

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

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Week 2 Forum Patriots and PBS

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Patriots and PBS

by [Joe Escobar](#) - Saturday, April 7, 2018, 10:16 AM

This thread is for discussions on the Patriots and PBS 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: Patriots and PBS

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How did the soldiers and Vietnamese view each other?

by [Delia Bura](#) - Tuesday, April 10, 2018, 9:40 PM



by [Daisy Burge](#) - Tuesday, April 10, 2018, 3:40 PM

One strong connection I noticed between passages of the Appy book and the documentary series was the almost inherent distrust that the Vietnamese, both Southern and Northern, had towards the United States. Bernard Trainor, an American commander, asserts that the hope early in the war was to work with civilians and win the "hearts and minds" of the Vietnamese people, but that "hope was destroyed by the South Vietnamese government's failure to gain the people's allegiance and Westmoreland's strategy of search-and-destroy" (Appy 7). The authoritarianism endured by the Vietnamese under the Southern governments destroyed some level of trust between American soldiers and the Vietnamese. There were strong cultural divisions between the Vietnamese and the Americans as well.

The Northern distrust and hatred of the United States was intense and has had lasting political and social ramifications. Tran Thi Gung, a revolutionary of Cu Chi, says that people in her village "were always brutalized by the police and puppet soldiers" (Appy 16), and goes on to assert that she does not regret her actions in the war because she was fundamentally fighting off invaders - "Since the Americans came to my country, I don't feel guilty" (Appy 19).

The inherent distrust and misunderstanding between all forces in the war was hugely significant in understanding the methods of war and diplomacy in the Vietnam war. Guerilla warfare tactics used by the Communists in the war reflected a deep mistrust of Westerners that extended to political diplomacy as well.

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Re: How did the soldiers and Vietnamese view each other?

by [James Alewine](#) - Friday, April 13, 2018, 6:59 AM

I do agree there was a deep seeded distrust for the Americans, but did they ever trust the Americans? The Vietnamese had been fighting other countries for centuries in order to gain their independence. Why would it be different with the U.S.?

They had been fighting the Chinese, the French, and the Japanese before they had to deal with the Americans. "As the war in Europe drew to a close the U.S. and it's allies turned to Asia and the war against Japan. What was needed was intelligence. The Viet Minh believed allied statements supporting the rights of oppressed people.

They had given the allies information about Japanese troop movements, so the Americans turned to the Viet Minh and its leader Ho Chi Minh." (PBS 20:30) They believed the U.S. would support the oppressed and in reality I believe that is what we "all" believe as Americans today. But let's not be fooled by sappy rhetoric!

The Americans came to protect it's industry in 1945. Oil, tin and rubber (Herring pg. 11) were needed to make products back in the United States to sell to the French, plus after Pearl Harbor we recognized the importance of the regions sea lanes. We must give the Vietnamese the benefit of the doubt, they had to know our true intentions.

When "hope was destroyed by the South Vietnamese government's failure to gain the people's allegiance and Westmoreland's strategy of search-and-destroy" (Appy pg.7) this was proof that the Americas intentions were not as they seemed.

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Re: How did the soldiers and Vietnamese view each other?

by [Tyler Cannon](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 8:41 PM

Can you really blame them for not trusting America? Just like the PBS film said at 20:45 the northern Vietnamese were denied the election they were promised at Geneva and mixed with news police and the events at Diem lead to them wanting to go back to war. Can you really blame them though? If you were promised one thing and then all of a sudden the other party turns around and does the opposite does that make you not trust them? To me it sure does. To the northern Vietnamese we look like a bunch of lying colonialist and then you have Nikita Khrushchev who is saying things like "down with colonialism" and "they will not be able to strangle the voice of the people." (PBS, 21:12). If we were to forget what we know about Vietnam, the Cold War, and the difference between Capitalism and Communism and put ourselves in the shoes of a northern Vietnamese witnessing these events, would we really ever trust the Americans or have any remorse for lighting them away from our land? I don't think that many would be able to say that they would trust America due to its track record at the time and the inspiration from the Soviets.

