



You are logged in as Joe Escobar (Logout)

Home ► My courses ► HST 195 F12 (Escobar 26516) ► November 18 - November 24 ► Forum 4 CLOSED ► Forum 4



Search forums

Display replies in nested form

Move this discussion to ...

Move

**Forum 4**

by Joe Escobar - Monday, November 19, 2012, 12:34 PM

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post.

To reply to someone else in your group, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

When addressing the topic and questions, BE SURE to put something descriptive, such as "Nixon's Vietnamization", "Robert McNamara's confession", or "Fog of War recollections" in the subject line of your post. It will help keep the discussion organized and let others easily know what specific parts of the materials you are talking about.

DO NOT leave the subject line Re: Forum 4

Sum of ratings: -

Edit | Delete | Reply

**Domino Theory Restated**

by Dylan Curran - Tuesday, November 20, 2012, 09:45 AM

Public image and setting a precedent for international policy played strong roles in the process of concluding the Vietnam war. In his speech "Vietnamization and the Silent Majority," Nixon makes numerous references to the importance maintaining U.S. image in the world.

Nixon fears that "this first defeat in our Nation's history would result in a collapse of confidence in American leadership, not only in Asia but throughout the world." In his view, the consequences of this would be "recklessness in the councils of those great powers who have not yet abandoned their goals of world conquest." In effect, Nixon is restating the consequences of the domino theory; if the U.S. lets down South Vietnam, other nations will soon fall to communism.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) 2

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply

**Re: Domino Theory Restated**

by Timothy Haley - Sunday, November 25, 2012, 11:54 AM

I agree that Nixon basically restated the long-believed Domino Theory, but with a new spin. "Peace with honor" changed the issue to being a matter of image. I also observe that Herring quoted Nixon as saying that he didn't care about a second term so much as not being the first President to lose a war. Johnson was of the same sentiment. I find it interesting how these two Presidents managed to take events so personally. I think it's indicative of the egos involved; and when we listen to, or read speeches made by these, and other, figures we should keep that in mind. Johnson didn't argue for image, honor, and appearances of the U.S. so much as he insisted that the U.S. military was the only thing standing in the way of tyranny. Nixon made the public image of the U.S. central to his argument; insisting that the appearance of strength is what was holding back the advancement of China and the Soviet Union.

Sum of ratings:3 (1) 3

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply

**Re: Domino Theory Restated**

by Matthew Menigoz - Sunday, November 25, 2012, 06:03 PM

I think public image was a huge thing and it was the main factor for why Nixon put forth his peace policies. He didn't want to pull out of the war and be looked at as the president that withdrew from the Vietnam war and as the country that retreated instead of staying and helping. So he put forth the Paris peace treaties too have something out there that would work, but not really on it as what he wanted to do. In reality he wanted to stay in the war to keep the pride as a nation as well as get rid

of the communist threats. I agree that he needed to keep pressure among the communist North and that if we did retreat it would of been worse then what it already was.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



McNamara, Nixon, and LBJ

by Tanaya Fonseca - Wednesday, November 21, 2012, 05:01 PM

Like all personal accounts of Vietnam Mr. McNamara's statements reflect person bias. What is immensely helpful with his statements and those of other officials like Mr. Westmoreland, it allows us to see how the war was thought of and considered from those in power. While the soldiers gave us a look at the war on a personal and emotional level, the officials give us the view of the war from a strategic and authoritative perspective. I can understand both perspectives as best as I can, however misguided some of the actions made were. I agree with Mr. McNamara that war is complex, especially the Vietnam war.

The obvious event of Agent Orange authorization seems to be a bit "foggy" in Mr. McNamara's mind. He can't seem to remember if he authorized it or not, which then brings me to question his first statements at the beginning of the film. *"Any Military Commander who is honest with himself, or with those he's speaking to. Will admit that he has made mistakes in applications of military power. He has killed people, unnecessarily, his own troops or other troops, through mistakes or errors of judgement."* Of course, memory is faulty, and he is on in his years but, something as big and as drastic as Agent Orange was someone had to remember who signed off on it. All herbicides had to be approved by President Kennedy and ran through the State Department, being the Secretary of Defense, McNamara must have known about Agent Orange and its use during Operation Ranch Hand.

