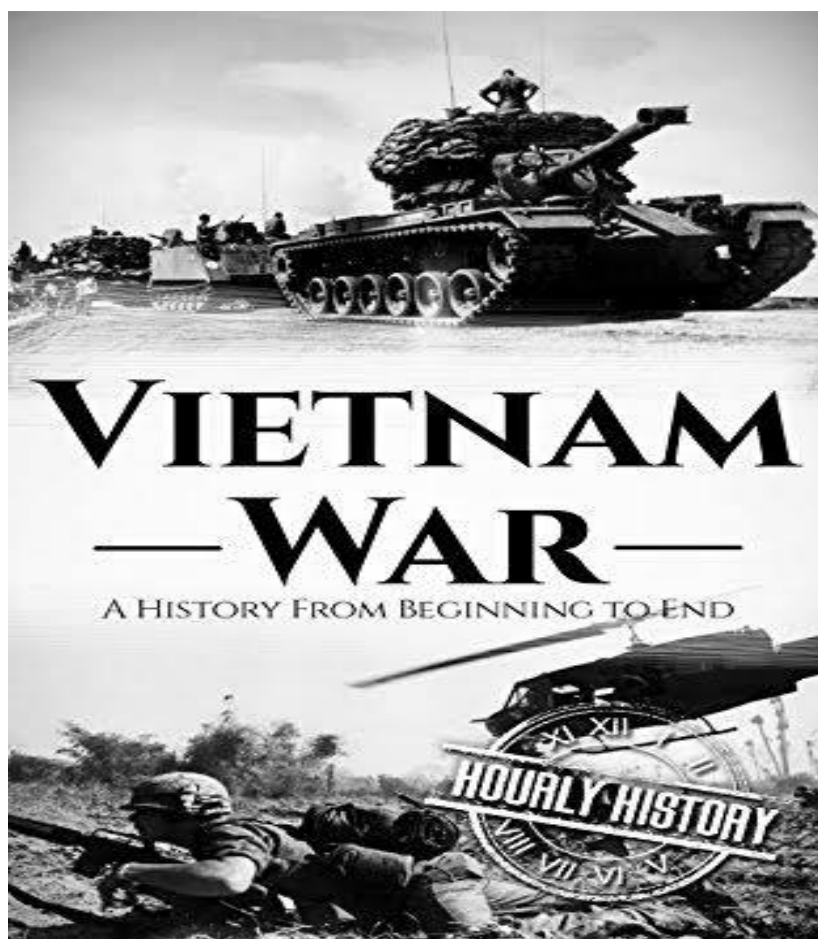


VIETNAM WAR ESSAY



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The withdrawal of soldiers by Richard Nixon from a small country, Vietnam signalled the defeat of the Superpower, United States of America and its policy of containment.

Do you agree with the statement? Substantiate your answer using the relevant evidence from the period 1965 to 1975, to support your line of argument.

I do agree with this statement that the withdrawal of U.S. soldiers from Vietnam, ordered by President Richard Nixon, is a pivotal event in the history of the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War and its policy of containment. The terrain in Vietnam was difficult for the American soldiers and the strategy that was supplied by the Vietcong using booby traps and camouflaging the Americans could not defeat them. In this essay I will give a clear detailing the reason why the American withdraw from Vietnam and how the Viet Cong overpowered them using guerrilla warfare.

Vietnam was ruled by the French till 1954. Then it was divided into two countries. The communist ruler of North Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh, wanted to unite the North and South under his control. He supported the Vietcong in South Vietnam. President Diem ruled South Vietnam. He was strongly anti-communist but was also a brutal and unpopular leader. Vietcong The Vietcong (or the National Liberation Front) were the communist guerrilla soldiers fighting to overthrow President Diem and his government. By 1964, there were over 100,000 Vietcong in the South and they were killing thousands of South Vietnamese officials every year. Diem's army could not get rid of them Diem was a corrupt and brutal leader, who was very unpopular. He was a Catholic ruling a mainly Buddhist country and gave Catholics all the best jobs. This meant lots of South Vietnamese people did not like him and were more likely to start supporting the Vietcong.

Why did America got involved America said it wanted to 'save' the south Vietnamese people from the evils of communism. remember that this was the time of the Cold War. Americans were obsessed with stopping Communism, both abroad and at home in the USA. The Americans wanted to contain the spread of Communism in the world. The USA wanted to support non-Communist governments which were threatened by Communists. It knew that the USSR and China, both Communist-ruled, were sending aid to Communist North Vietnam. At first, military advisers were sent to train the ARVN (the South Vietnamese army). The US also gave a lot of money and modern weapons to South Vietnam. Therefore, By November 1963, when Johnson took over as President, there were 16,000 military "advisers" but many were by now involved in fighting.

The Gulf of Tonkin incident in August 1964, the US ships were allegedly attacked by North Vietnamese ships gave him the excuse to attack the North. He also persuaded the US Congress to give him a free hand in Vietnam. In 1965, he ordered the bombing of North Vietnam. He then ordered US combat troops into action to back up the weak ARVN. Johnson believed that they would lead to a quick defeat of the Vietcong. In March 1965, 3,500 marines arrived at Danang. From now on, General Westmoreland directed the war in Vietnam. Furthermore, in 1968 there were well over 500,000 US troops in South Vietnam

Operation Rolling Thunder started in February, 1965 It was a bombing attack on North Vietnamese military and industrial targets bridges, army camps and roads. The aim was to end the North Vietnamese support for the Vietcong. Bombing did not cost as many American lives as ground warfare. At first cities like Hanoi and Haiphong were not bombed because Johnson did not want to anger the USSR and China too much by targeting civilians. But later the is policy changed and the USA began bombing everywhere. Therefore, this operation rolling thunder was not effective in destroying the Ho Chi Minh trail and stopping the aid from USSR and China.

