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Longest War & Video Documentaries

by Joe Escobar - Saturday, October 1, 2016, 10:39 AM

This thread is for discussions on the Longest War & Video Documentaries topic. 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.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post, something that describes which question(s) you are addressing . Do NOT simply leave it RE: Longest War & Video Documentaries

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US skeptically supports Bao Dai

by Nick Cervantes - Monday, October 3, 2016, 7:12 PM

A topic I found interesting, mentioned in “The First War in Vietnam” video and explained in more depth in “America’s Longest War,” was the installation of Bao Dai by the French into the nominal position of Emperor of Vietnam. The video described him as largely “discredited and ignored,” the Herring book as “much-maligned.”

The French realized on some level that imperialism was what the Vietnamese were most violently opposed to. Only after three years of war did they try to install a Vietnamese puppet leader, again arrogantly assuming that they should and could defeat the Vietminh. Their plan was to give Bao Dai more territory than Ho Chi Minh, to sway local opinion away from Ho. The book mentions US skepticism that this would work; the French were desperate after years of war disappointments. But the feeling was that without US support, communists would surely fill the void.

The US, whose conditionally friendly relations with Vietnam were described at the beginning of the book, did not want to appear to be supporting the French. Therefore, Bao Dai’s “puppet” position was convenient for the United States, where fears of communist power were growing fast.

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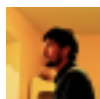
Re: US skeptically supports Bao Dai

by Scott Woods - Thursday, October 6, 2016, 8:32 PM

Bao Dai should have never been in power. The book describes him as a tragic figure. “An intelligent man, genuinely concerned for the future of his nation, he had spent much of his life as a puppet of France and Japan, whiling away the years by indulging an apparently insatiable taste for sports cars, women, and gambling.” It looks to me like the French had one plan for Vietnam and Bao had another for himself. Yet this didn’t help French win over ties with the people of the north and later the United States would be paying a large bill for the French Indochina War.

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Re: US skeptically supports Bao Dai

by Nick Cervantes - Friday, October 7, 2016, 4:47 PM

Yes, Bao Dai did not seem like the leadership type. Someone in the Harrison book described him as not the stuff of which Churchills are made. I would guess that is one factor why the French chose him; he was not an ambitious man who would cause any trouble for them.

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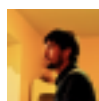
Re: Longest War & Video Documentaries

by Amber Gaboriault - Tuesday, October 4, 2016, 8:34 PM

The video documentary "Why Vietnam" seems to be a biased government video that was shown to America. I felt the video started out instilling fear in America by reminding them of past disasters that we did not step in and stop. The video then shows how well the American culture is influencing the southern part of Vietnam. They show videos of the Vietnamese profiting off land reform, and how the economic industry is starting to flourish with the help of American aid. The video shows the Vietnamese casting votes in a free election while reminding the viewers that the northern part has no intentions of a free vote. In the book "Americans Longest War" by George Herring on page 79 it states conflicting information than the documentary. The book states that the land reform achieved limited success and created conflict with the Vietnamese people. It also stated that Diem tried to centralize authority over villages by abolishing traditional elections and appointing leadership himself (Herring 79). I feel the video was made just to recruit support for the government's decision to send troops to Vietnam. The book seems to be an unbiased piece of information to record history.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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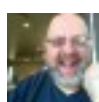
Re: Longest War & Video Documentaries

by Nick Cervantes - Thursday, October 6, 2016, 2:17 PM

Hi Amber. Yes, I thought the "Why Viet-Nam?" video was extremely biased. It was pure propaganda for, like you said, recruiting support for war efforts. It presented the war as noble and necessary, with LBJ making an emotional appeal right at the beginning. Speaking of emotional appeals, how about that music? It was so manipulative. Everything about the film played on the fear of communism. It demonized Ho Chi Minh, totally dismissing him as a monster. So far in this class I've appreciated the materials showing Ho Chi Minh's early life, his victories, and his thwarted efforts. The less biased stuff gives a more well-rounded idea of what was happening in the world at the time. This film does none of that, it just encourages the us-vs-them attitude. So the war goes on, like the narrator said, and "clearly it is the communists who have made that choice."

