

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

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Week 2 Forum Longest War & Video Documentaries

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Longest War & Video Documentaries

by [Joe Escobar](#) - Saturday, April 7, 2018, 10:17 AM

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

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Forum1.Longest war



by [Maria Cecilia Contreras Sanchez](#) - Tuesday, April 10, 2018, 6:11 PM

One topic that is mention in the video Why Vietnam and herring book is about the battle on Dien Bien Phu. In the video Why Vietnam, we could see in the minute 4:06 refers about the battle on Dien Bien and the problem faced in this region. According to the video USA got involved to this war because they saw a strange and huge problem in this region. The video said in the minute 4:25" three-cornered struggle. Non-communist Vietnamese fighting communist Vietnamese, and some of both fighting the French." Looking for this information in the book, we can find much more detail about this battle. It is explaining the reason of why they chose this region. According to Herring it was a strategic place at the crossroads of Vietnam (36). It also described how Viet Minh's guns shredded French defense.

If we compare the video and the book, we can clearly see that the video does not give detail in comparison with the book. However, both are a reliable source that help us to understand they situation in Vietnam.

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Why United States involvement in Vietnam?

by [Connor Antich](#) - Tuesday, April 10, 2018, 8:25 PM

The connection I found is between the Herring book and the Why Vietnam video. Both of these discuss a similar policy to why the United States was involved in the Vietnam war. The Herring book talks about how in early stages of the war shortly after World War 2, the region was a french colony with a military presence. One of the few pro western presences in all of South Asia and Asia overall besides Japan and South Korea after the Korean War. Asia was dominated by communist countries of the Soviet Union and China. Also existing in South Asia bordering Vietnam were the bordering countries of Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. These countries were rich of natural resources mainly grain. All of the countries in South Asia and its resources were at risk to being swallowed up by communism because of North Vietnam aggression. With pro communist China freshly victorious from there civil war, they supplied the North Vietnamese heavily with weapons and supplies. In 1954 the French withdrew their troops from the region and the region became even more at danger to a communist takeover. In the Herring book the reason for U.S. involvement is the because of the loss of the French pro western presence in the region and the fear of South Asia becoming all pro communist due to North Vietnamese aggression.

In the Why Vietnam video, it talks about as well how the U.S. feared communism in Asia and how the U.S. would not repeat mistakes in the past with North Vietnam aggression. The Video talks about how the Korean war was an example of how military

aggression would be dealt with. President Johnson quoted, "Aggression unchallenged is aggression unleashed" (Why Vietnam Video). For example before World War 2 officially started there were numerous acts of aggression made by the axis powers. In 1931 Japan invaded Manchuria, China but the League of Nations did nothing. Also in 1938 Italy invaded Ethiopia yet the League of Nations again did nothing (Why Vietnam Video). Another example is Hitler took over small parts of territory in Europe and Czechoslovakia before 1939. These events and others all lead to the unleashing of World War 2. These were pre war acts of aggression not answered by the allies that cost the allies and the world dramatically. This is why the U.S. needed a military presence in Vietnam. Letting communist North Vietnam take over South Vietnam would put the entire region under forced communist influence which would be a threat to freedom and democracy around the world. This would only make communism stronger and more of a threat to the west. Also by letting communist take over South Asia, they would only look to expand as thats what history showed us in World War 2 with Japan and Nazi Germany.

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Re: Why United States involvement in Vietnam?

by [Mackenzie Child](#) - Saturday, April 14, 2018, 2:07 PM

I really appreciate your synopsis, Conor. I have been reading and watching videos but these early stages are complicated to understand. The intricacies of the international relationships and the way US involvement flip flops has got me confused. Your explanation helps a lot!

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Re: Why United States involvement in Vietnam?

by [Maria Cecilia Contreras Sanchez](#) - Saturday, April 14, 2018, 6:21 PM

I like the idea of reading what everyone understood on the subject. Your explanation is very clear, which helped me clarify some questions. Your explanation about the reasons on why the United States has armed forces in Vietnam. I agree with you that communism over southern Vietnam would have consequences on democracy and freedom around the world

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[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Why United States involvement in Vietnam?**by [Haonan Bai](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 5:13 PM

I really like the idea how you explain why United States involvement in Vietnam, but I have some opinion to share with you and also add to your explanation.

