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Fog of War

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Fog of War

by [Joe Escobar](#) – Saturday, May 14, 2016, 10:21 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Fog of War topic.

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McNamara

by [Mathew Bohman](#) – Monday, May 16, 2016, 10:47 PM

Former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara gave a very thought provoking interview in the documentary Fog of War.

He didn't make me understand the war any better but he did provide some enlightening information into his actions and his involvement in the war.

Mr. McNamara spoke freely and somewhat emotionally about the war and some of his feelings towards his part in it. He apologizes for making errors that cost lives but he also was very proud of his service to his country. I understand that and respect him for being both loyal and also humble enough to enough to admit he made errors. I will say that his definition of service and mine are different because he was not on the grounds fighting. It amuses me that many politicians throw around how proud they are for their service when they are talking about war, yet they never fight in the wars they are so proud *of*.

He does seem a bit "foggy" when he talks about authorizing Agent Orange. He admits that he authorized it but then says that he can't remember authorizing it. He also states that he would not have authorized it if he knew it would kill so many people, both civilians and soldiers.

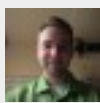
Mr. McNamara became somewhat emotional toward the end of the documentary on two different occasions. Once when he was reciting a quote and at the very end when he was asked point blank if he feels any responsibility for what happened or any guilt. He answer was simple yet telling, as he stated that he was not going to answer that question.

Sum of ratings: [3 \(1\)](#)

3

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Re: McNamara



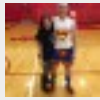
by [Daniel Long](#) – Saturday, May 21, 2016, 10:01 AM

Matthew,

I agree that Mr. McNamara was not a helpful resource to understanding what we already knew about the war and Agent Orange, but I guess he did enlighten some facts on a emotional level from a politicians standpoint. I can't believe also that when he mentions Agent Orange and knowing that it is a chemical that strips leaves from trees that he never knew it would kill people! That seems more of a cover up. What I want to know is why he waited so long for this to be put out and made publically with a book and video. I know that he mentions why in the New York Times, but that seems more of a cover up, in my opinion.

Sum of ratings: [1 \(1\)](#)

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Re: McNamara

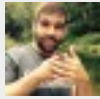
by [Aaron Ashenfelter](#) – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 3:58 PM

Hello Daniel.

While I did not watch the entire 95 min. documentary, the clip was provided did see to be cut a lot and I do agree with you that throughout this clip that we were given, Mr McNamara seemed kind of "foggy" when he spoke about certain events, I feel like the entire documentary might have given us a little bit of a better view into what he had to say about some of the topics. I do agree with you however when you say that he provided little to no extra information regarding his involvement in the war.

Sum of ratings: [1 \(1\)](#)

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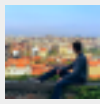
Re: McNamara

by [Bo Costello](#) – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 10:50 PM

I don't think that McNamara provided us with any new information about the war, but his emotion after the war and his latest outlook gives us viewer a deeper look on how the war affected someone so closely involved. This was the same guy pushing to send more advisors into Northern Vietnam. Good catch on him being "foggy" about authorizing Agent Orange. He states that he has made a lot of mistakes, but wasn't very specific on what those mistakes were. He isn't proud of them, so it is better to avoid giving examples. He would remember if he authorized Agent Orange or not.

Sum of ratings: [1 \(1\)](#)

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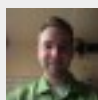
Re: McNamara

by [Trevor Kaye](#) – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 11:45 PM

I also found it particularly interesting that McNamara wasn't sure as to whether or not he authorized the usage of Agent Orange. It seems like one would remember authorizing such a consequential element of the Vietnam War. After all, Agent Orange was the most used herbicide in the entire war. The books don't offer much insight into the chemical, so I did a bit of research myself.

