

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

[Home](#) / [My courses](#) / [HST 195 Sp18 \(Escobar 41945\)](#) / [Week 8](#) / [Week 8 Forum](#) / [Fog of War](#)



Search forums

Week 8 Forum Fog of War



[Subscribe](#)

◀ [Fog of War](#)

[What the Article & Survey Reveal](#) ▶

Display replies in nested form

Move this discussion to ...

Move

Pin



Fog of War

by [Joe Escobar](#) - Saturday, May 19, 2018, 8:52 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Fog of War topic.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post, something that describes which one of the questions you are addressing. Do NOT simply leave it RE: Fog of War

Sum of ratings: -

[Permalink](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



McNamara's Reflections

by [Emilee Russell](#) - Monday, May 21, 2018, 10:09 PM

I think that it's clear from what McNamara says about his 1996 meeting with former

I think that it's clear from what McNamara says about the 1996 meeting that neither foreign minister in Vietnam that even decades later, neither truly see eye-to-eye about their intentions and motivations during the war. He says that it got heated and that the foreign minister claimed they were fighting for unification and for their independence, that the US had no place in intervening in their age-old conflict with China, their "traditional enemies." So these statements each of them made seem to show that they both likely have "foggy" recollections.

We know that McNamara played a key role in escalating the war and especially toward the beginning, advocated for deepening our military involvement in Vietnam. I felt that his responses in the video clip admit our faults and his own shortcomings, but I felt that the answers he gave fell short of truly owning up, especially when he said "We didn't know them well enough to empathize." I feel that that statement is true, due in large part to the fact that I feel we didn't make very much of an effort to become very familiar with the political climate and leaders and traditions before intervening--perhaps he was referring to Diem, as I'm sure he felt that Diem just refused to take any of our advice.

McNamara seems to understand the grave consequences of his, and our collective actions as a country. He understands the gravity of decisions like using Agent Orange, and takes responsibility while also noting that the US was completely unaware of the adverse health effects it causes. I think he has a real understanding of the repercussions and because of that, perhaps it is why he eventually softened his stance and why he chose to write a book about the lessons he learned from Vietnam. As he says, by doing so he was choosing to open himself up to criticism, but the consequences of not doing so would allow the US to run the risk of repeating our mistakes (he believes we're already beginning to) that we should have learned from in Vietnam.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: McNamara's Reflections

by [James Alewine](#) - Tuesday, May 22, 2018, 2:05 PM

I think your right in your assessment of the 1996 meeting, men choosing to flex their own egos. But at my age, I've learned about accountability--we must be accountable for the choices we make--which is what I would like to see from McNamara. He admits their were mistakes made, but I don't think he went far enough to hold anyone accountable, probably because it would lead back to his own decisions.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: McNamara's Reflections

by [Jacob Fagan](#) - Sunday, May 27, 2018, 9:04 PM

I thought you made a great point in your second paragraph about how McNamara escalated the war by deepening military involvement. That's something I didn't think about, but he would probably say in response something about just taking orders and serving the president. Not only is that a dangerous way to run a country, to do whatever one person says to do, but with seemingly all the ignorance in the world. I agree he didn't own up to his mistakes; he said "I made mistakes while during accomplishing things." I thought he could've done a better job owning up to his and his bosses mistakes, but like he said, 20/20 hindsight.

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

1

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



the deeper meaning of the Fog of War

by [Haonan Bai](#) - Monday, May 21, 2018, 11:31 PM



"We all make mistakes. We know we make mistakes. I don't know any military commander, who is honest, who would say he has not made a mistake. What "the fog of war" means is: war is so complex it is beyond the ability of the human mind to comprehend all the variable. Our judgment, our understanding, are not adequate. And we kill people unnecessarily (fog of war, 8:07)."

As McNamara said in the video, any decision in the war will change a lot, no matter the decision is right or wrong. Any military commander will make a wrong judgment, it will kill people unnecessarily. Personally, think that the biggest mistake he made during the Vietnam war was the initiation of the war. The deeper meaning of the fog of war is to abandon morality and cover up the interests behind the war. American capitalist rules were unable to empathize at that time, and it is even more difficult to understand the power which Vietnamese have in order to survive since the long period of colonial oppression.

