America could pull out at anytime. It was a civil war, and of course America shouldn't have been involved in the first place, but they had to get out at some point. Nixon was extreme that is true, but he was trying to get out because it was what Americans wanted and it was becoming hopeless for America to stay.

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Re: Nixon's Strategy

by [Sheila Daughtry](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 10:59 PM

Good point Samantha. The South Vietnamese government should not have a say as to when the U.S. would withdraw their troops. But I also think that with all the havoc the U.S. participated in over the years, a different approach may have been warranted.

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Re: Nixon's Strategy

by [Todd Lowry](#) - Friday, 26 November 2010, 10:45 AM

I'm not so sure that the southern government should not have had a say in when the U.S. withdrew its troops. America had taken control of the war and had largely waged it with no regard for Thieu's opinions or decisions. When Nixon shifted to the policy of having Vietnam take over responsibility for providing the manpower for the war, I think Thieu should have had some say as to the timetable for U.S. troop withdrawal. I think the U.S. should have worked with Thieu and his government to time the U.S. withdrawal to match the south's readiness to take the reigns, instead of dictating policy to them.

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Re: Nixon's Strategy

by [Samantha McCourt](#) - Friday, 26 November 2010, 12:58 PM

A different approach could have been helpful obviously, but we probably think that because we weren't living in that time. With all the protesting of the American people and the failing peace talks with the North I don't blame them for just wanting to get out. It was also becoming more obvious that the south wasn't particularly governable, they hadn't shown any signs of stability and it didn't seem like America being involved was helping the south find a way to govern itself.

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Robert McNamara

by [Sheila Daughtry](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 02:14 AM

McNamara confirmed for me how complicated war is and how easy it is to get caught up in it all, follow orders, and think at the time you are doing what is right for your cause. The phrase he fondly refers to "fog of war" sums up for me that you do not have a clear sight as to what is actually going on, you are indeed in a "fog".

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Re: Robert McNamara

by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 04:04 PM

I could imagine being in a war and certain circumstances to where the "fog of war" idea comes in part. Your there doing what your supposed to be doing, but there in that moment a lot of people probably didn't have to time to actually stop and think what was happening, the fog was there, it was blurry at the moment.

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**Re: Robert McNamara**by [Tracy Allen](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 09:08 PM

The "fog of war", it's poetic and scary at the same time, isn't it? It is a term found in many memoirs or books written about wars, just in different words. However, using cancerous and horrible chemicals on people and then arguing about whether or not you actually ordered it to happen, is something that is hard for me to understand. Before this clip and the Appy entries I thought, yeah we did some horrible things but we are sorry. I am beginning to think guilt and sorrow are completely different things.

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**Re: Robert McNamara**by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 08:45 PM

I think you brought up a good point about guilt and sorrow being different things, I could see that after reading certain stories in the Appy book and watching the films we have watched.

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**Re: Robert McNamara**by [Raina Kelley](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 01:12 PM

Sheila,

I also got more of a view on how complicated the war was from a political view. McNamara didn't fight on the front line but he was responsible for many of the decisions that were made about how to fight on the front line. I agree with you that it can be very hard to make a clear decision about so many important issues, thus you feel like you are in a "fog". I think it must be especially hard to know how many people have discussed the decisions you made in your past. I'm sure he has been met with a lot of negativity.

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**LBJ/Nixon**by [Sheila Daughtry](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 02:30 AM

I think they might have been able to shed some light as to complexity of the war. I do not think they would have cast themselves in an unfavorable light as to their roles in the Vietnam war.

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**Re: LBJ/Nixon**by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 04:01 PM

I agree, I think they may have shed some new light as to the complexity of the war. But I do not think we would learn a whole LOT more than what we already know.

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**Re: LBJ/Nixon**by [Jennifer Wilson](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 09:14 AM

this might only be because it is the president and he is the one that decides what information we are allowed to hear but for this reason they would just tell us information that we already know

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**Robert Mcnamara: Fog Of War**by [Todd Lowry](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 09:10 AM

Robert McNamara, in my opinion, did not really offer any new information about the war in his interview. He was, for the most part, defending his position and subsequent decisions during the war. It was interesting to hear him speak personally about his role in the Vietnam War, but he failed to give new insight into specific decisions he was responsible for. I found that disappointing. He talked about how he made mistakes during the war but was not specific about what those mistakes were.

Even when discussing Agent Orange, McNamara was unsure if its use was even his decision. Regardless, he concentrated on whether it was legal to use it, rather than if it was right to use it. Nor did he discuss how he might personally feel badly about the effects of the defoliant. Even with the benefit of hindsight, McNamara didn't seem to deviate significantly from defending, or justifying, his decisions during the war.

He was right that historians are interested in history instead of what might have been. I think that is how it should be. What he could have offered were specific examples of mistakes that were made, that he made, and insight into how those mistakes were made. Instead, he basically said everyone makes mistakes in war and lives are lost as a result. I think we all know that already. McNamara said, "...well, I know certain things..." the disappointment for me was that we may never know what those certain things are.

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Re: Robert Mcnamara: Fog Of War

by [Tracy Allen](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 09:09 PM

Your right, some how he managed to answer the questions without actually answering them.

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Re: Vietnamization

by [Jaymie Skeslien](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 10:51 AM

in the film fog of war was similar to the accounts that were said in the appy book. and robert mcnamara i feel really didnt give that much infomation out.

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LBJ and Nixon in a Documentary

by [Todd Lowry](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 11:05 AM

If Johnson and Nixon were alive today and were interviewed for a documentary like Fog of War, I think they would be able to shed considerable light on the war. I'm sure they both had information and insights about the war that could educate historians and the public about the war in a profound way. Unfortunately, I can't see either of these presidents speaking honestly and candidly enough to provide that insight. Both of these men were secretive and shrewd politicians. Many of the decisions about the war were made without even informing the government, much less the public. They both shared "...the Cold War dogma that national security was too important to be left to an ignorant public and a parochial and cumbersome Congress" (Herring, 272). Both of these Presidents were secretive, somewhat self-isolated and to an extent, paranoid. This would not have changed for an interview after their administrations ended. With the benefit of hindsight I think these characteristics would be even more pronounced.

