

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

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Longest War & Video Documentaries
by Joe Escobar - Friday, April 7, 2017, 10:03 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Longest War & Video Documentaries topic.

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Valuable and Resources
by Tyler Ritter - Tuesday, April 11, 2017, 12:14 PM

Tyler Ritter

Joe Escobar

April 11, 2017

Strategies and Resources

“For the first time during World War II, the United States actively opposed the return of Indochina to France.” (pg.11, Herring). The United States didn't want to see such a strategic area be under colonial rule. We helped Ho, who we codenamed “Lucius”, or “Agent 19”. The First War in Vietnam Helps tie things together. Ho Chi Minh wanted to be under their own rule, and we didn't want to lose exports of rubber and other valuable resources. Aiding Ho with small arms and military training, as well as saving his life, in return for information on Japanese troop movement and downed US pilots seemed the smart idea. This is a prime example of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.” “We must remember that the year is 1954, and the word “communism”, is truly a dirty word in the eyes of the American people.” (13:11 into The First War in Vietnam video). At the time, this leads me to believe that communism, but we where willing to negotiate when it came to valuable resources.

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Re: Valuable and Resources

by Stanley Cates - Wednesday, April 12, 2017, 2:20 PM

"At the time, this leads me to believe that communism, but we where willing to negotiate when it came to valuable resources."

Could you expand on this? Forgive me if I'm just missing it but it almost reads like part of this sentence is missing. What do you believe about communism? Also I'm a little lost on your chronology. You mention things Ho did for the US during WWII but then immediately use a quote describing public attitudes almost a decade later; surely there were developments in public opinion and government policy in that decade. Enough so that I'm not yet convinced that we can use the phrase "The enemy of my enemy is my friend" to describe Ho Chi Minh during WWII; I think we should at least make an attempt to isolate a genuine emerging relationship between Ho and the U.S. during WWII that later went sour.

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Re: Valuable and Resources

by Tyler Ritter - Thursday, April 13, 2017, 10:34 AM

Hello Stanley! Yes thanks for bringing that to my attention, part of the sentence must have been cut. I meant to say, "this leads me to believe that communism was the prime reason for going to war, but we had other motives, such as valuable resources to safeguard." I should have filled the gaps a little more when it comes to chronology and different time periods, I guess i jumped the gun and compared things that where really far apart in time. I completely agree that we had an emerging friendship with Ho that did eventually go sour. We at one point gave Ho life saving medicines and trained his soldiers.

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Re: Valuable and Resources

by Brent Roessler - Wednesday, April 12, 2017, 9:03 PM

I agree with you Tyler. I also found material pointing to the United States being very interested in the valuable resources Vietnam had to offer. "If Southeast Asia joined the Communist bloc, the United States and its allies would be denied access to important markets." (pg.21-22, Herring) We were fighting against Communism, but at the same time I get the feeling we were much more concerned with what would happen to our import/export deals with Vietnam and eventually all of Southeast Asia, or so we assumed!

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Re: Valuable and Resources

by Tyler Ritter - Thursday, April 13, 2017, 10:39 AM

Hello Brent! I completely agree, I also want to add that it seems we didn't see countries that were communist as different, but rather communism as a whole bloc as general McArthur once stated. I believe our main resource worry was rubber, and the Michelin rubber plantation. We received 80% (feel free to correct me if this is wrong), of our rubber from this plant near Saigon.

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Re: Valuable and Resources

by Stanley Cates - Thursday, April 13, 2017, 4:50 PM

You make a great point Brent, that the war had multiple dynamics. Because of this multiple dynamic I think it's important to separate concepts regarding fears and concerns. Were we mostly fearful of communism as an ideal? Or were we concerned with the effect its expansion would have on our own economy? In either case I think the elephant in the room is the question of whether America at the time was being hypocritical and violating its own founding principles as stated in the declaration of independence, namely that of the right of the pursuit of happiness, which Ho Chi Minh borrowed so heavily from in order to draft his own declaration. Regardless of which theme rises in priority it definitely seems to me that, at least in the case of North Vietnam, the feeling was one sided, at first. "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."" (Appy) I'd hardly consider these the words of a monster, and might loosely infer that this man would have maintained friendly commerce with the U.S.

So does the problem boil completely down to our inability to realize that not all communists were the same? What do you guys think?

Appy, Christian G.. Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides (p. 40). Penguin Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

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Re: Valuable and Resources

by Brent Roessler - Saturday, April 15, 2017, 12:53 PM

I think it's important to understand "true communism." Communism is a political ideology that promotes a classless and stateless society in which all property is communally owned. True communism is the end-game, in which the workers of the world have overthrown the ruling classes and established a society based in the idea of classless, stateless society.

True communism isn't an evil, as the US has led many to believe. It might differ from what we as a society (US) was founded on, but doesn't mean it is an evil ideology created in hopes of world domination, such as Hitler and Nazi Germany.

As you mentioned Stanley, there were many soldiers and political representatives that wanted peace, to live among each other in harmony, communist or not. Nhu said, "I am not an anti-communist from the point of view of politics or humanity. I consider the communist as brothers, lost sheep. I am not for a crusade against the communist, because we are a little country and we only want to live in peace." (Vol.2, 45:00)

It isn't easy to completely understand but it seems the US was so afraid of losing its "classes" in society that we had to put a stop to anything that threatened the hierarchy that had been created. It's crazy to think about, but would we have the epidemic "the richer getting richer, and poor getting poorer" like we do now if communism would have been implemented here in the states? Food for thought, but please do not get side tracked with that thought!

