

HST 195: History of the Vietnam War F14 (Escobar Meta 21179)

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Legacy



by **Joe Escobar** - Sunday, November 30, 2014, 12:59 PM

This forum thread is for Legacy posts and replies.

After studying the required materials, address the various questions. For purposes of encouraging discussion, you may decide to separate your responses into SEPARATE posts. To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

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BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post. Do NOT simply leave it RE: Legacy

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Loss of Trust



by Zachary Embree - Tuesday, December 2, 2014, 5:13 PM

The most significant and long lasting legacy that was left from this war was the great loss of trust the government received from the public. If you compare the way that people back then viewed the government and their role in society to today's view the differences are huge. One thing that always struck me as odd in the Herring book was the freedom with which the government operated as well. The idea of believing what the government is telling us nowadays is considered foolish, I would even say many Americans expect the people in power to be dishonest, not just about certain issues but as a character trait. But when reading interviews it sounds like back then taking what the president said as at the very least mostly true was how people thought. I cannot help but think that the large "credibility gap" as explained in the video, played a large part in souring the respect the government had in many of the younger generation. That is in part because I view the war in Vietnam where for the

first time the government lied so completely and the evidence of those lies was dead US soldiers. While the war had undoubtedly a huge effect on the hundreds of thousands of people directly involved that amount pales in comparison to the hundreds of millions of people who had their view of American society altered. The loss of trust in the government resulted in changes of the policies and behavior that are still present today. The idea of the President or Congress instituting a draft is just unthinkable, especially for a foreign conflict.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Loss of Trust

by Sierra Smith - Wednesday, December 3, 2014, 1:41 PM

I find it very sad that we have to keep our guard up at all times when it comes to our government. It is odd to think that there was a time when people were proud of what our country represented and the actions of our government to support our pride. There are one too many countless shameful incidents, such as Vietnam War that can never give us back that trust we previously had. It really IS foolish in my opinion to believe everything we are being told by the government. Things just don't work that way. In a perfect world we would have a transparent, honest leadership of this country, as well as other countries in the world but unfortunately with power comes deceit.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Loss of Trust

by Zachary Embree - Friday, December 5, 2014, 9:02 PM

Very true, deceit seems to be a universal trait among those in power. I like to think one thing the nation needed back then was a balance of our pride with the realities of the situation. All too often a politicians turn to pride in the country as a means of gaining support from everyday people. It turns the idea of " America is a great place to live" into "America is the best place to live", forming a false sense of exceptionalism. I have grown very suspicious of any politician that constantly tries to insist on this kind patriotism, because it seems like that is just another way of dodging the issue at hand.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Loss of Trust

by Racheal Bryant - Wednesday, December 3, 2014, 6:36 PM

I liked your answer, your point of view was very enlightening. I don't think I would have thought about this as a lasting impression from the war. Our view of the government changed and that still holds today. We do seem to anticipate those we elect to be to be dishonest, we look for a candidate who is the lesser of the two evils.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Loss of Trust

by Marquita Lucier - Thursday, December 4, 2014, 10:17 PM

Zachery you do bring up some good points that I noticed as well while watching the video clip, Legacy. The American people didn't ask questions and were confident in the government "back then." The government did lose the trust of the American people and it became an issue of creditability when the leadership lied to the public, as a result, the people lost confidence in the system. Even today, our politicians will still use a lot of rhetoric and make many promises that they are unable to keep. With all the information that we can obtain or given, there are still hidden truths. Having three sons now age 26, 18 and 13, I am glad we do not have the draft. I like the idea of being given the choice to serve our country in the military as opposed to the government making that choice for us. One of the greatest freedoms we have as Americans is the freedom of choice. The Vietnam War gives us many lessons to be learned as one of the speakers mentioned that a lesson to be learned is that no foreign war can survive without the public support. The people need to know the reason for war, the cost, what they are giving their lives for and that their loved ones died for a good reason.

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Deceived and left in the dark

by Sierra Smith - Wednesday, December 3, 2014, 12:42 PM

I believe a huge legacy from Vietnam War is "the end of American innocence" as stated on the video. It created lack of confidence of our leaders that we once used to listen to and trust as our first instinct. The Vietnam War in my opinion sparked skepticism that we previously did not have toward our leaders. They after all made so many mistakes that cost so many lives. In my opinion the authorization of Agent Orange, cockiness that we'd win, and the drawn out years of unnecessary war was enough to create cynicism in just about anyone regarding our leaders. Another great point brought up from the video was to realize the most important lesson that "no foreign war can succeed without that large domestic support....you have to level with the country, you have to make them understand the price they're paying, somehow the country got to feeling that each new endeavor in Vietnam, that it was going to be over soon, that there was a light at the end of the tunnel, instead of being told it

