



HST 195: History of Vietnam War Sp17 (Escobar 42050)

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Week 3 Forum

Determining the Truth

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Determining the Truth

by Joe Escobar - Saturday, April 15, 2017, 6:28 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Determining the Truth 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: Determining the Truth

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Configuring multiple sources of evidence.

by Stanley Cates - Tuesday, April 18, 2017, 3:53 PM

Subjectively speaking the most glaring contradiction I observed between the two video sources, AIM and PBS, were the portrayals of the philosophy and goals of Ho Chi Minh; If there was one single linchpin to the entire struggle in mid-20th century Indochina I cannot fathom a better candidate than Ho Chi Minh.

The PBS series explicitly states the Ho was "... first a nationalist and second a communist" (PBS, E.1, 21:20, Moffat). This statement, and others like it, make a clear implication that Ho was primarily concerned with establishing lasting independence for the people of Vietnam. On the other hand, in the AIM video, Morris paints Ho as a communist first and foremost with a "Commitment to the internationalist communist community lead by the Soviet Union" (AIM, 7:15, Morris), thus representing a security threat to the United States. These two concepts are polar opposites with seemingly no commonality, because of this we'll need sources beyond them in order to support one or the other.

I see two primary pieces of data that allow me to glean that the argument of commitment to the Soviets presented in the AIM video is flawed. The first of which is an account by Henry Prunier, a member of the "deer team" assigned to assist Ho in 1945, given in the Appy book; "At one point someone asked him directly if he was a Communist and he said, "Yes, I'm a Communist, but there's no reason why we can't be friends, why we can't live together."" (Appy, pg. 40) As I stated in last week's forum, these hardly sound like the words of a monster. Of course, we cannot yet rule out the two glaring potential complications; Ho was lying, or Prunier made it up, the former having obvious motives of Ho distancing himself from mounting Soviet aggression, the latter being less clear. However, in the Herring book we can find some supportive evidence that Ho was not squarely aligned with, and perhaps even drifting away from, Soviet style communism: "In fact, between 1945 and 1949 Stalin was no more supportive of the Viet Minh than the United States had been." (Herring Pg. 15); "Stalin distrusted Ho from earlier ideological spats. He was angered by the Viet Minh revolution's having been launched without his approval, and by its seeming ties with the United States." (Herring Pg. 15). These statements lend at least a little credibility to the idea that Ho's alleged statement according to Prunier was sincere.

Now the question becomes: If we have evidence that Ho was perhaps not the monster the US thought he was, then why do some people so adamantly and with emotional vigor still insist that he was? Such as those in the AIM video. I have some thoughts on this but I would like to wait to see what others have to say about it first. What do you think? Am I overlooking something? Why might people so aggressively defend US actions in Vietnam?

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3

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Re: Configuring multiple sources of evidence.

by Gordon Collver - Thursday, April 20, 2017, 11:32 AM

I believe people defend the U.S.'s actions so heavily for many reasons, but I think the biggest would have to be the era. Back then people were really anti-communist in America so even a small country such as Vietnam turning communist was seen as a big threat. If it could spread there, where could it spread next? At the time WWII was still a very real memory for the majority of the population and they were not ready for another World War. They feared if Communism kept spreading WWII would have been inevitable, but this time the U.S. would've had a much harder time in the Pacific if they let the Communist nations get to big of a hold on the region. Other big reasons for the aggressive defense would include it being America's first loss in a major war ever, the many acts of brutality occurred by both sides, and to improve the morale of civilians at home.

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Re: Configuring multiple sources of evidence.

by Stanley Cates - Thursday, April 20, 2017, 10:28 PM

I see what you're getting at, although I don't think know that by the time the AIM film was released on June 27th, 1985, (IMDb) that the majority of the US population had vivid memories of WWII. I think you misunderstood my question. I'm not asking why people endorsed or readily adopted the bad image of Ho or other communists during the conflict. I'm asking why people continue to ignore evidence that perhaps the image of Ho that the US painted during the conflict was incorrect? Specifically, why do sources like the AIM video leave out details about connections like the one that I readily drew from the other sources for the class? I'm well aware that I have an unfair vantage point in the conversation about whether the beliefs were correct during the conflict, but to reiterate, what I'm getting at is why do people continue to believe these things in the face of contrary evidence?

IMDb. "Television's Vietnam (Video 1985)." IMDb.com, n.d. Web. 21 Apr. 2017.

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2

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Re: Configuring multiple sources of evidence.

by Joshua Meeker - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 4:46 PM

Stanley,

I have to say first of all this is a solid post. I can immediately see that you have a knack for really examining information and coming up with good questions. Ultimately I think it important to realize that no matter what you do you will never have enough information to really know what both sides were feeling. History will always depend on the person, and therefore can be highly illusive.

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Re: Configuring multiple sources of evidence.

by Stanley Cates - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 10:30 PM

Thanks, compliments are always nice.

On the one hand I tentatively agree with you; historical subjects are subjective to a certain degree, and indeed the perspective of historical figures is difficult to pinpoint. We have to be careful to keep our subjectivity on a leash however, lest we run into the quagmire that is the mentality that everyone is as right as everyone else and things can be interpreted however one cares to interpret them without the burden of "proof".

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Ho Chi Minh, PBS hero.

by Joshua Meeker - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 2:14 PM

In the PBS documentaries the viewer is lead in a direction to believe that Ho Chi Minh was ultimately the "good guy", a nationalist who was fighting for his people and his country. They even go on to glorify him and give information to make the viewer believe that he was loved by his people. PBS also portrays the idea that South Vietnam and the US were in a sense the "bad guys", since they were preventing Vietnam from becoming one whole country. After watching the AIM video however, it becomes interesting to see the vast contradictions between these two media . AIM claims that the PBS documentary series on Vietnam does a very poor job in representing factual history, even though true information was readily available. The biggest contradiction I found was that Ho was actually a "communist"(AIM Historian Stephan Morris), not a nationalist. Historian Stephan Morris(AIM historian) even goes on to say "violence was central to the success of communism in Vietnam" and also claims that Ho's regime "carried out a massive campaign of assassinations on all non-communist national leaders they could get their hands on." This to me does not reflect the character of Ho Chi Minh as determined in the PBS series. A way to deal with this is to look at both sides of the videos and compare and contrast. If the variances are too great it is always a great idea to go on to other external sources to see what the main consensus is. Another valuable tool is to use logic and think about all the moving parts. For example in the PBS series Ho was made out to be the "good guy" but there were many times in the textbook where the Viet Minh attacked and killed other Vietnamese. This should have raised a red flag , since what "stand-up" figure would approve the killing their own people.

