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**Forum 5**

by Joe Escobar - Saturday, November 24, 2012, 09:28 PM

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IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

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**liberal realist**

by Andrea Porter - Tuesday, November 27, 2012, 10:29 PM

I would have to say I am more of a historian like Appy. I believe in the stories and events that others have experienced. To me that is what history is, accounts of peoples experiences and events in their lives. I am definitely more of a liberal realist than a conservative revisionism, which does surprise me. Normally I have a very conservative way of thinking but I agree that Vietnam was unnecessary and preventable. I feel that yes we could of helped South Vietnam we didnt need to fight the war for them.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) 1

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**the real legacy**

by Andrea Porter - Tuesday, November 27, 2012, 10:42 PM

The soliders are the real legacy of the Vietnam War. All the soliders that fought for either sides are the true legacy. Many of these soliders were drafted to fight in a war that they knew nothing about or didnt believe in. Many Americans soliders left home knowing how the people in their countr didnt support them fighting. American soliders came home and were judged for partaking in a war that they didnt even want to be involved in. These soliders have to live every second of their lives with the memories of a war that has forever changed their lives. The true legacy is to support your troops. they are fighting for our legacy as a country.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) 1

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**Re: the real legacy**

by Evelyn Deutscher - Thursday, November 29, 2012, 09:52 PM

Andrea,

I found your post interesting. When I thought about the legacies of the Vietnam war I thought more about the effects rather than the people involved as being the legacy. It does make sense that they would be a legacy of the Vietnam war since they are the ones that have to carry the war with them the rest of their lives for good, or bad. However if you explore the soldier issue more you find even more legacies of Vietnam, such as the treatement of returning soldiers, how they were affected by the war, the stereotypes we cast on the etc. But regarding the soliders as a group as the legacy of Vietnam is an important point that I forgot about.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: the real legacy**

by Andrea Porter - Thursday, November 29, 2012, 11:17 PM

Evelyn, Thank you for your reply. I agree that the treatment of the soliders and what the soliders came home to is part of their legacy. These soldiers gave their lives for a war that had little or no support from their own country. In my opinion the Vietnam war will never be over because these men / woman have to live with it every second of their lives.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: the real legacy**

by Matthew Menigoz - Sunday, December 2, 2012, 09:05 PM

I also think the soldiers were the real legacy we have from the vietnam war. These were our own family and friends going to hell in order to fight for their country. They didnt know what they were going to have to deal with or endure. The worst part was that their own people disrespected them, and treated them like dirt when they came back. How would you feel if you were doing something for the greater good as well as to serve your country and then come home and get spit on. It shows that this legacy is what was taken from the war through the acknowledgement of veterans in the years since. The movies, support, help, and focus on veterans and what really happened in vietnam has really shown the hell a soldier went through during the vietnam war.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Betwixt 'New Left' and 'Liberal' revisionist theories**

by Timothy Haley - Wednesday, November 28, 2012, 12:55 PM

The reasons for U.S. involvement in Indochina have always confused me. Growing up, I was exposed to the tail-end of Cold War politics and it all seemed like hype and hysteria to me. Watching movies like Red Dawn in the eighties made me laugh. I could never understand why Russia would ever invade the U.S. Wouldn't it be insanely expensive to do so? The nuclear arms race also made no sense to me because even if one side could destroy their 'enemy' without retaliation, the long-term global economic consequences would be catastrophic. No sane leader of any country would desire this, so I always viewed the Cold War as either complete mass insanity, or carefully constructed lies to rally the population into preparing for and going to war. So when I looked back at foreign policies and military actions of the fifties and sixties, I saw two empires trying to dominate world economies without picking a fight with the other. Smaller countries getting caught in the middle was just collateral damage. I think that put me in the 'New Left' category.

After this class, however, I'm even more confused. I still don't understand how a war can be purely political and not about controlling resources; but after studying both the Johnson and Nixon presidencies, I think internal politics was the biggest contributing factor for them. In that sense, I think I have moved towards being a 'Liberal Revisionist'. Additionally, my opinion has been influenced by the fact that the Truman administration refused to listen to, or bargain with Ho Chi Minh when he offered exclusive tax-free exporting rights, presumably because he called himself a 'communist' (p.12,13).

On the other hand, Marxist Theory observes that as private corporations gain more economic power, governments become beholden to their will (some argue that is as it should be; corporations are made of people, and governments should serve the people, therefore governments should serve the needs of the corporation). So I also found it fascinating how both Herring and PBS noted that with the exception of a few private corporations, France spent more money and energy controlling Indochina than it ever got back. This phenomenon falls in line with the 'New Left'. I also wonder why Eisenhower insisted that the real concern for the U.S. was Laos. Why? Neither Herring nor Appy answer this.

Finally, I observe that 'Conservative Revisionist' theory doesn't seem to answer 'why U.S. involvement?'. All I get out of it is 'why U.S. military strategy failed'.

These are the reasons I now find myself somewhere in between 'New Left' and 'Liberal Revisionist' theories.

