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**Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Joe Escobar](#) - Saturday, 28 November 2009, 11:25 PM

1. Did the United States win or lose the Vietnam War? Can it still be won or lost today? Justify your answer.

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**Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Jeffrey Harmon](#) - Wednesday, 2 December 2009, 05:13 PM

I believe America lost the war. We lost so much! The more I have been in the class a lot of my beliefs have changed. We were the winners, i always thought. But the amount of human life lost from something that we didn't need to do is so destructive to the country as a whole. I came from a family where my Father did 5 tour in Vietnam. He always said we needed to be there. But I do not think he really knew what he was talking about. His head was a little messed up anyway from the wars. We lost a lot of Sons, Fathers and Husbands to a war that did not need to happen. The first way we lost the war is America pulled out. Even though wars are not won and lost on bodycounts, but rather "diplomacy through other means". In this respect, the U.S failed in its primary mission, keeping the Communists from taking over Vietnam as a whole. Body counts don't matter if you fail in your diplomatic course or primary mission. The major U.S. justification for the war was the Falling Dominoes theory-- if Vietnam falls the rest of Asia will follow. That never happened. "It's more complicated than simply saying it was only a civil war, but it had aspects of a civil war, one between the Vietnamese communists and the Vietnamese Catholics, and a whole lot of other in between. When the US left in 1973, South Vietnam continued to exist as an unoccupied country until it fell in 1975. It's also interesting to me that the south was fighting to simply exist as south Vietnam, while the north was fighting to control the whole of Vietnam. We accomplished nothing we went there to do. For me the war was a propaganda war, none of the facts were given and it was a lot of puppets running around. Saying it is all the communist propaganda. All the Presidents involved screwed up. Kennedy jacked our involvement from his initial 1000 guys to over 15,000. All this despite advice from his own advisers to get out. Then LBJ gets in there and the troop levels get raised through the roof. We had no clear object, no goal, no sense of what we might gain in such a war and therefore no gauge of what we were willing to pay for such a war. Political mis management of war and failure to understand what it would take to win were so huge here. So when the day is done I feel we lost. Going back to the last forum, I believe we lost in Politics, society and the military. We won no-where. This is what I think, so let's see what everyone thinks. I also look at PBS with a whole new light, they have a lot of none facts.

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**Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Chad Schultz](#) - Wednesday, 2 December 2009, 07:11 PM

We did lose a lot. We not only lost a war but we lost many by standers trust. There was a lot of deception; for example the Gulf of Tonkin is a prime example. We stated that there was a second attack and later discovered it was an error. This was the initiative to be involved in the Vietnam War and the beginning of many lies.

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**Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Derek Abbott](#) - Saturday, 5 December 2009, 05:26 PM

The U.S. lost the war in the 1970's, I would have to agree. The ripple effect, however, lasted in the United States for years to come. We haven't done a very good job, at an administrative level, to learn from our mistakes. We can't afford to repeat past mistakes of Johnson and Nixon, and I feel that the Bush administration did a horrible job learning from the past.

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**Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Evan Looch](#) - Wednesday, 2 December 2009, 08:04 PM

I also thought before taking this class that we were the overall winners of the war even though we did lose many lives in combat. The fact that we continued the long fighting over there really did hurt millions and millions of Americans and Vietnamese people's lives forever. I can understand how the whole Domino theory may scare many leaders in the U.S. of a global Communist outbreak but to through a prosperous country in so quickly was ill advised.

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**Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Tish Bottensek](#) - Thursday, 3 December 2009, 02:33 PM

Jeffrey,

You made some very valuable points, points I believe have needed to be said for some time! For instance, you expressed that your father fought in the war and believed he was fighting for a good cause. I am pleased to hear that he was one of the fortunate ones who made it home. You stated that he was never the same, the unfortunate reality is simply that many of our soldiers returned with the mental reality of war. This is an unfortunate reality many Americans were not prepared to face. I too believe in more ways than one we lost the war, if not because of the lack of accomplishment we received during our time there, the amount of lost soldiers including those who returned alive, but also for the vast amounts of money spent for the war. The physical part of the war may be over, but there are still so many soldiers who are suffering from the mental aspect of war. In their eyes I too believe they would say we lost.

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**Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Jeffrey Harmon](#) - Saturday, 5 December 2009, 10:41 AM

Well thank you. That is a great point, that even most of the soldiers who returned really did not return the same, so the body count means nothing to me, because a lot of the alive returners feel like they mine as well be dead.

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**Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Glenn Dalglish](#) - Thursday, 3 December 2009, 04:29 PM

Before taking this class, I was under the impression that we lost the war in Vietnam and I still feel that way. America was on a downward spiral from the beginning and although I do agree that the spread of communism needed to be stopped, I don't think war was the answer. Too many people died on both sides during the war and I do not think there was any just cause for all those deaths. Not to mention, all those who didn't die and are either living with wounds on the inside or outside. There were other methods of dealing with communism and I don't agree that the Vietnam war was a good "solution." In the end, Americans' dislike and disapproval for the things they saw and heard was a major factor for the end of the war. There were others like the fall of Saigon, us pulling out and signing the treaty, but how can a war be won if the people involved do not support it? I'm not sure if I believe that we won anything from the Vietnam War. I would hope that we would learn from our mistakes that were made and looking at the war we are currently in, it is a good example of how we can not make the same mistake twice. We helped stop the spread of communism to the rest of the world, but I believe this could have happened without the violent Vietnam War.

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Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose

by [William Wymer](#) - Friday, 4 December 2009, 04:57 AM

I am a lot like you this class has made me look at things in a lot bigger picture. I also do not see that we won Vietnam. We lost the American's trust during that time, when they found out that they were not given the whole truth or picture. I also do not think that you can say you won on body count alone. I can say that we could say that we won many of the battles, but not the war, as we did not accomplish what we set out as an objective. I said in past in a past forum that we should have used all of our forces available right from the beginning, but now as the class has progressed and the discussions that we have had in our forums, I would have to say that we should have used more diplomacy and talks before we just jumped in. You brought up some very good points, thank you for your outlook on the Vietnam war. As for the media I see it in a new light as well. The one thing that I think we need to remember is that they are going for the ratings and are going to show or tell it in their view and beliefs. Do you agree or disagree with this? As for could we win or lose the war today I do not think we can honestly say for sure. I would hope that we could say yes, but I would hope we handled the war in a different way.

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Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose

by [Patrick Brady](#) - Wednesday, 2 December 2009, 05:16 PM

I believe that the United States lost the Vietnam War, because we went to Vietnam to contain communism and help support the South Vietnamese government. The United States failed in both of their objectives. The United States pulled out our troops in 1973 and the South Vietnamese government only survived two years after that. In 1975 the South Vietnam government in Saigon fell to the communist North Vietnam, which the United States had been trying to prevent.

If the Vietnam War was based on a body count basis the U.S. would have won, but because the North Vietnamese were so desperate for a unified Vietnam they were willing to put it all on the line.

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Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose

by [Jeffrey Harmon](#) - Wednesday, 2 December 2009, 05:53 PM

I think even if we look at body counts we did win in "stats" but all other avenues we did lose, saving the south? Stopping communism? The north vietnamese would have lost double the one and a half million, because they would have fought harder, and were willing to lose more lives than we were prepared to do.

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Rate... **Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Jennifer Mosier](#) - Friday, 4 December 2009, 07:02 PM

I agree that the United States lost. We went home with our tails tucked between our legs. The aid that the South Vietnamese government was expecting never came and the US withdrew everything. The only thing the US did in Vietnam was create chaos. The government that we were trying to establish failed.

I don't see how even the body count could be considered a win for the US. Just because the US had less casualties does not make the Vietnam war a success. In war there is always death and the US suffered many unnecessary deaths just like the Vietnamese. I don't see how killing more people on the opposed side could be seen as a win because a lot of civilians were killed.

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Rate... **Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Scott Burgess](#) - Wednesday, 2 December 2009, 05:33 PM

I hate to say that I think we lost the war in Vietnam. If you look at body counts we clearly won. We had over 58,000 KIA's and apx. 300,000 wounded. The North Vietnamese had apx. 1 1/2 million KIA's and over 3 million wounded. If you just looked at those stats you would think that we won hands down. Unfortunately, we didn't live up to our promises to our allies in South Vietnam. Our goal was to prevent the spread of communism in Southeast Asia. We did not do that, so in the end that is not a victory. Not only did Vietnam fall, so did Cambodia and Laos the whole region was a loss. One of the most disturbing things to me is that we let an Ally fall without lifting a finger to help. That part makes me sick. I am not saying that the South would not have fallen in time anyway, but it might not have.