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Valuable and Resources

by Stanley Cates - Sunday, April 16, 2017, 1:21 AM

Thanks for that, it's good to know that both parties in the conversation understand the real definition of communism. However, it's also important to remember that you and I knowing what true communism is/was is fairly, if not completely, irrelevant to how it was perceived in the mid-20th century in the west. To answer your question; I think there are far too many dynamic variables to legitimately say whether we would still have a growing socioeconomic gap (rich getting richer, poor getting poorer) in our country had communism taken hold here; any number of completely unforeseen circumstances could have simply resulted in *everyone* getting poorer.

I like your idea about being afraid of losing socioeconomic classes in America; it legitimately is kind of a scary thought when you stop to reflect on it. I'm not overly conservative but the notion of having all the hard work I've put in over the years to drag myself up from a very low socioeconomic class churns my stomach. I know that the popular image of wealth in the country today is to make wealth synonymous with greed but I'm unconvinced. In any case I can see how that

feeling might stem from a deep enough rooted value in our culture (self-reliance) that we could use it to glean some information about mid-20th century thoughts on the matter.

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Not so irrational fears.

by Stanley Cates - Tuesday, April 11, 2017, 6:54 PM

It seems to me that the most obvious and overwhelming connection between topics given in the videos and developments discussed in the book are the fears over unchallenged aggression resulting in emboldened actions of the communists. The video gives the example of Mussolini and Ethiopia, but the better representation of course was Hitler's actions in Austria. (Why Vietnam?) Though the video skips WWII and goes straight to Korea I think it's worth it to note that Austria was the first in an alarmingly long line of nations to succumb to German rule and occupation, not the least of which was France. The example of German, and to a similar degree Japanese, expansion would likely still be fairly fresh in the minds of Americans and I think added great amounts of legitimacy to what the book refers to as the "Domino theory. For our purposes the domino theory is: "...the firmly rooted conviction that the fall of Indochina would cause the collapse of the rest of Southeast Asia..." (Herring) Given this definition it is not terribly difficult to connect the dots between what was observed during WWII and what potentials were predicted in Indochina. "Acceptance of this concept reflected... memories from 1940-1942 when Germany and Japan overran vast regions in very short spaces of time." (Herring) This was not simple misinformation used to guide public opinion as in the accepted broad definition of propaganda (Propaganda), rather it was natural manifestation based on real, and recent, experiences.

Why Vietnam? 1965. Films Media Group, 2009, fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=239336&xtid=48891. Accessed 11 Apr. 2017.

Herring, George. America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975 (Page 22-24). McGraw-Hill Education. Kindle Edition.

"Propaganda." *Oxforddictionaries.com*. Oxford, n.d. Web. 11 Apr. 2017.

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Re: Not so irrational fears.

by William Wyatt - Sunday, April 16, 2017, 8:34 PM

Great in-depth analysis on what we have read/watched so far. Sure politicians portrayed communists to be bent on world domination, but in actuality distressing events where occurring due to the spread of communism. I agree when you argue that the fear of communism wasn't irrational but a "natural manifestation based on real, and recent, experiences."

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The Symbolic representation of the First Indochina War

by Riley Ahrenkiel - Wednesday, April 12, 2017, 2:30 PM

The topic that I found significant between both America's Longest War and the Vietnam video documentaries (specifically "The First war in Vietnam") was the symbolic representation of the French and Viet Minh and how that relates to the nature of war in Vietnam. In both sources, they give metaphors to describe the first Indochina war saying, "This will be a war between a tiger and an elephant. If only the tiger would stop, the elephant might penetrate his defenses, but the tiger never stops. He is concealed in the jungle during the day to emerge only at night. He pounces on the elephant and claws large gashes out of his back, and he disappears. And slowly, slowly, the elephant will be exhausted and will bleed to death," (The First War in Vietnam, begins at 0:46 second mark) and in the book, George Herring quotes Ho Chi Minh saying, "If ever the tiger [Viet Minh] pauses," he said, "the elephant [France] will impale him on his mighty tusks. But the tiger will not pause, and the elephant will die of exhaustion and loss of blood." (p.10, Herring) It's clear that in sources, they agree that Viet Minh were the underdogs when it came to battle against the might of the French forces. But through means of guerilla warfare, and sheer determination for independence and unification of one people, the Viet Minh were capable of making Vietnam a place the French wanted no business in. Successfully they had fended off a much more powerful nation when it came to things like a better trained and equipped army, as well as a stable independent economy. I found it interesting how these two quotes can also be used to symbolize the war between the United States and Viet Minh, with the US, of course, representing the mighty elephant, through a war of attrition or annihilation, the US found itself in a position similar to France.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Re: The Symbolic representation of the First Indochina War

by Tyler Ritter - Thursday, April 13, 2017, 10:50 AM

Hello Riley, I agree that the Vietnam war was by no means conventional, you had an enemy that was everywhere, yet nowhere. Reading about the very intricate tunnel systems was very surprising. I found it interesting that these tunnels had beds, kitchens, and even rooms for leading officers and officials. The Viet Minh were very smart with how they struck out. Tran Thi Gung's story of how they would shoot an American soldier and wait for more to come to his aid disturbed me, but it also made sense in a time of military strategy. She went on to say, "after a few minutes they pulled back, taking bodies of their friends with them. But they didn't pick up all their rifles so I crawled out and grabbed five or six AR-15's.(Pg 15, Patriots, Appy) This showed to me how resourceful they were at gaining more weapons and the upper hand.