Sum of ratings:3 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Betwixt 'New Left' and 'Liberal' revisionist theories**

by Andrea Porter - Wednesday, November 28, 2012, 04:34 PM

Timothy.....After taking this course I realized that what I thought were my political views were not. I walk away from this a little confused and a lot educated. I never really got the political side of war. When first reading some of the course materials

I honestly thought, 'Hello, we are America why didnt we just air strike the crap out of North Vietnam and go home'? But that just showed my lack of knowledge for the people involved. Appys book opened my mind to what people really went through. I remember when I was in highschool they never really talked about the Vietnam War in history class. I have researched Eisenhower this term trying to figure out what this man was thinking. my biggest question is why Laos? I could not find any information as to why he truly felt it was a threat except that he thought North Vietnam were using the country to hide out and use as safe haven for upper military(i got that info from the internet) In my opinion the conservative revisionist theory was just another way for politicians to try to make themselves look better when it comes to this war.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Vietnam - New Left**

by Tanaya Fonseca - Wednesday, November 28, 2012, 02:48 PM

In strictly dealing with these three options of how to view Vietnam, I would say that I am a New Left. The Vietnam War was a terrible event that should (not could, but should) have been avoided, not just for US involvement but also for the Vietnamese. I do not think that the US knew what it was doing in Vietnam, no matter how many objectives were being told, marked, and plotted on maps. The real, definitive reason for being involved in Vietnam was non-existent. What was even worse was the lies piled onto a non-existent platform, and the thousands and thousands of deaths that followed. While, outside of the realm of Vietnam, I do not subscribe to the mentality of "Left = Good, Right = Bad". In this instance I do see the right as being in the wrong. Military strategy could only have worked if the perceptions of the enemy were correct or based on truth. Political and social aid could only have worked if the US did not try and implement their standard system in a country where democracy was not known, and for a time was not wanted. In contemplating war strategies and economic plans, knowledge and information is needed from the people you are supposed to help and fight for. No knowledge was gained from Peace Talks, or secret meetings. Relationships were severely damaged, and trust was broken to the point where once actual conversation started flowing, no one wanted to speak.

Corruption was thick in the government in South Vietnam, much as it was in the US at that time. It does not surprise me that a corrupt government failed to help lead the Southern Vietnamese, when it was a corrupt US government that created theirs. Nothing can be all rainbows and fairy-tales, no one can really sit down and talk out a complex issue such as nation building -- especially when facing a Communist take over. But the continued escalation, the continued ignorance, and the continued lies both on the US and Vietnam's' part is what created the war and sustained it for as long as it did. I just don't find myself agreeing with any parts of it at all. The way in which it all was handled goes against my better common sense, it was adding fuel to an already raging fire.

Sum of ratings:3 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Vietnam - New Left**

by Andrea Porter - Wednesday, November 28, 2012, 04:24 PM

Hey Tanaya...One thing I have learned from these forums you and I share alot of the same views.I also agree with being a New Left. The Vietnam War definetley should of never happened and will always be Americas biggest mistake as far as I am concern.As far as left being good and right being bad I dont nessary feel that its true.I look at it as smart and not so smart. Yes military means war but in this cas the Vietnamese people needed education and a mediator. I found that though I am usually more of a conservative minded person when it comes to politics when it comes to this war I do not agree with the conservative minds.

Thanks for all your opinions and thoughts this term in the forums.Many things you stated in your forums not only resembled my own thoughts but were eye opening in other areas. Andrea

Sum of ratings:1 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Vietnam - New Left**

by Evelyn Deutscher - Saturday, December 1, 2012, 10:47 PM

Tanaya, I agree with a lot of your points and the main point of the fact that we shouldn't of been in Vietnam. I think to an extent our involvement would have been okay if we tried to help the nation as a whole rather than a spot to fight the Cold war. In addition our involvement would have been better if we actually took the time to make a capable government for South Vietnam and tried harder to address the needs of the people and win their support. Lastly we should of just understood the culture and the events that were going on in Vietnam because without these pieces there was no way we were going to be able to do the rest.

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**Re: Vietnam - New Left**

by Matthew Menigoz - Sunday, December 2, 2012, 10:18 PM

Tanaya,

Even though i added on here that i would be most likely a liberal realist i can still connect and understand why you think your a New left. From McNamara coming out and saying their were things they could have done different and thet they should of pulled out earlier. To the massacres and effects it had on our soldiers it really makes me think to why we were their. I think their are many reasons why they shouldnt have been their but also many why they should have been their. The most frustrating thing behind all of this is the fact that all this is even a debate. Should we not be apart of a war that has question to why we are even their? Also i think it does go against the common sense aspect to why we are battling somebody elses war? Althought some reasons were good by not allowing a communist takeover, how do we know those were the real issues over their? With the media we had their could have been a huge agenda and that is he problem.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Left Wing Liberal Realist Revisionst**

by Jacob Pusey - Wednesday, November 28, 2012, 05:34 PM

It is difficult for me to place a label on what kind of "revisionist" category that I would fall into. I feel that the liberal realists and the radical left both make excellent points. The war was certainly avoidable and terrible decisions led to terrible consequences. At the same time, I understand why the radical left believes that because the way that America dealt with foreign policy following World War II, put the U.S. on a collision course with communism and the spread of leftist ideology. When I say the war could have been avoided, I mean that it should have been a long time before there were any "advisers" on the ground in Vietnam. I guess then that I would place myself somewhere between a liberal realist and a new leftist. It is difficult to place your own political beliefs completely outside of how you choose to look back on modern history. McMahon's article says "debates about the Vietnam conflict remain as hotly contested years after the war's end as they were at the height of U.S. involvement in the late 1960s." I believe that this is true because this country is still so dramatically polarized on matters of foreign policy, domestic policy and simply ideology in general. We still debate on whether protesting war is patriotic or treasonous. Or whether we should involve ourselves in other country's affairs simply for or own economic interests. We continue to talk about a war that occurred in or close to our lifetimes because we compare it to events that are happening now. I cannot count how many times journalists or politicians have made references to Vietnam when talking about Iraq and Afghanistan. They try and use the mistakes and the successes of that war in order to strengthen their arguments.

