

HST 195: History of Vietnam War Sp18 (Escobar 41945)

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Week 4 Forum Continuing the Discussion

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Continuing the Discussion

by [Joe Escobar](#) - Sunday, April 22, 2018, 9:50 AM

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IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

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PBS Bias

by [Jacob Egan](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 11:03 AM

In the beginning of the AIM Program Sen. John McCain states “not one single documented case on mistreatment of Viet Cong or North Vietnamese prisoner once they were in the prison compound” (3:15 into AIM). He then continues to say “North Vietnamese had a calculated program of mistreatment physically and psychologically in order to extort the POW’s for propaganda purposes” (3:45 in AIM). Correct me if I am wrong, but PBS didn’t include this information in their documentaries anywhere. Instead they decided to show a North Vietnamese prisoner getting dunked into water. They then show the same prisoner running away and after a few gun shots and American troops running after him they show two American soldiers pulling out a dead North Vietnamese from a bush (17:40 into PBS). This is not the same NV soldier. The one that ran away was wearing black clothing and the one they were pulling out of the bush was only wearing shorts. PBS just put those clips together to make it seem like the American soldiers were mistreating the NVA and Viet Cong prisoners. This strengthens my thoughts on how PBS is purely Anti-war.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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Re: PBS Bias

by [Nicholas Walker](#) - Wednesday, April 25, 2018, 3:50 PM

I agree. The editing is at best selectively edited, and at worst deceptive. I didn't notice that about the one in shorts, though, but upon closer inspection you're right — it's a different person. The issue McCain brought up about the POWs may appear later in the series, however. There were some parts that AIM mentioned that I don't remember from the PBS documentary, for example the protesters, which weren't mentioned at all by part 4 if I recall correctly.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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Re: PBS Bias

by [Parker Mann](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 10:08 PM

Even though this is a good point. You cannot deny that both sides were guilty of awful human right violations. To think that the USA did not mistreat/abuse/kill the NVA and Viet Cong Prisoners is delusional of you. While I am not 100% defending the PBS video for this slight deception, you cannot say the the information presented in the PBS series about the mistreatment of both sides is false. As presented in the Appy book specifically, both sides were know for mistreating each other, and to think that John McCain is telling the full truth (based of the first hand accounts you have read in both books) is just silly. This is a good example though of each video trying to sway their viewers each way. So if this example makes you

think PBS is pure anti-war, you should consider that AIM may be pure post-war and propaganda rebuttal/coverup.

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Re: PBS Bias

by [Karson Laing](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 10:52 PM

I totally agree with PBS stringing together different clips to make it seem like the US troops treated the enemy prisoners poorly. Not once did they talk about US POW's and how they got tortured and treated considerably worse than how the Americans treated the Vietnamese soldiers that were captured. I think PBS did a poor job of portraying how American POW's were treated.

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Re: PBS Bias

by [Tyler Cannon](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 11:42 PM

PBS is very clearly anti-war and has a reputation on being towards the left(liberal) side so it makes sense that they would be anti-war. However, this does not give them the right to portray the U.S military as savages who came in and killed every living thing that moved. The series, as many of you have pointed out, does not really touch up on the life of an American POW. Just one of the torture methods used on the [American POWs](#) can be seen from the graphic description given by representative Sam Johnson who served 29 years in the U.S Air Force and spent seven years as a POW. He gives the following description;"As a POW in the Hanoi Hilton, I could recall nothing from military survival training that explained the use of a meat hook suspended from the ceiling. It would hang above you in the torture room like a sadistic tease—you couldn't drag your gaze from it. During a routine torture session with the hook, the Vietnamese tied a prisoner's hands and feet, then bound his hands to his ankles—sometimes behind the back, sometimes in front. The ropes were tightened to the point that you couldn't breathe. Then, bowed or bent in half, the prisoner was hoisted up onto the hook to hang by ropes. Guards would return at intervals to tighten them until all feeling was gone, and the prisoner's limbs turned purple and swelled to twice their normal size. This would go on for hours, sometimes even days on end. Aside from leg irons and leg stocks—both of which were used on me for months and years on end—the meat hook was a favorite instrument of torture at the Hanoi Hilton. I was spared the device only because I was already so injured. Some of my friends, however, were not so lucky."

(<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/07/i-was-vietnam-pow-donald->

trump-120436). Reading that gruesome horror story was worse than any horror movie. Mainly because unlike Jason Voorhees this "Hanoi Hilton" was real and did this to real men for years. These travesties are not mentioned enough in the context that the brave men who died from such torture or are mentally scared from it are given the recognition they deserve. Instead, PBS focuses on the Vietcong and our behavior towards them when there was never a recorded incident of inhumane activity done to a Vietcong after they were captured and in the POW camp.

Sum of ratings: **3 (1)**

3

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Opinions are like --- everyone's got one.

by [Jonathan Haskell](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 4:03 PM

“Defend the honor of those who died for freedom.” That is what Vietnamese refugees said in the Losers are Pirates piece. If that doesn’t move you enough to desire your own personal knowledge be historically accurate, then you do not care about either truth or history and debating with the ignorant is pointless. Truth matters. It said in the New York Times article Mr. Irvine and AIM are simply expressing their opinions. They of course are allowed to have them but historical facts shouldn’t be opinionated. They should be actual proven actions.

In the second AIM documentary Irvine himself near the end tells us that “the enemy was able to use our own freedom of media to their own ends.” Communists using the freedom of press against us? I think if your personal opinion can change due to propaganda of any sort than you are either weak minded or your opinion was never truly strong. Ho Chi Minh himself said that they would not win the war in the jungle but the streets of San Francisco. I think this was just wisdom from a wise man who understood his enemy. I have discussed with my mother Jane Fonda and her trip to Hanoi. I would of no doubt been against the war if I lived back then, but that is just treason. How is it not just treason? She should of been jailed and financially injured for that action.

Heston smugness still gets me and makes me wish AIM would of chosen a different spokesman but it does fit well in regard to the political right. That said using John McCain as a spokesman did the opposite. I listen when he speaks. When he spoke about how not enough was said about how the North Vietnamese treated prisoners and in comparing it to how we treated prisoners it was night and day. PBS should of made clear the rough treatment and evil actions of the North. He did say that “We have to defend our interests and freedom” which I totally disagree with. I understand

have to defend our interests and freedom which I partly disagree with. I understand defending our global interests within reason, but it is not our job to defend freedom on earth. We are not the world police.

They said that “more than a few Vietnamese critics of the PBS presentation have suggested the producers were politically motivated in making the series.” That might be true. At least in part of those who funded the program. I will say it is obvious the AIM documentary is politically motivated and I find it hilarious that both had funding from the Endowment of the Humanities. It also mentioned war reparations to the Hanoi regime... for what??? It was war. There are battles and bombs and bullets. That is ridiculous in my opinion. They say “the producers hope to convince the American public that the U.S. should not intervene in conflicts in the middle east or central America so there would not be a second Vietnam” There is not going to be a second Vietnam in regard as in that history has been written. I agree though that future chapters of our history should not have use interfering with the will of others in their choices for leadership or political sway.

I enjoyed the Losers are Pirate article. The actual gruesome beginnings of the paper “Reviewing the war in Southeast Asia” is the emotionless truth real history should be. Fact. That said after the preface when the author started name calling or calling out people by name is the act of a child and isn’t necessary. He also said “we the editor and sponsors readily admit our own personal bias”. Maybe that is the real problem. PBS did nothing to represent the personal bias it was conveying. As humans we all have an opinionated bias that isn’t easy to break. AIM editor Reed Irvine disputed the PBS program claim to balance, declaring the balance seemed to lean left. Truth doesn’t see right or left. If political blindness mistakes thought or opinion for historical truth then how can we impartially take the wisdom history offers us?

