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LOOKING INTO THE WAY THE VIETNAMESE MEDIA DISCUSSED THE
SEPTEMBER TERRORIST ATTACKS IN AMERICA

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of Communication

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Huong TN. Nguyen

August 2002

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

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for the degree Master of Arts, University of Nebraska at Omaha.

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LOOKING INTO THE WAY THE VIETNAMESE MEDIA DISCUSSED THE
SEPTEMBER TERRORIST ATTACKS IN AMERICA

Huong TN Nguyen, MA

University of Nebraska, 2002

Advisor: Dr. Michael Sherer.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the way the Vietnamese mainstream and unpublished media used the Vietnam War experiences to discuss the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in America.

Examination of 30 issues of The People newspaper showed that the mainstream media did not directly use the Vietnam War experiences to discuss the September terrorist attacks. Few articles directly mentioned or referred to the Vietnam War experiences.

Examination of 80 threads of discussion from two Vietnamese websites showed that the Vietnamese unpublished media used the Vietnam War experiences more directly to discuss the September attacks. Three specific ways were recognized: (1) to compare the attacks and the new war of America with the Vietnam War and justify the new war using experiences about the involvement of the U.S. in the Vietnam War (2) to make fun of America using experiences of

the Vietnam War and the American culture, and (3) to implicitly refer to the Vietnam War while discussing the attacks and the new war.

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This thesis marks the 2-year period of mine from Vietnam to Omaha. Though a short period of time, it has been essential to my academic career and personal life. The completion of this thesis has indeed represented a victory to me.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

History shapes our confidence. History shapes our perception. History also shapes our behaviors.

That might explain why almost thirty years after the Vietnam War, despite reconciliation efforts of both sides, the Vietnamese and American people still suffer from the war's memories. The relationship between the two countries still suffers. Of all the wars that America was involved in, the Vietnam War was the only one that America did not come out with victory. At the same time, Vietnam lost millions of its people and the country had to struggle very hard through the boycott and embargo of the United States and its allies. To some extent, the war forever affects the perceptions and behaviors of the two countries toward each other.

When the horrendous September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks occurred, Vietnam was among the countries that were late in expressing emotional support to the United States. Considering the speed of modern communication and the importance of the attacks in world politics, such a delay could hardly be blamed on technology. The not-yet-forgotten conflict between the two countries - the Vietnam War and its aftermath - might have been one reason for this delay.

This study explores the effects of the Vietnam War experiences on the way the September attacks were covered in Vietnamese media. In particular, the study will examine how the Vietnam War experiences were used to discuss the September attacks in mainstream (published) and unpublished media of Vietnam. Content from Nhan Dan newspaper (The People newspaper), the official voice of the Vietnam Communist Party, and two websites are used.

The purpose of this study is to give more insights into the September attacks, a special media event. From that point, this study hopes to bring more knowledge about communication and finally to help promote the relationship between Vietnam and America.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature will be reviewed in four main areas. There is a brief account of the September 11 terrorist attacks. A review of theoretical background on which the study is based follows. Communication theories that help explain or predict the way human beings use past experiences as a "looking-glass" or reference for behaviors at present are examined. This is followed by a review of what has been learned about the way American media portray Vietnam and vice versa using the Vietnam War experiences. Finally, a quick sketch of the Vietnamese media, focusing on government, ownership and other technical issues that may affect the way political news is treated is presented.

1. The September attacks

Planes were hijacked. Skyscrapers in downtown New York were burned down. A passenger plane hit the Pentagon - the highest security office of the United States. People jumped down from the 100th floor. Fire. Smoke. Dust. Blood. Screams. Traffic jams. Ambulance and police cars ran back and forth. These scenes might have suggested typical Hollywood products like *Armageddon*, *Independence Day* or *Pearl Harbor*. Unfortunately, all were real.

On September 11, 2001, America was shocked by the attacks of unknown terrorists in New York and Washington D.C. The

crisis started at 8:45 a.m. (Eastern Time) when a hijacked Boeing 767 hit the north side of a tower of the World Trade Center, snapping exterior columns and igniting more than 20,000 gallons of jet fuel. Roughly 15 minutes later, the second hijacked Boeing 767 slammed into the southeast corner of the second tower, causing extensive damage to exterior supports. At 9:50 a.m., mounting fire damage from the burning fuel caused the second tower to lean to the right before falling straight down. At 10:29 a.m., softened by 2,000-degree temperatures, the remaining steel supports of the first tower gave way, causing the building to collapse. Half an hour after the attacks on the towers, in Washington D.C., a hijacked Boeing 757 crashed into the military headquarters of the U.S., the Pentagon, tearing a 75-foot hole in its west side. (CNN.com, 09/11/2001).

Minutes after the first attack, every single television and radio station cut through their normal programs for breaking news. Tons of messages about the attacks and initial damages were sent throughout America. Schools, offices, banks and even the stock exchanges in downtown New York and many other important cities all over America were closed. Staff workers at the White House, Department of Defense and Foreign Affairs, the Congress, CIA and other governmental agencies were evacuated. Borders with Canada and Mexico were shut down. No single plane was allowed in

the sky until further notice. The American military was put on the highest alert. The whole country was in its highest defense against an unknown enemy. The first messages about human toll of the attacks reported several thousand casualties. Economic analysts woke America up with negative predictions about the enormous impact on insurance companies, airlines, and corporations operating in New York. Basically, America stopped functioning on September 11, 2001. (Time, September 17, 2001). (See Appendix, Table 1)

The September attacks were clearly not the first of this type. In 1993, terrorists placed a bomb inside the World Trade Center, causing death to seven people. In 1998, terrorists again placed bombs at the Embassy of America in Kenya and Tanzania. Many other small cases of terrorism occurred each year. However, none was comparable to the September event. This was the most horrendous and well-organized terrorist action in America's modern history.

Several things were noteworthy about the September attacks. First, they happened in America and the targets were the symbols of America's pride. The World Trade Center stood for the economic strength of America while the Pentagon represented its military power. The collapse of the WTC and the Pentagon inevitably left American public with confusion and mistrust into America's power to protect

itself, let alone to lead the world as implicitly stated in the American dream. It was also a strong blow to America's pride. America's enemies now had a reason to ridicule America and its government. Second, the size of this event was unprecedented. Never was there such a terrorist attack of this size, with this type of organization, causing such damage and terror. Previous terrorist attacks were normally small - scale bomb explosions.

Media reacted very quickly to the attacks. Minutes after the attacks, America started to see live coverage of the event. Resources were exhausted in order to get the news out to the public. No commercials were aired that morning. Most TV and radio programs were dedicated to the news. Images of America under attack were sent throughout the world. Weeks and months after September 11, stories of this tremendous event still appeared in most media outlets.

2. Theoretical background:

The September attacks were obviously a considerable media event. It made front page in newspapers around the world for many weeks. However, casual observation of the coverage suggested that the event might have been discussed differently. For example, Great Britain, France and Germany responded differently compared to China or Middle East

countries, depending on other factors like diplomatic relationship.

How a nation speaks about an issue is a matter of its communication culture. The way the Vietnamese media used Vietnam War experiences to discuss the September attacks should be examined as communication behavior.

Several communication theories provided a basis for this study.

Cultural approach to organizational communication

Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo first introduced the cultural approach to organizational communication in 1982. This approach looked at organizations not as an entity with buildings, machinery, assembly lines or tangible systems of production as was done in the previous studies of the traditional or human relational theory. Instead, it looked at an organization in a vital connection with communication, in which communication is understood as cultural performance. In this sense, culture is not what an organization has but what an organization is. Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo divided organizational performances into five groups: organizational communication as ritual, organizational communication as passion, organizational communication as sociality, organizational communication as

politics, and organizational communication as enculturation (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo., 1982)

Though conceptualized and applied in "traditional" organizations such as companies, offices, and firms, the cultural approach could be applied to explain behaviors of a nation. Authors of this theory defined an organization as any system in which communication takes place. A nation's behaviors, especially communicative behaviors, could be examined as part of its culture.

Story telling is one special cultural performance of an organization. Members of an organization carry its traditions and culture by telling stories. When first conceptualized, Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1982) focused on the script-like qualities of narratives that defined roles in the company play. They specified three types of stories in organizations. *Personal stories* are those which individuals tell about themselves, often accompanied by an underlying tone of one-upmanship, which embellish organizational identities. *Collegial stories* are narratives which individuals share about other organizational members. These collegial stories cover a broad spectrum of experience, ranging from the amusing anecdotes of a newcomer's initiation to more sobering accounts of member terminations. Finally, there are *corporate stories*, narratives that represent the management

ideology and are used to substantiate organizational procedures or pass on the unrecorded but managerially favored customs of organizational life. As Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo initially reckoned, stories of organizational successes and "screw-ups" are not merely entertaining narratives. They are constitutive of organizational passions as they call attention to significant possible future scenarios.

The cultural approach to organizational communication suggests that behavior of an organization - whether a group of poker players, a big corporation, or a nation - is consistent with its culture. Culture is defined and redefined through many performances such as rituals and stories. Stories that an organization hands down through generations plays an important role in creating the organization's culture and behaviors. An organization's reaction is very much affected by its culture, traditions and past experiences.

In the case of the September attacks, performances of the Vietnamese media should reflect the culture of Vietnam. That culture is defined partially by the Vietnam War. Behaviors of Vietnam - as presented by its media - should be consistent with its "Vietnam-America" tradition.

Cultural behaviors

A similar idea to the cultural approach is the idea about cultural behaviors developed by Vecchio (1996). He examined the effects of the Vietnam War in American society. Vecchio presumed that the story we told ourselves, individually or culturally, created our self-images. Self image consists of internalized, cumulative, and weighted images which create belief patterns, perceptual formats, understandings, and conceptualizations. At the most fundamental level, self-image determines macro behavior.

Vecchio pointed out that behavior was consistent with the self-image and story that an individual or a nation told itself. Behavior includes actions in the present as well as plans and projections for the future.

Vecchio gave an example of America's behavior toward its involvement in Southeast Asia, especially Vietnam. He suggested that the American public's belief in the unwise involvement in the Vietnam War could be used to explain the way America looked at Vietnam War veterans and the war itself, and other wars after Vietnam.