My own beliefs prevent me from agreeing with much of what a conservative revisionist may interpret. Even so, I value their opinions from a historical perspective because they do add to the debatable aspects that exist when we discuss this war in particular. This is why it is hard for me to call myself one type of "revisionist" or another when I feel it is important to understand them all in order to best comprehend history.

Sum of ratings:3 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Left Wing Liberal Realist Revisionst**

by Timothy Haley - Sunday, December 2, 2012, 03:53 PM

I agree that it is important to study and understand all perspectives in order to come to a better understanding of historical events. I get bothered by absolutist arguments. I also think you've hit on something important when you notice how many reports on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan refer to the Vietnam War in various ways. Media institutions do seem to report on the present based on how they think it fits into the greater narrative of previous patterns. These different interpretations of the Vietnam War seem to depend on political affiliations. How we view the present determines how we view the past, and vice-a-versa.

I also agree that we should have waited a while longer before deploying any 'advisers'. However, if we had waited, would we have seen that the South Vietnamese government was too unstable to bother? Or perhaps we could have seen how to make the government more stable, and focused on that first. This was the debate within Johnson's administration; does a stable government come from a strong military? Or does a strong military come from a stable government? Johnson's policy ultimately was formed by assuming an affirmative answer to the former question. You and I seem to be of the opinion that we should have tried the second question first.

Sum of ratings:3 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Left Wing Liberal Realist Revisionst**

by Emerald Jones - Sunday, December 2, 2012, 10:57 PM

I think you hit the nail on the head when you said that this war is as hotly debated now as it was years ago, due to the

continued polarization on foreign policy matters. As far as a lot of other matters as well. I think it is difficult to place labels on a lot of things. Especially an event such as the Vietnam war, which seems like it would befit a variety of labels. I cannot say if there was any way a war could have been avoided altogether in Vietnam but I am sure there were many ways its damage could have been lessened.

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Liberal realist

by Dustin McCowen - Wednesday, November 28, 2012, 08:15 PM

Being born in the early 80's my knowledge of the Vietnam War was fairly nonexistent, which is one of the reasons that I took this class. After reading both the stories in the Appy book and the detailed account of our involvement throughout the years in Herring's book I have definitely come out with the view of a liberal realist. Our involvement in the war, in my opinion was based largely on the personal insecurities and politics of our past presidents, which was largely hinged on the fear of communism and the fear of losing a war that would make America look weak. Vietnam was fighting for their own independence for years before we ever came into the picture, and I think the fear of Ho Chi Minh's possible alliance with China and Russia was greatly exaggerated by our presidential offices over the years. One of the most valuable things that I learned while reading about our presidents and their policies, is how much their personal beliefs and fears aided in forming those policies. The fact the American public was so willingly deceived throughout the entire war by nearly every president gives me new reasons, based on the past, not to trust politicians.

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Re: Liberal realist

by Dylan Curran - Thursday, November 29, 2012, 09:22 AM

It's remarkable to me how much the drive to preserve U.S. image played a role in the country's initial and continued involvement in the war. For American leaders, much of the impetus to "hold the line" in Vietnam was to continue the appearance of being "tough on communism" and to keep a reputation as a country that honors its commitments to its allies.

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Re: Liberal realist

by Evelyn Deutscher - Saturday, December 1, 2012, 10:57 PM

Dustin,

I agree with your points about why we were involved in the war. The beginning of our involvement in Vietnam was really marked by fear of the spread of communism and our pride that we could do it better than the French, while our continued involvement was based on the fact that politicians feared that it would make America weak. Though I do think that at that time at least in the early years a lot of American critics would of thought politicians that hypothetically got us out of Vietnam were weak. However your post does make me think of a idea, which is how differently things could have been if Ho Chi Minh had not been a communist.

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Judging the Vietnam War, I'm Somewhere In Between

by Evelyn Deutscher - Wednesday, November 28, 2012, 08:34 PM

After reading the article I seem to find myself somewhere in between liberal realistic and conservative revisionist, leaning more towards conservative revisionist. I do think as with most of what happened during the Cold war that America exaggerated events or happenings of the world and the Vietnam was no different. The Cold war hysteria of the time infected our foreign policy and probably blinded political figures of the actual situation. They only saw events through one lens, but they never seemed to stop and ask themselves questions about our involvement in Vietnam. Whether we could do it differently or whether the events really mean what we think.

However if I am looking at the Vietnam war as America was entering the war or before when we were trying to consolidate the Diem regime I lean more towards conservative revisionist. Often during America's time in Vietnam we failed to see true facts about corruption, support for Diem or Saigon regime, and the extent that North Vietnam or the NLF had infiltrated the southern population, among other things. It is with these shortcomings and an over exaggeration on our part that led to miscalculations in plans for Vietnam policy and the war. This is probably not the only reason we lost the war, but it probably is also a major contributing factor.

All in all I fall somewhere in between a liberal realist and conservative revisionist. I believe that America unjustly defined Vietnam and failed to recognize events in Vietnam. Once in Vietnam we again failed to recognize happening and accurately report them. Essentially making Vietnam a mess, that seemed somewhat unavoidable.

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Re: Forum 5

by Dylan Curran - Wednesday, November 28, 2012, 09:21 PM

I've come away from this course with a liberal realist perspective. The part of this philosophy that I most closely agree with is the notion that the United States failed to properly estimate the power of revolutionary nationalism with popular support. Perhaps if this had been understood at the time of the war, the US might not have entered Vietnam in the first place.

A recurring theme in our study of the Vietnam war has been the U.S. emphasis on massive firepower, which was clearly not an effective tactic in this conflict (this fits into the "limits of US power" part of the liberal realist perspective, as well as that of the conservative revisionists).

