

Forum 5

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Legacy

by Joe Escobar - Sunday, May 31, 2015, 8:21 PM

This forum thread is for Legacy posts and replies.

After studying the required materials, address the various questions. 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. Do NOT simply leave it RE: Legacy

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Fight of Flight - Confusion of the Vietnam War

by Laura Stewart - Wednesday, June 3, 2015, 11:26 PM

The most important legacy of the Vietnam War becomes a question of perspective. For U.S. citizens, people were and still are torn between supporting and protesting the war. Gwen Ifill closed the News Hour video perfectly by stating, “Mixed messages that don’t seem to go away.” The people are still undecided as to whether U.S. involvement was beneficial or harmful. From the soldier's perspective, most would view the war as an opportunity to defend their country. Private Bill Ehrhart saw the war as a way to become a hero (PBS episode 4). Yet, there were still some men who saw their role as being counterproductive. Some had no qualms about killing villagers, while others sought to help them. From Private Jack Hill’s interpretation, “it was war” (PBS episode 4). Most soldiers were unaware of the reason behind their presence in Vietnam. This was partially due to the government’s inability to agree on sending troops to Vietnam. The government continued to crumble. The war proved their incapability of stopping communism. “Vietnam made clear the inherent unworkability of a policy of global containment.” (Herring 270). Therefore, the government made a mistake. People lost their trust in the government to make wise decisions. In the News Hour video, Professor Jonathan Holloway pointed out when people view the government, “there is a first step that is missing” one that has become “a cynical and skeptical first step”. The people have grown to mistrust the government. Many soldiers died for a war they would not win. The takeaway from the war is general skepticism of the government and mixed reactions by U.S. citizens.



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please explain

by [Thomas Brokaw](#) - Thursday, June 4, 2015, 9:39 PM

Could you explain your statement regarding the reason soldiers were unaware of the reasons behind their presence in Vietnam?

Most soldiers were unaware of the reason behind their presence in Vietnam. This was partially due to the government's inability to agree on sending troops to Vietnam. The government continued to crumble. The war proved their incapability of stopping communism.

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Re: please explain

by [Thomas Brokaw](#) - Thursday, June 4, 2015, 9:44 PM

Regarding your closing statement: *Many soldiers died for a war they would not win. The takeaway from the war is general skepticism of the government and mixed reactions by U.S. citizens.*

I agree with you, but is a "takeaway" the same as a "legacy?" And is this the single most important legacy of the

war?

I couldn't answer this question myself because I couldn't make a case for any one single issue to be the single most important.

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Re: Fight of Flight - Confusion of the Vietnam War

by [Neil Pena](#) - Sunday, June 7, 2015, 11:21 PM

I definitely agree with you that people had trouble deciding if the war was beneficial or if it was wrong all in all. Looking back on it more people would probably come to the conclusion that it was more detrimental than it was beneficial. Coming from the war, skepticism of the government started giving people reason not to trust it. Although some of it did make sense after the war as well. From the domino theory, it in fact did happen when America pulled out as it was said in the herring book, "With the North Vietnamese/NLF victory, the "dominoes" in Indochina quickly toppled. Cambodia, in fact, fell before south Vietnam, ending a peculiarly brutal war and initiating a period of enormous cruelty." (324 herring) Laos then fell as well making what the original plan to stop actually happened. The purpose for this war made sense but the execution of it is what made this war look like we should have never have started it. For people who supported the war, The legacies that came from this conflict gave the American people less trust in their government especially after Watergate.

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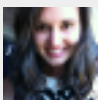
Casualties

by [Paul Turner](#) - Friday, June 5, 2015, 8:20 PM

The Vietnam War was a very long, dragged out experience that left many lasting impressions on the United States. In my opinion, the most significant legacy of the war was the 58,000 casualties. Many things will be forgotten about the Vietnam War, but the deaths of American soldiers will not. Death deeply affects families and the public in general. Although the U.S. has had more casualties in wars prior to Vietnam, this war was especially devastating because we lost the war and came out empty-handed. The Vietnam War Memorial in Washington DC has all the names of soldiers killed in the war. "The names of the dead engraved on the granite record more than lives lost in battle, they represent a sacrifice to a failed crusade" (Legacy Video 5:21). Like the video mentions, the casualties represent much more than just dead soldiers. They are a reminder that our government can make bad decisions, that not every war can be won with brute strength, and that the American public must be skeptical about our involvement in wars. 58,000 deaths will never be forgotten and they will always remind us as a hard lesson learned.

