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Fog of War

by Joe Escobar - Sunday, November 13, 2016, 12:48 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Fog of War 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: Fog of War

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The Mighty Mighty SoD.

by Scott Woods - Tuesday, November 15, 2016, 8:39 PM

For me I think former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara comes off as a “little foggy.” Mostly because he seems to be hiding behind his national security clearance. Meaning that when he says stuff like, “If you knew what I knew..,” comes off as not only vague but it also comes across as a little misleading. He really didn’t add anything to what I have learned already or already knew. To me he feels like he’s going on about tell you something important and then pulls it away to you. “After the Bay of Pigs we kind of knew how the Russia’s felt.” Not really sure what he meant by that and it’s not very informative to anything in particular.

I think LBJ would give maybe some truthful account, but not Nixon. Nixon was white wash it and make it look like it was the right thing to do. I feel that LBJ would have said what happened and then have come up with something like, “It was what we thought was right at the time.”

Max Frankel’s Article McNamara’s Retreat seems to me like it’s just a telling of what McNamara himself described in his book. He gives use information on what McNamara major errors where, but then he shows McNamara pointing fingers at Johnson “for going to war furtively, with no regard for the rights of Congress and the public. I think McNamara’s views need to be taken with a grain of salt. Mostly because of his finger pointing, but at least he seems sincere with what he feels were his errors.

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Re: The Mighty Mighty SoD.

by Zachery Brown - Thursday, November 17, 2016, 6:18 PM

Scott, I am really glad that I chose to read your post. At first, after watching the Fog of War clip. I felt that it kin of gave me a bit of insight on the responsibilities and the tough decisions that the former Secretary of Defense was forced to make. Like when he states that he would not have approved a chemical weapon like agent orange if it were to have been illegal.

But I also feel that I can side more with your opinion on the McNamara topic. For one, its not like he said, "I would not have approved a chemical weapon like agent orange if I would have known the horrors that it would inflict not only on the villagers but the environment as well." Which just that right there now thinking back at it, is not even the least bit sincere. It is more of the covering of his bum. I also do see where your coming from as McNamara being extremely brief and not adding much more insight to the subject. He avoided quite a few questions that were thrown his way, especially toward the end of the video.

Although one subject I think that I might disagree with you on is LBJ being more honest about the happenings of this war. As quite a few people these days almost except the fact, that the 1960 election was rigged. And people have come out to confess the fact that they had seen encounters of votes being tampered with. An

extremely wide known instance (or I suppose you could also say accusation) is when LBJ a Texas Native, was sent to Texas right after the election and burned the votes. Therefore if Nixon did decide to have an investigation on the election. There would be no proof of this. This simply, leads me to believe that I don't think either Nixon or LBJ would allow themselves to give a more honest and detailed account of the happenings of the Vietnam War.

I believe that there were many hidden morals behind the war, that of which the public will never hear of. And I don't think that either of the 2 Vietnam War Presidents would be willing to give insight too.

All in all Scott, I liked your post and thank you. It gave me a more clear sense of the avoidance of questions and secrecy to protect ones status.

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Re: The Mighty Mighty SoD.

by Scott Woods - Saturday, November 19, 2016, 12:58 PM

Yea, after I posted this and saying that I was pretty sure that LBJ wasn't such a good guy. What you don't know behind doors can be the downfall of the nation. I think the best way to get the information you would need to piece together an accurate history would be from multiple reliable sources.

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McNamara's Fog

by Amber Gaboriault - Wednesday, November 16, 2016, 6:42 PM

Robert McNamara, the Secretary of Defense, played a huge part in the Vietnam War, I feel the most mind blowing part was when McNamara talks about Agent Orange and how it "turned" out to be toxic and he doesn't remember authorizing the distribution of Agent Orange (Fog of War). I think that that part of the war, dumping 100 million lbs of chemical and destroying millions of acres of forest would be worth remembering. (America's Longest War).