Agenda-setting theory

First introduced in 1972 by McCombs and Shaw as a study about the influence of the media on public opinion during presidential elections, the agenda-setting theory

has since been extended to many venues. Generally speaking, the theory states that the media do not tell us what to think, but rather what to think about. After exploring the impact of the Watergate scandal on the public's opinion about President Nixon, McCombs and Shaw believed that the "mass media have the ability to transfer the salience of items on their news agenda to the publics." (Griffin, 2000) In other words, "we judge as important what the media judge as important." The volume of coverage or the duration of programs normally decides the order of importance.

After the attacks, almost every single radio and television station in America just reported the news. The event also made front page in most major newspapers around the world. The speculation is that the agenda of media in other countries, in this case - Vietnam, are also affected by the agenda in America. The scope of the event would trigger the Vietnamese media to treat it as important in the agenda and tie it to the Vietnam War, which continues to be in the agenda of Vietnamese media even today.

Social constructionism

Developed by Berger and Luckmann (1966), this theory asserts that society is a human product and an objective reality. That reality is created by the interactions and agreements among members of the society, part of which

include stories, norms, traditions, news, etc. The reality that one nation perceives about another may be a socially constructed reality created by past experiences between two nations. When stories about the Vietnam War are told repeatedly on Vietnamese media, they may be transformed from "stories" into "facts" and taken as assumptions, therefore creating a reality. That reality would affect the way today's Vietnamese media as well as American media portray each other and react to each other.

3. Using past experiences as reference for present.

Reporting Vietnam and America.

Few communication studies have examined how past experiences were used to report about current events. Several in psychology, however, have examined how people's present behaviors are affected by past experiences. For example, there is a series of studies about fears associated with Iraqi aggression among Kuwaiti children and adolescents (Abdel-Khalek, 1997); war experiences and distress symptoms of Bosnia children (Goldstein et al., 1997); Gulf War syndrome and stresses of combat (Ricks, 1997); Children and the aftermath of war (Mazower, 1996); the war experiences and psychological development of children in Lebanon (Macksoud, 1996). These studies suggest that past experiences, especially those concerning life and

death, could affect perceptions and behaviors of people in the future.

It is essential to understand how the media have previously portrayed America and how America has responded to the Vietnam War accordingly in order to understand the way the Vietnamese media covered the terrorist attacks in September 2001 and its relationship to the Vietnam War. There is no doubt that Vietnam and America both secure a stable position in each other's modern history and perception. These two countries, separated by twelve time zones, ran into each other in a painful war - the Vietnam War.

Twenty-five years ago, on April 30, 1975, North Vietnam troops marched into Saigon, ending what the Vietnamese call the American War and leading to the reunification of the country. Seeing the newsclips of the eleventh-hour evacuation of refugees from the rooftop of the American Embassy, President Gerald Ford said to an aide, "It's over. Let's put it behind us" (Lomperis, 1987, p.3). However, Americans have not put it behind them. "The Korean War ended in 1953, and it, more or less, was that. World War II ended in 1945, and it is still glorified. World War I lingered longer in the works of Ernest Hemingway or plays of Maxwell Anderson and Laurence Stalling but in the whole, it was over" (Lomperis, 1987,

p.4). But for most Americans who went to Vietnam or lived during that time, nothing in the war ever really ended (Beidler, 1982).

Twenty-five years after what American people call the Vietnam War, the U.S. still acts as if the United States had grievances against Vietnam. Any mention of Vietnam in the United States still evokes the war, first and foremost (Wells-Dang, 2000). In the United States since the conclusion of the Vietnam War, veterans have become known as neglected, troubled and even scorned individuals (Eric, 1992). People and the media often unconsciously divide America's modern history into pre-Vietnam and post-Vietnam eras. Politicians and military men keep a closer look on the media whenever an event somehow reminds them of the "Vietnam experience" (Lomperis, 1987, pp.4)

Of all the realities that were perceived after the Vietnam War, Henry Kissinger, former U.S. Foreign Secretary during the Vietnam War, considered the most important one to be the tradition of American "exceptionalism" (Rothschild, 2000, p.15). It meant "the once near-universal faith in the uniqueness of our values--and their relevance around the world--gave way to intense divisions over the very validity of those values and the lengths we should go to promote and defend them (p.15)." Summers (1994) also confirmed a "widespread perception" (p. 53) that in the

aftermath of the Vietnam War America had somehow lost its nerve. He argued that "that perception has far-reaching consequences, for while American military *power* remained formidable after Vietnam, its military *authority* declined precipitously." (p.53)

This phenomenon can be explained by the cultural behavior theory, which is the heart of a study by Vecchio (1996, Internet) about individual and cultural effects of skewing the realities of American involvement in Southeast Asia for social, political and/or economic ends. Vecchio argued that the story we told ourselves of ourselves, individually or culturally, created our self-image. Behavior, individually and culturally, was consistent with self-image. Story determined behavior. As story changed, self-image changed, as self-image changed, behavior changed; as behavior changed, so too the results of behavior changed. For example, one's behavior in the present would be very different if he told himself, "We were wrong. Terribly wrong." (Newsweek, 17 Apr. 95), than if he told himself, it was a "Noble Cause;" very different if one described oneself as a victimized, crazy Vietnam Vet, of if one's self-depiction was that of a proud conscientious participant; and very different if one's story was of "being against that silly-ass war," versus of "being any burden in the defense of freedom."

With this in mind, it is easier to understand the effects of the Vietnam War in American society. The ambient realities that the American public realized during and after the war, notably the strength and conscience of America and the power and performance of the Government, affected the way Americans and America acted during twenty-five years after the Vietnam War.

Culturally speaking, America might have driven itself into the current behavior because it constantly mentioned Vietnam with certain stories. Those stories have been told with uniform and repeated themes: "Vietnam War misogyny," (Jason, 1991, p.15) "Vietnam Syndrome," "a ghost from Vietnam," (Stepp, 1996, p.57) "Vietnam veterans' problems," (Griffin and Sen, 1995) "Vietnam tragedy," (Rothschild, 2000, p.15) "the lost cause" (Vecchio, 1996, Internet) and so on. This means Americans have constantly been "speaking the language of Pain" or have built up "a literature of Trauma" (Jason, 1991, p.217). Unconsciously, America (or American media) defined the Vietnam War as a salient story when it divided its modern history into pre- and post-Vietnam era, its people into "a generation after Vietnam" (Filene, 1999, p.1537) and before Vietnam.

Another clear example of the use of the Vietnam War as "looking glass" is the way Vietnam veterans have always been portrayed in America. Studies by many researchers,

both in media and psychology, found that more than half of Americans were personally affected by the Vietnam War by serving in Vietnam or by knowing a close friend or relative who did (Griffin & Sen, 1995). Dean (1992) discovered that despite evidence that Vietnam veterans have in fact readjusted well, in the public's opinion, Vietnam veterans have become known as "neglected, troubled, and even scorned individuals" (p. 59). This study indicated that the Vietnam veterans were seen as "unique" amongst veterans of all American wars. In revealing this myth, the author suggested five reasons, of which two reasons directly involved the role of media in portraying Vietnam veterans. The study by Griffin and Sen (1995), which dealt directly with movie portrayals and audience attributions for Vietnam veterans' problems, showed that exposure to films that demonstrated the experiences of soldiers coping with and being affected by the ordeals of the Vietnam War related to higher levels of external attribution for Vietnam veterans' problems. The researchers also found indication of relationships between social stereotypes and the tendency to attribute failures or problems of members of these groups to internal factors. They suggested that recently, as media depictions of Vietnam veterans as more typical members of their generations coping with an unpopular war increased, public

attributions for the problems facing many Vietnam veterans may have become more external.

Here, the agenda-setting effects and social construction of reality phenomenon are recognized. The media guide us toward what to think about by indicating what is important. They also build up social perceptions or assumptions for certain targets or subjects, which are then reflected in social behaviors, individually or culturally.

Thought about the Vietnam War in American society can be traced anywhere in the social, economic, political and cultural reflections of American society. President George Bush called it a "Vietnam Syndrome" and President Jimmy Carter called it a national malaise (Summers, 1994, p.53). On the historic trip to Vietnam in November 2000, President Bill Clinton, seemingly sensing some historical burden, confirmed (to America and the world) in advance that he would not make an apology (to Vietnam) for the war that cost Vietnam the lives of three million people. The perception mentioned before about the United States losing its nerve and feeling its defeat seemed prominent in the whole story concerning the Vietnam War. What Vecchio found out in the theory of cultural behavior probably proved practical in this case. The very fact that Vietnam is "a country, not a syndrome" (Pierre, 2000, p.69) is not yet

perceived because of what American literature about Vietnam keeps reminding its public.

In all, America's present behaviors are very much affected by what America perceived about Vietnam in the Vietnam War. What the American media projected to its audience influenced those perceptions.

The Vietnam War was unique because it was "the first television war" and the only one "without censorship" (Kemper and Baldwin, 1991, p. 19). The military established basic ground rules designed to safeguard national security but otherwise allowed reporters to travel freely and report without restriction on American casualties, military tactics, and views of soldiers in the field. This was a factor affecting the outcome of the war. "The American public saw scenes from a war on TV" concluded Gole (1996-1997, p.148). This "living room war," (Bindas, 1991, p.63) piped into American homes nightly over TV, constructed different views about the war.

Describing the way American media portrayed the war, Braestrup, a veteran journalist of Time and The New York Times, and chief of The Washington Post's Saigon bureau during Tet 1968 said that, "when American troops landed, it became a hometown story and then, as later, neither the sacrifices nor the activities nor the effects of the South Vietnamese Army thereafter were covered very much. They

were as invisible as the North Vietnamese. On television, it was an American war, which over time had a certain effects on public opinion back home" (The Freedom Forum World Center, 1995)

Many media researchers and veteran journalists, on the other hand, believed that "the press did not send American troops into Vietnam and did not bring them out." (Arnett, 1999-2000, p.192). Braestrup (1991, p.16) also found out that though about half of the reports filed from Vietnam in 1965-1970 were about military action, only about three percent showed "heavy battle." He also found that opinion polls for the Vietnam War (no censorship, television news) and the Korean War (censorship, no TV) showed that public support for both wars declined at roughly the same rate. A study of Sidle, chief U.S. military spokesman in Vietnam, 1967-1969, about prime time TV coverage and print media revealed that the positive outweighed the negative. Another study concluded that even if the 12 rules of the Gulf War had been in place during Vietnam, there would probably be no difference about the outcome of this war (Patterson III, 1995).