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Re: Forum 5

by Evelyn Deutscher - Friday, November 30, 2012, 10:33 PM

Dylan,

I think that your comment about the fact that the "United States failed to properly estimate the power of revolutionary nationalism with popular," was not purely just the failed to estimate the revolutionary movement, but they failed to recognize that Vietnam was a revolutionary movement. Our country saw or at least seemed to think of Vietnam as purely a communist expansion and nothing more. With this type of Cold war thinking it makes sense that they logically ruled out the power of the revolutionary nationalism. So while your statement was correct there seemed to be more reasons behind why the United States failed to see situations in Vietnam.

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Re: Forum 5

by Dylan Curran - Sunday, December 2, 2012, 09:54 AM

That's an excellent point, Evelyn. I'd like to add that a recurring theme in our study of Vietnam has been the tendency of the US government to "lump" all communists into a unified, expansionist force. So not only did the US fail to distinguish between communism, nationalism, and revolution, it also failed to realize that North Vietnamese communists were separate from the Soviets and Chinese, just as it was slow to recognize the growing Sino-Soviet split.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Forum 5

by Tanaya Fonseca - Saturday, December 1, 2012, 02:48 PM

Dylan,

While reading your post "brain over brawn" came to my mind. With the strategy of Vietnam, I think that aptly applies. The US thought they could discourage the enemy by sending in all this "state of the art" technology and planes, bombs, chemicals, etc. In reality what they failed to realize is that while you have the tools to do the job, you also need the instructions and information on how to handle them. The rush 'em strategy fails when the other team has predicted your movements and your responses. The North Vietnamese were very calculating and never gave up against the US' firepower, they planned and strategically attacked vulnerable areas even when faced with our bombs. Perhaps it was their will that made them seem so calculating or maybe they did have superior strategists in their Military. I would be interested in reading a book like Herring's, but from the Vietnamese perspective of the strategies of war.

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**Conservative Revisionist**

by Sierra Lavoie - Wednesday, November 28, 2012, 09:43 PM

The Vietnam War may seem futile to us now but I understand why Americans felt the need to go to Vietnam. This was a time when South Korea had just fallen to Communism and the domino theory was very much believed. If you believed in the domino theory than there really was no option but to go fight for the soon to be oppressed people of Vietnam. This fact is the decision that we made and all we can do now is look back and learn. During the Vietnam War there were many mistakes made. Most of these mistakes could have been rectified. Our tactics in Vietnam were all wrong. We didn't adjust the way we fought to meet the sneaky guerilla tactics are enemies had. We had more money, more weapons, and more power. The logic of it all said we would win. We went to Vietnam with a cocky mentality and we got knocked down. This could, of course, been prevented. In Herring's book we repeatedly read about expert military advisors and generals who believed we were fighting the war all wrong. Our body count method was foolish and misleading. None of our tactics were right for the type of jungle fighting we were involved in. We made mistakes and plenty of them. Many top officials didn't speak up about the mistakes being made. So we continued to make the same mistakes throughout the entire war. These foolish mistakes that could have been changed cost countless lives. The bombing attacks that went on during the entire war caused more irreparable damage than it did good. The only people the bombing really affected were the innocent Vietnamese trapped in a bloody war. We went to Vietnam cocky and when we lost we returned humbled. There is something to be learned in that.

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

by Evelyn Deutscher - Friday, November 30, 2012, 10:41 PM

Sierra,

I totally agree with your post. I think we went to Vietnam with a mentality that was wrong for the war and with tactics that were meant for a conventional war rather than the guerilla warfare that was going on in Vietnam. Also our body count, search and destroy and bombing methods was costing us much more money than it needed to. I do want to add that along another thing that hurt us in the war was that we failed to ever understand Vietnamese culture. It seemed that we thought of ourselves as the people that were going to teach the Vietnamese how to get stuff done rather than respecting them. Also programs where we relocated villagers only fostered more discontent since their land was secrated and that was a fact we never took into consideration when dealing with the public.

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

by Dustin McCowen - Saturday, December 1, 2012, 03:46 PM

I agree that there is definitely something to be learned from the Vietnam War. We all know the saying that we have to study the past to prevent making the same mistakes in the future. I think that is especially true when studying the Vietnam War. It is hard for me to understand the great fear of communism because there has been no real threat of such during my life time, but as our instructor mentioned, the fear was very real in the U.S. during that time. I think that our involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan today is comparable to the Vietnam War because we are trying to fight a war that we don't really belong have a clear cut way of winning. I also wonder how much of the information we get from our administrations is correct, because of all the "fluffing" of our progress in Vietnam. I have to assume that politics haven't changed much over the years.

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

by Justin Wease - Wednesday, November 28, 2012, 09:45 PM

I think that I can identify with each one of these groups at one point or another in the debate. So, if I had to choose one, I would definitely go with the liberal realist viewpoint. Perhaps it is because, as McMahon pointed out, there are only two schools of thought concerning the literature coming from the Vietnam War: Liberal realists and their radical left critics. I tend to believe that wars fought on soil other than our own tend to have a certain amount of hidden agendas coupled right along with any good intentions. This is purely a feeling I have based upon my existence so far. More and more Vietnam looks like an avoidable tragedy to me.

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**Re: Liberal realist!**

by Matthew Menigoz - Sunday, December 2, 2012, 09:34 PM

One of the biggest things that i believe we have wars and involvement in most foreign countries are becuase of hidden agendas. You can go all the way back to World War 1 for that and look all the way till now and tell me we havent had a few cases of hidden agendas. I think the war was very avoidable but like you say was done for good intentions. It could have been minimized and stopped even during the war, but becuase of the American intentions we didnt. During my time period on this earth and my knowledge of this war it just seems to me that this war like others were way to brutal, pushy, and agenda filled.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Liberal realist!**

by Emerald Jones - Sunday, December 2, 2012, 11:01 PM

I agree Matthew that most of our involvement in foreign matters is probably a result of ulterior motives. You mention good intentions, however if we have ulterior motives and or hidden agendas are our intentions really that good? Does it still count if we do good things even though our point was something else entirely and the good, helpful things we do are just a means to an end?