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Re: Longest War & Video Documentaries

by Scott Woods - Friday, October 7, 2016, 1:46 PM

Hello Amber. I agree that the video is biased as well, but still informative. I had to go back and re-watch Why Vietnam because I could have sworn that I heard them talk about the land being mostly owned by the French after the war in

the north. However, I was unable to find it.

I found myself getting more information from the book, not only about US relations but Ho Chi Minh as well. It also set the stage for the information that we are going to be studying better, giving us an idea of why the US was involved as well as the connection between the Viet Minh and the other Communist states surround it.

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Re: Longest War & Video Documentaries

by Meadow Benedict - Sunday, October 9, 2016, 1:38 PM

Hi Amber. I agree that the movie "Why Vietnam?" seemed to be very biased. The movie made it sound like the Vietnam people and their lands were flourishing. "Land reforms redistribute farm lands in the South so that farmers own their fields and reap for themselves the fruit of their toil. With American economic aid, the South begins to prosper" (Why Vietnam). In the book America's Longest War by George C. Herring it seems that the majority of people were struggling. The book and movie seem to be in conflict over this issue. "More important, although U.S. aid prevented an economic collapse and supported a high standard of living in Saigon, it did little to promote economic development or improve conditions in the villages where more than 90 percent of South Vietnam's population lived." (Herring, p.75) I think the movie makes it look like America was this great hero to Vietnam for helping them with economic aid, but in actuality, most of the people lived in villages and their conditions didn't improve.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Longest War & Video Documentaries

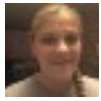
by Peilin Duan - Sunday, October 9, 2016, 2:51 PM

Hello Amber,

I extremely agree your idea that the video "Why Vietnam" is very biased but the book "Americans Longest War" seem to be less biased. The video seems to be a governmental propaganda film because it implies everywhere that the America's decision of supporting the Southern Vietnam is for noble reasons. The video tends to show the "good" of the Southern Vietnam people and the "evil" of the Northern leaders; how the Southern people growing with the help of the U.S. which also implies the power of the America. But in the book, Herring analyses the reasons of the America send troops to Vietnam are various especially for the political and diplomatic.

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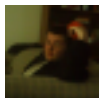
Re: Longest War & Video Documentaries

by Leslie Stockton - Sunday, October 9, 2016, 3:44 PM

I too found the video "Why Vietnam" similarly biased. It felt like propaganda for the American people. Herring's book was much more in-depth at why we were there. The lack of President Johnson talking about how important it was strategically for us to maintain access to the waterways. The fallback that only the "enemy" wanted those rich resources and not a mention that the United States too also wanted these just showed me the lack of true honesty. I liked how Herring mentions that we needed and wanted these resources also.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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Re: Longest War & Video Documentaries

by Jimmy O'Neal - Wednesday, October 5, 2016, 1:49 PM

Which single topic or event shared in either the The First War in Vietnam or Why Vietnam? videos is the most significantly related to any event or development which has been presented in either Chapter 1 or 2 of the Herring textbook?

I am choosing to discuss the event with Ho Chi Minh going to France to negotiate the removal of French forces from Vietnam in the Why Vietnam? video and the Geneva convention events that took place in Chapter 1 of the Herring book.

What is the connection?

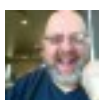
The connection is that the treatment of Ho Chi Minh in France led to his actions at the Geneva convention. While in France he was told that he would receive all of Vietnam but instead only received South Vietnam. This resulted in Ho Chi Minh not wanting to negotiate further with the French and declining any further deals.

Do both sources agree on the information, or are the claims in conflict with one another?