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Re: McNamara's Fog

by Scott Woods - Saturday, November 19, 2016, 12:38 PM

Hey Amber. I think you hit the nail on the head with the Agent Orange. There are things I honestly can't remember in my life, mostly because my brain space can only hold so much information. However, I think the dumping of tons of chemicals is something I would remember. I have no doubt that Robert McNamara not only ordered the dumping of those chemicals (other than the president who else could have) but I'm going out on a limb here and going to say that he didn't even ask once what it would do to the troops. "We found out later that it was harmful to people..."

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Morals and the Memory

by Timothy Lucas - Wednesday, November 16, 2016, 7:01 PM

At about 4:41 of the McNamara Clip, Secretary McNamara asks, 'what is morally appropriate in a wartime environment?' And then goes on to reference the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam stating its intended use as simply 'something that stripped leaves off of trees.' He then states at 5:15, 'after the war it is claimed that it was a toxic chemical...' Earlier in the full version of the *Fog of War* he speaks of his involvement in the fire-bombing of Tokyo, and asks the moral question of which was worse; those 100,000 civilians dying by fire, or by a ground invasion that certainly would have cost lives of many soldiers? At 5:50 he states, "I never in the world would have authorized an illegal action...I'm not really sure I authorized Agent Orange..."

This part indeed seems 'foggy' in the recollection of the Secretary. Most of the full video he tells a clear story of many of the events he was directly involved in both in WW2 and Vietnam, but he often stumbles when speaking of either family or morality in reference to his connection to Vietnam. This may be in part because of the damage the chemical dioxyn did, and any knowledge he may have had prior to its use and during the war of what it would do to people in short and long term. This is of course speculation that is not confirmed as best I could tell from either Herring or Appy. We do hear from Le Cao Dai in the *Patriots* book that speaks not only of short term affects such as poor nutrition from loss of crops, but to long term affects such as cancers and birth defects after the conflict had ended. "In one study I did after the war, among veterans who had stayed in North Vietnam, about one percent of their children had birth defects...Among veterans who had been in the South the longest, the figure was about five percent." (Appy 141) Le Cao Dai does admit that much of his information is not scientific, but even anecdotal evidence such as this does highlight how much damage was done in areas the United States was trying to defend.

Targeting civilians during war should be a moral dilemma for anyone, especially those involved in the planning. At about 7:07 Secretary McNamara speaks of both pride and remorse for his actions. But it appears he may have a selective memory on this issue that might be an attempt to not accept responsibility in this circumstance. Even

the wording of 'claimed' in reference to the victims of Agent Orange suggests he is not fully willing to accept its affects. From the explanation of the fire-bombings of Tokyo, it would seem at the time the use of Agent Orange was a natural next step. But the hindsight he says he has now to look at things, it would suggest he does not fully believe that to be true.

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Re: Morals and the Memory

by Scott Woods - Saturday, November 19, 2016, 12:45 PM

Timothy, I like how you show that McNamara is both remorseful and proud of his work that he accomplished as Secretary of Defense. Something I gained out of it was his conviction of what he did during the Vietnam War. He believes in what he did, be it right or wrong. The thing of it is that he hasn't been the only one in history to do the same. While watching the short clip I was reminded a lot of how Donald Rumsfeld would talk when talking about the Gulf War. Both men seeming energized by the work they were doing, with a slight recognition of remorse in there voice.

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Re: Morals and the Memory

by Jennifer Wilson - Sunday, November 20, 2016, 9:28 PM

Excellent point. Selective memory is an accurate observation, especially when it pertains to Agent Orange. Which, in this interview, he doesn't completely admit to. Although, when researching this topic, I found that he did not hide that he did approve of its use. I also perceived his pride and remorse, and his decision to no longer discuss certain things, for fear of discourse. I am sure, having experienced it and being able to see things very differently years later, can alter a persons views and memories of what actually happened.

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Re: Fog of War

by Peilin Duan - Wednesday, November 16, 2016, 8:15 PM

Should we use force for peace?