Patriots, Christian G. Appy, April 13th, 2017

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2

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Re: The Symbolic representation of the First Indochina War

by William Wyatt - Sunday, April 16, 2017, 6:40 PM

I completely agree Riley! I found the symbolic relationship between the French and Viet Minh to be fascinating. Also I think you're correct with regards to the Viet Minh being the underdogs using determination, tactics, and unification as their greatest strength's. Viet Minh created bases that were very difficult to attack. With strong bases of operation and political strength they were able to strike when they wanted. The Viet Minh made intelligent attacks and caused the enemy to disperse. Ordinarily Viet Minh forces avoided contact unless they held a clear advantage. In the end the lion was able to keep the elephant at bay.

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Forum week 2 Amerca's longest war

by Skyler Tidwell - Wednesday, April 12, 2017, 5:37 PM

In The first war in Vietnam was about how the people had to fought off and pushed out the French from their home land. Also, the Why Vietnam video accommodated a letter to President Eisenhower; From a confused, up-set, irritated, and longing for answers mother. Throughout the video, Eisenhower indirectly portraits that is our duty to defend/ assist a country trying to resist communism. Regardless time and time again, through countless deaths, and guerilla warfare they resisted. They did not have the skills and technology to defend themselves so the United States of America(USA) agreed to support them. At first no combat soldiers, the only military that the USA had at that point were The Military Assistance and Advisory Group(MAAG) and they were only there to train and to advise what they think the Vietnamese people should do. (Herring pg:70) However there was an attack on a dinner hall north of Saigon on July 8th, 1959 which two Americans lost their lives and many more were wounded, USA blood was split on that day (Herring pg:84), after that, that was when the decision was first combat troops touch Vietnam soil. The book America's longest war, follows the story line of the two videos above. However, chapter one and two I feel gives more information and enlightenment on what happened. To prove it the Why Vietnam film stated that Vietnam asked for help and they got it; (6:03) But in the book, it gave the details of programs that were given such as Commodity Import Program (CIP), American Friends of Vietnam(AFV), Care and Catholic Relief Service(CRS), The International Rescue Committee(IRC), The Southeast Asian Treaty Organization(SEATO). (pg:69, 73) The reading in this book and the video also give more of American fears and thought of the South Vietnam falling into the hands of the following North Vietnam, Communist China, and France. The difference I can only see is how the Geneva Agreement are characterized in the book. For example, a diplomat from Canada states "nasty bargain accepted by all parties as the only way to avoid a dangerous conflict". (Herring pg:49) I feel like if the people wanted to hold elections they should be able to, as well with all the other agreements made during the time of the Geneva Convention. In accumulation, the fight for their own land, government, freedoms, etc. Is the main and most important event that has happened to both book and videos. The book has more information and detail but both followed on the same trail. However, the difference in the opinion from book to video was interesting.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) 2

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Ho Chi Minh and His Political Rise

by William Wyatt - Wednesday, April 12, 2017, 5:58 PM

Although Ho Chi Minh was born in Vietnam, he grew up learning French colonial ideals. I believe this to be because of the permeation of French society in Vietnam. Later in his life he became an advocate for Vietnamese independence. He was inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, and later adopted communist ideals. In lieu of that, people who knew Ho regarded him first as a nationalist than a communist. He had a role in the emergence of the Indochinese Communist Party, and helped develop the League for the Independence of Vietnam, more famously known as the Viet Minh.

Nearing the end of the Second World War, Ho ordered his Viet Minh forces to seize Hanoi, a northern Vietnamese city. He became the president of North Vietnam and served in that position for over two decades. He was regarded as a symbol of the Vietnamese struggle for unification and independence. This new found independence was in danger of failure due to South Vietnam and more importantly their ally, the United States. Strongly anti-Communist at the time, and in fear of Russia and China, the United States wanted the spread of communism to end. I'm very interested to continue learning about the struggle for unification and independence with regards to Vietnam.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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United States Viewpoint Before and After the War

by William Wyatt - Wednesday, April 12, 2017, 6:19 PM

"No event in American history is more misunderstood than the Vietnam War. It was misreported then, and it is misremembered now. Rarely have so many people been so wrong about so much. Never have the consequences of their misunderstanding been so tragic."
(Richard M. Nixon).

The United States considered the Vietnam war endeavor as heroic, a way to stop the spread of communism. The U.S. idea was to plan a partnership with local forces that would assist with conflicts in North Vietnam. The pact was known as the "United Action" agreement, and it displayed the intent of not only America, but many other powerful nations to put an end to communism. The goal of the "United Action" agreement was to defend other nations from communism, considered then the ultimate aggressor towards democracy. What came from such actions were massive protests in the United States and hatred towards American soldiers.

