

# The vietnam war in 1965 history essay

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



The statement that Australia was only drawn into the war due to their alliance with America is true to a minimal extent. The Vietnam War was a military conflict between the communist North Vietnam and their allies, against South Vietnam and other countries including America, Australia, Britain, France and New Zealand. The countries that were allies of South Vietnam were signed into the Southeast Asia Treaty organisation, also known as SEATO. There were some factors which caused the Menzies government of Australia to send troops into the Vietnam War in the 1960s. The main reason why Australia joined the war was because of the USA. Australia had to keep a strong alliance with them in case they needed assistance during any war in the future. Other reasons for joining the war were the fear of the domino theory, SEATO, Containment, forward defence policy, and anti-communism policies created by Robert Menzies.

Australia's alliance with the USA was the main reason for our involvement in the Vietnam War. The USA had been involved with the war since 1959 and needed Australia's assistance, although this did not begin until 1964, with no troops arriving until 1965. Australia in a way was forced to send troops due to the ANZUS treaty; also known as Australia, New Zealand and United States Treaty. This is a treaty that shows an alliance, stating that these three countries will fight together in any war within the Pacific Ocean area, therefore all countries fought together in the Vietnam War. Australia joined the alliance with these two countries on April 29, 1952 in San Francisco, where the Australian Prime Minister, Robert Menzies read the agreement, negotiating terms to the contract. The countries' desire for peace was the main objective of the treaty, desiring to publically declare a sense of unity,

meaning that no aggressive country would be enticed to attack Australia, New Zealand or the US. This was due to these countries not wishing to stand alone, because allies will help us in destroying any invader.

Robert Menzies knew that Australia needed the alliance to remain stable in wartime. However, to remain as a safe nation, free of war on our own land, it was likely that the country would have to supply troops to Vietnam to fight against communism. America had been in the war since 1959, however in 1961 it was clear that the war would not be settled for a long time; therefore the current leader of South Vietnam requested assistance to help in its security and fight against the communists. Australia responded to this request by sending a total of 60, 000 troops into South Vietnam. This was along with USA's response of a further 200, 000 troops to fight the communists, consisting of North Vietnam, China, Soviet Union and the Viet Cong, a communist guerrilla army.

The Containment Policy was a United States policy that Australia also chose to adopt in its military endeavours during the 1960s. It was a strategy to try and limit or end the spread of communism. First articulated by George F. Kennan, it was announced to the world during the 1947 release of the Truman Doctrine. It stated that the United States of America would support free peoples who were and armed minority suffering from outside pressure. This placed Australia as a perfect candidate for aid in the communist battles. It would also strengthen and protect all countries within the NATO agreement. This agreement was signed between North Atlantic countries, comprising of twenty-eight members. It is also known as the North Atlantic

Treaty Organisation. The United States was part of this agreement and therefore we needed to keep a good relationship with them. Australia joined this policy in its efforts to stop the spread of communism. This was a small factor in fear of the treaty policy.

The South East Asia Treaty Organisation also known as SEATO was established in 1954. The treaty was signed by the United States of America, Australia, Britain, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, The Philippines and Thailand. It agreed that these countries would group together against countries which were aggressive and would bring an end to their destructive and sometimes violent antics. It was technically a collective action group that helped each other when necessary. SEATO grouped together for the Vietnam War, therefore this was a factor that Australia considered when sending troops into South Vietnam. Contrary to this, Australia had a minute choice to not send troops to fight communism, as did Britain and France who refused to join this war. SEATO ended in September 1975 in New York. This was agreed through a meeting which ended the organisation. Although, this agreement has ended, Australia and the US are still allies and if a war began it would be expected that these two countries would aid each other's military endeavours.

On the 10th of January, 1968 Prime Minister John Grey Gorton's Liberal party was elected by the Australian people. Gorton sensed that the failing adventure in Vietnam would provoke an American return to isolationism, a term referring to a nation that does not involve itself with any other countries about economic or political matters. This would inevitably inflict

damage on the ANZUS alliance, which would cause huge problems for Australia, as America and Britain would withdraw from the Vietnam War, leaving Australia to adopt its own defence policy. This independent defence policy was a likely outcome in the future of the Vietnam War, therefore PM John Gorton stated “ Australia won’t increase its troop commitment”. This decision and statement was made as it was not worth sending more troops to fight Viet Cong when the ending of war could come much sooner than expected, if US troops are withdrawn. With Australia no longer sending troops into the war it ended the forward defence policy enabled by Robert Menzies, one of the key reasons for Australia’s involvement in the war.