might be a long war and what the reasons of the war were". I think that the American people woke up and realized the they were being left in the dark and the level of dishonesty from our government was and still is hard for us to bare.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Deceived and left in the dark

by Rachelle Wells - Friday, December 5, 2014, 1:09 PM

Doris Kearns Goodwin's statement stood out to me as well in the Legacy video, Sierra. Especially when she said, "Wherever we lay blame—or not—there's no question the lesson to be learned is that you have to level with the country." Also, author Stanley Karnow saying that those were the days when people did not ask questions, trusted the government and that Vietnam eroded our faith in the government. I think rightfully so, through each President that took office throughout the war. When Jonathan Holloway from Yale University was asked about any shift he was seeing in regards to the college generation, their view was that there was no good wars left. Mr. Holloway said, "First step now is a skeptical first step (re: trusting our government)." I would have to agree that a level of distrust for me stems from the Vietnam War, even before taking this class.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Deceived and left in the dark

by Kasey Harmon - Saturday, December 6, 2014, 8:08 PM

I like your title you choose for your post, it is true after all. I remember reading about how president Johnson seemed to avoid the subject of Vietnam and never would address them directly. The public was definitely left out of the loop on certain issues. The government didn't do their part on bringing the people accurate numbers which led people to think we were winning the war. I do agree though that when a country becomes skeptical of their leader there is big problems.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Deceived and left in the dark

by Dennis Calciano - Sunday, December 7, 2014, 3:54 PM

I agree. I think that the public started to distrust in the government for matters or war. It should of been an easy victory with the most advanced military machine over peasant soldiers. It never happened though. Images of the war in the media brought home the true horror of the war. All the massacres and atrocities,

rapes etc reported on the news. Vietnam changed how people felt about the U.S role in national affairs and their views about war.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Vietnam Syndrome

by Racheal Bryant - Wednesday, December 3, 2014, 7:22 PM

The most significant legacy of the War in Vietnam for the people of America is called the "Vietnam Syndrome". Defined by Herring, "Vietnam Syndrome had sapped America's will to defend legitimate interests".(Pg. 364) As we read in Herring, Vietnam shattered our nations cold war consensus and changed our Foreign policy ranking from top priority to well down the list. It also provoked opposition for military intervention abroad even to defend our allies.(Pg. 363) The columnist David Broader even says "Vietnam has left a rancid aftertaste that clings to almost every mention of direct military intervention". (Pg. 363) As the years distanced us from Vietnam, our nation thought we were over the trauma and anxiety of the war. With much debate as to the short comings of Vietnam, Colonel Powell came up with what was called the "Powell Doctrine". The "Powell Doctrine" was a formulated set of rules for intervention so that the U.S. wouldn't fail in another war. It's main objective was to strike hard and with the maximum amount of power, unlike our rolled out military policy in Vietnam. When the U.S. used the "Powell Doctrine" to defeat Kuwait, Bush is quoted as saying "By God, we've kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all" (Pg. 366-367). Later in Somalia, October 1993 when eighteen GI's were killed, Diplomat Richard Holbrooke described it as "Vietmalia". This instantly flashed our nation back like a PTSD episode creating fear that our troops were getting slaughtered. Clinton worried about the backlash and pulled troops out in 6 months, thus proving the "Vietnam Syndrome" was not kicked for good. (Pg. 367) The "Vietnam Syndrome" had left such a scar on our nations confidence that Clinton refused to help in Rwanda, a decision he regrets that lead to the deaths of up to 800,000 innocent people. (Pg.367) We as a nation were so afraid of repeating history, that we refused to fight even for noble causes. I believe that the mentality of the "Vietnam Syndrome" was the lasting legacy that was passed on.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Vietnam Syndrome

by Zachary Embree - Friday, December 5, 2014, 9:21 PM

Vietnam definitely changed the way we approached warfare with a smaller power. It seems that we learned that even a small seemingly harmless nation could inflict quite a bit of damage in a insurgency based conflict. and in doing so had a bit of that overwhelming national pride knocked out of us. I current times I see the same effect that you have described at work when it comes to the situation in the Middle East. The threat that always seemed to be the

justification for our involvement in the area, a hostile militant takeover, has occurred. Everyone I have talked to about their view on the situation agrees the public is not going to support intervention after the long drawn out war in Iraq. I think a similar situation like that after Vietnam has settled in the minds of the public. I am not saying that is a bad thing, like Vietnam some situation are just not going to be fixed by dropping troops into it. One thing that also interested me is when you referenced "noble causes". I hear that term used to encourage US intervention overseas often. The question I always have is when did it become the US's responsibility to fight on others behalf for noble causes. Take your Rwanda example, definitely a tragedy but it was never on our heads to stop it.