After the war had ended, the United States was in disarray due to defending against communism. After the end of the war, American troops did not receive much of a welcome when returning from Vietnam because an overwhelming majority of American citizens had been completely against the war. After the war ended many nations readjusted their perceptions on the value of human life and the right of a country to rule autonomously.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: United States Viewpoint Before and After the War

by Kayla Elliott - Sunday, April 16, 2017, 9:37 AM

Part of the reason that the Vietnam war was so misunderstood is because the government was overexaggerating the successes and not being completely truthful about what was happening over there.

It is an interesting point that I think a lot of Americans lost their patriotism and stopped trusting the government because of all the untruths that had been told. I think the Herring book does a better job at telling the events of the war as it happened. I think the Why Vietnam video favors the U.S. and doesn't talk about them negatively as much, and talks more negatively about Ho Chi Minh.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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War fueled by fear.

by Brent Roessler - Wednesday, April 12, 2017, 8:20 PM

Something I found quite interesting was the fear driving the War. In both "the Herring book" and "Why Vietnam?" There are references pointing to the fear of repeating history and without action NOW history will repeat itself, or so we believed!

"Independence would not come without a struggle. Looking backward instead of forward, French leaders were determined to regain the empire they had ruled for more than a half century...Humiliated by their defeat at the hands of Germany..." (pg.8, Herring). President Johnson said "Americans have gone too far lands to fight for freedom...retreat does not bring safety and weakness doesn't bring peace, and it's this lesson that's brought us to Vietnam."(3:30, Why Vietnam?)

The world was made well aware of "what could be" after Hitler's attempt at world domination. Out of fear that the Communist community might have the same views of world domination, such as Hitler, the United States engaged in war FEARFUL that Communism might take over the world.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: War fueled by fear.

by Kayla Elliott - Saturday, April 15, 2017, 11:35 AM

You brought up a very important aspect of the Vietnam war, which was Communism. In a lot of the speeches given by American presidents, their reason to help out Vietnam, and ultimately the reason they said they were at war there, was because they felt that if Communism took over Vietnam, it would take over all the surrounding countries.

The United States also felt like they had made a mistake by not intervening and stopping Hitler sooner than they did. In Vietnam, they didn't want to make the same mistake by not intervening and then have Communism take over.

This is another instance, where in hindsight, knowing that we end up losing the war, we think "why would we do this", but at the time this was happening, this was a real, huge fear that many people had. It's important to understand this concept to realize what was the driving force behind our part in the war.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: War fueled by fear.

by Wenxuan Nie - Sunday, April 16, 2017, 4:28 PM

Your opinion is convincing. Vietnam war as a major partial war during Cold War period is misleading America to right strategy. You can see this point in Herring's book multiple times, which on the one hand, America thought there is too much cost to support French against North Vietnam; on the contrary, they have no choice but to help French because the fear of communism is expanding. " By 1950, moreover, Americans viewed Vietnam as the key to keeping Southeast Asia out of communist hands, an importance it would retain for nearly a quarter century." (p.20 Herring)

So the war starts with fear, how irony.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: Longest War & Video Documentaries

by Jay Autry - Wednesday, April 12, 2017, 8:53 PM

The topic that has stood out to me the most though this first week of study has been the reluctance of the French government to relinquish its colonization of Vietnam, and the Vietnamese perseverance to resist foreign rule. "America's Longest War" does a thorough job of explaining the history of the oppression and sometimes exploitation of the Vietnamese by both the Chinese and the French. This history helps to explain the persistence in which the Vietnamese persisted French imperialism.

Ho Chi Mihn was a staunch nationalist and strongly opposed French colonialism. However, Ho Chi Mihn stated that, "All my life I have fought against French colonialism, but I've always loved and admired the French people."(2:35 into The First War in Vietnam video). "Americas Longest War" speaks of Ho's life long nationalistic goals (pg. 6 Herring), but not once does it mention any sort of hatred towards the French people. It simply paints a picture of a patriot and revolutionary whose story is not much different than our own founding fathers. This reflected attitude that fueled the Viet Mihn throughout their struggle against the French, and eventually the South Vietnamese and Americans.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: Longest War & Video Documentaries

by Kayla Elliott - Saturday, April 15, 2017, 11:29 AM

I think you brought up a very interesting point. Obviously, there were some Vietnamese people who just hated all French people for what their country had done. However, there were many, like Ho Chi Minh, who didn't hate the French people, they just wanted France to relinquish its control of Vietnam, and leave.