We learned a few things from Vietnam that I think have helped us. The first Gulf War was our first test since Vietnam. I think it had a very good outcome. I would like to think that it was from us growing and learning. It sounds like we used the Powell Doctrine to its fullest extent. Objectives must be clearly defined and attainable; use overwhelming force to achieve certain, swift, and complete victory. I think that we had the whole nation behind our troops in support and it made a difference. If we had to go back and fight in Vietnam today using those methods, we would, without a doubt in my mind win. I still think that it is important to win the hearts and minds of the people you are trying to help. You have to go out of your way to set the best example you can for your country. You can not do this by blowing up entire blocks to kill a few people.

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Rate... **Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Name Withheld-6450](#) - Saturday, 5 December 2009, 10:41 AM

Well the first Iraq war was in defense of Kuwait, which was invaded by Saddam Hussein. We had countless NATO allies assisting us, so it was a combined effort on the part of ourselves and our allies.

And in fact, the first Gulf war was the second since Vietnam. Please see the invasion of Grenada of 1983. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Invasion_of_Grenada

And I also agree that we left South Vietnam to basically fend for themselves. It was quite clear after Operation Linebacker, we were no longer willing to supply South Vietnam with the proper air support it needed (much less ground troops) We must also look at the failure of the South Vietnamese economy during the American pull out. Congress cut aid for South Vietnam from 1 Billion dollars to 700,000 dollars in 1974 and in 1975 Congress voted almost immediately after the midterm elections to drastically cut aid

and phase aid completely out by 1976. Not only did we leave the South Vietnamese defenseless, we left them bankrupt. The situation was hopeless for the South Vietnamese, who truly were the real losers of the war.

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Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose

by [Scott Burgess](#) - Saturday, 5 December 2009, 08:48 PM

Lets be clear Grenada was not a war it was a rescue mission to recover US students that were attending a medical school. At that time Fidel Castro had put Cuban national troops and weapons on the island and was not allowing these US citizens to leave of thier own free will. They can thank President Reagan for thier freedom. The first Gulf War was sanctioned by Congress and authorized by President Bush Sr. That was the difference between those two actions. Don't even get me started on Central America and the secret opps that went on during the mid eighties. I was just commenting on aproved military actions by Congress since Vietnam.

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Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose

by [Robert Nicholls](#) - Wednesday, 2 December 2009, 05:37 PM

President Richard Nixon once stated that he would not be the first president to lose a war. In my opinion, he was. We defiantly lost the Vietnam War. I say this because I believe that we did not obtain our main objective in Vietnam, and if you do not do what you set out to do, it is considered a loss. Many people say that we did not win or lose the Vietnam War. However, I believe that there is no mediate answer. You can either win, or lose. Since we did not stop the Communists from taking over South Vietnam, I would say we lost the war.

George Herring states that the ultimate losers of the war were the South Vietnamese. This strengthens my argument of how America lost the war because we directly represented the South Vietnamese. We fought for them, we stood up for them, and we lost for them. We could not stabilize the South Vietnamese government enough for them to fight on their own. Since this was our main goal, and we failed at doing so, we failed at winning the war in Vietnam. With the whole Watergate scandal during the Nixon era, our own government became weak and undermined. This, in turn, weakened the South Vietnamese government because we were directly related to them in almost every aspect. Everything bad that happened to us, would directly affect them. Although we were supposed to be helping the South instead of fighting for them, I feel that America had 99% of the responsibilities of the Vietnam War. Our failures translated to a direct loss of the war. Unfortunately, it had to be at the expense of many South Vietnamese lives, as well as our own.

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Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose

by [Patrick Brady](#) - Friday, 4 December 2009, 05:28 PM

I agree with you, I believe that North Vietnam won the war becuase there goal was to have a unified communist Vietnam, and they obtained their goal in 1975. Since North Vietnam won that means that the United States and South Vietnam lost. There was definatly a winner and a loser of this war.

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Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose

by [William Wymer](#) - Friday, 4 December 2009, 08:01 PM

I have to say that I agree that we lost the Vietnam War, But I believe that we failed at getting the South Vietnamese People behind us and willing to stand up and fight. We read over and over many times when they were put into a battle situation they would turn and run. If you cannot get the people you are trying to help to defend themselves then ultimately they are going to fall, it is only a matter of time and the North Vietnamese were willing to put in that time and take the loss of life, they also had their people support and belief in what they were doing was right and that they would succeed, which in the end they did. I think that we should have put more training and time to make sure that they would be able to defend themselves. We also should have help make sure their government was stable and not corrupt. I believe that we were so afraid of communism spreading that we jumped in and did not look how we would succeed (no real game plan) and what game plans we had were ether made on partially correct information or political policy. It also did not help that in the end we ourselves did not even have the support of some of our own troops, they would make up reports and actually would be setting right where we dropped them. The U.S. even lost support at home.

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Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose

by [Name Withheld-6450](#) - Wednesday, 2 December 2009, 06:44 PM

I would most definitely say that we lost. The body count is irrelevant due to the fact that our objectives were not accomplished. We left South Vietnam in a rather sloppy manner. The "Vietnamization" was a complete fluke and our presence in South East Asia was diminished severely. You cannot justify the outcome of the war simply by body count alone. If we recall a bit of history, we know that the Soviet Union suffered almost twice the casualties at the hands of the Wehrmacht, and yet we know that they clearly beat them back and won the war, hands down. There are examples like this everywhere. (One of the American accounts in the Patriot Book even attests to this, comparing the Vietnam war to our own American revolution) You can say the same for the Vietnam war, in which an enemy considered by most to be "inferior", beat an army most considered superior.

I would also like to point out that I'm sure alot of the Hawks in Washington felt like fools a while after the war with their "Domino" theory. As we know, the rest of South east Asia did not, in fact, "fall" to communism.

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Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose

by [Robert Nicholls](#) - Friday, 4 December 2009, 10:33 PM

Well i definatley agree with the majority of your post, but i have to disagree with the fact that you say "Vietnamization" was a fluke and diminished our presence in South East Asia. From the point of view of the President, as well as myself, Vietnamization was a great idea. It contained everything that we sought after when we started the war. To have the Vietnamese fight for themselves. It was not our fault at all that it failed. I believe it was the simple fact that the South Vietnamese lacked the will and pride to fight for their own country, not a failure on the shoulders of America. You can't change someone's character and amount of pride for their country.

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Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose

by [Name Withheld-6450](#) - Saturday, 5 December 2009, 09:51 AM

Well, our job was to see it to that the South Vietnamese could fight independently of American forces. We failed to convince the populace and the South Vietnamese forces of their objective and their country was worth saving, hence why Vietnamization failed.

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**Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Jeffrey Harmon](#) - Saturday, 5 December 2009, 10:44 AM

I agree, sometimes we need to step in and help people out, but after a while we need to let them stand on their own two feet.

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**Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Amy Wells](#) - Saturday, 5 December 2009, 04:33 PM

I agree with you that a body count does not constitute a win. For me all of the lives that were loss count as a loss, but not looking at the lives lost, I never really knew a lot about this war. I hae learned a lot in this term. Then one thing that I got was that all the fighting we did in the end we pulled out, so I feel that we did not win we just quit fighting and putting our money into a war that was going no where.

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**Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Evan Looock](#) - Wednesday, 2 December 2009, 06:49 PM

The Vietnam War was a long-strenuously-slow fought battle that never had one side really exclaiming itself the victor. My opinion is that the U.S lost the war in Vietnam. Americans are very proud people that like to think that we actually won the War for the reason that the Cold War ended soon after the conflict was over in Vietnam. The U.S wanted to stop the Communists from taking over South Vietnam but eventually abandoned its efforts further leading to the enemy taking control over the South. We were not militarily conquered or out-equipped by the North and Communist enemies. The strategy we attempted to use was to simply make the enemies believe that they could not succeed in a military achievement. The enemy's determination and willingness to sacrifice every man and women it took lasted longer than the American's which gave little support to back up the conflict. The mismanagement from Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon and others in Washington during the Vietnam War made a victory militarily very unlikely. The U.S was not prepared for guerilla warfare from the start of the conflict in Vietnam which was a major miscalculation that cost lots of money and lives. Similarly When I first set foot in Iraq in 2003 we had no up-armored humvee's or turret armor for the top exposed parts of tanks that I was in (except sandbags). Nor did we even need sixty-plus ton heavy armored tanks patrolling city streets and highways. Things that should have been more thought out in past wars need to be applied to more current engagements before committing young men and women and millions of dollars to them. The U.S overall misjudged its enemies thinking that they could merely intimidate them with destructive bombs and superior technology. Soon as the U.S finally came to the realization that it could not be won this way they withdrew and the North Vietnamese and Communists took control of Hanoi.