If LBJ and Nixon were still alive and have given their perspective of the war I feel that it would both add some form of clarity and also release a lot of questions. For both presidents this war was highly personal, and it was based upon their own assumptions of how America should be seen in the eyes of other countries.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: McNamara, Nixon, and LBJ

by Dustin McCowen - Sunday, November 25, 2012, 02:35 PM

I found it a little hard to believe that the Secretary of Defense wouldn't have know what agent orange entailed and not remembering if he authorized it or not seemed to me to be a way of not answering the question and a great example as to why to take personal accounts with a grain of salt. I think that McNamara's unwillingness to answer some of the questions he was asked toward the end of the video demonstrated "the fog of war" in the affect that there will always be questions that won't be answers unless all the main players in the administration were willing to be as honest as McNamara was.

I don't think that Johnson and Nixon would have given us too many more answers or insight on the war due to their highly personal endeavors during their presidency. It was very interesting to me how their personal insecurities and beliefs truly influenced their foreign and domestic policies. I don't think that they would have offered us any forthcoming information if it meant that they would have to admit to any mistakes they may have made.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: McNamara, Nixon, and LBJ

by Timothy Haley - Sunday, November 25, 2012, 02:42 PM

Tanaya, you make a very good point about McNamara not remembering the approval of the use of Agent Orange. After noting that he didn't remember authorizing it, it seems you question his honesty in other things, seeing as the use of Agent Orange was so significant. It seemed to me that even though McNamara didn't remember approving it, he did still acknowledge that it happened while he was serving as Secretary of Defense and therefore he must have approved it. I give the man credit for at least recognizing that.

Something else that bothered me about his explanations of the use of Agent Orange was how he specified that the intent was to defoliate the jungles, not kill people; and that there is no law listing all the chemicals that can or cannot be used in war. I think this is a cop-out. I ask: Why were we using any chemicals in the first place? I understand the tactical reasoning - to deny the enemy of sanctuary. But to destroy entire forests with the use of napalm, defoliants, and herbicides as a matter of policy; this seems like Total War/Scorched Earth policy. How did the top brass and the White House come to decide this was appropriate?

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Nixon and his"savage, punishing blows"

by Dustin McCowen - Wednesday, November 21, 2012, 09:45 PM

Nixon's "peace with honor" strategy was largely a failure because it depended so greatly on Hanoi's willingness to negotiate on his terms. Nixon believed that he could accomplish what presidents before him couldn't by trying to engage Hanoi in secret peace talks by threats of "savage, punishing blows" against Northern Vietnam, including massive bombing attacks on the major cities, a blockade of the ports, and even, possibly, the use of tactical nuclear weapons in certain 'controlled' situations" (Herring, 280). His threats of course had no effect, even after leaking it to the press, because Hanoi demanded that we completely withdraw, which would not be an "honorable" way to end the war. Nixon was so afraid of being the first president to lose a war that his "secret" policies tended to cut off information to his colleagues and the American public, causing even more civil distress and definitely not helping the war end as quickly as he had hoped.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Nixon and his"savage, punishing blows"

by Andrea Porter - Wednesday, November 21, 2012, 11:03 PM

In my opinion the bombing of Cambodia was Nixons "threat" to Hanois unwillingness.Nixons definetly didnt want to be the president that lost the war,but in many opinions by this time we had lost th war.Nixon "honorable" way was to make America look like we didnt surrender and that we were taking the rational way out, we were being the "bigger country"..

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Nixon and his"savage, punishing blows"

by Dustin McCowen - Sunday, November 25, 2012, 08:29 PM

I agree Nixon saw Cambodia as a way to show Hanoi that he was serious, "...he seems to have reasoned that widening the war into previously off-limits Cambodia would make it clear that unlike his predecessor, he would not be bound by restraints" (Herring, 291). He also used it to give vietnamization more time in south Vietnam and it was a great excuse to attack the North's sanctuaries there. Even if his intentions were good the American public saw it as widening a war that we were supposed to be trying to get out of, all the while bringing the anti war movement back to life here at home with even more force than before.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Nixon and his"savage, punishing blows"

by Matthew Menigoz - Sunday, November 25, 2012, 06:51 PM

Although i think the strategy was a failure i think it was a way to see if he could end the war in a way that would be least detrimental to the vietnamese. I feel like he put forth that strategy to suffocate Hanoi and the North into a hold that would allow America to end the war the vietnamese more likely give up. But the thing is that it didnt work and Vietnam wasnt going anywhere and they were standing by what they wanted. I think Nixon didnt want to be the first president to loose a war but I also believe he wanted to regulate this war and do the best he could at ending it.He set himself back by doing this but if it would have worked i believe this wouldnt be an issue and a reason why people make mistakes. Just as Robert Mcnamara said in the video, people as well as Army generals make mistakes but thats how they learn and they move forward.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



