

## Historiographical Narrative

The historiographical view of different aspects of the Vietnam War potentially vary greatly due to evolving understanding of the War, and its components, from different perspectives. In the case of my project, Buddhism and self-immolation were not familiar forms of protest for Western peoples, and our interpretation of such things evolve as we continue to further understand the culture.

### **Buddhist population**

In the first place, many scholars believe that Buddhism wasn't trusted by the American Government to be the religion that should head the state of South Vietnam given the threat of encroaching communism. Instead, Ngo Dinh Diem (a Roman Catholic) was put in power by the support of many influential political and religious US agents (Young, 42). Historian Marilyn Young would claim that this was setting the stage of political, social and religious disaster due to the fact that 85% of the population in Vietnam was Buddhist. On the other hand, historian Piero Gheddo claims that in fact the Buddhist population in Vietnam was at about 4 million which puts the figure at less than 30% of the total population (Gheddo, 187).

### **Political or Religious?**

This leads into another disagreement that Gheddo has with many other scholars such as Young and Christian Appy – under the Diem regime, Buddhism enjoyed the fullest amount of religious freedom to date in Vietnam. Buddhist opposition to the regime had quickly turned “into something clearly political” (Gheddo, 185) – and consequently, Diem's regimes repression of the Buddhist movement was strictly political, not religious. Gheddo points out that the major oppositional force to the Diem regime were the upper class people (that mostly lived in urban

settings) because they were the demographic who most sharply felt the restriction on political affairs under Diem. Buddhism had been noted to replace Confucianism as the prominent religion of the upper classes during the “cultural and religious awakening of Buddhism” (Gheddo, 178) – tying Buddhism to the major political opponent of the Diem regime. It is also important to understand that if Diem’s repression of Buddhism was political, that would mean that he feared communist initiatives were acting through the Buddhist movement. Gheddo asserts that communism easily infiltrated Buddhism because of Buddhism’s extreme neutrality on the issue (189), and because of the unorganized structure of the Mahayana Buddhist society – that is to say that a bonze at a pagoda could be a communist, and disperse the teachings among the people who use that pagoda. Interestingly enough, Gheddo also points out that communism was able to infiltrate into some Catholic organizations as well; however, becoming a bonze is much easier than becoming involved with the highly structured Catholic actions.

### **Buddhist Communists**

Historian B. R. Chatterji understands the spread of communism in Vietnam as an alternative to capitalism. During the time of colonial reign over Vietnam, the people associated their rulers with capitalism, and revolt from them, by default, meant revolt against capitalism. People like Ho Chi Minh, who Chatterji considers the architect of the independence movement of Vietnam, was educated in Marxist doctrine. Shawn McHale asserted that through the education of the people, neologisms would be able to have more of an effect on the public in their acceptance and understanding of communism. Minh’s speech on the Hanoi radio on October 22, 1961 paints the picture of the view of the USSR’s impact on Minh, and his effort in opposition of the French (and the West).

### **Anti-Communist Buddhists**

However, assuming that Diem's regime repressed and fought the Buddhist movement because of its communist ties is contested by Appy. Appy makes a distinction between the people who were opposed to communism for political or self-interest reasons, and those who were opposed to communism due to moral conviction. Anti-communism movements that were upheld by American aided organizations in South Vietnam ended when American aid stopped coming in – these people were easy opponents to Communism. Anti-communist Buddhists, on the other hand, posed a much larger threat to communism because of their ideological and philosophical reasons and convictions. Appy claims that communists feared anti-Communist Buddhists because their political and social efforts were based on conviction, and were not easily persuaded.

### **Diem against the Buddhists**

Still, scholars debate whether Diem was strictly acting out of political necessity in his repression of the Buddhist movement. Charles A. Joiner wrote the article "South Vietnam's Buddhist Crisis: Organization or Charity, Dissidence, and Unity" in 1964. This article does not share the contemporary media's view of the Buddhist's protests in Vietnam – that Diem was innocently trying to fight back a disgruntled religious group. Joiner explains the side of the Buddhist protestors and exposes the propaganda used by the Diem government. For instance, during escalated events in Hue 1963 over the right for Buddhists to fly their flag, a grenade was thrown. The government accepts that the grenade came from the crowd and was even *somehow* identified as being thrown by a communist. The article goes on to then expose acts of the Diem's government such as using tear gas grenades and opening fire on the civilian protestors – details that were left out of the description of that day's events by many Western public media sources. Joiner's article contrasts Gheddo's claims by explaining how the Diem regime was oppressive

and vindictive against the Buddhist community; this shows a much different view of Diem than Gheddo endorses. This concept implies the question: how much political attribution to the Buddhist movement was Diem's propaganda?

