

HOW/WHY WE LOST THE WAR IN VIETNAM

PART ONE

THE FRUSTRATING LOSS IN VIETNAM

PART TWO

RESPECTING OUR SOLDIERS – HOW VIETNAM CHANGED U.S.

PERCEPTIONS OF WAR AT HOME

PART ONE

WHAT ARE THE REASONS THAT THE US LOST THE WAR?



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283



More than forty years have passed since the end of the Vietnam War, **easily the most controversial war the United States was ever involved in.** Even after all of this time, the debates around US involvement in the war are still heated. Opinions vary about why the US got involved, whether successive administrations knew the war could not be won, whether the armed forces of the US could have won the war if “Only the politicians had let us,” and so on.

All things being equal, if you were a visitor from another planet who was familiar with Earth’s history up until 1969-72, and were presented with an in-depth military report on the hard facts, figures, and data surrounding the US involvement in Vietnam, and were then presented with the question “Which side do you think won the war?,” **it would be easy to understand why you might pick the American side.**

Far more casualties were inflicted by the Americans on the Vietnamese than vice-versa. The United States had command of the air, the sea, and-where it chose to-the ground. Its troops were better equipped and better armed.

Not a single hostile Vietnamese ever invaded the United States, nor can one be proved to have caused an American casualty outside the Southeast Asian theater of war. Based only on those few facts, any person (or alien) in their right mind would assume that the United States easily won the Vietnam War.

What are the reasons that the US lost the war?



Armored personnel carriers clear the way as infantry follows using vehicles for cover.

The first two reasons are the converse of each other: the Vietnamese, in this case meaning the Viet Cong (VC) and the North Vietnamese Army (NVA), were highly motivated to win the war. **The Americans were not nearly motivated enough.**



By the latter half of the 20th century, many in the West were exhausted by wars. In contrast, the Vietnamese were fighting a perceived foreign invader - the latest in a long line of them. With the uniting ideologies of communism and nationalism, the Vietnamese felt they were on the brink of having a unified nation for the first time since before the arrival of the French in the 1800's

American involvement peaked in 1968 when over half a million US troops were "in-country," but most of those troops were draftees, sent for one year to "do their bit." Their main goal was to get out of Vietnam alive, which led us to the next problem American forces experienced.

No one ever effectively articulated to the American public or military the reasons for US involvement in Vietnam.

Firstly, when the US became more heavily involved in 1965, most Americans couldn't find Vietnam on a map. When told that Vietnam, a relatively, small, poor, and backward nation thousands of miles away posed an existential threat to the US as part of a chain of domino nations that would each fall in turn to Communism, most Americans couldn't see it, including their troops.



U.S. soldiers searching a village for potential Viet Cong

American forces were hampered by rules of engagement. Of that, there is no doubt. There were to be no American troops north of the DMZ ("de-militarized zone") of the 17th Parallel that separated South from North Vietnam. Violating that "rule" ran the risk of bringing Communist China into the war, as had happened in Korea. To heighten that threat, by 1965 China was armed with nuclear weapons and was led by the increasingly erratic Mao Zedong.

Vietnamese troops used supply routes in Laos and Cambodia to funnel the necessities of war to South Vietnam. While American special forces teams operated in Laos in the early-mid 1960's, by the late 1960s that was a lost cause, despite an additional massive bombing campaign.

Another roadblock in the rules of engagement occurred when US troops were exposed as having operated in Cambodia **contrary to what the Nixon Administration promised.** After Congress, which was already concerned with the length of the war, dissent in the US, costs, etc., found out about the incursion, **it threatened to stop much of the military funding for the war.** The only thing the US military could do after that was bomb the so-called "Ho Chi Minh Trail," the supply route leading from North Vietnam into the South, on its western borders.



Female Viet Cong guerrilla in combat

Within South Vietnam itself, America was faced with an ineffective and corrupt allied government that was hated by its people. Many South Vietnamese felt the US propped up people worse than the Viet Cong. Despite the cruelty often shown by the Viet Cong, when push came to shove many South Vietnamese chose, however reluctantly, the side that was perceived as not corrupt and not working alongside “Western colonialists.”

Why Did America Lose?