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Re: Vietnam Syndrome

by Racheal Bryant - Friday, December 5, 2014, 10:03 PM

I guess I look at things a bit different than others. I think it is our duty to stand up for those who need help. I believe that is noble, whether it our problem or not. There is right and wrong and we have the responsibility to protect that if we can. We are lucky enough to live in a country that can protect that for us, but why does it have to stop there? I guess being married to a Navy Veteran and Law Enforcement Officer I have had the privilege to see the sacrifices my husband makes for strangers every day. I believe that is noble.

I will share one of my favorite quotes by Michael Marks: ""And maybe just remind the few, if ill of us they speak, that we are all that stands between the monsters and the weak."

Not everyone is capable of defending themselves, thank goodness we have people in this world that are willing to put themselves in between the monsters and the weak.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Vietnam Syndrome

by Zachary Embree - Saturday, December 6, 2014, 9:07 PM

I would not say you think that differently than many others, I just happen to be a what many would call a particularly cold person. I agree that wanting to help out a suffering nation is in fact a noble and often backed by a desire to help our fellow man. But I think many

Americans do not consider one thing, Even with all our military and economic power can we actually fix the situation? When people just assume that the sheer amount of power we can throw around can fix anything, or that we have seemingly endless reserves of help is where we run into problems. Their are some problems that are just rooted to deeply into the cultures or encompass so much, like the Vietnamese drive for independence, that even we cannot fix the problem. I might sound cold but I feel that we need to except as a country sometimes it is better just to let things run their course, stopping every act of large scale violence is beyond the abilities of any power on the planet. That being said I respect your desire to help people despite the difficulty, the world could use less cynics.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Vietnam Syndrome



by Racheal Bryant - Sunday, December 7, 2014, 5:22 PM

I think your right, Vietnam's drive for independence hindered any progress made to free them from Communism. We were fighting two different wars at the same time. I don't think we can fix everything and surly Americans get fed up funding these efforts when the situation can't be fixed. I just wanted to point out that the act of trying to help is noble even is the end outcome produces nothing. It reminds me of the saying "you never know until you try".

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Aftermath



by Rachelle Wells - Wednesday, December 3, 2014, 8:17 PM

I would say that the legacy of the Vietnam War for the USA is the *aftermath*. Several things can fall under that term such as the effects of Agent Orange, PTSD, death, and distrust. For some of the soldiers who went to Vietnam, whether drafted or not, the aftermath of the war has had a significant impact on their lives. Not all suffered negative impacts —or maybe they were just able to cope easier. However, some were/are not so lucky. We know now that Agent Orange continues to hamper lives, even today. Over 58,000 soldiers died in Vietnam and the question remains by many, “why?” PTSD affected many veterans, some until the day they died, and some continue living with it today. Many Americans continue to have a lack of trust in our government today as an aftermath from Vietnam, even if we are the ‘next generation.’ Similar to what Herring writes (pg. 377-378), for the Vietnam generation the conflict resonates. Most of the major issues remain unresolved and some unaddressed. For some of us, the ones born after the Vietnam War, I think it’s easy

to label the war a tragic mistake and for us to say the men and women who fought and died in Vietnam were brave who deserve our respect. I wholeheartedly agree when Herring says, "Vietnam remains a war that never seems to go away."

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Aftermath

by Timothy Hammett - Wednesday, December 3, 2014, 11:09 PM

I really liked what you brought up in this comment. a lot of responses I have seen my own included talk about the views that changed and we look at the conflict as this big single entity. your comment talking about the PTSD and the other effects on veterans really is a nice reminder of the human cost of this war and not just some political fall out. I just felt like commenting to tell you that your comment is a nice change of pace from a lot of the other comments where most of us seem to just be saying the same things and I think you bring up really important effects about the aftermath of Vietnam.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Aftermath

by Rachelle Wells - Thursday, December 4, 2014, 5:49 PM

Thanks Timothy. Certainly, we know there are other legacies, but I just could not stop thinking about the aftermath—which is broad, but significant. There are other indirect casualties, such as Norman Morrison who immolated himself at the Pentagon in protest of the war (Appy pg. 150), Kent State University students, and not to mention all of the innocent Vietnamese.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Repercussions

by Kasey Harmon - Wednesday, December 3, 2014, 9:02 PM

From where I stand the most noteworthy legacy lies with the U.S. soldiers of Vietnam. The way we treated our soldiers when they came back from war was shameful. The fact that we even had to read the "notes to the editor" involving spitting on soldiers is just embarrassing and outrageous of our country. It infuriates me to read these stories and to know they are true. Many of the soldiers did not want to be at war but did it because it was the right thing to do. Once the war was over the soldiers were in a way "punished", by having a harder time in the job market and not getting the proper medical care many of them needed. They were not taken care of like they should have been. Even to the last days of the war the U.S. soldiers did