### **Broader Context of Buddhism and Vietnamese Culture: Western Perception**

It is important to understand the global (mainly Western) perception of the self-immolations that were in protest of events happening during the Vietnam War, and the War itself.

Many of the newspapers that I have read from the early 1960's depict the Buddhist protests as militant and their self-immolations as outrageous. The titles of these articles, such as "2 More Buddhist Suicides by Burning in Vietnam Protest" or "Buddhists Remain Dissatisfied", poses the Buddhists as reckless, disorganized and needy people. Although there is little mention of the oppressive nature of Diem's regime in the news. Gheddo claims that Diem was someone that in fact tolerated the most religious freedom that Buddhism has ever been allowed to experience in Vietnam. Gheddo claims that Diem donated millions of dollars to the construction of pagodas across Vietnam as well as was willing to meet with representatives of the Buddhist community – giving the Buddhists a new political strength and freedom. However Gheddo, K. M. Fierkle, Andrew Rotter, and Robert Topmiller agree that Western journalists, media, and people did not know enough about the culture and people of Vietnam to understand the purpose of self-immolation. Here there is common ground amongst historians – in order for someone to understand self-immolation as an act of protest, you would also have to understand the societal and religious structure of Vietnam. Rotter for instance, explains that religion in Vietnam is not the same as the Western world understands religion. Also in a way, Rotter describes the religious realm of Vietnam as being the state realm as well. This then brings in Gheddo's idea of political aspect of the protests into play – if religion is the state (as Rotter puts it) then religious protest

would have to be, by default, political, while at the same time maintaining religious integrity.

This is a fascinating concept that is hard to grasp for cultures that have distinct separation between different facets of social, political, and religious life.

### **Self-Immolation: Sacrifice or Suicide? Religious or Political?**

Sallie B. King's article, "They Who Burned Themselves For Peace: Quaker and Buddhist Self-Immolators During the Vietnam War", discusses the act of immolation in a much different way than newspaper articles in the 1960's. During the 60's this kind of self-sacrifice was mostly just shocking and not understood by the American public. A major question that newspapers couldn't answer was: why burn yourself? King offers an understanding of self-immolation that may illustrate a different perspective. I have inserted a quote from her article that illustrates the symbolism of self-immolation.

"I offer my body as a torch  
To dissipate the dark  
To waken love among men  
To give peace to Vietnam  
The one who burns herself for peace"

The idea here is that person who burns themselves is a beacon of light for the rest of humanity.

Topmiller is in agreement with King's view of the greater meaning of this self-sacrifice. In an interview, Thich Nhat Hanh explains that self-immolations are acts of love, and not despair – they are not suicides.

Topmiller points out that by 1966, US officials such as President Johnson viewed self-immolations as a maturing process, and as a means of media manipulation instead of a religious

demonstration for peace. This is in accordance with Rotter's point that the single self-immolation in 1963 captured international attention, whereas "the self-immolations of twelve Buddhist nuns and priests on November 2, 1975...received scarcely any notice either in the United States or anywhere else" (341). This is testament to the perpetuated misunderstanding of self-immolations and the Buddhist movement.

## Background Narrative

### **Communism and Colonial Reign in Vietnam**

Communism, however not explicitly central to my project, is implicitly important to understanding some of the concepts that are related. Since Buddhism is often tied to communism in scholarship regarding this topic, I think it is important to discuss Communism in Vietnam.

Communism in Vietnam became a prevalent political and social force in the 1920's. When political activism against the colonial powers started to grow, communism was seen as a way to gain support for the resistance.