Based on what I've learned in this class, history does not look kindly on the failed policies found in both these administrations. As a result, I think that the majority of any interview would be spent in defense of, or justification for their decisions. I think these explanations would be bases on what we already know, and rely on why those decisions were made based on the prevailing Cold War rhetoric of the time. Not on what we know now. Much like McNamara's interview, I honestly can't see Johnson or Nixon speaking freely and honestly about the War and their roles in it. Especially about mistakes or failed policies they made.

That's not to say I would not be extremely interested to watch such a documentary. I would love to see these Presidents interviewed about the war. I just don't think we would learn much more than we have. Not because they couldn't teach us more, but because they wouldn't teach us more.

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Rate... **Nixon's Strategy**by [Justin White](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 03:26 PM

I think that Nixon's strategies were essential compliments of each other. With all of the pressure from the American public Nixon had to begin withdrawing troops from Vietnam, in my opinion that would've been the only way to appease the people. Most Americans were tired of our boys dying over there and from all of the media coverage it probably didn't look like we were doing any good for the Vietnamese people anyway. All Americans wanted is to get our troops out of Vietnam I don't think they thought about all the South Vietnamese civilians that would be killed by the Vietcong after America left. And because of the disaster of an evacuation plan that was never set up by Nixon and his advisers we basically left the South Vietnamese that worked alongside the U.S Government out to be slaughtered. Also one huge problem that affected Nixon's Strategies was the corruption in South Vietnam. In the Appy book (pg497) Frank Snepp a CIA intelligence analyst and operative says that he believed that the South Vietnamese had plenty of supplies to hold the lines but there commanders were stashing the supplies away to be sold for their own profit. As long as this corruption was going on the war against the North was a futile effort for the South. (In my opinion)

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A big problem that surfaced when trying to conclude the Vietnam war was without a doubt the North's inability to come to an agreement with the United States. In fact it was a total rebelling against the idea of compromising with the United States. The Vietnamese people are strong and patriotic, so i believe that as long as there were foreign occupancies in their country they would not stop the fighting. I remember reading where in certain circumstances even the South Vietnamese would help fight with North. Cause i think when it came right down to it, many Vietnamese felt the the north and the south are the same people and they should fight together.

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One of the biggest problems definitely was that the North did not want to come to an agreement, Ho Chi Min totally turned down Nixon's peace letter and pretty much said to heck with it.

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When listening to Robert McNamara in the documentary "Fog of War" I noticed that his stories matched pretty close with the stories we have read in the appy book. He will tell about how many things that happened during the war were without a doubt wrong and terrible. I think he still has trouble with many things that went on and it is hard to admit to it because of knowing he was involved i believe. You notice how he didn't answer many of the questions asked in the interview, this caught my attention and made me think that there must be many things that still are not public knowledge about the war since he was so resistant to elaborating on many topics.

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I agree that McNamara did seem elude many of the questions that were asked, which is pretty much what I expect from any politician. It was nice to just see his demeanor throughout the film though. One thing he said that really caught my attention was his description of the Fog of War, he said, " War is so complex

its beyond the ability of the human mind to comprehend all the variables, our judgment, our understanding are not adequate and will kill people unnecessarily." I think this is a very valid statement, but wonder if he is merely saying it to bail himself out of some of the decisions he made.

Also you said in your post, "made me think that there must be many things that still are not public knowledge about the war." I also agree with that there is information being withheld because In 1963 when JFK was assassinated there was a file that was sealed and is supposed to be released 75 years after the date, this means that in 2029 when every one involved in the conspiracy is gone the file will be released. Knowing this leads me to believe there is perhaps more information out there that has either been destroyed or withheld.

(I don't have a source about the files, but perhaps someone in the class or Mr. Escobar can confirm that there are in fact sealed files containing information about the Assassination of JFK.)

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Re: Vietnamization

by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 04:00 PM

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I am not quite sure how I feel about his strategy whether I feel if he was right in doing the decisions he did or not, I feel that the two strategies do complement each other though because withdrawing troops automatically de-couples the Vietnamization. The south Vietnamese were weak, they cannot protect them selves and they depended on us. I certainly think that they did not appreciate America's help as much as they should have, so I look at it in a way that is was right, but at the same time there is always the "what if?" what if he did not withdrawal troops from the negotiations, would there have been a better outcome? We will never know, its done and over with.

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Nixon Strategy

by [Jesse Long](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 04:01 PM

Due to all the pressure from outraged Americans regarding the war Nixon had to one way or another start the withdrawing of the troops from Vietnam. The American people wanted withdrawal and that was it. I feel they failed to see the effect this withdrawal would have on many south Vietnamese people and soldiers who help the United States once we left. As other sated these soldiers and people would be left to be slaughtered, but because of our always negative media coverage what can one expect? So when we began to leave many did get slaughtered but i guess there is no easy way around a war.

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Re: Nixon Strategy

by [Raina Kelley](#) - Friday, 26 November 2010, 08:28 PM

I agree with you that Nixon felt like he needed to start withdrawing troops from Vietnam due mostly to the American public. The American public was fed up with everything that had gone on and they were demanding something to change. The South Vietnamese troops still needed our help but the United States had fought their war long enough. It was a tough decision and one what I think no matter which decision was made would be under harsh discussion.

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Re: Nixon Strategy

by [Tracy Allen](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 07:14 PM

"Why does my son have to die for your country?" that entry in the Patriots book hit me, and the speaker, hard. In the beginning of the war, Americans were proud to serve their country and help protect people in other countries. All of that began to change as the war rode on. It seperated families and created a gap between generations while at home the Civil Rights movement was at its peak. There was negative media coverage during the war but it only started after the Tet Offensive. There was a lot going on and the withdrawal of troops from Vietnam probably felt like

a safety valve. It meant things could improve. Granted I am just hypothesizing but its the feeling I got from some of the entries in the Patriots book.