U.S. government claim that they sent troop to Vietnam is to fight for peace and right of Vietnamese, but we all know that the more profound implication of the decision is for anti-communism. After a succession of failure of America strategic policy in Vietnam, the public of the U.S. start to question the accuracy of the government's decision. As Herring says in the book, Nixon and Kissinger want to end the war, but in an "honorably" way (American's Longest War). Nixon decided to threaten the North Vietnam into negotiation by using force such as booming operation. With the failure of the decision "again", both of the America and North Vietnam are unwilling to make concessions and end the war; another policy shows up, which called Vietnamization, from 1968 to 1973. Even with lots of aids from U.S. government, South Vietnam is still very dependent on the America; the Vietnamese economy is growing rapidly including prostitution thrived and black market as well (Vietnam: A Television History); after withdraw American troops from Vietnam, the body count of American is decreasing in Vietnam. American booming attack breaks the peace of Cambodian that takes neutral position in the war, innocent people are killed and result in massive protests in U.S. colleges and universities (American's Longest War). The policies used in the Vietnam War prove that force can't solve any problem but been dragged into a deeper chasm.

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Re: Fog of War

by Peilin Duan - Saturday, November 19, 2016, 12:28 AM

For me, I think Secretary is trying to quibble that the Agent Orange is not against humanity and people who authorized that didn't break the law. Pardon my language here, there is no law says that people shouldn't eat shit but nobody does that as well, it's a common sense. And then he claims that he wan't sure if he authorized the Agent Orange, he is the "architect" of the Vietnam War, sounds to me, it's more like Jack the Ripper says "I can not remember if I killed him, he just died in front of me". I don't think he is not so objective when he talks about the war.

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My Understanding Up to this Point in Time.

by Zachery Brown - Wednesday, November 16, 2016, 8:43 PM

I actually do have to (Up to this point in time based off of my understanding) quite agree with Mr. Robert McNamara toward the start of the video. Which is impressive with about 19 seconds into the video his honesty. Stating that "Any Military Commander, who is honest with themselves or with those he is speaking to will admit

that he has made mistakes in the application of Military Power." And also goes onto state some quite unpleasant admittance about the inflicted casualties of war. Which to me I don't feel is so brutally honestly put all that often. He gives insight into the positions taken by those who were what you could potentially call, "Higher Ups." And the decisions that are made that are extremely tough. I feel that this 11 minute video gives you a more in depth look into some of the questions one might think of in the realm of the decision making behind Vietnam.

Yes I think that this clip did give me a little bit of a different outlook on the Vietnam war. Like I said previously, I feel that it is hard to come across the honest truths and experiences from someone like Mr. McNamara being the Secretary of Defense at that point in time. And I had never really thought about this war through the sight of this position. So therefore, the video kind of put a bit more of a respectable understanding of the war. I could never imagine having to the decisions, and approvals and denials of the Vietnam War, or for any war for that matter. So I now feel that I have a bit more of an open mind to another side of this war that I hadn't had before. We have read testimonies and seen videos from those that had fought in the war first hand, those that opposed the war, and now, from someone who had to make some History changing decisions in effort of the Vietnam War.

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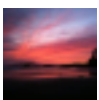
Re: My Understanding Up to this Point in Time.

by Scott Woods - Saturday, November 19, 2016, 12:54 PM

Zachery, your post brought up an interesting question. Can we as historians put ourselves into the shoes of these people? Can we make the same choices as them and fulfill our duty that we are given? Then do we judge these people on our choices? For example, McNamara makes the same statement as everyone else when the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Kill X amount of lives or send in Y amount of troops and expect more casualties than X. For me I would drop the bomb every time. With the information that they had at the time they knew that the Japanese civilians would be a problem if the US would have invaded. What's more is that during the 11 minute film, McNamara never says that he has the information on what Agent Orange will do to people. Seems a little disturbing to me that one could drop a chemical without knowing the side effects.