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Re: Casualties

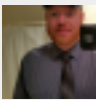
by [Laura Stewart](#) - Saturday, June 6, 2015, 10:32 PM

Not only have the deaths of the soldiers, but the harsh treatment of returning soldiers have changed as a result of the war. As Doris Kearns Goodwin stated, “There has been much greater empathy” for veterans now than before. Although the 58,000 deaths is a significant number, there were other underlying issues which proved to be more devastating. For instance, the reason for getting involved in the war is an imperative factor. The government was attempting to stop the spread of communism. “Vietnam made clear the inherent unworkability of a policy of global containment” (Herring 270). It was impossible to keep communism out of Vietnam, even with our aid. Another impactful decision behind going to war was the idea that “America has a role to play economically, culturally, and morally too” (Legacy - News Hour). According to Stanley Karnow, people looked to America to set the norm. Since America is a large power source, it is expected that we were to get involved in the politics of Vietnam.

America searched for a way to provide assistance to the South Vietnamese not only to combat communism but to support civilians. The Strategic Hamlet Program was made to protect the people from the North Vietnamese. However, this did not stop the violence or raids and even proved to harm the locals by removing them from their homeland. The deaths of American soldiers were important, but there were other factors which proved to feed this result.

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Fundamental distrust
by [Timothy Conway](#) - Saturday, June 6, 2015, 1:19 PM

The Vietnam War was a very complex war. There are many legacy's that remain from it, and I think the legacy remains from what point of view you have and how the war affected you or your family directly. As a well informed student of this class and after reading the two books and watching the video documentary, I would say that the fundamental distrust of government would be an important legacy for the American people. Unlike in World War II, we the United States was attacked on U.S soil, the Vietnam War was not provoked by an attack or invasion of U.S. land or protectorate. The average American did not even know where Vietnam was.(episode 1, Vietnam A television History). It was a foreign land and a land that was located in Southeast Asia and had no historical significance to the average American. The U.S. government made a weak case to the American people for U.S involvement. This was the Domino Theory, "*U.S. policy makers firmly embraced what would become known as the domino theory, the firmly rooted conviction that the fall of Indochina would cause the collapse of the rest of Southeast Asia, like a row of dominoes falling.*"(Herring: p.22) besides the Korean War you could say that the Vietnam War was the first war in American history of prevention not retaliation or defense.

The fundamental distrust of government was a result from a war that was the preemptive strike against communism and its spread. As Jonathan Holloway stated in the *News hour " fundamental distrust and the cultural shifts in terms of what one expects out of war, there are no good war's left, cultural shift in terms of the peoples expectation of the political process and justice on an international scale.. the first step that's missing is we trust the president and support our president, the first step now is a cynical approach."* I would have to agree with Mr. Holloway. Majority of American people, educated or uneducated always starts with cynicism towards government, which I think is good and healthy because it puts the burden of truth on the government and cynicism is a good tool that prevents fascism, like in early days of Hitler and the rising of the Third Reich. The Legacy of fundamental distrust was Vietnams legacy because unlike World War II "the good war" and the patriotic trust is left behind, Vietnam was a "why war" and that question was not answered by the government truthfully and that created the legacy of fundamental distrust of government by the American people that still stands today.

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Re: Fundamental distrust
by [Paul Turner](#) - Saturday, June 6, 2015, 2:30 PM

I agree that distrust is a huge legacy left from the Vietnam War. Like Professor Jonathan Holloway mentions in the *News Hour* video, Vietnam caused a whole cultural shift in what Americans expect out of a War. Prior to Vietnam, the U.S. had played a dominant role in most of the wars, and Americans expected nothing less when facing North Vietnam. Americans trusted our leaders and our military strength but after Vietnam there is rightfully a sense of skepticism.

