

Role and strategies during the vietnam war history essay

[War](#), [Vietnam War](#)



Before becoming the U. S. President, Lyndon B. Johnson was serving as the Vice President of John F. Kennedy. In 1961, as a Vice President, he visited Saigon and met Diem. Johnson claimed to Diem that he was very important to U. S. objective in Vietnam and was a Churchill of Asia. Two years later, in 1963, President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. Thus, the problem of Vietnam War fell unexpectedly into Johnson's hands. After that, the situation in Vietnam War became worse as the North Vietnam, Viet Cong, won in large rural areas of South Vietnam. Indeed, after Kennedy was assassinated, Johnson handled the situation in Vietnam moderately by trying to keep Kennedy's program in Vietnam without escalating the war. However, on August 1964, four months before he won the election in November, two U. S. Navy destroyers were attacked by North Vietnamese gunboats at the Gulf of Tonkin. Johnson's policy toward Vietnam War changed dramatically after that situation. He made several changes in military leadership. Although the secretary of defense, Robert S. McNamara still held his position, the new chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was replaced by Earle G. Wheeler and the commander of MACV, General Paul Harkins, transferred his position to William C. Westmoreland. Johnson urged the congress to take "all necessary steps" for the purpose of U. S. interests in Vietnam. The congresses complied and passed the "Gulf of Tonkin Resolution" on 7th of August with 533 out of 535 members of congress and 82 voices agreed from the senate. Johnson also ordered bombing against North Vietnam after that event. In November 1964, he won a landslide election against his counterpart Barry Goldwater by promising not to escalate the U. S. involvement in Vietnam War. Johnson claimed that Goldwater's policy might start a nuclear war. The most

important point is that he promised not to “ support American boys to do the job that Asian boys should do”. However, the threat from North Vietnam became more violent that Johnson could not handle his promise during the election. Due to the “ Tonkin Gulf Resolution” President Johnson could wage out war against North Vietnam anytime without any declaration from the congress. Thus, after the 15th February violent incident of Pleiku raids caused by Vietcong guerilla and killing 8 U. S. soldiers and wounding many U. S. soldiers, Johnson practiced some specific strategies in response to North Vietnam Army.

Operation Rolling Thunder

Since North Vietnam Army and Vietcong became more violent and had many soldiers in South Vietnam, President Johnson, with the pressure from the Joint Chiefs, started to operate a new bombing strategy called “ Operation Rolling Thunder”. It was operated from March 2, 1965 to November 2, 1968. U. S. Air Force and U. S. Navy were ordered to make an extreme series of air strike as Johnson hoped that it would bring an encouragement to South Vietnamese, and halt the spread of communism. Anyway, by using this operation, Johnson hoped to destroy the North Vietnam transportation system, industrial base and air defenses. Two famous operation of this campaign were “ Operation Rolling Thunder Steel Tiger” and “ Operation Rolling Thunder Tiger Hound”, which U. S. air force started an air interdiction campaign against the Ho Chi Minh Trails, used to transport goods and weapons from North to South Vietnam through Southern Laos. However, U. S. found it difficult to achieve that purpose because North Vietnam gained

both military aid and assistance from both his allied- the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China.

Americanization

During the election, Johnson had made his promise not to back American boys involve in Vietnam War. However, he could not handle that promise since the situation in Vietnam became more violent and aggressive. In order to support the " Operation Rolling Thunder", Johnson escalated the war by sending more troops to Vietnam as the number of U. S. troops in Vietnam reached 70 000 in June 1965. By the way, in July 1965, Johnson authorized 100 000 troops more into Vietnam and employed additional 100 000 troops in 1966. Also, in that year, General Westmoreland doubted Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN)'s ability to protect U. S. air base against Vietcong and the corruption. Thus, he persuaded Johnson to send more troops to Vietnam in order to defense U. S. air base. As a result, Johnson complied and decided to send first U. S. ground troops as well as the first American combat troops, the 9th Expeditionary Brigade, to Vietnam to defense U. S. airfield at Da Nang. In addition, during Nguyen Cao Ky's visit to Honolulu, Johnson promised to back the ARVN against the aggressive NVA in return to the expansion democracy in Vietnam and improvement of economy condition for its citizens. The Vietnam War was undergoing to be " Americanization" as the number of U. S. troops peaked to 536 100 by the end of 1968.