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Re: My Understanding Up to this Point in Time.

by Jennifer Wilson - Sunday, November 20, 2016, 9:41 PM

Putting yourself in someones shoes, can give you a different outlook in difficult situations. "Never judge someone, until you've walked a while in their shoes". This saying could be applied to this situation. People often are thrust into difficult situations, and have to make decisions that can affect others in different ways. I can imagine they weren't easy decisions. I am sure after so many years passed, he could see how things could have been done differently. One benefit is others can learn from those mistakes.

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Re: Fog of War

by Jennifer Wilson - Wednesday, November 16, 2016, 9:23 PM

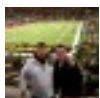
In the midst of war, I can imagine a person so close to it that you can get caught up in it. Make decisions that when reflected on later in life, one cannot help but realize that things could have been different, had they done things differently. I can understand this. Robert McNamara comes off to me in two different ways. Defensive and passionate about explaining how he now feels about the war. He defiantly refuses to speak of more than he has, citing that he will face criticism if he continues. Also, he denies taking part in Agent Orange, then says, "at least I don't think I would". This could be the "fog of war" or a way of refusing to acknowledge his part. He feels that he is wrongly portrayed, but he did defend the use of Agent Orange in northern Vietnam, publicly so. I believe it is common to see things differently in hindsight.

This video clip does not have a profound impact on my understanding of the war. I believe he is a man who has many regrets and because he may see things differently now, it doesn't change the events that occurred.



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foggy memories

by Mason Fisher - Wednesday, November 16, 2016, 11:52 PM

From the video clip it is obvious that Mr. McNamara is able to recount very vivid details about the Vietnam war while he was secretary of state but when asked questions that may make him liable for actions he seems to stray away from a clear and definitive answer. At one point in the video he exclaims that he doesn't even know if he authorized the use of "agent orange" but he later insists that he "must have".

At the end of the video he is pressured to answer some tough questions but exclaims "I'm not going to say anymore than I have". The interviewer last says "well aren't you damned if you do and damned if you don't?" and McNamara replies "I'd rather be damned if I don't". These exchanges as well as other things we have read and

watched adds to the idea that Vietnam is not only difficult to understand but it is also extremely secretive in nature which is one of the biggest reasons why I think it is so hard to interpret and fully understand without being directly involved in some way. '

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Re: foggy memories

by Timothy Lucas - Sunday, November 20, 2016, 10:28 AM

Well said, the end of the video caught my attention too. When asked the damned if you do/don't question he answers, "I'd rather be damned if I don't." I find it interesting that he chooses that option when asked to explain his actions. I wonder what things would have been different if he had chosen the "damned if you don't," when he had a choice on policy for Vietnam, especially the use of Agent Orange. Maybe then he would have felt more comfortable in explaining his actions. However in his mind and that of others around him the Domino Theory was more than enough to justify actions at the time, yet we can see how it may not be enough to completely absolve him of any guilt he feels at the time of the taping of the video.

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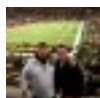
Re: foggy memories

by Scott Woods - Sunday, November 20, 2016, 12:36 PM

I couldn't agree more. The more I think about Vietnam as a whole I realize that there is an underling factor to the whole of the history from the administrations stand point. How wants to be blamed for the atrocities, death, and under lack of planning that we had during this time? McNamara personifies this with his own fog of war memory, saying he doesn't know about Agent Orange and damned if you do and damned if you don't commentary.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: foggy memories

by Mason Fisher - Sunday, November 20, 2016, 6:44 PM

Scott, I agree with when it comes to administrators not wanting to be blamed for those terrible things that happened. This brings me to go deeper and question who is to blame? Last week we focused on soldiers being mistreated and blamed for things in Vietnam but what about the people sending the orders

down from the top? Timothy you bring up the domino theory and I believe that is prevalent throughout the war which caused people to make rash decisions at that time.