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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Re: Opinions are like --- everyone's got one.

by [Parker Mann](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 10:12 PM

"It said in the New York Times article Mr. Irvine and AIM are simply expressing their opinions. They of course are allowed to have them but historical facts shouldn't be opinionated. They should be actual proven actions."

This is a great point Johnathan. Facts and the videos aside, usually I will believe/trust a publicly funded/research source much more than one privately funded by a conservative who is known for being pro-war attacking his opposition. Obviously the PBS series has its stance too, but it is clearly not just pure opinion and slander of opposing views, but more facts and 1st hand sources.

Sum of ratings: 0 (1)

0

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Re: Opinions are like --- everyone's got one.

by [Daisy Burge](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 10:52 PM

It also mentioned war reparations to the Hanoi regime... for what??? It was war. There are battles and bombs and bullets. That is ridiculous in my opinion.

I mean, the chemical warfare used by the United States literally destroyed Vietnam's countryside. There are still active landmines in a lot of rural areas. Vietnam, particularly in the South, has always been a primarily agricultural country, and the war activities of the American side decimated large swaths of rain forest and farmland. Without reparations, the citizens of Vietnam likely would have faced even more severe poverty and starvation than they already did after the war. There's a reason landmines and chemical warfare have been banned: they destroy nations physically and economically. Here's a pretty good article about it:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/sep/18/vietnam-unexploded-landmines-bombs>

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

1

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AIM's Factual and Political Controversies

by [Daisy Burge](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 5:04 PM

As with part one of the AIM video series, the historians and narrator aim to preserve American justification for the war. In the opening words of the documentary, Ngo Dinh Diem's portrayal in the PBS documentary series is referred to as "demeaning" by the narrator (AIM 0:03), and the documentary goes on to assert that the Southern Vietnamese government was in fact more stable and supported by the people than a Communist alternative. Both the PBS series and the Herring book directly contradict this claim. Though Diem undoubtedly aligned more with American interests than other

leadership alternatives, his government was by no means stable or popular. Herring repeats throughout his book that Diem's regime was authoritarian and "viewed any opposition as subversion that must be suppressed." Herring further documents Diem's failed land reform policies and land resettlement programs, as well as his elimination of local elections to suppress Viet Minh influence (Herring 78-79).

Further, AIM asserts that the media was the reason why Vietnam was lost, rather than by a lack of military strategy, political infighting, or popular support, such as is asserted by other sources. Media distorting American actions in Vietnam led to a lack of support rather than any wrongdoing by American troops. AIM asserts that the Viet Minh used the free American press as a weapon against America and claims that this is something that PBS ignored.

As with Part One, however, AIM refuses to admit any type of American wrongdoing, even claiming that the Tet Offensive was an "outstanding military victory" (AIM 23:28). Though Herring admits the timing of the attacks were "poorly coordinated" (Herring 237) and that the "North Vietnamese failed to achieve their major goals" (Herring 240), Herring also points to the massive downturn in support after media coverage in Tet in politics, the public, and media outlets. AIM asserts this media coverage was a political strategy, whereas Herring, attempting to remain less politically biased, simply reports the effects of the offensive on public opinion.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

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Re: AIM's Factual and Political Controversies

by [Jonathan Haskell](#) - Saturday, April 28, 2018, 5:45 PM

"As with part one of the AIM video series, the historians and narrator aim to preserve American justification for the war."

That is exactly right and well said. That is exactly what AIM was trying to do.

"In the opening words of the documentary, Ngo Dinh Diem's portrayal in the PBS documentary series is referred to as "demeaning" by the narrator (AIM 0:03), and the documentary goes on to assert that the Southern Vietnamese government was in fact more stable and supported by the people than a Communist alternative.

Both the PBS series and the Herring book directly contradict this claim.”

Like you said the Diem government aligned more with American interests. This is true despite his elimination of local elections and religious persecutions two things our oldest nation founding documents say we should be completely against! I agree that the PBS documentary did not show Ho Chi Minh in an honest light, but I don't think AIM shows the Diem government in an honest light either.

“Further, AIM asserts that the media was the reason why Vietnam was lost, rather than by a lack of military strategy, political infighting, or popular support,”

If you break the law somehow doing something, and someone gets you on tape admitting to doing this thing, it is not the tapes fault. That is the lamest attempt at trying to explain mistakes that cost people their lives i have ever heard. Do I think a war should be televised minute by minute like that probably not, but that is not the reason we were defeated in Vietnam.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: AIM's Factual and Political Controversies

by [Jacob Egan](#) - Saturday, April 28, 2018, 5:56 PM

I am not saying that the US didn't make any mistakes or have any wrongdoings, but the political tug of war between the country was no help. It was a disadvantage. Ho Chi Minh once said "We won't win the war in the battlefields of Indo china, we'll win the war in the streets of [America]" (5:50 into AIM). The enemy was able to use our media to achieve their own objectives (23 min into AIM). The AIM video gives an example of the Tet offensive and how a victory was turned into a defeat by our own media (23 min into AIM). I do not believe the media is to be blamed for the loss, but it was a contributor.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Fear Tactics... and “Fake News”

by [James Alewine](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 6:44 PM

In the twentieth minute of Television's Vietnam: The Real Story – Part 2, why are we hearing about El Salvador? Wasn't this series produced to show “the true story” in Vietnam? Yet for some reason AIM decides to plug views as to what should be

in Vietnam. Yet, for some reason, AIM decides to plug views as to what should be going on in congress in regard to El Salvador.

“...and if the series teaches its lessons well congressman John McCain’s concern about repeating the errors that lead to the Vietnam debacle, John McCain says, the legacy of Vietnam is with us today, I see it in the halls of congress I hear it on the floor in speeches and the statements that are made. The reluctance of the United States to understand that we have vital national security interest throughout the world and we have an obligation not just to maintain the freedom of people in the world but to maintain or vital national security interest. The situation in central America is far graver than that in Indochina, geography being one of the primary reasons. Unless we learn that. We have got to give the kind of military and economic aid to the government of El Salvador that’s necessary for them to survive we may be paying again with American lives in a far more serious situation closer to the United States than El Salvador is.” (AIM, 19:20)

The scene cuts to recent war video in El Salvador, dark sounds are presented with the clip, sense of fear overwhelms the viewer.

In the end, is this just propaganda to promote a reason why we should support another war? “...The situation in central America is far graver than that in Indochina...” McCain says! Right?!

I know I’ve heard this many times in my life, Desert Storm to Afghanistan, the Republicans really know how to scare those that are under informed and uneducated.

Fear tactics... and “Fake news”.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

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Re: Fear Tactics... and “Fake News”

by [Nicholas Walker](#) - Wednesday, April 25, 2018, 4:05 PM

It's definitely ironic that as soon as El Salvador is mentioned, the AIM video for a moment becomes propaganda to the same extent as parts of the PBS documentary. Perhaps their strategy was to fight fire with fire? Regardless, what you say about Republicans is mostly true. There is always a small group of Reps that will vote against engaging in military conflict, but for the most part, the entire right-wing of America in both the house and the senate is represented by Neo-Cons, a small and particularly hawkish demographic of right-wingers. This may seem a bit off-

topic, but the reason I point it out is because I somewhat take umbrage with AIM being described as a "conservative" group (not that you described it as such, but the NYT article did, for example). Conservatives are typically more isolationist, and are reluctant to get involved in war unless American soil is directly attacked (such as in the event of foreign terrorism).