According to history.com, the United States' "program of defoliation, codenamed Operation Ranch Hand, sprayed more than 19 million gallons of herbicides over 4.5 million acres of land in Vietnam from 1961 to 1972." This was a very large and expensive operation, so I find it seriously hard to believe that McNamara couldn't remember whether or not he had a hand in its approval. On the other hand, McNamara did play an integral part in the Vietnam War, so I suppose it would be hard for him to remember every aspect of it. I searched for documents regarding McNamara's involvement with Agent Orange to no avail, so for now, it remains a mystery.

History source for a bit more information on Agent Orange: <http://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/agent-orange>

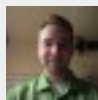


Re: Fog of War too complex
by [Daniel Long](#) - Wednesday, May 18, 2016, 12:01 PM

The accounts made by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and the relation to the Appy book express that they seem to dive into one thing. That the Vietnam War, or any war is so complex that it is beyond human capacity to solve it. One statement that Mr. McNamara makes is that “our judgement, our actions are not adequate” (Video). All these things that Mr. McNamara makes reminds me of the different stories told from either side of the U.S. and North and South Vietnamese soldiers. That there are so many variables to consider in war it is impossible to understand, so we must resort to a simplistic resolution of, its hell.

The claims by Mr. McNamara, again brings me back to the first stories that I read from the Appy book. Describing an account of a U.S. soldier, Roger Danlon, who was terrified by the phosphorous mortar that struck near him, and only seeing the silhouettes of the North Vietnamese. And on the other side, a North Vietnamese female soldier, Tran Thi Gong, who recalled the terrified looks from U.S. soldiers and knew that they had a home field advantage, and used this to hide or protect themselves against airplane bombings.

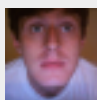
These stories and reconciliations from both the Appy book and Mr. McNamara have only confused me more on the accounts of Vietnam. In the video we see a picture of him and president of Vietnam in 1995 having lunch. They discuss the differences of why they were over in Vietnam; Vietnamese wanted independence from anyone and everyone no matter the luxuries or casualties, and U.S. wanted to support Vietnam in independence and unity (Video). All of the variables, as previously discussed, leads for me to believe that even Mr. McNamara can’t see the full picture and that his memories are only a keyhole size of what really happened.



Re: Fog of War too big a pedestal
by [Daniel Long](#) - Wednesday, May 18, 2016, 12:01 PM

If LBJ and Nixon were still alive, I think that we would get as far as Mr. McNamara. We would only receive more political responses to moral questions and comments that only answer personal memories from the War.

If both presidents did answer questions we could get some minor details, but nothing major like the ones we are receiving from the videos and books. Mr. McNamara says that “we didn’t understand the war,” and “it was an element of the cold war” (Video). These comments are very Western comments, we only receive one side of opinion and a political maturity of answers that only go as far as politicians can. At the end of the video he is asked “do you feel guilty about the war?” and he replies with, “I’m not going to go into that, it will only cause more controversy” (Video). If either presidents were to answer these questions, again, they would decline to answer, because they were too big and international pedestal to share any feelings and that would decrease their image to the public.



Macroscopic View
by [Timothy Eckley](#) - Friday, May 20, 2016, 9:31 AM

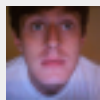
I have to strongly disagree that LBJ and Nixon could only provide us minor details. The details they could provide about the war would be from a perspective that is much wider than the average person participating in the war. Sure, soldiers were able to give us accounts from the ground, they were able to tell us details about what they did in the war. However, they admit, for the most part, that they weren't always sure why they were doing what they were doing. Mostly just following orders. If the presidents who were in office during this war were willing to speak, we could attain much more insight into why these orders were given and what the strategy was behind them.

Just as you assume they wouldn't give us straight answers, we can also assume that they would be completely open and honest. So making the presumption that they would decline to speak on this topic is not beneficial just as me saying, "yes they would answer every question asked" is not going to be effective either. Since they are gone and neither contention can really be proven. It's hard to refute that if they were

both, alive and willing to tell their story, there would be little to no better sources for a macroscopic view on the war. The insight we could have on the thought process behind their decision making during the war would be invaluable to the historical record of the war. They could be vague, dishonest, misleading or completely open about the happenings of the Vietnam War, but any information attainable from them would clear a lot of things up.