Overall, there has been and still is a "Vietnam-war looking glass" between America and Vietnam. Movies, drama, poems, and stories written in today's time still reflect what has been perceived about Vietnam almost 30 years ago.

An America in Vietnamese media:

Vietnam gained its independence and reunification in 1975. Reconstruction of the country after the war has been going on for more than 25 years. Almost 20 years were under the embargo and boycott policy of the United States and its allies. Because media in Vietnam are very new and poor, research about them has been very embryonic.

Although the Vietnam War is repeatedly reported on today's Vietnamese media, the image about America in Vietnamese society is influenced more by what the Vietnamese public sees today than what is echoed from the past. Proximity is an important factor in explaining this. America is geographically too far from Vietnam. News about America's economic or social events is heard day by day. Summarizing what mainstream publications such as Time and People covered in the 25th anniversary celebrating the end of the Vietnam War, Wells-Dang reported that, "more than half of all Vietnamese were born after the war. Both they and the older generation desire peace, continued reform, economic opportunity, and ending their isolation while maintaining a distinct national identity." This may be a new face of Vietnam, which has never been known by Americans.

The Vietnamese media have not yet developed into an industry or an academic field of study. Hardly any study

has been done about the effects of Vietnam's media in its society.

Casual observation of the Vietnamese media is enough to conclude that America has in fact entered in Vietnam media's agenda and the Vietnamese audiences' agenda as an interesting, if not important, figure, in their perception about the world's issues. Such events as the embargo lift in 1994, the normalization declaration in 1995, U.S. Foreign Secretary Madlene Albright's visit in 1997, the bilateral trade agreement in 2000, and President Clinton's visit to Vietnam in 2000 have been salient in the Vietnamese media and public's agenda.

Certainly, Vietnamese media have a different agenda, compared to that of American media. Take Clinton's visit to Vietnam in November 2000 for instance. Before and during his trip, this event was covered in detail by the periodical press and television in Vietnam as one of the most important stories throughout the year and throughout the two-country relationship history. President Clinton's talk at Hanoi National University was covered live, which has hardly happened before with an exception being important political events. In America's media, however, except for roughly one-minute news by CNN, almost no channel reported the event. Since television became

available for more Vietnamese audiences, America has always been one of the main figures of world's news stories.

Also, America in Vietnam's media today is in fact not an America attributed to the Vietnam War but to the Gulf War, Microsoft, Coca Cola, Boeing, Hollywood, etc. The implications about America as an enemy or loser in the Vietnam War seemed to be outweighed by the reflections of America as a developed country. However, every year during days such as War Memorial Day, Victory Day, and Independence Day, the media carry many programs that recall the spirit of the Vietnam War.

At the same time, because the media's gate-keeping function is so strong in Vietnam and the relation between Vietnam and America has been very sensitive, America is reflected in a rather selective manner. American movies are not available in Vietnam's mass media due to copyright regulations. On television, the most popular medium, America is seen through the news or stories concerning scientific inventions or breakthroughs, educational reforms, political issues and some important stories of America's entertainment industry, such as Oscar awards. Print media, however, carry many more stories about America. In all, the reality about America that the Vietnamese audiences have constructed through what the

media project to them might be a selective reality and probably favorable to America.

4. A quick sketch of the Vietnamese media

In Vietnam, the media are not yet a profit-making industry independent from the government. They are totally owned and operated by the government. Television and radio stations belong to central and local authorities. The government also owns the printing press. Newspapers are normally not a self-operated unit, but the voice for a governmental office, social/political group or state-owned organization. For example, Nhan Dan newspaper (The People) is the official voice of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Lao Dong newspaper (Labor) is the official voice for the Union of Vietnamese workers. Vietnam Agriculture newspaper is under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Of all the media, television and radio are the two most powerful and popular forms. There is currently no private broadcasting program allowed in Vietnam, only public broadcasting. Consequently, television and radio programs are completely free of charge in Vietnam. There is only one nation-wide television station, The Television of Vietnam. Other stations are local and cover local news for the most part. Though normally having a separate office,

television and radio stations are operated under the supervision of designated Departments of Culture in each province. Local authorities pay staff salaries and operational cost. The government and advertisers pay for program production and broadcasting. Viewers, therefore, have almost no say as to what programs are produced and broadcast; they simply watch what is offered. Programs are scheduled weekly and are fixed. Certain programs are required for broadcast everyday, such as a program for children at 6.30 p.m., and headline news from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. In addition to those fixed programs, shows and programs are produced in order to carry news of different sectors in the economy or different groups of people such as the army, workers, farmers, women, etc.

The printing press is a little different because readers have to pay for newspapers and magazines. Still, except for some profitable newspapers, other newspapers and magazines receive subsidies from their supervisory organizations, which allows them to deliver their products at a low price. Since newspapers and magazines are under control of different governmental agencies, the content of newspapers and magazines is very much specialized and segmented according to the target audiences. Except for the People newspaper, the official voice of the communist party of Vietnam, which is either subscribed or delivered for

free at every single governmental authority, and some other general-interest newspapers, most newspapers are targeted toward certain audiences. For example, Agriculture newspaper under the Ministry of agriculture and rural development targets toward farmers and related audiences. The Arts and Literature newspaper under The Society of Vietnamese Writers is written for writers and readers interested in arts and literature.

All newspapers, magazines, TV stations, radio, etc. are professionally and administratively under control of the Department of Media, and ideologically under control of Central Department of Culture and Ideology. The former is in charge of technical and administrative support to all forms of media. The latter is to make sure that no newspaper or radio publishes or broadcasts anything against the doctrines of the Communist party and the people of Vietnam. Punishment, censorship and other forms of content supervision are under the charge of the second office.

Two notable features of the press in Vietnam are (1) it represents the voice of the supervisory authority and (2) it is very much involved in news rather than entertainment. Though media law guarantees the freedom for the media, in reality no newspapers, magazines or TV programs are supposed to ridicule the government, political leaders or the common cause of the nation. There is not

much discussion or interaction between readers and writers. It is mainly a one-way communication.

5. Summing up

The main purpose of this review was not to describe in detail what previous research has talked about. Rather, this review established the conceptual context for the research question. It links the key concepts that are helpful in understanding the way the Vietnamese media may have used the Vietnam War experiences to discuss the September terrorist attacks in America.

In addition to providing a brief account of the September terrorist attacks and a quick sketch of the Vietnamese media, the review of literature reveals three major points:

- Past experiences play a role in the way we see and behave in the present.
- Cultural behavior is normally consistent with experiences. Reactions toward a topical issue are part of a nation's culture.
- Media contribute to create, develop and reevaluate social reality. In the case of the Vietnam War, the media played a role in creating images about the war, and a social reality about America and Vietnam. This leads to the fact that almost 30 years after the Vietnam War, Vietnam is

still mentioned in America as a lost war more than a nation with its people. At the same time, America is portrayed in Vietnam with certain stereotypes and stories that might not necessarily reflect the real America.

CHAPTER 2: STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The review of literature reveals that personal experiences in the past will shape our perspectives at present. Past experiences direct our behaviors and reactions toward events in the present. Shared experiences of a group or country also shape its behaviors at present and in the future.

In America, Vietnam is almost always mentioned as a "lost" war, rather than a nation with its people. In Vietnam, however, the image of America in the Vietnamese media is as a strong nation of the world, and as a past war that cost the lives of millions of people. The literature suggests that there has been a socially - constructed reality about the two countries which the media help build.

Taking into account the fact that past experiences could influence present behavior and that the Vietnam war has been a looking glass between Vietnam and America, there is reason to suggest that the Vietnamese media would use the Vietnam war experiences to discuss the September terrorist attacks of America. This assumption is based on the fact that the strongest tie and memory of America in Vietnamese public has always been the Vietnam War. This study raises the question of how the Vietnamese media actually used the Vietnam War experiences to discuss the attacks.

The immediate purpose of the study is to explore if the Vietnamese media used the Vietnam War experiences to discuss the September 11 attacks, and if so, how they were used. Results of the study can be used to discuss stereotypes or distorted reality about the attacks in particular and America in general when things are seen through the "Vietnam War looking-glass". The study can also suggest the power of constructing reality of the media, taking into account the essential differences in American media and Vietnamese media. It helps to shed more light on the way past experiences are used to shape perceptions and reactions of the present. On a larger scale, this study aims at explaining and then reconciling any distortions, conflicts or stereotypes in media between the two countries, therefore drawing the two peoples closer to each other.

Theoretically, the study will further examine the influence of media on constructing reality and maintaining public opinion. Practically, it will give more insights into the differences between the two countries' media-constructed images and their real images; therefore advancing the process of cooperation.

The main research question of the study is "How were the Vietnam War experiences used to discuss the September terrorist attacks in the Vietnamese media". It should be

noted, however, that the public ownership of the Vietnamese media have created differences between mainstream media (official publications) and unpublished media (websites, forums, E-groups, etc.) when it comes to sensitive issues.

Currently, besides the mainstream media, there are unofficial media on the Internet. They are websites established by organizations or individuals; for example free forums of governmental agencies, non-governmental agencies and individuals. Some forums, especially those established by a professional organization, allow only professional discussion; others allow members to discuss relatively freely on different topics. These websites do not officially exist as a branch of the Vietnamese media; however, the websites account for a part of the Vietnamese public's opinions, especially of young people. Some forums such as The Online Forum for Vietnamese Intellectuals attract Vietnamese adolescents and young adults all over Vietnam and the world.

Research Question: How were the Vietnam War experiences used to discuss the September terrorist attacks in mainstream (published) and unpublished Vietnamese media?

CHAPTER 3: METHODS AND MEASUREMENTS

Data Collection

Data used for this study were collected from two main sources.

To analyze the way the mainstream (published) Vietnamese media used the Vietnam war experiences to report the September attacks, articles from the Nhan Dan newspaper (The People newspaper) were examined. The newspaper is a special agency under the supervision of the Vietnam Communist Party. It is the official voice of the Vietnam Communist Party and the Vietnamese people, issued daily and delivered to almost every organization, company, and agency in Vietnam. The newspaper provides updated domestic and international news, columns, and comments about topical issues in political and social life of Vietnam.