It doesn't seem like the book covers Ho Chi Minh's visit to France but it does cover his stand on negotiations thereafter. In both entries he no longer wishes to deal with France and would rather use force to remove them from his country.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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Could we have avoided the war?

by Scott Woods - Wednesday, October 5, 2016, 2:14 PM

The title seems to give off a sound of speculation, but I found that I had more questions than answers when dealing with this section of America's longest War and the Documentary videos. The biggest similarity I notice is that they both talk about was Ho Chi Minh as wanting freedom from French colonialism, which to be fair is understandable. I mean we American's wanted to be free from British rule and so we fought and won our right to be free. Originally when going over the material I didn't quite pick up on that Minh was a communist. However, when writing this piece I noticed that he had help found the French Communist Part as well as many others, including the Indochinese Communist Party. However, the section that really caught my attention was when the book and the videos talk about Ho Chi Minh was looking for support against the French. "Ho scrambled desperately to advance its interests. Ever the pragmatist, he continued to seek aid from the United States as well as the Soviet Union (p.8 ALW)." For a time we did provide support. OSS agents trained Minh's troops in rudimentary military training in return for information on Japanese troop movements and aid in locating downed U.S. pilots. We also helped him medically as well, when he came down with malaria the OSS provided him with quinine and sulfa drugs to combat it. Yet after Roosevelt's death and the Truman administration took over, tides started to shift away from Minh and more to assist the French. The idea here was that if we helped the Europeans in their troubles we could also get them to help us stand against the Soviets and Communists. This section of the reading left me more with "what if" questions than anything. Though we were unsure of Ho Chi Minh's intentions in the beginning and his ties with the Soviets, which by the way the Soviets at that time really didn't care about Vietnam, we thought that supporting Minh would have been a terrible idea. Yet, what if we had. What if we had given him aid on the stipulation that his government was more democratic than Communist. Sure, Communists could be voted into office, but more as a balance of power than anything else. Would that small sacrifice to our worries been enough to stay off the eventual war that would take American's lives? We will never know, honestly. Yet it seems to me with all the information from the book and video this could have been a path we could have taken.

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Re: Could we have avoided the war?

by Meadow Benedict - Wednesday, October 5, 2016, 11:19 PM

I agree. I think the United States shouldn't have backed Diem for president, especially since they knew Diem rigged his own election and announced he was the president. I think the U.S. should have stayed out of it and let the people have a free election to choose whoever they wanted, even if The United States didn't agree. I also wonder if the outcome could have been different if we gave the people the free election to vote that was promised to them. How many lives could that have saved?

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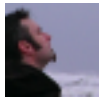
Re: Could we have avoided the war?

by Will Lawhon - Sunday, October 9, 2016, 11:42 PM

Hey, Scott great post. I also felt this section to leave me with more questions the more I read. Moreso the "what if" question as well, but like you said we will never know.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Opening Narratives

by Timothy Lucas - Wednesday, October 5, 2016, 8:13 PM

One of the most important topics discussed in the early chapters of America's Longest War by George Herring, in contrast to the video *Why Vietnam?* is Ho Chi Minh and the roots of resistance to foreign occupation in Vietnam. The video sets up a dark tone that ironically describes, "a peoples' war of liberation" (14:29) led by the communist leader, "who plays the kindly smiling grandfather...planning a reign of terror" (6:48). The video teaches us little beyond the recent events already tied to the several global powers whose interest in Vietnam is mainly centered around competing market systems and political ideology. Herring does spend a bit more time discussing the early life of Ho Chi Minh, such as his time working in America or traveling to Britain and France, and failing to plead a case for democratic reforms for Vietnam at the Paris Peace Conference (Herring 6). We also learn more of the resentment Vietnam has of Chinese occupation. Despite being the southernmost province of China for nearly 2000 years and borrowing aspects of language and culture, Vietnam has throughout that time resisted Chinese rule. The country even had a short time of self-rule before falling to French colonization in the late 1900's (Herring 4). After nearly a hundred years of being economically exploited by the French, and brutally occupied for a short time by the Japanese during World War 2, Vietnam found itself caught between the legacy of Western colonialism and the rise of communism in China.

Nationalists in Vietnam such as Ho Chi Minh attempted to exploit the interests of the various international parties involved in the region to obtain their independence. During World War 2 the allies in small part gathered support from occupied nations in Asia by supporting them against Japan. Agents of the OSS had provided small arms and training in exchange for information on Japanese troop movements (Herring 11), and in the years after the war Ho Chi Minh, "clung to hopes that the friendly demeanor of OSS agents reflected official American views." (Herring 14) In fact, American policy had begun to shift away from supporting colonial empires. However, the fear of Russian expansion in Europe and particularly the rise of communist China motivated America to support a strong and recovered France in Europe, and in turn

the puppet government of Bao Dai they had installed in the south to oppose the northern communist leader Ho Chi Minh. After the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu, the Geneva Accords divided the country along the 17th parallel “to permit regrouping of military forces from both sides,” (Herring 48-49) and imposed a period of 2 years that would pass before a national vote could decide the future of Vietnam. Herring estimates the United States had contributed more than 2.6 billion dollars in military aid to France, yet had failed to influence a successful policy to not only bring peace to Vietnam but prevent a rise of communism within.