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Making sens of the past
by [Joseph Foley](#) - Saturday, June 6, 2015, 1:30 PM



Much like attempting to choose one particular turning point or conclusion to the war, I'm not so sure that there is one clear legacy in regard to the U.S.A and Vietnam. There are a variety of perspectives, lessons and legacies, and as we have seen, historical theories evolve with time. As more information is released and new scholars take a stab, new theories, or further advanced theories emerge.

I enjoyed listening to the scholars in the News Hour piece. They touched on a variety of points that I would agree with. Most of them mentioned that the Vietnam War was part of a cultural shift that changed how American’s view international conflict, which can be a good thing.

Questioning our government’s motives and holding one another accountable can be extremely beneficial. In fact, the origins of our nation encouraged the people to carry the power, and to not allow the government to hold too much control. American’s skepticism from Vietnam is very much alive in how current conflicts are perceived (both pro and anti-war perspectives are continually debated.)

In lieu of this point, Vietnam also taught us that success in war is highly difficult without the support of the people. We have studied the dramatic impact the press had on the conflict, the countries first T.V. war. As the conflict intensified, so did the anti-war fervor on the domestic front. Sending troops to a war they already didn’t support is a recipe for disaster on both fronts.

I greatly appreciated Doris Kearns Goodwin’s point near the conclusion of the News Hour piece. She recognized the poor treatment of returning Vietnam Veteran’s as one of the lowest points of the time period. Although she may not have supported the war, she made it very clear that the young men and women who were subject to fight the war deserved care and respect upon their return home. Fortunately, as Goodwin pointed out, the public has shifted in regard to treatment of Vietnam veterans. In recent history, they have finally been treated with the love and support they so desperately need.

I believe that the legacies and historical analysis of the Vietnam War will continue to evolve. Like the Civil War, or the American Revolution, new theories will continue to develop centuries after the fact.



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Vietnam veterans treated with love?
by [Thomas Brokaw](#) - Sunday, June 7, 2015, 12:22 AM

In the *Legacy video*, referring to the poor treatment of Vietnam veterans, Doris Kearns Goodwin said that in the last couple of decades she thought there had been much greater empathy, much greater reaching out, and much greater understanding. She attributed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and movies, as did Herring, p362, to a better understanding of what the soldiers went through. This could be interpreted as greatly diminished anger and hostility. I’m not seeing Vietnam veterans treated with “the love and support they so desperately need.”

I don’t necessarily believe Vietnam veterans are in desperate need of love. I do believe Vietnam veterans mostly want appreciation for their service and to have that service disentangled from the politicians that sent them to Vietnam. I would also say veterans want to be treated fairly and not be discriminated against. There are current laws in place protecting Vietnam veterans from discrimination in the workplace. These laws are there because there is discrimination potential today for those who are Vietnam veterans.

<https://adata.org/factsheet/VEVRAA>

It says: “Originally passed in 1974, the Vietnam Era Veterans’ Readjustment Assistance Act (VEVRAA) aimed to provide assistance to returning Vietnam veterans and to protect them from employment discrimination.

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Re: Vietnam veterans treated with love?
by [Joseph Foley](#) - Sunday, June 7, 2015, 1:58 AM

Thomas, thank you for the insightful post. I agree, Vietnam Veteran's (other wars included) are not always given the support that they need. Things have improved in regard to how they are looked upon, but there is a lot of room for improvement.

Being raised by a Vietnam Veteran, I have personally witnessed many of the hardships the war caused for returning soldiers (including employment discrimination via mental health). I believe that returning soldiers need love, support and many other things. My father always struggled to convey love, hence he was misunderstood and didn't always entice it in return. When he began to find a better balance in life, he explained that he felt as if he didn't deserve anyones love after what he had done in war. His success story required a lot of love and support from his friends and family. One's definition of love obviously varies from person to person.

I do a great deal of homeless and recovery outreach in Eugene. The amount of homeless Veteran's is staggering, and America's most recent wars have increased homeless populations across the country. It is clear to see that in many cases, the government and society had turned their back's on them at some point. The homeless Veteran's I work with suffer from similar issues that my father dealt with. Assisting these men with Veteran's Services can be impossible at times, and watching the way they are treated by the public at is sad.