To analyze unpublished Vietnamese media, postings on websites for Vietnamese students were used. In particular, two following websites were used.

Dien Dan Tri Tue Viet Nam Tren Mang (Vietnam Online Intellectual Forum) - <http://www.ttvnonline.com> - is the forum of Vietnamese students. Founded on December 24, 2000, this forum today has more than 40,000 members (40,090 by April 24, 2002), both in Vietnam and outside the country. The forum won the 2001 Vietnam's Intellectual Award because it creates a lively and broad forum for discussion among

Vietnamese students. This forum has boxes specifying in politics, social life, education, technology, tourism, literature, music, locals, foreign languages, arts, love and friendship, etc.

Dien Dan Thanh Nien Xa Me (Forum for Vietnamese overseas students) - <http://www.tathy.com/thanglong> - is a forum created by a group of Vietnamese overseas students. It has more than 1000 members, most of whom are undergraduate and graduate students all over the world. Unlike the Vietnam Online Intellectual Forum, this forum is hosted by a foreign server, which means there is less threat of being fire-walled if members of the forum discuss politically sensitive issues. Also, because members of this forum are mainly overseas students, they may have different perspectives compared to those at the Vietnam Online Intellectual Forum.

The two websites are selected for this study because they are among the most popular forums for Vietnamese teenagers and young adults. Members of those forums include students from high schools and universities all over Vietnam and other countries. Discussion at those forums is normally very lively and straightforward. The anonymity of online forums allows discussion to flow naturally and honestly (Uslander, 2000; Hearne, 2000; Cassel et al, 2000). Different perspectives are presented when the

authors do not face the threat of being judged or criticized personally. In addition, the two forums are private, independent forums. They are not owned and operated by any governmental agencies. This means censorship in these forums is executed by members, rather than by the government.

Data from both sources were collected from September 11, 2001 to October 11, 2001. Thirty issues of the People newspaper during that period were used for analysis. As for the websites, 80 threads of discussion with approximately 332 postings of members between those two dates were employed. One month is an appropriate period for data collection because Vietnam is far from America and one month is sufficient to observe the development of the event in the media.

Data analysis

This study used content analysis to find answers to the research question.

This method is chosen based on the nature of the study. This study raises the question of how a media event is covered. Content analysis is most appropriate to answer the question because it allows the researcher to examine the overall theme as well as details of the event. Content analysis is a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content

categories (Stemler, 2001). It allows the researcher to look into expressions, attitudes, and other features of the stories found in data. It is useful for examining trends and patterns in documents. It also allows inferences to be made which can then be collaborated using methods of data collection (Stemler, 2001). By analyzing the material, categorizing and synthesizing what is found, the researcher will be able to answer how the September attacks were covered using the Vietnam War experiences.

Articles from The People newspaper were analyzed closely to find the overall themes and relations to the Vietnam War. In each of 30 issues of newspaper, the articles that mention the September attacks were examined separately to see if they made comparisons between the September attacks and the Vietnam War, if they referred to the Vietnam War, and if the Vietnam War memories left certain perceptions or attitude that affect the perceptions of the September attacks. Language of the text was examined to find repeated patterns and theme. Then, these articles of all 30 issues were placed together to find the trend throughout the period. They were examined to see if people recalled the Vietnam War experiences when they discussed the September attacks. Categories of certain methods using the Vietnam War experiences to discuss the September

attacks were developed. Detailed descriptions and analysis of those categories were given.

Postings collected from the website were analyzed in the same way. Language of the postings was examined closely to find out patterns; then categories were developed based on these patterns. In some threads, discussion went over the time period examined. Because of the nature of continuity of online discussion, these threads were also accepted for analysis.

This method of analysis is appropriate because it helps to find out the way the Vietnam War and the September attacks relate. It looks for reference between the two events. It looks for linkage and how the two events are treated together.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Results of the study are reported in two separate sections; the mainstream media and the unpublished media. As expected, examination of data showed that the Vietnamese media used the Vietnam War experiences in many different ways to discuss the September terrorist attacks in America. With the mainstream media, the Vietnam War experiences were used in an indirect way. No article mentioned or referred directly to the Vietnam War when discussing the September attacks. However, the tone and the theme in which the attacks were covered may suggest the relationship between the Vietnam War experiences and the attacks.

With the unpublished media, the Vietnam War experiences were used in direct and multiple ways. Three specific ways were most often used to refer to the Vietnam War in the discussion of the attacks. One way was to compare the similarities and differences between the Vietnam War and the new war of America against terrorism. Another way was to make jokes about the September attacks and the new war of America, based on the knowledge of the Vietnam War and the anti-terrorism war. The third way involved a variety of indirect methods of referring to the Vietnam War in the process of discussing September attacks.

Details of the results are reported in following sections.

1. The mainstream media:

- Overall picture of the coverage used for the September attacks:

For the purpose of this study, three terms were used: tone, phase and theme. These terms were selected based on the examination of the data, using content analysis method. In particular, the use of language was analyzed to find out trends and patterns of using words.

A tone was defined as a recognized, consistent style or technique of covering or expressing news, ideas or opinions in an article. For example the news-reporting tone meant the technique of writing an article, in which the writer simply reported the event objectively in the manner of an observer, leaving out emotional expressions.

A phase was defined as a period of time during which a recognized, consistent tone appeared. For example, the drama phase meant a period of time, within which the drama tone was dominant.

A theme was defined as an overall opinion, idea or attitude that was expressed through the articles. Different

from the tone, which dealt with techniques of expressing ideas, the theme dealt with content of ideas.

Thirty issues of Nhan Dan (The People) newspaper dated from September 11, 2001, to October 11, 2001, were examined using the content analysis method. Except for the issue published on September 11, 2001, the other 29 issues carried a phenomenal amount of news about the attacks. The September 11 issue did not cover the attacks because the event happened after the newspaper had been in circulation.

Normally, news of world politics was assigned to page eight of the eight pages of the newspaper. The page was divided relatively equal to different political areas of the world, i.e. America, Europe, Asia, Middle East, Africa. However, articles about the September attacks not only accounted for the most part of page eight but also continued on other pages.

What was noteworthy was that the attacks were covered in episodic manners, which meant more news or stories were added after each issue. This created a long story of the attacks for the readers to follow. Even at the end of the 30-day period, the attacks still accounted for a great part of the world news page.

The first characteristic was that the attacks were covered with different tones in different phases. During the examined period of time, three distinct phases appeared: the drama phase, the news-story phase and the news phase.

The drama phase lasted for about four days from Sept. 12, 2001, to Sept. 15, 2001. This phase had the drama-like tone, which meant the attacks were covered as if they were dramatic acts rather than real happenings. Events were reported with details of time, people involved, and scenes, which evoked the feelings of watching a movie or a drama. More important, each attack to the two targets, The World Trade Center and the Pentagon, was retold with the narrative telling tone. The articles reported the scene, the events, actions, and the atmosphere all at the same time. For example, articles of Sept. 12 through Sept. 15 portrayed New York and Washington, D.C., in great chaos. Reporters made use of proximity - the geographical closeness to the attack scenes - to bring the readers near to the scene of the attacks, making all the articles more dramatic. They emphasized a theme of phenomenal magnitude: "this is the first...", "this is the biggest...", "this is the most terrible..." Names of important leaders such as the President of the United States, the President of

Russia, the Foreign Secretary of the United States were listed to emphasize the importance of the event.

The second phase is the news-story phase, which started on Sept. 16, 2001 and continued throughout the time period examined. The overall tone of this phase was a news-story tone, which meant the attacks were covered with the style of news reporting and story telling. From Sept. 16, the attacks were still high on the newspaper's agenda but the dramatic tone faded away as readers became more familiar with the event. Details of the consequences of the attacks were reported but the tone was neutral and distant from the scene. Different news sources, such as the Boston Globe, Washington Post, and The New York Times were cited, therefore creating the sense of reality in readers instead of merely dramatic description as before. The People newspaper chose to cover mostly political news and ignored tragic stories of the attacks' victims. They did not mention firefighters and policemen as heroes; nor did they carry heart-breaking stories of family members of the attacks' victims. Only news at the national and international levels, such as the effects of the attacks on American and world economy, reactions of the world to the attacks, or plans of America for a new war were discussed.

This lessened the tragic side of the story and may have lessened sympathy from readers. The newspaper also focused on America as a government, rather than a country with its civilian people. No distinction was made between American citizens and the American government.

The third phase started roughly two weeks after the attacks, approximately Sept. 25. The main tone of this part was news reporting, which meant objectively reporting the attacks and the new war of America as a regular news event. Sometimes, the narrative tone was mixed in with the coverage, especially when there were new movements of the war. For the most part, the newspaper simply summarized main events or news obtained from other sources and put them in a list of events.

Throughout the three phases, the three tones described above could be found in all the reporting. With each phase, there was a tone that dominated the coverage; the two other tones, however, were still employed. For example, in the drama phase, the dominant tone was a drama-like tone while the storytelling tone and the news-reporting tone were not as prominent. Toward the end of the period examined, when America started to attack Afghanistan, the news-reporting

tone was dominant, while the dramatic and story-telling tones were also present.

Overall, America was slightly victimized or portrayed as a failure in the articles covering the September attacks. This victimization theme could be recognized by the repeated patterns and content of the articles. On one hand, most of articles during the very first days of the attacks created a drama atmosphere around the events by drawing them as a movie. On the other hand, those articles constantly reminded readers that what they were reading was true. Throughout the articles was the idea that the attacks were the most horrendous terrorist attacks in American history; the very first one using hijack techniques instead of a bomb explosion or other weapon, and the very first one attacking right at the symbols of economic and security power of America. Comparing these attacks to other attacks of previous years further supported the emphasis on the phenomenal scope of the attacks.

One notable theme throughout the articles was the indication of protest against the new war of America. Many articles showed the poll taken in America regarding whether or not and how the America government should punish the terrorists. These articles showed that the America public

wanted the terrorists to pay for their evil actions, but they did not want to drag America into a costly and risky war in a faraway land. Many other articles covered protests and demonstrations of other nations against the American government's intention to use military forces in Afghanistan. For example, articles of Sept. 18, 19, 20 drew an overview of the world's reaction to the new war of America, in which many national leaders were quoted. The France's president, Greece's foreign minister, Russia's head of foreign affair committee, Chile's general secretary of the Communist party, etc. were quoted, in which they expressed their concern and protest against strong military strategy of America.