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**Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Chad Schultz](#) - Wednesday, 2 December 2009, 07:03 PM

I agree that America and the soldiers both were not ready for the type of war that was fought. Before the exposure of the war it was accepted, and then when the front runners lost their crutch, we started fighting our own war. No one is actually prepared for a war like Vietnam or anything similar but America was not aware until exposure was brought.

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**Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Jennifer Mosier](#) - Friday, 4 December 2009, 07:06 PM

The US was not ready for this war! Just because the US was bigger and was better equipped did not make this war any easier. The US didn't have the heart that the Vietnamese had in saving their country. We were arrogant to expect that we could win anything just because we are the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

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**Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Evan Looch](#) - Friday, 4 December 2009, 09:21 PM

Thats what I was saying and just cause were a prideful type of people with higher technological capabilities does not mean anything when you fight an enemy who will never give up. We are still this way today being arrogant in our belief that cause we got unmanned aerial drones that can bomb the Taliban in Afganistan from California that they are going to be terrified in our tech. accomplishments and give up.

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**Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Chad Schultz](#) - Wednesday, 2 December 2009, 06:58 PM

Honestly, I feel as if the U.S. lost. We engaged in Vietnam to stop the spread of communism in South Asia. This was something we should not have incorporated our self's with. We tried using "Bronze" over brains and clearly, statistically, it states that the U.S. won, but we didn't. Yes, our "Body count" was numerous but we lost composition and became "Monsters". My Lai is a prime example; we were killing innocent bystanders and uprooting them from their homes. Our "search and destroy" mission were taken literal. We were shooting at anything that moved. (don't get me wrong, who knows what would have happened, they were defending themselves. But did we really need to be even in this area at this time.) Our tactics were unmoral and media was exposing this to Americans back home. This increased anti-war movements and once-supporters of Vietnam, saw themselves opposed to this grueling war. Now, we were not only fighting the war over seas but one on our home front. There was so much deception and betrayal that we were swimming in our own defeat. I think, that accepting the wrong and learning from previous mistakes can be taken into account. But obviously, we have not learned from Vietnam, nor any other war since we are once again in a war being continued for unknown reasons. We can not Win or Lose Vietnam but we certainly can learn not to repeat the same.

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**Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Michael Bellamy](#) - Wednesday, 2 December 2009, 07:32 PM

A question such as this can look simple at first glance and seem short in response at first thought, but that is hardly the case here. When it comes to war there are so many different factors that determine "winning" and "losing." These factors cover all angles whether it's through military, politics, territory, or socially. When we look at the United States' involvement with the Vietnam War, we immediately come to the conclusion that it was an obvious loss when the Northern Vietnamese forces took over Saigon, and the country, along with Cambodia and Laos, fell to communism. Usually after one side of a war forcibly takes over and controls the opposing side that's considered a loss for the opposition. More often then not this statement is accepted as true by the general public and with the Vietnam War we must determine who exactly is on the losing side.

First let's look at the military aspect of Vietnam - specifically the body count, which was one of the main statistics used for measuring the rate of success during the war. The United States military lost over 58,000 lives throughout the duration of the entire war, which is a total that is noticeably less than the South Vietnamese body count at over 220,000, and the North Vietnamese body count at well over one million. Generally the side with the lowest body count walks away victorious, so if we were to determine the winner based off of this result, technically the United States won right?

Now let's look at politics. It is very apparent that the United States was fighting a war against communism, and that the end of the war resulted in South Vietnam falling under communist rule. But that's South Vietnam. Over here in the United States we're the same old nationalist country we've always been, and so far there hasn't been a hint of communism in any level of our government. So then this must mean we didn't lose, right? Clearly the Southern Vietnamese are the ones who bear the burden of defeat. We made a political choice to withdraw troops and they did not succeed in defending their own government.

Finally let's consider the territorial and social components of the war. The entire war was fought in Southeast Asia and an overwhelming majority of the Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian land was destroyed beyond imaginable. Entire villages were burnt to the ground and what was left, if anything, was finished off by another air bombing attack. For the Vietnamese, a normal social life was absent, only a distant memory from before the very beginnings of the war. It didn't matter if it was a town, a small village, or a deep part of the jungle, it was affected in one way or another and the very last place to search for peace. The United States on the other hand wasn't being bombed, and there weren't any small towns invaded by search-and-destroy operations. People were not evacuated from their homes and could carry out their everyday lives as they pleased. As far as social life is concerned, there was nothing altering about the direct actions in Vietnam for our country itself. Vietnam was physically torn to shreds, and since the United States came out of the war in one piece, clearly it's the Vietnamese who suffered a much heavier loss, right? Well, maybe...

We look at these elements on paper and get a first impression that the United States "losing" the Vietnam War is hardly the truth. Yet, why is it that when we speak of Vietnam it is always in a negative manner? Why is it that when Vietnam War veterans are asked to relive their experiences many begin to emotionally tear up? And why is it that this war in particular has left such a stabbing pain in our society, and has affected the lives of countless people who were never actually in Vietnam themselves? Even though the numbers go our way, and the overall condition of our country ended in our favor, nothing can take away from the individual personal losses many people experienced throughout the Vietnam War. The United States as a country did not lose, but those individuals will never recover from the searing pain they experienced both physically and emotionally. With that being said, the real question to ask is: *what exactly did we achieve?* Because whatever that is, it's certainly nothing close to a victory.

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Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose

by [Matthew McIntosh](#) - Wednesday, 2 December 2009, 07:49 PM

Can you lose and still win? I might be wrong but I am going to go out on a limb and say that the United States won the war. I know that seems crazy but as I read more about Vietnam I think we won. We went to Vietnam to stop the spread of communism and even though South Vietnam and some of the surrounding countries were taken by communism it did not spread world wide and wasn't that the goal to stop the spread of communism? We lost less men than the North Vietnamese and after we finally left and South Vietnam fell to the North, we limited trade, aid from other countries, and even limited business trying to be established in Vietnam. After Vietnam Congress now stands up to the president and doesn't give him the power to do what ever he wants(except maybe Bush) and now media coverage and how the United States looks at foreign affairs has changed, we now look before we leap or are more cautious with what we do in other countries. With all that I think those things might just be lessons we have learned from Vietnam, but I think we won.

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**Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Paul Slaughterbeck](#) - Wednesday, 2 December 2009, 08:26 PM

I admire you for attempting to argue what is a pretty hard argument for a lot of people to swallow. I wonder if the "(except maybe Bush)" part isn't more important, however. What Bush did in deceiving Congress about the "Weapons of Mass Destruction" to get us into a war with Iraq seems very similar to the way LBJ used the "incident" in the Tonkin Gulf to get the resolution passed that enabled him to do the same in Vietnam. This lesson (even if you argue that both were due to faulty intelligence) is one that was clearly not learned. As to your previous point, you are correct that communism never dominated the world as "we" feared it might, but I don't know whether this can be attributed to our efforts in Indochina or not. Once again, I like that someone had the courage to take up this argument, however.

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**Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Kelly Culhane](#) - Thursday, 3 December 2009, 09:18 PM

I also commend the position that you are taking. If you break things down so black and white like you have, maybe to some people the United States did win. But, I believe that things are not so clear cut. What did we win? As far as the media coverage goes, of course things have changed. Technology has changed drastically, and things are much more readily available, between satellites and the internet. What I find even more disturbing is that we have all of this technology available to us, yet we still remain naïve and misinformed about major political issues. We also seem to be a society that has turned into a society obsessed with gossip. Doesn't anyone else find it sad that we are at war, can not get public health care for our citizens as a fundamental right, but we want to know if Tiger will be getting divorced and how many affairs did he have? Sorry, that was my personal pet peeve!

Anyway, I think that we lost the war in many aspects. The citizens lost their faith and trust in the government that runs them. Soldiers came home, the ones that actually came home, with so many more problems than what we were prepared to treat them for. Nowadays many of them are homeless, incarcerated, in mental institutions, or have lost many things in their life due to the fact that no one was prepared for the problems that they came home with, mentally and physically.