The reason why we should feel confident in our learning is because we have multiple sources(2 text books and videos) to see all the different stories and points of view. Since even if some of the sources are incorrect some of the time, they could still contain truths that the other media didn't present. As such I think it is important to keep an open mind when studying history and to take the time to really think about the events that transpired.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Re: Ho Chi Minh, PBS hero.

by Stanley Cates - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 3:09 AM

While I appreciate your attempts to view things from multiple angles I have to take issue with one of your statements. "For example in the PBS series Ho was made out to be the "good guy" but there were many times in the textbook where the Viet Minh attacked and killed other Vietnamese. This should have raised a red flag , since what "stand-up" figure would approve the killing their own people." I get where you're coming from, but we have to remember that those events took place in the middle of a civil war. If we're going to go so far as to condemn any commanding figure for military actions taken during civil war then wouldn't we be forced to put Ho Chi Minh and Abraham Lincoln in the same category? Don't get me wrong, you may very well be on to something, but without a specific example I'm forced to remain unconvinced that military action of undetermined capacity wholly condemns Ho Chi Minh.

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2



Re: Ho Chi Minh, PBS hero.

by Joshua Meeker - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 4:25 PM

Hey Stanley, I also understand where you were coming from. However, I made that point not so much as a statement, but a cue. I think it can be easy to just look at the material and eat whatever it is you are fed (something I am guilty of at times). I was just trying to say that had I been more aware I would have been able to see that Ho was not quite the man as he was presented. From what you are saying I gather that you believe that we should not just judge them, and I hope you know that judging was not my intention. However, I stand firm that a true leaders should not kill their own people and that they should be criticized for it.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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Re: Determining the Truth

by Mason Peckels St.onge - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 2:56 PM

Which Ho, is the real Ho Chi Minh? PBS or AIM?

First off, when I read the forum topic and watched the video I was not surprised. I would think that the government funded channel would make intentional changes to history to make it benefit one party over the other. Especially with something so controversial as the Vietnam war. Before watching the Real Story video I looked at Ho Chi Minh as a nationalist leader who just wanted the best for his people, in this case, independence. Now I look at him in a similar view, but with a sprinkle of harsh dictator and extremist. At least thats what our new source says. If the statistic of 10.000 executions of catholics by the communist north (The Real History) is true then a whole new dark shadow is cast on the Ho Chi Minh regime. We were being set up to think that he was a "Nationalist first and a Communist second" (Abbot Low Moffat, A Television History).

Even the OSS officer Patti spoke very highly of Ho, and how the declaration of independence for the DRV that he read to his people was very similar to our Declaration.

The Real History claims that the PBS documentary made Ho the hero of the "story" and the U.S and South Vietnam the enemy. Giving statistics of many executions and the destruction of other nationalist/Communist organizations in the north. My question is, Why would PBS falsely make Ho the hero? Wouldn't it make more sense the other way around? That would fulfill one of its "goals" in the transcript for giving the population closure.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3



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Re: Determining the Truth

by Stanley Cates - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 3:36 AM

I also had a slight change of heart about Ho after watching the AIM video. However, as easy as it is for some to condemn those sorts of actions, not that I condone them, I just don't know that it's fair that we as a society point the finger at the communists as the ones that use violence. We may not have gone so far as to stage mass public executions but there's been no shortage of bloodshed for the sake of political differences and financial gains in our own history; the transcontinental railroad, the homestead strike, Sacco and Vanzetti, just to name a few.

As for your question: "Why would PBS falsely make Ho the hero? Wouldn't it make more sense the other way around?" Just a stab in the dark; but maybe the concept the producers of the PBS series were going for with the idea of closure is that "the right people won". Almost like a sheepish admission of wrongdoing.

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Ho and Diem

by Mason Peckels St.onge - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 10:37 AM

I know right? I definitely don't condone what Ho did either, and that we have our own bloody political history. If we were to compare the Diem and Ho governments go I think, with the new information, they would be equal in cruelty. With Ho's treatment of the Catholics, The Diem government was doing very similar things to Buddhist and suspected Communist, in fact he was basically at war with them during the "Buddhist Conflict" (HERRING, 91).

For your response, I think that is very possible. Because I had that feeling when watching it. I kept looking at Ho as a hero and honestly, like you said, "the right people one". To bad the info we were getting wasn't very reliable to some extent.

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Re: Determining the Truth

by Kayla Elliott - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 10:21 PM

The difference of views of Ho Chi Minh in the AIM and PBS videos were by far the most popular topic of this forum. Mainly because it was so obvious. However, another significant difference between the videos is the view of Diem. In the PBS series, they tried to portray Diem as an "American puppet." However, people in Vietnam believed that he was the right leader for their country and that was very traditional, opinionated, and strong willed. Edward Lansdale was in Vietnam when Diem was appointed Prime Minister. He recalls that people who knew Diem thought he was honest, the best nationalist still alive, and that he was more favorable than Ho Chi Minh. I think this difference is just as significant as the difference of views of Ho Chi Minh. PBS lacking to portray Diem in the right light, also is another example of how they wanted to show Ho Chi Minh in a more favorable light, because they didn't want to give the idea that Diem was more popular than Ho Chi Minh.