First, I agree with your idea of the United States worry about the communism will destroy their plan. Which is forcing to deal with communism countries and regimes in order to prevent the endless expansion of communism. Because it's against the global strategy of the United States interests. But the Vietnam War is the longest war in the history of the United States. Since the more than a decade of Vietnam War, the United States spent at least 250 billion dollars. Although the United States did not fail in military affairs, it shows a major misstep in United States' Cold War strategy.

The Vietnam War has intensified racial issues and civil rights issues in the United States and leaving the country extremely divided and causing tremendous trauma to the American people. Also, the Vietnam War ended the economic prosperity of the United States 25 years after the war, causing the economic situation in the United States to go down sharply. Although the United States has profited in most wars since the founding of the United States, the Vietnam War is an American Waterloo.

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[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Why United States involvement in Vietnam?**by [Parker Mann](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 8:29 PM

First of all I enjoyed your post, especially the second paragraph. You made me realize some parallels to other wars/conflicts that America was involved in before Vietnam. The quote from President Johnson especially was a good one. Even though I loved the parallels you drew in paragraph, I do disagree with some of the statements at the end. I wouldn't entirely say that the US needed a military presence in Vietnam, and I also wouldn't say that It was a given that Communism would of entirely spread all over Vietnam, because early in US involvement Ho had just as much support from the US as he did from Communist China, and was always considered a Vietnamese nationalist before a communist.

Sum of ratings:0 (1) 0

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Re: Longest War & Video Documentaries

by [Parker Mann](#) - Tuesday, April 10, 2018, 8:57 PM

Which single topic or event shared in either the First War in Vietnam or Why Vietnam? videos is the most significantly related to any event or development which has been presented in either Chapter 1 or 2 of the Herring textbook? What is the connection (be specific)? Do both sources agree on the information, or are the claims in conflict with one another? If in conflict, which do you believe and why?

The American backing of Bao Dai knowing very well he was a puppet that was for the imperialism of the French was an event/period (as described in the Herring textbook) that relates directly to the order by the French to grant Bao Dai a very large portion of the country, even more than what Ho Chi Ming laid claim to. The Americans gave 2.6 Billion Dollars of support to the French in Indo-China for the purpose of holding a non-communist force in that area (Herring, Pg 50). The 'Free Election' as promised by the French and Bao Dai never took place and the French continued to have power. This control is shown in the short film First War in Vietnam that shows exactly what the USA was backing. It is described in the Herring text by "The commitment to France had indeed turned out to be a "dead-end alley." Americans attributed France's failure mainly to its misguided attempts to perpetuate colonialism in Indochina. They were confident that without France they could find a viable non-Communist alternative to the Viet Minh." I agree with the claims because the this was one of the first major moves by the USA to maintain a presence there. They did know that Dai was not loyal to his country and was a French puppet and knew disaster could happen with conflicting Ho Chi Ming who they originally supported.

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France and the United States

by [Connor Antich](#) - Saturday, April 14, 2018, 3:43 PM

I agree the United States invested in French imperialism to keep communism out of the region. I also agree that United States possibly knew french rule in the region would crumble. I think part of this was in fact due to the United States understanding of the weakness of the french military that was poorly trained and poorly strategized in a jungle region against an enemy that knew its terrain and knew how to cripple the french using brutal fast guerrilla tactics against a slow sloppy french force exhausted from the terrain and hot and humid environment. All of these factors contribute too the United States knowing french control would not

last long in the region. Especially with morale in France depleting and the french military's joke of an effort and show of force in World War 2.

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Re: France and the United States

by [Parker Mann](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 8:33 PM

Thank you for your response... I do completely agree with your assessment of the French military, and that is something I should have probably included in my response as I look back at it. That in point, adds to the argument of USA fault in backing France, and turning from Ho. The USA and French relationship is an interesting one, and one that should be examined more.