My question is, why has no one discussed who truly lost the war, the Vietnamese? Here is a country that only wanted its own independence, they did not ask to be at war for generations. What gave us, or the French, or Chinese to decide that we know what is right for anyone else? Where does our responsibility lie in all of this? We went over there and destroyed more than what any of the other wars they had to fight did. More destruction of their land, lives, and their way of life. So many refugees fled and were murdered, yet we did nothing to help them rebuild. Sure we gave humanitarian aid, but I am sure that was about trying to save face with the rest of the world. Where was our moral and ethical obligation to help people all over the world then? Why haven't we had to suffer the disgrace of having some of our military men and politicians subjected to War Crimes trials? Is it because we think that we are better than everyone else, or that we are above the laws that we expect others to live and govern by?

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**Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Brian Hein](#) - Thursday, 3 December 2009, 09:34 PM

One of the main reasons we entered into the Vietnam War in the first place was to stop the global spread of communism. We were really afraid China's and Russia's influence in the world would spread. The reading for this week gave a different perspective to the Vietnam War. With the "collapse of the Soviet Union and its empire and the demise of communism" "Americans may come to regard the Vietnam War as little more than a tactical setback in what turned out to be a strategic victory, a lost battle in a war eventually won" (Herring pg. 357). Still, it is hard to think of 58,000 Americans losing their lives was just battle in a larger war.

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Rate... **Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Paul Slaughterbeck](#) - Friday, 4 December 2009, 03:52 PM

What about the fact that it was and is not our right to decide what form of government other countries choose to adopt. If China wants to start running an all children's government in which the rights of people are decided by how much cheese they can produce, so be it. Whether or not Communism spreads to other countries may have been disconcerting to us, but these countries don't belong to us. It is just a subversive form of world imperialism to think otherwise. We must take in as many refugees from tyrannically run countries as we can, and do whatever we can diplomatically and with sanctions to limit the power of the governments in these countries, but we don't have a right to dictate how they are run through force. And the idea that we can predict our own imminent danger, thus allowing us to wage war because it may stop a "future" danger, is a very slippery slope.

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Rate... **Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Name Withheld-6450](#) - Saturday, 5 December 2009, 10:21 AM

Hmm, I'm not sure I agree there. Yes, these countries do not belong to us, but we have to draw a moral line somewhere. Do you know how many people died in the Great Leap forward? Gulags in Siberia? We regard World War 2 as a "moral" war but stopping communism now seems more like Imperialism on *our* part but not on the part of the aggressors. (The Communists) Would you consider the war against the Axis as a war of Imperialism on our part?

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Rate... **Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Paul Slaughterbeck](#) - Saturday, 5 December 2009, 07:44 PM

Who says who gets to draw the moral line where? I am not saying that we should not fight against tyranny, just not militarily outside of our own borders. If someone hits you, you can defend yourself. In 911 we were "hit", so a response was understandable (against the Taliban and with the help of the rest of the world). If someone just looks at you mean, (Iraq, Iran, N. Korea, etc) that doesn't mean that you can hit them. I know these are idealistic and simplistic views, but I just think that war should truly be the last option. Instead it often seems that we are just looking for the first chance we can get to flex our muscles. This policing of the world business is neither our job nor our right, in my opinion. If there were a country who should be doing this duty, I would hope it wouldn't be a capitalistic greed-based society who doesn't even seem to care about their own subjugated and impoverished people.

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Rate... **Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Mikco Stiner](#) - Saturday, 5 December 2009, 07:24 PM

Your right we dont have the right to tell other countries how to run their government but there is suggestion. The only reason Vietnam happened was out of fear of communism causing a domino affect. Which never happened anyway, but the point was we were supposed to be looking out for not only the U.S. but the rest of the world. Sometimes you step out of your bounderies to do so.

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**Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Mikko Stiner](#) - Saturday, 5 December 2009, 07:18 PM

I do agree that the war started because of the fear of communism causing a domino effect. And although we didn't win the war the domino effect never took place anyway. So did we even need to be there fighting to begin with?

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**Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Mikko Stiner](#) - Saturday, 5 December 2009, 07:29 PM

I never thought of it that way but it is a good point. Stopping communism in Vietnam itself was also an objective and that was not reached? And still to this day we have many Veterans that suffer still from the war. Day after day they are still affected greatly by the time they spent there wheather mentally, physically, or both. To me the suffering Veterans is part of our loss that stays with us day after day. I just think there are different kinds of winning and losing.

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**Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Tiffany Adrian](#) - Wednesday, 2 December 2009, 10:08 PM

"The American evacuation of Saigon revealed in microcosm much of the delusion, frustration, and tragedy that had marked the American experience in Vietnam(Herring pg.336.) No I don't believe that we won the war in Vietnam, for many reasons. I think us getting into the war in the first place seemed like a fight that we could not win. Even with the peace agreements in 1973,the war seemed to wage on, and continued to wage on even when the last American helicopter left Saigon. Nixon had promised continued aid to South Vietnam after our departure to ensure they could continue on with the fighting we had trained them for. Unfortunately after Watergate Nixon no longer had any power and congress decided to stop all aid to South Vietnam. "Nixon's ill-advised promises tempted President Thieu to reject the admittedly risky choice of negotiations and to launch a war he could not win."(Herring pg.338),With this NLF invaded Saigon and South Vietnam fell.

So why was the United States so unsuccessful? I think in a lot of ways we were fighting a country that had been fighting for their independence for a thousand years. Even as the Prime Minister of Vietnam said to Robert McNamara "We were fighting for our independence, and we would fight until the last minute, and we were determined to do so, and no amount of money, no amount of U.S. pressure would have stopped us.(Robert McNamara's speech.) With a country so determined to win, could we have ever stopped them, and if we hadn't pulled out could we possibly be at war today? It seems that we did leave the South Vietnamese to fend for themselves and made empty promises to them. We abandoned our allies when we tired of the war. In the end the real losers of Vietnam were the South Vietnamese.

Although North Vietnam was victorious they won at a great expense. Millions of people had lost their lives, and had become refugees. The North and South were still at odds with one another. The country went into economic crisis and the effect of Agent Orange that the U.S. sprayed is still having it's effect today on many people.

Years later I think that we have made our amends and each of our nations share in a history that defines us today. Even today I think maybe there was a small victory for the United States in part with the Normalization of Vietnam in 1977 and then the full support and help of Vietnam to help find those missing in action. We now have opened up an embargo that was administered under the Clinton Administration with Vietnam and large company's like Pepsi Cola and Nike being one of Vietnam's largest foreign employers (Herring 365.) So maybe in ways we did have a small victory, but overall the Vietnam War was a frustrating and disappointing war for Americans who fought and lived through those times. I only hope that we learned our lesson as McNamara stated in his speech. Maybe, but even today it seems we are fighting a war with no end and more American lives are being lost. Will we ever truly learn?

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**Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Mikco Stiner](#) - Thursday, 3 December 2009, 09:34 PM

Unfortunately I do believe that we lost the Vietnam war and still to this day are suffering and at a loss from it. By all means the body count surely showed in our favor but when you take a look at our objectives they were clearly not met. We did not stop communism or the eventual taking over of South Vietnam by the communists. This is what North Vietnam wanted, so they succeeded in reaching their objectives while the U.S. failed. That is why I would say we technically lost the war. If you take a look at the Veterans who were fortunate enough not to lose their lives in combat and came home had to and still may have to deal with the people they saw die even by their own hands, family members in the war that may have died, or a wife or girlfriend who couldn't handle being with a soldier. Many soldiers mentally never came back from Vietnam. They may suffer from things such as Post traumatic stress disorder which can cause them to have persistent frightening thoughts and memories of the ordeal, feel emotionally numb, especially with people they were once close to, sleep problems, being easily startled, or having angry outbursts. There are also many health related problems that many veterans suffer from as well, besides just the more known combat wounds. Agent Orange was the problem of many of those health problems which many are still suffering from today. Some Agent Orange caused illnesses may be: neuropathy, different kinds of leukemia, diabetes mellitus(type2), hodgekins disease, prostate and respiratory cancer, and many others. My dad did two tours in Vietnam and now has neuropathy and diabetes. He is considered 100% disabled. I remember how in shape and healthy he used to be, and in his pictures his muscles were really toned. He now weighs only about 110lbs. His neuropathy is so bad he has trouble walking so he usually uses a cane and often uses his balance and falls. It is so heartbreaking for me to see him this way and I know that there are others out there feeling the loss as well. So for me we lost the Vietnam war and continue to lose everyday as we carry it with us.