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LBJ or Nixon

by [Jesse Long](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 04:10 PM

Because of the interview with McNamara i don't think that either one would be more concerned with answering questions than they would protecting there images and opinions. If they were however willing to answer honestly regarding the war in hindsight i think they could inform us of a lot of issues and questions that we would have. They could clarify why they did certain things, or why they instated certain polociies that we see now weren't great ideas. I would want to ask them if there was anything they would have done differently just to see if they would admit there wrong doings. So i do believe they could shed new light on the war if they were willing.

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Robert McNamara

by [Justin White](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 04:41 PM

Robert McNamara's statements in the documentary Fog of War did not change my opinion much, it did give me a little better understanding of how the decisions were made and what the thought process was. When McNamara chose not to answer questions about the war it shows to me that he definitely had some regrets about decisions that were made. It is much easier to look at decisions that were made in the past and say you could have done something different to change the outcome for the better. Overall I think the documentary was enlightening.

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Re: Robert McNamara

by [David Ross](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 02:11 PM

Justin,

I agree with you for the most part but I'm not sure that I would say he has any regrets, it seems to me that he was more concerned with someone digging in to much and there being more for him to answer for. It felt like he was trying to find vindication and those questions threatened that.

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Re: Vietnamization- PROBLEMS

by [Jairus Godeka](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 05:41 PM

Through the French intermediaries, Nixon conveyed a personal message to the North Vietnamese expressing his sincere desire for peace. As a first step, he proposed the mutual withdrawal of American and North Vietnamese troops from South Vietnam. To prove to Moscow and Hanoi that he (Nixon) meant business, He ordered intensive bombing attacks against North Vietnamese troops in neutral Cambodia. The objective was to limit North Vietnam's capacity to launch an offensive against the south. To avoid American bombs, the North Vietnamese troops moved deeper into Cambodian territory. This was the first challenge Nixon faced with his new plan to end the war
Nixon's secret diplomacy and implied military threats failed to wrench concessions from Hanoi....." From the North Vietnamese point of view, the president's proposals were no improvement over those of Johnson, and to have accepted them would have represented abandonment of goals for which they had been fighting for for nearly a quarter of a century
"....(Herring pp 227).

Nixon's peace proposals also failed to contain the opposition at home. When it was clear that there would be no breakthrough in Paris, public approval of the president's handling of the war dropped sharply. Anti-war protesters were another problem Nixon was faced with.

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Rate... **If LBJ or Nixon were alive.**by [David Verner](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 05:57 PM

I honestly do not believe that we would learn anything much more from LBJ if he were alive UNLESS his attitude had changed. It's all a matter of personality here, and thus we can't truly judge too much on what he may have said. But, going on how intensely proud he was of his own image, i do not believe he would have thrown out a bunch of dirty laundry in an interview after the fact. If he had kept that proud exterior right through this hypothetical longer life, i feel he would have kept a lot to himself still.

Obviously, a lot has come out since then which would have been out of his control, so he would have had some questions to answer and mistakes to face up to (I would love to hear his thoughts on Tonkin these days) so there would be new information to shed more light on. But anything that maybe has not come out that he knows about i feel would be kept under wraps.

However, had he mellowed in older age (which, people do mellow with age - my grandpa is quite a different person now to the man he was 10 years ago, for example) maybe we would have heard a little more? I honestly don't think we would have, but maybe if he had mellowed enough where in his heart all he wanted was for the people to know the completely uncut truth of what happened in his time in charge, then maybe we would have heard more. But, my honest opinion is from what i have read about LBJ, his pride, his temper, everything leads me to conclude that not much would have changed.

And almost forgetting Nixon, but basically the same goes for him. I feel he would have elaborated on some things that had come out and he had no choice, but anything super-secret would have been kept under wraps. So although it would have been fascinating to hear their views on some of the things that have come out after the war, i dunno if we would have been treated to anything completely new.

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David,

I think that you are making some really good points and from what I gather from the descriptions about President Johnson you have pretty much pinned is personality to the "T", however I honestly believe if one of the those men were alive (Nixon or Johnson) we could learn something. If nothing is learned then at the very least having their perspective would be beneficial. I have always thought that there is something to learn from everyone in life, it could be a homeless man on or a Pulitzer prize winner, but just having a different points of views helps me learn. After speaking with people from all different walks of life I just go away and decide what use of their story I want make of it.

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Of course, i completely agree. My last sentence in my original post mentions not getting anything "completely new" - thats my point. Of course I would have loved to see them interviewed, as i mentioned in another post about McNamara it's good to see live interviews to see how they act and speak, body language and things like that. It lets you inside the personality more, and can sometimes change the way you think depending on if they have a boisterous attitude, or are a timid type - or somewhere in between.

So yes, we could have learned something - agree. However, it would not have been anything completely new as i still highly, highly doubt that they would reveal anything secret unless it was something that was going to come out. Their pride i feel would stop them from talking about anything but what is already known, despite my belief in there being more that we don't know about.

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**Re: If LBJ or Nixon were alive.**by [Daniel Bonner](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 06:21 PM

That seems to be the general consensus and I agree

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**Re: If LBJ or Nixon were alive.**by [Tracy Allen](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 07:27 PM

What about Kissinger, Nixons secretary of state? He was one of the men who knew about all of the secret actions of the Presidential office. Since Nixon and LBJ are dead it would be beneficial to also look at his accounts of the war.

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**Problems**by [Jeremy Carlson](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 07:15 PM

First of all, the United States could not simply withdraw from the war because the American people, as well as the rest of the world, would see the United States as a weaker country. Also, North Vietnam would not comply with any negotiations and this prolonged the United States involvement. Finally, if Vietnam was lost to Communism, the United States, then believed they would watch the spread of Communism throughout Southern Aisa.