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Re: Determining the Truth

by Mason Peckels St.onge - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 10:02 PM

I didn't even think of that before. But its so true! Just like Ho, Diem is portrayed differently in each source. However, in the Herring book they emphasize how the U.S. didn't have faith in Diem's ability to lead the country. They began to have a bad relationship during the Buddhist Crisis "The so called Buddhist crisis strained to the breaking point relations between Diem and the U.S." (the Herring Book, pg. 91). Although some Vietnamese were supportive of the Diem government, in the long run he was not capable to run the country, due to his government being overthrown and him and his brother being killed in the process. This leads me to believe that although some of his decisions were influenced by the U.S. he was not a puppet; and that the PBS documentary was less factual than the AIM video.

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Nationalist or Communist

by Riley Ahrenkiel - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 6:29 PM

A glaring contradiction emphasized later into the AIM video, they discuss Ho Chi Minh as a communist first and a violent leader head of an oppressive regime. It's made clear that "Ho Chi Minh couldn't accept anyone independent of him and his organization." (21:40, AIM speaker Stephen Morris) In comparison to the PBS series, specifically in episode 1, they describe Ho as a nationalist first and a communist second who sought to gain independence for his people (21:20, PBS Episode 1) In response to these conflicting claims I'm inclined to lean towards the PBS video and my textbooks, they seem to be more on the side that Ho Chi Minh himself was more or less a reserved, gentle old man. He didn't appear to be a menacing man, didn't seem to be very violent in nature, this can be seen when an old ally of Ho says, "At one point someone asked him [Ho Chi Minh] directly if he was a Communist and he said, 'Yes, I'm a Communist, but there's no reason why we can't be friends, why we can't live together.'" (p.40, Appy book, Henry Prunier) Due to this connection between the PBS series and the Appy book I feel a bit more confident that I'm getting the correct information with my textbooks and PBS series.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Re: Nationalist or Communist

by Mason Peckels St.onge - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 10:54 AM

I have to agree with you here. The info from the Herring book, and some of our other course material seems to coincide more with the PBS documentary. I also think that Ho's history can back it up. He fought for Vietnamese independence after WW1 in France which made him kind of famous by the Vietnamese. This makes me think that he is a dedicated Nationalist who realized that his people have suffered for 2000 years and wanted to do

something about it. He started out peacefully, but I think the strain of war, and the suffering the North had to undertake from the Japanese and French pushed Ho and his generals to a point where they thought they had to take drastic measures to be successful.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Nationalist or Communist

by Brent Roessler - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 2:12 PM

I like your perspective Riley. I also find our course literature and the PBS video to be a little more accurate. The AIM video seems to be more of a smear campaign, made only to discredit the PBS series. I find the Herring book to be the most comprehensive and concise to what "seems" to be the reality. In actuality we are only left with speculation because we weren't there, but I have to agree with you about the books and PBS seeming a little less bias than AIM.

Something that stood out to me was a quote from Henry Prunier in the "Appy" book, he says..."Ho Chi Minh was happy to have our military and weapons, but I think what he really wanted was America's political support...He could tell various political factions that the United States was behind the Viet Minh and that might give him some added credibility." (Appy, pg.40)

These words, from a former private in the US military, just seem authentic. Henry gives good personal perspective without sugar coating it. For us, students of the history of Vietnam, I think it's important to try and give credit to the less bias sources of material. Henry's statement comes from personal experience, whereas PBS and AIM are both privately funded media, with restrictions and guidelines.

Anyway, well done Riley.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Nationalist or Communist

by William Barker - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 8:15 PM

"In response to these conflicting claims I'm inclined to lean towards the PBS video and my textbooks, they seem to be more on the side that Ho Chi Minh himself was more or less a reserved, gentle old man."

I'd respectfully like to point out that the textbook does indeed show the cruel side of Ho Chi Minh's occupation of Hanoi, when the French eventually left. "As many as 15,000 dissidents were executed. A campaign to eradicate capitalist influence in the cities sparked dissent among artists and intellectuals." (pg. 82 Herring) Truly we can't keep making excuses for the actions Ho Chi Minh took during his "liberation" of Northern Vietnam. He definitely loved his people, but he was a communist first. Ho took swift action to suppress anyone who questioned his communist group's authority and credibility by executing 15,000 people! That's a play stolen right out of the *Communist Manifesto*.

"Yes, I'm a Communist, but there's no reason why we can't be friends, why we can't live together." (p.40, Appy book, Henry Prunier) Obviously Ho Chi Minh didn't truly believe this if he murdered 15,000 people for different beliefs.

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Re: Determining the Truth

by William Barker - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 8:05 PM

The most painfully obvious evidence we were presented in the video, *Television's Vietnam: The Real Story - Part 1*, was the true identity of Ho Chi Minh. In the PBS series, they portray Ho to be the hero in the story, as said by Bruce Loeb in the AIM video. Ho Chi Minh was absolutely a communist before he was a Vietnamese nationalist. Ho was a young kid when he helped form the communist party in France and then went to China to become an international communist organizer, which is clearly stated by Dolf Droge in the AIM video. Mr. Droge also points out that Ho Chi Minh betrayed his fellow communist friend, Phan Boi Chau, by turning him in to the French for a payment of gold. He used the money to promote a protest in China which protested the "inhuman French arrest of Phan Boi Chau!" (AIM Video)

Ho Chi Minh was a professional international communist organizer, unlike Ngo Dinh Diem who was a true nationalist and a person who was actually for the Vietnamese people's interests. This is another glaring fallacy in the PBS video. Diem was said to be highly respected, honest, more favorably known than Ho Chi Minh, and the best known nationalist in Vietnam, according to Major General Edward G. Lansdale of the USAF in the AIM video.