One of the only unfortunate omissions in The Fog of War is the lack of concrete answers from McNamara regarding his feelings about the war in Vietnam, though this is hardly surprising after watching the film. As he says himself, McNamara's words can be inflammatory, and he is very adept at moving an interview where he wants it to go.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: the deeper meaning of the Fog of War

by [James Alewine](#) - Friday, May 25, 2018, 8:43 AM

People do make mistakes—but people have to make a choice first to determine if it was a mistake. Choices were made—and choices were made to kill people unnecessarily. You are correct in the statement, “the deeper meaning of the fog of war is to abandon morality and cover up the interests behind the war”. This is where I have a problem with McNamara's Half ass apology.

There must be full accountability for one's action—I learned this valuable lesson while in jail. To have full closer you must accept responsibility for your own choices, right or wrong—leave the politics out and just accept it. It is sad we will never have the full truth from McNamara.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: the deeper meaning of the Fog of War

by [Emilee Russell](#) - Sunday, May 27, 2018, 10:10 PM

I would agree with you, and I think that McNamara's "owning up" to his mistakes fall a little short, but I do think that him changing his positions on some of the decisions made in Vietnam shows his remorse and regret for so much of the (especially unnecessary) damaged caused. Part of the quote you chose, "Our judgement, our understanding, are not adequate. And we kill people unnecessarily." sums it up, and accounts for a lot of decisions we made in Vietnam before collecting sufficient research and information.

You made an excellent point that the real meaning of "fog of war" is our compromised morality and especially, as you said, covering up our interests. I think that is true for our involvement in Vietnam and unfortunately, I think our country has made the same mistakes again since then. I agree that the true nature of "the fog of war" makes us be deceptive about our true motivations.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Dammed if you do--Dammed if you don't



by [James Alewine](#) - Tuesday, May 22, 2018, 12:17 PM

Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara has the opportunity to set the record straight with his unique insight about the dealings of the Vietnam War. What really strikes an accord with me is, the dammed if you do--dammed if you don't attitude when ask about speaking out against the Johnson administration after he left (FOG 10:20). His position to rather be dammed if he doesn't--eludes to a greater sense that there is something to conceal--a perplexing statement in itself. Was it loyalty or guilt? We will never know.

If McNamara took the opportunity to speak more candidly about the handling of the war, we could fully understand the decisions that were made and why the administration made them. America could have closure and accountability. We know that this war was part of a broader sense of fear about the spread of communism. McNamara was hired by an elected official to do a job, and as far as I'm concerned, he should've been more forth coming in his statements at the time.

Hopefully in the years to come there will be more documents de-classified explaining more about the administration. But in the meantime—this will keep you busy. Hundreds of [declassified materials](#) (some still not fully declassified) pertaining to Vietnam from 1945-1975. We must remember that this was privileged information that the administration had in making decisions to go and stay in Vietnam, this included McNamara.

Sum of ratings: [2 \(1\)](#)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Dammed if you do--Dammed if you don't

by [Haonan Bai](#) - Friday, May 25, 2018, 11:26 PM

Although we will not get all the truth from McNamara, at least the Fog of War give us some different understanding of the Vietnam War from another side and also understand the U.S. government. As he said we don't know what he knows about how inflammatory his words can appear, he doesn't want to go any further with this discussion. It just opens up more controversy. He doesn't want to add anything to Vietnam (Fog of War, 11:10). The Vietnam War has been going on for so long. If he tells us more truth about Vietnam War, it may be the truth. It will hurt the veterans anyway. Think that people will continue to discover the truth and find any useful information about the Vietnam War. However, this real information may only be explained by veterans who are retired from the Vietnam War.

But in other words, if McNamara speaks out against the Vietnam War after he left the Johnson Administration, it might not trigger this war for so long. This is might the wrongest decision or mistake that he made at that time.

