

Due date: Saturday, 14 November 2009, 10:10 PM

Last edited: Saturday, 14 November 2009, 10:29 AM (480 words)

“The War of What Ifs”

The Vietnam War was full of *what ifs*, so some people thought we could have ended the war *if* we did this or we could have pulled out *if* we did that. To me the Vietnam War is like a maze, there are a lot of twists and turns and when you don't get the results that you wanted it leaves you wondering *what if* we would have done this or we should have done that. The great thing about history is that you can learn from your mistakes, and I feel that we should have learned a lot from that point in time.

Walt Rostow (p.124, Appy) believed that the U.S. could have won the war if the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff would have taken his advice on how to cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail and “shrivel the Communists out of Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam”. Rostow also wanted to take the city of Vinh hostage and demand the North Vietnamese to leave the south. I don't think that taking a North Vietnamese city hostage would deter the North, because they were even willing to take bombings to reunify Vietnam so they would probably accept the city of Vinh as a temporary loss.

Another *what if* came from Anne Morrison's account (p.150, Appy). Anne Morrison's husband Norm burned himself to death outside Robert McNamara's office as a protest. In 1995 Anne read McNamara's book in which he said the war was wrong and then wrote him a letter, and then they started talking and she forgave him. Although she forgave him she still wonders *what if* McNamara would have publicly acknowledged that the war was wrong and that we should withdraw, and how many lives could have been saved including her husbands.

The last account that I am going to include is Truong My Hoa (p.228, Appy). Hoa was imprisoned for 11 years because the Saigon Military Tribunal accused her of disrupting order and national security. While in South Vietnam prisons she underwent many horrible things such as torture and was forced to live in a small cage with five other women for a whole year. The prison tried to break their will and get them to reveal secrets about communist organizations but no matter how much they were tortured they always stood strong. They were thinking that if the U.S. public could persuade the policy makers that what was going on there was wrong the war might end. My question is *what if* we would have realized earlier that we couldn't break the will of the Revolutionaries and the North Vietnamese? How many lives could have been saved? I believe that this is one of the major lessons that we should have taken out of this war.

Close this window

 [Moodle Docs for this page](#)