Sum of ratings:1 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Liberal realist!**

by Jacob Pusey - Sunday, December 2, 2012, 10:24 PM

It is tough to try and condense all that we have learned this term and try to place a label on how we feel about it. Especially with the varying opinions from the Appy book. I agree with Matthew and his feelings about hidden agendas regarding American involvement in foreign wars too. The administrations that were in power leading up to the war as well as the ones that escalated it, were only doing what they thought was best for the U.S. Unfortunately, we see these mistakes and find it easy to pass judgment. That being said, it is obvious that those same people made terrible mistakes that led to a massive loss of life on both sides that in the long run was unnecessary and tragic. In my opinion we should never have set foot in Vietnam. We certainly had something to prove at this point of the Cold War and thought that a Third World country in Indochina would be a great example of our military superiority to the Soviet Union. I do not think it went so well. But, as we have learned, from a historical perspective one person's opinion is only a small voice and really has little meaning in any historical context.

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by Michelle Srstka - Wednesday, November 28, 2012, 09:52 PM

Before I even started reading this article I thought for sure that I would most identify with the 'liberal realist' line of thought. Ultimately, that is the conclusion that I came to but it surprised me that I also identified with conservative revisionist.

The article says that "...military and civilian leaders failed to develop realistic plans for achieving American politico-military objectives in Vietnam, failed to assess accurately the capabilities and intentions of their adversaries, and failed to coordinate specific battlefield tactics with an overall strategy for securing victory." This is something that I agree with. Once we were in Vietnam we underestimated our enemy and were not prepared with a specific, well developed strategy to win the war.

While I can see that point of view, I ultimately returned to the liberal realist perspective because I see the Vietnam War as unnecessary, avoidable, and a tragedy. Had more time been spent evaluating the situation in Vietnam we might not have gotten involved in the first place.

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

by Sierra Lavoie - Friday, November 30, 2012, 11:41 AM

Michelle,

When reading the article I found that I agreed with the conservative revisionist the most but I also agree with the liberal

realist perspective. I have not made up my mind if the U.S going to Veitnam in the first place was good or bad. But I do beleive that once we got there, there were many things that could have been changed so the war was fought better. The aftermath of the war in Vietnam was very humbling. I think this really brought us back down to earth and probably saved us from other conflicts we may have cockily entered. I feel sorrow for the Vietnemse their country was destoryed and the lost so many loved ones. The U.S. could have handled things a lot better and worked harder to save the innocent civilians.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Liberal realist

by Michelle Srstka - Saturday, December 1, 2012, 07:51 AM

I had the same thoughts reading the article. The viewpoint that I agree with depends on what point in the war we are talking about. Before the war and at the very beginning, before we had fully entered the war with combat troops, I see things from the liberal realist perspective. Whether involvement was right or wrong, I think that the tremendous loss of life could have been avoided had we considered other perspectives and tactics. For example, our tactic of relying on tremendous firepower- had we thought about it more carefully we might have realized that it would not be the most effective tactic and would have a greater number of civilian casualties. Talking about our tactics during the war I find myself identifying with the conservative revisionist. I certainly agree with you that the Vietnam war was a very humbling experience for our country. I do think that it made us realize that we cannot win a war based on firepower and the strength of our armed forces alone- there are other parts to the equation that vary with each conflict.

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Re: Liberal realist

by Tanaya Fonseca - Saturday, December 1, 2012, 01:58 PM

Michelle,

I think we needed more evaluation on Vietnam's circumstance before intervention as well. Discussion of Vietnam before intervention seemed brief and coupled with the "threat" of the Domino Theory, in depth talks seemed practically avoided. I think that if terrible atrocities are being committed anywhere, whether it be in the street or in other countries, someone should step in and try to stop it. However, that does not mean that all care should be flung out the window and a risk assessment shouldn't take place. There are complex issues for when countries intervene among other countries. Not only financial responsibilities to the war and to the Nation, but also the man power and negotiations have to be thought of first. If we leave everything to the last minute, or even the middle of the war, to consider we have already lost. Proper strategy before, during, and after the war should be dicussed openly and honestly. Something we had failed to do numerous times with Vietnam.

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Re: Liberal realist

by Michelle Srstka - Sunday, December 2, 2012, 09:26 PM

I agree with your point about the domino theory. There was so much fear of losing a country to communism that there was not much pause to really consider the circumstances and situation. It seems like throughout the war everything we did was a reaction that was not well debated and considered. There are situations where intervention is needed, but there needs to be a well developed plan. Vietnam was something we were totally unprepared for.

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Re: Liberal realist

by Michael Sitterley - Sunday, December 2, 2012, 04:36 PM

I think it is next to impossible to put just one title to our individual viewpoints of the Vietnam War. There were times that I found myself siding with all the points of view. I understand what you said about being surprised with siding with another view. I too surprised myself.

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**Re: Forum 5**

by Michael Sitterley - Wednesday, November 28, 2012, 09:54 PM

I find myself leaning in the direction of a "liberal realist" in my view of the Vietnam war. I feel that the war was a tragic waste of money and life and I feel that there never was any chance of winning the war. I know how close we came to complete nuclear war with the Soviet Union and the difficulties the US had with communism. But Vietnam did not turn out to be the tipping of the dominos that everyone feared. I do find at times that I lean to "the new left", in that I feel some of the aspects of the war were moral. Although the cause of combating communism was a noble cause, the fact that we stepped in and started a civil war that was destined for failure seems immoral. I believe that the resources that were lost could have been used elsewhere in the world with better results.