America was the most powerful military nation in the world, yet it lost the war in Vietnam to an army of straw-hatted peasants. There are a number of reasons for this:

- The South Vietnamese government was widely unpopular because of its corruption and failure to introduce land reforms. This meant the Vietcong had widespread support amongst the ordinary peasants, and the brutal methods used by the Americans to fight the war actually increased that support - they lost the battle for the 'hearts and minds' of the Vietnamese people.
- The Americans severely under-estimated the Vietcong. The derogatory names such as 'dink' and 'gook' show this attitude. The Americans were over-confident and didn't take the Vietcong seriously until it was too late.

Within the United States itself, the war engendered increasing opposition in the United States. The reasons above, plus the lies of successive administrations dating back to the JFK era about the war, were too much for many people. By 1973, when the US pulled almost all of its ground troops out of Vietnam, it was not just “the hippies” that wanted American involvement to end. Increasingly, the taxpaying middle classes were against the war too - and Nixon knew if he had lost them, the war was over.



Transporting goods on the Ho Chi Minh Trail from North Vietnam to South Vietnam

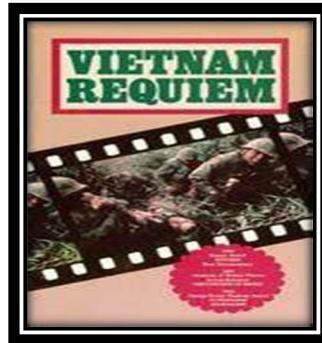
According to Gallup, in 1965 most Americans supported the war. Gallup took the same poll in 1968 – most Americans were against it. This was due to many factors, not least of which were images of dead and wounded Americans, civilians, and **war crimes committed by US troops.**



A suspected Viet Cong prisoner captured in 1967 by the U.S. Army awaits interrogation. He has been placed in a stress position by tying a board between his arms.

Most people knew that the VC and NVA committed atrocities, **but until the Vietnam War, Americans were imagined as being above that. The reality of those images was shocking at the time.**

Vietnam defied almost everything America knew about war - or perhaps, the conflict showed Americans how much they had forgotten, since just under two hundred years before, a smaller guerrilla force in the Colonies had defeated the world's largest power.



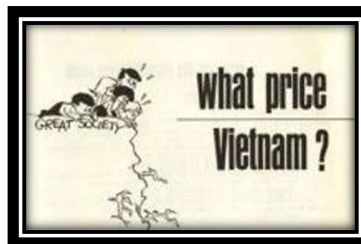
PART TWO

RESPECTING OUR SOLDIERS – HOW VIETNAM CHANGED U.S.

PERCEPTIONS OF WAR AT HOME



Jul 25, 2018



When we think of war, many of us envision images of our fellow citizens suffering. We think of soldiers who are hurt or killed overseas. We think of veterans who come home with life-changing injuries trying to recover. We think of the families of the young men and women lost at war.



However, it was not always like this. Before the Vietnam War, most Americans didn't get to see these images. American journalists, the government, and the military didn't want Americans to think of the war in this way. It was not until the 1960s and 1970s, during and after the Vietnam War, that things started to move in a different direction.



Vietnam War protestors march at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. on October 21, 1967.

Today, with the war in the Middle East at times dominating the news, Americans are flooded with information and images depicting U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan and Iran. We are exposed at least weekly to the major news networks' stories highlighting American military war heroes.

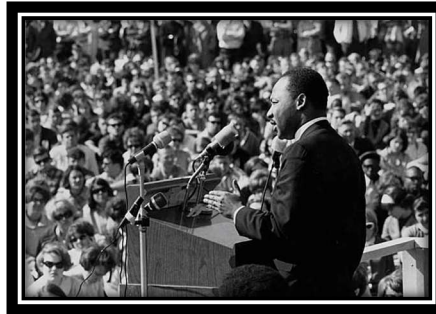
We see hour-long documentaries covering the perspective of families of the troops, both stationed overseas and killed in action. During Vietnam, rarely did journalists broadcast these intimate stories. Nor did they personalize the stories of our troops who were killed or injured while stationed abroad.