what they could for the vietnamese and they followed their orders from their command. In episode 11 of the PBS series, we watched the soldiers pushing helicopters off of the ships to make more room for the Vietnamese refugees. If thats not dedication then I don't know what is.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Repercussions

by Marquita Lucier - Sunday, December 7, 2014, 12:34 PM

I asked my neighbor who served in Vietnam between 1969-1970 what it was like for him to come home to the states as a soldier. He said that when they flew home it was on a continental jet and they all cried when they got on the plane to come home. They first flew into Alaska then to Travis Air force base. The soldiers were advised not to wear their uniforms so they wouldn't be harassed. When they landed, he said he did not have any protesters who greeted them and when he went home to Hood River, OR being a small town, there wasn't any issue. My neighbor said that after he got out of high school he went to Montana to work in some kind of mine it was then that his parents came and got him because he had received his draft papers. When I asked him about the Legacy of the Vietnam War for him, he has said more than once that we should not have ever been involved and been over there. He said that we never learn our lesson when it comes to getting involved with other countries problems. As far as being able to find work for him when he got home, he worked for over thirty years in the aluminum plant in the Dalles before finishing his working career out at Dexter Dam with the Army Corp of Engineers who give hiring preference to veterans. One more point that my neighbor made about his time in Vietnam was that he felt sorry for the children there and that they didn't know any better. I have seen some of his photos from his time in Vietnam and there are a few with the children. I feel sorry for those who still bear the scars from the war and for my neighbor it's every time he hears the sound of a pop that resembles gunfire. I know that he also gets some assistance from the Veteran's hospital for various medical needs, which is the least that our government can do for those who suffer lingering affects from serving our country.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Repercussions

by Rachelle Wells - Sunday, December 7, 2014, 1:54 PM

I agree it is the least our country can do! I have made a request for Christmas this year from my husband: to take all of the slides from my dad's Vietnam collection and have them made into prints. There is also movie reels that I have requested be made into DVD's. I am anxious and excited to see them. Your neighbor talks about the children over there. A

story I cannot stop thinking about is Sylvia Lutz Hollands (Appy pg. 170-175). There is a couple of things she talks about, like the soldiers asking her to hold their hand saying, "I know I'm dying, please don't leave me." As a nurse, I cannot imagine ever having those images leave my mind. The story she told that stands out the most, though, is the story about the pregnant Vietnamese woman who came in with frag wounds in her belly. Ultimately, she delivered her baby after the surgery to remove the frags. Sylvia delivered the baby, and the baby cried spontaneously. The doctor walked back into the room and grabbed the baby from Sylvia, wrapped it in a chuck and said it was dead, premature and they cannot waste oxygen (on the baby). He handed the baby back to Sylvia and she put it in the trash. She knows in comparison to her own babies, the baby was approximately 7 months gestation, maybe even full term based on Vietnamese stature. The oxygen and supplies the baby may have needed were reserved for special circumstances. Wow! I cannot even imagine.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Repercussions

by Marquita Lucier - Sunday, December 7, 2014, 3:41 PM

This story represents yet another tragic event that happened during the war. Sylvia describes a "different mind-set in conflict." When you are in a war, you look at the world differently. There is only certain types of life that has value. This mindset is hard for me to fathom since I consider all types of life to have value and how difficult it would be to have to fight a war with conflicting values. She goes on to say that, even though you may have done things differently you took orders from others for direction. In her words "where do your principles stop and where do your actions begin."" You can't go back and change things or second-guess yourself or it'll drive you nuts. You have to accept responsibility for what you did. (Herring p 174) I think it would be hard to follow orders that would violate your core values and then to have to live with yourself for the rest of your life must be very haunting. I think that the psychological damage of war for those who served is often the hidden repercussions of the war.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Repercussions

by Rachelle Wells - Sunday, December 7, 2014, 5:07 PM

My thoughts exactly Marquita. How haunting and psychologically damaging that experience must have been for her. Clearly, the experience has left her with memories she'll never be able to

erase. And then knowing what she went through and continued to deal with as an 'aftermath' of the war, she doesn't want anyone in her family (especially her son) to 'experience what she experienced' (pg. 175). What is even more powerful is that she has a significant level of loyalty to our country and her military service and at the time of her interview with Appy if she'd been called upon again, she would've went. Powerful.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Repercussions

by Marquita Lucier - Sunday, December 7, 2014, 8:08 PM

My cousin's granddaughter had a baby at 25 weeks last June that weighed about one pound at birth. He is a miracle baby who survived against all odds. I can't help but to think of the baby at seven months who was denied at the chance for life. Disturbing. As I read the story, she said if there was another war and they said we need nurses, she would go, even though she thinks they would think she was too old. Hopefully, if she were able to go a second time she would stick to her convictions as opposed to following unorthodox directions.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Repercussions