At the same time, the articles stressed the failure of America in protecting itself from terrorism. Slight sarcasm was found when those articles gave comments from military leaders or America and other nations toward America's failure or compared the amount of money the American government intended to spend on the security system with the simple techniques used by terrorists. For example, former America's foreign secretary Henry Kissinger compared the attacks as Pearl Harbor. Other military experts criticized America for depending too much on high-tech

security equipment. The newspaper mentioned that America used billions of dollars each year to develop its missile system but failed to detect the terrorists' hijack plans. They also gave the public opinion polls in which the American public expressed their disappointment in the security system of the American government.

Slight victimization of America was done through the focus on the losses and damages after the attacks. Numbers of death toll and money loss were repeatedly carried throughout daily articles. News about the rescue efforts was reported regularly. As mentioned, those articles did not tell personal stories of the attacks' victims, as in most American newspapers.

Pictures chosen for those articles were mostly neutral in tone. The pictures used on the first days of the attacks showed mainly the fire in the WTC and the Pentagon, President Bush getting the news, and rescue efforts. No heart-breaking pictures were chosen. No close-up pictures of the scene of the attacks or of personal stories were used.

- How were the Vietnam War experiences used to discuss the September attacks

To examine the relationship between the Vietnam War experiences and the way the Vietnamese media covered the attacks in America, it was important to know the main ways the Vietnam War was normally mentioned in the Vietnamese media. The overwhelming idea of the Vietnamese people was that the Vietnam War was Vietnam's heroic war and America's shameful war (General Van, 1975; Werner and Huynh, 1993). The involvement of America in the Vietnam War was unjust; therefore all the economic punishment by America following the war had been unfair treatment of a nation who wanted to dictate the world.

Examination of data showed that the Vietnam War experiences were not directly used to discuss the September attacks in Vietnam's mainstream media. Of the 30 issues of The People newspaper, hardly any articles referred directly to the Vietnam War while discussing the attacks. There are several possible explanations for this. First of all, all the articles were simply a retreat or summary of articles by well-known newspapers or news agencies. The People newspaper simply chose, translated, edited and published

what had been told by other news sources. In other words, the articles of the People newspaper were not written by the Vietnamese reporters but American, Russian, French, or British reporters. Second, as the official voice of Vietnam's Communist party, The People newspaper would normally carry world news with greater care. Articles about political issues were carried with caution.

However, there was evidence that the Vietnam War experiences indirectly affected the way the attacks were covered. Indirect references to the Vietnam War could be found in the tone and theme of the articles.

First of all, the newspaper focused on the failure of America during the attacks as well as the strategy to strike back against terrorists while ignoring other humane sides of the event. The main theme was to focus on the chaos of America after the attacks. For example, schools, offices, and banks were closed; hospitals were packed with injured victims; and American market fluctuated considerably. The slight victimizing style and the neutral tone of those articles suggested an emotional distance between Vietnamese readers and America, which could be because of proximity, the nature of news reporting, and past experiences. At the same time, no personal stories of

the attacks' victims were carried. And yet, in Vietnamese media, personal stories of the Vietnam War's victims had always been a focus. Stories about the Vietnamese veterans, who went to the Vietnam War and suffered from the orange agent, were often carried. This contrast in carrying tragic stories indicated some relationship between the way the Vietnamese media saw America's suffering and Vietnam's own suffering during the war. The suffering of the American victims in the September attacks seemed to carry a different meaning as compared to that of the Vietnamese victims of the Vietnam war though both of them were human suffering caused by unwanted tragedies.

One noteworthy outside factor was that the attacks happened when the U.S. House of Representatives voted for the Vietnam Human Rights Act, in which they accused Vietnam of violating human rights and asked for changes. The Act evoked protest around the world. Since The People newspaper was the voice of Vietnam's Communist Party and the Vietnamese people, the Vietnam Human Rights Act was very important in the domestic news page during the time of the attacks. Parallel to articles covering the attacks were articles about the Human Rights Act. For example the Sept. 12 issue reported the terrorist attacks in the same page

with the protest of Chinese government to the Vietnam Human Rights Act. Issues of Sept. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, spent three long articles each issue to the protest against the Vietnam Human Rights Act. Authors of those articles were mostly well-known scientists, writers, lawyers, foreigners, priests, or other social activists. In addition, the newspaper covered news about policies of America in world economy or politics. For example, in the issue of Sept. 12, next to the coverage of the terrorist attacks were articles about the protest of an American senator to America's self-defense plan, the protest by Malaysia to many unfair conditions to join the World Trade Organization, in which America has a considerable voice, evidence of the killing effects of agent orange dropped by American troops in Vietnam during the Vietnam War, and the unfair operation of the International Court, under the leadership of powerful countries.

There was extensive coverage of America's new war against terrorism in Afghanistan. For example, issues from Sept. 25 through Oct. 11, 2001, gave great details of the new war everyday. This might suggest that the Vietnamese public be interested in war-related issues, especially when it came to America. It should be remembered that many war

memories and experiences of the Vietnamese public were attached to the Vietnam War since it was the last war of Vietnam. War sensitivity could be a distinguished cultural behavior of Vietnam.

Finally, as mentioned above, the newspaper seemed to cover the terrorist attacks in America and the new war of America in Afghanistan with the notion that America meant the American government, rather than a nation with its people.

2. The unpublished media

Together with the examination of the mainstream media, this study examined the unpublished media in order to establish an overview of the way the Vietnamese media used the Vietnam War experiences to discuss the September attacks. For the purpose of this study, the definition of "unpublished media" referred to the websites established by Vietnamese people or used the Vietnamese language as the main language. Four specific technical terms were used in the discussion of the results.

"Posting" was a single and complete reply posted by a member of the examined websites in reply to a question of

another member, to express an opinion or start a new discussion.

"Thread" was a separate topic posted on the websites. A thread consisted of one or more postings.

"Discussion" referred to a single thread or a single issue discussed in one or more threads.

"Boxes" referred to a site inside a forum that focused only on a certain issue, for example box Literature focusing only on literature, box Computer Games focusing on computer games, box General discussion focusing only on social and political issues.

Different from the mainstream media, the unpublished media directly used the Vietnam War experiences in discussing the September terrorist attacks. Details of the results are as follows.

- **Overall results**

Approximately 332 postings from the two websites - Dien Dan tri Tue Viet Nam Tren Mang (The Vietnam Online Intellectual Forum at <http://www.ttvnonline.com>) and Dien Dan Thanh Nien Xa Me (Forum for Vietnamese overseas students at <http://www.tathy.com/thanglong>) - were collected between Sept. 11, 2001 and Oct. 11, 2001.

In the Vietnam Online Intellectual Forum, the topics were selected mainly from two boxes: "America against attacks" and "General Discussion". "America against attacks" box was opened right after the attacks took place in America. "General Discussion" box was the one normally focusing on political and social issues. In the Forum for Vietnamese overseas students, topics were selected from two boxes: General Discussion and Serious Issues Only because these boxes focused on social discussions. Altogether 80 threads of discussion were selected from the two forums.

Because of the anonymity of forums' members and the unofficial nature of the discussion, the attacks were discussed very vividly on the two forums. Though most of users were students, probably born and bred after the Vietnam War, therefore having little direct experiences about the war, their references to the Vietnam War when discussing the attacks were considerable.

The Vietnam War experiences were used in three ways to discuss the September attacks:

- Compare the attacks and the new war of America against terrorism with the Vietnam War.

- Make jokes of the attacks and America based on experiences of the Vietnam War and related issues.
- Implicitly refer to the Vietnam War when discussing the attacks. This way is recognized through the invisible impact of the Vietnam War on perceptions about America and its political policies.
- Comparing the attacks and the new war of America with the Vietnam War:

This was the most obvious way that the Vietnam War was used in discussions about the September attacks and the war against terrorism. Comparisons were made with two distinct purposes: (1) to compare similarities and differences between the two events and therefore predict the outcomes of the war; and (2) to justify the attacks and the new war of America.

One thread, which started on Sept. 11, 2001 and continued throughout the time period examined in this study, discussed a series of comparisons between the two wars. For example, in Vietnam, the U.S. took over a war from another country (France), which could not defeat the Vietcong; in Afghanistan, the U.S. was taking over from the Russians, who could not defeat the Afghans. In Vietnam,

the U.S. had very little understanding and knowledge of Vietnamese culture, history and language; while in Afghanistan, the U.S. has very little understanding of Afghani culture, history and language. In Vietnam, the U.S. was at a loss to figure out how to win the war. In Afghanistan, it seems apparent that the U.S., anxious to retaliate for September 11, rushed in and now is flailing about trying to figure out what to do, given that (surprise!) the Taliban are a clever, tenacious force of guerrillas fighters -- who also are well-skilled in public relations marketing. Finally, the writer commented that, "the similarities are striking, especially the main one: the U.S. administration really doesn't know what it's doing, or how to do it." (See Appendix, Example 1)

These comparisons about the similarities and differences between the Vietnam War and the anti-terrorism war by America were mainly used to find out whether America could succeed in its new war. Discussions also suggested that America should have been more careful not to step in a war in which there was no assurance of victory or no clear evidence to justify its goals, as it did the Vietnam War. For example, two discussions starting on Sept. 11, 2001 and Sept. 13, 2001 both justified the terrorist attacks as a

worthwhile warning and punishment to America for its unfair political policies to other countries. The Vietnam War and other America-involved wars, such as the war in Iraq, Kosovo, or Japan, were used to justify the current war of America. Specifically, the discussion suggested that because America had done many unfair military acts, such as bomb raiding in Vietnam, dropping nuclear bombs in Japan, or attacking Iraq, making many civilians die, it deserved the terrorist attacks as punishment. (See Appendix, Example 2)

The Vietnam War experiences may have served as a looking-glass for the Vietnamese public when they observed the September terrorist attacks. It should be remembered that most opinions given in the above discussions came from young people who did not actually go to the Vietnam War. Their experiences with the war came from the stories of their family, friends or the media. As mentioned above, the main theme of the Vietnamese media about the Vietnam War was that it was a heroic war for national independence, freedom and unification. What America did with Vietnam during the Vietnam War was a wrong cause. This theme was used to justify the September attacks and the new war of America.