The Enclave Strategy

In fact, before Johnson started to send lots of troops to Vietnam, in early 1965, he officially implemented “ The Enclave Strategy” which was suggested by General Maxwell Taylor, U. S. ambassador to Vietnam, the opponent of the concept of large number of U. S. forces inside Vietnam. “ The Enclave Strategy” allowed U. S. force to maintain only areas of Vietnam already controlled by Saigon. Due to “ The Enclave strategy”, the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) had to win the war and U. S. role was to aid ARVN by controlling the densely populated coast.

However, General Westmorland didn't support “ The enclave Strategy” and urged Johnson for more and more U. S. troops to Vietnam and allowance of “ taking the battle to enemy”. Moreover, ARVN performed so poor and there was the increase of attack from communist in June 1965. U. S. leaders saw the inefficiency of Enclave Strategy. Johnson's policy became inconsistent. As a result, Johnson believed that only to increase U. S. force in Vietnam can force Ho Chi minh to negotiate and withdraw NVA from South Vietnam. Thus, he began to apply the strategy of Americanization.

The War of Attrition

Due to the unsatisfactory of “ the Enclave Strategy”, General Westmorland urged President Johnson for more troops to Vietnam. Westmorland found that U. S. hardly fought the war in Vietnam as most of the battle occurred in the jungle of Vietnam and Vietcong was a rugged, dedicated group of guerilla fighters. Westmorland believed that U. S. could only win the Vietnam War by decreasing the number of North Vietnam Army and Vietcong members.

not by traditional land conquer method. Thus, instead of using an ineffective strategy, "The Enclave Strategy", he persuaded Johnson another strategy which is called "The War of Attrition". It is also known as "Search-and-destroy strategy". The main mission of this strategy is to send U. S. troops out to field to search and killed the Vietcong member. U. S. troops also needed to cause many casualties on enemy in order to destroy the North Vietnam's economy to assure that it could not prolong the war. To ensure that this strategy would success, President Johnson permitted some operation such as "Operation Starlite" and "Operation Cedar Falls".

Operation Starlite

Due to the miss spelling from the clerk working under the candle light, Operation Satellite was spelled as "Operation Starlite". Starlite was operated from August 18 to August 24, 1965. It is the first large-scale of U. S. ground force operation in Vietnam. The purpose of this operation is to destroy 1 500 Vietcong member locating in Van Toung village complex.

Operation Cedar Falls

Another operation backed up the "War of Attrition" was "operation Cedar Falls". With a full support from General Westmorland, Cedar Falls was operated from January 8, 1967 to January 28, 1967. More than 30 000 U. S. troops, including both ground force and paratroopers brigade, and South Vietnam troops involved in that operation. It is the largest U. S. operation in Vietnam. Cedar Falls aimed to destroy the Vietcong member at the Iron triangle, a major stronghold of the Communist National Liberation Front,

located near Saigon. However, Vietcong decided to fled from this massive operation to Cambodia or hidden in the complex underground tunnels.

Although U. S. operated many operations, such as Operation Starlite, Cedar falls, Birmingham, Crimp, Hasting and Junction City, against Vietcong and North Vietnam Army, U. S. could not won because they always hid from the U. S. troops in the forests and U. S. always lost lots of casualties whenever they operated action. Moreover, Ho Chi Minh claimed that “.....”. Thus, in order to win search and destroy them, President Johnson decided to use chemical weapons such as Napalm and Agent Orange.