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**Re: Problems**by [Sheila Daughtry](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 11:19 PM

Jeremy-I don't know if the majority of American people would have viewed a withdraw as a weak move. I don't think the American people were clear as to why we were their in the first place.

I agree with you on the point of the U.S. government not wanting to look weak in the global arena.

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**Re: Problems**by [Daniel Bonner](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 11:46 PM

I agree with you Sheila, I don't think that Americans would have necessarily viewed a withdraw from Vietnam as a weak move, but I do agree with Jeremy that America could have been able to execute an immediate withdraw either. I think that there was too much invested into South Vietnam and that we felt there was an unmet obligation that needed to be sought out.

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**Re: Problems**by [Jeremy Carlson](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 03:29 PM

Ok. I can see that, but I also think that the American people were busy dealing with domestic "problems" in the 1960s. I don't think the American people really knew what they wanted. We seem to always want to win, but in Vietnam the American people protested not only the government but the soldiers that were place in the middle of a big mess. The American people definitely were uneducated about the war, but I think just pulling out and coming home would have been a terrible idea. "Nobody likes playing for a losing team" is all I am trying to say.

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**Re: Problems**by [Jaiurus Godeka](#) - Friday, 26 November 2010, 09:16 PM

I like your honesty about what we are as a people (Americans). We believe we are better than the rest of the world and our way about politics is the best. We also believe that our system of government is the best in the world and that if the rest of the world new better, they would all want our type of government. This perception about ourselves I believe kept us in Vietnam because we had to be or are the best. All the fears about what would have happened if we lost to Communists in Vietnam (southeast Asia becoming Communist), or that if Saigon fell to the Communists, there would have been a lot of bloodshed and death, never materialized.

The demonstrations and activism against the war was a problem that hampered efforts to conclude the war.

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Nixon

by [Jeremy Carlson](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 07:20 PM

Nixon wanted the United States to end the war in "peace with honor." He realized the United States could not defeat the North Vietnamese; instead, he looked to withdraw troops, de-escalate the war, and find some common ground to negotiate with the North Vietnamese. With trying to achieve these goals he had to have them work together with eachother or else he would "be wrong"(his speach Nov. 3 1963).

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LBJ or Nixon

by [Tikoya Wiget](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 07:21 PM

We may have been able to see the war in a different perspective through these former presidents had they made a documentary like Fog of Work. And it would be very interesting to do so. But I believe it wouldn't reveal much more truth than any of the other accounts we have read in the Appy book or the video of McNamara. Simply because these presidents would have biases of there own. Also they might not be as truthful because they don't want to make themselves look bad.

Whether or not we would learn more from a documentary is based on how willing they would be to look back on their decisions and really be analytical of them and themselves.

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Re: LBJ or Nixon

by [Raina Kelley](#) - Friday, 26 November 2010, 08:38 PM

I agree with you. I think that it would be interesting to hear LBJ or other presidents talk in a documentary but I also think it wouldn't reveal a lot. I think there would be too much bias and too much concern with reputation. And like you say how truthful would it be? And how would we be able to know whether or not it was truth or fact.

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Re: LBJ or Nixon

by [Justin White](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 09:00 PM

I agree with you, I believe that the only way we could learn anything new is if they choose not to worry about thier images and really analyze thier decisions without holding back.

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LBJ or Nixon

by [Jeremy Carlson](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 07:24 PM

Both of these men were politicians. In being politicians their image is everything. I believe that if they were involved in Fog of War they would be too conceited. Looking to make sure they looked good and did not over step anything or anyone. I do not believe Fog of War would be a better film with them. In fact, I believe that some of the facts would not be brought forward because they would suppress anything that reflected them negatively.

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Robert McNamara

by [Jeremy Carlson](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 07:28 PM

McNamara seems like he was just pretending the whole time he was in office. He was one of the only people who admits getting into the war was a bad idea and feels a little guilty because of it. The Appy book demonstrates his emotions a little better than Fog of War in my opinion and he seems like a man who struggles with what he had to do at that time. Fog of War shows a more elusive McNamara compared to the "absolutely certain" views of him.

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Re: Robert McNamara

by [Jairus Godeka](#) - Friday, 26 November 2010, 08:51 PM

I like your keen observations about McNamara. However I don't believe he was pretending the whole time he was in office. He may have questioned some of the decisions the president made which may have led to the juggling of affiliations in Washington DC, but overall I believe he sincerely carried out the presidents orders. He had an opportunity to set the record straight during the fog of war, but his refusal to answer what appeared to me to be simple and relevant questions, raised alarms in my mind about his honesty in what appeared to be a prepared speech.

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Re: Robert McNamara

by [Kelley Allender](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 07:36 PM

It seems as though every time I am exposed to a new source documenting or related to the Vietnam War, I learn a little more about it. Reading the Appy book has been my favorite part of this class because I have found it so interesting to hear different perspectives from both sides of the war. Some people seem more forth coming than others, and of course not knowing them personally or having been involved in the war myself, it is hard to say how much they are or aren't biased and/ or exaggerating. Fog of War was yet another source and similar but slightly different perspective on the war, so I gained some new knowledge about it. Although McNamara did express regret towards certain decisions and events that took place, the interview was far from full-disclosure. This was a little disheartening to me. I think after everything is said and done, it would have given a lot of Americans some piece of mind or the feeling of justification, if key players in the war like McNamara would come out and point blank say, we made a mistake, or even better we made a lot of mistakes. McNamara shows that in hindsight he would have done things differently but that isn't the same as taking ownership and responsibility for any of his personal wrong-doings. It's always hard to accept blame or admit when you've been wrong, but in my opinion leaders such as McNamara put the entire country and millions of people through, years of warfare unnecessarily and the least he could do is give a point-blank apology. I appreciate that he was willing to step up and answer some questions, but I was also disappointed by the fact that he denied to answer the toughest ones. The use of Agent Orange is an example of McNamara only admitting partial wrong-doing. He said that the military's use of Agent Orange was wrong and never should have happened, but he also neglected to accept any personal responsibility, saying that he didn't sign off or know of it's use. Even if this is true, he was the person in charge of military action in Vietnam, therefore I feel that unless he has someone else specifically stepping up to take the blame, it falls on him. Although Fog of War did offer some new insight, it also felt like more of the same to me. In everything that I have learned about American political and military leaders involved in Vietnam, it has felt like "half-truths".