- Make jokes of the attacks and America based on experiences of the Vietnam War and related issues.

Many topics discussed the September terrorist attacks with a tone of sarcasm. They mainly ridiculed America for its failure in protecting itself from the terrorists and rushing into an uncertain war. The overall theme was that America would likely be seeing another Vietnam in Afghanistan.

The jokes were based on two assumptions; (1) America, always self-claiming as an undefeatable nation, failed for the first time in Vietnam and now failed again right in America, and (2) an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

The jokes derived from two sources: experiences of the failure of America during the Vietnam War and America's cultural features. For example, in the Forum for Vietnamese overseas students, one user launched a joke about recruiting Vietnamese pilots for future terrorist attacks (See table 1).

Table 1: Example of joke of the September attacks

Socialist Republic of Vietnam
Independence - Freedom - Happiness

Vietnam Air Force declares to open an instant pilot training course.

Applicants: Must be Vietnamese citizens, clear profiles, preferably those whose family members died in the Vietnam War.

Qualifications: strong, proficient in English. Priorities given to overseas Vietnamese, especially motorbike racers who have practiced some sort of martyrdom.

Course information: students will learn to take control of an air plane (no need to learn to take off or land because they will only control the air planes after hi-jacking them). Students will also learn Teakondo, Kungfu...focusing on threatening others by knife and fork.

Practice will be done on air planes of TU 134, TU 154, AN 12 (typical air planes of Vietnam Airlines, produced by Russia and former Soviet Union).

Instructors for the course are experienced pilots from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Palestine, Iraq, Iran, etc. All the costs for this training course will come from donation of Tamin Tiger organization, Bin Laden, Hamas and other extreme Islamic groups.

Outstanding students will receive full scholarship (tuition, living expenses, and life insurance) to attend the University of Taliban.

...

Sign up today, the nation will honor your service tomorrow!
(By user Tiger_for_sale, Sept. 11, 2001)

Source: The Forum for Vietnamese overseas students)

Many other jokes focused on the attacks and President George W. Bush (See Table 2, Picture 1 and 2)

Table 2: Example of funny pictures

Picture 1: New design of the WTC



Picture 2 (right): President Bush

As mentioned above, the jokes were given with the purpose of ridiculing America's pride. They are either directly or indirectly connected with the perception about the failure of America in the Vietnam War, as well as memories of what America has done to Vietnam and other countries.

- Implicitly refer to the Vietnam War when discussing the attacks.

The impact of the Vietnam War on Vietnamese people's perceptions about America and its political policies were also found in the discussion. As suggested by the literature, the Vietnam War left Vietnamese people with the impression that America was once their enemy and that

America's involvement in the Vietnam War was unjust (General Van, 1975). Moreover, during the time of the attacks, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Vietnam Human Rights Act, which evoked a lot of protests. Discussions about the attacks and the Act appeared at the same time on the two websites. The anger provoked by the Act was partially expressed in discussion about the attacks. There were two general themes; one expressing sympathy, and one happiness toward the suffering of America in the attacks. One common theme found was that America deserved the attacks because of all the unjust activities the American government did to other countries, including Vietnam.

An article from Vietbao Online post on The Vietnam Online Intellectual Forum said, "Many people in Hanoi consider the terrorist attacks an heroic action because the terrorists dare to challenge America. On one hand, Vietnamese people admire America for its economic, military, cultural, and scientific power. On the other hand, as a communist country, Hanoi still keeps a very cautious relationship with America. Washington and Hanoi were once enemies. Though the Vietnam War had passed for a quarter of a century, the bitter feelings are still there

behind the smiles of the Hanoians" (Source: The Online Forum for Young Vietnamese Intellectuals)

At the same time, many discussions expressed sympathy to the victims who died in the attacks or covered news about the support of Vietnamese people to the American people. For example, a series of postings discussed relief activities of the Vietnamese communities in America. One topic mentioned that a Vietnamese person in New York gave U.S. \$2 million to terrorist victims. Another covered the concert of Vietnamese people in Santa Ana to collect money to support New York. Other similar news was given. The underlying expression from these postings was that despite the Vietnam War experiences, the Vietnamese people sympathized for the losses of American people. Most topics often ended up with the Vietnam War experiences and different opinions about America's involvement in it.

The fear for wars or any military activities of the Vietnamese people was also contained in the discussion of the September attacks. The memories of the war still lingered on the old generations and were reflected on the young generations of Vietnam. It was speculated that every single family in Vietnam has a story or two to tell about the Vietnam War. The nation has not recovered from losses

yet. That truth was reflected in the fact that many members of the two forums were concerned about the chance of the third world war and its negative effects. (See Appendix, Example 3)

Summary of findings

Examination of 30 issues of The People newspaper and 80 threads of discussion from two Vietnamese websites showed that the Vietnamese media used the Vietnam War experiences in different ways in the discussion of the September terrorist attacks in America.

The mainstream media did not directly use the Vietnam War experiences to discuss the September terrorist attacks. Few articles directly mentioned or referred to the Vietnam War experiences. However, the effects of the war could be traced in subtle ways. First of all, the tones of the articles changed through three phases: drama phase, story-news phase, and the news-reporting phase. No feature story, personal profile, or similar heart-breaking stories were told. News about other disaster-relief activities such as concert, donation days, etc. was not reported in detail. The new spirit of America in the crisis, such as the honoring of fire fighters and policemen, the united theme

of America, etc. were not mentioned. Instead, America was covered as a government in crisis, rather than a nation with its people. This could be because of proximity or the nature of the news reporting. But it could also be because of the perception of America as a past enemy of Vietnam. Moreover, at the time of the attacks, the people of Vietnam were in protest against the Vietnam Human Rights Act passed by the U.S. government, which was said to intervene into the internal affairs of Vietnam.

Second, the style of slightly victimizing America in the attacks could have suggested that the past experiences of the Vietnam War with human and economic losses still affect the way America was perceived. The fact that the involvement of America in Vietnam was always considered unjust had implicitly been used as a factor to justify the terrorists' attacks and America's decision to attack Afghanistan.

The unpublished media, on the other hand, used the Vietnam War experiences more directly to discuss the September attacks. Three specific ways were recognized: (1) to compare the attacks and the new war of America with the Vietnam War and justify the new war using experiences about the involvement of the U.S. in the Vietnam War (2) to make

fun of America using experiences of the Vietnam War and the American culture, and (3) to implicitly refer to the Vietnam War while discussing the attacks and the new war. One main theme was that the attacks were evil acts because they targeted American civilians. However, they were also seen as a warning and punishment to the American government for their dictatorial policies in the world. Another discussion theme was that if America rushed in the war with Afghanistan just to take revenge on the terrorists, they would face another dilemma like the Vietnam War. Also, if America continued to give itself the right to attack any country they found involved in the terrorist attacks, the world would be facing the third world war, which was no good for anyone, leaving human losses and hatred forever.

Parallel to serious discussion about the attacks and the war of America were jokes and funny stories or pictures about America, especially president Bush in the crisis. The jokes aimed mostly at America's pride as the most powerful, undefeatable country in the world. Most of the jokes explicitly or implicitly referred to the experiences of the Vietnam War, in which America was the loser and the enemy. The human losses and the enduring suffering of the Vietnamese people 30 years after the war still left

Vietnamese people with hurt and reluctance against the American government. Finally, there were many other subtle references to the Vietnam War experiences in the discussion of the terrorist attacks and the new war of America.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

DISCUSSION

Results of the study showed that the Vietnam War experiences affected the way the September attacks were covered in the Vietnamese media. However, these effects differed between the mainstream media and the unpublished media.

Specifically speaking, the mainstream media used the Vietnam War experiences in an indirect way. They did not refer directly to the Vietnam War in the content of articles that covered the attacks. However, the special tone in which they slightly victimized America, together with other subtle ways of covering the attacks may have indicated the link between the Vietnam War experiences and the perceptions of the attacks.

In contrast to the mainstream media, the unpublished media directly referred to the Vietnam War experiences in their discussion of the September attacks. The major ways to refer to the Vietnam War were to compare the Vietnam War and the anti-terrorism war of America, to make jokes about America's failure, and to indicate in more subtle ways the lesson of the Vietnam War in today's military acts.

These results suggest that present cultural behaviors - in this case communication behaviors - were consistent with past experiences. The Vietnam War experiences clearly created a looking glass in the Vietnamese public and affected the way they saw America. The terrorist attacks in America were justified using some similar reasons used to justify the involvement of America in the Vietnam War. The new war of America in Afghanistan was also justified and judged based on perceptions derived partially from the Vietnam War. The Vietnam War experiences, together with the 100-year struggle against the French domination and the 100-year battles against the Chinese invasion, probably made Vietnamese people especially sensitive to wars and losses. The terrorist attacks and the new war of America might have triggered that underlying perception about wars and losses. As mentioned above, communication behaviors - understood partially as the way a nation told its stories - represented one of many cultural behaviors. As far as storytelling was concerned, it was recognized that one of the notable stories Vietnam often told about the war was the story of their struggles against powerful enemies such as America, France, China, Japan, etc. to gain independence and freedom. The discussion of the terrorist attacks and

the new war of America came naturally as part of that storytelling tradition. Also, it showed the consistency in cultural behaviors.

By looking into the way the Vietnam War experiences were used to discuss the September attacks, it could be concluded that past experiences could affect current behaviors in many subtle ways. As far as a war experience was concerned, the feeling of hurt could last for a long time and be expressed in many ways. It could be expressed by visible hatred or rejection. However, it could also be the underlying perceptions, the stereotypes, the sympathy for similar sufferings, the protest against war, or many other subtle expressions. The lasting experiences of the Vietnamese people through the Vietnam War, through the 20 year economic boycott and embargo of the U.S. government have not built hatred against the America public but created a looking-glass toward the American government and America-involved military actions.

Results of the study indicated that there were differences in the effect of the Vietnam War experiences in different generations of Vietnam. The young generations, which were also the users of the two forums used for data collection, discussed the attacks more frankly, directly,

and openly. Part of the reason could be the anonymous nature of an online community. In those forums, any person could sign up a nickname and express opinions freely without being identified. Another part of the reason could be the nature of these websites' members' experiences of the Vietnam War. Mostly born after the Vietnam War, their experiences with the war were mainly indirect ones. They experienced the war through stories of family members or through their own upbringing during the hard times of the 1980s when America and its allies placed boycotts and embargo against Vietnam. However, the direct human losses or battle fighting were probably not among their experiences. Their daily exposure to news about American politics, technology, and economy changed their perception about America compared to that of the older generations.