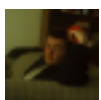
Concerns of humanitarian aid and global security are the focus of *Why Vietnam?*, throughout the movie northern Vietnam is painted as uncooperative and a threat to the peaceful intentions of those in the south. “...even as the people of the south build, north Vietnam is creating in their villages political action centers with trained agitators infiltrated from the north, often in the guise of refugees” (8:45) Statements such as these are designed to influence public opinion in favor of involvement in the form of rescuing the Vietnamese people from themselves and the external forces of communist nations that seek to dominate Asia and in the minds of some, eventually the world. The beginning of the movie sets up the narrative of how Germany and Italy were allowed to succeed through the inaction of other nations, then Korea is used as an example of how, “free men had begun to learn the lesson, and something was done.” (2:40) But to rigidly apply these examples to Vietnam ignores its thousands of years of history and the realities of the then current politics related to American indirect involvement in the form of supporting and funding the failed policies of France. Herring believes, “although a dedicated communist, Ho Chi Minh was no tool of the Kremlin.” (Herring 26) If we are to believe this and if we recognize the efforts of Ho Chi Minh and other Vietnamese nationalists in the decades leading up to direct American involvement, the forces opposed to the Soviet Union and China (also known as the Communist Bloc) allowed itself to fall into, “A Dead-End Alley” as Herring names the first chapter. It may have also dismissed and demonized possible allies that found fame and a cause through continuing the Vietnamese tradition of resisting outside occupation and fighting for the dream of independence and self-determination.

Herring, George C. *America's Longest War*. McGraw-Hill Education, 2014

Why Veitnam?. fod.infobase.com, 1965. Online Video

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Re: Opening Narratives

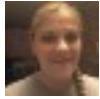
by Jimmy O'Neal - Saturday, October 8, 2016, 1:53 PM

From what I was able to gather from the readings and the *Why Vietnam?* video is that the video really does paint a one-sided picture. As you have said, the video seems to demonize Ho Chi Minh while the readings show a man that was just

trying to get his country back into working order. The video also omitted certain actions that the US had taken to ensure that a democratic leader be put into place in to try and sway the people to embrace democracy, such as rigging elections.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Longest War & Video Documentaries

by Leslie Stockton - Wednesday, October 5, 2016, 8:16 PM

LONGEST WAR AND VIDEO DOCUMENTARIES:

After reading through “America’s Longest War” and watching “Why Vietnam?” I found many similarities. They both agree that holding back the communist regime was important but what I found the most interesting is the differences in explanation on why we were there.

In 1950 the 38th parallel in Korea changed the way we looked at warfare. As President Johnson phrased “Aggression unchallenged is aggression unleashed”. We feared that the Soviet Union could assemble an army that the United States could not possibly overtake. So in 1950 The Cold War Policy was written one of the most significant premise that that the Soviet Union “animated by a new fanatical faith” would “impose it’s absolute authority on the rest of the world” .

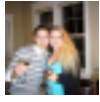
Johnson goes on to state that after 2 world wars and Korea “Retreat does not bring safety, weakness does not bring peace.”

So after the defeat of the French in 1954 Vietnam was split into two halves at the 17th parallel just as Korea had been at the 38th. Many Vietnamese people fleeing south to avoid the communist party of the North. President Eisenhower granted aid to the South Vietnamese in support of creating a military force that could hold off enemies. With limited and strict rules that applied. With Ngo Dinh Diem making major changes and reforms. Diem was a Catholic and was anti-communism. Basically we were building a nation from scratch.