Many of my close friends who have served in recent wars have dealt with the shock of returning home in very different ways. Some just want to be thanked for their service and left alone, some require counseling and steady support, some have committed suicide, and some would prefer to never speak of it. All humans deal with the shock of war differently, but there should never be a lack of support if needed.

Thanks again for the response. I appreciate your perspective and valid points (VEVRAA was a great example.)

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Re: Making sens of the past

by [Neil Pena](#) - Sunday, June 7, 2015, 11:31 PM

The legacy of the American people beginning to question their government isn't really a good legacy. The way that the troops returning home were treated and the protests that stemmed from this did not help. I too agree with Doris Goodwin's point that the returning troops deserved respect and that stigma that our troops were murderers by the people opposing the war was a huge low point in our history.

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Re: Legacy

by [Daniel Lopez](#) - Sunday, June 7, 2015, 1:10 PM

The single, most significant legacy of the War in Vietnam for the USA is that the government failed it's people. The US lost nearly 60,000 lives in Vietnam. This huge loss of lives is made greater by the fact that they were soldiers who died in a war that the American people so hardly protested against over and over again. Within the first two minutes of the Legacy-News Hour video we are presented with the images of the US military doing it's best to get out after the fall of Saigon and the North Vietnamese rolling in on their tanks; The video states, "The North Vietnamese taking over decades after the first American military advisors arrived to fight a shadow cold war." So the question can be formed of "Why did we even go to Vietnam? Soldiers fought and died for decades and in the end we retreated?" I think the obvious sentiment was that this retreat could of and should of happened years before it did. But like the video mentioned some good came out of this legacy. The people no longer just trust in the US government. They ask questions of our world political affairs and ask the government to be more transparent.

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Re: Legacy

by [Veronica Sandow](#) - Sunday, June 7, 2015, 11:01 PM

Transparency seems to be a difficult thing to do for the government. What they are willing to release information on is either too little or people are so untrusting that they don't believe it even then. It is, of course, a good thing for the people to question those elected to represent them.

As you stated the loss of 58,000 lives is a huge loss, regardless of the end result of the war. It would be a huge loss if we had somehow been more able in the functioning of policy and military prowess. That’s just the deaths accounted for our armed forces. The rate of civilian deaths on both sides was immensely devastating as well (not to undercut the sacrifices of our forces). “Where Johnson had fretted about civilian casualties, Nixon instructed Moorer to aim for military targets but “if it slops over, that’s too bad.”” (Herring p316) It seemed to be that both sides looked at civilians as a disposable asset and was used as such.

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Re: Legacy

by [Paul Turner](#) - Sunday, June 7, 2015, 11:52 PM

Nice post Daniel, I share the same views as you. The way I see it is that there were so many mistakes in the war, but the 58,000 Americans that died really make them serious. When young men are dying in Vietnam with nothing to show for it, something is terribly wrong. American policy makers are putting lives on the line with every decision they make and that's why the public needs to be skeptical. Up until Vietnam we never really had to question our governments decisions and leadership, but we also had never lost a war before. Like you said so perfectly, the government must be more transparent.