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Re: Robert McNamara

by [Daniel Bonner](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 11:26 PM

Kelley,
I agree with every sentence in this post. Very well put, I could not have said it better.

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Re: Robert McNamara

by [Jennifer Wilson](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 10:18 AM

love your post by the way I cant belive the reaction that he gave about agent orange that chemical that he said was war worthy has destroyed so many Americans lives and to not own up to your mistakes is just throwing there pain and continual punishment back in the faces of all Americans that have been effected by this nasty chemical.

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Re: Robert McNamara

by [Kelley Allender](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 01:34 PM

I completely agree!

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Re: LBJ or Nixon

by [Kelley Allender](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 07:48 PM

I think if LBJ or Nixon were still alive they could definitely add to our understanding of the war. I would love to hear from them, but especially LBJ. Everything that I have read about him, tells me that he was incredibly stubborn and bull-headed, so his perspective on the war in hindsight would be very interesting to me. I would love to know if he would be willing to admit making mistakes, felt regret, felt guilt, if he regretted the war at all and to what extent. He is probably the one, single, person that I would be most interested in hearing his feelings on the war after it was over. Ideally, I would like to say that he would be bold enough to admit his wrongdoings, but realistically, I think that if he did an interview such as the Fog of War, his level of disclosure would be similar to that of McNamara's. After all he was a politician, and as much as he may come out and admit mistakes here and there, I expect that he would be equally conscious of depicting himself in the most favorable light possible. From every source that we have been exposed to in this class, I have always come away with the strong feeling that Americans will never know the real story behind the Vietnam War. I suspect that a lot of the decisions that were made were motivated by factors we don't know about, there was also probably a lot of things going on in Vietnam in terms of the warfare itself, that has remained unreported to this day. I wish I could spend 5 minutes in LBJ, Nixon, or McNamara's shoes just to gain some of this insight, but at the same time the thought kind of scares me. As much as I hate to admit it, sometimes when things go unreported to the public, it really is in our interest.

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Re: LBJ or Nixon

by [Daniel Bonner](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 11:27 PM

Yet another good post. Well said again Kelley

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Re: LBJ or Nixon

by [Jennifer Wilson](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 09:11 AM

I think Nixon thought long and hard about what he was going to do about the war. He knew he had to please the public without making it look like we lost the war. I think that Vietnamization was a great idea. There needed to be a way to stop the war because it was obvious that it would have never ended. Because the war was going to continue even after we left, training the south to defend themselves was the only solution. And that the way of communism was not right was not right and that they could still be a free people. It's just like when President Clinton came to office the people wanted us to stop sending so many troops to the desert and that is what he talked about in his campaign. Vietnam was a much bigger problem to the American people this is why Nixon gave this speech within his

first year. Nixon knew they couldn't just leave because all the work and lives lost would be for nothing, and to use Vietnamization would be the most logical. This sounds very familiar like President Bush might have said something similar

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Re: LBJ or Nixon

by [Tracy Allen](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 08:10 PM

I agree that Vietnamization was a good idea. I just don't think that throwing a bunch of money and weapons at the ARVN and saying here go to war, fight the Communists was the right way to implement the policy. The Administration already knew that South Vietnam was dependent on American aid and the U.S. dollars spent by the G.I.s, knowing this should have warned them that just pulling out would be the end. There was no way that the ARVN could win, the soldiers were not trained and many of them went awol. Besides many of them were just as weary of the war as the G.I.s and the American public.

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Re: Vietnamization-NIXON'S STRATEGY

by [Jairus Godeka](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 08:04 PM

With his inability to end the war by force and unwilling to make concessions, Nixon opted for Vietnamization. The two strategies complimented each other because by gradually withdrawing U.S. troops, he would gain favor and the support of the American public. At the same time, Sir Robert Thompson informed Nixon that, South Vietnam was growing stronger and that if the United States continued to furnish large-scale military and economic assistance, the Saigon government might be strong enough within two years to resist a Communist takeover without external help. Nixon's strategy however failed in one key area. It failed to compel Hanoi to accept the terms it had consistently rejected. The United States on the other hand turned over to South Vietnam huge quantities of the newest weapons. Strategically, it was the right move on Nixon's part because he benefited by improving his public image, and the South Vietnamese government benefited by equipping with American weapons. Unfortunately, it was a situation Saigon had been forced into because they were not in favor of American troop withdrawal.

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Re: Vietnamization-ROBERT McNAMARA

by [Jairus Godeka](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 08:21 PM

Robert McNamara's comments did not change my understanding of the war. He appeared to be apologetic specifically about poor decisions made at the time. Looking back, he reflected that what worried him a lot was the loss of life, particularly American life. To me, he came across as a politician attempting to make good on past mistakes. The fact that he refused to answer questions from reporters told me that all along his message might have been scripted, and he was telling us specific information that he may have scripted before going on the air.

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Re: Vietnamization-ROBERT McNAMARA

by [Sheila Daughtry](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 11:11 PM

Jairus-Good observation about McNamara's concern over the loss of so many American lives. What a shame that more value is placed on an American life than a Vietnamese life.

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Re: Vietnamization-ROBERT McNAMARA

by [Kelley Allender](#) - Friday, 26 November 2010, 01:38 PM

I agree with you. I had a hard time seeing him as sincere since he was only willing to answer certain questions and he seemed to continuously try to paint himself in the most favorable light. I felt as though his apology and regrets were half-hearted.