by Rachelle Wells - Sunday, December 7, 2014, 1:28 PM

Some would argue Kasey that the treatment of our Vets continues to be shameful. Just last week in my local newspaper (I'm not in Lane County) there was an article about a veteran who committed suicide on November 4th and his widow is filing a lawsuit against our local VA for what she believe is negligence on their part. I know that there are plenty who feel they are treated well by society, family, and maybe even the government as veterans. I know for some vets, especially the Vietnam era, often pride kept/keeps them from seeking care, especially somewhere like the VA. It is my opinion however, that all who served in any capacity are deserving of any services offered to them. Anyone in the military deserves the best our country has to offer them.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Repercussions



by Timothy Hammett - Sunday, December 7, 2014, 10:57 PM

Your comment has really made me think about the war and I am struggling with how to reply because it really makes me reconsider what the true legacy of Vietnam. This class has tried to drill into us the idea of us as unbiased historians looking at this past conflict and viewing it through historical lenses. So while the Historian in me believes that the most "important" legacy is how the war in Vietnam would change Americans perception of their government for probably generations to come. The personal view I have says that the way we treated are servicemen who fought in this conflict is one of the most shameful moments in our history. not just in the lack of proper care from the government but the stigma they received upon coming home. Although this might not have the same long lasting effects as the political backlash towards the government it so much more tragic in my eyes. If i do have to add a silver lining i would say that i truly believe that our nation has seen the wrongs that were committed against or servicemen and because of that we are less likely to see our servicemen treated as poorly in the present and in the future.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Importance of Vietnam



by Arvind Raman - Wednesday, December 3, 2014, 10:47 PM

I think the biggest importance from Vietnam, is that this was the first televised war, and thus shifted "the people's" view of U.S. fighting abroad. With constant news and updates of what was going on in the Southeast Asia, Americans at home were discouraged and upset at the loss life, especially an endless war that went through 4 presidents. This war also proved to be a set of checks and balances, because Americans were aware of what was going on, on a daily basis, so with protests in Washington and elsewhere brought more pressure on the president and his staff to find solutions, because "the people" were aware of the active problems in Vietnam. The importance of media associated with the War in Vietnam would have to be the most important aspect of this war. Since then, U.S. involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan draws the same criticism because of media's involvement associated with technology, to bring the news instantaneously to Americans and others throughout the world.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Importance of Vietnam



by Sierra Smith - Thursday, December 4, 2014, 10:08 AM

It seems obvious, but I never thought of the media as a legacy until you wrote this. It really did make SO many changes with accountability. Although there was still misinformation and cover ups, there were still so many more checks

and balances than any other war before due to more awareness.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Importance of Vietnam

by Kasey Harmon - Friday, December 5, 2014, 3:32 PM

It is very true that the media played a huge role in the attitudes of the people back home and the protestors. Hearing about it is upsetting enough and then having to see it too on tv makes it even more real. Especially if the media is being contorted and manipulated to make the war look a certain way. I don't know if "legacy" is the word I would use to describe the media but it definitely played an important role.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Importance of Vietnam

by Bryan Lewis - Saturday, December 6, 2014, 8:03 PM

Thought I feel the American people's view of their government is the lasting legacy, I do agree that the media was the root cause of this distrust. The act of televising the war enable both sides to attempt to sway the public to their side. The problem with this, and the reason why Americans became "discouraged", was the fact war is never pretty. War is violent and brutal, with the main focus always being on killing or defeating the enemy the media is likely to have gruesome or sad things to report. The fact 'good news' usually involves something drastic (such as a shooting or car crash) a war is something juicy the media loves to eat up. I do feel that the use of media to cover the war was beneficial to help the American people get somewhat of an idea of Vietnam, but at the same time it was going to be swayed, looking for report that would get more ratings. I feel that televising the war also had a negative impact on the individuals fighting the war, lowering the morale with the lack of support from either their home country or the country they were fighting for. Like in Good Morning Vietnam with Robin Williams when he is forced to edit out the death tolls or ambushes, though something like this may seem shady at the same time it allows the soldiers morale to stay slightly higher. Wars are more often won through moral than numbers, and the media played an extremely important role in effecting U.S. and Vietnamese morale during the war.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Importance of Vietnam

by Jessica Ballestrazze - Sunday, December 7, 2014, 5:45 PM

What a great point about the impact of media. I wonder how much we would have actually known about the events in Southeast Asia without the intense media coverage it received. Obviously the Kent State incident was initiated because of the Cambodian invasion, which Nixon announced to the American public. But I have to wonder, if media had not been so ever-present, how many events like that would have happened without the public's knowledge? Would Nixon have been so open about the invasion if he had any expectation that it could simply be a blip radar of American radio, if he hadn't understood that it was going to come out anyways? It also makes me think of the My Lai massacre, how it was eventually uncovered and vastly altered American perception of what our intent was in Vietnam. Reading the literature for this class, it is easy to become frustrated or angry with the Presidential leadership throughout the entire war, because so many of their decisions were controversial, and we now know so much of the dirt. It's also easy to assume that the Vietnam War brought out the worst leadership, or the worst traits in our leadership. However, who's to say that these same things weren't happening with the leadership prior to the Vietnam War, we just weren't privy to the details due to the lack of media coverage?