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**Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Michael Bellamy](#) - Friday, 4 December 2009, 06:40 PM

I would like to start a new discussion here, and that's focusing on the second part of this question: *Can the Vietnam War still be won or lost today?*

As far as winning is concerned, I honestly think that if Vietnam never happened when it did, and instead started in the present day, we would still not win. I believe that our government would have done the exact same thing as it did all the way back throughout the duration of the war and would get too caught up in trying to prevent something that eventually turned out "unwinnable." If the Vietnam War started today, we would not have learned any of the mistakes we did in the actual war. Obviously now we have far better technology and highly advanced war equipment than we did 30 years ago, but then again, you reflect back on the war and realize that wouldn't make a difference. Back then when you compare our technology to that of the Vietnamese it wasn't even close - this means that our level of success was not related to the technological advances we possessed.

When you look at the current conflicts in the Middle East you can't help to be reminded of Vietnam. Each president during the Vietnam War contributed to the war's escalation in one way or another and just recently, President Obama addressed he will be sending 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan. Again, when hearing things like this you can't help to be reminded of Vietnam.

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**Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose**by [Name Withheld-6450](#) - Saturday, 5 December 2009, 10:47 AM

Yes, totally agreed. We are seeing the exact same patterns now in our current conflicts in the Middle East and Central Asia. A war that is extremely unpopular, troop increases and decreases. And now our current

president has set an exact date for our troops to pull out of the Middle East. I will not make any political statements here, but I will state that simply, we are doing the exact same things now that we did in Vietnam. Whether it's for the best or not, time will only tell.

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Re: Question #1 - Win or Lose

by [Nicholas Holden](#) - Saturday, 5 December 2009, 07:30 PM

Who won the Vietnam war and who lost? With the North Vietnamese flag flying over Saigon it seems like the answer would be pretty strait forward. But the effects of America's involvement in Indochina from '64-'72 are anything but strait forward. I would say that using the terms "win or lose" as well as "victory and defeat" are far too crude and inexact to describe the very nuanced and wide ranging outcome of the ten thousand day war.

First off, the Hanoi was able to conquer the south and reunite the nation of Vietnam on it's terms and under it's banner; it's difficult to argue with a result such as that. America's ally was literally wiped off the map and the images of Marines hauling down the Stars and Stripes over the US embassy in Saigon were seared into the national consciousness for decades to come. America's policy of countering communist threats to Indochina lay in ruins.

But, what of America's other goal; stopping the fall of dominoes in greater East Asia? By this measure America was largely successful. While the US lost in Vietnam we won in a incomparably more important country; China. The Nixon/Kissinger meetings with Mao and the turning of the People's Republic of China against the Soviet Union and it's Vietnamese client stands as the ultimate achievement of statecraft by any power during the Cold War. With one fell stroke Nixon had mitigated many of the ill effects of an American withdraw from Indochina and had given Hanoi a powerful enemy to contend with long after the US had left the scene. It is also worth pointing out that the Indochinese wars did not end after the fall of Saigon in '75. In 1978 Hanoi invaded Cambodia and ousted the Chinese backed Khmer Rouge regime of Pol Pot. Beijing was none too pleased with the actions of their erstwhile comrades in Hanoi and subsequently launched a month long invasion into northern Vietnam in February of 1979 in effort to make the Vietnamese see the error of their ways and leave Cambodia.

While the Chinese invasion was by many accounts an unmitigated military disaster and failed to force Hanoi out of Cambodia it did serve to draw more of Vietnam's scarce resources away from repairing the vast destruction wrought by the American War. The combined drains of a miniature cold war with China and a ten year occupation of Cambodia served to limit Vietnam's ability to act on the world stage until well into the 1990's. All said, while Hanoi won Vietnam America won Asia.

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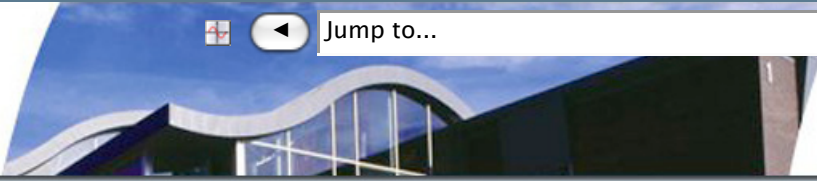
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[Fall 2009](#) ► [HST 195 F09 \(Escobar 21820\)](#) ► [Forums](#) ► [Episode 11 Forum](#) ► **Question #2 - Remember or Forget**


Question #2 - Remember or Forget
 by [Joe Escobar](#) - Saturday, 28 November 2009, 11:25 PM

How have Americans memorialized/remembered/forgotten the Vietnam War, and what do these reveal about changing American attitudes to the conflict?

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Re: Question #2 - Remember or Forget
 by [Amy Wells](#) - Wednesday, 2 December 2009, 06:37 PM

There are big memorials, like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall, that is located between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. There is also a website, <http://thewall-usa.com/>, that show all that was lost during this war. Many remember by going back to Vietnam and trying to heal. In our reading assignment in part 6 of "Patriots" we read the words of Tom Corey who goes back to try to help recover the bodies of fallen soldiers, and also to help show where fallen soldier had been buried. Many veterans handle thing their own way many are still very angry. Tom talks about his brother-in-law who says to him "nuke the place when you leave". Then Tom asks him "why he is so angry", and brings up really good question, "Why so you hate the Vietnamese? Did they ask you to come to their country and destroy and kill their people? Who sent us here? Who lied to us?" When I read these words they were so powerful. I feel that many people views have changed over the years about the war because as time goes on we learn more and more then we didn't know. So as the truths come out feeling change, but for those who fought this war, and for those who lost someone in this war the pain is always there. Taking this class has really opened up my eyes on this subject. I would have to say that I am one of those people who really had forgotten about the Vietnam War because I felt I had no ties to the war. After reading the words on both sides it is a war with many losses. It is a war that should not be forgotten. It is a war that we should study and not make the same mistakes twice.

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Re: Question #2 - Remember or Forget
 by [Tish Bottensek](#) - Thursday, 3 December 2009, 02:43 PM

Amy,

I agree with your post completely! The tragedy of war is simple, those who are involved in the war and those who fight the war are the ones that are affected. I agree with you that a war memorial is a good gesture to remember those who have lost their lives. However, the underlining factor remains those who survived their duties are often forgotten. May soldiers continue to harbor harsh feelings for those of the Vietnamese nationality. Simply because a country is at war does not mean all of the people in the country share the same feelings. I found your quote from the reading where someones brother in law suggested blowing up the entire area to resolve the issue interesting. Many villagers lost their lives in the war, along with the soldiers. I believe we should remember the fallen, but also remember those who have survived. I found your post to be direct and with some very supportive details very well said.

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**Re: Question #2 - Remember or Forget**by [Patrick Brady](#) - Friday, 4 December 2009, 01:00 AM

I agree that we should not forget the war, and the lessons that may have come from it but there are some who are trying to forget it. I know some guys who were involved in it, and they refer to it as one of the darker areas of their lives.

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**Re: Question #2 - Remember or Forget**by [Kelly Culhane](#) - Wednesday, 2 December 2009, 07:01 PM

As far as memorializing the war in Vietnam, the Vietnam Wall Memorial was built on Washington's Mall in Washington DC, and memorials were set up in courthouses and communities across the US.(Herring349) I must say, having been born in 1976, aside from people who were in the war, or lost loved ones in the war, I was not around much talk about it. Sure, in high school we were taught the basics. For instance, the number of people who were killed, how long the war was, etc. But, from taking this class, I now know that what I was told was wrong.

I think that the veterans of the war deal with the aftermath of the war the most. I am sure that the things that they remember from the war, they would soon like to forget. Knowing that these veterans suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, drug abuse, alcoholism, and joblessness just clarifies to me how much pain this war caused. (Herring348) Vietnam I am sure is remembered by the politicians as well, but I doubt to the extent of the soldiers who actually fought in it.

