

Was the vietnam war necessary? essay sample

[Countries](#), [Vietnam](#)



The Vietnam War started in 1954 with the defeat of the French and ended in 1975 with the fall and withdrawal of Saigon. The United States' (U. S.'s) involvement in the Vietnam War started in 1963 with support of weapons, military training, advisement, and supplies until 1965 when U. S. troops went into battle with the North Vietnamese (Szczepanski, n. d.). American troops did not pull out of the war until 1973. Was the U. S.'s involvement in the Vietnam War worth the time, money, and effort they put into it? That answer depends on whom you ask. Some politicians, civilians, and military personnel deemed the U. S.'s involvement in the Vietnam War necessary; others, especially peace-activists, did not. Whether this war was necessary or not, it affected the U. S. and Vietnam in many ways. The Vietnam War affected the U. S. economy, Vietnamese, and U. S. civilians, and both soldiers from the U. S. and Vietnam. The Vietnam War is still affecting both countries today.

The U. S. entered the Vietnam War to prevent the spread of communism (Szczepanski, n. d.). She further added the way communism works:

Under communism, none of the " means of production" - factories, land, etc. - are owned by individuals. Instead, the government controls the means of production and all of the people work together. The wealth produced is shared out among the people based on their needs, rather than on their contribution to the work. The result, in theory, is a classless society where everything is public, rather than private, property. (Para. 2)

Ho Chi Minh (a communist leader) ruled North Vietnam. A democratic government under the leadership of Ngo Dinh Diem (after his assassination was later ruled by General Duong Van Minh) ruled South Vietnam. North Vietnam wanted both sides to join under a communist rule. Vietnam is still

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under a political communist rule and a capitalist economy (Szczepanski, n. d.). She goes on to state, Cambodia, Korea, Russia (The Soviet Union), China, and North Korea is still under some version of communism today. The first attack on a U. S. vessel (the USS Maddox) by North Vietnamese gunboats happened in August 1964. Two days later, during a storm, the USS Maddox and the USS Turner Joy were patrolling the same area, and according to sonar blips and radar images, the vessels thought they were under attack again. These two events are called the Gulf Tonkin Incident. There was an investigation into the second incident, and there was no proof it ever happened. According to Hickman (n. d.), subsequent research and declassified documents have essentially shown the second attack did not happen. President Lyndon B. Johnson sent U. S. ground troops to attack the North Vietnamese March 2, 1965 anyway.

This started the U. S.'s full engagement in the Vietnam War. According to Stephen Daggett (2010), a specialist in defense policy and budget, the Vietnam War itself cost the U. S. \$111 billion dollars. Because of the cost of the war, federal funding for several programs was cut, including science and space programs. The Manned Orbiting Laboratory (MOL) program eventually was canceled in 1969, attributed by budget cuts because of the war. Taxes also increased because of the war. Although the first tax act was a reduction in 1964, there was a 10% surcharge applied to individual income and corporate taxes to curb inflation (Labonte & Levit, 2008).

They go on to state, throughout the conflict the government attempted to avoid raising taxes. Despite this, the government did raise the taxes from

1968-1970. As indicated by Bruce Bartlett (2009) who writes for Forbes Magazine, and is a former Treasury Department economist and author: History shows that wars financed heavily by higher taxes, such as the Korean War and the first Gulf War, end quickly, while those financed largely by deficits, such as the Vietnam War and current Middle East conflicts, tend to drag on indefinitely. If Americans are not willing to follow John F. Kennedy and “ pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship” to fight a war, then we should not be fighting it. (Para. 3)

Another major economic blow to the U. S. was the injured soldiers returning home without limbs and with severe disabilities. According to Autor, Duggan, and Lyle (2011), after remaining stable, at about nine percent in the late 1990s through September 2000, Disability Compensation (DC) enrollment among Vietnam era veterans has since increased rapidly, and it stood at 15.1% by September 2010. They went on to say, during that same period, the average annual benefit received by Vietnam era DC recipients increased by 44%. Furthermore, costs were increased as a result of prosthetic limbs needed and rehabilitation costs for injured soldiers (over 300, 000) (Szczepanski, n. d.), soldiers affected by Agent Orange/dioxin (an herbicide), and drug addicted soldiers. U. S. soldiers were either, addicted to morphine (the painkiller of choice when injured during the war) or heroin, in view that they could not handle the mental strain of living at home. A number of soldiers also suffered mental illnesses because of what they saw and what they did during the war.

Many soldiers suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). That number has tripled since 1998 to 2010, from more than 98, 000 to more than 268, 000 (Autor, Duggan, & Lyle, 2011). It was a very difficult transition from the war to everyday civilian life for many soldiers. Not many veterans speak of what it was like on the frontlines, nor do they speak of what they did during the war. These same Vietnam War veterans had to deal with a less than hero's welcome when they returned to the U. S. No ticker tape parade or ceremonies, only their loved ones to welcome them home, not their country. According to Pete Dougherty, director of homeless veterans programs at the VA: Overall, 45% of participants in the VA's homeless programs have a diagnosable mental illness and more than three out of four have a substance abuse problem, while 35% have both. (Para. 4) The Vietnam War is still haunting the U. S. and Vietnam today. Over one-quarter (more than 190, 000) of homeless people in the U. S. are Vietnam Veterans.

Countless soldiers will get disability income for the rest of their lives because of injuries (both physical and mental) caused by the war. U. S. soldiers as well as Vietnamese soldiers are suffering from illnesses (different cancers) due to the Agent Orange exposure during the war (Szczepanski, n. d.).

According to Fuller (2012), " by the time the spraying stopped, Agent Orange and other herbicides had destroyed 5. 5 million acres of forest and cropland, an area roughly the size of New Jersey." Many of these same soldiers' children have been born with mental and physical disabilities due to the Agent Orange exposure. These illnesses range from mental disabilities, physical disabilities as well as untreatable illnesses. The U. S. will give Vietnam 43 million dollars to help clean up Da Nang International Airport (a

main U. S. military post in South Vietnam during the war); the clean up will take four years (Fuller, 2012). He states further, there are sections of the airport that have Agent Orange exposure as far down as six-feet underground. Nothing will grow there; the soil and everything in it are dead.

He goes on to state: Over a decade of war, the United States sprayed about 20 million gallons of Agent Orange and other herbicides in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, halting only after scientists commissioned by the Agriculture Department issued a report expressing concerns that dioxin showed “ a significant potential to increase birth defects. Many Vietnamese people still suffer from the side effects of Agent Orange today. According to Nguyen Van Rinh, a retired Lieutenant General who is now the chairman of the Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin, “ I would like to have one message sent to the American people; the plight of Agent Orange victims continues.

I think the relationship would rise up to new heights if the American government took responsibility and helped their victims and address the consequences” (Fuller, 2012). America should do all they can to address any issues, either medical or political regarding the Vietnam War. Relatively speaking, this war still is not over. In conclusion, the Vietnam War cost America hundreds of millions. More than 55, 000 U. S. Soldiers lost their lives. There were over 150, 000 injured U. S. soldiers and more than 1, 900 are missing in action. The Vietnamese casualties and wounded numbered in the millions, including women and children. Today this war is still costing the U. S. millions of dollars in clean-up efforts and lawsuits by Vietnamese

soldiers and their families. Furthermore, the Vietnam War is costing America hundreds of millions of dollars for health care for U. S. Soldiers injured in the war. The U. S.'s involvement in the Vietnam War was not necessary.

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