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

by Phillip Hubbard - Wednesday, November 28, 2012, 10:09 PM

I believe that the legacy of Vietnam and the United States involvement rests with the presidents that made the decisions. President Truman started the war by aiding the French. He gave them 10-15 million dollars. He was starting America's involvement in Vietnam even though we were not at war with the North at that time. Then president Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon all played their part, be it not equal, in continuing or escalating the War. As the war continued the American people began to ask questions and try to exam why we were there. In previous wars the President was seen as honest and to have integrity. As questions began to be asked it was revealed that the president might not be as honest as once thought.

I find it ironic that the American chose Nixon on the belief that he would proceed to end the war. But rather extended the bombing for 3 more years. The anticipation of the American people led them blindly into each proceeding election hoping for an end to a war that they simply could not find a clear answer of why we were there.

Looking back and examining the most recent presidential race I find similarities in how the public voted. American's voted for whom they thought would end the war most quickly. Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon were all elected with American's expecting the end. Obama was elected and then re-elected with hopes of ending our involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan among other highly debated topics. I think Americans have been misled for many, many years and it is our job to dig for answers to topics that truly concern us and not rely on media outlets with hidden agenda's.

The president is the commander and chief. All decisions must go through him. Above all that is why I feel the War in Vietnam's legacy must begin and end with each president during this time.

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by Timothy Haley - Saturday, December 1, 2012, 03:30 PM

I agree that U.S. involvement in Vietnam began with President Truman's decisions. I'll even agree that Eisenhower bares some personal responsibility for pressuring Congress into funding his agenda. However, I don't agree that responsibility for U.S. involvement and defeat in Vietnam lies only with these and the next three Presidents. When it comes to deployment of the military, and the policy of that deployment, yes, the Commander-In-Chief is responsible. But, in all stages of the deployment, Congress consented to, enabled, and funded the action. Cabinet members offer their expertise and advice to Presidents who must consider it. To lay blame on Presidents alone is to deny that Congress funded Eisenhower's plan to build the new nation of South Vietnam; that Congress enabled Johnson to deploy more than 500,000 troops without declaring war; and that the majority of Americans voted for Nixon, the candidate and party that asserted they could ensure an American victory.

Basically, my argument is that the political systems of the U.S. are too complicated to lay blame for the war on only five people. In fact, that is the purpose of its complexity; to prevent the will of one person from becoming reality. The American political system relies on checks and balances. Yes, these Presidents also deceived both Congress and the American people; but I think that tells more of the complacency of the public, and how Congress had become used to the Cold War and using the military. Both the Congress and the public were so afraid of 'communist aggression' that they rarely questioned whether the use of the U.S. military was appropriate.

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by Michael Sitterley - Sunday, December 2, 2012, 04:41 PM

I agree that the legacy of starting the war started with the presidents but it does not end with the presidents. On paper, we can say that it was Trumans war or it was Nixons war, but in the end it falls on the rest of america to endure the lasting legacy of war. The legacy we as Americans have to deal with is the veterans and their families, the massive amount of money spent on the war, and the fact that it made the people of other countries hate Americans. Presidents will always say they can fix all of the problems of the previous administration but often fail because sometimes the hole previously dug is just too deep. The commander and Chief does make all the final decisions, but it is always the Americans that pays for it.

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War protestor

by Emerald Jones - Wednesday, November 28, 2012, 10:30 PM

I have no label for what my political affiliations would be. Politics has always seemed so complicated and at times, senseless. Vietnam seems to be caused and maintained for so long, due to the politics of the various parties involved. We (the US) were determined to stop the spread of communism, yet we didn't want to alienate the french too much, but we also wanted to help the vietnamese but we also didn't want to continue getting stuck fighting the war for them. That seems like a lot of different interests. Especially considering the interests/politics that Ho Chi Minh had. The video we watched had soldiers and students basically facing off. Going against people that could be your peers or maybe even friends in another place. Both sides were just trying to do what they thought they were supposed to be doing.

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Nobody Wants Another Vietnam

by Jacob Pusey - Wednesday, November 28, 2012, 11:05 PM

The fallout from the war in Vietnam has had incredible significance in the way the United States government has conducted foreign policy. Being the first foreign war that America lost, it still stands as an important humbling reminder that the Pentagon and whoever has occupied the White House has clearly not forgotten to this day. A humiliating defeat to a Third World communist country seemed to keep the war hawks in check for the next few decades. Initially Americans felt that our presence in any nation would be enough of a persuading influence to repel any internal revolution that was leaning towards Soviet control. During the war, the U.S. Military dropped 7 million tons of bombs. This was double the amount that that were used during World War II in all of Europe and Asia. It was so shocking to our government that no matter how many troops and/or firepower they sent, we were still unable to break an enemy that we considered to be inferior. This was a hard learned lesson that still has an impact on how they decide whether or not a conflict is worth it. Vietnam did not end the Cold War by any means. It did however limit where and amount of resources that the American government was willing to throw at any disruption of our American capitalism. We still protected American economic interests but, they were mostly through sanctions and covert operations such as Nicaragua in 1983 or small scale invasions like Panama in 1989. Politicians and the military have been fearful of beginning another "Vietnam" since the end of that war. Herring remarks that "the fundamental lesson was never again to intervene in Vietnam-like situations in the Third World." (pg. 352) This change in the U.S. government's attitude has saved countless lives and in my opinion has had a more profound impact than any other aspect of the war.