Many men lost their jobs from Vietnam. Whether they resigned or got fired, there was more than just casualties from the frontline from the Vietnam war. Johnson did not seek a second term of the presidency, and Nixon ended up being disgraced and impeached. Even after the war, politicians have had to struggle with their decisions in fear of making another mistake like that in Vietnam. American citizens and politicians alike were much more skeptical of funding any conflict that was not directly related to Americas vital interests. (Herring356)

I think that we have forgotten the lessons that we should have learned from Vietnam. Yes, Congress did pass the War Powers Act in 1973, which requires the president to inform Congress within 48 hours of deployment of American military forces abroad and to withdraw them in sixty days in the absence of explicit congressional endorsement.(Herring328) But, what else have we learned? The truth about how long we had actually been at war in Vietnam, what our true involvement was, and many other questions still are not truthfully answered. I personally believe because of everything else that we see on a daily basis, that we are much more desensitized to war and violence. I would like to think tha politicians are smart enough to see the similarities between Vietnam and Iraq, especially the one's who were directly involved, but I guess that is just wishful thinking.

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**Re: Question #2 - Remember or Forget**by [Tish Bottensek](#) - Wednesday, 2 December 2009, 07:28 PM

Many Americans unfortunately lost their life in the Vietnam war. Though many bodies found their way home many didn't. Though there is an estimated death count it is almost impossible to be completely accurate. Many Americans honor those who fought and loss their lives on Veterans Day and visits to war memorials. But I feel this simply isn't enough. Some men chose to fight in Vietnam; whereas, others found themselves drafted. I believe more attention should be focused those who lived. Last term I did a paper on the tragic consequences soldiers face upon returning from war. My findings were unacceptable. Though we may remember the dead all too often the living are forgotten. I discovered that the care in which veterans receive upon returning is unacceptable. The bureaucratic red tape prevents those who risked their lives for our country from getting the

so desperately needed care. I believe the living, the ones who recall the fight for survival should receive a high priority. Some of the soldiers who returned are still living the tragedies of the war. Many drown their sorrows in alcohol or drugs; whereas, others deny their fears and one day break from the tension. I also believe it would be more beneficial for those studying the war to contact someone who has lived through it. They would discover a more accurate account of events and perhaps helping the person whom they have a discussion with, face their experience. So to say whether I believe Americans remember those who have fallen, yes. But to say they have adequately remembered those who have returned, no I feel they have fallen through the cracks.

I believe many Americans were happy to see their soldiers return home. Many didn't realize the consequences of war would have on many returning soldiers. However, as the rising number of fallen Veterans has shown, the tragic events has taken its toll. If more Americans educated themselves regarding the staggering number of fallen Veterans, they too would be outraged demanding results.

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Re: Question #2 - Remember or Forget

by [Evan Look](#) - Wednesday, 2 December 2009, 08:20 PM

I enjoyed your post to the question and believe that you are correct about how the military and others do not take good enough care of returning veterans. Many of us come back from serving in combat or just separating from active duty and only ones who choose to contact us are recruiter's in a nearby town wanting to sign you up for more time to benefit their quotas. And that is what is sad to me. I did not really need the extra attention that others might have but if they missed me then they missed fifty more that needed the help.

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Re: Question #2 - Remember or Forget

by [William Wymer](#) - Friday, 4 December 2009, 02:45 AM

Evan like yourself when I separated from the Army, the first person to see me was the recruiter. The only thing that he was interested in was how he could get me to reenlist, this included what could he offer me to reenlist. I am very much like you, I also did not need the extra attention, but most veterans need that little extra. I think as a country we need to give that to them and not let them fall in those cracks.

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Re: Question #2 - Remember or Forget

by [Robert Nicholls](#) - Friday, 4 December 2009, 10:57 PM

In reply to the two posts above me with the men who served our country, (thank you very much!) you state that you did not see combat yourself, but knew people who did. Do you think it would be an adequate program for the military to start giving more recognition to the men of the front lines? I think it would be a great idea to give them the notice they need, but would it just lower the others even farther through the cracks? How can we fix the problem of finding who needs the recognition for sanity sake, and who doesn't?

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Re: Question #2 - Remember or Forget

by [Jeffrey Harmon](#) - Saturday, 5 December 2009, 10:49 AM

I agree 100% that the military does not take care of returning veterans, and I feel it is a shame.

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Re: Question #2 - Remember or Forget

by [William Wymer](#) - Friday, 4 December 2009, 02:37 AM

Tish, I liked your post very much, as I was in the Army myself and even though I did not see combat, I did have many friends from high school that did. I have to say that I agree that we do over look the ones that come back home, but we make sure we remember the ones that do not come back. I feel that we need to take better care of those that return home and recognize them the same. We need to remember that they went through a very traumatic thing and need to take care of them, as well as honor them.

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Re: Question #2 - Remember or Forget

by [Scott Burgess](#) - Saturday, 5 December 2009, 07:20 PM

I like your heart felt reply and concerne for veterans. Verteran's day is the day that we are to honor those who came home. I served for almost 12 years and I am a 60% percent disabled vet. When I got out in 2000 I did not see a lot of info on ptsd and suicide prevention. The last few years the VA has gotten out the word and has been what I would consider very proactive. Yes there are flaws and unfortunately you only here about the mistakes and bad things that go on. The VA has state of the art equipment and great doctors. I don't like the hoops that you sometime have to jump throught to get things done but you do what you have to do. I feel that vets can get any help that they need if they only ask; it is there and waiting for them. I hope that people continue to support the true hero's of this great land.

I have heard a lot or horror stories about Vietnam vets not getting the care that they have earned. Some vets waited thier whole life after the war to get a disability rating. It is then awarded to their family shortly after thier death, bureaucracy sucks.

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Re: Question #2 - Remember or Forget

by [William Wymer](#) - Wednesday, 2 December 2009, 08:17 PM

The biggest and most well known way that Americans have memorialized the Vietnam War, would be the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall. The wall is located in Washington, D.C.. There are also many web sites set up in honor and to memorialize Vietnam Veterans and POW's. There is also the Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall, it is a 3/5 scale model of the original memorial that is in Washington, D.C.. It stands six feet tall at the center and covers 300 feet from end to end. The memorial stands as a reminder of the great sacrifices made during the Vietnam War. This memorial was made to help heal and rekindle friendships, and to allow people the opportunity to visit loved ones in their home towns, that otherwise would not or may not be able to make the trip. The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall has been here in Oregon in Springfield at Day Island Park, if I remember correctly last year. Oregon also has its own Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Portland in Washington Park, next to the Portland Zoo. This was made to honor all of the Oregonians that died or missing in Vietnam War.

As for being remembered I would have to say that with all of the losses that the United States endured during the Vietnam War, That it will be hard to ever forget. As long as the internet and Things like the Vietnam Traveling Wall exist we will never forget about the things that happened in and during the Vietnam War. I would have to say that in most cases people still remember The Vietnam War, as a war that should not have happen or at least we should not have been involved in. I also think that most people look back at it when we go into new conflicts and make sure that we are not making the same mistake twice. I also think that people

hope that we learned from it and remember why we are entering a conflict before we just jump in and not know all of our facts. To end this part, I have to say as long as there are still Vietnam Veterans alive they will make sure that we do not forget. I do not believe that this is a bad thing. I have talk with a few Vietnam veterans and have to say that they are the first to tell how bad things were and do not sugar coat the story and their views about the war. I have talk to older veterans of other wars and they are not as obliged to talk about their experiences or what they saw.

I do not think that the Vietnam War will ever be forgotten as there are too many reminders. I also think that people use the Vietnam War as a scale in order to weigh whether we should be in a conflict or not. They also bring up the Vietnam war when they disagree with the way the United States government is not handling a conflict the correct way in their eyes. I have heard many time with what is going on right now, that this is how it went in Vietnam and why aren't we getting our guys out now.

I have to say that this class has opened my eyes to see war in general in a different way. I was in the Army myself and never had to go into battle, but I have friends that are there right now and would have to say that my views have changed a bit. I cannot just say we are doing the right thing and overlook the big picture , I am now looking at all of the little things as well and have become a more round person in my thoughts and views on war. I also have found a greater understanding of the impact that the Vietnam war had on our country than before. This was not just a war to stop communism. The Vietnam War also played a part in the government and people of the United States as well. This was not just a war abroad, but at home as well even though we were not attacked on our home land, it had a great impact on the United States as a whole.

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Re: Question #2 - Remember or Forget

by [Brian Hein](#) - Friday, 4 December 2009, 08:16 PM

Hi William, First of all I would like to thank you for your service to our country. Being older than you, I can remember the end of the Vietnam War and the attitude toward it at that time. The war was so divisive to the country most wanted to forget it as soon as possible. It seems it was years later before the ache from the war had lessened enough to be able to talk about it. I think it was these feelings still held toward the war that was partially responsible for the lack of care provided to those veterans who still needed help. It was hard to separate the memories or the war from those who fought. Also I agree we must remember the Vietnam War veterans and learn from past experiences.