Johnson stated that the enemies would benefit from the rice and natural resources but what I feel he failed to tell America was that we too needed and wanted these resources for our self. Something I feel every President neglects to tell the people. While he goes on about fighting communism and freeing people from oppression he pushes off the benefits we would gain from helping the South Vietnamese While “America’s Longest War” points out that the rich resources and the right to the waterways were of utmost importance to the United States also. We continued aid and fighting for our own goals not for the South Vietnamese people. While intentions were good, we needed to gain the Asian ally to help retain control of the global power we had. We could not allow for an area loss such as Indochina for fear that European countries would take to communism and we would tip the scale in their favor.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: The suffering of innocent people in Vietnam

by Meadow Benedict - Wednesday, October 5, 2016, 9:06 PM

In America's Longest War by George C. Herring the single most important topic that was most significantly related to the movie Why Vietnam? was how badly the people of Vietnam were treated. The Geneva agreement was meant for the people to live in a free world with the right to vote. That didn't happen. The people slowly started to resent the U.S. being in their country. "After eight years of ruthless exploitation by the French, many Vietnamese wonder why America is suddenly spending so much money in Vietnam." (Herring p.78) They resented the influence America had in their country. They were forced to move, fight, and work for close to nothing. The people started to get tired of the way they were being treated and decided to fight back. "So the war goes on. Clearly it is the communists who have made that choice, and as always the innocent suffer". (Films Media Group, Why) The Vietnamese were promised many things but they continued to struggle and die for the freedom they wanted and believed they should have, even if that meant going to war against the United States to win their freedom. Both the movie and book agree that many people died and suffered in Vietnam.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: The suffering of innocent people in Vietnam

by Scott Woods - Sunday, October 9, 2016, 5:25 PM

Meadow, after reading your post something interesting struck me. During this error of time the communist was our biggest threat. From Soviet Union, to China, to Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam. Yet, we still fight that fight today, don't we? Where as they describe in America's Longest War the time and money provided before troops are even entered into the combat area, we have the almost same example with terrorism. We have been sinking money into one thing after another in the claim of our safety, but that begs the question, since after World War II, has America taken on a scared aggressive state of policy?

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Re: Longest War & Video Documentaries

by Peilin Duan - Wednesday, October 5, 2016, 9:44 PM

Based on my reading, Vietnam is a small but value nation for the world. In the video "why Vietnam", it portrayed that Vietnam has special location and it divided into two parts—North Vietnam and South Vietnam: the North supported by the leader of communists Hong chi minh who wanted to bring terror to South Vietnam; and people

from the South Vietnam are looking for freedom and peace. In the “America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975”, the author Herring detailed describes the idea of the security threat the America faced if lose the Indochina to communists. The war happened during the “cold war” period, right after the war in Korea, the diplomatic strategy of America government for southeast Asia was influenced by the Soviets. In my opinion, the video focus more on the war itself but the book tells us more about political and diplomatic sides. Both materials implied that the fear the America had for the growing and spread of Communism mainly lead by Soviet Union was an important reason that why America involved in this war.

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Chapter 1 A dead end valley and Why Vietnam?

by Will Lawhon - Sunday, October 9, 2016, 7:21 PM

Which single topic or event shared in either the The First War in Vietnam or Why Vietnam? videos is the most significantly related to any event or development which has been presented in either Chapter 1 or 2 of the Herring textbook?

I was able to understand the Why Vietnam video clip after reading the first chapter of the herring text book. Chapter 1 'A dead end valley' included a lot of detailed events leading up to the United States involvement in Vietnam.

The new strategies and efforts of the United States military advisors were not carried out by French military leaders and as result they suffered a tremendous defeat by the north Vietnamese troops. "By supporting supporting France, even under the guise of the nap Dai solution, the United States attached itself to a dubious cause." (Herring) Defenseless and Vulnerable to communistic expansion, south Vietnam had no choice but to request aid from the United States. Thousands of north Vietnamese people fled to the south trying to evade the communist regime which only made it easier for the enemy to makes attacks from within the country. The video opens with Lyndon Johnson's speech regarding a woman's question why are we in Vietnam? His speech seems assuring with valid reasoning but I believe that everyone underestimated the power and abilities of the Vietcong who were most confident in there leader Ho Chi Min and determined to be victorious Against any foreign nation.

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