Communism has been associated with Buddhism in multiple ways. First, during the beginning of the anti-colonial movements against the French, communism was a political form of resistance against capitalism (which the West had represented). In this way, communism was an alternative to capitalism. It can be simply expressed as: anti-colonialism led to anti-western revolt, and anti-western implies being anti-capitalism; this invites socialism and communism as to fill the void of political structure. Figures like Ho Chi Minh are seen as being architects of the Vietnamese independence from colonial power. In the case of Minh, being educated meant communist and Marxist doctrine.

### **Communism and Buddhism**

It is fair to say that the Viet Minh, NFL and Communist Parties had a somewhat ambivalent relationship with Buddhism. Buddhist organizations in particular are variant in their relationship to Communism and/or Diem. It is widely understood by scholars that one main element of Buddhism that made it especially susceptible to infiltration of Communism was its neutrality to it. Although, there are cases of anti-Communist Buddhists which scholars have identified as some of the greatest opponents to Communism, due to their moral conviction and philosophy.

On the other hand, US policy makers in 1966 such as Walt Rostow, Lodge Maxwell Taylor and President Johnson, started to pin communism to Buddhism in order to make international policy (as well as the legitimization of US military action against) regarding the Buddhist crisis easier to pass. These men cunningly used the fear of losing South Vietnam to Communism, as a way to get other policy makers on board with actions that needed to be taken against the Buddhists. Reasons for their detestation of the Buddhist movement was attributed to the international recognition that their demonstrations were gaining – the iconic image being the self-immolations. Coupled with a roaring Civil Rights movement in the US itself, the anti-repression sentiment of the Buddhist movement was causing more problems with policy on Vietnam, and communism. The politicization of the movement by the U.S. may have caused a misguided manifestation of Western perception of the Buddhist Crisis.

### **Religion in Vietnam: Buddhism**

Religion in Vietnam is not what religion is in the West. Western journalists, media and officials didn't understand the full motivation and social impact of such demonstrations, as well as the culture of Vietnam.

In America, there are a variety of institutions that function in various separate ways and serve different aspects of our lives. For instance we have churches that satisfy our religious needs, government that tends to the needs of the state, patriarchal family structures, trade unions and fraternities – each of these institutions offer individual organizations and commanded different loyalties. In Vietnam, there were three institutions: family, village and state – the dynamics of the family modeled the structure for the village and state; there was one kind of organization (Rotter, 317).

Until European contact, Vietnam had no churches or ways of distinguishing between religious life, and other facets of life. Religion (Buddhism in the case of Vietnam) was the authority of every aspect of life ranging from social, labor, political and of course religious. There was no separation between church and state.

This is probably the single biggest reason for being unable to understand the motivations and intentions of the Buddhist movement. Some historians consider it a political movement veiled by religious intentions because they saw that there were political aspects of the movement. That's because there was – but in reality, religion and political initiative were part of a singular social force of the Vietnamese culture.

### **Buddhist Protest to Diem: Political or Religious?**

This project will hopefully be helpful to discern whether the Buddhist protests are political or religious in its nature. At this point there are scholars who think that the Buddhist movement was purely a political movement, even though it is widely accepted that the Western world has misconceptions about the culture and society of Vietnamese people. Such as I have stated above, the religious structure was part of the political structure, so to say that the Buddhist movement



was political is as correct as saying it was a religious movement, and vice-versa. To bluntly answer the question: yes, the Buddhist movement was a political movement, and yes, the Buddhist movement was a religious movement.

By that same token, Diem's repression of the Buddhist movement was a political one, and a religious one.

### **Self-immolation and Self-sacrifice**

Self-immolations were at first an event that grasped the attention of the world. In this way, these demonstrations were certainly effective. It is debatable whether these self-immolations were acts of strict religious moral, or of purely political motivation. However, a vastly important fact is the act itself gained recognition for a cause – and in 1963, it more than did the job. Michael Browne, a reporter that was in Vietnam in May of 1963, was invited to be at the Thich Quang Duc self-immolation in Saigon. The fact that Browne was tipped about the event is evidence that this movement needed to gain some political recognition and traction – which brings this act and (as this act is the symbol of the movement) the movement to a political front.