Looking back, knowing what we know now, it's easy to ask the question, "why didn't France just get out of Vietnam and leave them be?" For France though, this was a very important territory for bringing wealth to their country. "They also sought an outpost from which to exploit China and compete with British and Dutch colonies in South and Southeast Asia." (pg. 5 Herring) Another important reason not to leave, was that China, or some other nearby country, would just try to take over Vietnam again. So, instead of just leaving Vietnam and let them fight against some other country, France wanted to keep power of Vietnam to further their own agenda in their country at home.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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by Kayla Elliott - Wednesday, April 12, 2017, 9:36 PM

I think an important contrast between the “America’s Longest War” book and the “Why Vietnam” video is the point of view each has taken with Ho Chi Minh’s actions and the actions of the United States. In the book, throughout the first chapter, it talks about how Ho Chi Minh was respected and loved by many because he was a nationalist who just wanted to unify Vietnam and make it a free, independent country. However, in the video they said, “Ho Chi Minh, communist leader of North Vietnam, plays the kind, smiling grandfather. But behind the smile is a mind which is planning a reign of terror on South Vietnam in which children and adults alike will be the victims. (6:46 into Why Vietnam Video) There was also a difference between how the United States is viewed. In chapter two of the book, it mentions frequently how the South Vietnamese people were suspicious of Americans and how they weren’t really as welcomed as the U.S. gave on. In contrast, the video mentions how the U.S. sent people over to help the Vietnamese and how they were fighting for freedom. I think these contrasts are important for many reasons. It shows how different people during this war viewed it or experienced it so much differently from other people. For instance, Ho Chi Minh and his followers believed that they were trying to help the Vietnamese and make them a free country. But from the perspective of the people in South Vietnam, it looked like Ho Chi Minh was just trying to assert control and take over the country by force. Similarly, the United States wanted to make the world think that they were going over to Vietnam to help them and had no agenda of their own. However, the Vietnamese just saw it as another Western power trying to control and colonize their country. “However well intentioned, the visitors’ cultural arrogance and determination to impose their own ways could not but come across to many South Vietnamese as yet another form of colonialism.” (pg. 70 Herring) I think this contrast is important to realize because it shows that we need to be studying different material when looking back at history because opposing views can teach you different aspects that you wouldn’t have learned otherwise. I also thought it was an important contrast because it helps give a better feel of all the different emotions that were happening that were the basis for actions that were taken. You asked the question, “If in conflict, which do you believe and why?” My response would be: both. I believe that Ho Chi Ming was a man who loved his country and his people, but he also murdered or jailed many of his people. I also believe the United States really did want to help, but they also had their own political agenda.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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by Skyler Tidwell - Friday, April 14, 2017, 10:36 PM

Kayla Elliots, wow, I agree with your contrast completely. At first watching the videos and reading the book I did not analytically think of that, but the more times I read it the more I see the contrast which you so vividly portrayed in your passage above. How Ho was favored by the USA in the book (America’s Longest War) but was shown as the evil wanting to cause harm in the video (*Why Vietnam*). I also applaud you for the quote from our book on page.70: “However well intentioned, the visitors’ cultural arrogance and determination to impose their own ways could not but come across too many South Vietnamese yet another

form of colonialism.” (Elliot’s post) The quotation adequately ties it together. The contrast that I have found is that in the book under the Truman administration France graciously accepted US help, but in the video, they state that although they may be fighting each other they are also fighting French and their colonial imperialism. (4:20) Although looking at all side and attempting to understand their reasoning helps the subject in a full manor. And I firmly believe that with good intensions may not be the necessarily what was need, because to every situation there are two sides and you should constructively evaluate and find the best course of action. I believe that Ho played the role he needed to at first to gain the power he needed but soon after went on a war path. Whoever got in his way was killed or imprisoned.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Re: Longest War & Video Documentaries

by Daine Taylor - Sunday, April 16, 2017, 10:03 PM

Kayla,

I would agree with you that studying different material that shows both sides viewpoints on a subject. Having more material will really show more than just the one side. When you said "It mentions frequently how the South Vietnamese people were suspicious of Americans and how they weren't really as welcomed as the U.S gave on" (Line.7-9) would you say that the Americans should have been more suspicious about helping the Vietnamese and taken more precautions about being attacked and ambushed?

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1



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Re: Longest War & Video Documentaries

by Daine Taylor - Wednesday, April 12, 2017, 11:12 PM

The topic that I found most significant in Why Vietnam? And America’s Longest War was that there were several attempts to make peace in Vietnam and all were rejected. Many countries tried to send officers and make a conference to help talk about what peace could be established but they too were rejected. (22:33 into Why Vietnam? Video). “Roosevelt did not push ahead on trusteeship issue or spell out a clear policy for Vietnam” (P.12 Herring). The connection that was brought to my mind was that in a way there is a seemingly common theme of many leaders and countries seeing if Vietnam will have peace. It did not pan out that way as the United State was worried that Vietnam would have a communist takeover. In a way information from both the video Why Vietnam and America’s Longest War are in opposition of one another. The reason being is the video says the United States took much more action in trying to create peace in Vietnam and where the book is saying the Viet Minh tried to support the US and persuade them to come and build a legacy, “even suggesting that Vietnam would be a “fertile field for American capital and enterprise” (P.14 Herring).

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Re: Longest War & Video Documentaries

by Kayla Elliott - Saturday, April 15, 2017, 11:22 AM

I think it's true that many countries, including the United States, did want peace in Vietnam. The problems that arose that kept that from happening was French colonization and Communism. The United States had fears of a Communist takeover of Vietnam, which would then spread to the surrounding Asian countries. So, the United States had another agenda besides just making Vietnam a free, independent, peaceful country, which is what made negotiations difficult. France, obviously had a different agenda and wanted to keep control of Vietnam. There was also China who had their own interests in gaining power in Vietnam.