Sum of ratings: [2 \(1\)](#)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

**Ignorance in America**by [Jacob Fagan](#) - Tuesday, May 22, 2018, 3:19 PM

The Fog of War featuring Robert McNamara was interesting, because he recounts lessons he learned during the Vietnam War as the Secretary of Defense. He said during the Cuban Missile Crisis they were able to emphasize with the Soviets, but couldn't with the Vietnamese because they didn't know them well enough. The latter reasoning is one of the main lessons from the war: know your enemy and know your friend. Robert explained that the Vietnamese thought the U.S. was trying to colonize them, which might've had some truth to it, but the U.S. didn't realize the Vietnamese had been at war with China for hundreds of years. Xuân Thủy told McNamara the U.S. was trying to enslave them while the Vietnamese was fighting for independence. I find this accurate and smart of Thuy because the U.S. was trying to help South Vietnam by way of taking control of them and that especially shown through when they assassinated Diem. It seems most of McNamara's downfalls was due to ignorance like using Agent Orange, which was obviously toxic to beings due to its affect on trees. If McNamara could back in time it seems he would take steps to avoid the matter with Vietnam and aid them financially instead of with gun power. It's perfectly reasonable to help countries in need, but to enter a country and try to take over their army, teach them how to fight and carry out an assassination on their leader; that's uncalled for and immoral, no matter if the leader is communist or nationalist. Similar with America's paranoia of terrorism today, we were scared for our lives that communism would spread. That shouldn't have forced our government to intervene on everything to stop the so-called "domino effect."

Sum of ratings: **1 (1)**[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**LBJ and Nixon: Relatively Reliable**by [Danielle Wardrip](#) - Tuesday, May 22, 2018, 4:08 PM

What if LBJ or Nixon were still alive and had been filmed in a documentary similar to Fog of War? Using the knowledge you've gained in this course about these two presidents and making an informed and educated guess, would they be able to add to our understanding of the war? Both of them? Which one? Neither one?

If LBJ and Nixon had been filmed in a documentary like Fog of War, they may have said similar things. However, they may not have.

In any case, I believe that LBJ would have tried to justify decisions made. He didn't seem like the kind of man that would lie outright about it, but he may have tried to soften the blow. He might have left out details that implicated him. Or, he could have

just told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I don't think he would, though. After going to Vietnam in his vice presidency, LBJ reported that Diem was having doubts regarding the U.S. He "warned that if a further decline in morale was to be arrested, 'deeds must follow words— soon.'" (Herring book, page 98) He knew how to deal with allies and was clear about circumstances regarding the war.

Nixon wouldn't have either. He most likely would have done everything to make himself look good. (If you take into consideration that Watergate Scandal, his administration, at least, would not have wanted him to tell the truth.) Richard Nixon authorized his campaign team to send messages to President Thieu and ambassador Bui Diem that asked them "to obstruct peace talks by refusing to participate and hinting that South Vietnam would fare better under a Nixon presidency." (Herring book, page 271) He did so behind LBJ's back. This doesn't seem like the most forthcoming man. I mean, he did this during elections (the whole point was that it would get him elected).

Both men would be able to help us to better understand the war. Whether they would be completely truthful or not, we could glean more from hearing their testimonies.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



"Little Foggy"

by [Tyler Cannon](#) - Tuesday, May 22, 2018, 9:51 PM

The statements made by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara go to show that the Vietnam War was one of great confusion, secrecy, and regret. Throughout the entire clip Robert McNamara is bringing up that he along with every else has made mistakes in the past. In this case he is referring to the people killed in Vietnam on both sides. McNamara like so many other veterans from this time were lost in "the fog of war" and did things that seemed right at the time, but proved to have a costly after effect. This particularly on soldiers who killed when deep inside of them they knew that they did not belong on a battlefield and were not ready to take another life. They had to do it because they were under the impression that it was theirs or the enemies and that in order to keep their way of life safe they needed to stop this uprising. He says in regards to agent orange "I never in the world would have authorized an illegal action, I'm not really sure I even authorized agent orange I don't remember it, but it did occur when I was secretary." (McNamara vid, 6:15). This goes to show that his recollection of the war is in fact "a little foggy" because how can the Secretary of Defense not remember if he authorized the use of a chemical toxin on the field of battle. He is either in denial or genuinely does not remember which does not bode well for his credibility when he makes his other claims and stories. Also at the end of the clip when he is asked all of the hard hitting questions like if he feels responsible for the war, McNamara chooses to

basically dodge the question and move on. This evasion of answers as well as “forgetfulness” really puts a red flag on any accounts given by the former secretary because if he can’t remember what he agreed to and did not agree to how are we supposed to take his word on other events in the war? The stories that McNamara brings up do correspond with the accounts of him given through the textbook and PBS. This is particularly true when McNamara talks about his visit to Vietnam and when he explains how we saw this war as an act in the Cold War and how the North Vietnamese saw it as a civil war and war for colonialism. PBS states in episode 3 they have a clip of McNamara saying “Well stay for as long as it takes, we shall provide whatever help is required to drive back the Communist insurgency.” They also say that “To the Communist in Hanoi it was another act of foreign aggression as they remember 1,000 years against foreign invaders Chinese, Japanese, French and now they faces Americans.” (PBS episode 3, 7:00-7:30). McNamara’s story is pretty accurate with this explanation from PBS and shows that both sides viewed the war as something different and fought for different reasons.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



