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Article & Survey

by Joe Escobar – Saturday, May 14, 2016, 10:21 PM

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If LBJ Were Alive

by Mathew Bohman – Monday, May 16, 2016, 11:02 PM

I think LBJ would have been able to help with our understanding of the war if he would have been able to contribute to Fog of War. LBJ would have been able to answer a lot of questions about decisions that were made during the war since he ultimately authorized them.

While we know he was treading a fine line, trying to maintain his Great Society and to honor Kennedy's limited troop commitment, after the Gulf of Tonkin incident he was to get away with increasing U.S. commitment in Vietnam.

LBJ could have added a wealth of information to the documentary because he would have been able to answer the questions that so many people have. He could have answered why suppressing communism became more important than his Great Society he envisioned.

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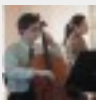


Re: If LBJ Were Alive

by Daniel Long – Saturday, May 21, 2016, 10:25 AM

Matthew,

I have to disagree that LBJ would give us anymore detail into his actions. He might be able to try and justify his reasons and give us dates about when he signed them and his experience trying to convince others. However, I do think that he would apologize for his actions since the Geneva Accords put him in the hot seat. I don't think that he was treading a fine line trying to maintain limited troop commitment, I rather think that he was crossing it completely. When there were over 540,000 troops by 1969 in Vietnam, and only increased as the war escalated, he seemed to have crossed it.



A War of Ignorance

by [Titus Young](#) – Tuesday, May 17, 2016, 5:02 PM

It seems that a lot of our sources have said that the soldiers that were sent to Vietnam were not prepared well enough for the landscape, people, and fighting that was to take place in Vietnam. Often the courageous, young patriot would sign up to serve his country without fully knowing what he was signing up for. Even Mr. Frankel says that "In his pew, Mr. McNamara himself was a prominent sinner. His can-do spirit found no mission impossible, even as Saigon's government and armies crumbled. His domineering intellect and predilection for system analysis made him a pathetic example for erroneous and deceptive military audits, of bodies counted, weapons captured, sorties flown, supply lines ruptured." In many ways the perfect soldier, blindly following orders, without much thought for why. Him, and almost every other soldier enlisted were on this mentality. If the soldiers were better prepared, for what they were facing, we might have won the war.



Max Frankel's criticism

by [Mathew Bohman](#) – Tuesday, May 17, 2016, 7:19 PM

I think that Max Frankel's criticism is a bit harsh. When reading the article you can almost feel the contempt he had for Mr. McNamara.

I think we are getting the truth from Mr. McNamara, at least his version of the truth. I'm not sure that anyone can get 100% truth from another person. I know that is cynical but I believe that most people do not disclose everything.

Mr. McNamara was not on the ground but he was the one making the recommendations to the President and the President was the one person that ultimately approved them.

Back to the question of Frankel's critique, I understand where he is coming from and I think even Mr. McNamara understands. In Fog of War he states that most people think he is a son of a bitch. With that said, I do not think that Mr. McNamara would care how much Mr. Frankel dislikes him or his participation in the war.



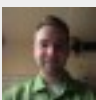
Survey Answers

by [Mathew Bohman](#) – Tuesday, May 17, 2016, 7:30 PM

My responses to the survey questions were not based off, or influenced by what we have learned in this class so far. Up to this point my views and beliefs have not changed. If anything, this class has reinforced what I already felt and believed

In this particular situation I do not think it is fair or right that we pass judgment on those before us that made decisions that affected this country. It is not our right to imply that we know what exactly was going on, it is not our right to imply that we knew the mindset of our leaders or the information they were receiving. That being said, we do pass judgment on those before us, everyday.

Opinions are a way of being constructive and I think that is acceptable, everybody is entitled to their opinion.



Re: Article & Survey Better off

by [Daniel Long](#) – Wednesday, May 18, 2016, 2:00 PM

In the article, McNamara’s retreat, we can read clearly that this is an analysis of his book, and basic summaries that can be put into short paragraphs for context. Max Frost does a good job of leaving criticism out of the

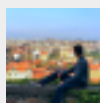
article, but gives subtle hints to some of the choices as any person would. “In this pew, McNamara himself was a prominent sinner” (Frost). Mr. Frost does a good job of summarizing knowledge from the book and inputting this into his sentences. “Even in retrospect, he does not associate the drift into war in Vietnam with the Republican taunts that Democrats had "lost" China to Communism. (Kennedy was afraid to recognize not only China but even Outer Mongolia!)” (Frost). It is because of this however, that he also harshly and fairly concludes that McNamara did leave out some valuable information. “Even more disappointing is Mr. McNamara's unwillingness to explore the human tragedies and political legacies of this longest American war.” (Frost).