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Hazy Sincerity

by [Timothy Eckley](#) – Wednesday, May 18, 2016, 12:51 PM

It's obvious to say that we are easily able to evaluate our mistakes in hindsight. We have a much clearer vision of the sequence of events that have occurred and that lead us to our decisions. How we can adapt those decision making processes to attain a much more accurate estimate towards the solution in the future. However, these actions don't benefit us for things that happened in the past, but only for decisions to come. With that said, I think very few people have as complete of a perspective on the war as Mr. McNamara. To this day, we are still speculating on many things and have difficulty being 100% sure of what the right decisions would have been during the Vietnam War.

McNamara's points on the war make it clear that it was a much more complex situation than we give it credit for. From the first weeks of the term, I immediately began to recognize that Vietnam was more of a civil war, more of a fight for independence and had second thoughts about whether we should've been there in the first place. It's not that easy in the moment. McNamara points out that it was very easy, given all of the global strife that had been occurring in previous years, for a misinterpretation of the situation to take place. I find myself empathizing with his situation and gaining a sense that he was, very much so, trying to do what was best for our country and international relations.

There is something to be said about his reminiscence of the past. Which would point out that perhaps, his testimony, isn't 100% reliable. When speaking about agent orange, he stated that he couldn't recall authorizing it and would never authorize an illegal action. These types of comments, while brutally honest, can definitely hint towards either a lack of memory or disregard for the whole truth. Even this subtle slip up still makes me hesitant to believe everything he says, even though he seems so sincere. McNamara even breaks down while discussing his rediscovery of his actions while quoting T.S Eliot.

There's no doubt that LBJ and Nixon could add to our understanding of the war. Any individual that can provide us more information or perspective on this event are going to contribute to completing our understanding. If anyone with an immense macroscopic view of the Vietnam War were alive today and willing to tell their story, the information would be invaluable to the historical record. It would be great to hear the same sort of recollection from LBJ, Nixon, Kennedy or other sources as well.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Hazy Sincerity

by [Mathew Bohman](#) – Wednesday, May 18, 2016, 9:29 PM

Timothy I am glad to read that you also noted how emotional Mr. McNamara was.

I still think that what he told us was his version of the truth and what parts he was able to without more controversy. LBJ, Nixon, Kennedy would all have been excellent sources of information and it would be a great addition to history.

Mr. McNamara certainly had great information and I too feel for him. People hated/hate him and I think he really was just a very loyal man serving his country the best he could.

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History repeating

by [Dustin Brown](#) – Wednesday, May 18, 2016, 4:36 PM

Secretary McNamara’s recollection of the war seemed to be influenced by frustration, and a desire to convince the audience

that his decisions in regards to Vietnam were justified. It is easy to understand his passion about the war, because essentially he has been living his entire life in it's shadow since becoming Secretary of Defense. That desire to know that one's life's work wasn't in vain can be a huge motivator for setting the record straight, however his tale of a meeting in 1995 with his Vietnamese counterpart showed he has been engulfed in the fog of war. To imply that if Vietnam had severed ties with communist nations independence would have been established or that the U.S. would have not intervened is a little farfetched. The U.S. needed a strong French ally after WW2 and having French Indochina as a functioning colony again rather than an independent nation was thought to be the key to that strength. Secretary McNamara was correct, America did not understand the Vietnamese, and was easier to sympathize with the French. Vietnam like WW2 came out of the inability to see all the variables on the world stage, after WW1 the treaty of Versailles was the foundation for conflict, and after WW2 the treatment of Vietnam as an afterthought set the stage for history to repeat itself.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Re: History repeating

by [Bryce Tilton](#) – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 9:38 PM

