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Longest War and Government Documentaries

by Joe Escobar – Saturday, April 2, 2016, 9:23 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Longest War and Government 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.

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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 and Government Documentaries

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Why did America stay in Vietnam?

by Robert Taylor – Wednesday, April 6, 2016, 2:24 PM

There are many connections between the video Why Vietnam, and the first couple of chapters from the Herring book America’s Longest War. Perhaps the one that was most interesting to me was when the video made that statement that “Vietnam sent out an urgent call for help” referring to 1961 when the United States started their official military campaign against Communist Vietnam. In the Herring book they speak of the reasons why america decided to escalate their fighting forces, and an urgent call for help from South Vietnam was not mentioned. The main reasons that I was able to pull from the text were much less heroic, in fact most of the reasons circled back to the slippery slope fallacy of Communism spreading if not stopped in Vietnam. That fallacy is best wrapped up in a statement from the video by Dwight D. Eisenhower in a speech given at Gettysburg College where he said “the cost of defending freedom, of defending america must be paid in many forms and in many places.” This idea that leaving the Vietnamese people to govern themselves would somehow result in a compromise of American freedom is something that is touched upon throughout the first chapters of the text. That combined with the fact that the United States had already invested time, money, and reputation in their “experiment” of building a democracy economy in Vietnam are the reasons highlighted in the text. The video made a lot of similarly oversimplified statements that defend Americas actions in the war, and gloss over or ignore the complexities laid out in the text. Whether our actions in Vietnam were justified are up to debate, however one thing that I find clear is that this video does not give a fair assessment of what was actually happening.

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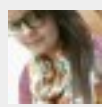


Re: Why did America stay in Vietnam?

by Mikayla Cervantes – Saturday, April 9, 2016, 11:49 PM

The book gave much more detail about why America stayed in Vietnam then the video. The book talks about how our president did not believe that Vietnam could govern itself, and I think that we decided to stay in Vietnam because we believed that we could assist their governing even when the Vietnamese people did not want us there. The book tells about how much time and effort America placed into the war and while Vietnam wanted assistance, they did not ask the Americans to fight their battle for them, just to teach them how to fight. Why Vietnam? it talks about why we sent troops to Vietnam and it mainly mentioned control of countries, and that we did not want another country to control Vietnam, instead we wanted to give them freedom and give a bunch of money to "restore and fix" their government even when they did not want assistance in fixing their way of life. Are our actions justified is a really good question, and I don't ever think it will ever be answered in depth and detail,

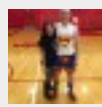
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Communism Spread?
by [Mikayla Cervantes](#) – Wednesday, April 6, 2016, 7:52 PM

The connection between the Videos and the book is that the United States wanted to stop communism spread and to provide military training to South Vietnam to assist in their victory over communism. The book explained more of the background and thoughts of both Vietnam and the United States while the information in both the videos mainly surrounded the fact that the United States assisted the South in fighting communism but did not give further information as to why or what they would gain. The America’s Longest War book talked about how the United States traded with Ho Chi Minh by training his people they would inform the U.S. about Japanese movement that occurred after the attack on Pearl Harbor. President Franklin D. Roosevelt said in the book that “Annamites as an inferior people, backward, politically immature, and unready to govern themselves...” (Herring pg. 11). Vietnam had been of no concern but the Japanese takeover would allow for a gateway to China, Southeast Asia, and the U.S. Colony in the Philippines (Herring pg. 11). America had assisted the French in the beginning of the war as a way to keep China and Japan from having control and once the French were defeated the Americans sided with the South Vietnam to stop China and the North Vietnam from gaining control and stopping the spread of communism (Why Vietnam? 3 Minutes). The main information between the video and book were similar besides the fact that the book gave more information to what previously occurred before the war and why the United States felt that they needed to help.

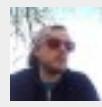
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Declaration of Independence. Vietnam style.
by [Aaron Ashenfelter](#) – Wednesday, April 6, 2016, 8:25 PM

I think that one of the many events that stuck in my mind that were noted in the book and the first documentary video was the moment where Ho Chi Min declared Vietnam’s independence and began to cite the new Vietnam Declaration of Independence that was heavily borrowed from the United States Declaration. Both the documentary and the book stated that he opened the event by the playing of “Star–Spangled Banner” and stating that “We hold these truths to be self–evident. That all men are created equal.” Now, these area a major connection to the events that transpired after the Vietnam declared independence because it showed just how much influence the U.S. had on Ho Chi Min.

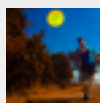
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Re: Declaration of Independence. Vietnam style.
by [Robert Taylor](#) – Friday, April 8, 2016, 9:01 AM

Yes i also found this very interesting. The way that Ho Chi Minh appealed to americans in the early stages of the war was clever all around. In the Herring book in when he was speaking of Vietnams capacity to defeat France he sited the American revolution of 1776 saying "You Americans ought to remember that a ragged band of barefoot farmers defeated the pride of Europe’s best armed professionals.” In the beginning stages of Frances occupation of Vietnam with a leader such as Minh it seemed as though the war could have went an entirely different direction. However according to the book these clever statements did not do much to change the overall racial prejudice Americans had towards the Viet Minh.

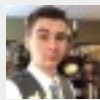
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Preventing Communism from spreading

by Adam Clairmont – Wednesday, April 6, 2016, 8:40 PM

The most important connection I have found while reading the Herring book and viewing the documentary Why Vietnam would have to be the underlying need to prevent communism from spreading. At the time, South Vietnam was seen as the linchpin keeping communism from spreading across all of southeast Asia and eventually the world. The Americans had hoped by assisting the French with millions of dollars in aid for the war we could turn the tide and secure South Vietnam as a democratic republic. Both the documentary and the book also discussed our need to keep the natural resources coming out of South Vietnam under Allied control. The valuable rubber, manganese, zinc, and other such resources if controlled by the communists would help them in their war effort considerably. It surprised me to hear from the documentary how hard the Americans tried to get the North Vietnamese to the peace table.

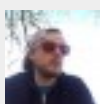


Our support for the new government brought some problems.

by David Leavitt – Wednesday, April 6, 2016, 11:50 PM

While watching the “Why Vietnam” Video, I was intrigued when it talked about South Vietnam flourishing due to American aid after Vietnam was divided, and the communists given the north part (around the 8–minute mark). Thinking that it was probably just propaganda, I was surprised to find that it wasn’t, at least according to Herring. The US poured over 1.5 Billion in aid to the new government, and it worked. Visitors reported that “the markets were filled with consumer goods; the streets filled with new motor scooters and expensive automobiles...”. It appeared that the US’s plan was working. Or was it? One thing that the US failed to take into consideration was how the Vietnamese would react to these gifts. The Vietnamese were very proud of their culture, and all this aid coming from the US hit many Vietnamese as them trying to change their culture, which they resented. This represents one of several things that we didn’t take into account with our actions in Vietnam during this time, and perhaps something that could have been avoided by studying their culture beforehand. (Got from pages 73–75 among some others)

David Leavitt



Re: Our support for the new government brought some problems.

by Robert Taylor – Sunday, April 10, 2016, 5:21 PM

That is a great point about how the Vietnamese interpreted the aid as an attempt to change their culture. What was also unfortunate about the operation was the fact that Americas aid did not help the vast majority of Vietnam. The book states that our aid "Did little to promote economic development or improve conditions in the villages where more than 90 percent of South Vietnam's population lived. The United States spent a lot of money, but with the wasteful spending, and all around mismanagement of the funds it may have been an overall mistake. I wonder if whoever made the video knew all of this or if they believed the aid was helping more than it was.