LBJ and compromise

by Timothy Haley - Wednesday, November 21, 2012, 09:59 PM

My personal impressions of Johnson's public statements regarding the military actions are of an old-time Texan trying to rally the country as if the situation was analogous to the Alamo. Herring paints a different picture however. After reading the debates about the conduct of the war within Johnson's administration, I now understand that he was having to appease the 'hawks, and rally or convince the 'doves' with his policy. It seems that his political philosophy was one of compromise (I also understand that he was known as a compromiser when he was Senate Democratic Leader). This is difficult for me to realize because I personally think that political compromise is essential for government to be effective. However, in this case, it seems that the U.S. should have been more decisive to either get out, or all in (what I mean by 'all in' is a declaration of war and national mobilization such as what was done during WWII). I don't know what should have been done, just that what was done was a disaster. I think if Lyndon Johnson were alive today and agreed to be interviewed regarding his policies in Vietnam, he would be defensive,

needing to spend time explaining the political pressures he was receiving. McNamara spoke of the American military action in Vietnam in the context of the Cold War -which he asserted was more hot than cold- and the actual threats and perceived threats that came with it. Perceived threats played a large role in Johnson's foreign policy, and I think he would try explaining the pressure and criticism he received from his political opposition. I also think he would insist that if Goldwater had been elected, their would have been a nuclear war.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Vietnamization (Part 1)

by Matthew Menigoz - Wednesday, November 21, 2012, 10:29 PM

I think their were many problems that the president and government had to face before they started to pull out troops and end the war. Nixon states that it would have been an entire disruption of their work to bring peace to the vietnamese nation. He thought it would bring complete khaos and disruption and that it would be a copycat of what happened 15 years before that time. Which was the massacre of thousands and total rule by communist which was a nightmare for the North. It also brought a factor of glory and pride by showing defeat to the vietnamese communists and would collapse Americas strength of confidence throughout the world. Also if we pulled out before vietnamese were fully trained and ready for combat they would have been overrun by the North.

Richard Nixon wanted peace for vietnam and the U.S. and he showed that with his peace proposals. I think he was right in proposing the ideas he had and thought would work becuase they were the right thing to do. By giving resolution to the people and pulling out of vietnam and not continueing battles would of stopped alot more deaths and damage. He wanted the vietnam nation to have its own electoral presidency by voting the proper government and leader in. I think the reason he decided to bring these proposals to light instead of stick to his plans of continueing the war was becuase it was the only way he could bring peace and planning to their nation. Instead of just pulling out of the war and letting things go into kaos. He came up with the ideas for if they were to pull out it would eliminate deaths, casualties, but still push the vietnamese to put the right government in place as well as make sure people had their equal rights.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Vietnamization (Part 1)

by Andrea Porter - Wednesday, November 21, 2012, 10:57 PM

Nixon had great proposals on how to end the war. I would like to believe that he didnt pull troops out right way to avoid kaos,but then why invade Cambodia? The war at this point was already kaos, soliders from all sides were done fighting. I dont know if there would be kaos or just pure joy that the war was ending.