Overall, the article seems well written and throws in some valuable points, however, Mr. Frost does only seem one-sided about McNamara’s accomplishments and failures during his time as Secretary of defense. Without reading the book and seeing an eleven minute portion of the video, it is hard to put judgment on a political figure. Although, McNamara gives us very limited knowledge, and only seems to be repeating what we, as a class, have already learned through the books and videos. In the video, he mentions the Agent Orange, and how if it were illegal he wouldn’t have launched that, and how he tried to convince President Johnson to not send in more men to be slaughtered (Frost).

All the limited information that we have seen and read are already known facts, though this time it comes from the former Secretary of Defense himself. Even if this is the case, he still answers politically. “I’m not going to add anything else, or else I would be in more controversy” (Video). Without hearing the full picture form a political figure we should only focus on the videos and books from outside resources. Finally, Mr. McNamara only has a western (U.S.) view, and the Vietnamese government has only their point of view, so again, we are at cross roads.

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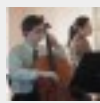
Survey Realizations
by Trevor Kaye – Thursday, May 19, 2016, 12:00 AM

I feel that the majority of my responses to the survey questions were not effected by the materials I have been exposed to during this class. I do, however, feel that a select few were absolutely effected. For example, one question struck me as particularly related to the subject matter of this class. "As Americans, we have a responsibility to spread democracy around the world." This question made me recall the disastrous consequences of imposing our political systems and beliefs on countries around the world, perfectly exemplified in the case of Vietnam. I disagreed with the statement for that reason.

Another thought provoking statement was, "We will always have to compete with the world’s other nations for power." In a primarily capitalist, connected world, competition exists in most aspects of life. In order to maintain our position as a world power, the United States must compete with other countries for power, whether that be economic, military, or technological power. The Vietnam war and materials that I have learned in this class illustrate the importance of ensuring that the competition for power doesn't get out of hand, and that there is a substantial difference between good and bad competition. Examples of good competition would be the scientific race to put the first man on the moon, or international businesses like Toyota and Chevrolet competing to create the most reliable and fuel-efficient vehicle for their customers. The war in Vietnam was a result of bad, fear-induced competition, and it is important to keep a watchful eye for examples of this in today's society.

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Article and Scrutiny.
by Titus Young – Friday, May 20, 2016, 6:45 PM

In Frankel's article, it is obvious that he does not think highly of Mr. McNamara. He openly scrutinizes McNamara on many accounts and does not praise him. Frankel does not seem to be happy that McNamara kept his story/perspective hidden for so long. The press is interesting, they have constitutional rights to print whatever they want, and tend to be very pessimistic in their views of people. What I think Frankel fails to realise is that the war probably holds many bad memories for McNamara. However, one of our classmates Mattew Bohman speculated that Mr. McNamara probably doesn't care how people viewed hm, or talked about him. I think that regardless of whether someone cares or not if you are a reporter, you need to accurately give the person's perspective, without distorting it with your own bias too much.

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Yes, it is ok to judge.
by [Dustin Brown](#) – Saturday, May 21, 2016, 5:33 PM

My responses to the survey questions were influenced not by this course, but by my firsthand experience in attempting to spread democracy and the American way in a hostile country (Iraq). This course did however open my eyes to just how shortsighted our leaders can be, and how fast history can repeat itself. Having witnessed millions in taxpayer dollars get wasted on projects that were never finished, and on new equipment that was never used and then destroyed. It is no wonder the National debt is pushing 20 trillion dollars with that kind of waste and negligence. Another ridiculous waste of cash was the American civilian contractor who operated the laundry facility on my base who would brag that he earned \$140,000 a year of which \$80,000 was tax free thanks to the combat zone tax exclusion. To put his earnings in perspective as a Corporal in the infantry I earned just over 30,000 a year, and to top all that he had local Iraqi workers who earned \$7 dollars a day doing all the work while he just supervised. It is absolutely right to blame the past American leaders for their handling of Vietnam, because the choices they made cast a huge shadow over America that is still lingering to this day. It is important for each generation to analyze, criticize, and praise the decisions that any past leader has made, so that hopefully similar mistakes won't be repeated, and successes can replicated.

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A different view.
by [Titus Young](#) – Saturday, May 21, 2016, 9:17 PM

We usually get many different views or stories when we learn historically about a war like soldiers from both sides, generals,kings, and civilians. It seems to me that we rarely get a story from the second in command (or in McNamara's case, close to the president). I find his point of view to be a bit enlighting, especially in how the president's staff were thinking. However, I do not think that he handled it as well as he could have, but he is one of the very few people that came forward and told about his experiences with the Vietnam war. Frankel says "In his 79th year, Robert S. McNamara at long last offers the public a glimpse of his aching conscience." This statement has a lot of information. It states the overall tone the Frankel will take while describing McNamara's book, and shows that the public must have know that McNamara was deeply involved with the Vietnam war.

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