McNamara Speaks!!!

by [Jonathan Haskell](#) - Tuesday, May 22, 2018, 10:16 PM

The Fog of War, I remember this movie. It was fantastic. Does McNamara say anything that helps my understanding of the war?

Yes actually when he explains the meaning of the movie title, and since he does I want to quote him. He states: “There is a wonderful phrase, The Fog of War, what that means is war is so complex its beyond the ability of the human mind to comprehend all the variables”. That is true. I am looking at it with hindsight and he even says “What I’m doing is thinking it through with hindsight but you don’t have hindsight available at the time. I’m very proud of my accomplishments and I’m very sorry that through those accomplishments I made errors” I sometimes get baffled reading about the past wondering how so much can go badly and at times for such horrendous reasons. One can not help but think what the hell were going through the minds of some of these people? We are looking through the great window of history though if we were him looking through the mirror of the present we might do something similar. Perhaps.

I guess I am quoting a lot in his forum, but I enjoyed the movie and enjoy hearing

from people with such historical importance as Mr. McNamara. I appreciate his apology for errors and I had no doubt he would apologize in the film. That said though there were a few things that irked me. I do not really appreciate how he moves around the questions about Agent Orange like saying after the war “it is claimed” that it was a toxic chemical & saying that we don’t have clear definitions of what kind of chemical warfare is acceptable and not remembering if he ordered its use. It almost sounds like he fears a war crimes tribunal. He reminds me of those slippery Nazi’s who just denied everything. If things go wrong deny, deny, deny! I think anyone with any sense of humanity would KNOW that all or any chemical warfare is unacceptable.

I really enjoyed in the clip when he begins talking about going to Vietnam and meeting their prime minister because I would have the same question for Mr. McNamara as he did “Mr. McNamara you must of never read a history book?” I can not really fathom that someone with such a high ranking office and for someone to hold this office for so long through so many presidents, to go to war with a country that he personally knows nothing about. I understand it was fear of the red menace which remind me, I really liked the use of the picture of dominos fallen on a map of Vietnam to represent domino theory. That then magically get lifted and moves from Vietnam through China & Mongolia to the USSR. That was clever and artistic. Anyway back to topic of what I was saying he even said it “We saw Vietnam as an element to the cold war not what they saw it as a civil war”. A man of his importance in his station should find time to go to the library of Congress and read a book about the country he is at war with. That is ridiculous.

Another thing I found a little ridiculous and maybe someone can explain it to me but he says “You didn’t get any more then we were willing to give you at the beginning of the war” when he is talking about his sit down meeting with the Vietnamese prime minister after claiming that what they lost would be the equivalent of 27 million Americans dying. What were we offering them? I seem to recall the French all in the way and being pains in the butt, so we just threw cash at them until they got a new leader who didn’t want to fight anymore. Then Eisenhower backing the South with not following through on the unification vote. What exactly were we offering them at this time period? I know LBJ wanted to help them economically with their

farming which is just like him, and Kennedy seemed to completely by into the whole domino theory and wanted to seem tough. So, at the beginning the very beginning what were offering them? It wasn't unification so what is he talking about?

Next question is if LBJ or Nixon were alive and had been filmed in a documentary similar would they be able to add to our understanding of the war? Well I think Johnson would probably defend his actions by preaching on about his "great society" he was trying to build and how Vietnam got in the way of that. He would probably I think though regret and claim different action if he could do things differently. I don't know if he would add to the understanding of the Vietnam war but my gut says he would. Nixon would be similar to the Frost/Nixon interview. Cold and continually defensive. He would pass the buck and blame the Vietnam war on Presidents before him. He would be no help at all.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: McNamara Speaks!!!

by [Danielle Wardrip](#) - Saturday, May 26, 2018, 3:17 PM

"war is so complex its beyond the ability of the human mind to comprehend all the variables"

Wow. I could not agree more. McNamara is exactly right. Throughout this whole class, I have not kept that fact in mind. I mean, I know it's true and would say it, but sometimes the brain forgets in the small moment that it has to react to new things.