Sum of ratings: (1)

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Vietnamization (Part 1)

by Tanaya Fonseca - Sunday, November 25, 2012, 01:41 PM

Matthew,

I partly agree with your sentiments of Nixon truly wanting peace for Vietnam, however I do not necessarily agree with his approach. In a torn country where there is already so much corruption, implementing an electoral process and trying to really hammer out a democratic system would never truly work. It's like spraying perfume on someone who was sprayed by a skunk, it never fully solves the problem. Nixon started on a superficial level with Peace talks only to, in my opinion, save his own image. There was a lot of similarities between the Southern Vietnamese masses and the US citizens of that time. Both were completely at odds with their government, and no real change could take place unless the voices of the people were heard. While establishing a government in Southern Vietnam was a noble goal to achieve, American involvement in such a task was not winning or aiding that goal in anyway. The Vietnamese saw that any American backed government was a false government and therefore would get no support.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Vietnamization and Nixon

by Andrea Porter - Wednesday, November 21, 2012, 10:51 PM

In Nixons speech he states that a Asian leader told him "When you are trying to assist another nation defend its freedom,U.S. policy should b to help them fight the war but not to fight the war for them". If one was to sum up the reason we were in the war

that statement would be the best way. The issue or problem with Vietnamization is that it should of happened at the start before thousands of lives were taken. So now after years of war the South Vietnamese soliders were suppose to be trained and take on the rest of the war? These men had been beaten down morally and had lost the fight in them by the time Nixon had this plan. Nixon had the right idea but lost Americans faith when he invaded Cambodia. One minute he is pulling out troops and not wanting "Johnsons war to be Nixons war" and the next he is invading Cambodia. One could argue that maybe Nixon was doing this as a way to show that America still could fight and that we had indeed won the war or that we werent surrendering but just trying to "assist" South Vietnam. In my opinion Nixon should of just pulled troops and be done with it all. Why lose more of our soliders? Who cares who won or lost? In my opinion no one did.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Fog of War**

by Andrea Porter - Wednesday, November 21, 2012, 11:25 PM

If LBJ or Nixon were doing a film like McNamara i definetly think they could give their opinions on the war and what happened in govermental terms, but definetly couldnt inform us on what went on in Vietnam. They could give us stats and numbers but couldnt give us the personal feelings or emotion that many of the authors in Appy's book. I strongly feel that both LBJ and Nixon would give us their political opinion of the war. I think this is the same for McNamara. McNamara states that we didnt know enough about Vietnam or its people to properly advise them. If that were true which in some ways it is then why did we send our troops over to fight? Shouldnt we have "learned" more? McNamara claims that the Vietnamese government considered us a replacement for the French but didn the American goverment allow that?

Sum of ratings: 1 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Fog of War**

by Tanaya Fonseca - Saturday, November 24, 2012, 01:43 PM

Andrea,

You bring up a good point about LBJ and Nixon just giving us the statistical information. I feel that they would always lean more towards the statistical aspect of the war because then it will help them evade the more personal reasons as to why they continued with the war. The trumped up statistics that both presidents have on their side, covers up the fact that there was no reason to really continue with the war. We got involved in a civil war between a country and themselves, what there was to gain other than image and country "ranking", I have no idea. Perhaps they could create something that was logistically at stake for the US in their interviews, but I feel that they would not give any useful information at all. Both Nixon and LBJ are highly introverted and highly paranoid individuals that any real pertinent information would be left out. For fear of admitting to mistakes, problems in leadership, etc. neither wants to admit having failed. It perfect sums up the war in and of itself, personal image and status is more important than the reasons why so many people died and for what reasons.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Fog of War**

by Andrea Porter - Sunday, November 25, 2012, 09:34 PM

I agree with you 100% Tanaya. I think America stuck their nose where it didnt belong and then needed to save face with the world and especially the American people. We should of offered our help by teaching the South Vietnamese how to handle their own problems, if that is possible.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Fog of War**

by Matthew Menigoz - Sunday, November 25, 2012, 06:42 PM

Yes the Government did allow that becuase we were providing aid to the French which makes no sense becuase we provided an entire army! We didnt learn anything from the first president to the last, simply becuase they wanted to be their and finish the war they got theirselves involved in and werent leaving. The feeling among the government was not to back away and loose all pride and power we had as a nation but to fuel it. If LBJ or Nixon had an interview like this their wouldnt be any more useful information on this war but political views. They could tell you detailed information they recieved and make decisions upon, but thats about it. The Appy book is the best way to get detailed information that has strong feeling and views from different people among different sides.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Fog of War**

by Andrea Porter - Sunday, November 25, 2012, 09:37 PM

Matthew, I agree Appys book is the best way to get detailed info. Also its true we didnt learn anything from first to last president because none wanted to be the one who lost the war for America. All were trying to push the issues on past and present president.