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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A peoples view of their government



by Timothy Hammett - Wednesday, December 3, 2014, 11:03 PM

Although the Vietnam war has left a long list of long lasting effects on the united states I would say that the biggest change that has come about because of the the Vietnam war is the way in which the American people view the government. This was an era where the government was basically lying to the american people and they got caught. The Vietnam war was also one of the first wars that was looked at critically by the american media and gave harsh critics of what are government was doing at the time which would later become the norm for looking at many conflicts. All of things that happened just added up to the fact that most Americans lost faith in the idea that they could trust what the government was telling them. Also the fact the we fought in a war that was never truly declared as such and instead congress passed along the war powers act it seems like the government side stepped an almost sacred understanding held with the american people in the way it is decided how and when we will go to war. It may not be that the government or people changed a great deal but the way the people would view the government after the events that transpired during this era surely did. The government never really regained our trust after these events and the way we view our government now is I believe a result ripple of the governments actions concerning the Vietnam war.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: A peoples view of their government





by Jimmie Berguin - Thursday, December 4, 2014, 7:18 AM

This was definitely the war that made people wary of all things political and government ran. It was like America had this great relationship with a significant other, the government, and it just found out they had been cheated on for the past 10+ years. Leaving America to feel taken advantage of, confused, hurt, and angry. There was a lot of long term damage done to the people of America with the loss of loved ones, or the battle wounds soldiers returned home with. And not only that, when the soldiers returned home from fighting to their country, the government gave them a pat on the back and expected them to adjust back into their normal lives again. In Appy's book there's the story of Malcolm Browne's experience with the war and how could anyone return unscathed. Or even famous figures like Muhammad Ali who didn't believe in fighting this unjust war, and to be strike down upon by his government for not doing as he was told. There was too much lying and shady behind the back deals going on for anyone to really comprehend that there was any way this war was in the best interests for the people. And this war left an ugly red circle on the timeline of our American history when people didn't agree with the dealings of government and their agendas.

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Re: A peoples view of their government



by Sierra Smith - Thursday, December 4, 2014, 9:58 AM

Perfect analogy! It is a trust you pretty much can't get back -just like a cheating situaiton. We were in a way "cheated" as a nation by our poor leadership from the government. It is so sad how neglected the vets were and still are. A lot of things get swept under the rug, hence the negative feelings so many feel toward our government.

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Re: A peoples view of their government



by Sierra Smith - Thursday, December 4, 2014, 5:16 PM

Timothy- this was pretty much the point I was getting after, but I like how you explained yours way better. I feel like our view of our country is one of the biggest things left that we carry with us from that war. Our leaders have left us jaded. The saying "forgive and forget" could never apply to this horrible atrocity- I don't think we will ever forgive

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Re: A peoples view of their government

by Bryan Lewis - Saturday, December 6, 2014, 7:54 PM

I do agree that the the lasting legacy of the Vietnam War was the loss of trust the people had for their government. I also liked you point that the "This was an era where the government was basically lying...they got caught. It made me think more about the government and their actions during and before the war. This was the the war in which the government got caught lying to the people, but what else had the government lied to the people about before hand? It also makes me feel as their is still information about the Vietnam War that our government may be hiding from us, because even with the deceitful actions we uncovered I feel that the more heinous ones might still be buried. The government is selective in what it tells the people for multiple reasons, primarily being the inability of the masses to think as one. As you said the media critically examined the Vietnam War, this ended up bringing the masses to disagree within themselves causing the home front to be split, and therefore prolonging the war,

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Re: A peoples view of their government

by Desria Hansen - Sunday, December 7, 2014, 10:13 PM

I like this point of view. We are so used to living in an age where we are fed information through the television and Internet and information travels so quickly. It definitely was a game changer when the media could feed information to the public and the public could be informed and develop an opinion.