That being said, religiosity is inherent in Vietnam's political structure, so it is also a religious event. Also, there is a way for the Westerner to relate to the self-immolation of these monks. Self-immolation, or, as K. M. Fierke puts it, self-sacrifice, is not a suicide. The Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh compares the self-sacrifice of these monks in Vietnam to the way Jesus allowed himself to be persecuted. This sentiment is similar to Sallie King's use of the example of Mary Dyer in 1660 – a Christian woman that was hung because of her refusal to either leave Boston, or to stop spreading her own religious views. The question in King's article is: is there a

“difference between death at one’s own hand, and death at the hands of others into which one willingly walks” (King, 129)?

The practice of self-immolation and self-sacrifice is ancient, and has been used as a way to peacefully bring recognition to a cause without forcing anyone else’s life.

Perhaps further proof that this demonstration is a religious one, is the fact that the self-immolations kept on happening, even after the initial media shock factor died down. By 1966, the self-immolations were pawned off as cheap media manipulation tactics – beyond these potential political gains, religious motivation kept these demonstrations alive.

## Primary Source Bibliography

**“2 More Buddhists Suicides by Burning In Vietnam Protest: 2 BUDDHISTS DIE, VIETNAM SUICIDES.” *New York Times*. August 16, 1963.**

**<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.uconn.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/116325280/abstract/14147C33BF740B8FECD/4?accountid=14518>.**

The article focuses on the self-immolations of Buddhist monks during a protest, however I think the title sets an intriguing tone for the article – *Suicide* rather than *sacrifice*. It makes the monks, and their actions, seem less important, and denotes their deaths as non-consequential. This article can also shed some interesting light on the main-stream American understanding and perception of the self-immolation practice that has become, comparatively at least, more relevant.

**Times, DAVID HALBERSTAM Special to The New York. “Militant Young Buddhists Gain Strong Political Role in Vietnam.” *New York Times*. July 25, 1963.**

**<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.uconn.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/116607279/abstract/14147C33BF740B8FECD/5?accountid=14518>.**

The article focuses on the effect the Buddhist population is having on the southern Vietnamese political scene. It contradicts the contemporary conception of Buddhists as complacent and docile beings – one of the reasons why they were not trusted to lead the Southern Vietnamese front against communism. It can also serve as a piece of irony in that way; the American politicians didn’t want the Buddhists to be politically powerful because they doubted the potential Buddhist fortitude against invading political and cultural systems (such as communism or Diem).

———. **“RELIGIOUS DISPUTE STIRS SOUTH VIETNAM: Buddhist Struggle Poses Major Threat to Diem Rule And the War Effort Against the Vietcong Tentative Accord Major Question Limitations Cited Ominous Flags.” *New York Times*. June 16, 1963, sec. The Week In Review.**

One of the major themes that I want this project to exemplify is the folly that the American policy makers exhibited while trying to construct a political entity in southern Vietnam. This article regards the pressing issue of politically active Buddhists in South Vietnam. American fear of the weakness of Buddhism as come back to bite them in the legal political butt. I also like how this article uses the stigma that the Buddhists are helping the Vietcong cause – it seems that the newspaper is trying to stir up some anti-Buddhist sentiment.

———. **“The Bhuddhist Crisis in Vietnam: A Collision of Religion, World Politics and Pride: 2 SIDES TOUGHEN IN 4-MONTH TEST New Militancy of Monks and Sternness of Regime Set Stage for Final Clash Upheaval in 4 Months 10 or 11 Million Buddhists Many Discerned Unrest Feeling in Hue Strong American Counseled Peace Church and State Blur Others Join Buddhists Mrs. Nhu Deplores Pact Monks See An Omen Survey Finds Discontent Provocation a Goal Priests Stay in Pagodas Quintuplets ‘Satisfactory’.” *New York Times*. September 11, 1963.**

**<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.uconn.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/116313683/abstract/14147999FD757E01415/19?accountid=14518>.**

There is a photo used in this article that I like very much. It shows a large group of Buddhist monks standing in opposition the southern Vietnamese police force – a monk had immolated himself in protest of government policies and the group of Buddhists were trying to recover his body. This picture is a visual representation of the Buddhist ability to take a physical stand for their values – a point that might be contrary to popular contemporary belief. There is a quote used in the beginning of the article by a Vietnamese professor where he explains his view of what he thinks Americans think of the Vietnamese.