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Re: Vietnamization-ROBERT McNAMARA

by [Jennifer Wilson](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 10:13 AM

I agree he makes me feel like he is a government cover up just telling us what we want to hear. he was the Secretary of Defense do you realize this man probably knows more about the war than the president and that is all he has to say some rehearsed lines and narrative.

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Re: Vietnamization-ROBERT McNAMARA

by [Kelley Allender](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 01:39 PM

I agree that his lines seemed very rehearsed. It was disappointing to me because I felt like someone else probably wrote out those answers for him (maybe this is why he chose to avoid certain questions, because he didn't have politically correct predetermined answers) and none of it really came from him. He may as well have just let the speech writer answer do the interview.

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Re: Problems

by [Benjamin Trautman](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 08:38 PM

There were many factors that hampered the extension of the Vietnam war but one of the more influencing factors I believe was the American people. After the "Green Beret Affair" many American citizens who had prior to this incident supported the war, did not. Obviously the event of American soldiers raping and murdering unarmed Vietnamese fueled the fire of those opposed the war immensely. More demonstrations occurred in the States, hostility grew and grew between police and activists as the war went on. Four students were killed at Kent State University in a march against the invasion of Cambodia. President Johnson had to take these situations very seriously. The American public was gaining a lot of attention in the eyes of many other countries, including those who were involved in the war. I feel as if the American people illuminated the ugly truths about the Vietnam war, and President Johnson heavily weighed the doves in his decision for peace and an American withdrawal.

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Re: Problems

by [Kelley Allender](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 08:40 PM

There were several problems that hampered the conclusion of the war, which is why it was drug out over several years. First and foremost, several issues arose within the peace negotiations alone. The mere fact that it took the involved parties from 1965-1967 just to agree on the initial terms of peace talk, delayed by disagreement over issues from appropriate location for the negotiations to issues as trivial as the positioning of the tables; this turned out to be a precursor of the frustration that would occur in negotiations and trying to end the war. A statistic from Herring sums up the extreme disfunction of initial negotiation efforts, "American officials later tallied as many as 2,000 attempts to initiate peace talks between 1965 and 1967. Neither side could afford to appear indifferent to such efforts, but neither was willing to make the concessions necessary to bring about negotiations" (Herring, 201). Once negotiations finally did start, the need for translators only further complicated and confused matters.

The Tet Offensive was one event that further delayed the beginning of peace negotiations and extended the war. Although, fighting had been taking place simultaneously with talks for peace long before the Tet Offensive occurred, the offensive led to a temporary escalation in warfare.

Another issue was North Vietnam's insistence of "Four Points", which meant complete American withdrawal before they would agree to partake in peace talks. They finally relaxed their position, only demanding that bombing cease during negotiations. The U.S. and South Vietnam also relaxed their demands in order to move forward with negotiations. The next complication in negotiations was North Vietnam's refusal to cooperate with Saigon's "puppet" government, and Thieu's refusal to participate at all as long as the NLF was represented. As soon as this issue was put to rest, an even

more ridiculous one arose; the "battle of tables" was argued for weeks before a solution that all parties agreed to was finally found. Yet possibly the most problematic issue of the negotiations was the unavoidable language barrier between Americans and Vietnamese. The negotiations took place in Paris, and every exchange had to be translated from English to French then French to Vietnamese, or vice-versa. Not only did this make negotiations considerably longer and more tiresome, you also have to assume that much of the intent and meaning in a statement was prone to being lost in translation.

Another major issue at this time was the discontent of the general public towards the war. Americans' support of the war had swayed, and more Americans were against the war now than ever. This also meant that political leaders were losing their support. Civilians had the tendency to over simplify the process of withdrawal. I think the mindset was, we aren't going to win the war so lets bring our soldiers home, enough lives have been lost already. The problem was this process couldn't happen overnight. When Americans didn't see any changes taking place their discontent only grew.

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Re: Vietnamization- LBJ or NIXON

by [Jairus Godeka](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 08:42 PM

If they both had the same opportunity Robert did they would have in my view apologized for decisions (some) that they made at the time. They may have told us of the degree of the perceived threat that led to the war, which in my view, was exaggerated. I believe they both would have apologized for the heavy loss of American life.

I may learn more from a former president because, it is their attempt to make things right. While trumpeting their successes, they are more likely to tell us what they didn't do, or where they went wrong. Nixon was burdened with both the Vietnam war and the Watergate scandal. I believe he would have been ver careful in his choice of words. Like Robert, he might have rejected questions from reporters.

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Nixons strategy

by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 08:54 PM

I forgot to add "Nixon's strategy in the subject) so here it is again: I am not quite sure how I feel about his strategy whether I feel if he was right in doing the decisions he did or not, I feel that the two strategies do complement each other though because withdrawing troops automatically de-couples the Vietnamization. The south Vietnamese were weak, they cannot protect them selves and they depended on us. I certainly think that they did not appreciate America's help as much as they should have, so I look at it in a way that is was right, but at the same time there is always the "what if?" what if he did not withdrawal troops from the negotiations, would there have been a better outcome? We will never know, its done and over with.

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Re: Nixons strategy

by [Jairus Godeka](#) - Friday, 26 November 2010, 09:30 PM

Give it to Nixon, he was imaginative and knew how to manipulate. Vietnamization, a strategy he adapted from the previous administration worked well for him. A few years into the program, and some experts including doves and hawks agreed that it was working well. I believe Nixon's de-coupling of the two programs was to assure the South Vietnamese that he was not abandoning them, and at the same time proving to Americans that he was sincere about ending the war by withdrawing troops.

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LBJ or Nixon

by [Justin White](#) - Wednesday, 24 November 2010, 09:03 PM

If LBJ or Nixon were alive today to be in a documentary similar to the Fog of War I think that they could answer a lot of good questions that would lead to a better understanding of why they made the decisions they did. As far as why I think you could learn more from a former President after the fact is because there's not nearly as much pressure on him as when he is in the presidential spotlight. The public can't criticize you as bad if you're not the president at the time. I think they would speak more freely and more openly without the pressure of bieng the president.