I agree that he has been frustrated about the war, and for good cause since he was the Secretary of Defense. I think the whole United States was frustrated from the war. I mean I get frustrated just doing homework. This guy was making orders for a war cross the world. I also think he has to try to justify his decisions just to keep some respect from people. With that being said, I think he has accepted his decisions, and moved on to the best of his abilities which is that best thing for him to do. If he hasn't set his decisions to rest he would be living the rest of his life contemplating his every decision in the war which would not be a good situation to be in. I think it is a very interesting that you related WW1 and WW2 as well. That's a pretty cool relation.

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McNamara admits to failure

by [Bo Costello](#) – Wednesday, May 18, 2016, 7:07 PM

This was a very confusing time for everyone that was part of the war. Robert McNamara admits to his failures, and killing people unnecessarily (Americans and Vietnamese). He also supported Rolling Thunder and added an additional 40 000 advisers in the North, after Tonkin (ALW pg.159). He was in full support of the war and did everything to push for more military action. That was until 1966, when he admitted that the results of the war were not what he intended for and wanted to discontinue bombings. He admitted that he made mistakes. During this short clip of McNamara, I thought about how he referred to war as “human nature” and how this has stood true throughout history. Many of the U.S. citizens who played a part in the war were just doing their job. McNamara said “I was serving at the request of a president that was elected by the American people.” I couldn’t imagine being put in a foreign country with bombs going off all over the place and determining between the Vietnamese that are on my side and who are the enemy. This must have just been as confusing to them, since the French that were there before the U.S. were trying to colonize them. The Vietnamese weren’t fighting a civil war; they were fighting for their independence. I think he is reminded everyday of the war. I didn’t catch anything that I considered “a little foggy” from what he said.

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2

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Re: McNamara admits to failure

by [Daniel Long](#) – Saturday, May 21, 2016, 10:19 AM

Bo,

I agree that it was a confusing time for both the U.S. and Vietnamese people to see a point to the war, and if the U.S. soldiers were sent to protect the people then why would they burn there homes, and those citizens would have to relocate? For Mr. McNamara, I wonder then if he supported operation Rolling Thunder, 40000 advisors in the North, and Agent Orange, then why then would he later advise to the president to not send more troops, when in 1965, he authorized 21,000 more? It seems as though he would have many more negatives then positives to suddenly change his mind as Secretary of Defense.

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Re: McNamara admits to failure

by Bryce Tilton – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 10:01 PM

To the defense of the United States troops, there were northern soldiers mixed in those villages with the citizens so the American soldiers were probably on edge and easily provoked with anything suspicious that happened, so they thought relocation was the safest, and most convent way to protect the citizens of South Vietnam. Little did they know that the citizens would rather live in dangerous areas where their ancestors previously lived, rebuild destroyed homes, and face possible death there than be relocated to a different area. I think if the United States knew that the citizens were so loyal to their little villages that we would have gone about things a little differently. I also think him deciding to not send anymore troops soon after sending 21,000 more was poor adjustments in the war, but they wouldn't have done what they did if they didn't see a good possible circumstance. A lot of mixed emotions for me in this situation...

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: McNamara admits to failure

by Bo Costello – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 11:04 PM

McNamara realized that the war might of have gone too far without gaining anything. That the US was beginning to "destroy a nation", which was McNamara reason to to resign as secretary of state in 1967. He thought that the South Vietnamese needed to fight there own war and that bombs should stop being dropped in the North. This is how I think it should have been from the beginning, instead of the U.S. fighting their war. We could act as a true supporter, and not another country taking over.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Fog of War

by Aaron Ashenfelter – Wednesday, May 18, 2016, 7:36 PM

I feel ash though Defense Secretary McNamara did add some new light to the war much in the ways that the articles did, but I also feel like there was a lot of information that he kept private and that could very well be because of the fact that he does have some very top secret information that even this long after the war if he were to say it could get him in some serious trouble.