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Re: Longest War & Video Documentaries

by [Haonan Bai](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 6:43 PM

I totally agree with your opinion of America support France. For the common opposition to the communist party, France persuades the United States to support them in Vietnam. France may take advantage of American, but American also take advantage of France's military, the government and the Vietnamese force which they support. Also, the United States paid more than 70% for France in this war because it was also American war.

With the defeat of France, Geneva Conference may end of the French war in Vietnam, but it did not end the indirect war of the United States in Vietnam. American no longer rely on the colonial policy of France to curb communism in Vietnam, instead of turning their hopes on a non-communist leader of the independent regime in Vietnam. As long as the United States does not trample on the sovereignty of this new country, the Vietnamese non-communist leader does not threaten the American strategic investment in Vietnam for a decade, and indirect deterrence can continue.

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Re: Longest War & Video Documentaries

by [Parker Mann](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 10:22 PM

I wouldn't say that the US is taking advantage of the French's military. In fact they

more let the USA down if anything. But correct the USA did pay for 70% of Frances presence in Vietnam, and with this support may have just went to Vietnam early at that point. Because supporting a puppet, in which they later spoke ill of, clearly never was going to work out.

Sum of ratings: 0 (1)

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The First Dead End

by [Mackenzie Child](#) - Tuesday, April 10, 2018, 9:34 PM

The beginning of the Herring book as well as the first documentary "The First War in Vietnam" both focus of the idea that the first conflicts with the French were just the beginning of a raft of problems for the Vietnamese. "independence would not come without a struggle"(Herring 8) seems like the understatement of the century. They both highlight Ho Chi Minh's rise in popularity and influence.

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Re: The First Dead End

by [Miles Arnold](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 9:57 PM

I think American involvement in Vietnam along with French and Chinese involvement proves just how underestimated the Vietnamese people were. Disrespected by the french for years and then totally underestimated by the United States. I'm curious as to why they were under-looked and walked over despite their resilience and strong will to fight for independence for SO LONG.

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America's Longest War sharing

by [Haonan Bai](#) - Wednesday, April 11, 2018, 1:47 AM

After I watched the two videos, I know that both of video was talking about Vietnam against France. The reason why those two countries fight each other is that Vietnam became a French colony before the World War II, and France want to restore the colonial over Vietnam again after World War II.

In order to get more time to start the development of revolutionary forces, Vietnam and France sign an initial agreement which allows Vietnam to have their own government and military. But Vietnam wants more than that such as freedom, liberty, and independent. However. French president believes that this will threaten the rule of

independent. However, French president believed that this will threaten the rule of French colonies. After few months, he tore up the agreement so that the war began. Vietnam fight for their liberty so that Vietnamese military and civilians carried forward the spirit of decisive victory to against French by launching the guerrilla warfare and sports warfare. Finally, Vietnam defeated the French.

Chapter 1 or 2 from Herring textbook explain more detail then video at that time. We know that Vietnam won this war especially the communist party won the Dien Bien Phu, not the whole war. Therefore, Vietnam is divided into North and South which are communism and non- communism. Ngo Dinh Diem is the leader of non-communism in South Vietnam. He suppressed religious and political groups also against communists. He welcomed U.S. aid and assistance but oppose the direction of military intervention.

In fact, at the beginning of the war between Vietnam and France, the United States has indirectly involved for the ten years of strategic investment. Because of China and the Soviet Union support the North, the war is deadlocked. The United States directly involved which is giving up Ngo Dinh Diem in order to make the Vietnamese military government hold the power. But there is still no change in the situation.

That's what I learned from all the materials. Both materials were agreed on the information.

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Re: America's Longest War sharing

by [Maria Cecilia Contreras Sanchez](#) - Friday, April 13, 2018, 8:18 PM

I like the way you give your explanation and the details of your un
I also agree with you about the book. What I meant is that, the boo

Sum of ratings: 1 (1) 1

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One is like Propaganda

by [Miles Arnold](#) - Saturday, April 14, 2018, 9:20 PM

A simple look at both "America's Longest War" and the two short documentaries reveal two very different approaches to describing the start of American involvement in Vietnam. The book takes a very dry neutral look at Americas early support of the Viet-Minh and the policy change that took place after FDR left office that ultimately led to the U.S. involvement in the conflict. etc.