Sum of ratings: (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Problems with Vietnamization**

by Timothy Haley - Saturday, November 24, 2012, 08:24 PM

According to Herring, one way that full 'Vietnamization' was hindered by a lack of popular support. He noted that the Thieu government was mostly made up of "Chinese merchants, loyal bureaucrats, and army officers, held together by the glue of corruption" and that "despite the frenetic activity in the villages, there was nothing to indicate that the pacification program had generated any real enthusiasm for the Thieu government" (p. 286). This is a vague identification of the problem, but it hits on something that had plagued the entire effort to create the nation of South Vietnam since its inception. The people's loyalty hadn't been earned. Very few democratic governments can survive for long and remain democratic without the support of the masses.

Herring also goes deeper and observes that even though the military aspects of 'Vietnamization' showed early signs of success, the South Vietnamese government remained entirely dependent on U.S. economic aide. After more than a decade, the governments of South Vietnam had failed to develop an independent and self-sufficient economy.

Thus, South Vietnam could not fund its struggle for the long-term, nor could it count on a steady supply of military recruits that would be effective on the battle-field.

Sum of ratings:3 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Problems with Vietnamization**

by Dustin McCowen - Sunday, November 25, 2012, 01:43 PM

It seems to me that the early signs of success seemed to be a little padded just as the previous administrations reports on our progress in the war were misleading. As Herring stated "The figures were grossly inflated, however, and although the insurgents' clandestine apparatus was severely damaged, it remained intact" (Herring, 286). The progress that was made was definitely a good start but it was all done with major American military and financial support and was in part due to the north going on the defensive. I agree with you that the South Vietnamese's corrupt government and the willingness of the people to stand behind it and fight was a major problem in moving forward as well.

Sum of ratings:3 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Fog of War**

by Matthew Menigoz - Sunday, November 25, 2012, 06:34 PM

I think from the statements made by the forer secretary of defense, is that they do reflect upon how the war started, how it and why it was involved, and how it ended. Among the Appy book and this short video we can still see that their was just so many questions and answers for why America was involved in the first place. We think of the vietnamese as just people we were helping and they see us as people who came and destroyed their country among with killing millions of their people. Their understanding of the war was different from the understanding we had, which really sets questions up as to why we did what we did and is their things that are hidden we dont know about. Between the books and this interview it shows how cloudy some things may be and how touchy certain subjects are. I think their is alot to the vietnam war that isnt shown and was never shown, and its something only the people who experienced will know about. I still believe that we did the right thing in stopping a communist power and threat and heping the southern vietnamese people become independent and prosper. But, i also dont like the way America did things, the people they killed and the unecessary massacres and brutality shown from pride and arrogance. I think alot of veterans from the vietnam war have guilt and shame and dont want to talk about things they did and saw just like Robert McNamara didnt want to in his interview.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

**Peace Talks**

by Timothy Haley - Sunday, November 25, 2012, 10:04 PM

On the question of whether or not Nixon was right in de-coupling Vietnamization and U.S. troop withdrawals from peace talks; I really don't understand why he did, other than to pretend that the U.S. was saving face in front of China and the Soviet Union. In the end, the results were the same; the U.S. left and eventually South Vietnam collapsed. Seems it would have been more productive to tell North Vietnam- 'we're leaving, so could you guys chill out?' I also don't understand why Nixon and Kissinger refused to stop supporting Thieu; especially when he eliminated his political opposition in South Vietnam. That's the kind of independent democracy we wanted? Why Thieu? What was so important about him? Why was allowing a free and diverse election out of the question?

But, it also seems to me that most of the peace talks weren't really peace talks, but simply both sides telling the other to stop fighting. Herring noted that much of Nixon's willingness to participate in negotiations were a ploy to appease his political opposition within the country. I don't see much difference in reasoning between Nixon and Johnson. Both refused to concede American defeat, and both had to bend at least a little to political opposition. Nixon, however, truly seems to have been more concerned with public image, and based his decision making accordingly. This is a terrible military strategy. Diplomatically, it translated to attempted intimidation of rivals. This is a terrible peace strategy.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

You are logged in as Joe Escobar (Logout)

 Moodle Docs for this page