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Re: foggy memories

by Peilin Duan - Sunday, November 20, 2016, 5:19 PM

Hi Mason, I have similar feeling like you have. I think Mr. McNamara remember the Vletnam War clear enough, for example, in the clip, he can exactly recall who said anything during what time. While when he has been asked some tricky questions, he didn't tell a definitive answer but pass it by saying he can not remember.

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Re: foggy memories

by Mason Fisher - Sunday, November 20, 2016, 6:46 PM

Yes he definitely remembers the war and his actions. When heavily pressed with very risque questions he squirms and veers the conversation away from the subject that was presented to him. Very interesting to watch and honestly its kind of frustrating because I would like to know what really happened fro his eyes, whether what he did during war time was ok or not.

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There's a right and there's a wrong and there isn't either

by Dan Johnson - Thursday, November 17, 2016, 12:21 AM

McNamara did the best he could with the epistemological resources he had available. In other words, McNamara did his best with what he was willing to acknowledge, which means he didn't really do his best because there were many facets of the war in hindsight or at the time McNamara wasn't willing to acknowledge. Two references McNamara made help spell him out. When McNamara talks about the law on using chemical warfare being not well defined, he shows his deference to authority over a deference to humanity. It wasn't 'we're trying to be humane and do the best we can for defending the world and it's people'. Instead, it says 'we want to win'. That kind of lack of compassion and deference to systems over conscience show that hindsight wouldn't have mattered much for McNamara. He didn't choose to acknowledge authentic conscience. He instead looked for gaps in other's moral systems for leaway.

McNamara wrongly projected. Human nature is not one of war. Human nature is in a constant drive for resolution. Sometimes that takes place through war for some people, but it takes leaders willing to resolve people's hearts and minds around war for them to follow. The average person's nature isn't to fight in prolonged bloodshed and violence on their own. It takes leaders to sell them certainty and give them death. McNamara acted as one of those men during the war. He sold certainty and gave death. His nature is one of war. That is certainly wrong, and he is certainly culpable.

Certainly there is a right and wrong; however, there are two principles that coincide: even in morality there is a learning process that is not necessarily influenced by self-determinism, and leaders reflect their societies. It is not to say that McNamara wasn't wrong and that he didn't have a choice. It's just to say that he choice his path in life while simultaneously he was put in a position to learn from the choices he was likely to make. This idea is essentially ascribed to by Hindu and Buddhist religions in their understandings of Dharma. At the same time, he was put in his position for others who thought he was wrong to learn how to better relate to him as well and to learn something about themselves in regards to how to stop their own human suffering and others. Society itself was mainly culpible for falling to the illusion that he should led and other's inability to adequately break the illusion for others. Therefore, ultimately it is not in people's best interest to judge McNamara, but instead, it is their job to seek how to best break down illusion caused by fear to bring true resolution and true certainty to people. If the true resolution is stronger than the fear and confusion, then it can stave off destruction. It can certainly be said that it wasn't McNamara's fault. That would ascribe him far too much power. It can also be said that he was in some way inevitable. In the future though, McNamara doesn't have to be inevitable if people collectively make better choices, and leaders come around who offer a harmonious way forward rather than a forceful one.

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Re: There's a right and there's a wrong and there isn't either

by Amber Gaboriault - Thursday, November 17, 2016, 5:53 PM

Hi Dan, in the video Fog of War McNarama says " he formed a hypothesis that each country could achieve their objectives without the terrible loss of life and he wanted to test it out in Vietnam" (2:18) I wonder if he started out with a conscience and really cared about the loss of life. It does seem he lost that focus and just wanted to "win" no matter the cost. It would be interesting to try and find the point in which his focus changed and the circumstances around it.

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Re: There's a right and there's a wrong and there isn't either

by Dan Johnson - Saturday, November 19, 2016, 11:41 AM

I appreciate your point, Andrew. "Win" probably isn't right word; however, to use your quote, he used the word "test" when describing his approach to Vietnam. I think that's a "cop out", and probably more specifically describes his approach.