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Re: A peoples view of their government

by Timothy Hammett - Sunday, December 7, 2014, 10:43 PM

Thanks for all the replies everyone and making me think even more deeply about the topic. I also think a huge part of this i didn't touch on earlier that much is the role that television played in the war. this being the first real televised war I think also helped bring the brutality of war to the people at home in way they had never seen before. I think another legacy of the war is that do to the loss of faith in the government and the images people were seeing on the television we are a more war weary country now which is not to say we avoid it as we know isn't the truth as we have been involved in conflict since then but none of them ever seem to garner the long lasting poplar public opinion that conflicts before seem to have had. I would compare the televised accounts to the first civil war photos taken in the aftermath of battles. it would forever change the way Americans look at war and I believe that it still effects the american war

mentality to this day at least for a large portion of Americans anyway.

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A Legacy Remembered; distrust running deep



by Bryan Lewis - Wednesday, December 3, 2014, 11:30 PM

I feel that the most significant legacy of the Vietnam War was that new negative attitude the American people had for their government, a stronger sense of distrust that persists to today. Prior to the Vietnam War the people trusted in what their government said, and that the government was acting in the best interest of the people. Starting with Truman helping France to retake Vietnam as a colony, something which felt unnecessary to most Americans and in fact did nothing but create distrust with the Vietnamese.. Also the lack of any progress hampered the people's faith in the government; after nearly 30 years, billions of dollars, and thousands of American lives the public began to demand reason to stay or peace. This is one way Nixon rose to power, by promising a withdrawal from Vietnam which the public would later see as a lie. A key factor in creating the distrust was Nixon's actions, by having secret meetings and ordering secret bombing in Cambodia without consent of the people made them more weary of their government's honesty. This legacy of the American government being less than honest with the people has continued to today; you can see it in nearly every generation since the Vietnam war, most recently with the focus being on police brutality. The American people haven't forgotten about the betrayals of their government in the Vietnam war, and this has created distrust in nearly every generation since. Though this feeling of distrust persists today I do feel that it is slowly waning with the Millennials, that is they are beginning to be more trustful of what they are told. The reasoning for this I feel lies with the lack of a war such as Vietnam they are given more less of a reason not to. This is why I feel that the Vietnam War is something every American should learn about; not only to prevent us from repeating past mistakes but also to remind ourselves that the government works for us, not the other way around.

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Re: A Legacy Remembered; distrust running deep



by Andrew Schubert - Sunday, December 7, 2014, 11:52 PM

I too share your observation about how the Vietnam War seemed to be pivotal time regarding Americans distrust of their government, I commented about it too in my post. Obviously such a huge rash of anti-war protests and riots in the streets portray the displeasure of a populous that is tired of war and their governments role in it.

Regarding Truman helping France to retake Vietnam, remember that it wasn't an action taken for or against the American people, but rather because it was felt that we owed it to France after their actions during WWII. There are certainly a number of what-if questions that arise regarding the origins of the Vietnam war, and also certainly a number of what-the-hell-were-you-thinking questions, but during this early stage I can't begrudge Truman for his actions. We needed France to remain a force that didn't fall to communism, and I'm sure it was perceived that the stronger our allies were, the greater opposition we could form.

I like the way your comment about Millennials sparked an argument in me. I must admit that I probably fall within the realm of this demographic and now I have a wealth of personal questions to ask myself. I don't know if I agree with the notion that Millennials necessarily trust their government, honestly I don't know if it's a matter of trust at all. If I had to guess, I'd wager that it has more to do with apathy than trust; do I care that my government may be lying to me? Am I surprised?

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Changed Everything



by Dennis Calciano - Saturday, December 6, 2014, 8:46 PM

I think that the Vietnam war was pointless around 1968. Before that, the U.S. was in conflict with the NVA. After that, we started fighting the Viet Cong. Now all wars after Vietnam have been compared with it. No war can measure up to the conflict on the battlefield, and backhome like the Vietnam War. America's own protestors viciously spitting on veterans when they came back home. Also coffins of dead American soldiers were physically spit on and no one cared for soldier that made it back alive. It's maddening this war only comes up when its compared to others. Its made out to be nothing, but it changed everything.

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A Country Divided...



by Marquita Lucier - Sunday, December 7, 2014, 11:18 AM

The legacy that's seems to permeate our country among our youth is that the Vietnam War lasted for many years in which a lot of American soldiers died and that we still didn't win the war. The legacy also portrays the tragedy of when the soldiers came back from the war how those who protested the war mistreated them. These legacies are past down from the previous generations that either lived through the Vietnam War era or were raised by those who experienced it firsthand. My middle school student in his social studies class was taught these legacies this year by his

teacher who is in his forties. I do not recall in middle school, during the seventies, talking about the Vietnam War perhaps it has taken some time to heal the wounds and distaste for the war in order to talk about it. One of the speakers in the video mentions that no foreign war can survive without the publics' support and that they need to be informed upfront about the reason for war, the cost involved and for what purpose people's lives would be given. This is outlined in Collin Powell's, Powell Doctrine, (Herring p.366) that objectives must be clearly defined and attainable and Public support must be assured, and force must be employed to achieve certain, swift, and complete victory. The Legacy for me represents a much-divided country amongst the soldiers, the people and our government. If you follow what is in the media today on television or print you will see that things haven't changed much in the sense that people are still divided and protesting over the most controversial issues and further widening the gap. These are two of my favorite quotes that illustrate my concern about a divided nation. "A house divided against itself cannot stand." (Abraham Lincoln House divided speech, Springfield, Illinois, June 16, 1858.) Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. (NIV Matthew 12:25.)