**Times, HEDRICK SMITH Special to The New York. “SAIGON BUDDHISTS REVIVING ACTIVITY: Demand More Active Role Under New Government Convention Scheduled Buddhist Riots Cited Anti-Diem Action Legalized New Envoy to U.S. Indicated.” *New York Times*. December 27, 1963.**

**<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.uconn.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/116334516/abstract/14147B6F99747C38F58/11?accountid=14518>.**

In the middle of this article, there is a quote by a young political activist that that is trying to inform the local youth on the importance of proper political and social reconstruction. He uses the word revolution and, more importantly, he claims that Buddhism should be the backing force of the new government. I see this article as the US’s Americanization of the situation in Vietnam due to the nature of the explanation of South Vietnam’s current issues – this way of understanding the Vietnamese probably further disillusioned the American public.

**Vecsey, George. “Buddhism in America: Buddihism.” *New York Times*. June 3, 1979, sec. The New York Times Magazine.**

**<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.uconn.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/120809330/abstract/14147999FD757E01415/3?accountid=14518>.**

This article that was published at the “end of the show” (so to speak) talks about a community of Americans that have adopted Buddhism. Although this article doesn’t pertain to the Vietnamese, it does still have signs of the way Americans viewed the Buddhist religion. Language like, “A small group of Americans, following the ‘Pathless Path’, is quietly making Buddhism apart of our life” or “Americans are quietly practicing some form of Buddhism”, are examples of the persistent ignorance and/or lack of respect for the religion and its potential significance/influence. I think this article can be instrumental in exemplifying a lack of progression in understanding the Buddhist perspective (and in some ways the Vietnamese people). I mean to tie it back to the idea that the American public, by in large, has (at this point) yet to understand the culture of the Vietnamese people. This is, in many ways, critical to the US failure in Vietnam.

**Helble. “112. Telegram From the Consulate at Hue to the Department of State.” [history.state.gov](http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v03/d112), May 9, 1963. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v03/d112>.**

This is a document from Hue, Vietnam pertaining to a notorious protest outside a radio station that turned violent in 1963. This source can provide a “snap shot” of the scene in Vietnam at this point. Aside from details on amounts of people, deaths, injured, and so on – this document can be helpful in my background building for Buddhist protest developments.

**Rusk, Dean. “115. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam.”**  
**history.state.gov, May 9, 1963. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v03/d115>.**

This is short telegram, but it is a powerful one. It almost has a tone of fear or caution to it, which I find interesting. It urges the GVN to not be repressive against the Buddhists after what seems to have been a violent altercation during a protest. This source can be intrustmental in illustrating the growing concern over the Buddhists and their ability to “cause problems” (as it were).

**Hilsman, Roger. “256. Memorandum From the Deputy Director for Plans, Central Intelligence Agency (Helms), to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs.”**  
**history.state.gov, August 16, 1963. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v03/d256>.**

This memorandum from Hilsman, in great detail, discusses the already materializing and potential consequences of the Buddhist crisis. One of the major topics that is discussed is the idea that Diem and his administration face serious opposition by the Buddhists, and that it is possible that a Buddhist would take office. This document references the Buddhist crisis as having “decisive effect” on the Diem government. This could be useful for understanding the effects of the crisis as a context for this presentation.

**Van, Bonze Tuong, Bonze Mat Nguyen, Bonze Mat Hien, Bonze Tri Quang, Bonze Thien, and Sieu. “118. Manifesto of Vietnamese Buddhist Clergy and Faithful.”**  
**history.state.gov, May 10, 1963. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v03/d118>.**

This Manifesto illuminates the voice and the wants of a united Vietnamese Buddhist community. I think that this source can be used to give the cause of the protests and the deaths of the Buddhists a political and revolutionary tone. I like it because it is written to appeal to the anti-colonial sentiment that is a prominent force among the international community.

**Rusk, Dean. “138. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam.”**  
**history.state.gov, May 29, 1963. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v03/d138>.**

This telegram talks about how the American government thinks that Buddhist protests and demonstrations are potentially causing Diem to shift his policies – Buddhism protests are working. It also describes a projected hunger strike that the Buddhists are planning – similar form of protest to self-immolations in that it is a way for the people to take action when they are exempt from government affairs.