We need to keep in mind that we were not in our country's leaders' shoes when all of this was happening. We cannot judge their actions, for we are not, and most of us (I assume) have never been, in their shoes. We need to give them the benefit of the doubt. We have no idea what stress they certainly were going through. Yes, there are things they could have done better, but they are human. As are we. I cannot say that I would have made better choices. However, I cannot say that I wouldn't have either.

I am sure that our leaders made the decisions that they thought to be the best, given the circumstances. I would like to think that they strove to do what was right, but also know that may not be the reality.

Their judgment may have been clouded, but I would be willing to bet that they thought their cause was a just one.

Sum of ratings: **2 (1)**

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



McNamara's questionable recalling of events

by [Kishahn Fellows](#) - Tuesday, May 22, 2018, 10:33 PM

I think McNamara's statement's in the "Fog of War" mini-documentary reinforce my understanding of the war. That being it was a hazy conflict with a clear goal, but no clear way to accomplish this goal that would benefit the U.S. and not totally decimate Vietnam. Especially since we didn't even understand the people we were supposed to be fighting for. "In the case of Vietnam, we didn't know them well enough to empathize and there was total misunderstanding as a result. They believed we replaced the French as a colonial power... and we saw them as part of the cold war, when they saw it as a civil war" (Fog of War McNamara 1:10). McNamara's statements also reinforced my belief that there were actually 2 wars going on at the time. The United States war on Communism and the Vietnamese civil war/ war for independence. While they may have overlapped, these were 2 different wars with different goals. " The former foreign minister of Vietnam said you're totally wrong, we were fighting for our independence, you were fighting to enslave us...you must have never read a history book, if you'd had, you'd know we weren't pawns of the Chinese...we have been fighting the Chinese for one thousand years, we were fighting for our independence" (Fog of war McNamara 2:35)

I'm not sure this would count as a "foggy recollection" but McNamara's comments about the U.S.'s use of agent orange are definitely suspect. His side stepping on the question of legality is surely at least morally questionable, and his unwillingness to admit, or lack of memory on whether he did or did not approve the use of the chemical agent is dubious at best. " While i was secretary, we used agent orange...after the war it was claimed that it was a toxic chemical and it killed many individuals, soldiers and civilians exposed to it. Were those wishing for approval to use agent orange criminals? were they guilty of crimes against humanity? well lets look at the law. Now what kind of law do we have that says these chemicals are OK and these are not? we do not have clear definitions of that kind, I never would have approved illegal actions in Vietnam" (Fog of war McNamara 4:48) His "damned if you do and damned if you don't, and i rather be damned if i don't" comment solidifies my belief that while he may or may not have done or authorized anything illegal, he knows he made many wrong decisions in Vietnam, and he wants to do all he can to cover his and his associates asses.

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

Sum of ratings: 3 (1) [Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: McNamara's questionable recalling of events**by [Jonathan Haskell](#) - Sunday, May 27, 2018, 6:44 PM

I really enjoyed your reflection on the Fog of War and the thoughts you expressed. "McNamara's statements also reinforced my belief that there were actually 2 wars going on at the time" you stated. I completely agree. Our purpose and efforts were for something other than unification of Vietnam it was a chess move in the Cold War. where as the unification of Vietnam, was their only goal and one which they were unwilling to fail at. "I'm not sure this would count as a "foggy recollection" but McNamara's comments about the U.S.'s use of agent orange are definitely suspect. His side stepping on the question of legality is surely at least morally questionable, and his unwillingness to admit, or lack of memory on whether he did or did not approve the use of the chemical agent is dubious at best." Again, I agree. He seems like a guilty man who feels sorrow in an earnest effort to defend himself. I accept he feels guilt, but that is because he IS guilty.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1) [Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: McNamara's questionable recalling of events**by [Jacob Fagan](#) - Sunday, May 27, 2018, 10:39 PM

I agree the documentary helped my understanding of the war, because of McNamara's perspective on the matter. It seems the aftermath was that he had many regrets about the way they entered the conflict because, like you said, they didn't have much intel on the way of life or what they wanted. The former minister told McNamara that they were fighting for their independence with China, but the U.S. didn't understand that. U.S. didn't realize the Vietnamese thought the U.S. wanted to colonize which is sort of what they were doing by forcing their weapons and training on them. The U.S. was fighting to stop the spread of communism while they didn't realize the Vietnamese were having a Civil War.