Because there were so many countries that had their own agenda in Vietnam, it made it impossible to have Vietnam become its own peaceful, independent country.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: Longest War & Video Documentaries

by Wenxuan Nie - Sunday, April 16, 2017, 11:06 PM

I agree with your idea that if American get Vietnam, they get peace. Additionally, Vietnam also being an important strategy place under the Cold War Situation, that Asian would be a communism cradle if Vietnam lost. Secondly, I believe the United States is hope for the materials and resources Vietnam has. " Even if France should succeed, they reasoned, it would restore monopolistic controls that would deny the United States access to raw material and naval facilities. (P.9.Herring) In that case, Why Vietnam is a complicated question.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: Longest War & Video Documentaries

by Daine Taylor - Wednesday, April 12, 2017, 11:12 PM

Another topic that I had found very significant was guerrilla warfare. The reason why I find it very significant is it was the key to winning for the Vietnamese for many centuries, "In the process pioneering methods of guerrilla warfare later used against the French and Americans" (P.4 Herring). The Vietnamese were true to their country's heritage and took what has been passed down such as sayings and tactics and used them in the Vietnam war. (6:30 in The First War in Vietnam video) The connection between the video and the book on the subject of guerrilla warfare is almost the same just the video goes more in depth of Ho Chi Minh's point of view of guerrilla warfare. As in the video at 6:30 you will see him speaking and giving a strong dictation of how guerrilla warfare was fought.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: Longest War & Video Documentaries

by Kayla Elliott - Saturday, April 15, 2017, 11:18 AM

Guerrilla warfare is a very significant aspect of this war because it was something the French were not prepared for. France out-gunned the Viet Minh, but the Viet Minh were smarter in how and when they attacked. They stayed out in the country, stayed hidden, and then struck at night. "The Viet Minh guerrillas retreated to safe areas, avoided conflict where the French had an edge, and exploited their familiarity with the terrain. They ambushed French convoys where possible and employed terror selectively and with deadly effectiveness." (pg. 10 Herring) It was a type of attack that the French had a hard time predicting and preparing for.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) 1

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Video Documentary - Early relationship between America and Ngo Dinh Diem

by William Wyatt - Wednesday, April 12, 2017, 11:28 PM

I found the early alliance between The U.S. and Ngo Dinh Diem to be fascinating. Diem was capable of keeping U.S. support against a multitude of odds. Eventually Diem established complete support from the Eisenhower administration.

American leaders thought at first that Ngo Dinh Diem was a model choice as an ally for the U.S. to restore control in south Vietnam. Diem was born the son of a Catholic imperial official. Like the U.S. Diem was strongly against communism and it's position in North Vietnam. Communist control in Vietnam eventually provoked Diem to flee to the United States. While in the states he met leading politicians like John F. Kennedy.

During early relations with Diem, the U.S. offered support. With the newfound U.S. support Diem was able to gain control of the South Vietnamese government. Diem was actively against communism, but was also a leading nationalist. Despite many odds, His first year in office was successful. Many American politicians considered that Diem would bring promise in restoring control to Vietnam.

Inheriting a government without a solid foundation, Diem found himself battling almost every conflict in south Vietnam. The Eisenhower administration eventually decided Diem was was a liability, and planned to remove him from power. a political step that would have ensured the defeat of Diem. Luckily He was able to rally his army and win an astounding victory in South Vietnam. Such success against all odds ensured the political support from the U.S.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) 1

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Re: Video Documentary - Early relationship between America and Ngo Dinh Diem

by Kayla Elliott - Saturday, April 15, 2017, 11:08 AM

Ngo Dinh Diem becoming the leader of South Vietnam was definitely a very important aspect of the book and the video. The relationship between Diem, the United States, and France was rocky, and had some ups and downs.

Diem resented the French for their intrusion in Vietnam in the first place, but he clung to the United States and always looked to them for guidance. "Although accepting U.S. aid, he often staunchly resisted American ways of doing things." (pg. 60 Herring) Diem was glad to have the aid of the United States to further his vision of a non-communist Vietnam, and was fine with modernizing Vietnam, he just didn't want everything to be the "American way."

The United States having this closeness with Diem, gave them more power in Vietnam, slowly pushing France out of the picture. This put a huge wedge between France and the United States.

Except for a few French officials, France never thought Diem was a good choice to lead Vietnam. "The French doubted Diem's capacity to lead, viewed him as a threat to implementation of the Geneva Accords, and actively sought to get rid of him." (pg. 61 Herring) So, France didn't like the fact that the United States was giving Diem all of their support, and weren't really taking their suggestions. Since the United States "now held most of the cards" (pg. 61 Herring), they started making some changes. For example, they started giving their aid directly to Diem, basically taking France out of the equation.

However, France almost got what they wanted with the Sects Crisis. When negotiations with Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, and the Binh Xuyen went poorly and actually made all the sects team up against Diem, the United States finally sided with France and decided that Diem needed to be taken out of power. However, Diem persevered and defeated the other sects and remained in power. After this victory, the U.S. decided to continue to support Diem and not take him out of power. This was the last straw for France who basically said, "If the United States persisted in its support, France would have to withdraw from Vietnam." (pg. 65 Herring) So, by the spring of 1955, it was decided that France would stay until South Vietnam could hold their elections, but the U.S. would no longer look for them for input. Basically, the French stayed in Vietnam but had no power.