It is quite clear that the PBS video, for some reason unknown to myself, left out key facts in order to portray the Vietnam war as a *total* waste of time and a big mistake. Now that I have been alerted to the sometimes false nature of this series, I will truly be critical of all facts presented and try to cross reference them as much as possible.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Determining the Truth

by Stanley Cates - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 3:51 AM

After reading your post I couldn't help but notice that you had simply compared the two video sources side by side without any third-party sources. I'm curious; without comparing the two videos to at least one other source how can you say with any certainty which is correct? What fundamental elements of the AIM video make it more credible than the PBS video(s) without and back up references? In other words, without digging further, how do you know that the AIM video didn't just make up that bit about Ho using the money from betraying Chau to promote a protest? What's to say that's not misinformation? Make no mistake, I have a great appreciation and place a high value on critical thinking and analysis; but with all due respect I don't think that's what you've done here. I think you've fallen victim to a confirmation bias, but I'd certainly be interested to see your points defended.

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Re: Determining the Truth



by William Barker - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 8:39 AM

After thinking on this for awhile (your response), it took me awhile to swallow my pride and come to the conclusion that you were right, I did fall victim to confirmation bias. When I was first presented with this video, *Television's Vietnam: The Real Story - Part 1*, I was in the mind set that Joe had given us this video to refute the claims presented in the PBS series. Now after further reflection I see this was just a test/ lesson to show us we need to be ABSOLUTELY careful about where we get our information from. This isn't even a small fake news website on the internet, this is a full on high budget film which still has some controversy surrounding its facts. So I do appreciate you calling me out in a respectful manner to point out my mistake.

EDIT:

However, the one thing I will hold strong is that Ho Chi Minh was a communist before he was a nationalist. Traveling abroad to become an international communist organizer means he had deep communist roots at the time of his "liberation" of Vietnam from colonization forces. Would you agree with that statement?

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Determining the Truth

by Mason Peckels St.onge - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 11:32 AM

I'm gonna jump in the discussion, and your last question "Traveling abroad to become an international communist organizer means he had deep communist roots at the time of his "liberation" of Vietnam from colonization forces." I think what your saying makes sense. You would think that he would be a full out, dedicated Communist after all his long stays in China and Russia. He even studied in Russia. However, I have agree more with the statement "He was first a nationalist and second a Communist" (PBS documentary, 21:19). Because, with the information I have right now, he looks more like a nationalist looking for a way to give the Vietnamese independence. It just so happens that western powers (France, U.S, and England) got in the middle of the his journey, and forced him to act more as a communist with his decisions so he could make Vietnam have some world power on his side(China and Russia). He was forced to do this because they didn't have the army to fight off the U.S or the food to feed its people, and China provided that.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Determining the Truth

by William Barker - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 1:36 PM

"It just so happens that western powers (France, U.S, and England) got in the middle of the his journey, and forced him to act more as a communist with his decisions.."

Nguyễn Tất Thành (Ho Chi Minh's second real name), had an early career as a socialist organizer in France well before he had traveled to China or Russia. In those days the communists looked to flex their strength by sending out highly trained organizers to change the political landscape in regions with enough turmoil to easily gain control of (much like how the OSS and now the CIA try to sway public opinion in other countries for our national interests).

From my point of view, those folks like Nguyễn Tất Thành were brainwashed to believe in the cause and go to their countries as nationalists to bring communism. Yes, Ho Chi Minh undoubtedly loved his country and his people, I won't deny that, but he was still bringing communism to his country. Every time communism has entered a country it has been ushered in with violent revolution. So I doubt Ho Chi Minh was pushed towards communism more because of foreign influence (US, France, etc.) Ho was there to either bring communism or die trying, and he stopped at nothing to accomplish that. Remember in the AIM video when it spoke about the 1,000,000 catholic people who fled to South Vietnam from the Communist regime because in 1950 Ho Chi Minh attacked them? He was through and through a communist, who held communist ideals of purging the opposition to gain supreme dominance.

I do appreciate you entering into the conversation Mason, I like these mini debates!

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Re: Determining the Truth

by Stanley Cates - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 10:43 PM

I certainly do agree that Ho had deep communist roots at the time of the "liberation". What I'm really unconvinced about is whether there is really any reason to rank his communism against his nationalism; in other words I don't necessarily think they're competing values. Not unlike how modern American politicians can have different political views but two individuals still claiming to love their country, id est nationalism.

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Re: Determining the Truth

by Skyler Tidwell - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 6:24 PM

I agree with you William Barker that PBS did leave out a big piece of information. That just shows how people want to look at things and to make things seem more worthy over other situations. Not only is this unethical by all means but it is also discredits them for not putting information out there and letting individuals make their own concise decision. Now

that is real news. I also liked how you picked up on in the AIM's video that Diem was recognizably more a nationalist than Ho Chi minh and caught that he was selling people to the French for gold to provide for his own means. It really tied your passage together.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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pulling out is not an option

by Skyler Tidwell - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 8:46 PM

President Kennedy's stance on Vietnam never wavered. He thought that if pulling out of Vietnam would show a weakness and that is something the United States was not willing to risk. Some called this a Domino effect best explained by James Thomson who was on the National Security Council Staff "The final domino is not some Asian country it is the presidency". (Vietnam a Television History Episode 3 about 9:10 minutes) It was like playing with fire, for example you can hold a torch many different ways, but there is only one way to hold it without burning yourself. However, Kennedy realized thus and was tentative on not pulling out. Vietnam was America's podium for free and democratic rule or that's what it was supposed to be, throughout that time numerous suggestions were put on the table to simple give up and leave but surely humiliation on a national stage would be assured. Although, Vietnam was not our only problem, we were also at that time dealing with the Cold War (Berlin Wall) and Cuba(Castro) in the Bay of Pigs. So, for Kennedys first hundred days Vietnam was not considered a "Troubled Spot" until January when a man named Edward Lansdale brought it to his attention. (America's longest war pg. 95) Then in the spring of 1961 his reaction was to send an increase of 100 MAGG advisors and dispatch 400 special forces to train the Vietnamese. (ALW pg.97) President Kennedy was not willing to lose Asia to communism. However, with mutually assured destruction on the line with the cold war with Soviet Russia and the failed assassination of Fidel Castro tensions were high all around but was still active in the fight for freedom and democracy and was willing to help a country that wants to be free from their oppressors.