Now, in regards to if LBJ or Nixon were to have done a similar story I feel like they would have been the same or similar in the ways they spoke of the war. They would speak of small events but never tell major secrets because that could have a huge amount of future weight when it comes to anything in Vietnam later in history.

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Re: Fog of War

by Mathew Bohman – Wednesday, May 18, 2016, 9:18 PM

Aaron I definitely agree with you regarding Mr. McNamara. I am sure he has much more information that he is not authorized to disclose. Perhaps his books would have some additional information. The video makes me want to read his book as soon as I have time.

In regard to your second part of the post, I think we would have been given more information from LBJ or Nixon but probably not ALL of the information.

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Re: Fog of War

by Bryce Tilton – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 11:04 PM

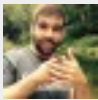
Aaron,

I agree that McNamara did provide us with some good stuff on the war, but definitely agree that there is much more that he knows that he is just keeping to himself. It makes me wonder if were ever going to be

given the full information that the government is keeping from the public. I honestly doubt it since it seems every war in US history has information that is kept from the public unfortunately. With that being said, I think that people will still have these questions and discussions that we are having right now 100 years from now.

I agree with Mathew on question two in that I think if Nixon and or LBJ were still alive they would give us some more information that we don't know today. I think their pride would make them release a little more information than we know today to kind of justify the decisions that they made.

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Re: Fog of War

by [Bo Costello](#) – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 11:13 PM

It would be hard to think that someone who went through such a controversial war wouldn't be hiding questions. What "new light" do you think that he put on the Vietnam war? I don't think it provided any information that had me learn anything new. People were confused from the advisors to the higher-up politics, such as McNamara.

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Knowing the place for the first time

by [Bryce Tilton](#) – Wednesday, May 18, 2016, 11:22 PM

His quote from T.S. Elliot at 9:30 that says “We shall not cease from exploring, and at the end of our exploration, we will return from where we started and know the place for the first time.” He said he is beginning to be in that position. The reason that caught my attention is because he said that with so much emotion. I think what he meant by that is that he sort of went into the war thinking he knew what was going to happen, but realized when it was all over that it wasn’t the best of ideas. He talked about how everybody makes mistakes as well. So I think he deeply regrets his decisions in the war, but he is also not going to dwell on them, because people make mistakes. That is what I got out of that.

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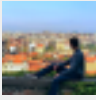
Regret

by [Timothy Eckley](#) – Friday, May 20, 2016, 9:42 AM

His emotion didn't appear simply as crocodile tears. McNamara appeared to be a true patriot that cares greatly for this country. While, with this quote, he essentially points out that hindsight is always 20/20, he understood at the time that any mistake could lead to nuclear war and that was something he was definitely trying to avoid. I agree with McNamara that it's difficult to make the correct decision in the moment, and he was very likely doing his best. In any event in life, we are restricted to taking the information we have available to us in order to make the best decision.

Regret is a tough emotion to crack. A man in his position has to remain almost immune to regret and only focus on strategy and making the best possible decision as consistently as possible. You can't have regret during a stressful time like this, because emotions will only negatively affect your decisions in the future.

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Loss of Life – Avoidable or Inevitable?

by [Trevor Kaye](#) – Wednesday, May 18, 2016, 11:22 PM

One of the most striking recounts depicted in the Fog of War documentary clip is McNamara's meeting with "two former enemies," discussing "what might have been" with a former foreign minister of Vietnam. Interestingly, McNamara hypothesized that "each of us could have achieved our objectives without the terrible loss of life." This leads me to believe that he is indeed plagued (at least to some extent) by the "fog of war."