So, I agree that the relationship between the United States and Diem was very important, because the U.S. is the only reason he stayed in power for as long as he did. However, the relationship between the United States and France during this time was also significant, because although they were supposed to be allies, it didn't really seem like they were during this time.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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endeavors to secur independence

by Skyler Tidwell - Friday, April 14, 2017, 8:58 PM

Throughout history Vietnam/ Indochina has fought time and time again for independent freedom without being occupied by a foreign government. They had survived the rule of China from 111 BC to 939 A.D. and drew eager for independence; Then we have the Trung Sisters who through the first major revolution but was defeated; In 248 A.D., we have Trieu Au and she failed as well. (Herring pg:4) However, it was not till the tenth century Vietnam was victorious on gaining their independence but not till about 1426 they truly secured freedom. Then that leads us to the French occupation toward the end of that century. Some good did come from it though, they showed Vietnam western-style modernization, because of these two major cities (Hanoi and Saigon) that within the next couple of centuries play predominate roles.

Ho Chi Minh first left Vietnam in 1911, and traveled to numerus place. When attending the Paris-Peace Conference he was shut down on his thought for democratic Vietnam, but was soon set on the path of communism with the help of Vladimir Lenin creating the first communist party in France. Soon after Ho jumps aboard, and is on a 20 plus year rode as functionary and revolutionary planner. As he did those things he traveled to Soviet Russia,

china, Thailand, Vietnam, then ending up in France. However, Ho is a Nationalist first then a communist. His home, people, and the rights of the people of Vietnam matter more to him than the type of government implemented.

When time can to serve his people Ho Chi Minh returned home ad devised a plan to rid his homeland of French troops occupying Vietnam land and remove colonial imperialism once and for all. Ho has a plan and goes to execute it, his mindset is best explained in the video "*Why Vietnam*", "Ho Chi Minh... plays the kind, smiling grandfather. But behind the smile is a mind which is planning a reign of terror". (6:46) with good intentions can lead into worse outcome.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Re: endeavors to secur independence

by Kayla Elliott - Saturday, April 15, 2017, 10:18 AM

You did a great job of laying out the timeline, telling how the war came to be and why it happened.

In my opinion, "Why Vietnam" portrayed the war somewhat differently than the book did. This probably happens many times when recounting history, different people remember the war differently depending on who they favored in the war. That's why I felt that "Why Vietnam" made Ho Chi Minh seem less favorable and "evil" as they called him in the video, whereas The Herring Book made him sound more like a nationalist who just loved his country and his people.

Like I said, you did a great job of laying out the timeline, which helped me understand it better. Do you think the book or the video told the timeline differently? Did you favor the video or the book better in how they did retelling what happened? Personally, I liked watching a video and reading the book that I felt were telling the same story, but they just told it a little bit differently on how the perceived the events that happened.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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Re: endeavors to secur independence

by Stanley Cates - Sunday, April 16, 2017, 2:00 AM

"In my opinion, "Why Vietnam" portrayed the war somewhat differently than the book did. This probably happens many times when recounting history, different people remember the war differently depending on who they favored in the war."

While I definitely agree that different people remember differently I think it's important to realize that the two sources you're referring to above have incredibly different target audiences. If you watch the "Why Vietnam" video all the way to the end you will see the words: "Presented by the directorate for armed forces information and education". In short that means the video was not meant to be a historical documentary, it was current events propaganda meant to rally the public to a cause. Given this, I do not think it's appropriate to give them a totally side by side analysis as the video is almost certainly inaccurate from a perspective of presenting objective facts.

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Sum of ratings:3 (1)



The US government's fight against communism

by Riley Ahrenkiel - Saturday, April 15, 2017, 4:01 PM

Another significant topic found in both sources (Longest War and Why Vietnam?) is the embrace of the domino theory and fight against communism by the United States government and what that meant for the future of US involvement in southeast Asia. In the Why Vietnam video, Secretary of State Dean Rusk addresses the American people saying, "And so the record seems very clear to us. Hanoi is presently resisting the road to peace, Peiping even more so. The declared doctrine and purpose of the Chinese communists remain clear, the domination of all of Southeast Asia. And indeed, if we listen to what they're saying to us, the domination of the great world beyond." (22:42 into Why Vietnam?) It may be important to note that this source never does mention the domino theory exactly, however, it's essentially the same principle, a fight against communism to stop the spread of communism throughout the world, starting in southeast Asia. In America's Longest War, Herring writes that "Southeast Asia was the target of a coordinated offensive directed by the Kremlin," then later says, "The loss of an area so large and populous would tip the balance of power against the United States and might tempt European nations to come to terms with communism." (p.21, Herring) Both sources agree that the US government is fighting the spread of communism, but they contradict each other when they discuss who's to be labeled as the culprit for the spread of communism. I can't say that one source is more right than the other because later into The Longest War, Herring makes note of the flawed assumptions made by US policymakers, and admits that the communist revolutions in southeast Asia weren't "inspired" by the Soviet Union or China, but that they were both looking to be in an influential position for a communist Vietnam. (p. 24, Herring) Although, one thing was clear to the US government, if they were to stop the spread of communism, they needed to be more active in the region.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Reasons for Being in Vietnam