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Re: pulling out is not an option

by Daine Taylor - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 7:00 PM

I liked the simile you used "it was like playing with fire". The simile sheds light on how Kennedy was holding the torch and if he held the torch the wrong way he would look weak to the world. I don't know If I'm just not getting what you meant by the "domino effect" but are you talking about the Kennedy or about events during the war?

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

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Ho Chi Minh: For peace or Internation Communism?

by Brent Roessler - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 9:05 PM

The most contradicting part between the PBS series and the AIM video is the portrayal of Ho Chi Minh. Was he a Communist or a Nationalist? Was he fighting for freedom for all of Vietnam or International Communism? The PBS series certainly had me believing Ho wasn't a terrible

person. I was lead to believe he was for peace. Also, that he wasn't concern so much with communism as he was relieving all of Vietnam of the French influence. But, after watching the AIM video and learning new information of Ho and his educational and political background, I am not quite sure which person he is; Peacemaker or International Communist.

The Herring book speaks of a trail named after Ho, for his efforts to gain access to the South uninvited. "The party thus authorized the resumption of armed struggle and took active measures to support it. With the watchword, "absolute secrecy, absolute security," it established special force, Group 559, to construct an infiltration route to move personnel and supplies into South Vietnam through Laos-the beginning of the fable Ho Chi Minh Trail." (Herring pg. 83) If you were for a free country, why would you need to infiltrate any particular area?

In contradiction PBS states "in 1917 Ho moved to Paris, he took the name Nguyen Ai Quoc and began to agitate for Vietnam's independence." (PBS,14:37)

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Ho Chi Minh: For peace or Internation Communism?

by Daine Taylor - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 7:07 PM

Ho Chi Minh doesn't seem like he would a peacemaker. Ho wasn't even know in Vietnam according to AIM video. While watching the AIM video the historians say that Ho really just pushed his views onto the Vietnamese people. Ho didn't actually bring any peace to Vietnam for the "American view" but from the Vietnamese view that could be different.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

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Determining the Truth: Ho Chi Minh Communist first

by Gordon Collver - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 9:51 PM

I believe the biggest glaring error by PBS presented by aim would have to be how Ho Chi Minh was portrayed as the good guy and a Nationalist first (until apparently episode 13). While it was actually well known at the time by PBS that Ho Chi Minh was an international communist who committed many atrocious war acts against his own people and was not some patriot fighting for freedom. Ho Chi Minh killed many of his own people, especially anyone who disagreed with his ideology, which included fellow communists. I believe the only way to really get through false information is by due diligence, reading through all the sources given then mapping out what was said by who. Next it is required to dissect each opinion until a consensus has been found and we can arrive at the truth.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Determining the Truth: Ho Chi Minh Communist first

by Kelsey Gilseth - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 10:40 PM

You are absolutely correct that the only way to find the real truth is to consider the material provided from multiple different sources. It has been nice to have two different text books, but especially nice to have a book that takes into account the statements from people on

both sides of the war, like in the Appy book. The Accuracy in Media video claims that there is “nothing in the series that an American can be proud of,” (AIM, 3:59) while the PBS series says quite the opposite. The PBS series makes Americans out to be heroes for trying to help the poor, innocent South Vietnamese “because it’s the right thing to do.” While on the contrary, the Herring book stresses that we were involved in Vietnam because of our own self-interest of stopping further communism spreading. All these sources tell a different story, but if we take pieces of each sources and put them together, we get a complete puzzle of what actually happened during the Vietnam war. In a topic as controversial as the Vietnam War, there might not always be a definitive answer to every question, but looking at the different opinions can at least help us see the options.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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The Perception of Ho Chi Minh

by Kayla Elliott - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 10:18 PM

I think one main problem that I talked about in my last forum post, is that they are portraying who the “good” and “bad” guys are inaccurately. It is important to the facts of the Vietnam war to know who was doing what and for what reason. So, one major contradiction is the fact that the PBS series makes Ho Chi Minh seem like a guy who is just trying to do right by his people, and by his country. PBS fails to mention the backstabbing and murders of his own people. Pretty much every person who spoke on the AIM video talked about things Ho Chi Minh did, that were significant, that PBS didn’t even mention. For instance, Dolf Droge said that Ho Chi Minh was a “professional international communist” and told how he turned his own people into the French police just to further his own cause. The PBS series also didn’t mention how there were many assassinations of his own people if they did not believe in the communist ideals and agree to follow him. That is why the North Vietnamese Catholics fled to the South because although they were fighting the French alongside Ho Chi Minh, they did not follow him.

I think it is important to know about these things about someone who is being portrayed as the “rightful” leader of Vietnam. Bruce Loebs summed it up best when he talked about how the PBS series tried to make Ho Chi Minh the hero, while making South Vietnam and the United States the villains.

Although there were other discrepancies that the AIM video pointed out, this is the most significant to me because it is important to know what happened and I have found that this point has been continuously been brought up.

I think the only way to figure out what really happened, is to do a lot of research. We have to research stories, movies, biographies, all from different points of view. Better yet, if we could find one that isn’t biased like someone from America, France, or Vietnam wrote it. That way we can get an overall better understanding of what happened.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3



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Re: The Perception of Ho Chi Minh

by Joshua Meeker - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 2:32 PM

Kayla,

I liked your post a lot. Especially the part about "good" or "bad". Because this brought up a thought that generally the PBS videos are bias(history is one of those tricky subject where I bias is unavoidable). For they do have a natural inclination to show one person in a positive light, and one person in a negative one. Im sure that neither Ho Chi Minh nor the US had bad intentions about what they were doing, and that they both thought that they were doing the right thing. I agree with you, more of these facts should have been made known in the PBS series sooner. I say sooner because, if I recall correctly, I remember that a historian on the AIM channel actually said that PBS did present the truthful information about Ho being a true communist; but that it was not revealed until the 13th episode, the very end of the series. Though in hindsight that seems kind of silly to me; because your watching all of this information yet they hold this key piece of information until the very end.