**Trueheart, William C. “140. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State.”**  
**history.state.gov, May 31, 1963.**  
**<http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v03/d140>.**

Trueheart’s telegram raises an interesting point about the Buddhist movement which I can’t tell is either a Buddhist ploy or incompetence – the fact that the Buddhist movement has no way to deal with official governmental affairs. Due the lack of a hierarchical structure within the Buddhist community, it is very hard for the Diem government, or other governments, to

negotiate with the Buddhist movement. Also this document raises the concern that Buddhist protests are becoming façades for other movements that aren't related to religious freedom and discrimination. That could be an interesting shade that taints the validity of the movement and questions the moral motivations.

**Rusk, Dean. "252. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam." history.state.gov, August 13, 1963. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v03/d252>.**

This telegram from Rusk is the first time that I have read something from US officials claiming that the Buddhists have legal grounds to persecute the Diem government. This document can be useful for claiming the Buddhist movements were in successful in gaining political and legal authority, where once they had none.

**Forrestal, Michael V. "249. Memorandum From Michael V. Forrestal of the National Security Council Staff to the President." history.state.gov, August 9, 1963. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v03/d249>.**

This document to the president iterates the United States governmental conception of the Vietnamese government's stand on the Buddhist crisis. This can be important to illustrate the idea that the US didn't fully understand how the GVN was dealing with the crisis' – mostly they just knew when things were erupting in violence.

**Hilsman, Roger. "246. Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Hilsman) to the Acting Secretary of State." history.state.gov, August 6, 1963. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v03/d246>.**

This memorandum provides an analysis of contemporary events revolving around the Buddhist crisis issue in Vietnam. Among other things, Hilsman's analysis states the Buddhist movement is prepared to remain strong until the Diem government is overthrown – this can be used to understand that the goals of the Buddhist movement have evolved from freedom of religious expression and from discrimination, to also include the expulsion of the Diem administration.

**"217. Special National Intelligence Estimate." history.state.gov, July 10, 1963. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v03/d217>.**

This document makes an interesting point about the effects of the Buddhist protests on the Diem government. The Buddhist crisis serves as a highlight on the faults of the Diem administration and has intensified widespread dissatisfaction with Diem. This could be a useful way to explain the (perhaps) unintended consequences and implications that the crisis had for the GVN.

**Trueheart, William C. "261. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State." history.state.gov, August 21, 1963. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v03/d261#fnref4>.**

This telegram from Trueheart illuminates the growing tension that exists among the Vietnamese military regarding the GVN's policy on the Buddhist crisis. Trueheart supposes that the Vietnamese military sees the prolonged escalation of the crisis as potentially compromising the security of the South Vietnam, especially in regard to the VC. Also, this telegram uses the VC as

a way to vilify the Buddhist movement. Trueheart proclaims that the VC has penetrated the movement. Overall major concern of this telegram is the Buddhist crisis having the potential to shake the foundation of the military structure in Vietnam due to the military officials' skeptical opinions of the manner in which the crisis is being dealt with.

**Ball, George W. "281. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam." [history.state.gov](http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v03/d281), August 24, 1963. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v03/d281>.**

In this telegram from Ball, he exposes the real initiatives of the imposed martial law in Vietnam Aug. 1963. Nhu (brother of President Diem and captain of secret police) has taken advantage of the martial law to attack Buddhists with use of secret police and other loyal secret forces. Ball iterates that Nhu's actions have placed the Vietnamese military in world view of being directly responsible for the Buddhist crisis. This telegram shows how the Buddhist movement was instrumental in the ultimate removal of Diem and his administration – Ball advised that Nhu must be removed, and if Diem refused to do it, then he should also be removed.

**"287. Voice of America Broadcast." [history.state.gov](http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v03/d287), August 26, 1963. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v03/d287>.**

This document reports that the military did not know about Nhu's use of the secret police to conquest the Buddhists. This is further testament to Nhu's fraudulent acts in regard to the oppression of the Buddhist people.

***Self-Immolation in Saigon (1963), 2012.***

**[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9sKso6h\\_Ks&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9sKso6h_Ks&feature=youtube_gdata_player).**

This is a video of the self-immolation of Thich Quang Duc in 1963. This video can provide a real time look at what the event looked like, and perhaps bring a new perspective to its understanding.