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Re: Nobody Wants Another Vietnam

by Sierra Lavoie - Thursday, November 29, 2012, 11:04 AM

Jacob,

Vietnam was extremely humbling and I to think that it has a lot to do with our foreign policy in other countries. No president wants to start another Vietnam. We thought the Vietnamese were inferior "gooks" and we believed we with our superiority could quickly come in and win the war. Well the "gooks" sure showed us. Despite all the million tons of bombs, the state of the art weapons, and many of our top military advisers they still won. They used their guerilla tactics, the never ending supply of soldiers, and of course the media to their advantage. The Vietnamese fought courageously for their homeland and the American soldiers fought bravely for their country back home. The Vietnamese were fighting to free their homeland and that instills much more courage than if you are simply fighting for someone else's homeland.

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You could call me a realist

by Natasha Haynes - Wednesday, November 28, 2012, 11:06 PM

After learning about this war and what was known and done behind closed doors. I would definitely consider myself to be somewhat of a liberal realist, but that is not implying that I share all their beliefs. I think what appeals to me most in this revisionist idea is that it recognizes that America should have "appreciated the limits", of its own power. We went into this country thinking that because we had so much money and "power", it would be such a simple defeat, but we were wrong. Things just continued to get dug into deeper and deeper, and it only became harder for use to get out. I do also appreciate that the radicals see and clearly believe that America was, "concerned primarily with its own economic expansion, and reflexively opposed to communism, indigenous revolution, or any other challenge to its authority" (McMahon), because I believe it to be true. The thought of loosing the economic resources that South Vietnam had to communism was not considered a good one to America. However, what really stirred me right when it came down to placing myself within a group is the idea that, "American involvement in the war as an avoidable tragedy". I don't think I will ever forget certain stories in the Appy book. From soldiers reminiscing about having to burn and destroy little villages down, knowing that it was all those people had, to reading about young soldiers dying or becoming paralyzed because of bobby traps set up in open fields. All of these things were very much so avoidable.

Sum of ratings:3 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**End of Trust in Government**

by Dylan Curran - Thursday, November 29, 2012, 09:17 AM

I think that the most significant lasting legacy of the Vietnam War for the USA is the distrust of the government. Before the era of the Vietnam War, Americans tended to trust their leaders without question and put faith in their government (Legacy News Hour, Beschloss). President Johnson led the country deeper into the war while allowing corrupt practices in his administration. Then, Nixon escalated the war in apparent contradiction with his campaign promises. He meanwhile violated civil liberties to combat dissent at home, and was eventually forced to resign amid the Watergate scandal. This period of dishonesty and misconduct by American leaders marked the end of America's faith in its leaders.

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by Sierra Lavoie - Thursday, November 29, 2012, 11:05 AM

Dylan,

I agree with you completely. Before Vietnam the government and its practices were never questioned. During and after Vietnam we are constantly questioning are government. We know there is corruption in it as indicated by the Watergate Scandal during Nixon's time and even know with the situation in Libya under Obama. Its a good thing America's opened their eyes to the corruption in our government. There is less the government can get away with because American's are constantly questioning those in power. Now more than ever we are able to instantly be able to see the choices the government makes through the news and the internet. During Vietnam news didn't get around so fast and it wasn't so readily available. Now I would like to think the people have much more power than they did during Vietnam.

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by Tanaya Fonseca - Saturday, December 1, 2012, 02:12 PM

Dylan,

I think in that respect that was a positive outcome of Vietnam. Not necessarily to distrust the government but to question authority. Question why "we" are doing such things in foreign lands, what "we" are at stake for losing if we do not. Vietnam certainly woke Americans up to how much power they let their government have in situations like this. Clearly, no matter how much we protested and begged for the war to be over, it was still up to the presidency to decide whether or not to end the war. But the War gave a lot of people a reason to become more politically active, more vocal about their own opinion on America's foreign affairs. It marked a very clear distinction between America's government and America's people, I know a lot of people in different countries always say "Yeah, I love your people, but I hate your government." I think citizens need to realize that we are no longer a united nation in the sense that we are one with our government. Our government is now its own separate entity, and we have to watch exactly how it tries to "represent" us.

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**Re: End of Trust in Government**

by Michael Sitterley - Sunday, December 2, 2012, 04:44 PM

The war definitely left most Americans distrusting their government and officials. Before Vietnam, the american people knew who the soldiers were fighting and why they were fighting. With a war like Vietnam, with no real reason to be there, only helped to harbor distrust.

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by Dustin McCowen - Sunday, December 2, 2012, 04:49 PM

I agree with you Dylan, I think that Vietnam really gave the American people the perfect opportunity to see how our government works. As Stanley Karnow mentions in the News Hour video the American public was kept largely in the dark about the details of the War and when things were brought to light on the true details, there was a large gap between what our government told us and what the true reality was. I also think that Jonathan Holloway makes a good point by saying that we tend to be more skeptical about our presidents now than we were in the past. Personally I think that the more skeptical that we are of our leaders the more they have to be accountable for what they do and say.

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by Matthew Menigoz - Saturday, December 1, 2012, 10:06 AM

Im definitely a liberal realist mixed with some conserativeness. I believe we had to be in vietnam for a number of reasons but at the same time we didnt have to be for a number of reasons. I think we should of been their to help the southern vietnamese establish their country and bring a stop to the spread of comunism rule from the North. Getting rid of communism as a whole is something that Americans do and are against fully. Helping people when they are in need and coming to aid with another nation needs it, thats also what we like to do. But for the things we should of done better is whats most important for the time being throughout the vietnam war. we definetly needed a better strategy to come into this war with, one that was focused on the communist threat and nobody else. The massacres and deaths of millions that probably didnt have to be if things were worked out in a diplomatic or less aggressive way. Also i believe our carelessness of where we attacked and what we bombed could have been really brought to attention better. Becuase werent we the ones who stopped Adolf Hitler from slaughtering and killing millions of innocent people? But yet tears later were over in another nation practically doing the same thing in some cases. I think im more realist becuase of the main ideas and reasons of the vietnam war but also have conservative in me becuase of App'ys book. When you hear it from people who experienced it its hard to not be against things they did over their from a moral standpoint.