I thought the AIM video was pretty well presented since they had multiple researchers from different parts of the US contributing to the work of disproving PBSs work. Granted that it did throw me a bit of a loop it did ultimately provide a larger picture. For instance the fact that Ho didn't come back to Vietnam till 1944(AIM Video) or that Diem "was very well known....best known living Nationalist left in the country, and was much more favorably known than Ho Chi Minh"(Landsale: AIM Video). Goes to show that there is always something to be found that will change your views, and that one should take the information with a grain of salt. But your right, they should have been more specific about Ho's dealings on his side of Vietnam. That piece of information definitely made me understand more as to why we were fighting him.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Re: The Perception of Ho Chi Minh

by Riley Ahrenkiel - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 6:03 PM

"Better yet, if we could find one that isn't biased like someone from America, France or Vietnam wrote it. That way we can get an overall better understanding of what happened."

I agree wholeheartedly with you on the importance of gathering information from a pool of sources, although, I'd argue what we need is more research and viewpoints from the people involved (i.e. Americans, French, Vietnamese, etc). Even though there may be bias tied to some sources, this is where you are going to find the best perspectives of the Vietnam war, from those who fought it. Sometimes this is difficult because like you said, bias can obviously arise when you're getting information from conflicting parties of war. However, since we have viewpoints from multiple sources, it enables us to identify contradicting information so at the very least we can acknowledge that we may need to think critically about what the truth really is.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: Determining the Truth

by Daine Taylor - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 11:00 PM

After watching the AIM video it shines a new light on how important it is too study from more than one view. If we as Americans only studied from the knowledge we were giving from an American point of view on the Vietnam War we wouldn't be given the whole truth only partial. The PBS episodes shows exactly why it is important to have several sources that can rule out what may be fiction and what may be not. " we get a episodic series of images some are accurate and some are inaccurate, some are significant and some are trivial" (3:00 Director Douglas Pike). Having two books to read and study from helps shed light from both sides of the war but some accounts are really one sided. Bernard Trainor believed fighting in Vietnam was a Noble cause and he was fighting communism. " I left Vietnam in 1966 as totally convinced of the nobility of our cause as I was when I arrived." (Appy, P.5, Bernard Trainor). In the book America's Longest War it put in perspective that Americans thought of Vietnam as their "offspring" and that they knew what was the right thing to do and how to do it. "But Americans' certainty that they knew what was best for their "offspring" inevitably clashed with the views of a proud people who had their own vision for an independent South Vietnam" (Herring P.54). As some Vietnamese would they had their own way of dealing with political situations and wanted to deal with it in a traditional manner.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3



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Re: Determining the Truth

by Riley Ahrenkiel - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 7:09 PM

Hey, Daine, I too saw the light shining brightly on the importance of studying from more than one view, using a variety of differing sources will grant us with an overall higher quality, big picture view of war. I've noticed that with the Appy book, that "some accounts are really one sided." I think that's because many of these personal accounts show grittiness of war, and to not take a side when a part of something to that scale would be nearly impossible. Also having the Herring book, which offers a more chronological concise overview of the United States involvement in Vietnam, hand in hand with they both offer information to help us when we confront problems of conflicting information.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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Re: Determining the Truth

by Sydney Zuelke - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 9:31 PM

Diane,

I liked the point you're getting at. As a Journalist, I've always been taught to stay curious, always ask questions, and always get the other person's perspective. Basically, always have a hint of doubt. I think the same can be applied when we study things like history, and particularly something as controversial as war. It really made me think when in the AIM video, they describe an OSS Officer in the PBS video who claims we messed up our chance of making allies with Ho Chi Minh. The AIM video then suggests that the OSS Officer was "fooled" by Ho Chi Minh. This made me wonder -- at what point are people blatantly trying to cover up, or make things look better than they actually were, and when does it become an innocent mistake, or someone (naively) being "fooled" and spreading wrong information unknowingly?

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: Determining the Truth about the Geneva Accords

by Kelsey Gilseth - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 11:25 PM

The Accuracy in Media Part 1 video mentions several inconsistencies in the Vietnam PBS video documentary series. Although many of them are worth noting, the one of the highest importance pertains to the omissions concerning the Geneva Accords and the Vietnam elections. The Geneva Accords was a conference held in Geneva, Switzerland in 1954 from April to July. The purpose of the meetings was to reach an agreement to end the war in Indochina. The solution that was reached was to divide Vietnam at the 17th parallel and hold an election in two years (1956) that would reunite Vietnam. The major nations represented at the conference were the United States, France, the Soviet Union, and members of Indochina. It is mentioned in the documentaries that the representative from the United States, Walter Bedell Smith, was only there to observe and would not be taking part in any decision making. All of this is information that was provided in the video documentaries. AIB stresses that the PBS video discusses the proposed elections more than any other topic in the series, but leaves out a huge piece of the story. In the words of Bruce Loebs from the Department of Speech Communications in Idaho State University, "no elections were promised at Geneva." The PBS series fails to note that Smith stated that the United States' was not to be bound by the Geneva Accords. Article 7 of the final declaration held that "The United States opposes elections unless they are supervised by the United Nations to make sure they are free." (Summary by Bruce Loebs at 25:25). Furthermore, on July 21, 1954 President Eisenhower declared that the United States would not be held accountable for any decisions taking place at the Geneva Accords. All of this is extremely valuable information that should have been included in the PBS documentaries, but for some reason was not.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Re: Determining the Truth about the Geneva Accords