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

0

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Fear Tactics... and "Fake News"**by [James Alewine](#) - Friday, April 27, 2018, 7:35 AM

Definition of **propaganda**: information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view.

I wouldn't consider the PBS propaganda at any level. PBS used interviews of those that were there, on both sides of the conflict, to encompass a larger view of the Vietnam War and present it as historical testimony. From time to time, with any story written, there can be some discrepancies. For that reason, AIM is useful in pointing out a few things that needed to be fact checked. But when they cross the line into propaganda, they lose all credibility.

PBS did show how the Vietnamese used propaganda to help them fight the American aggression. AIM used John McCain as propaganda to be further the right-wing agenda, one that was going on in 1984 when it aired. The conservatives were trying to get us involved with another civil war conflict in El Salvador. The use of "fear" is presented in a way to mislead and rally support for their agenda.

In response to, "Conservatives are typically more isolationist, and are reluctant to get involved in war unless American soil is directly attacked (such as in the event of foreign terrorism)", this may have been true in the 19th century, but today, I don't believe it.

Also, History has shown, that in our modern society, conservatives are at the front of the line when American industry is threatened. Eisenhower, Regan, Bush Sr., and Bush Jr. all have blood on their hands because of their deep-rooted sense in protecting Americas money and overseas interest. Lyndon B. Johnson, who was a Texas democrat also carries the burden of blood. He, in my opinion, did everything he could to avoid conflict. He was concerned more with our

society here at home rather than abroad, as most democrats are. His achievements included the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Medicare Act of 1965. If it wasn't for the Vietnam debacle that Eisenhower and Nixon created, LBJ would not have moved troops into Vietnam, which killed 68,000 Americans to protect foreign interest.

Sum of ratings: 0 (1)

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Re: Fear Tactics... and "Fake News"

by [Jonathan Haskell](#) - Saturday, April 28, 2018, 8:22 PM

Again, in the sum of it all I am in agreement with you, but I am nit picking little things here are there where I disagree with you. I am just doing this to point out as we are two guys seemingly on the same side of the issue yet can disagree a bit anyway. Everyone will never agree on everything!

"I wouldn't consider the PBS propaganda at any level."

I disagree. PBS told the story they were able to tell not because it was necessarily true but because it was allowed. The holding back of any truths and telling the story anyway as it was desired to be told by others is propaganda. The not mentioning the negatives of the communist aggressions for cause or the comparisons to mistakes made by the South Vietnam government due to ineptitude is propaganda. It is telling the story you want to tell truth be damned. That's propaganda. I am in complete agreement with you the AIM video was propaganda and it wasn't even hidden in dramatic sequence or story. It was just straight in your face.

"PBS did show how the Vietnamese used propaganda to help them fight the American aggression. AIM used John McCain as propaganda to be further the right-wing agenda, one that was going on in 1984 when it aired. The conservatives were trying to get us involved with another civil war conflict in El Salvador. The use of "fear" is presented in a way to mislead and rally support for their agenda.

In response to, "Conservatives are typically more isolationist, and are reluctant to get involved in war unless American soil is directly attacked (such as in the event of foreign terrorism", this may have been true in the 19th century, but today, I don't believe it. Also, History has shown, that in our modern society, conservatives are at the front of the line when American industry is threatened. Eisenhower, Regan, Bush Sr., and Bush Jr. all have blood on their hands because of their deep-rooted sense in protecting Americas money and overseas interest."

You go on a little rant here that I don't really find anything I disagree with really except like I already mentioned before just like the left, and the liberals and the socialists and the communists etc. Just like we can't just put them all in a generalized left sided group and call them all the same, we can't take people who have conservative values for religious or personal viewpoints and shove them in with the fundamentalists and nationalists and crazies. There are many spectrums to both sides which in my opinion means that the divide will just get bigger and stronger as time goes on and we evolve.

"Lyndon B. Johnson, who was a Texas democrat also carries the burden of blood. He, in my opinion, did everything he could to avoid conflict. He was concerned more with our society here at home rather than abroad, as most democrats are. His achievements included the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Medicare Act of 1965. If it wasn't for the Vietnam debacle that Eisenhower and Nixon created, LBJ would not have moved troops into Vietnam, which killed 68,000 Americans to protect foreign interest".

I agree with all of Johnson accomplishments and I am sure he was a nice man, but I disagree with the comment "he did everything he could to avoid the conflict.". I believe Johnson escalated the conflict actually. In part due to American Texan stubbornness of unaccepting defeat, and in part because he really had no choice or other conceivable option. Also Eisenhower and Nixon didn't create Vietnam! Though I will say NO ONE really did anything constructive

in attempting to end the conflict quickly and correctly.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

2

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Re: Fear Tactics... and “Fake News”

by [Jonathan Haskell](#) - Saturday, April 28, 2018, 7:56 PM

So I am reading through people’s thoughts and comments, and I quickly realize that in the sum of it we are both coming from the same spectrum of viewpoint as in we are not in disagreement in regards to the information, and our stance on the war itself. That said there are a couple of things you do say that I do disagree with for some little reason here or there, so I am going to focus on these as I think intelligent debate is what Joe is going for here in there forums.

“In the twentieth minute of Television’s Vietnam: The Real Story – Part 2, why are we hearing about El Salvador? Wasn’t this series produced to show “the true story” in Vietnam? Yet, for some reason, AIM decides to plug views as to what should be going on in congress in regard to El Salvador.”

I presume you are being caustic in questioning why we are hearing about El Salvador because your question “In the end, is this just propaganda to promote a reason why we should support another war?” is exactly why. You form it again in the form of a question though, but again I think you are aware that that is correct.

“I know I’ve heard this many times in my life, Desert Storm to Afghanistan, the Republicans really know how to scare those that are under informed and uneducated.

Fear tactics... and “Fake news”.”

First you have to separate people who happen to have conservative views with the right wing agenda that is patrioted by The Republicans. I think our current leadership situation may be an aftermath of the educated conservative right, continuous dependence on their core base of the religious right. That they choose to be under informed of the truths of world issues instead looking at the earth as some sort of prophetic chess game. It is definitely fear tactics to try to achieve their attended agenda, but I don’t think its fake news. That gets thrown around to

much!

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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The True Lesson

by [James Alewine](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 6:47 PM

The true lesson that we need to take away from this information, is that this war, Vietnam, was dictated by the media, I give AIM that!

I think it's interesting that "Television's Vietnam: The Real Story" was finished with this statement. "...but perhaps these men did not die in vain, if we distill the true lessons of Vietnam. We were right to resist communist aggression, we were wrong to think the outcome would be decided on military strength, in the end, words, disinformation, deception were the deciding factors in the Vietnam War. Indeed, these media related issues need a special program of their own where the power of the television image and the impact of media in general can be explored in detail, we won't be truly responsible citizens, until we confront these challenges of our information age."

"It [Television's Vietnam: The Real Story] is important because it addresses a persistent problem in television: How can the medium present grievances against itself? Print journalism has op-ed pages, letters to the editor and other devices for this. With few exceptions - ABC's 'Viewpoint', for one - television has none" (NY Times article)

We must remember that these programs were aired before cable television exploded, which gave the liberal and conservative media 24 hours a day to drive their point home. Today we get information across multiple platforms as the media still plays an important role in our everyday lives in this over saturated market of "fluff-n-fold". We must be aware that someone ALWAYS has an agenda, so it's up to us as responsible citizens to be well informed and make decisions based on multiple sources and not just one.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Re: The True Lesson



by [Jonathan Haskell](#) - Saturday, April 28, 2018, 8:29 PM

"The true lesson that we need to take away from this information, is that this war, Vietnam, was dictated by the media, I give AIM that!"