His comments about the Agent Orange were very suspect, I agree. He said he didn't think they would hurt people but common sense says otherwise and then he did side step the questions and talked about the law not being definitive so he was

more thinking about the legality and not the morality. You did a great job saying what I agree with; he really was trying to cover all of his faults so it wouldn't hurt him among the public. Overall, it was an interesting perspective, but just that; just another one that doesn't actually define the truth.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Fog of War

by [Nicholas Walker](#) - Tuesday, May 22, 2018, 10:35 PM

For me, McNamara's comments remind me of a few things: Namely, his statement about the grey morality of war. He argues that in the moment, war is so complex and wrought with so many variables that it's impossible for Man to comprehend, and therefore the actions taken at the time are justified as simply as they can be. Only in hindsight—which is 20/20 as they say—can one see what oversights were made. He also noted that every military general makes mistakes.

I do think that McNamara is downplaying the impact he had in the war, however. The decisions he made directly led to the increase in US troop sent to Vietnam, though I believe he's correct about not authorizing agent orange. I think the softness with which he scrutinizes his decisions makes sense from his perspective, but isn't entirely forthcoming. That said, later in his career he did encourage President Johnson to seek a peaceful resolution to the conflict, seeing the US's efforts as more and more futile. He says in the clip that there was a fundamental lack of communication about what each country saw as a threat from the other (e.g. Vietnam saw America as wanting colonial power akin to the French).

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

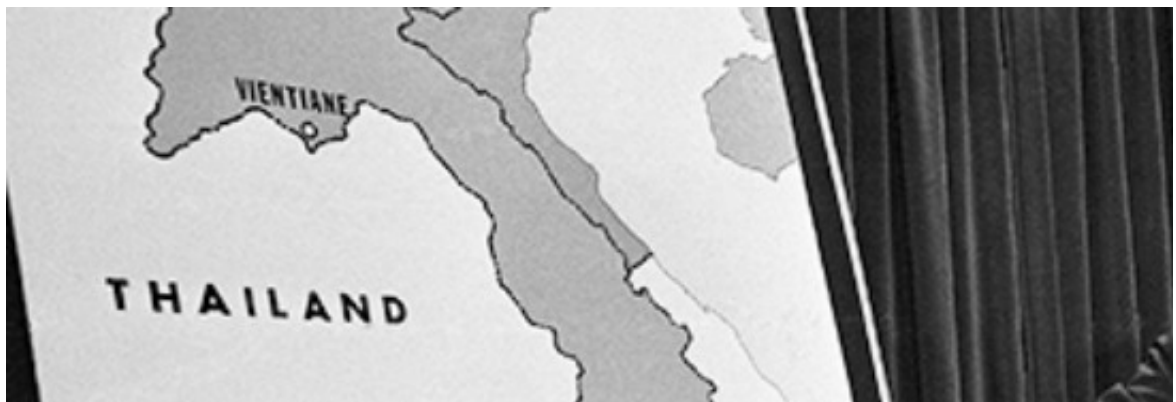
2

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



What if LBJ and Nixon still alive?

by [Haonan Bai](#) - Wednesday, May 23, 2018, 12:00 AM





If LBJ still alive and had been filmed in a documentary similar to Fog of War, he might feel that Vietnam war is a wrong decision for Americans because the heavy costs for the U.S. and he will try to clear out the relationship as much as possible with this war. But he might not deny the decision he made during the war. As he said in the Herring's book: "we have kept our gun over the mantel and our shells in the cupboard for a long time now. I can't ask our American soldiers out there to continue to fight with one hand behind their back" (Herring book, p129). Personally, think that he does not think he is wrong in this war. He won't tell the truth in order to cover up the truth which he cruelty at that time. He might tell us some historical facts, but certainly, it has nothing to do with him. Or it might not a fact at all.

Nixon will also be like LBJ. Because during his administration, he persisted in the quixotic search for an independent, non-communist Vietnam. The goal was to be achieved primarily by a massive buildup of South Vietnamese military strength and by the application of military pressure against North Vietnam, methods that had been tried before in various forms and had been found wanting (Herring book, p217). He made the mistake, but he won't tell the truth of what he made.