by Kayla Elliott - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 10:04 PM

I love this difference that you brought up because it really is so important. Like what was already said, the PBS video makes the point numerous times that the United States and other countries agreed to let the Vietnamese have free and fair elections. So, when the elections don't happen like they are supposed to, the PBS video makes it seem like the United States and other countries are actively trying to not let them have elections because of their own agenda. While it may be true that the United States didn't want them to have elections yet in the fear that communism would take over, PBS does fail to mention that it wasn't the United States' responsibility to make the elections happen. When PBS mentions the Geneva Accords so often, it makes the viewer believe that this was an important event that makes the United States look bad for not following through with what was agreed upon there. That is why it is so significant that PBS left out the fact that the United States was not bound to the rules of the Geneva Accord. It is really misleading.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: Determining the Truth

by Daine Taylor - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 11:39 PM

The most glaring contradiction would have to be that that Ho Chi Minh was not known as a patriot by Vietnamese for a quarter of a century. The reasoning for that being the most glaring is that in the PBS episodes they make Ho out to be a good man and give it a good story line on how we was given that name. "Ho only took the name Ho Chi Minh in 1941 in a Chinese prison where the Vietnamese wouldn't have the knowledge of that." (10:20 AIM, Dolf Droge). It is surprising that Ho came in contact with the American OSS (Office of Strategic Services) and the OSS wanted his help. It makes Ho look as if he is a fooling the Americans like he fooled the George Washington of the Vietnamese national movement Phan Bội Châu. "He invited Phan Bội Châu to Shanghai to talk about revaluation, and he betrayed him to the French security police in Shanghai for gold" (9:45 AIM, Dolf Droge). The Vietnamese did not really know Ho Chi Minh all that well. He more or less just barged in and said he was leading the movement against these nations. He wasn't a very honorable man as he's made out to be.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Re: Determining the Truth

by Kayla Elliott - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 9:58 PM

I think your last sentence sums up what the people in the AIM video were trying to get across. Ho Chi Minh was being portrayed in the PBS video as a hero of his people, a nationalist, and a well-liked man, who did what he had to do during war just to get his country unified and free. However, the people in the AIM video shed more light on what Ho Chi Minh was actually doing, that the PBS video failed to mention. Besides just turning in his own people, like you mentioned, he was also giving orders to murder his own people if they refused to go along with a communist Vietnam with him as the leader. If he was really fighting for free and fair elections in Vietnam, he wouldn't be doing those types of activities. That is why I feel like those parts of the history are really important to know what was really happening in Vietnam. However, the PBS video left that information out and people were really outraged about it.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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Re: Determining the Truth

by Joshua Meeker - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 2:40 PM

Yes, this was shocking to me as well. Especially since PBS basically made Ho out to be the "father" figure of Vietnam during that area. What a joke that was. Overall I enjoy the PBS series but I will definitely be more wary of the bias in the future. In regards to your mention of OSS wanting to work with Ho it was because he was very helpful to the US when Japan had established dominance in Vietnam. Would have been interesting to see how the events would have changed if the US had actually given him full political support when he asked for it.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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Diem: Capable of Victory alone?

by Brent Roessler - Thursday, April 20, 2017, 5:27 PM

Like the portrayal of Ho Chi Minh being misleading, I believe the Herring book along with PBS have very different portrayals of Ngo Dinh Diem compared to the AIM video. The Herring book seems to portray Diem as incapable of leading South Vietnam to independence alone. There are many passages (from the Herring book) but the one that stood out to me was..."To have constructed a viable nation in southern Vietnam, moreover, would have required the most enlightened, imaginative, and determined Vietnamese leadership, an ingredient the United States could not provide. Ngo Dinh Diem may well have been the "best available man," as Dulles described him. The United States pinned its hopes exclusively on him and helped him survive the tumultuous years 1954 and 1955. But Diem lacked the qualities necessary for the formidable challenge of nation building." (Herring, pg.88) All of this certainly is meant to lead us to believe Diem was indeed incapable of being as influential or even beloved by his own country without Eisenhower holding his hand the entire time.

The book makes it sound like Diem wasn't capable of being a political figure that the southern Vietnamese would support without US aid. On the other hand the AIM video states..."First it (PBS) tell us Diem was an "American puppet", which he was certainly not." (AIM, 17:00) Over all I find it difficult to believe that Diem wasn't an influential political force in southern Vietnam unless the US held his hand. His collegiate background and political endeavors say otherwise. I somewhat believe the United States got in the way of his vision and tried to control him and his country too much. It's impossible to say whether or not the US indeed impede Diem's vision of complete independence of South Vietnam, but I certainly don't believe he was incapable of gaining the support of the non-communist community if he wasn't supported by the US.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Diem: Capable of Victory alone?

by Stanley Cates - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 4:08 AM

"Over all I find it difficult to believe that Diem wasn't an influential political force in southern Vietnam unless the US held his hand. His collegiate background and political endeavors say otherwise."

Doesn't that statement preclude that Vietnamese culture holds his collegiate background in the same regards that Americans, being of the American cultural persuasion, might hold an individual's collegiate background? In other words, what makes you think that the Vietnamese people cared one bit about his education? Perhaps a western education just lent credence to the accusations of puppetry.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Diem: Capable of Victory alone?

by Brent Roessler - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 2:34 PM

"Ngo Dinh Diem attended French Catholic schools in Hue and the school of public administration in Hanoi, where, after finishing at the top of his class, he was given an appointment in the bureaucracy of the protectorate of Annam... As a village supervisor

in central Vietnam, he unearthed a Communist-inspired uprising in 1929 and severely punished its leaders. The French rewarded him with an appointment as ministry of the interior, the highest position in the government... During the next two decades, Diem remained active in politics. He was deeply involved in the frantic maneuvering that took place at the end of WW2.” (Herring, pgs. 58-59)