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1

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Bernard Trainor's early experiences and PBS

by [Tyler Cannon](#) - Tuesday, April 10, 2018, 8:52 PM

The most significantly related story from the Appy book would have to be the story from Bernard Trainor. In this story, Trainor talks about his time working in a covert mission to help train and inform the southern Vietnamese against the northern Vietnamese. Just as pointed out in the PBS episode Trainor recollected that "Most of them were northerners and Catholics who had come south, dissatisfied with the Communist regime." (Appy, 4). The PBS video gives a figure as high as 900,000 northern Catholics moved south and that only a handful had moved in the opposite direction. (Vietnam a Television History Episode 2, 7:32). This spike in southern Vietnamese from the north also comes from the successful CIA agents using propaganda to push the migration.

Very similarly to the role of Bernard Trainor as an advisor with the "Studies and Observation Group" which was a CIA operation in which these soldier went incognito and helped train the southerners to conduct raiding parties and disrupt northern rice fields. The connection between these two stories is very strong because it gives a first hand view as to what some of these covert missions were to train the people of that country to fight for themselves and disrupt communism. One connection I can make is that this sounds a lot like our plan in the Middle East where we are focused on giving the native people the power to defend themselves so that we do not need to get involved.

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Re: Patriots and PBS Karson Laing

by [Karson Laing](#) - Tuesday, April 10, 2018, 9:13 PM

In the Patriots book George Watkins talks about when they went to Vietnam and cleared out the Que Son Valley. He says "why did all these people have to die? What was gained from it?" In the PBS video they talk about how are they able to tell if they were winning the war, but there was no real way to tell who was winning. The only way they could tell who was winning was by the amount of enemies killed. The way the Watkins talked about how they destroyed everything in their path. It was a total war.

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Re: Patriots and PBS Karson Laing

by [Jacob Egan](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 5:57 PM

This is a good point. How do you tell who's winning a war? At any second the "leading" side could change. Look at the battle of Dien Bien Phu. The French lost 1500 soldiers while the Vietnamese lost 8000 (51:20 into Vietnam a Television

History), but the French lost. Same goes for the war between the US and Viet Cong. Viet Cong lost 1.1 million soldiers ([Hyperlink](#)) while the US lost 58,000 ([Hyperlink](#)), but the US lost. So how do you know who's winning a war? In my opinion you don't know until it's over.

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United States Colonialist... I Think Not!

by [James Alewine](#) - Tuesday, April 10, 2018, 9:43 PM

Coming into this class I really didn't know what to expect. My understanding of the Vietnam war was, and has been, based on vague assumptions created from blockbuster movies I saw as a kid. *Platoon* and *Full Metal Jacket* are as close as I've ever really wanted to get to it. I knew it was a terrible conflict, a part of history that almost was better left unseen. A war that turned our young men into something unfathomable and I never understood why. That being said... after watching the first few frames of the PBS special, I had it wrong.

In trying to understand exactly why the U.S. found itself in a war with Vietnam in the first place, we must look back, way back. Colonialism was a way of life for the French in the nineteenth century, to the Americans, it was a dirty word. During the development of the United States, Americans were strongly opposed in colonizing other countries (even though we had just taken land from the natives and made it our own), to colonize another country, was just plain wrong.

This was made apparent during the Philippine War that happened in 1899-1902. Americans did not see themselves as Colonialist, but more as Liberators.

"Annexation of the Philippines by the United States was felt to be justified by those in the U.S. government and media who supported the conflict through the use of moralistic oration. Stuart Creighton Miller writes 'Americans altruistically went to war with Spain to liberate Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Filipinos from their tyrannical yoke. If they lingered on too long in the Philippines, it was to protect the Filipinos from European predators waiting in the wings for an American withdrawal and to tutor them in American-style democracy.'" (Miller) Through this concept, and believing it was up to us, as Americans, to liberate and install our governing system which would allow other countries to enjoy independence and liberty, is the main reason the United States found itself stuck in such a predicament in 1969.