***Vietnam Burning Monk, 2008.***

**[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjpAh4rqTv4&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjpAh4rqTv4&feature=youtube_gdata_player).**

This is a reporting on the effect that the Vietnamese self-immolations has on the global-political front. This video can be a good look into how these events reached and stimulated national and international awareness.

## Annotated Secondary Source Bibliography

**King, Sallie B.** "They Who Burned Themselves for Peace: Quaker and Buddhist Self-Immolators During the Vietnam War." *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 20 (January 1, 2000): 127–150. doi:10.2307/1390328.

This document speaks on the self-immolations of Norman Morrison and Nhat Chi Ma, as well as commenting on Thich Quang Duc. Although this article mainly focuses on these people, it is meant to represent self-immolation among the Buddhist and Quaker community. This document will be useful in comparing and contrasting Buddhists and Quakers in their anti-war protests, as well as their impact on the anti-war movements.

**McHale, Shawn Frederick.** *Print and Power : Confucianism, Communism, and Buddhism in the Making of Modern Vietnam.* Southeast Asia, n.d.

This book talks about the presence and power of communism in Buddhism and Vietnam. Communism truly took hold when the people and culture were able to adapt to be able to understand it. This book touches on the concept of neologisms as a key factor in the communism adoption in the 1920's. It is important to understand the root of communism in Vietnam – communism was one of the main reasons for US involvement. Communism → US → Diem → Buddhist Crisis → ect.

**Topmiller, Robert J.** *The Lotus Unleashed the Buddhist Peace Movement in South Vietnam, 1964-1966.* Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2002.  
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=175482>.

This book defines the act of self-immolation in the way that Buddhists understand it. It provides a contrast to how American's understand, and have been shown (by media), this self-sacrifice. This book also describes American public perception of immolations by 1966 as non-sympathetic. Also, the idea that US public officials began to use the Buddhist movement as a secret façade of the communists in order to take away from the religious precedents that were causing so much trouble.

**Welsh, Anne Morrison.** *Fire of the Heart: Norman Morrison's Legacy in Viet Nam and at Home.* Wallingford, Pa.: Pendle Hill Publications, 2005.

Although this book may be able to serve as a primary source as well, I think that it can be a secondary source and a telling of how the self-immolations effected people both in the US and Vietnam. Part of the book is dedicated to poems that have been written in honor of the self-immolations and tribulations of the people who protest for religious freedom, and freedom of the Vietnam. Dat Dutinh, a northern Vietnamese man proclaimed that a poem written about Morrison's immolation was infamous among the Vietnamese people.

**Gheddo, Piero.** *The Cross and the Bo-tree; Catholics and Buddhists in Vietnam.* New York: Sheed and Ward, 1970.



This book is vital in providing a contrasting view on the motivations of the Buddhist movement. Gheddo claims that the religious movement was in fact a prominently political one. This author believes that Diem's repression of the Buddhist was strictly a political measure to ensure that communism would not use the Buddhist crisis to pursue their political agenda against him. By that same token, Gheddo explains that he believes Buddhism to be especially susceptible to inception of communism – legitimizing Diem's political fear of the Buddhist Crisis. This book is in contrast to Appy who claims that anti-communist Buddhists actually pose the largest threat to communism.

**Fierke, K. M. *Political Self-sacrifice: Agency, Body and Emotion in International Relations*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.**

This book talks about what a sacrifice is, and why sacrifices are effective. More importantly, this book discusses the international perception of the Buddhist self-immolations. Americans believe this act of self-sacrifice is naïve, fanatic, and sinister. Buddhists believe that this form of self-sacrifice is a sign of the greatest form of love. There is also a distinction made between the idea of suicide and sacrifice. This ties into conversation with the article "They Who Burned Themselves for Peace", which discusses a woman in 1660 who was hung for her beliefs, and (more importantly) because she wouldn't leave Boston. The idea being, whether there is any irony or hypocrisy, and/or connection between Christian martyrdom, and self-sacrifice.