Meanwhile, the doc's are more patriotic, and state that the U.S. had to go into Vietnam to protect the region from the spread of communism and that it was a noble cause.

There is no effort to truly explain the real reasons for the overall conflict, which starts well before the U.S. had troops on the ground.

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1

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America and War Propaganda

by [Kate Adkisson](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 10:51 PM

Miles,

The documentary Why Vietnam was almost satirical concerning the amount of ethnocentric and propagandic material. At 30:55 minutes in, a screen says "Presented by the Directorate for Armed Forces Information and Education", followed by the seal for the United States Department of Defense. Their use of imagery and music to shift opinion is telling, using upbeat and triumphant music when America or soldiers are involved. When footage of Vietnamese civilians is shown, we hear stereotypical "Asian" sounding music. When communism or the Viet Cong are discussed, such as at 8:40 minutes in, menacing and villain-ish music begins to play. The narrator warns the viewers at 9:00 minutes in, saying "The communist plan also includes acts of terror and subversion to disrupt the legitimate government". We know from the readings and the history presented that the South Vietnamese government was anything but legitimate, as foreign powers had their noses stuck firmly in the business of the appointment and rejection (by coup) of political figures. As the film's production date says 1965 on the website, this type of media is predictable from our government in hopes of swaying people's hearts and minds into supporting a war that most didn't even know what was for, but knew they were there to win. Win what, however, I'm not sure.

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3

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The Geneva Agreement

by [Caitlin Strickland](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 1:12 PM

One of the most prominent developments in Why Vietnam? and Chapter 1 of the Herring book is discussion of the Geneva Conference, an incredibly important moment in the history of Vietnam, communism, the end of French colonialism, and US involvement. It simultaneously ended French colonialism in Vietnam and was a win for the communist world, causing over a million people to flee southward rather than live under a communist regime (Why Vietnam? 5:18). The "temporary division" separating of Vietnam at the 17th parallel symbolized a real separation between communist and non-communist Vietnam (Why Vietnam? 6:26). The Geneva conference marked the end

of the war as the French were defeated in the battle of Dien Bien Phu, and they recognized the independence of the state of Vietnam (Herring 44, 47). It was decided that Vietnam would be parted and have national elections, but they only occurred in South Vietnam (Herring 47, Why Vietnam? 7:16). This conference marked the end of the First Indochina War between France and Vietnam, but furthered direct US involvement in Vietnam as they decided to “assume responsibility for defending Laos, Cambodia, and non-Communist Vietnam. They did this by advising the South Vietnamese, providing economic aid, and building a strong military force built to enforce the border between the two Vietnam and fight subversion and aggression from Communists in the North (Herring 48). All players in this conference compromised, including France, the United States, the Soviet Union, China, and Vietnam. The United States pushed other European forces to commit to keeping Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam independent and free from Communism (Herring 48). The US’s reaction was mixed; they both considered Geneva a communist victory, but gave them an opportunity to build up non-Communist forces in South Vietnam (Herring, 50). They also welcomed the end to French colonialism, which they opposed morally (Herring, 50). I found the two sources agreed on the information. What was interesting was in “America’s Longest War,” the text focuses mostly on the Geneva agreement’s impact on the politics of the United States and their involvement, while the Why Vietnam? video focused on how Geneva changed life for the people of both Vietnams.

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Why Vietnam: greed or freedom?

by [Kate Adkisson](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 7:32 PM

Before this class, I had heard of Vietnam of course, possibly studied it for an hour one time in History in Highschool, but I never really understood the “what?”, never mind the “why?”. My understanding of Vietnam and our involvement before this term was limited to knowing that we went over there to help the Vietnamese people fight the Vietcong. That was about it. I never thought about the whole scope of it, the impact not only in regards to human loss but the economic toll that this war supplied.