I disagree. A mirror doesn't dictate how you dress. If you see yourself and you look ugly and then others start marching in the streets of the cities in the country and begin saying "you are ugly you need to put on something else now", it is not the mirrors fault. Yes I agree that the media coverage was a detriment to the war, but it also can not be blamed for the nations war failures.

"Today we get information across multiple platforms as the media still plays an important role in our everyday lives in this over saturated market of "fluff-n-fold". We must be aware that someone ALWAYS has an agenda, so it's up to us as responsible citizens to be well informed and make decisions based on multiple sources and not just one."

Agreed. 100% percent agree! Well said and thanks for all your comments!

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

1

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Re: The True Lesson

by [Caitlin Strickland](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 3:41 PM

While I agree the role of media cannot be blamed for the nation's war failures, the media did play a prominent part in American's perceptions of the war, which was hugely important in determining American foreign policy. When the media negatively portrayed the US's success/involvement in Vietnam, such as representing the TET offensive as a failure, it swayed the public against the war, and many were frustrated with the government's decisions and wanted them to pull out of Vietnam, leading to demonstrations and protests that divided the nation "the worst it has been since the time of the civil war." The opinion and movements of mass publics have always been crucial in deciding political matters; if the majority of Americans had been in favor of the war and advocated for the government intensifying their efforts, it is likely that the war would have been extended and the US government would have allocated more resources and troops to Vietnam. And if the media had shown great American victories abroad and spread positive messages, it is in turn more likely that the average person would regard the war as a good thing. Therefore, in my opinion, Vietnam was dictated by the media, and the media, in turn, dictated the public's reaction to the war and therefore the government's decision in ending it.

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Sum of ratings: 2 (1) 2

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) |[Reply](#)**Re: AIM or PBS**by [Karson Laing](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 7:18 PM

The PBS story of the Vietnam War for me does not get my endorsement as an accurate representation of what happened. Now it may give some factual evidence about some thing but they have it twisted around to favor the public's Anti-War propaganda. On (pg 6) of the Losers are Pirates article it says that PBS fed into the anti-war propaganda by showing why the Americans should not have been in Vietnam. They never talked about the tactics used in the battles the Americans had won. Also in the PBS segment Vietnam veterans as well as South Vietnamese people felt that they were not represented fairly in the documentary. On (pg ii) in the Losers are Pirates article one former POW Robinson Risner talked about how he was interviewed by PBS and asked to watch his own segment before it was released to the public he was ignored and never contacted again. On this same page the South Vietnamese felt like they were being portrayed as "thieves and whores" and the soldiers were "puppets and mercenaries." PBS also seemed very biased to me as people who defended the United States involvement in Vietnam get very little attention in the program. People who defended the PBS segment said "it is easier to objectify war than to clarify the war." In my opinion i would give the AIM program my endorsement.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1) 3

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Contradiction on public protest to the War**by [Parker Mann](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 8:37 PM

A contradiction that I noticed in the AIM part 2 video, PBS videos, and the Herring book is the portrayal of those opposed to the war in the USA. The AIM video portrays the protesters of the war as just hippies who are trying to find anything to protest. As put by Col. Harry Summers, a Vietnam Vet. (with obviously bias) "It was obviously that the people who were protesting the war, needed a moral justification for what they were doing"(9:32, AIM). This is clearly just an attack on people who opposed them, because as stated in the PBS series and the Herring book, the Vietnam war the most largely opposed war by the USA public ever, and was opposed much more widely than people who wanted to dodge the draft, or hippies are portrayed by AIM. They basically try to say the only reason people were against the war is because they were hippies trying to dodge the draft, or protest just to protest, not that there was much wrong with the war.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1) [Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Contradiction on public protest to the War**by [Nicholas Walker](#) - Wednesday, April 25, 2018, 4:28 PM

The AIM video also ignores the public opposition from less culturally dubious groups: Many Christians, for example, were very upset about the Vietnam war. There's a great article called "Social Movement Participation: Clergy and the Anti-Vietnam War Movement" that outlines the religious objection to the Vietnam war. Surely AIM wouldn't claim that the clergy were just draft dodgers.

Sum of ratings: 0 (1) [Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Affect of the Media and those Opposing the War**by [Houston Schmutz](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 8:39 PM

After watching the second half of the AIM video I became familiar with how the PBS series was actually giving a disadvantage to the men fighting in the war, and how it benefited Ho Chi Minh. John McCain says in Television Vietnam, "Unfortunately the PBS did not give the attention it deserved of the way the Vietnamese manipulated the [American POWs](#) for propaganda purposes, the Vietnamese captured Americans for one reason and one reason alone, to use propaganda purposes to negotiate the kind of agreement they wanted so they could win a victory in Indochina including Laos and Cambodia." (4:40) After John McCain was shot down and spent six years in a North Vietnamese prison camp this does disrespect to him as well as he physically went through the struggles of containment. The PBS video states that of the 2.5 million soldiers, three quarters of a million are still haunted by the experience. (8:00) The issue with this is that it doesn't support the troops whose lives it's changed for the better, or dignify that there are living examples of those who have benefited from the strength of their actions in the war. As many did not understand why the US was going to war, the media and "educational sources" were doing what they could to show their opinion on how they felt about the war. Like the parade that never happened for example, because the media didn't want to broadcast the thousands of people giving support to troops in Vietnam. The last piece I want to add from the video is the very end as it reads, "we were right to resist Communist regression, but we were wrong to think the outcome would be decided by military strength." (25:15) I viewed this as that there were more factors to the war than the physical war in Vietnam, like the influence back in the cities of the US. In a way the US was at war with itself as well.

The excerpt from *Losers are Pirates* gave me a realistic approach of the differences of the PBS series, and the books approach in general. The book did not necessarily work to rip the PBS series apart, but to demonstrate ways it lacked fundamental truth. The book supports American and South Vietnamese government, but understands some mistakes were made as well. The preface also touches on the support of the troops adding, "many had felt they were not receiving the support of the folks back home; when they returned to the states, they were often met with sadness or hostility." (pg. 3) The book touches that the viewers of this program were those who opposed the US involvement in the war or those who did not know the history of the background of Southeast Asia. It also adds on who is also feeling this way by saying, "the program is criticized by Vietnam scholars, government officials, military officers, Vietnam veterans, and Vietnamese refugees, who consider it a biased and inaccurate representation of the war. According to these critics, the series does not contain a balance of opinions on some essential topics nor does it necessarily give a true or complete picture of the war and what was actually happening on the field." (pg 5-6) The book works to support those who gave their lives in the war for our future, despite great losses.