In the video, he also describes he was essentially only trying to serve the president. However, he was known properly for being one of the hawks throughout his tenure and one of the most influential leaders. Hiding behind his position is not the excuse he thinks it to be. He made an interesting point in referring to how he made mistakes on his way to accomplishing great things. This quote describes McNamara perfectly. He was an intelligent guy who was just trying to do his job; however, what he implies with this idea in conjunction with his actions was his willingness to be reckless and irresponsible to maintain his position as a favored individual in the war effort. For him, he must have known like others that there wasn't a clear path forward, so instead of doing the moral act of using restraint and humility, he moved forward carelessly essentially "testing" his ideas while millions of lives hung in the balance. This approach speaks to the hubris of the time. I can't say anyone who isn't morally desensitized would approach war and peace this way. McNamara was far too eager to cement his legacy as a great hero during war time. Winning as a leader of the war through his technocratic approach would have furthered his greatly accomplished career. Whether he tried to win through intellectual tests or emotional fervor may be a distraction from the point that he wanted to win perhaps not at all cost but at high costs. I think it's important to ask ourselves about McNamara, 'would he be deflecting credit if they had won the war?' I get the sense he would have been fine being paraded throughout the U.S. So, if he's deflecting blame when they lost, it shows a clear view of his motivations. He doesn't strive to add insight about himself and the time. He strives to be seen favorably. McNamara said it, "he'd rather be damned if he didn't," when referring to making public comments. It shows how much courage it takes to start a war you're never going to fight in.

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Re: There's a right and there's a wrong and there isn't either

by Amber Gaboriault - Saturday, November 19, 2016, 4:33 PM

Hi Dan, do you think he started his position with the mindset of being careless and wanting to win at all cost? or do you think that changed? In the article McNamara's Retreat Frankel ends with "But he refused to abandon or attack the President whom he had helped to guide into quicksand. He and

Johnson "loved and respected" each other, in a bond that even now, in retrospect, keeps the public at a distance looking on, with skeptic" do you think his loyalty to the president could have fueled the desire to win?

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Re: There's a right and there's a wrong and there isn't either

by Dan Johnson - Saturday, November 19, 2016, 10:17 PM

I think those are all really great questions. I think that McNamara like a lot of people was simply desensitized to confusion, uncertainty, and humility. I think you could say almost everyone is to varying degrees. Some people are to such an extent they are able to do huge amounts of destruction not because they believe their actions to be bad or purposely hurtful, but in their desensitization, they simply deny parts and pieces of reality. His loyalty to Johnson probably came from his like mindedness to him and his love for the institution he worked for. I can't say I can totally understand McNamara, just like it's hard to understand anything in its entirety. I think sometimes when I look at Vietnam and look at the mistakes others made, I think that sometimes we push too hard and rush too much. In the process, I think we take short cuts and often act callously towards the groups negatively effected by those shortcuts. In the rush, I think we struggle to put together thoughts and ideas that can fully account for the process that will bring about our designs in actuality and communicate them in ways comprehendable and coordinatable with the masses. This way of operating works inevitably works like clockwork in producing chaos, disarray, wastefulness, and suffering. A film from the time period called A Clockwork Orange speaks to these outcomes. It's a disturbing movie that I would say accurately describes the time. It references people's search for control in the response to destruction and chaos and ultimately breed more. At the core of the destruction is the compromising of our morality which inevitably comes back to roost, so to speak. Often times, the more successful and wealthy a country becomes the less of sense of humility and acknowledgement of fundamental aspects of reality because it often takes longer for those in leadership to feel the effects of their actions. I would say McNamara was at the tip of this spear.

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Re: There's a right and there's a wrong and there isn't either

by Mason Fisher - Sunday, November 20, 2016, 11:53 PM

I think the way he chose to hide certain details surrounding the war points towards him wanting to win. I mean why would he have things to hide if he didn't make sacrifices to win at any cost? It is obvious that many details surrounding Mr. McNamara have not and will not ever be released which makes me assume guilt and dishonesty. Why are some memories foggy yet others are not?