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Re: Question #2 - Remember or Forget

by [Tiffany Adrian](#) - Friday, 4 December 2009, 11:52 PM

I agree, this class has opened my eyes to the real truth behind the events in Vietnam. I remember when I was a little girl about eight years old and my Aunt had taken me to Washington D.C. We had gone to see the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall. When we approached I just remember seeing a older Man and Woman Crying and holding each other. I was to young at the time to understand why they were crying, but after being in this class it has made me remember, and think it was probably their child that they were mourning . I really didn't know a lot about the Vietnam War, only the glamorized movies of the war. "America's obsession with Vietnam was manifest in the sheer volume of the popular culture, by one estimate 12,000 nonfiction titles, 1,400 personal narratives, and 250 films(Herring,pg 367.)" It amazing to think so many different titles and narratives have been written. The Vietnam War has lived on in our memories many ways, I am glad that we remember and it is important never to forget.

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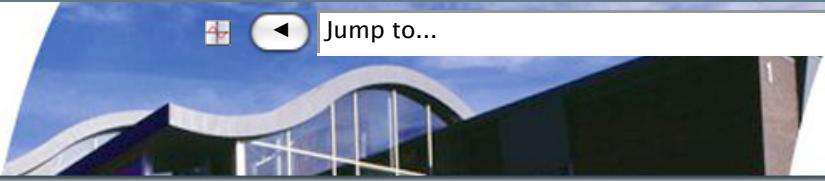
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Question #3 - Legacy
 by [Joe Escobar](#) - Saturday, 28 November 2009, 11:26 PM
 What is the single, most significant legacy of the War in Vietnam for the USA?
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Re: Question #3 - Legacy
 by [Derek Abbott](#) - Wednesday, 2 December 2009, 05:57 PM

The legacy left behind from the Vietnam War, and it's ending is extremely subjective based on which side you ask. For the United States the most visual and well known object of the Vietnam War legacy is the wall memorial located in Washington D.C. This memorial is a massive reminder how many lives were actually lost as a cost for the price of war. The legacy of the Vietnam War doesn't end there however, it can be found in the countless hours of video footage, the riots and protests, the music of the time, and the war veteran walking around everyday. The Vietnam War was the first highly documented, visually exposed war ever and it will always be brought to the forefront of every discussion about war. Since it was so well documented and visual publicized, the legacy of the Vietnam War well never diminish or die. Wether the Vietnam War was a victory or a defeat, a lost cause or a righteous movement all depends on who you ask. Every single person in America has a different point of view on the war. This point of view is relative based on the role he or she had. Its unfair to say wether the war was a good thing or a bad thing, or wether we won or lost. What is more important is the memory of the U.S. soldiers. The most important legacy left behind is the legacy of the people who fought and the people who lost their lives.

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Re: Question #3 - Legacy
 by [Amy Wells](#) - Saturday, 5 December 2009, 04:40 PM

I really like what you wrote here, you are so right that the biggest legacy is the soldiers, the ones who died for this war, and for the ones whose lives will never be the same because of this war. Like I have said before I am not a big history buff so coming into this class I knew the bare minimum about war. As I read through individual stories I began to feel for these people and understand more. I cannot imagine what it must have been like, and I thank the soldiers of the past, present, and future that I never will.

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Re: Question #3 - Legacy
 by [Paul Slaughterbeck](#) - Wednesday, 2 December 2009, 06:06 PM

One of the most enduring legacies of the Vietnam War was how it changed forever the image of the office of the President of the United States, both here in America and abroad. Before Vietnam, the office was far more trusted and respected. After the war a cynicism and well-founded distrust would set in and never leave us. When this country was founded, our forefathers saw clearly how important a strong system of checks and balances was in making the fledgling democracy work. With Vietnam the results of an imbalance within this system became painfully evident. In 1968, when Daniel Ellsberg leaked the Pentagon Papers to The New York

Times, it was akin to opening Pandora's box. "The documents confirmed what critics of the war had long been arguing, among other points that Kennedy and Johnson had consistently mislead the public about their intentions in Vietnam." (ALW. pg. 299) These documents were printed in clear back and white and could not be chalked up to biased innuendo or hearsay. What was even more dangerous, if not more lascivious, was the capacity of the President to deceive and even circumvent the Congress of the United States. "If Congress undertakes to restrict me, Congress will have to assume the consequences." (ALW, pg. 295) These are not the words of a man content to exist within the framework of a three-tiered government in which his power was necessarily checked. Following this statement Nixon attempted something called the Huston Plan, in which he would authorize various intelligence agencies to conduct blatantly illegal activities. "Among other things the plan called for domestic burglary, illegal electronic surveillance and opening the mail of domestic "radicals". At one time it also called for the creation of camps in Western states where anti-war protesters would be detained." (wikipedia) Perhaps the saddest part of this story, however, is the capacity of large sectors of the American public to forget this important lesson. Given what we should have learned from this period of history, it is difficult to explain how the American people/American Congress could allow something like the "Patriot Act" to come into being just a quarter of a century later. Perhaps if you can make the populace frightened enough (by design or otherwise) then you don't even have to lie to them to strip away their rights. The truer legacy, then, may be the fact that we are doomed to learn and forget the lessons taught about the inherent dangers of a too-powerful executive branch again and again.

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Re: Question #3 - Legacy

by [Brian Hein](#) - Thursday, 3 December 2009, 09:31 PM

I agree that Vietnam War did give the U.S. Presidency an image problem. All administrations since have lived under the shadow of Watergate's lasting legacy. It seems to me, now it is not so much the office though, but rather who is the current president and whether or not you are affiliated with their party. Look at how popular the last President Bush was just after 9-11. Because of this attack on American the public was justifiably outraged, and Congress was persuaded by those events to pass such laws as the Patriot Act. My point is, only in hindsight things become clearer, decisions were made with the best intentions do not necessarily turn out the way they were intended.

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Re: Question #3 - Legacy

by [Paul Slaughterbeek](#) - Thursday, 3 December 2009, 10:03 PM

I guess my comments are always shaded with a bias I have toward believing that there are more sinister goings-on at the higher levels of government, especially when money gets involved. Because of realities like the tangling of government and special interest groups, it is hard for me to give them the benefit of the doubt. When the President attempts to seize more power than the Constitution allows, by whatever means and for whatever reason, it always wrong, in my opinion.

"Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely" (Lord Acton, 1887)

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Re: Question #3 - Legacy

by [Jeffrey Harmon](#) - Saturday, 5 December 2009, 10:51 AM

Tell that to Obama!!!

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**Re: Question #3 - Legacy**by [Derek Abbott](#) - Saturday, 5 December 2009, 12:48 PM

During the Vietnam War the leadership role wasn't in the greatest of hands. President Johnson was so concerned with his reputation at home, that his decisions about the war were being clouded. I feel that JFK had a good chance of resolving the war in a better direction, until he was killed.

When Nixon came into office the division of the United States was at a all time high, when it came to the war. Nixon's philosophy didn't help end the war quicker or easier. The war itself wasn't the main topic at hand, it seemed to be the president's image....again!

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**Re: Question #3 - Legacy**by [Brian Hein](#) - Wednesday, 2 December 2009, 07:16 PM

It seems to me the most significant legacy that came from the Vietnam War is how the United States now approaches the possibility of intervention into other conflicts in the world. The lasting effect of the Vietnam War was to change U.S. foreign policy. Since the war whenever the U.S. seeks to intercede in another conflict there always is a comparison made to the parallels of the current conflict to Vietnam. "Vietnam has left a rancid aftertaste that clings to almost every mention of direct military intervention" (Herring pg.349).

Comparisons surfaced in the 1980's when President Regan committed military aid to El Salvador. "The ghost of Vietnam hovered over an increasingly divisive debate on the proper U.S. response" (pg.352) to leftist insurgencies that were occurring in South America at that time. Also, the "Military and Defense Department made it clear that they would not go to war under the conditions that had prevailed in Vietnam" (pg.353). Even later during the first Gulf War there was the thought by many American's opposed to the war that "Iraq was Arabic for Vietnam" (pg.353). And today you hear of warnings of the failures and trappings that happened in Vietnam are, or will, take place in Afghanistan. Although at times it appears we have forgotten the Vietnam War or that it has been put behind us, it still surfaces whenever there is some concern about the possibility of another "quagmire" we may be drawn into.