Another difference indicated by the results was the one between the mainstream media and the unpublished media. The mainstream media were more objective and formal when covering the attacks while the unpublished media were more subjective, informal and direct. Again, the nature of the two types of media could be an explanation for this difference. As mentioned, the People newspaper is the official voice of the Vietnam's Communist Party and People,

therefore it should be very formal and cautious about diplomatic issues. The two forums were relatively free to discuss social and political issues.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how the Vietnamese mainstream and unpublished media used the Vietnam War experiences to discuss the September terrorist attacks in America. Examining data collected from The People newspaper and two websites of Vietnamese students, this study found that the mainstream media did not directly refer to the Vietnam War when discussing the September terrorist attacks in America. However, the Vietnam War experiences subtly affected the way the September attacks were reported. An underlying notion about American government, which derived from the Vietnam War experiences, was reflected in the articles about the attacks. The most obvious evidence was the slight victimizing style that was used to portray America in crisis.

Different from the mainstream media, the unpublished media directly used the Vietnam War experiences to discuss the September terrorist attacks. Three major ways were revealed. One was to compare the Vietnam War with the

attacks and justify the new war of America against terrorism using the same justification for the Vietnam War. Another way was to make jokes of America's failure, using America's sense of failure in the Vietnam War. Finally, many other subtle ways could be traced about the usage of the Vietnam War experiences in discussing the terrorist attacks and the war.

Results of the study suggested that the already known socially constructed reality of Vietnam and America once again proved true in the event of September attacks. The Vietnam War was indeed still a looking glass in the relationship of Vietnam and America. Results of the study also indicated that cultural behaviors were normally consistent. Present reactions were consistent with past experiences. Results of the study supported the theory of social construction of reality and cultural approach to organizational communication, which suggested that the perception of a nation were social product and was very much affected by past stories, beliefs, or stereotypes. In Vietnamese society, perception of America and the Vietnam War was a social product, which was shared by both the young and the old generations. The findings also revealed that there were differences in the magnitude of influences

of past experiences on current behaviors between the young generations and the old generations of Vietnam, between the mainstream media and the unpublished media.

This study was strong in that it examined a unique and influential media event in relationship with cultural issues. Its results could be used for the field of communication as well as other social fields.

However, this study also had some limitations. As a Vietnamese, the author could be culturally biased when analyzing the data. In addition, the data collected to examine the Vietnamese mainstream media came from the People newspaper, the official voice of the Vietnam's Communist Party and therefore probably did not reflect a comprehensive picture of the whole mainstream media.

Future research could see how other countries, especially those who did not have war experiences with America, covered the September attacks. Future research could also examine how the media of the Vietnamese community in America discussed the attacks. Finally, it could look at other sources of data besides the People newspaper.

Findings from this study could be used in many ways to enhance communication research as well as other social

research. However, the utmost hope of this study would be to shed some more light into the Vietnam-America culture and therefore contribute modestly to improve it from a bitter past.

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APPENDIX

Example 1: A posting comparing the Vietnam War and the new war of America in Afghanistan.

=====
 In Vietnam, the U.S. took over a war from another country (France), which could not defeat the Vietcong. In Afghanistan, the U.S., so to speak, is taking over from the Russians, who could not defeat the Afghans.

* In Vietnam, the U.S. had very little understanding and knowledge of Vietnamese culture and history -- and language. In Afghanistan, the U.S. has very little understanding of Afghani culture, history and language.

* In Vietnam, the U.S. was constantly fighting an inhospitable geography -- the jungles, the muck, the highlands, the monsoons. In Afghanistan, the U.S. is constantly fighting an inhospitable geography -- the high mountains, the snowy winters, the lack of infrastructure.

* In Vietnam, the U.S. tried to win the hearts and minds of the native population, while it bombed their villages with napalm, Agent Orange, and cluster bombs. In Afghanistan, the U.S. is trying to win the hearts and minds of the native population with its yellow-packeted food drops, while it continues to mistakenly bomb their villages and hospitals and food warehouses, sometimes with cluster bombs.

* In Vietnam, the U.S. depended on its high-tech weaponry in fighting guerrillas who for years, decades, centuries, had found a way to disappear into jungles, caves, tunnels, and then drive the invaders from its soil. In Afghanistan, the US is relying heavily on its high-tech weaponry in fighting guerrillas who for years, decades, centuries have found a way to disappear into caves and tunnels, and then drive invaders (British, Soviets) from their soil.

* In Vietnam, the U.S. (unsuccessfully) tried to prevent the truth of what was happening there from being reported by the American news media. In Afghanistan, the U.S. military doles out the news it wants to have reported.

* In Vietnam, the U.S. in the early stages sent "advisors" and other small contingents of troops, and used the local army in its fight against the bad guys, prior to sending in hundreds of thousands of drafted soldiers. In Afghanistan, the U.S. wants the local opposition troops to do the major land fighting, but realizes it may have to send in hundreds of thousands of American troops (probably re-instituting the draft) to do the job.

* In Vietnam, the U.S. escalated the war beyond the borders of the country it was fighting. In the current war, there is widespread speculation that the U.S. is ready to go beyond Afghanistan, with Iraq the next likely target. (You can imagine what that will do to the fragile coalition of Muslim states currently supporting or tolerating U.S. actions in Afghanistan.)

* In Vietnam, the U.S. was at a loss to figure out how to win the war. In Afghanistan, it seems apparent that the U.S., anxious to retaliate for September 11, rushed in and now is flailing about trying to figure out what to do, given that (surprise!) the Taliban are a clever, tenacious force of guerrillas fighters -- who also are well-skilled in public relations marketing.

Now, of course, the two wars are not exactly parallel. This is a far different conflict, in a far different place, with no Cold War serving as background music. But the similarities are striking, especially the main one: the U.S. administration really doesn't know what it's doing, or how to do it.

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Source: The Vietnam Online Intellectual Forum. Sept. 11,
2001.

Example 2: A thread using the Vietnam War experiences as
reference to the September attacks

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The reasons for American tragedy are obvious. It's the reflection of George Bush's unfair political policies. However, I feel sorry for American civilians.
(by user QQ)

Source: The Online Forum for Young Vietnamese Intellectuals, Sept. 13, 2001)

Such terrorist activities should always be condemned no matter what. I feel so sorry for the American civilians. However, I don't know if American people understand that this might be the result of what America did in Kosovo, Iraq and Vietnam. What America did (to those countries) were much worse than what the terrorists did today (by user Huu Vinh, Sept, 11, 2001)

Why did you say that America committed unforgivable crime in Vietnam, Iraq and Kosovo? Didn't you know that each year America gave away hundreds of thousand dollars to assist developing countries, including Vietnam? Without America, many countries in Africa would have a lot of people die because of famine. Also, I want you to tell me if the 50,000 people died in the World Trade Center had anything to do with the American government. Never in the world history, there were 50,000 innocent civilians die within half an hour. I think the terrorists are not human beings. (By user ThanhEDM, Sept.12, 2001)

ThanhEDM, don't you know that two nuclear bombs America dropped in Japan killed hundreds of thousand of civilians in just a few minutes? (By user paolo_vn)

I agree that all terrorist activities should be condemned. We should be sympathetic with the American people because we Vietnamese understand more than anyone the meaning of losses caused by war. We should protest the use of military in keeping peace. I hope that American government understands that

there could never be any thing good about wars. America should become a free and powerful country without making other country suffer. Today's tragedies were rooted from yesterday's policies... (By user ATC)

I don't know if America deserves those terrorist attacks. I think killing civilians is always mean. If they want to fight for freedom or whatsoever, they should go to the battlefield. We Vietnamese people, in 30 yeas (of the Vietnam War) never bombed civilians. (By user Ica)

ThanhEDM, I have some questions for you. Do you know how many people died from the two bombs America dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Who were the victims? Military or civilian people? Do you know that America once bomb raided in Kham Thien, Hanoi, killing all people living in this street? Do you know the My Lai massacre (during the Vietnam War)? Those who died in that massacre include elderly people and children. You said America gave "humanitarian" money to help Vietnam. I don't know how much money America gave Vietnam but I don't think a humanitarian nation would spray orange agents in Vietnam's jungles in order to detect the Vietcong hidden in those jungles. America did not kill those soldiers but they are killing children born from those soldiers, who are now disabled children without legs, arms, etc. Do you know all that? (By user Bom)

The World War II ended thanks to the two nuclear bombs of America, which forced Japan to surrender. Though America killed thousands of people, they saved millions other who could otherwise die because of the war. The Middle East media distorted news about the war over there. America did not drop bombs at schools, hospitals or factories. I must say that the recent terrorist attacks were mean. America did not declare war with them. (By user ThanhEDM)

Hey ThanhEDM, then I would say its was worth scarifying 1400 people (according to the latest death toll) in these terrorist attacks in order to save millions

of other people who would otherwise die if America continued its political policies. (By user Kiengia).

Oh, so thanks to the American nuclear bombs in Japan that the Vietnamese people survived through the famine of 1945? Alright. From now on, if I heard Vietnamese guy condemning America, I would slap his face. But, ThanhEDM, let me ask you this question: In 1854, when the Dien Bien Phu battle almost came to an end with obvious victory of Vietnam, why did in the hell America want to give France a nuclear bomb? Lucky us that the French government refused this gift. Tell me, what did America want to save then? (By user Bom)

Example 3: A thread indirectly referring to the Vietnam War experiences.

=====

I strongly protest the new war of America in Afghanistan. This is simply a demonstration of American power and a challenge to the world. Until America has sufficient evidences about the involvement of Bin Laden, the attacks of British-American military to Afghanistan go against international laws. If the world keeps silence (especially China, Russia), America may take the victory at Afghanistan as the pedal to attack other countries under the umbrella or "involvement in terrorism." Who can be sure these attacks won't lead to the world war III? Where would the world go?

Me too. I protest this war because too many civilians are dying. It's likely that America will attacks Iraq, Iran...the war will spread all over...more innocent people will die...