Operation Ranch Hand was a controversial military campaign carried out during the Vietnam War, Agent Orange which contained a combination of herbicides, was primarily used to defoliate the dense jungles and eliminate the enemy's cover which the Vietcong used to their advantage. The chemical had a lasting effect on both sides women gave birth to children who had deformation and many suffered from cancer. Agent blue was used to destroy crops and create starvation within the Vietnam. However what chemicals where is active destroying the vegetation and the crops the aim of this strategy was to create a crisis for the North Vietnam to create an uprising it did not work.

Search and destroy army units were sent out into the villages and countryside to search for and kill any Vietcong they could find. This led to much brutality against the Vietnamese, partly because the US soldiers were so afraid and angry when their friends were killed by the Vietcong. The US Army High Command measured the success or failure of a search and destroy mission by the "body count", meaning the number of Vietcong killed. Search and destroy missions were backed up by helicopters, which were used to carry troops, arms, and supplies. Helicopters were the best form of transport in the thick rainforests and swamps of Vietnam. Helicopters were also used as gunships armed with rocket launchers and machine gun.

Viet Cong strategy they employed various strategies to resist and fight against the American forces. One of the most notable strategies was guerrilla warfare, which played a crucial role in their resistance efforts. The Viet Cong utilized their extensive knowledge of the local terrain, including jungles, swamps, and 250 km underground tunnels which had hospital, kitchen and bedroom, to their advantage. They employed hit-and-run tactics, ambushes, and booby traps to inflict maximum damage on the enemy while minimizing their own casualties. This strategy aimed to exhaust and demoralize the American forces, who were accustomed

Tet offensive started on 31st January 1968. It was an attack by the Vietcong and NVA on more than 100 cities, towns, and military bases throughout South Vietnam, including Saigon. It was totally different to the guerrilla fighting they has used before and was a surprise attack. The Communists expected the people to join them, but the uprisings they hoped for did not happen. Over 100,000 people were killed during the battle. 47% of the people killed during the Tet Offensive were Vietcong, 24% were NVA and 22% were civilians. Just 5% were ARVN and 2% were US troops. This seems to show it was a massive success for the Americans (but see below!). As a result of what they saw as a failure, the North Vietnamese agreed to peace talks soon after the Tet Offensive ended. From now on, the NVA did most of the fighting, as the Vietcong never recovered from the setback of Tet. Vietcong and NVA, was refused more troops. Furthermore, Tet also played a large part in Johnson's decision to give up hopes of standing as President again. Richard Nixon, the Republican candidate, promised to end the war and was elected as President.

My Lai massacre on 16th March 1968, nine helicopter gunships landed three US platoons near the village of My Lai. The US troops were on a search and destroy mission and My Lai was believed to be a Vietcong stronghold. Over a two-hour period, the Americans killed hundreds of men, women, and children - probably 300, but maybe more. The truth about the massacre did not come out for eighteen months. Only Lieutenant Calley was convicted of war crimes; he only served three years of his life sentence. Pictures of the massacre were shown around the word and people were appalled. It was another reason why many Americans began to turn against the war. On the other hand, some Americans refused to believe the story and some even approved of the massacre.

Vietnamization was a policy of the Richard Nixon administration to end U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War through a program to expand, equip, and train South Vietnamese forces and assign to them an ever-increasing combat role, at the same time steadily reducing the number of U.S. combat troops. Vietnamization aimed to shift the burden of the war from American forces to the South Vietnamese government and military. The United States sought to gradually withdraw its troops from Vietnam while simultaneously training and equipping the South Vietnamese army to assume a larger role in combat operation to the South Vietnamese. The United States provided extensive military assistance to South Vietnam, including training programs, equipment, and financial aid. Furthermore, Richard Nixon accelerated the war by bombing Cambodia and Laos.

Role of media the war was televised and made a lot of people to question why are their sons dying in a war. This led to protest in USA the invasions also led to more protests the war back in the USA. It seemed as if Nixon was escalating the war not trying to bring about peace. 4 American students were shot dead by police in a demonstration at Kent State University. This made even more people angry about US involvement in Vietnam. There were heavy casualties. A total of 58,000 troops were killed. TV showed pictures of the horrors of the war - for example the use of napalm. Therefore media played an important part in creating opposition to the war hence across US protested against the war

Why did America lose the war at the beginning of the war, the USA underestimated the Vietcong and the NVA. The US generals never found an effective way to deal with guerrilla warfare. They put too much faith in technology, especially bombing. This did not work well against a guerrilla army. Many of the U'S troops were young, inexperienced and did not want to fight anyway – they had been conscripted. They did not have the motivation of the Vietcong and NVA. The US soldiers couldn't cope with the hardships of the Vietnamese climate or terrain. They were often frightened and could not tell who an enemy was. Sometimes they even killed their own officers.

In conclusion In conclusion, the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam under President Nixon's direction marked a pivotal juncture in the history of the Vietnam War and U.S. containment policy. The complex interplay of Vietnam's terrain, the Viet Cong's ingenious tactics, and the limitations of conventional military strategies demonstrated the challenges faced by American forces. In this essay I have provided reasons why the US withdrawal signalled a defeat.