The New York Times article has no effect on my evaluation of the two. I have trouble understanding its arguments personally and I continue to support the article that is in favor of supporting the troops and their selflessness of going to war. As many people hid, fled, starved and found other ways to avoid the draft, others didn't. It is those men who deserve recognition and support and the media failing to do that is a weakness of the support fellow Americans should've been given by the whole.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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Facts and Fallacies: AIM vs. PBS Part 2

by [Nicholas Walker](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 9:24 PM

In the *Losers are Pirates* (LaP) excerpt, it was highlighted that the PBS documentary had presented itself as having a balanced view, which some critics (such as in the NYT article) agreed with. However, LaP counters this by pointing out the possible desire of PBS to color the war in a way that encouraged the US to give reparations to Vietnam, or to warn that involvement in the Middle East would lead to a sort of "Second Vietnam." This contradiction stuck out to me, because it offered not only an explanation of how PBS altered history, but also why—as in, what was their end goal. A few other contradictions I noticed were:

- AIM was clearly pro-military and accused PBS of being the opposite.
- PBS framed the North Vietnamese as "revolutionaries" as we know from last week

- PBS framed the North Vietnamese as revolutionaries, as we know from last week, but crucially they also framed the South Vietnamese as standoffish and puppet-like, with one interviewing even calling them cowardly in the face of the Viet Cong.
- There was little sympathy to the South Vietnamese, despite PBS's posturing regarding the balanced nature of its reporting. In fact, mostly North Vietnamese people were interviewed, with very few South Vietnamese.
- Soldiers were portrayed as monsters in the PBS documentary, as savage as they were hopeless. AIM paints them as brave and honorable, even highly skilled.

The Losers are Pirates excerpt gave an interesting third-party look into the whole controversy, from the point of view of a single contributor, rather than two corporations duking it out, as can be seen in the feud between AIM and PBS. LaP mostly elaborated on the same points as AIM though, which makes me trust AIM a little more, if for no other reason than anecdotally.

The NYT article on the other hand did not have much of an effect on my opinion. The writer is too wishy-washy, and its unclear who exactly he is siding with, if any group at all. The writer seems to have positive things to say about PBS (it being "balanced," which is dubious at best), but is also somewhat critical of it, and is quick to point out the bias of AIM being "conservative," though I fail to see how that changes whether the rebuttal they provide is actual or not.

On the issues I mentioned, I am on the fence as to if PBS or AIM are 100% accurate in what they are saying. Personally, I don't trust PBS because I am aware of their shady reporting tactics, and of their conflict of interest endemic to being a publicly-funded organization. I lean more towards AIM's way of thinking because it represents how I have studied American history, and I'm never quick to label my own people as monsters, even if they are in an ultimately unjustified conflict. The only thing that could be a deal breaker for me is their laziness in portraying the Americans as heroic. You can reveal the horrors of war without denigrating your own people. If I had to pick a side, I would side with AIM.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Facts and Fallacies: AIM vs. PBS Part 2

by [Parker Mann](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 10:32 PM

"The Losers are Pirates excerpt gave an interesting third-party look into the whole controversy, from the point of view of a single contributor, rather than two corporations duking it out, as can be seen in the feud between AIM and PBS. LaP mostly elaborated on the same points as AIM though, which makes me trust AIM a little more, if for no other reason than anecdotally."

This a good point Nicholas, one that I completley agree with. While it is harder to trust one of the video sources and assess which out the two big sides is more 'right', it is easier to trust a qualified author who clearly has knowledge of the war and facts. He also presents is a more mild tone as critic of the PBS series, while still admitting that the PBS does contain at least some quality information.

Also, just because LaP elaborated on some of the same points as AIM, doesnt mean that info is significant to who to trust. You also should consider that the PBS info LaP confirms, is also claimed as false or attacked by AIM...

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

1

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AIM v. PBS

by [Caitlin Strickland](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 10:16 PM

One of the second part of the AIM program's most important points is how the PBS video portrays the South Vietnamese, the United State's ally and beneficiary. The program claims that the South Vietnamese are described as "passive, puppets, corrupted," "non-people" and "incapable and uninvolved," and criticizes this representation as unfair and untrue (AIM, 0:34-1:30). The AIM producers would rather have had the North Vietnamese vilified and the South Vietnamese honored, or at the least not slandered. It is true that these ideas are expressed, such as in Episode 4, "America Takes Charge," in which it is stated that the Army of the Republic of Vietnam "wouldn't fight" against the Vietcong, and soldiers had the belief that, in so many words, the ARVN was "chicken" compared to the brave and capable North Vietnamese soldiers ("America Takes Charge" 10:14). The corruption of the South Vietnamese government, protested by AIM, was shown in the second episode of Vietnam: A Television History, which explored Diem's presidency, and revealed its chaotic, insecure, ineffective, and often oppressive nature which ultimately led to the US giving the "green light" on the coup that ousted him ("America's Mandarin"). However, unlike AIM's valid complaints about PBS's treatment of Ho Chi Minh, the ideas they disputed are reinforced by Herring's "America's Longest War." South Vietnam was in a state of crisis, with constant fighting and protesting between Catholics, army factions, labor unions, Buddhists, and students; the government's forces had to violently suppress these rebellions to establish order (Herring 199, 201). Herring also states that US forces frequently came under fire from ARVN units, especially those loyal to Buddhists or Ky (Herring, 200). The ARVN was not capable of providing security for either Americans or Vietnamese citizens, and in fact softened threatened the security (Herring 202). It is understandable that PBS depicts the South Vietnamese and their government this way, as US attempts to rebuild the state were mostly unsuccessful and unrewarding, and for the most part making the fragile country and its economy more dependent. The South

Vietnamese and American relations in the mid-60s were tense and characterized by suspicion, resentment, and misunderstanding, as there was a great cultural disconnect and the US constantly demeaned the fighting ability of the ARVN (Herring, 207-208). The "Losers are Pirates" excerpt agreed with the AIM video in disagreeing with PBS, citing that "Vietnam scholars, former American soldiers who had served in Vietnam, government officials, political commentators, and others" found the series inaccurate and distorted, even citing Douglas Pike in saying "What ever this thing is, it is not history" ("Losers are Pirates" preface). This book attempts to dispute the legitimacy of the PBS series, giving greater context for the war and illuminating major flaws, points of arguments, omissions, and misrepresentations to be found within the series ("Losers are Pirates" 8). For me, this article seems to back AIM's claim that PBS favors Communist sources and propaganda without providing a balance between opposing viewpoints, and likely in its entirety would provide a helpful interpretation of the merits and flaws of PBS. It is hard to tell such a loaded, dense subject such as a long war impartially, and neither the AIM series nor PBS seem to accomplish this. I am more inclined to believe whichever source seems to be proven accurate by other impartial sources; Herring's book gives credence to PBS and refutes AIM's accusations of unfair rendering of the South Vietnamese government. Yet "Losers are Pirates" allows for the representation of those offended by PBS's interpretation of the war, and New York Times Author John Corey, writing in 1985, seems to find a middle ground between the two.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1) 3

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Aim vs PBS V2

by [Tyler Cannon](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 11:01 PM

In this weeks continuation of the debate between AIM and PBS I decided to focus on the aspect of "the war at home." The PBS gives off the feeling that America as a whole was against the war and against everything that it stood for. With all of this protest against the war being publicized, the media continues to leave out any pro-war sentiment that there may have been during the time. For example, according to the AIM video "On May 13th 1967 the U.S' 3rd longest parade was held on NYC's 5th Avenue where a quarter of a million people marched for 9 hours in the support our men in Vietnam parade." (AIM, 10:58). While this parade is not mentioned in the Herring book it does state however that "The majority of Americans rejected both the hawk and the dove positions, but as the war dragged on the debate became more divisive, public concern increased significantly. Expansions of the war in 1965 was followed by a surge of popular support." (Herring pg220). What I am trying to point out is the fact that PBS doesn't shed a popular light on the war and makes it seem as though every American hated the war when this is not the case. Many men enlisted for the war, and many

people had parades and other activities to support the war effort. Not everyone wanted to run off to Canada or purposely avoid the draft. PBS also makes sure to choose only men to testify that have strong opinions against the war instead of representing the men who served and fought for their country and don't necessarily detest the war for its purpose.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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Re: Aim vs PBS V2

by [Houston Schmutz](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 8:27 PM