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Rate... **Re: LBJ or Nixon**by [Jaiurus Godeka](#) - Friday, 26 November 2010, 08:32 PM

You make good points about LBJ and Nixon. I agree with the point that if they had answered questions about the decisions they made while in office, they would have had a clear and better understanding. A few things puzzle me about Nixon. Given the situation of the watergate scandal and some of the decisions he made while in office, I find it questionable that he would have been upfront in answering questions about his time in office. Like the fog of war, I believe he would have read a prepared speech, just like McNamara did and turn down questions from reporters that were relevant to his subject of discussion. The fact that they had been out of office and therefore more likely to answer questions with some degree of honesty is also questionable. Chances are, they would rather have taken the skeletons to their death beds (which they did) than discuss them publicly. Let's face it, reporters would have been fighting for this kind of interview, and any of the two presidents would have had the opportunity to be interviewed if they had wanted to.

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Rate... **Roadblocks on the Road to Peace**by [Todd Lowry](#) - Friday, 26 November 2010, 09:26 AM

Nixon found several roadblocks in his efforts to conclude the war. Nixon was sure he could bring about a swift ending to the war once in office. Herring writes, "with the sublime self-confidence common among leaders new to power, Nixon and Kissinger were certain they could end the war within six months" (276). This proved to be a short sighted analysis at best.

Nixon doggedly refused to withdraw American forces in defeat. His "peace with honor" strategy was conditioned such that: "The American withdrawal from Vietnam must be conducted in a way that avoided even the slightest appearance of defeat" (274). So to achieve the goal of extricating U.S. forces from Vietnam, Nixon needed significant concessions from North Vietnam. These included their conceding to "...exchange U.S. withdrawal for a political settlement that would leave Thieu firmly in control" (274), reestablishment of the demilitarized zone and a willingness to bow to pressure from Soviet diplomats. To make any of these concessions the North would essentially be abandoning the goals for which they had been fighting for so many years.

Nixon was also concerned about America's international credibility. He was concerned that America's abandonment of the southern government would damage America's international credibility. Therefore, simply pulling out of Vietnam and leaving Thieu and his unprepared military and government to the mercy of the communists was not an option. Nixon, like his predecessors, considered himself a bulwark against the spread of communism and he did not want to appear weak in the eyes of communist nations. This hard line resulted in massive bombing campaigns in Cambodia which were to scare Hanoi into negotiating on Nixon's terms. The decision to bomb Cambodia was a political failure, and served to steel the resolve of the North while further embedding northern forces deeper into Cambodia.

Hanoi had little interest in making any concessions toward peace without "...the unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Vietnam and [they] called for the establishment of a government from which Thieu would be excluded" (278). I think Hanoi knew that Nixon and his administration would balk at these conditions. The north was buying time to rebuild their forces and draw the war out for as long as they could. The northern government was "Certain that public opinion would eventually force Nixon to withdraw from Vietnam, [and] they were prepared to wait him out, no matter what the cost might be" (278). Indeed, they were right and Nixon was wholly unable to intimidate or persuade concessions out of the north. Nixon was left to "choose between a major escalation of the war and an embarrassing retreat" (281). Nixon, having counted on failed military coercion to achieve his objectives, "suddenly found himself without a policy" (281). With both sides of the conflict unwilling or unable to make the concessions necessary to achieve peace, the war would continue.

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Rate... **De-coupling Troop Withdrawal from Negotiations**by [Todd Lowry](#) - Friday, 26 November 2010, 01:02 PM

Based on Nixon's strategy of trying to get the north to budge in negotiations, I think it was important for him to de-couple American troop withdrawals from negotiations with the northern government. Nixon didn't want to appear weak, nor did he want the ARVN forces to appear weak in the eyes of the northern government. His policies for forcing the north to negotiate were primarily based on military reprisals for the north's refusal to make concessions. He made that point clear

in his speech in November 1969. During his first year in office, Nixon held a hard military line against the north. He was hoping to intimidate the north into making the all important concessions for progress in Paris. He went to great lengths in his speech to make the north think the forces in the south would be just as strong as they always had been, whether or not American forces were handling the lions share of the fighting.

The separation between American troop withdrawal and negotiations were essential from the position Nixon was taking. Letting the north know that he was withdrawing troops without the ARVN forces being capable of filling the void would do little but convince the north that they had the upper hand and they would have to do nothing but wait until America was out of Vietnam, then invade the south and overthrow Thieu and his weak government. Nixon needed the north to believe he was withdrawing troops from a position of strength, not weakness. Nixon said in his November speech, "This withdrawal will be made from strength and not from weakness. As South Vietnamese forces become stronger, the rate of American withdrawal can become greater" (Vietnamization). For Nixon's strategy to work, the military forces in the south needed to appear just as strong as they had been when the war was fully Americanized.

Nixon needed the north to think he was withdrawing American combat troops because of the south's great success in strengthening their own army. Not that he was doing it because of domestic pressure, or a sense of defeat. Nixon was basically saying to the north that Thieu and his ARVN forces were becoming strong enough to no longer require the help of U.S. combat troops. It was from this position of overwhelming, unwavering military strength that he hoped to convince the north to negotiate. The message was that American troop withdrawals didn't matter. The north would face the same military resistance from the south, no matter if the troops they fought were Vietnamese or American.

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Re: De-coupling Troop Withdrawal from Negotiations

by [Raina Kelley](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 12:59 PM

Todd,

Good post. You bring up good points about Nixon not wanting to look weak as well as wanting the North to think that the South would be just as strong if there were no American troops there. I agree with you, I think Nixon made a good decision, it was important for the North to think the South would be just as strong. I didn't think about the North needing to not think that the troop withdrawal was not because of America's public demanding action. Well said, you have strong points.