Curious about the American understanding of Vietnam, I asked my mother the other day, born in 1968, if she knew why we went there. She responded, (confused and a tad flustered and unsure), “We went there to help people fight against other people in their country, the communists.” That was the extent of what she understood too. While she didn’t come of age during the thick of the war, she grew up in the years following and remained somewhat ignorant of why we were really there. And this small experiment I’ve conducted bothers me because I know if I tested it on a larger scale, the results would most likely come out to be people are ignorant about the true causes of our involvement of the war

INVOLVEMENT OF THE WAR.

Why did mothers and fathers say goodbye to their sons, young men just starting their lives, only to say goodbye permanently shortly after. The reading America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam by George C. Herring tells us that from 1955 to 1960 alone, the United States "poured more than 1.5 billion in economic and military assistance into South Vietnam" (Herring, p.70). Why? Why the bloodshed and the loss? It comes down to problems the world runs into repeatedly, such greed, colonialism, and stubborn powerful male leaders.

In the Film "Why Viet-Nam", viewers are greeted by President Johnson addressing a letter written by the mother of drafted American soldier, who inquires simply, "Why Vietnam?". Johnson responds coolly, "Americans have gone to far lands to fight for freedom. We have learned that a terrible and a brutal cost that retreat does not bring safety, and weakness does not bring peace. And it is this lesson that has brought us to Vietnam" (Why Vietnam?, at 3:35)

Freedom, of course freedom. America; champion of liberty, spreader of democracy. This explanation seems to be missing giant chunks of reality, and while "freedom" may have been the reason in the minds of some, the reasons span back a millenia.

Through the readings, discussions, and videos this class has provided, my understanding of what got us into Vietnam is rapidly evolving and deepening. My long story short explanation currently is after years of wars, French colonialism and exploitation, and general unrest, the Vietnamese people (with the help of Communist powers such as China and the USSR) try to overthrow their French occupiers and aggressors in order to live in peace under their own terms, not the terms of outsiders. That didn't sit well with America, who was allied with France and benefitted from Southeast Asia's natural resources. As explained in America's Longest War, "In Southeast Asia joined The Communist bloc, the United States and its allies would be denied access to important markets. Southeast Asia was the world's largest producer of natural rubber and a vital source of oil, tin, tungsten, and other strategic commodities" (Herring, p. 21-22). Reeling from the Cold War and wary of Communism, the involvement of China and the USSR only made the American government more paranoid, afraid they would lose Indochina to Communism, thus delivering a blow to American power and pride on the global scale. Fearing communism and economic loss, the United States adopts the hero or protector status of Indochina, providing support to the French-controlled South Vietnamese government in the fight against godless communism, also known as the loss of profit from natural resources exploited by a foreign country.

Why then, Vietnam? On page 24 of America's Longest War, Herring explains, "The strategic reassessment of 1950 ended American "neutrality" in the war in Indochina. In

February, the United States formally recognized the Bao Dai government. In early March, it committed itself to furnish France military and economic aid for the war against the Viet Minh. The principles upon which these decisions were based would form the basis for U.S policy in Vietnam for years and in time would lead to large scale U.S involvement” (Herring, p.24).

Why then, Vietnam, according to President Johnson? In the film Why Vietnam, Johnson explains, “ I do not find it easy to send flower of our youth, our finest young men into battle. But as long as there are men that hate and destroy, we must have the courage to resist. We did not choose to be the guardians of the gate, but there is no one else. Nor would surrender in Vietnam bring peace, because we learned from Hitler at Munich that success only feeds the appetite of aggression. Moreover, we are in Vietnam to fulfill one of the most solemn pledges of the American nation. Three presidents...over 11 years have committed themselves and have promised to help defend this small and valliant nation. Strengthened by that promise the people of South Vietnam have fought for many long years, thousands of them have died, thousands of them crippled and scarred by war, and we cannot just now dishonor our word, or abandon our commitment, or leave those who believed us and who trusted us to the terror and repression and murder that would follow. This then, my fellow Americans, is why we’re in Vietnam” (Why Vietnam, at 28:38).

Why were we there? Why did we stay there for so long? Pledges of democracy, or paranoia of loss of power? I hope in the coming weeks the readings and videos and conversations will shed light on all our opinions regarding exactly why Vietnam.

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