Diem couldn't have reached such a level of influence/power without his education. The quote above clearly shows he was recognized solely for his academic achievements. Not until after WW2 was the US so interested in Diem, so all his work beforehand leads me to believe he already gained to the support of non-communist Vietnam.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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difference in videos

by Skyler Tidwell - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 5:00 PM

The Accuracy in media (AIM) video object to the PBS television history channel time and time again. In the video from AIM they state 7 minutes and 45 seconds into it that Ho Chi Minh was first and far most a Communist than a Nationalist. And to support that Stephen Morris went into details about thousands of assassinations of people who were more nationalist than communist and or someone who could damage his organization and over throw him. However, again the conflict between the PBS and AIM strikes again when stating “Ho Chi Minh was not a patriot for half of a century, because he only took the name while in a Chinese prison in Chinese 1941.” (10:20 AIM's video) Although PBS never A: disclosed that or B: wrote what they thought would make for a better program. Either way it was unethical news and skimmed the mind of the viewers. Also this could have led to the risen opposition to the PBS news broadcast; Some of 1500 people showed up in New Orleans, then in Houston, and again Washington D.C. (AIM 12:40) Another example would be before Diem took office in Saigon, it was said that Diem was more popular than Ho Chi Minh and a stronger Nationalist. (AIM 19:10) it is clear that there are multiple differences between the videos. On the other hand both AIM and PBS said that Ho Chi Minh's path to the communist party was started with the French, then to the Soviet Union, and then return to Vietnam. However, the difference is that when Ho Chi Minh was in Soviet Russia he only taught or supported Nationalist if they seemed to keep the option of Communism a good possibility. (AIM 8:35) Regardless one or the other is not telling the complete truth and that is unethical. I trust someone who tells me the truth, Do You?

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: difference in videos

by Kayla Elliott - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 9:53 PM

You showed great examples of how the AIM video showed the flaws in the PBS video's view of Ho Chi Minh and his actions. I think time and time again in this class, there have been videos or readings that show Ho Chi Minh in a different light. The speakers in the AIM video seemed to point out the lack of information in the PBS video instead of wrong information. I thought it was interesting that they didn't say that PBS had all the facts wrong about Ho Chi Minh, but that PBS left out some key facts about how he was as a leader and how he got to that position. Dolf Drodge described Ho Chi Minh as a “professional

international communist” because he went to different countries and started groups based on spreading the word about Communism. He even turned in his own people and friends to the French government if he thought they wouldn’t convert to Communism. I think the atrocities he committed against his own people are significant to what happened in Vietnam, however PBS chose not to disclose this information. As Bruce Loeb put it, PBS tried to make Ho Chi Minh into a hero while making South Vietnam and America into the villains. This was the biggest flaw that the AIM video pointed out about the PBS video.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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gulf of tonkin

by Skyler Tidwell - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 6:12 PM

The Vietnam took its toll on its people and everyone including the United States and the surrounding countries. However, the Tonkin Gulf Incident was the United State’s presidents stepping stone. Thus allowed for his bill to pass through congress, with only two senators disagreeing with it. It was stated in *America’s Longest War* that “The United States may not have been seeking to provoke another attack, but it did not go out of its way to avoid one either”.(pg.147) This to me sounds like they put themselves into a situation to which they knew they would get attacked by the North Vietnamese. Then soon following it would be easier to claim that the North attacked for a second time. In the USA’s eye, they were challenging just how much they could get away with. Also on a national platform it would show that the United States was soft and unwilling to attack; and that was not acceptable in any way shape or form. Later in the book *America’s Longest War* is says “no evidence [was] ever produced to demonstrate that they committed hostile acts”. (pg.147) Furthermore is making a point to which of many situations that the Tonkin Gulf could have been a setup for the United States to engage in the fight with North Vietnam. Was it setup? Do you believe it yes or no and say why not? If you were in the USA president’s shoes what would be the decision would you make knowing the information that he knew? Constructively and analytically I would look at this information and conclude that there was no second attack and ensure if a second one occurred there would be extreme retaliation. That’s what I would send to Ho Chi Minh in the North Vietnam. What would you at to Ho?

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Comparing & Contrasting The "Facts"

by Sydney Zuelke - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 7:10 PM

The most glaring contradiction between the PBS Documentary and "The Real Story" was the involvement and role of Ho Chi Minh -- PBS glossed over his position in the war, that he became a French communist, and a Soviet citizen. As an international communist (PBS refers to him as a national communist, and there's a significant difference here), Ho Chi Minh supported only those open to communist ideals, and betrayed nationalists as soon as they re-entered Vietnam, often for gold.

In the second episode of the PBS docu-series, they made a statement that Ho, when he came to power, was known to the Vietnamese as a "patriot" for a quarter of a century -- this was very wrong. Additionally, they associated him with the 1930 rebellion, a non-communist,

nationalist party known as VQDD, saying “He was not in Vietnam, but his ideas in the Vietnamese train were.”

Ho Chi Minh was not fighting for democracy, and that should be known. Undermining or spinning his involvement, is unethical. "It failed to put across one of the most important lessons – that the imposition of communist rule inevitably results in great human tragedy" (Television's Vietnam: The Real Story - Part 1).

I believe we can begin to determine what the truth is, only by diving into our sources (truly research the author, and determine their experience and any possible biases). And compare and contrast our readings/videos and do as much cross-research as possible. Paying attention to timelines, and analyze anything that brings up skepticism -- just as "The Real Story" did.

Sum of ratings:3 (1) 3

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Re: Determining the Truth about Diem

by Kelsey Gilseth - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 10:23 PM

One of the discrepancies that Accuracy in Media points out in the PBS series is that Ngo Dinh Diem was defined as “a little-known nationalist.” AIM included a commentary by Edward G. Lansdale, Major General. USAF, who happened to be in Saigon when Diem was appointed as prime minister in 1954. Before the ceremony, Lansdale was asked to speak with the Vietnamese about Diem to find out about him. Lansdale learned that “he was very well known by them. Everyone that I talked to felt that he was an exceptionally honest person. He had a very strong character and most of them felt that he was perhaps one of the best-known living nationalists left in the country and was much more favorably known than Ho Chi Minh was by most of the people of South Vietnam. (AIM, Lansdale 19:02). This one interview completely belittles the PBS claim that Ngo Dinh Diem was not well-known.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) 2

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