by Maxwell Ahrenkiel - Saturday, April 15, 2017, 4:31 PM

A topic I found to be significant is the reasoning given to as why America remained involved in Vietnam. In the documentary Why Vietnam, President Johnson says, "Moreover, we're in Vietnam to fulfill one of the most solemn pledges of the American nation. Three presidents, President Eisenhower, President Kennedy, and your present president, over 11 years have committed themselves and have promised to help defend this small and valiant nation. Strengthened by that promise, the people of South Vietnam have fought for many long years. Thousands of them have died. Thousands more have been crippled and scarred by war. And we just cannot now dishonor our word, or abandon our commitment, or leave those who believed us and who trusted us, to the terror and repression and murder that would follow. This then, my fellow Americans, is why we're in Vietnam." (29:40 into Why Vietnam?) He suggests that we must stay by our word and protect these people. He talks about the "thousands" that have died and been affected by this war, and how dishonorable it would be to back out now. The book puts it more bluntly with, "its limited success, exaggerated for public relations purposes, led ultimately to a disastrous failure. Throughout the second half of the decade, the administration publicly proclaimed miraculous success where little

existed...This illusion of success ‘trapped Eisenhower and the subsequent U.S. presidents in a frustrating and futile effort to define and defend U.S. interests in Vietnam.’”(p.89 Herring) This interpretation suggests more that the US was more there to gain something out of protecting Vietnam rather than being there to protect its people. It seems that the US was a little stubborn and too prideful to accept anything less than a victory. I believe both interpretations are accurate for why the US was in Vietnam, but I think that Herring’s interpretation is more significant and holds more truth than the documentary.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Reasons for Being in Vietnam

by Kayla Elliott - Sunday, April 16, 2017, 9:31 AM

It's very important to realize that the U.S. did want to help out the people of Vietnam, but the United States also had it's own agenda. Ultimately, the United States made decisions based on how it would effect their agenda first, and then how it would effect other countries. One main, fear-driven goal, was to stop Communism from spreading. The United States also wanted to get France out of South Vietnam and have the United States have more of a say in what happens there instead of them.

I feel like you made a very important point in saying that a lot of the reason the United States stayed in Vietnam for so long was the fact that the U.S. didn't want to lose the war and have people realize that they had been exaggerating the successes in Vietnam for so long.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Reasons for Being in Vietnam

by Maxwell Ahrenkiel - Sunday, April 16, 2017, 8:51 PM

I do realize that the U.S. did want to help the Vietnamese and stop the spread of communism, along with helping their French allies. It definitely wasn't a simple situation that could be just defused. It's not that the U.S. government didn't want to let the people know that they had possibly exaggerated some parts of the war, but they that's just what happens sometimes. Maybe I made a mistake in calling their actions stubborn, but I think they were being prideful in staying in it so long. From the quote I used," its limited success, exaggerated for public relations purposes...Throughout the second half of the decade, the administration publicly proclaimed miraculous success where little existed."(p.89 Herring) I'm not suggesting that the government at the time was lying to the people but they definitely exaggerated how well the situation was being handled. Maybe not all aspects of the war, and it may not happen all the time but it's a possibility that the government will exaggerate success for reasons that support the cause. Like: boosting morale, getting people to join the military, and their goal obviously isn't to bluntly come out and say how the war is going to any real depth. That would make them look bad, making a lot of people stray away from joining. The U.S. Government definitely respected the Vietnamese people (p.39 Herring), and they wanted to help them, but it's not on their agenda to have everything out to the public.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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America's attitude in Geneva Accords

by Wenxuan Nie - Sunday, April 16, 2017, 9:34 AM

Geneva Accords: a 1954 peace agreement that divided Vietnam into Communist-controlled North Vietnam and non-Communist South Vietnam until unification elections could be held in 1956. The connection is America's attitude. Their claims are kind of in conflict with one another. Which is, in the book, United States hate to communicate with communist and try to invent in this meeting, even though Dulles said they came here only as an "interested nation." "Dulles and Eisenhower seriously considered a new plan for intervention. The JCS drew... drafted a congressional resolution authorizing the President to employ military forces in Indochina." (p.46 Herring) Herring mentioned that United States real goal is to intervene communisms regroup power. Meanwhile, in the video, Dulles showed as he indeed not occurs anything. "United States delegation was ordered the watch, and not to talk...not to agree to anything but to be there and sit at the table." (52:27 into The First War in Vietnam video) So he's not telling the truth affront of the camera. That's the conflict, America's showed attitude. Anyway, this Geneva Accords is important because it's the base of second Indochina War.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Re: America's attitude in Geneva Accord

by Skyler Tidwell - Sunday, April 16, 2017, 12:10 PM

To Wenxuan Nie post on April 16, 2017,

Reading your passage, I agree that the book and the video takes opposites sides. However, which video were you quoting from? You implemented "United States delegation was ordered the watch, and not to talk...not to agree to anything but to be there and sit at the table." (52:27 into The First War in Vietnam video) Although, Week 1 viewing and reading assignment number three "The First war in Vietnam" is only a 15-minute video. But on the other hand, the video "Episode 1 Roots of War" is a 59-minute video. (from Moodle page) The reason I brought it up was I got confused. Please, elaborate with more details. But overall everything else seems to work together.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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