That is not to say that all of our leaders are necessarily ineffective at what they do. It just helps us to remember that they are human too and the decisions they make are colored by the same kinds of biases and shortcomings from which all human beings suffer.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1) 2

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: What if LBJ and Nixon still alive?



Re: What if LBJ and Nixon still alive:

by [James Alewine](#) - Sunday, May 27, 2018, 7:53 PM

Hoanan, you make a good point, these men are human. I just find it had to speculate on what might have been. I personally believe LBJ and Nixon both felt they were do the country a service in the pursuit to control the spread of communism. It's just hard to know we may never know the full truth.

Sum of ratings: [0 \(1\)](#)

0

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



foggy memory

by [Miles Arnold](#) - Saturday, May 26, 2018, 10:07 AM

When I listen to McNamara speak I have to remember that he is an older man, with regrets for his actions in Vietnam and that there may be some details that he changes at times to maybe paint himself in a better light. But maybe he can charge it to what he calls "A wonderful phrase, the fog of war." He explains, "War is so complex that it is impossible for the human mind to comprehend all the variables. Our judgement, our understanding are not adequate, and we kill people unnecessarily." That sort of takes some of the burden off his shoulders.

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

1

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: foggy memory

by [Jacob Fagan](#) - Sunday, May 27, 2018, 10:56 PM

I understand McNamara's point about it being complex, but his job is to be an expert at it and if he can't be then he shouldn't be employed. However, there were less resources when this happened so I can see where he and his co-workers had their difficulties, but basically invading another country without proper knowledge of the situation can never be truly apologized for. The former minister told him, "You're totally wrong, we were fighting for our independence, you were trying to enslave us!" To see the former minister's viewpoint and not to say "ok I get it" is completely crazy to me. These are conversations that should be had ahead of time to avoid the conflict or join on each other's agreement. U.S. only saw the fight as a fight to stop communism and not to help the Vietnamese.

McNamar kept peddling back saying he had to serve the request of the president, because "[he] was elected by the American people." I don't understand that concept because you should have your own opinions and research finished to fight back if necessary.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) 1

Sum of ratings:1 (1) 1 [Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



The Fog of Our Minds

by [Danielle Wardrip](#) - Saturday, May 26, 2018, 3:46 PM

"In the case of Vietnam, we didn't know them well enough to empathize." (1:10)
McNamara

Isn't that the truth. We should never have gotten involved when we couldn't even relate to those that we were both supporting and opposing.

He also mentions that "we saw Vietnam as an element of the Cold War." (1:39)

The domino theory. We thought that they were going to become COmmunists and that we just had to stop it, no matter the cost. We didn't see them as separate from the Soviets, as they did. We jumbled them up in the same boat and called them all the same (behind the scenes, of course, never to their faces).

"U+You must never have read a history book." (3:13) Former Prime Minister of Vietnam, Thu ??

Good point. It's like they completely ignored Vietnam's struggle right before we got involved. They took the French back in order to get rid of the Chinese, for golly's sake!

"I just felt that I was serving at the request of a president..elected by the American people." (3:52)

I'm not sure if McNamara is trying to shift the blame here. He was serving the PRESIDENT elected by the PEOPLE. The question was when did he feel as if he was in/not in control. So he says "I don't think I felt either." Um, you either feel like you're in control or not. The decisions that he made and the things he pushed for the presidents to do, would suggest otherwise. He wasn't just along for the ride, following the orders of those around him. He had a voice. And he used it, too.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) 1 [Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: The Fog of Our Minds

by [Danielle Wardrip](#) - Sunday, May 27, 2018, 12:21 AM

If McNamara is telling what he remembers as the truth, then his memory is very "foggy." The thing that miffed me the most in the video was his statement that he only followed the presidents' orders. McNamara was the Secretary of Defense. You

don't get that position just by following orders and going with the flow. You get to that position by doing what McNamara did.

McNamara, with the help of the JCS and McGeorge Bundy, told JFK that he should "make an unequivocal commitment to prevent the fall of South Vietnam." (Herring book, p. 102) JFK rejected this "proposal," as Herring tells on page 103.