I think you guys are too naive. America has sufficient evidences about Bin Laden...and has submitted them to the United Nation...

No one wants wars. I don't think the attacks in Afghanistan would bring any good. However, we must be clear about the attacks in Afghanistan and Bin Laden. It's funny that many people celebrate when 5,000 people died in the World Trade center but protest when only about 160 Afghanistan people died. Many American people too protest the attacks in Afghanistan just as they did during the Vietnam War. But one must

understand that the threat of terrorism is not only in America. It's a
threat to the whole world...

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Source: The Vietnam Online Intellectual Forum.

Table 1: Chronology of the September attacks

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8:45 a.m. (all times are EDT): A hijacked passenger jet, American Airlines Flight 11 out of Boston, Massachusetts, crashes into the north tower of the World Trade Center, tearing a gaping hole in the building and setting it afire.

9:03 a.m.: A second hijacked airliner, United Airlines Flight 175 from Boston, crashes into the south tower of the World Trade Center and explodes. Both buildings are burning.

9:17 a.m.: The Federal Aviation Administration shuts down all New York City area airports.

9:21 a.m.: The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey orders all bridges and tunnels in the New York area closed.

9:30 a.m.: President Bush, speaking in Sarasota, Florida, says the country has suffered an "apparent terrorist attack."

9:40 a.m.: The FAA halts all flight operations at U.S. airports, the first time in U.S. history that air traffic nationwide has been halted.

9:43 a.m.: American Airlines Flight 77 crashes into the Pentagon, sending up a huge plume of smoke. Evacuation begins immediately.

9:45 a.m.: The White House evacuates.

9:57 a.m.: Bush departs from Florida.

10:05 a.m.: The south tower of the World Trade Center collapses, plummeting into the streets below. A massive cloud of dust and debris forms and slowly drifts away from the building.

10:08 a.m.: Secret Service agents armed with automatic rifles are deployed into Lafayette Park across from the White House.

10:10 a.m.: A portion of the Pentagon collapses.

10:10 a.m.: United Airlines Flight 93, also hijacked, crashes in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, southeast of Pittsburgh.

10:13 a.m.: The United Nations building evacuates, including 4,700 people from the headquarters building and 7,000 total from UNICEF and U.N. development programs.

10:22 a.m.: In Washington, the State and Justice departments are evacuated, along with the World Bank.

10:24 a.m.: The FAA reports that all inbound transatlantic aircraft flying into the United States are being diverted to Canada.

10:28 a.m.: The World Trade Center's north tower collapses from the top down as if it were being peeled apart, releasing a tremendous cloud of debris and smoke.

10:45 a.m.: All federal office buildings in Washington are evacuated.

10.46 a.m.: U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell cuts short his trip to Latin America to return to the United States.

10.48 a.m.: Police confirm the plane crash in Pennsylvania.

10:53 a.m.: New York's primary elections, scheduled for Tuesday, are postponed.

10:54 a.m.: Israel evacuates all diplomatic missions.

10:57 a.m.: New York Gov. George Pataki says all state government offices are closed.

11:02 a.m.: New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani urges New Yorkers to stay at home and orders an evacuation of the area south of Canal Street.

11:16 a.m.: CNN reports that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is preparing emergency-response teams in a precautionary move.

11:18 a.m.: American Airlines reports it has lost two aircraft. American Flight 11, a Boeing 767 flying from Boston to Los Angeles, had 81 passengers and 11 crew aboard. Flight 77, a Boeing 757 en route from Washington's Dulles International Airport to Los Angeles, had 58 passengers and six crew members aboard. Flight 11 slammed into the north tower of the World Trade Center. Flight 77 hit the Pentagon.

11:26 a.m.: United Airlines reports that United Flight 93, en route from Newark, New Jersey, to San Francisco, California, has crashed in Pennsylvania. The airline also says that it is "deeply concerned" about United Flight 175.

11:59 a.m.: United Airlines confirms that Flight 175, from Boston to Los Angeles, has crashed with 56 passengers and nine crew members aboard. It hit the World Trade Center's south tower.

12:04 p.m.: Los Angeles International Airport, the destination of three of the crashed airplanes, is evacuated.

12:15 p.m.: San Francisco International Airport is evacuated and shut down. The airport was the destination of United Airlines Flight 93, which crashed in Pennsylvania.

12:15 p.m.: The Immigration and Naturalization Service says U.S. borders with Canada and Mexico are on the highest state of alert, but no decision has been made about closing borders.

12:30 p.m.: The FAA says 50 flights are in U.S. airspace, but none are reporting any problems.

1:04 p.m.: Bush, speaking from Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana, says that all appropriate security measures are being taken, including putting the U.S. military on high alert worldwide. He asks for prayers for those killed or wounded in the attacks and says, "Make no mistake, the United States will hunt down and punish those responsible for these cowardly acts."

1:27 p.m.: A state of emergency is declared by the city of Washington.

1:44 p.m.: The Pentagon says five warships and two aircraft carriers will leave the U.S. Naval Station in Norfolk, Virginia, to protect the East Coast from further attack and to reduce the number of ships in port. The two carriers, the USS George Washington and the USS John F. Kennedy, are headed for the New York coast. The other ships headed to sea are frigates and guided missile destroyers capable of shooting down aircraft.

1:48 p.m.: Bush leaves Barksdale Air Force Base aboard Air Force One and flies to an Air Force base in Nebraska.

2 p.m.: Senior FBI sources tell CNN they are working on the assumption that the four airplanes that crashed were hijacked as part of a terrorist attack.

2:30 p.m.: The FAA announces there will be no U.S. commercial air traffic until noon EDT Wednesday at the earliest.

2:49 p.m.: At a news conference, Giuliani says that subway and bus service are partially restored in New York City. Asked about the number of people killed, Giuliani says, "I don't think we want to speculate about that -- more than any of us can bear."

3:55 p.m.: Karen Hughes, a White House counselor, says the president is at an undisclosed location, later revealed to be Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska, and is conducting a National Security Council meeting by phone. Vice President Dick Cheney and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice are in a secure facility at the White House. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld is at the Pentagon.

3:55 p.m.: Giuliani now says the number of critically injured in New York City is up to 200 with 2,100 total injuries reported.

4 p.m.: CNN National Security Correspondent David Ensor reports that U.S. officials say there are "good indications" that Saudi militant Osama bin Laden, suspected of coordinating the bombings of two U.S. embassies in 1998, is involved in the attacks, based on "new and specific" information developed since the attacks.

4:06 p.m.: California Gov. Gray Davis dispatches urban search-and-rescue teams to New York.

4:10 p.m.: Building 7 of the World Trade Center complex is reported on fire.

4:20 p.m.: U.S. Sen. Bob Graham, D-Florida, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, says he was "not surprised there was an attack (but) was surprised at the specificity." He says he was "shocked at what actually happened -- the extent of it."

4:25 p.m.: The American Stock Exchange, the Nasdaq and the New York Stock Exchange say they will remain closed Wednesday.

4:30 p.m.: The president leaves Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska aboard Air Force One to return to Washington.

5:15 p.m.: CNN Military Affairs Correspondent Jamie McIntyre reports fires are still burning in part of the Pentagon. No death figures have been released yet.

5:20 p.m.: The 47-story Building 7 of the World Trade Center complex collapses. The evacuated building is damaged when the twin towers across the street collapse earlier in the day. Other nearby buildings in the area remain ablaze.

5:30 p.m.: CNN Senior White House Correspondent John King reports that U.S. officials say the plane that crashed in Pennsylvania could have been headed for one of three possible targets: Camp David, the White House or the U.S. Capitol building.

6 p.m.: Explosions are heard in Kabul, Afghanistan, hours after terrorist attacks targeted financial and military centers in the United States. The attacks occurred at 2:30 a.m. local time. Afghanistan is believed to be where bin Laden, who U.S. officials say is possibly behind Tuesday's deadly attacks, is located. U.S. officials say later that the United States had no involvement in the incident whatsoever. The attack is credited to the Northern Alliance, a group fighting the Taliban in the country's ongoing civil war.

6:10 p.m.: Giuliani urges New Yorkers to stay home Wednesday if they can.

6:40 p.m.: Rumsfeld, the U.S. defense secretary, holds a news conference in the Pentagon, noting the building is operational. "It will be in business tomorrow," he says.

6:54 p.m.: Bush arrives back at the White House aboard Marine One and is scheduled to address the nation at 8:30 p.m. The president earlier landed at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland with a three-fighter jet escort. CNN's John King reports Laura Bush arrived earlier by motorcade from a "secure location."

7:17 p.m.: U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft says the FBI is setting up a Web site for tips on the attacks: www.ifccfbi.gov. He also says family and friends of possible victims can leave contact information at 800-331-0075.

7:02 p.m.: CNN's Paula Zahn reports the Marriott Hotel near the World Trade Center is on the verge of collapse and says some New York bridges are now open to outbound traffic.

7:45 p.m.: The New York Police Department says that at least 78 officers are missing. The city also says that as many as half of the first 400 firefighters on the scene were killed.

8:30 p.m.: President Bush addresses the nation, saying "thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil" and asks for prayers for the families and friends of Tuesday's victims. "These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve," he says. The president says the U.S. government will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed the acts and those who harbor them. He adds that government offices in Washington are reopening for essential personnel Tuesday night and for all workers Wednesday.

9:22 p.m.: CNN's McIntyre reports the fire at the Pentagon is still burning and is considered contained but not under control.

9:57 p.m.: Giuliani says New York City schools will be closed Wednesday and no more volunteers are needed for Tuesday evening's rescue efforts. He says there is hope that there are still people alive in rubble. He also says that power is out on the westside of Manhattan and that health department tests show there are no airborne chemical agents about which to worry.

10:49 p.m.: CNN Congressional Correspondent Jonathan Karl reports that Attorney General Ashcroft told members of Congress that there were three to five hijackers on each plane armed only with knives.

10:56 p.m.: CNN's Zahn reports that New York City police believe there are people alive in buildings near the World Trade Center.

11:54 p.m.: CNN Washington Bureau Chief Frank Sesno reports that a government official told him there was an open microphone on one of the hijacked planes and that sounds of discussion and "duress" were heard. Sesno also reports a source says law enforcement has "credible" information and leads and is confident about the investigation