1967 Anti-Vietnam War demonstration at The Pentagon.

To put this into perspective, during the Vietnam War, the New York Times published the names of only 726 out of the 58,220 American soldiers killed in Vietnam. Only 16 biographical references were made, and only 14 photos of military servicemen found their way onto the pages of the Times.

After searching all of the newspaper articles from that period, only five articles expressed the reaction of family members who had lost sons, fathers, and brothers in the Vietnam War. And only two articles talked about the suffering of soldiers posted in Vietnam.



Martin Luther King, Jr. speaking to an anti-Vietnam War rally

The United States suffered major casualties throughout the Vietnam War. Americans were reacting to the news of these devastating casualties in ways previously unseen by the government. To avoid a long-term lack of domestic support for the war effort, the US needed to find a new way to honor the troops. The chances of victory in Vietnam were quickly dwindling, and it was important to find a way to honor those fighting for our country.

The US changed the way they approached honoring their military service members in a few major ways. First, they changed the basis on which they were awarded the Medal of Honor. Before Vietnam, the Medal of Honor was typically awarded to soldiers who had excelled offensively in war.

In other words, if a certain soldier killed a large number of enemy troops, and thereby contributed to victory, he may be awarded the Medal of Honor. During and following Vietnam, the criteria for awarding the Medal of Honor changed. The medal was now being awarded to men who performed acts of heroism in defending or saving their fellow soldiers.



Vietnam War, November 1965

Another way in which the US changed its honoring of US troops was in how the military handed down discipline. Before the Vietnam War, military leaders were renowned for their harsh discipline of recruits and enlisted men. The 1960s and 70s, however, were a time of individual autonomy and self-expression.

The military had no choice but to embrace these values by allowing their men to enjoy the same expressive freedoms US civilians did. Journalists began publishing photographs of soldiers wearing buttons proclaiming “Love” and “Ambushed at Credibility Gap.” Never before had soldiers had this sort of expressive freedom.

Finally, the government and military changed how the families of fallen soldiers were treated. Before Vietnam, when a soldier died in combat, an impersonal telegram was sent to the family’s home.

As a response to America's reaction to the high number of casualties in the Vietnam War, the US Military changed this policy and started sending a representative of the military to the home of the family instead. Families were notified, in person, of the death of a loved one rather than by a telegram.



Wounded servicemen arriving from Vietnam at Andrews Air Force Base.

It was not only the families of the fallen who were honored. The US changed how they treated and handled prisoners of war. Families of POWs started to band together and demand respect and honor for their loved ones.

For the first time, military personnel and journalists began to meet with the families and loved ones of soldiers who became prisoners of war. They wanted to show America the emotions felt by the families of these heroes.



President Lyndon B. Johnson awarded the Distinguished Service Cross to First Lieutenant Marty A. Hammer, in Vietnam.

The cultural changes in how we view war and honor our troops have persisted up to today. How the US fights wars has changed. Casualties are much lower today than they were in Vietnam. One of the reasons for this is that the US military has changed its approach to war in foreign lands.

Instead of the ground troops, we saw in Vietnam, the military now uses high-altitude bombing, drones, and heavily armed vehicles. Although this does lead to much fewer US casualties, it does typically increase the number of civilian casualties abroad. It also reduces the amount of interaction the US troops have with the locals which, inevitably, can reduce local support for the US cause.



UH-1 helicopters just before takeoff in Vietnam.

Vietnam did not make Americans pacifists. It did, however, make us more concerned with the well-being and safety of our troops. The end of the draft following the Vietnam War led to an all-volunteer military force.

Because of this, recruits have to be treated with much more respect today than they did decades ago. As a result, America will continue to honor its military troops for protecting each other even during conflicts in which America does not fare so well.

While Americans have almost always respected those who serve, following the Vietnam War how we do so has changed significantly in many different areas including the press and the military itself.



Never forget those young men who gave their lives for America and us and if you see or know a Vietnam Veteran, treat him with respect, he's earned it !!



58,220 LIVES – WASTED?

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PLEASE UNDERSTAND THAT EVEN THOUGH THIS INFORMATION
HAS BEEN TAKEN FROM WHAT APPEARS TO BE AUTHENTIC WEBSITES
I CANNOT ENSURE THAT ALL THE DATA IN THIS ARTICLE IS ACCURATE AND CORRECT.