I had a similar mention in my initial post on the medias ability to sabotage the war and front what all of Americas view on the war was. A dissaponting part about this as I reflected, is that the media doing this actually had the ability to put our military in more harm. Psychologically a confident mindset within the troops affects their performance at war, and support from back home gives them confidence moving forward. As media is a way for everyone to connect, the militaries understanding of what kind of support they were receiving had to have been influenced by the media. Anti War rallies also lacked support for fellow Americans and although I'm sure most of the nonsense was ignored, they were made personal. In Herrings book chants during anti war protests read as, "hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today" and "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh, NLF is going to win." (page 218) This became a war at home as US military wasn't just focused on the war in Vietnam, but the war at home. "The impact of the antiwar protests remains one of the most controversial issues raised by the war, the obvious manifestations of dissent in the United States undoubtedly encourages Hanoi to hold out for victory, although there is nothing to suggest that the North Vietnamese would have been more compromising in the absence of the protests." (pg 218-219) This controversy limited LBJ's military options and forced possibilities of finding the way out of the war. In this time with our own men falling, support for the war was important even if you didn't believe in it.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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Losers are Pirates Thoughts

by [Tyler Cannon](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 11:00 PM

After reading the excerpt from Loser are Pirates it only reaffirmed me that what I was watching in the PBS series was both incorrect and incredibly biased. In this excerpt it also includes, very similarly to AIM, that "On the other hand, the program is criticized by Vietnam scholars, government officials, military officers, Vietnam veterans, and Vietnamese refugees, who consider it a biased and inaccurate representation of the

war." (Pirates pg 5). It then goes on to cite a specific example from the series in which they use information from Communist propaganda which is completely inaccurate. They also choose to omit and leave gaps in key plot holes and events in order to further their own argument and political agenda. At least in this critique the writer chooses to explain that they are not writing this as an informational history of Vietnam, but rather to challenge the producers of PBS by pointing out things such as gaps and holes, show that the show is not balanced, but rather biased, and to show them the truth as to what it looks like through an average American's eye. This has really opened my eyes to how the story of the war is being told and how just about anything in history today can be told and twisted. People tend to want to spin things in a way that best serves their interest rather than just dealing with straight facts and arguing and seeing points from both sides not just one. If one can not make this distinction and can not keep back their own feelings towards a subject matter such as a war which can be very hard to do, they should at least prepare the reader/viewer for that. They should not go and say that what they are saying is only fact and that no bias was added which was the job of PBS when making their series. The editors of the "Losers are Pirates" article end the excerpt with this "We, the editor and sponsors of this book, will readily admit to our own personal bias. We share the pain and anguish of those who suffer under Communism, a system which promotes the destruction of cultures and societies with a policy that expresses disregard for human rights." (Pirates pg 9). This at least gives the reader a heads up as to what the writer thinks and feels before proceeding with the article so that they can take everything they say with that sense of bias in mind. This can allow the reader to compare this source with others to make sure that they can differentiate between fact and feeling.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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Re: Losers are Pirates Thoughts

by [Houston Schmutz](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 9:40 PM

I agree and I think the Losers are Pirates did a very good job of staying true to itself, while allowing open opinions and allowing the reader to understand that the book is not meant to show what "really happened in the war." It says, "the book is not intended to give a comprehensive history of Vietnam or the war in South East Asia over the past 50 years." (pg 7) Also, as the book works to show why PBS is biased, it also understands that the US government did make mistakes when it came to the war. The book works to show which and where information is misrepresented which allows those who didn't grow up during the Vietnam War a fair understanding of what really happened. As PBS has been used to teach many students in the school systems about the war it has allowed false knowledge which is detrimental to our understanding of the war.

"This has really opened my eyes to how the story of the war is being told and how just about anything in history today can be told and twisted."

As you said, this happens all the time in our daily lives. It happened to me the other day and I made sure to check my facts and sources and I ended up being right. If anything this week has taught me that incorrect information can stem from any subject, even a subject that is meant to tell a story of history. Checking sources and keeping an open mind is important for our mental growth as it can persuade us into believing something that isn't even correct. Bias is a disease in a sense because those vulnerable to believing it, will then transmit the belief to others who are vulnerable. This is also a reason that the media was able to impact so many people during this war. Another goal of *Losers are Pirates* was to explain how the media affected understanding of the war. "One aspect of the war which is not dealt with in the series, namely: the role of the US news media in affecting understanding of the war." (pg 8)

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

2

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New York Times Article

by [Tyler Cannon](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 11:23 PM

The NYT article really just continues to strengthen the bond that I am having with the AIM program. While yes it does bring up that AIM can typically be conservative and biased towards that side it also brings up the fact that, "The paradox now is that the members of the public television community who deplore the AIM rebuttal rule out all points of view except their own. Or, as one of them says on the program tonight, the only reason to broadcast the rebuttal is 'to show people what bad propaganda is like.'" He misses the point; actually, he misses all the points. For one, the rebuttal is not bad propaganda." (NYT, pg 2). This is showing how PBS is so centered on its left wing bias that it only accepts to look at the other side when it does so only to mock and deplore it. The job of PBS was to give education to the viewers about the Vietnamese War both the good and the bad and just straight down the middle. They were not suppose to lean one way or another because it is suppose to be an educational program for Americans and not a political tool for one party or another. To me AIM has more credibility in the topics that it explores and can provide solid evidence to back them up such as the portrayal of Ho Chi Minh as a beloved nationalist and not so much communist. Also the whole debate about America "backing out" of the Geneva agreement when they clearly stated several times that they were not bound by those agreements to hold any sort of elections. Lastly, the portrayal of South Vietnam as being basically the lapdog for the U.S during the War when in fact South Vietnam was

just as much a part of the war as we were and perhaps even more. All of these points that AIM brings up against PBS have actual factual evidence to support their claims that they actually bring up as oppose to PBS which presents its information as fact and the one and only. Of course with history many things will be open to interpretation and people will have different views, but sometimes the cold hard facts are what is important and that is what AIM provided more of then PBS.

Sum of ratings:3 (1) 3

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Evaluating Both Sides

by [Emilee Russell](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 11:47 PM

I viewed the tone of pt. 2 of the AIM documentary as different and slightly more accusatory than the first part. In the first part, I noticed that the historians pointed out inaccuracies and information that PBS either ignored or glossed over, but in the second part, I perceived that the people interviewed were calling out blatant biases that PBS showed in the series. Examples of this are in the way that south Vietnam is portrayed compared to north Vietnam being praised as tireless revolutionaries but glossing over their brutality (especially in their treatment of US POWs).

Another seemingly biased depiction is the image that the PBS series illustrates of the American soldier in Vietnam. In the AIM video, Dan Cragg says that they are portrayed shamefully as a "drug addict and racial bigot", when in fact he believes just the opposite. Kenneth Moorefield agrees that they were portrayed as "not the equal of their adversaries" but he can attest firsthand that they were brave, capable, and "died with dignity and honor."

One point of the AIM video I took issue with is when William Jayne spoke about what he perceived as the false image of American soldiers when they returned home. He claims that when they came home, not only were they okay, but they were leaders. He says soldiers achieved success in leadership after returning home "in part because of, not in spite of" their service. He refutes the PTSD statistic given in the PBS series. I think that we can now look at that interview with the knowledge that we have gained through research since then and say that PTSD played a huge role in the well-being and the readjustment of veterans when they returned home. Not much was known then about the mental health repercussions of the trauma endured during their service, but Vietnam veterans gave us our first clues that people returning from war are at tremendous risk for mental health issues if not addressed.

