
Depiction Of Western Imperialism In The Quiet American Book

The Quiet American

A quote by Author Eckhart Tolle says, "Power over others is weakness disguised as strength" (Eckhart). This quote surely describes the defeat of the French forces against the Vietnamese communists during the first Indochina War. In the year 1946 to 1954, a major conflict in the Asia region known as Indochina was fought between France – its' long-time colonial leader and the Vietnamese rebel forces. The French mobilized 50,000 troops and took control of Saigon – a city in Vietnam. Other countries like Britain and America also tried imperializing the country. As a matter of fact, an author name Graham Greene wrote a novel called "The Quiet American" which depicts the French and British imperialism in Vietnam being overturn by the Americans during the 1950s. The love triangle between Pyle, Fowler and Phuong serves as an allegory to represent a bigger picture of the history of the first Indochina War. Pyle represents America, Fowler represents Great Britain and Phuong represents Vietnam. Thus, the novel The Quiet American by Author, Graham Greene, illustrates the impact of Western Imperialism in the countries that were involved through characterization and some of this effects differ.

The western imperialism affected Vietnam in a negative way. The country became vulnerable and has become oblivious – Vietnam just wanted to survive that they let other countries push them around and take control. In the book The Quiet American, during the part where Pyle went after Fowler up north just to tell him that he is in love with Phuong and that they both have her best interest at heart, Fowler said, "I don't care that for her interests. You can have her interests. I only want her body. I want her in bed with me. I'd rather ruin her and sleep with her than look after her damned interests" (51). Obviously, Fowler is just using Phuong to benefit him without thinking about her feelings. This describes how France used Vietnam for their agricultural richness and did not care about what the citizens want or their opinions.

Also, while outside of Pyle's old flat after getting Phuong's belongings, Joe, the American Economic Attaché, and Fowler had a situation where the trishaw driver had a hard time understanding what they were saying because of their accent, Joe exclaimed, "I was three years in Paris. My accent is good enough for one of these darned Vietnamese" (22). Throughout the novel, the disrespect towards the people of Vietnam has become evident and obvious. American and Europeans believes that they are superior and does not appreciate or respect the Vietnamese' way of living.

Moreover, the outcome of imperialism on America when it comes to trying to colonize Vietnam was not good. At the beginning of the chapter, Fowler was talking about Pyle to the American Economic Attaché to give his explanation for Pyle's death. Fowler claimed, "They killed him because he was too innocent to live. He was young and ignorant and silly and he got involved". He also said that York Harding's books on the East "made a fool of him" because "he never saw anything he hadn't heard in a lecture hall" (23). Pyle has become so focused on conquering the east for democracy that he did not think through the different possible outcomes his actions can lead to. He was careless and got involved with the situation he barely knows. Pyle was ready to do anything to have a Third Force in Vietnam – even if that means to kill

innocent people. Surely, Pyle's character is a representation of the American forces and it showed how unprepared they were – which led to its' lost and failure.

Furthermore, According the Graham Greene, the British had an eye opening experience about the outcomes of the war up north. For example, when Fowler went up north to visit for his report, he saw a woman and small boy in a narrow ditch. They were both clearly dead. A lieutenant turned the dead child over and saw a holy medal hanging around his neck which was shot by one of the soldiers he was with. Fowler thought, "The juju doesn't work. There was a gnawed piece of loaf under his body. I thought, I hate war." (63). He is now faced with the gruesome reality of war, innocent civilians are getting killed. Fowler stated that he is not taking a side because he is only a reporter, but after seeing the impact of war to the people, he obviously hated it.

Another outcome of imperialism according to Graham Greene is that the British successfully stopped the Americans from establishing a third force in Vietnam. With the help of Mr. Heng and Mr. Chou who has evidence the Pyle might be working with General Thé – which is a guerilla leader that Pyle thinks is perfect to associate with to "win the East for democracy" (pg #). Pyle was wrong to trust him because he led a public bombing and killed a lot of innocent lives. This led to Fowler betraying Pyle and set him up to get assassinated by Mr. Heng and Mr. Chou.

All in all, the effects of imperialism is different for everyone. It will all depends on who is being imperialized and who is imperializing them. Imperialism promotes social Darwinism, which in this case, people from the west feels superior that they tried taking over a defenseless Asian country. Conflicts arises between countries when trying to take over a country for their resources to gain profit from it. This causes the original people that live in the land to have no control over what is happening. Thus, imperialists should also think about the welfare of others and not just how they will benefit from it.