One last point I want to make. After World War I, Ho Chi Minh went to plead his case at the Versailles conference to try and get help with his situation for his country, but no one listened. I believe that this one event set the ball in motion for the Vietnam War. If Ho Chi Minh's voice would have been recognized that day, a civilized country may have helped the Vietnamese gain their independence, and Ho would never have sought out the communist party. It's amazing how one event can dictate the lives of millions.

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Re: United States Colonialist... I Think Not!

by [James Alewine](#) - Friday, April 13, 2018, 6:03 AM

In addition, " ...when the Paris Peace Conference ending World War I ignored his petition for democratic reforms for Vietnam, he found 'our path to liberty' in Russian revolutionary leader Vladimir Lenin's treaties on imperialism" (Herring pg.6)

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Phan Xuan Sinh & Dien Bien Phu

by [Jacob Egan](#) - Wednesday, April 11, 2018, 7:18 PM

The story and event that I find most significantly relatable are the story of Phan Xuan Sinh (Appy pg. 25) and the battle of Dien Bien Phu (television history min 42). It is not necessarily the story themselves but what the stories and events show. The knowledge I have gained isn't just about the triumphs and deaths in these stories, but from the passion and love the Vietnamese people feel for their home. In the battle of Dien Bein Phu 51,000 Vietnamese soldiers crossed the mountains carrying supplies on their backs (Television history min 44). After battling for days, they then put all their time and effort into building trenches (Television History min 47). Dien Bien Phu costed Vietnamese 8,000 soldiers (television history min 51). They were doing all of this to protect their home. From soldiers to citizens, it seemed all Vietnamese people were loyal to their land. While people were fighting, others were just trying to survive. In the Appy book Phan Xuan Sinh talks about how he saw an old couple living in a free-fire zone. After bringing them to safety and then burning their house down so they wouldn't return, he eventually found that they had gone back. He asked them why and they said "All my ancestors are buried here and this is our land. We're not going to leave." (Appy pg. 26) This is the reason why I think the two stories relate, because of the passion shown from both stories.

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Sum of ratings:3 (1) [Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Story 1**by [Spencer Gutierrez](#) - Friday, April 13, 2018, 8:16 PM

I felt that the first story I read had strong similarities to the videos that I viewed. As the general said the military was given little intelligence which made for wrongful killings and made the war seem to be wrong. At the time the main aim of the government was to rid the Vietnamese of communism which was seen unacceptable and were doing horrible things.

Sum of ratings:0 (1) [Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Buddhist crisis**by [Alysia Knapp](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 7:58 PM

Episode 2 of the documentary discusses how Diem forced Catholicism on his people around 1960. This lead to the Buddhist population protesting, first by “demonstration” and then by self immolation. As this protested continued and grew, and more people felt disconnected from Diem, eventually plans for the coup started.

Le Lieu Browne shares her story beginning on page 72 of Part 2 of the Appy book. Rather than give an outsiders observation regarding the religious and political tension in south Vietnam at that time, she gives her personal experience. As a censor for Diem’s Ministry of Information, she said in order to be considered for a promotion she had to convert from Buddhism to Catholicism, because of Diem’s rule. Referring to the protesting Buddhists, she says Diem was “harassing demonstrators and arresting monks” and called it the “Buddhist crisis.”(pg 74)

She mentions how Diem’s sister in law, known as Madame Nhu, called a Buddhist who performed self immolation a “barbecued monk.” This only spread more fire and tension. Browne blames Madame Nhu’s naïveté partly on the influence of American media at that time. She says “...the Americans never tried to understand our culture, customs, and sensitivity.”

So based on this, it seems like the film places most of the blame regarding the Buddhist crisis on Diem. While Browne does share her frustrations with Diem, she also accuses the United States’ misunderstanding of the Vietnamese culture. The Buddhist crisis is a good representation of why this all didn’t work out. Diem didn’t understand charisma or how to connect with his people, and the United States didn’t understand the Vietnamese culture. Diem thought he could make certain rules and everyone would have to comply without understanding the repercussions of doing so. The United States thought they could train the Vietnamese however they wanted to

The United States thought they could train the Vietnamese however they wanted to without having a better understanding of their culture. The whole situation was based on too many misunderstandings.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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