I think the arguments presented in both the NYT article and "Losers Are Pirates" are valid-- the opinions in the AIM video were largely unchecked, and it was a lot of opinion with significantly less evidence. However, I agree more with the stance of the "Losers

Are Pirates" piece. I agreed that it is "grievously biased" and lacking well-rounded arguments and differing viewpoints.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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Re: Evaluating Both Sides

by [Tyler Cannon](#) - Saturday, April 28, 2018, 8:03 PM

I would agree that the second half of the AIM video was much more aggressive in their accusations of the PBS series with not as much hard facts to back them up like they had in the first part. Another part that really raised some red flags for me was the explanation of how the media really did obstruct the victory that America actually had during the Tet Offensive. According to Reed Irvine explains "In the fall of 1968 a producer at NBC news name Jack Fern recognized that they had gotten the story wrong and that it actually was a victory and proposed to the producer that they make a series to set the record straight and was turned down because Tet was established in the public mind as a defeat so it was an American defeat."

(Aim,24:09). This to me is completely wrong because it makes everyone today including PBS come to the conclusion that Tet was a defeat for America when in fact it was actually a military victory. This claim by AIM is further backed up by our Herring book when he says "In Saigon U.S and ARVN forces held off the initial attacks and within several days cleared the city, inflicting huge casualties , taking large numbers of prisoners, and forcing the remnants to melt into the countryside." (Herring,237) This is something that is not as widely published about the Tet offensive since it was portrayed by the media as a major defeat rather than victory. This just goes to show how powerful the media was back then on deciding the outcome of the war.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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Re: Evaluating Both Sides

by [Daisy Burge](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 10:42 PM

I agree with your analysis on the PTSD argument you posit - most experts in both mental health and veterans affairs believe PTSD is actually a hugely underreported and underdiagnosed disorder because current psychology only has a limited grasp of how trauma affects us long-term. Though I had severe doubts about the AIM documentary based on my own politics, their claims about mental health were so blatantly false that I subsequently doubted everything the documentary claimed. Trivializing mental issues is not appropriate recourse for an academic source, and as such influenced my entire perspective on such a source.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

0

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Supporting the Soldiers from Home**by [Andrea Kuipers](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 11:51 PM

An example I saw that was controversial between the PBS and the AIM programs were the topic of soldier support from back home. In the PBS series, Captain Ted Danielsen talked about how "Soldiers got a great deal of support from the States. Classes by the hundreds would write letters addressed 'To a Soldier in Vietnam'", which helped to show in their video that they said the soldiers were getting a lot of support from back home (2:38). However, in the AIM series, they talked about how support for the troops in Vietnam was never as popular as propaganda to end the war (10:53). People would be out protesting how it should end, and the AIM said the PBS series made it out that the protesters needed moral justification.

I thought the significance of the NYT article was to show how controversial the "Television's Vietnam: The Real Story" is to other programs about the Vietnam War. They tell of it's strong viewpoints about communism, and it brings the reader's interest back into being more in favor of the facts from the PBS videos.

The significances of Losers Are Pirates is that it takes a look into the sources of the PBS film. The narrator tells of the shock they felt from watching the video and all of the "facts" it was filled with, and then it begins to list some of the things that are wrong with the video.

On the historical topic of the soldiers in Vietnam receiving mass support from the people back home, I am leaning more towards the AIM series having the more truthful facts on that matter.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Anecdotes and Opinions**by [Daisy Burge](#) - Thursday, April 26, 2018, 7:19 PM

I believe there to be a major difference in credibility between the PBS series and the AIM documentary. Although both sources have obvious political biases and the PBS

series undoubtedly does downplay some of the more violent and oppressive tendencies of the Viet Minh, the PBS series makes use of more factual information from multiple sources to create a narrative centered around the errors made by the Southern Vietnamese and American forces. The AIM documentaries are little more than a collection of anecdotes and opinions. For example, AIM interviewee John McCain criticized the portrayal of the "Viet Cong" as too lenient and portrayals of American soldiers as too harsh. However, no evidence is provided to show otherwise or contradict PBS's claim. In a more shocking assertion, AIM even goes as far as to say that PTSD claims after the Vietnam War were exaggerated. Again, no evidence is shown to support this claim. Although criticism of PBS's political agenda is completely valid, AIM does a frankly terrible job of backing up their opinions with hard fact or data. Losers are Pirates does a much better job in its criticism of the PBS docu-series simply because they actually cite the issues of bias within the PBS series in a factual and concrete way.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

1

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Re: Anecdotes and Opinions

by [Caitlin Strickland](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 3:45 PM

I could not agree more! PBS at the very least interviewed those who were involved in the war from all sides and does give sources for their information. I believe they tried to explain the war in a balanced way, which is a difficult task as all sides had strengths and shortcomings and it was an extremely complex time in history. PBS does have flaws, and I agree the Losers are Pirates did a great job of demonstrating those in an educational, factual way. AIM would have been more persuasive and more balanced should they have looked at multiple viewpoints, rather than take an opinionated and "cherry picking" route to criticizing PBS.

Sum of ratings: 0 (1)

0

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Evaluating Media's Influence

by [Emilee Russell](#) - Saturday, April 28, 2018, 11:51 PM

Vietnam was the first "televised war," meaning that not only could the American public see for themselves scenes from overseas (although hand-picked footage and scenes that could be taken out of context), but also that news media suddenly had a huge stake in public opinion.

In part 2 of the AIM documentarv. AIM chairman Reed Irvine describes how the TET

offensive was portrayed by the media as a defeat and influenced the public into believing it was a military defeat, when in fact the TET offensive had been effective and successful operation. This is a very clear illustration of the power that American news media had to sway the public's thoughts and beliefs about the war through news coverage. Another example of skewed media coverage is the portrayal of antiwar protests versus demonstrations in support of the war. The antiwar protests that were happening nationwide got much more news media coverage than rallies in support of the war. As it is stated in an AIM interview, "popular support wasn't as newsworthy." This may be because the antiwar protests often got violent and were often very large in numbers, such as on college campuses.

Another example of American media's role in the public opinion of the war was when a handful of celebrities such as Jane Fonda came to Hanoi to visit [American POWs](#). In clips, the focus is on Fonda and she is seen laughing and appears very lighthearted. It appears that that portrayal is very skewed, because we know all the celebrities that visited only met with the same 7 prisoners, and we know that [American POWs](#) there were abused and tortured by the North Vietnamese, as well as being used as propaganda like in the public march of the POWs in Hanoi. Sen. John McCain says that these celebrities in their televised visits did "a great disservice to America and our efforts in Indochina," in part because of the distortion and illusion about the conditions of the POWs in these televised visits.

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Criticism of the Portrayals of North & South Vietnam

by [Emilee Russell](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 8:39 PM

In the first 2 interviews of the second part of the AIM documentary, both Nguyen Ngoc Bich and Douglas Pike made similar comments that the PBS documentary held a strange double standard in the ways that it depicted North and South Vietnamese. Nguyen Ngoc Bich says that the South Vietnamese were illustrated by PBS as "passive puppets" who were easily swayed and corrupted. Douglas Pike took a stronger stance, saying that PBS was "contempt, almost racist" in their treatment and portrayal of the South Vietnamese and succeeded in "villifying their government and society." One section of the documentary is even titled "America's Enemy." I would agree with those statements, but the next point made is that in contrast, the North Vietnamese are portrayed as "very revolutionary and dedicated."