Later, McNamara "initiated planning for a phased withdrawal of U.S. forces" (Herring, 117). He did this as "a means to gain leverage with the Saigon government and assure Congress and the public that the United States was not hopelessly entangled in Vietnam." (Herring, 117)

McNamara was not just along for the ride and definitely had some control over many of the situations regarding the war.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

1

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



McNamara's Behavior then and now

by [Kishahn Fellows](#) - Sunday, May 27, 2018, 10:34 PM

I would say McNamara's actions during the war and his comments in the Fog of war documentary line up quite well with each other. They both come off as somewhat shady and self preserving. For example his time spent publicly praising and surveying the strategic hamlets, even though he and his associates were unimpressed.

"McNamara publicly praises the strategic hamlets even though U.S. officials doubted their usefulness" (Vietnam PBS Ep. 2, Narrator, 31:23) Another example being his time spent promoting General Kahn, even though he and his compatriots were almost positive he would fall. "McNamara travels Vietnam publicly praising General Khan, though he and other U.S. Officials had little faith" (Vietnam PBS Ep. 3, Narrator, 18:36)

In regards to LBJ I believe his behavior mirrors McNamara's in that it was self serving and self preserving. For example Johnson's reasoning for his choices in Vietnam, as explained by presidential aide Bill Moyers. "Johnson didn't seek a wider war, he didn't want one, It was against everything he wanted for the U.S. at the same time if he didn't fulfill an honorable commitment by the U.S. to south Vietnam his administration would be lost as well" (Vietnam PBS Ep. 3, Bill Moyers 18:36) Another example being his slander of Barry Goldwater during his 1964 re-election campaign. "The president said to me one day, we've got to remind people of who Goldwater was before the convention" (Vietnam PBS Ep.3, Bill Moyers 19:08) "Johnson portrayed Goldwater as irresponsible and himself as the candidate of restraint" (Vietnam PBS Ep. 3, Narrator 20:08)

So, with all of that in mind, no, I do not believe that Johnson would be able to add

So, with all of that in mind, no, I do not believe that Johnson would be able to add anymore insight into the war than McNamara, and I believe Nixon would be even less helpful. Especially with his massive Water gate scandal.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: McNamara's Behavior then and now

by [Jacob Fagan](#) - Sunday, May 27, 2018, 11:37 PM

Good point about the strategic hamlets. McNamara was proud of them, but officials didn't see a good outcome. It doesn't seem like a good idea to me, in hindsight, due to the fake caring of the U.S., because all they wanted were the towns people to not talk/socialize with potential communists.

McNamara came off in the video a little hazy with the truth, because it was obvious at times he was being stubborn and passive aggressive towards the interviewer. On LBJ, I agree. It seemed both really cared about their reputation around America and didn't seem to care what the cost was. LBJ had motives to appeal to voters and McNamara had his job and reputation on the line. I also agree that LBJ probably couldn't much more, but he could give another needed perspective to help Americans and the world find the truth.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Would LBJ or Nixon be Foggy?

by [Tyler Cannon](#) - Sunday, May 27, 2018, 10:50 PM

I feel like of the two of these former Presidents, LBJ would be able to add to our understanding of the war. To me Nixon is out of the question because I feel like he would be doing everything in his power to make himself seem better in order to erase his negative image in America. Nixon would be looking to find a clean slate and would attempt to do so perhaps by fabricating lies and messing up all that we know and understand about the Vietnam War and America's involvement in it. However, LBJ seems to be the kind of guy that would own up to his mistakes and tell the American people what they wanted to hear. He would have explained the difficult situation he was left with and why he felt the need to escalate the amount of troops in Vietnam. He would not lie in order to cover his image or for personal gain because that is not the man he is. When his party was in turmoil and split between whether or not to reelect this was the response; "I shall not seek, nor will I accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your president," he said in a nationally televised speech on March 31,

1968."(<https://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/lyndon-b-johnson>). Those are not words of a politician that wants to gain power or glory, but rather of a simple man that wants peace and the best for his country rather than for himself. That is why I personally believe that LBJ would give us the tell all and help us really get a better understanding for the Vietnam War, while Nixon would be out to tamper it.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

◀ [Fog of War](#)

[What the Article & Survey Reveal](#) ▶

 [Moodle Docs for this page](#)

You are logged in as [Joe Escobar](#) ([Log out](#))

[HST 195 Sp18 \(Escobar 41945\)](#)