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Re: A Country Divided...



by Jessica Ballestrazze - Sunday, December 7, 2014, 5:35 PM

An interesting point to strengthen your argument is George Herring's statement that, "In the immediate aftermath of the war, the nation experienced a self-conscious, collective amnesia" (Herring 361). He goes on to discuss that the wounds and frustration were still so fresh in the minds of Americans that people were very reluctant to talk about it, "because the memories were so painful, no one cared to dredge them up." This directly supports your guess as to why the Vietnam War was never addressed when you were in school. (Although it still wasn't being discussed when I was in school, in the late 90's and early 2000's.)

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Re: A Country Divided...



by Racheal Bryant - Sunday, December 7, 2014, 6:31 PM

Very interesting, I had always wondered why we never learned about it in school. One of the main reasons I took this class instead of any other history classes was that I had not received any education on it prior. Makes sense to me, thanks for adding that information.

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Have We Learned?

by Dennis Calciano - Sunday, December 7, 2014, 3:37 PM

Always plan on finishing a war. The domino theory is horseplay. A restrictive governments fall on itself.

Our nation has not learned that without intervention in different governments they will fail themselves and it will bring casualties in attempt to change them. People of those different countries must adapt their view and make their own destinies. We see that today were non intervention is making a difference in countries, but we still impose our values and attempt to change people that don't care about American values or the few that enjoy our help. We should only focus on a war if it has become a direct threat or else it not worth it and encouraging other people makes more commotion. It's not excuse to go into a country and topple its government because of terrorism.

People shouldn't have faith in a government that lies and be aware that we can't sacrifice Americans for nothing. Currently Vietnam is in trade with the U.S. and many more have lost touch with the war than we have. If we didn't invade, overall it would be same as it is today except for all the time wasted, casualties or the economic crisis. The legacy being the U.S. is developing similar mistakes currently for other things like political concerns such as oil and resources.

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End of Innocence

by Jessica Ballestrazze - Sunday, December 7, 2014, 5:28 PM

I was searching for words to express the concept I had in mind for the greatest legacy left from the Vietnam War, and George Herring provided them in saying that it "marked a sort of end of American innocence" (Herring 360). In so many ways, the Vietnam War shattered the rose-colored glasses through which we viewed our morals, society, and government. We approached the war in Vietnam with a sort of naiveté, as a country that could not comprehend or foresee defeat. We believed our politicians to be primarily wholesome and honest. Our government held staunch convictions about the dangers of communism, and the public vastly supported the claims of the domino effect and understood the danger that could come from the toppling of one small country. We were united, we were confident, we were unconcerned by the possibility of defeat.

So much of this innocence and loyalty deteriorated throughout the war, and I don't believe it has been restored, nor do I believe that it can. The Herring book chronicles US involvement in Vietnam for the 25 years from 1950-1975. That means that when Saigon fell in 1975, we were involved with Vietnam for over 12% of our existence as an independent nation. That is a massive chunk of our country's history that was either directly affected or shaped by the war in Vietnam. In a way, I think that period resembles a sort of awakening for our country. Until then, we had exuded a sort of

arrogance in our foreign policy. As Herring said, the Vietnam War "challenged Americans' traditional beliefs about themselves" (Herring 360). Our country was forced to accept that we had made mistakes; regardless of your stance on the war, very little had been executed properly. We were knocked down a peg or two, and consequently played the blame game as we licked our wounds. I think that the Vietnam War created a profoundly greater chasm between our political parties, which is rarely bridged now. Politicians whose views on individual issues vary from those of their parties are labeled as "flip floppers" and considered disloyal to their cause. It seems to me that the civil unrest during the Vietnam War polarized politics in America, and created a great divide that has not since been reconnected in a meaningful way. It represented for the first time since the Civil War, our country in great conflict with itself. Our nation became inflamed that such debated actions were being executed in the name of the citizens of the United States of America, actions that so many of those citizens strongly opposed. This disillusionment with the intentions and benevolence of the government has since carried on. We absolutely do not trust our politicians the way we did before the Vietnam War. A country skeptical and distrustful of its leadership will never be as strong as a country united under a banner of solidarity and confidence, much like the one we left tattered in the countryside of Vietnam.

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