In the next interview, Sen. John McCain's point complements that by saying that PBS did not fairly show the brutality of the North Vietnamese, especially in their treatment of [American POWs](#). The clips from the inside of the Hoa Lo Prison (where we know

prisoners were tortured, interrogated, and held in solitary confinement) and from the Hanoi March on July 6, 1966, and he goes on to say that it is not made clear and emphasized enough by PBS that North Vietnam manipulated POWs in this way for propaganda purposes.

A reason or explanation for this double standard and inaccurate way both North and South Vietnam are portrayed is not given, and the AIM documentary does not suggest a motivation besides distorting the narrative to make the "good" guys seem better and the "bad" guys seem worse, but this seems like insufficient reasoning to me for many reasons, let alone because the purpose of a historical documentary is to be accurate and precise, not to enhance/gloss over things to make for a more entertaining story. Regardless, again I feel that PBS missed their mark in providing a documentary that could "add to the historical record" because for whatever reason, their information and the way they chose to display it seems biased and inaccurate.

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Pirates-Understanding Bias

by [Parker Mann](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 9:16 PM

The significance of the 'Losers are Pirates' excerpt is understanding the sources of bias in both the PBS and AIM videos. When reviewing both sources it is important to understand who's opinion is being represented in the source. Because the article is clearly written in the perspective of a critic of the PBS series, it is important to understand both sides of the argument for the PBS series. What was important for the authors of the article is to gain the trust of the reader while discussing a controversial topic, and present themselves as a fair, and legitimate source, while also admitting and addressing their own bias. I think the author did a pretty good job of this, while telling his story, and why he holds his opinions as expressed in the article. To me this excerpt is a much more mellowed down version of the AIM series, with a lot less bias. I say this because the both take issue with the PBS series, but the difference is the AIM portrayed the PBS series as total falsehood, and completely attacked them, while the Losers are Pirates' excerpt admits the truths of the PBS series while, not attacking the PBS, but just pointing out flaws. This serves as a good bridge source between people who may flat out fully agree with the PBS or AIM videos. This passage from the excerpt is a great example of this.

"We do not defend the U.S. policy in all its shapes and forms as it coursed through the war for over thirty years. We do not deny that mistakes were made by the American government in its understanding and handling of the war. In many cases, contributors to this book have been among the first to criticize specific actions of the American government or individuals connected with it We do not deny that American military

actions caused extensive damage to parts of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos or that wartime violence sometimes resulted in tragic incidents or atrocities. It is not our intention to defend the South Vietnamese government in all its actions or individuals within the government for personal actions they might have committed while they were in power. Every government in the world has its problems and South Vietnam, too. had its share. These must be looked at in context” (Banerian,7). This really helped gain my trust of the author, even though I don’t fully agree with a lot of the points brought up in the article. This article is significant in developing an opinion on the war, and adds a new perspective from the rest of the material we have studied. Even though they are bias I feel the come with a respectful tone, and add a meaningful opinion as expressed in this final quote. “Yet in the final analysis, the readers must decide if the information being presented here is honest and worthwhile to their view of the war”(Banerian, James,vii).

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NYT Assesment

by [Parker Mann](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 9:54 PM

The New York Times article does not affect my evaluation of the articles that much. Upon first contrast I sided with the PBS series as the video. I did try to give the AIM a chance to win my opinion/side but quickly I realized it was made simply as propaganda. The PBS article is clearly more factual and less opinionated, as well as not conceived as a rebuttal. What the New York Times article did do for me is clarify the contexts of both videos, and the timeline of their making. I would consider the New York Times a pretty reliable source so when I hear them echoing my own previous opinions; decided before reading the article, my opinion was confirmed. Also the fact that they discuss the flaws in both the AIM and PBS article helped clear up for me and realize that even though the PBS video is not completely honest or 100% factual, but in my opinion does portray the truth in Vietnam much better, and in a less biased manner than the AIM series. Quotes such as this explain why I feel this article portays both articles fairly. “Nonetheless, during the two-hour program - both in the rebuttal produced by AIM and in the segments done by "Inside Story" - intelligent criticisms are offered: The series makes Ho Chi Minh into a nationalist rather than a Communist; it ignores the role of the South Vietnamese Army; it minimizes the brutal treatment of American prisoners of war; it slights the actual conduct of military operations. At no point, however, do the producers of "Vietnam: A Television History" give an inch. They confuse their series with Holy Writ”(Corry, John, 2). In my opinion this article was well written, and gives a fair assessment of the controversy of the AIM vs PBS series, but doesn’t sway my opinion that much of the PBS video easily getting my approval over the AIM videns.

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[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Losers are Pirates is anti-Communist**by [Daisy Burge](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 10:12 PM

The Losers are Pirates excerpt charges that the PBS series is too lenient towards Ho Chi Minh and the Northern Vietnamese, asserting that Communist sources were cited in the docuseries without providing counterbalance. The book accuses the producers and creators of the series of being politically motivated by anti-interventionist politics as well, hoping to “prevent another Vietnam”. In the ending words of the introduction, the author openly admits to his anti-Communist bias and belief that Ho and the NLF are not heroes.

At least in his rebuttal to the PBS series, the author of Losers are Pirates readily admits his biases and does not attempt to wholly defend American involvement in the war, unlike the AIM program. This, in my eyes, elevates the source somewhat, as it doesn’t attempt to defend grandiose or overly broad claims. However, this source must be considered anti-Communist and indeed is centered around an opinion that the Northern Vietnamese were morally deficient and thus PBS is in the wrong for agreeing with or using Communist sourcing in the series they produced.

The Losers are Pirates piece does make some legitimate points about the scholarship of the PBS docuseries and the biases of the producers in creating the series. I believe the facts that are presented by the author and can thoroughly understand his perspective and issues with the PBS series. However, I would argue this: we live in the country that was actively involved in instigating the Vietnam conflict for anti-Communist reasons and have therefore been exposed to the American aspect of history. We have been exposed to anti-Communist ideals for our entire lives because Communism is antithetical to the capitalist vision that America espouses. To be exposed to multiple Communist sources, or “propaganda” as the author puts it, may make an American reader believe that they are being fed an unbalanced view simply because they are unused to the ideologies being presented them. Giving equal time to different sources can seem unequal when you are used to a slant in your sources. I personally do not believe that the PBS docu-series is anti-interventionist propaganda anymore than I believe that Losers are Pirates is capitalist propaganda.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) [Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Losers are Pirates is anti-Communist**by [Caitlin Strickland](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 10:24 PM

I think this is a really interesting point that I, and probably many others, hadn't considered. It is true that we are socialized to certain viewpoints, and seeing something opposing (such as pro-communist propaganda in the US) is remarkable and will leave a big impact, just as a communist watching the PBS series may see it as too pro-capitalist and in favor of the Americans. Therefore, in evaluating all the sources, I think the best way to validate the accuracy is to see if it has an equal standpoint, allowing for the view of all sides to be represented so readers can discern for themselves the legitimacy of their beliefs and actions. In my opinion, the Appy book does a wonderful job of this because it represented voices of US soldiers, protestors, officials, as well as North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese leaders and soldiers. I agree with Losers are Pirates and the AIM series that PBS was too lenient with their assessment of Ho Chi Minh and the NLF. All sources should truthfully represent what happened, and the communist regime did cause millions of people to flee, die, and come under an oppressive, dangerous regime; any series that denies or underplays those facts is not only biased, it is incorrect and therefore should not be studied for its historical accuracy.

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