**Oppenheimer, Mark. *Knocking on Heaven's Door: American Religion in the Age of Counterculture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.**

This book touches on the evolution of religion in the US during the time of the "counter-culture". This book can set a point of context for Christians (mainly Baptists) in America who would be seeing/dealing with the Buddhist crisis/the Vietnam War and how they would react it in their own (religious) way. This can be a reference for the way the American religious community saw, understood, and dealt with these acts, and explain how they acted accordingly.

**Hallin, Daniel C. "The Media, the War in Vietnam, and Political Support: A Critique of the Thesis of an Oppositional Media." *The Journal of Politics* 46, no. 1 (February 1, 1984): 2–24. doi:10.2307/2130432.**

This article explains the important role that Television played in the presentation of the Vietnam War in the 1960's-70's. "Vietnam was the most extensively covered and the most controversial news story of the period from 1960-64 through 1976" (5). This document could also be used to depict the effect that television had on public perception of the war - "Robinson presented data to show that people who relied primarily on television for information about public affairs... tended to be more cynical about political institutions and more doubting of their own political capacity than those who utilized other media" (3). Hallin also claims that the most important media that influenced public opinion of the political affairs were newspapers.

**Bain, Chester A. *Vietnam: The Roots of Conflict*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967.**

Bain talks about the communist constitution of 1960 of the DVR which iterates the idea of a united (north and south) Vietnam. This can be instrumental in understanding the pressing efforts

of communists trying to infiltrate the Buddhist crisis as a means to achieve their own political objectives.

**Chatterjee, Bijan Raj. *Southeast Asia in Transition*. Meerut: Meenakshi Prakashan, 1965.**

This book is vital to understanding the presence of communism in Vietnam. This is vastly important because of the political implications of the Buddhist crisis, especially after US political officials brand the Buddhist movements as communist facades. This book illustrates how the colonial pretext/context of the Southeast Asian countries provided strong anti-western sentiments and resorted to communist powers for education and support.

**Appy, Christian G. *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides*. New York: Viking, 2003.**

This book provides Malcolm Borwne's images and reporting of the Thich Quang Duc burning and interpretations. This book also offers a contrasting view of the relationship between communism, Buddhism, and politics in relation to Gheddo's. Here, anti-communist Buddhist were seen as being more of a threat to communism due to their ideological and philosophical. Appy explains that other political opponents are less strong because of their political motives are based off self-interest, and are vanquished with cease of foreign subsidy.

**Rotter, Andrew J. *Light at the End of the Tunnel A Vietnam War Anthology*. Third Edition. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010.  
<http://public.eblib.com/EBLPublic/PublicView.do?ptiID=1023684>.**

Rotter's book is in agreement with Political self-sacrifice, Gheddo, lotus unleashed in explaining that westerners are inapt to understand self-immolations because of their ignorance of the societal structure of the Vietnamese. This provides insight into the public perceptions, as well as political officials perceptions. Rotter also may be in some agreement with Gheddo's idea of questioning how much of the Buddhist movement was truly motivated by religious reasons/political.

**Young, Marilyn Blatt, John J Fitzgerald, and Grunfeld. *The Vietnam War a History in Documents*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.  
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=160308>.**

This book provides large contexts for this topic. The history for how Buddhism came Vietnam, Catholic presence under Diem, and Diem's appointment due to religious affiliation, are all topics that are important for understanding the scope of the Buddhist crisis. There are descriptions of the Buddhist protests that kick started the movement, as well as Thich Quang Duc who became the image of the movement itself.

**Oprah Winfrey Talks with Thich Nhat Hanh Excerpt - Powerful, 2013.  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJ9UtuWfs3U&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJ9UtuWfs3U&feature=youtube_gdata_player).**

This is an interview with Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh and Oprah Winfrey. This interview is an eye opening look into the perspective of a Buddhist monk who was involved with the protests in Vietnam during the time of the Vietnam War.

at 6:45, Thich Nhat Hanh explains to Oprah, that on June 1, 1965 he wrote a letter to Martin Luther King Jr. explaining to him, the reason for immolation.

Act of love, not despair. Not a suicide.

7:25 Hanh also compares the act of self-immolation to other acts of stepping into death's path voluntarily (Jesus Christ, or the women in 1660 described in political self-sacrifice). This idea can be put into dialog with Professor K. M. Fierke and his book, *Political Self-Sacrifice*, which compares the ideologies and similarities between different kinds of self-sacrifice.