Seeking to address the pitfalls of the Vietnam War the Powell Doctrine now guides the U.S. foreign policy when there is the prospect of military intervention. We do not look to see if our help is needed on the basis of morality or humanitarianism. But now the focus is upon "public support", "national interest", and use of "overwhelming force" to guide our decisions, areas now thought to have been instrumental in losing the Vietnam War. Many people still believe the Vietnam War was a mistake, and paraphrasing McNamara, many mistakes are made in a war, it is the ability to learn from these mistakes is what matters. It is the fear of another Vietnam that still effects our foreign policy decisions to this day.

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**Re: Question #3 - Legacy**by [Paul Slaughterbeck](#) - Thursday, 3 December 2009, 01:38 PM

I especially agree with you about the "national interest" part. As a matter of fact I believe that to be the key deciding factor in what we do militarily now, and during the time of the Vietnam War. Whether it is the fear of communism or of losing access to oil reserves, we act selfishly when we decide to go to war. We didn't even get involved in WWII until we were directly threatened. It always amazes me how good people are individually, yet how wicked they are in any form of a group, be it a clique or a nation. It is obviously an inherent human trait of some kind that served this species well thousands of years ago, but it is played out and I hope (but doubt) that we as people can move beyond this limiting view of human kind. Patriotism has to give way to humanitarianism one day, or we, as a species, are done. No one ever wins wars, period.

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**Re: Question #3 - Legacy**by [Glenn Dalglish](#) - Thursday, 3 December 2009, 04:05 PM

I agree with your choice as to what the most significant legacy is to the Vietnam War, other than maybe the memorial in Washington. I think that there are many similarities with the Vietnam War and the war that we are in now. First it was war on terrorism in Afghanistan and now we're in Iraq. It does not seem like we are going to be very successful in winning this war, which is opposed by many people. When the people of a government do not back up a war that they are involved in, it is almost inevitable that we will loose. How can we win a war that is not supported by the people who are involved? Obama inherited this war just like LBJ, and I believe he is making progress, but once again I do not see ourselves being successful in this war we are currently in. The Vietnamese were not anywhere near ready to be in control of their own government when they regained control again and I feel the same way about those people in the Middle East.

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**Re: Question #3 - Legacy**by [William Wymer](#) - Friday, 4 December 2009, 02:56 AM

Glenn, I have to agree with you about Iran, I do not see us winning per say. I understand why we are there, but how can you help a country that is always in conflict with its self. They have been fighting for hundreds of years with someone or within themselves. My question is how do we fix situations like these when countries like Iran do not seem to want to be fixed or help. My other question is who is to say that we are right in what we are doing, but ourselves?

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**Re: Question #3 - Legacy**by [Michael Bellamy](#) - Friday, 4 December 2009, 08:39 PM

These are some good posts that include some discussion-worthy points. I like the angle the Brain and Paul take with how it seems like the Unites States is constantly getting involved in foreign affairs; and for selfish reasons at that. But I would like to comment specifically on Glenn's post because we've all heard the phrase, "history repeats itself," and Glenn brings up a prime example of that. The war right now in the Middle East is essentially a reflection of the Vietnam War in more ways than one, and just as it fell into the hands of each Vietnam-era president, Obama is now facing the same challenges. But I find it very interesting that initially Obama promised to begin withdrawal from Iraq, but recently he is sending more troops to Afghanistan. Technically this isn't going against his original pledge, but it is only escalating another issue instead. To me this is an additional example of how history can repeat itself, especially when you look back on the different approaches to escalation and de-escalation of the Vietnam War.

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**Re: Question #3 - Legacy**by [Kelly Culhane](#) - Thursday, 3 December 2009, 09:30 PM

I must say that I think in a way you are right. I think one of our biggest legacies from Vietnam is our foreign policy decisions. I honestly do not think that they have gotten any better over time, by the way. I find it truly disturbing tome that we only deem it necessary to fight a conflict based on public support and our own national interests. This seems to be quite hypocritical to me.

We had no problem invading Iraq because of some mythical weapons of mass destruction, yet once it was

truly realized that there was none there, we continue to stay and fight to liberate the people of Iraq from an evil dictator in Saddam Hussein. Yet, we do not go help the people in other countries that are dealing with even more disgraceful political leaders. Is it because of oil and our addiction and dependence upon it? Or because a lot of wealthy Americans became even more wealthy from doing business in Iraq? Either way, what exactly have we learned from Vietnam, and how has that legacy helped or hurt us from here on out?

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Re: Question #3 - Legacy

by [Tiffany Adrian](#) - Friday, 4 December 2009, 11:28 PM

I do believe that one of the reasons we have been fighting in the middle east for so many years is our dependence on Foreign oil. The Bush Administration was a lot like the Nixon Administration, corrupt and biased tending to their own needs, trying to make the rich richer and the poor forever poor. Forgetting about true humanity and forgetting about the Americans that put them in office, or did we? I don't think we have learned very much from our experience during the Vietnam Conflict. Look at our economy today. It is just as bad as the 1st great depression, now we are living in another. The war we have been fighting for eight years in the middle East has hit our economy because of the money it has cost to be over there, amongst other things. Now we are moving into Afghanistan and deploying more troops at the cost of 33 billion a year. Things have been going like this for so long will we ever not be at war?

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Re: Question #3 - Legacy

by [Jeffrey Harmon](#) - Saturday, 5 December 2009, 10:53 AM

War has been going on for the history of time, there will always be wars. I actually thought Obama would get us out, but a politician is a politician, a liar.

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Re: Question #3 - Legacy

by [Derek Abbott](#) - Saturday, 5 December 2009, 12:54 PM

In order for a long, drawn out war to end properly, the leader needs to be unconcerned with his public image and more concerned with the lives being lost. There needs to be a definite justification to why they're even overseas fighting.

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Re: Question #3 - Legacy

by [Robert Nicholls](#) - Friday, 4 December 2009, 10:45 PM

I definitely agree with your post when you discuss the fact that almost every single scuffle in the world now can be related to Vietnam. I loved the examples and citations. The comparison of Vietnam to Iraq today is scary accurate. We say the war today is to drive terrorists out of Iraq and unify the people. Basically the exact same thing as driving out the Communists and making the government of the country stable. The Vietnam war had so many great lessons to be learned, and I think it will be awhile until we stop finding them. I do not want to inflict my bias opinion on the war today, but it seems very similar, and a similar outcome would not be good.

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Rate... **Re: Question #3 - Legacy**by [Jennifer Mosier](#) - Friday, 4 December 2009, 07:18 PM

At first I thought the most significant legacy of the War in Vietnam for the USA, was "let's not do that again," but looking at where we are now that doesn't seem to hold true. So many veterans are in pain because of what they experienced in Vietnam and now we see this happening again. In one word I would sum up the legacy of the Vietnam War as this: "oops."

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Rate... **Re: Question #3 - Legacy**by [Glenn Dalglish](#) - Saturday, 5 December 2009, 08:57 PM

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There are many legacies from the Vietnam War and I believe that the most significant one is the change in government and how people's view was changed toward their government. People stopped trusting the government and were skeptical because they had been lied to by LBJ and then Nixon came along with Watergate. The legacies from this war are different depending on how old you are and how much you actually know about this war. An older generation will have a much different perspective than a younger one. Sure, there are war memorials everywhere that remind us of where we've been and what we've done, but those don't make us really care in my opinion. If I went to the Vietnam War Memorial, I don't think that I would feel any different than I do now. There were so many events that took place in America during the Vietnam War. Some of them being, the Democratic Convention of 1968, Ohio State, the deaths of the Kennedy's and MLK, as well as the American dream being shattered and people not looking at the government the same way. I don't think that people have forgotten about this and it will take a long time before we forget about this. I also don't think that we will ever be able to put full support and belief behind our government. There are too many conspiracies and scare-tactics that keep us from getting where we need to be. Many Vietnam vets ended up homeless and unemployable because of their condition after the war. I've seen a few homeless people with cardboard signs that read, "homeless Vietnam vet. Anything helps." We didn't help them like we should've and because of this and many other things, I think that American still has a bitter taste in its mouth about how we handled ourselves in the eyes of the world's government. I'm not even sure if we learned anything from it, but I would hope that Obama doesn't make the same mistake in the middle east.

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