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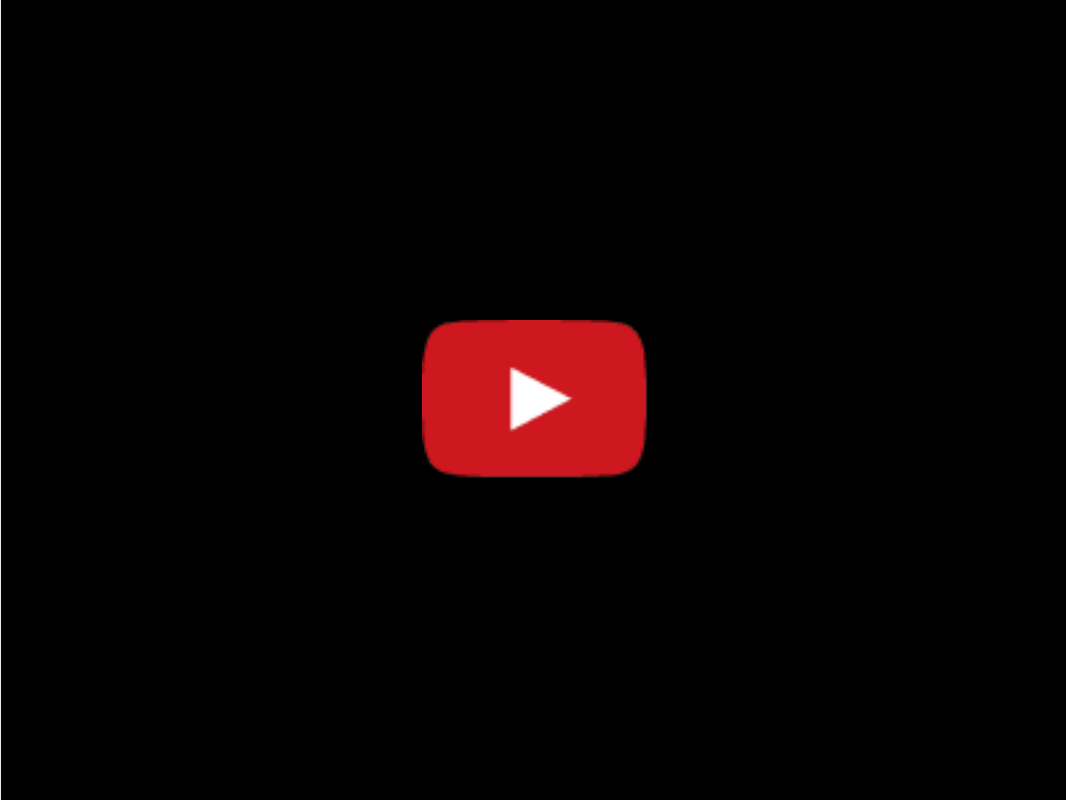
television war

by [Timothy Conway](#) - Sunday, June 7, 2015, 5:40 PM

A legacy that was left from the Vietnam War was the empowerment of the medium of Television. The Vietnam War was the world’s first televised war. With “on the battle field” reports and live images of combat television created the realism and intensity of war instantly to the homes of the American people and people around the world. The reality of war was never shown before in the history of all war fair. World War II had on the battle field reports but these were shown edited and many days after the event happened. These films were shown as news reels mainly before movies shown at the theaters.

"During World War II, American movie-goers were kept up to date with events at home and on the war fronts by twice-weekly newsreels produced by five major film companies. The newsreels were conceived as part of the entertainment package that accompanied the feature film. As war drew closer to America, concern grew as to whether this was the proper use of the information potential of Hollywood films in a time of crisis. In June 1940 Hollywood established the New York-based Motion Picture Committee Cooperating for National Defense. For the next two years, the committee assisted the federal government in informing the American people with regard to vital aspects of the defense effort through newsreels." (<http://www.proquest.com/products-services/World-War-II-Through-the-American-Newsreels-443.html>)

Television was an instant medium that provided access to the war. In many aspects this provided raw in the moment interviews from the soldiers that were fighting. In **Vietnam a Television History** a good example of this was during the fight in the ancient capital of Hue. The reporter was behind the wall entrenched with soldiers during a fire fight, and the reporter asked one of the soldiers what he thought and felt. The soldier seemed tired, weary and wanted to go home, than he got up and started firing his M16. These images are powerful and aided the anti-war feelings of Americans. Today, we do not see these images of battle from the Iraq war or in Afghanistan that would have these same effects of realism. Charlton Heston hosted an AIM video that we watched early in the term and stated “*T.V. is an electronic window to the world, the war was never far away, and it was in our living rooms every night. Disinformation and deception were the deciding factors in the Vietnam War, the power of the T.V. Image and the impact of the media had a generation. We won’t be truly responsible citizens until we confront these challenges of our information age.*” (



) Disinformation can be debated, but watching these images of raw war and civilians fleeing in horror left Americans at home in shock and had an effect on their view of the war. In the 60’s television was still a new spectrum for the world and replaced the news reels and dominated over the radio. Images have more of an impact on the mind than hearing words over a radio. The challenges of reporting fair and balanced information still exists today and this legacy of the first televised war will forever be left by the Vietnam War.

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