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Misunderstanding McNamara

by Will Lawhon - Thursday, November 17, 2016, 1:39 PM

This clip from the documentary is very important when trying to understand the reality of war. Robert McNamara was appointed secretary of defense by the Kennedy administration which at the time was dealing with a pretty serious threat from the communist Soviet Union, and the brink of war just 90 miles from US soil. The United States had no choice but to intervene in Vietnam because they feared that the spread of communist supported nations would result in another world war over time. This clip also helped me clarify that there was misunderstanding on both sides on the battle field. The north claimed to have been fighting for independence in fear that the US was going to enslave the entire nation with colonialism just as the French had done, and the Chinese prior to them. McNamara claims that he doesn't remember exactly giving the authorization to apply Agent Orange during his time as secretary of defense so this would be one example of his recollection of the war to be "a little foggy".

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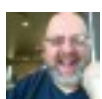
Re: Misunderstanding McNamara

by Amber Gaboriault - Thursday, November 17, 2016, 5:35 PM

Hi Will, Your post makes a great point, the Fog of War video stated that McNamara viewed the Vietnam War as part of the Cold War, not a separate Civil War. I believe his statement of that sheds light on why they were so intense and set on fighting off communism. Maybe if he could have viewed it as a Civil war and realized how long the Vietnamese had been oppressed he would have handled the war differently.

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Re: Misunderstanding McNamara

by Scott Woods - Sunday, November 20, 2016, 12:45 PM

Amber, I find it interesting that you'd suggest that if McNamara, let alone the rest of the world, that this was anything but a civil war, how would the whole outcome have been played. Let us not forget that the south was being heavily supplied by the US at this time, even before troops set boots on the ground. We would have still be a player in this opera, but would we have had as heavy a hand in it? I think that after listening to McNamara's statement he was on a road to win no matter the cost. He not only would dropped Agent Orange during a civil war, he would have done almost everything exactly the same. At the cost of winning mind you.

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Re: Misunderstanding McNamara

by Amber Gaboriault - Sunday, November 20, 2016, 1:56 PM

Hi Scott, My thoughts consisted of the idea that the leaders of the united states were so paranoid of communism stemming from the cold war, it says in the article McNamara's Retreat "President Dwight D. Eisenhower, the most venerated American of the time, had taught -- and the Kennedy and Johnson teams never dared to doubt in time -- that if South Vietnam was "lost" to Communism, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Malaysia would fall like dominoes, imperiling India, Burma, Indonesia and the Philippines, if not also Japan, and emboldening the Russians and Chinese to extend Communist conquests by military force or subversion in ways that would sooner or later provoke a nuclear World War III, the very destruction of civilization.

Yes, that is how America's leaders spoke to each other and, all too persuasively, to the public. Mr. McNamara's book reminds us that they even repeated the litany in memos to their Presidents, to inoculate them against any temptation to retreat from Vietnam. And if all those dominoes were not cause enough, there were promises to be kept in order to preserve the value of America's other diplomatic threats and commitments." If it was just a "Civil War" between Vietnam alone I am not so sure America would have spent so much effort and loss of life, It was always the bigger threat of communism that influenced the continuation of Vietnam.

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Re: Misunderstanding McNamara

by Will Lawhon - Sunday, November 20, 2016, 6:42 PM

Hey amber thank you for the feedback on my post. I too think it would of been a totally different outcome if they had understood the Vietnamese warrior like background. In my opinion i think that the paranoia and phobias of the red

scare had instilled major fear in our government at the time and they didn't want to take any chances With communist russia. We have to give Robert Mcnamara some credit for opposing nuclear warfare. Talk about a game changer!