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by Timothy Haley - Sunday, December 2, 2012, 12:16 AM

In the Legacy video, Stanley Karnow asserted that you can't understand the legacy of the Vietnam War without understanding how the U.S. first got involved. He also mentions that those were the days when the American people didn't question the government, especially regarding the use of the military.

As mentioned in other posts, I think that one lasting legacy of the Vietnam War is a more habitual distrust of the government. However, I don't think that distrust is as far-sweeping as many think, including those scholars in the video. I think a bigger legacy is political division, with most distrust dependent on party lines. I have observed that most people I know who vote Republican didn't question George W. Bush's foreign policy and conduct of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. On that same note, most people I know who vote Democratic haven't questioned Barack Obama's conduct of the wars either.

The biggest legacy in my opinion is the shift in political attitude specifically towards the use of the military. Herring described how many previous 'doves' had favored military intervention in places such as Somalia and Kosovo, while many former 'hawks' didn't (p.356). The main points I take from Herring is that most Americans are still willing to use the military, but aren't willing to tolerate extended warfare. Another is the existence of serious division along political lines as to how and why the military should be used.

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by Dustin McCowen - Sunday, December 2, 2012, 05:01 PM

I agree with you that people tend to put their loyalties with their political affiliation and are much more critical of those that are not lined up with their views. I think that only goes so far though, just as in the Vietnam war during Nixon's term in office many doves and hawks joined together to protest the war and ultimately bring the American people together, no matter what their political affiliation. I think that different views of how to use our military are definitely a good thing, and will help to keep us out of wars like Vietnam.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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Re: Legacy of Division

by Natasha Haynes - Sunday, December 2, 2012, 09:41 PM

You make a great point in saying that you have recognized that some people fail to recognize the policies of their presidential choice after they have been elected. Which makes for a great illustration in how the majority of people want to trust their choices. However, when things do go up in flames, and the public is suddenly alerted and warned about policies gone bad, people all of a sudden freeze up and quick change. For instance, after McNamara was brought into the light, he suddenly comes out with a book explaining how he opposed what he did. Where there's freedom, there's always unforeseen shifts.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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Link to Pictures of Vietnam War museum in Vietnam

by Sierra Lavoie - Sunday, December 2, 2012, 11:12 AM

Hi, Guys

I found this really neat link to the Vietnamese museum of the Vietnam War. It shows picture of the tiny entrances to tunnels and their cunning handmade traps. There are about ten pics I found it very worthwhile.

http://away.com/vacations/travel-gd-vietnams-cu-chi-tunnels-photo-gallery-sidwcmdev_118953.html?utm_source=outbrain&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=outbrain

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Re: Forum 5

by Matthew Menigoz - Sunday, December 2, 2012, 06:51 PM

I believe the most significant legacy that we should take away from the Vietnam War is the legacy our soldiers left. The soldiers that fought in the Vietnam War had to endure more than just death. They entered the war not knowing what they were entirely fighting for. There was so many cloudy facts and information surrounding the reasons America got involved in the war and what we were really there for. They suffered through such hard times and having to be away from their families for years. A lot didn't come back from the war, and a lot came back with major physical and mental health problems. They had to battle among themselves through pride and revenge. Soldiers were apart of things that even Veterans today are not proud to talk about. Then coming back they were spit on and treated like outsiders to the American people. Through the years we have reflected back on this war and have brought much more support and explanation to the veterans of the Vietnam War. We've done it through the wall, movies, and books that have let the American people understand what really happened during the war. Our legacy is our soldiers and what they witnessed, endured, and did during the Vietnam War.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

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Re: Forum 5

by Natasha Haynes - Sunday, December 2, 2012, 10:14 PM

They certainly are a legacy. I still don't think after learning more about this war that they are recognized the way that they should be. Yes, a lot of them did do a lot of bad things, but also a lot of them were young and somewhat left in the dark about what they were really fighting for. And today, the ones that did make it home alive, battle with the scares of the hardships that they went through. I met a man who talked about having flashbacks when the weather got to humid here in Oregon. Just a weather change, and he would think and act like he was still in Vietnam. There are so many stories similar to his, and instead of recognizing what he went through, a lot of people just deem him as crazy.

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

by Natasha Haynes - Sunday, December 2, 2012, 07:31 PM

I would have to say that the single most significant legacy of the Vietnam War was how the people of the United States were able to illustrate just how important their voice was and still is. The Anti- War movement was a massive thing and stands as a perfect example for how the real people of the United States can assemble and not just make noise, but have their noise heard. Appy writes, " Many Americans saw the protests as one of many signs that the very structure of society was crumbling; that traditional authorities were losing control" (Appy 264).

The Anti- War protests enabled the people of the United States to have their real opinions and voices heard, and most importantly fight for what they believed their country should and shouldn't do.

Deidre English, who was a Anti- war protester says, " We began to wonder if the government was not only at war with the Vietnamese, but would go to war with America's own youth" (Appy 30). The protests not only was a war of it's own, but it demonstrated the power of the people, the "everyday citizen" kind of people. That is a huge accomplishment and holds significant legacy.

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