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Nixon and Vietnamization

by [Jennifer Wilson](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 09:00 AM

I think Nixon thought long and hard about what he was going to do about the war. He knew he had to please the public without making it look like we lost the war. I think that Vietnamization was a great idea. There needed to be a way to stop the war because it was obvious that it would have never ended. Because the war was going to continue even after we left, training the south to defend themselves was the only solution. And that the way of communism was not right was not right and that they could still be a free people. It's just like when President Clinton came to office the people wanted us to stop sending so many troops to the desert and that is what he talked about in his campaign. Vietnam was a much bigger problem to the American people this is why Nixon gave this speech within his first year. Nixon knew they couldn't just leave because all the work and lives lost would be for nothing, and to use Vietnamization would be the most logical. This sounds very familiar like President Bush might have said something similar

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Re: Nixon and Vietnamization

by [Benjamin Trautman](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 04:27 PM

Agree with you that Nixon's decision on Vietnamization was a a smart one. Originally in my opinion it was the South's war to fight. I'm not saying aiding a stance against communism was the wrong thing to do but from the looks of the way the war turned out ended, only being "partially" involved in the war was the most intelligent thing to do.

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Rate... **Robert McNamara**by [Jennifer Wilson](#) - Saturday, 27 November 2010, 10:09 AM

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I really like the line from the Fog of War made by foreign minister of Vietnam, "you totally wrong we were fight for our independence you were fighting to enslave us". What really summed it up for me was when he also said "Mister McNamara you must have never read our history books if you had you know we weren't pawns of the Chinese or Russia, McNamara didn't you know that don't you understand we have been fighting the Chinese for a thousand years". This conversation really shows the other side and how we as the American government looked at a country we knew almost nothing about. All we had was the fear of communism and the fear for a people who could not protect themselves from the terrors of communism and that we wanted to stop communism before it became a major problem. McNamara does not mention communism in this conversation the foreign minister does. In the Appy book the story of Vo Nguyen Gaip on Pg. 43 in a conversation between Gaip and McNamara. McNamara says "We need to draw a lesson which will allow us to avoid such tragedies in the future." Gaip says in return "Lessons are important. I agree. However, you are wrong to call the war a 'tragedy.' Maybe it was a tragedy for you, but for us the war was a noble sacrifice. We did not want to fight the United States, but u gave us no choice." This quote has almost the same meaning as what was said in the fog of war video and basically the feeling you get after watching the PBS series about how we were the people in the wrong in another country 'the invaders'. I am sure the Video is talking about the same event McNamara in the fog of war asks "do you mean to say that it was not a tragedy for you when you lost 3,400,000 Vietnamese killed with on our population basis is the equivalent of 27,000,000 Americans." This is what Vietnam has been doing for thousands of years fighting much larger countries to protect their way of life. They were never going to stop fighting the US this is the reason we left. It sounds like we still believed that we were there to help. But I doubt that we were there to show them a different way of life that did not work for them and they let us know.

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There were two main problems in ending the war peacefully in my opinion. 1) The north not up to negotiations and 2) And the souths government being dependent on US aid.

The first problem as i stated was the Norths unwillingness to negotiate any type of agreement. They were not willing to stop until they achieved complete independence. This caused the war to be much longer, I believe, because we were not willing to give them this. And so the war continued.

The second problem was the Souths inability to govern and fight for themselves. They relied on US aid and involment way to much since the very beginning. This caused vietnamization to be difficult. It was the best plan to get US troops out. But it left the south weak and vulnerable to the Norths communist attacks.

Both these were critical problems in ending the war and, I believe, ultimately led to the loss of the Vietnam war.

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I felt that it was best to combine the strategy of Nixons with the problems, as i feel they go hand in hand.

The problems in Vietnam surely are very clear to a lot of us by now after all the reading we have done, and with Vietnamization i feel a lot of the problems that had grown over the course of the war came back to bite the US.

Firstly, the theory of Vietnamization was good. Like all theory's though, implementation is always much more complicated than it sounds originally. The idea of slowly pushing more of the combat responsibility over to the South Vietnamese was of course the way it should go eventually - the problems with that however were quite large.

Firstly, there was the fact that though the US had fought some big victories in military terms, they had still not nearly broken the back of the North Vietnamese war machine. The South was still largely disorganized, and thus would still need a lot of American help in trying to turn the tide of the war in enough favor that they would actually be able to "win" it.

Second of all, there was the intense patriotism of the North Vietnamese. These men and women had been fighting for a long time, long before the major introduction of American forces, for the independence of their nation. This is where i feel the negotiations by Nixon were never, ever, going to work. The Americans just never got their heads around how truly patriotic and intense these people were about the unification of Vietnam. They had fought the French for years to try and force those foreign aggressors out, and fought with the idea of two outcomes - victory, or death. There was no other way for them. So to think that they would negotiate for anything less was naivete at its finest. It was a society not based on any form of consumerism or modern ideals, but one on simple pride in itself and what it wanted to be. There really was nothing the US could use as a bargaining chip.

Thirdly, and most important i think, was the Americans complete mismanagement of the war, and its alienation of the local Southern population during the years of the war. The way the soldiers treated the locals, and the tactics used (things such as Agent Orange) did not endear the Americans to the Southerners at all, and sent many of them into sympathizing with the North. There was also a memoir in the Appy book that mentioned how growing up in Vietnam the locals were conditioned to fear foreign aggressors. With how the Americans acted in Vietnam, this didn't help the already fragile support they may have had. This led to an even lesser portion of the population actually sympathetic to the US - which leads me back to the first point i made, which means there was even less of the population to take up the slack of the US gradually lessening their involvement. There was simply going to be no way there would be enough Southerners fully committed to the cause to be able to successfully take up the war once the US pulled out.

I feel all of these problems combined to hinder the US hopes of a conclusion to the war, and thus Nixons strategy, whilst in theory it worked - was never going to be able to work after what had happened in the lead up to that point.

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