North and South Vietnam desired two entirely incompatible things; the North fighting for unity under communism, and the South fighting for a democracy. The Viet Cong, largely supported by the North Vietnamese,

would not settle for peaceful division at the 17th parallel. Rebel groups native to Vietnam had fought against foreign invaders for centuries, and in their eyes, the United States was no different. It is naive to believe, given Vietnam's history with internal conflict, that both the objectives of the United States and those of the North Vietnamese could have been achieved without bloodshed. Their beliefs and political agendas were fundamentally different, and could not possibly exist in conjunction with one another.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Loss of Life – Avoidable or Inevitable?

by [Bryce Tilton](#) – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 11:30 PM

Trevor,

That part really got my attention too! For him to say "each of us could have achieved our objectives without the terrible loss of life" really had me thinking about things. He kind of made it sound like they could have had a meeting and resolved all of the problems just like that. I reply want to hear more of what went on during that conversation. And for him to say that after such a controversial war is just crazy! I'm glad you brought that up in this forum.

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LBJ/Nixon helping us understand more

by [Bryce Tilton](#) – Wednesday, May 18, 2016, 11:35 PM

If LBJ and/or Nixon were still alive, and filmed in a video like the fog of war, I think it would absolutely add to our understanding of the war. They knew more than anybody else what was going on in the war, decisions made in the war, and reasoning’s for everything that happened in the war. They might be able to justify certain things that occurred, and maybe sway people’s perspectives on those things. I also however, think they would also regret decisions that were made in the war. I think that they would realize that there were better, safer, and smarter ways to go about the war in Vietnam. I think we would learn a lot, and gain much more understanding of the war if they were still alive to talk to us about it, and I wish they were still here to do just that.

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Making mistakes.

by [Titus Young](#) – Friday, May 20, 2016, 3:20 PM

In the "Fog of War" video, one of Mr. McNamara main points is that you can't change human nature. I agree with this statement. He goes on to say that we all make mistakes, I think that no one is above making mistakes. We all make mistakes, probably every day, whether it is a small mistake or a huge one. Everyone will make a mistake every day. However, most of our decisions that lead to mistakes usually affect us and those around us, not a whole country. Mr. McNamara said that he doesn't know an honest military leader that hasn't made a mistake. When a military leader makes a mistake something precious, like life, weapons, or strategic positioning is lost. If it was me it would be hard to accept that my mistake led to someone else's death. Mr. McNamara says that you can't change human nature, that we all make mistakes, and we probably will until the day we die.

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Emotions driving decisions

by [Timothy Eckley](#) – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 5:20 PM

I play poker for a living. Some days I make a mistake and lose some of the money I invest into a game. Sometimes something unlucky happens to me, where when I made my decision, it was the best decision and I had the best of it, but still the results didn't pan out and I lost. In order to continue playing well and making the best decisions I can, I must desensitise myself from the money otherwise it will affect me emotionally and negatively affect my play. If I think, "That could've been rent, a downpayment on a car" or all of the other things I could've spent the money on if I lose, then I'm no longer thinking about the game in an efficient manner. I have to take the information I have and make the best decision as often as possible.

This may seem insensitive, but McNamara has to do the same thing. He cannot be results oriented during war, he cannot make his decisions off of emotion, but make his decisions off of what he feels is right and best for our country. He has to desensitise himself to the lives lost during the war, the mishaps, the tragedies, if he's going to consistently make the best decision. It's sad to look at human beings as pawns in a game of war and I'm not devaluing human lives by any means. However, in McNamara's shoes, this is the job that we have trusted him to do. With the stakes as high as they are in his game, it makes it even more important, even more paramount, for him to distance himself emotionally from results and continue to make the best possible decisions for our country following his intuition, instinct and critical thinking, rather than emotion.