When joining the Vietnam War there were many factors relating to Australia’s alliance with America and the fear of being un-armed if a war of their own broke out. However, there were also many factors that were analysed solely by Australian politicians, ones that were not influenced by the US. The Forward Defence Policy was one of Australia’s own decisions, with no influence by the United States. It was a major part of Australia’s decision when joining the Vietnam War. The policy was based on the principle that Australia would prefer to fight communism in a foreign country before communist countries come to fight them in Australia. This is because Australia would not want their country succumbing to the threat of communism in their own cities. If Australia had defeated communism along with the United States and South Vietnam, we would never be threatened by communism in the future, as the domino effect would not proceed into Indonesia. Although this factor was purely the Australian government’s decision it also helped to strengthen the relationships between the US and

Britain, as these two countries were seen as non-fearing countries who were prepared to fight for their freedom and also against communism. The Forward Defence Policy was very similar to the Containment Policy, another reason for Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. This is the policy of stopping the spread or influence of a hostile power or ideology, in this case, communism.

The Domino Theory was the fear that communism could easily spread throughout the world, Australia being one of the first hit by the radical idea. It was not only Australia that was living in threat of this theory but also America. If South Vietnam was to lose their control of the country it would fall to communism. It was thought that this would then lead to communism being spread into Laos, Cambodia, Burma, Philippines, Australia and New Zealand. This would greatly affect America as these countries were allies. In a speech by John F. Kennedy he stated, " No other challenge is more deserving of our effort and energy... Our security may be lost piece by piece, country by country." He was fighting the spread of communism and stopping the Domino Theory not only to protect Australia, but over time he was saving America as well. Under Kennedy's rule America would " Pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, and oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty." However Australia was uncertain about the current spread of communism, because they already believed that communism had spread into Indonesia. Therefore, Prime Minister Robert Menzies thought that Australia would be next, an idea citizens and political powers could not bear. However, America was also at risk, if the domino theory were to occur and Australia fall to communism. This was due to

Australia being loaded with important natural and strategic resources, including tin, rubber, rice, copper, iron ore and oil. If Australia fell to communism all of these resources would be taken by Viet Cong ruled countries, inevitably cutting off the United States from these resources, affecting the global economy.

Prime Minister Robert Menzies', anti-communism policy was also a reason for Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. Before the war began, and prior to Menzies appointment for the second time as Prime Minister of Australia, he stated that they will be soon declaring war on communists. Menzies would do anything to end communism in any country. In 1962, he attended a meeting in the United States, where it was decided that if America ever required assistance Australia would send troops. Later, on April 29, 1965, Menzies announced that a battalion of Australia soldiers were to be sent to South Vietnam in response to a request for extra troops. However, Menzies was reluctant to tell the citizens of Australia that his government had approached the United States and also the Saigon Government in Ho Chi Min, Vietnam, requesting such an invitation. Menzies stated, " We have decided...in close consultation with the Government of the United States - to provide an infantry battalion for service in Vietnam." Whilst Australia was still at war, the peak number of soldiers fighting at any one time in South Vietnam was sixty thousand, all of which were appointed by Robert Menzies.

The war was seen as a mistake after all Australian and American troop had arrived in South Vietnam to an onslaught of Viet Cong. Unfortunately; it seemed that Australia had to continue the support for South Vietnam, as

pulling out mid war, may have been a disaster for America. Many people were annoyed at the Australian government for sending troops, however, once in Vietnam, the mission of ending communism had to be completed.

America also had their own policies such as the NSC-68, a policy of aggressive containment, to restrict the expansion of communism by the Viet Cong and more so the Soviet Union. This had nothing to do with Australia, proving that although the two countries had connections through allies and treaties, they were both individual and had their own reasons for joining the Vietnam War.

It is evident that Australia did not join the war due to their alliance with America; they simply chose to join the war themselves with little influence by other countries. The ANZUS treaty, SEATO and the containment policy were all large contributing factors that led to Australia joining the Vietnam War due to their alliance with America in 1965. Conversely, the forward defence policy, domino theory and anti-communism policy were all reasons for Robert Menzies elected to send Australian troops to the Vietnam War. The evidence presented, that displayed Australia choosing to go to war is much stronger and outweighs Australia's dim excuse that we had to aid America's war efforts against the Viet Cong. Many countries did not adhere to the SEATO agreement and therefore Australia did not have to attend the war. Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies mislead the citizens by stating that we were asked to go to war, in fact Australia chose to go to the Vietnam War in 1965, proving to be a horrible mistake.