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Re: Misunderstanding McNamara

by Zachery Brown - Friday, November 18, 2016, 8:45 PM

Hey Will, I do think that Mr. McNamaras accounts of the war probably were a little bit foggy. But I also have to go with what Scott posted in the first post of this thread. Is that he didn't exactly care to give anymore of a clear account on the war. Perhaps due to possible repercussions that could possibly take place due to saying something that he was never suppose to. I think that is kind of why near the end of the video he insisted on not telling the interviewer anymore then he had. I think that there is much more that went on behind the scenes with this war more then the public could ever imagine.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Misunderstanding McNamara

by Peilin Duan - Saturday, November 19, 2016, 12:42 AM

Hi Will, I agree with you about the misunderstanding on both sides on the battle field, I think the misunderstandings are always exist; but I don't believe what McNamara says that he is not sure if he authorized the Agent Orange, In my opinion, McNamara, as a former secretary, he is more standing for the U.S. side when he talks about the war instead of standing in neutral, such as, when he talks about general Sherman, he points out that the countless killing general Sherman processed is all for saving the nation.

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Re: Misunderstanding McNamara

by Mason Fisher - Sunday, November 20, 2016, 7:01 PM

The United States had been and was still fighting a war on communism almost like our war on terrorism today. Although the situation was obviously stressful and difficult to make decisions regarding the war, I do not think these are excuses for some of the decisions that were made. Also, I think these actions should be explained and not withheld like Mr. McNamara does in the video clips. This is frustrating from a student standpoint when trying to investigate the war.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Misunderstanding McNamara

by Amber Gaboriault - Sunday, November 20, 2016, 8:00 PM

Mason I do agree with you. I do feel the war on communism was the bigger idea versus a civil war. I also agree the it is frustrating that McNamara says in the McNamara's Retreat that "He left with a whimper, not a bang. So why speak out now? The main reason, he says, is that he has "grown sick at heart witnessing the cynicism and even contempt" with which so many Americans view their institutions and leaders. He knows how much Vietnam contributed to that disaffection; he would never deny the war's terrible damage. But he hopes to prove that the mistakes were "mostly honest," even if traceable to a ghastly ignorance of the Vietnamese people, culture and terrain, and the historical forces of that time." It seems if he was trying to help or clear his conscience he would have actually answered the questions that were asked. I feel he didn't add anything that we didn't already know. In the video the Fog of War McNamara states the he "knows things" but he never really says what. I do say these things having not read the whole book, so maybe he added more in other areas of the book.

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McNamara's Retreat

by Amber Gaboriault - Saturday, November 19, 2016, 4:23 PM

After reading articles and studying Vietnam, I believe Max Fankal's view of McNamara is accurate. The article McNamara's Retreat states "What Mr. McNamara adds to the public record are some White House documents and tape transcripts revealing, most notably, his own agonized attempts in 1967 to persuade President Lyndon B. Johnson to stop sending more men to the slaughter." The comment shows that McNamara is taking a last attempt to shift the blame of the war off of him. When McNamara is asked "Why didn't you speak out against the war after he left the administration" he states "I am not saying more than I already have" (Fog of War), I believe his unwillingness to answer questions such as these shows he is not honest and transparent. McNamara also refuses to answer the question of how much responsibility or guilt he feels, and he avoids that question as well (Fog of War). I almost start to think he has convinced himself that nothing was his fault except relying on and not correcting others who made mistakes. It seems in the article McNamara's Retreat that some of his errors were "-- an escalating pattern of military misjudgment. He is hard on the Joint Chiefs of Staff for their misplaced optimism in the early years, their always excessive faith in high-tech weapons and their later expectations that massive bombing and frontal battles could wear down the

Vietnamese enemy.” Being hard on the Joint Chiefs of Staff shows evidence of shifting blame. He blames himself for not seeing the decisions of others as a failure. I don’t take much weight in what McNamara has to say. I think at one time he cared about the lives of people but the more involved and deeper relationships he formed with LBJ he ignored what the right thing was needed to protect the soldiers.

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