The biggest mistake he could've made would be to let these tragedies get to him in the moment. If that happens, he shouldn't be doing that job anymore. If emotions are driving him to make his decisions in such a high stakes game, we can no longer trust him to do his job well. While the analogy seems cold and heartless, I believe it's exactly how it needs to be in a time of war.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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The importance of the "Fog of War"
by *Titus Young* – Saturday, May 21, 2016, 10:39 AM

The Fog of War is an interesting topic to me. When I first saw it as the title of this forum I was a little confused. Was it describing chemical warfare, was it an actual fog that took place during the Vietnam war? What was it? However as I studied the materials for this forum I became aware that it is just describing how difficult it can be to see how your actions will work out in war. Mr. McNamara says that the fog of war is hat makes it so easy to make a mistake in warfare. The fog of war will never go away, it will always be a force in war because you can never tell exactly how someone will respond. McNamara says "...war is so complex, that it is beyond the human mind to comprehend all the variables." I agree with this statement. There simply are too many factors in war, to many people, there is too much for one person to quantify all of the variables it in his/her mind.

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Unseen Elements Haunting McNamara
by *Timothy Eckley* – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 5:41 PM

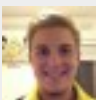
In the game of chess, there are over 10 million possible positions after just 7 moves. The battlefield is also restricted to 64 spaces that are taken up by 32 pieces, 16 for each side. In Vietnam, there are hundreds of kilometers of battlefield with hundreds of thousands of soldiers. Large numbers of objectives, strong points, crucial areas for the war to occur, for battle to be won. With this said, the possible reactions each side can make are not as restricted, they have infinitely more options than their chess piece counterparts.

In my opinion and in agreement with McNamara, it's simply impossible for anyone to calculate all of these variables, let alone in a timely enough fashion to make incredibly quick and efficient decisions. And this is just on the battlefield, not considering the political ramifications of actions you may take or how they will affect the reactions of other countries globally. We trust these men to take on these burdens as if they are not human, then ridicule them or criticise them for their mistakes. It's actually just not fair. It's not fair for an individual to have to take on this burden, even if they are willing to, and live with the ramifications of the mistakes they can make afterward.

I agree that the Fog of War is referring to the unseen and uncalculated elements of warfare. While McNamara put himself in a position to deal with these issues, it's possible that we could've found someone else better suited for the job; and perhaps not. Even if he's not telling us a complete story by leaving some things out, we have to understand that he tried. The only criticism a man in his position should receive is from mentors that have more experience in these situations or that can help him do a better job. He, undoubtedly, has to live with the tragedies of the Vietnam war for the rest of his life and it's likely not something he can just forget.

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You can't change Human Nature
by *Justin MacDonald* – Sunday, May 22, 2016, 11:54 PM

Damned if you do damed if you don't. Robert McNamara would prefer to be damned if he didn't in his final days. Hindsight is always a little more clear. When McNamara was visiting Vietnamese leaders, I found something interesting; "I formed the hypothesis we each could of achieved our goals without blood shed" (FoW Video). I, as well as several other students, have come to the conclusion that the war, while many things could have and should have gone differently, was necessary. It was to fight back against Communism, a tyrannical and morally repugnant force which deserved to be crushed. The leaders he met with years after the war still thought they were on the right side of things, and that leads back into the forums from last week. I talked about how when people are cornered on their beliefs and assumptions, even when wrong, they tend to entrench in and still hold their beliefs, for to be wrong is the worse than anything else for many. The leaders claimed it was a war of independence, continued from a thousand year with China. Yet, they failed to accept they were playing ball for China and Russia, the realization would probably be too much for them.

However McNamara admits his own faults, "I don't know any military commander who has said he hasn't made a mistake, if he has he's lying" (FoW Video). In essence, that quote from him shows he is hinting at the fact he made mistakes. War is hell. War isn't always fully rational; it's is at it's core hard for a human being to wrap its mind around. Nixon said, "No event is more misunderstood in American History than the Vietnam War. It was misreported then, and it is misremembered now." I am confident both LBJ and Nixon could go on for days about how the war could have been handled better. But war will always be here. You can try to make laws about it, set guidelines; but you can't change human nature. McNamara opening his mouth about the war just makes it so critics can peel him apart more.

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