

Word count: 1539

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



Word Count: 1539 In which conflict did American public opinion play a larger role: the Spanish American War or the Vietnam War? Table of Contents:

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..... Pg 7 A: Plan of the investigation Did the United States' public opinion play a larger role and have a greater impact on the Spanish-American War than the Vietnam War? This investigation seeks to evaluate the role that the public opinion of the United States played in The Vietnam War and The Spanish-American War. The outcomes as well as the duration of the wars will be assessed. Primary and secondary sources will be used as well as national polls to get a deeper understanding of the nations support and personal views towards the contrasting wars. Once the overall opinion is understood, the actions that the government took will assist in the full understanding of the role. Not only will the actions of the government be examined but also the effect that the opinion had on the soldiers fighting the war. Another aspect that will be examined is the role that technology played in the information delivered to the nation. It is believed that the factors above will clearly demonstrate the answer to this question. B: Summary of evidence At the turn of the century The United States of America was actively involved in a war against colonization. The war had started in 1898 fighting Spain for the island of Cuba. The war ended in 1902 with the defeat of Spain and with a victorious win for The United States. During the trying

war, The US was in the midst of an Industrial Revolution, which resulted clear urbanization and growing populations throughout the country. For the duration of The Spanish-American War two leading publishers in New York City were said to have had a tremendous amount of influence among the population. Seeing as the publishers were rivals, the stories in the newspapers would often elaborate on facts to create a more interesting and exciting front page, many of which were later proven untrue. Furthermore, the population of the entire country was fed propaganda throughout the war; with most negative battles overlooked and unrecorded the population had no reason to doubt the “ positive” intentions of the war. Due to the lack of technology throughout The Spanish-American War the only form of information available was in biased newspapers. 57 years later it was 1959 and The Vietnam War officially began. Between 1954 and 1973 the United States deployed a large number of US forces to Vietnam. As the war raged on tens of thousands of US soldiers’ lives were being claimed as casualties destroying the hopes and dreams of many Americans. Throughout the war the public opinion was consistent in their negative feelings towards the war. Citizens openly denounced the actions taking place in Vietnam and when a draft lottery was introduced the negative feelings only progressed. Clearly in 1959 the technology had drastically changed and as a result so had the way that the population formulated their opinions. During The Vietnam War the population was able to view the atrocities occurring overseas in their living rooms, which created much more controversy and compassion for the soldiers. In addition to televisions, an array of newspapers were available as well and even telephones enabled certain soldiers to call home. While the

population's opinion of Vietnam was clear, the effect that the population opinion had on their government was much more discreet. In 1972 the senate and the congress put a tremendous amount of pressure on President Nixon to withdraw completely from Vietnam. Finally on January 27, 1973 a peace agreement was signed in Paris that led to the complete withdrawal of The United States from Vietnam. Regardless, technology enabled the population to understand the atrocities of war, which contributed to the opinions, which forced the government to withdraw. Negative opinions back home attributed to many psychological problems that soldiers in Vietnam faced during the war and upon their homecoming. On the contrary soldiers that served in The Spanish-American War were regarded as chivalrous and noble, and upon their homecoming they were seen as royalty. The outcomes of both wars are also vastly different. The United States came out of Cuba with a new positive, international development whereas The United States pulled out of Vietnam embarrassed and regretful, especially regarding the international opinion of The US.

C: Evaluation of sources The United States. U. S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Vietnam Veterans Against the War Statement. By John Kerry. 31 Feb. 2007 This source is a testimony of a Vietnam Veteran, John Kerry, to The United States Senate addressing the atrocious difficulties that the soldiers were faced with. This senatorial testimony was delivered on April 23, 1971. The testimony itself gives indepth insight into the happenings in Vietnam, the soldiers' feelings towards the war. The fact that this primary source that actually served in the war provides hard evidence to support many ideas proposed especially that idea that the soldiers themselves were opposed to the war. Blow, Michael. A Ship

to Remember: the Maine and the Spanish-American War. New York: Morrow, 1992. This book provides a reliable account of the sinking of the Maine, a crucial milestone in The Spanish-American War. It also contains narratives and quotes from soldiers from the war. These sources have an impact on the information and analysis due to the fact that they are considered primary sources and therefore give extensive insight into the topic. The book describes the war from a geographical standpoint as well as examining certain cultural aspects that relate to the war.

D: Analysis The first area to assess is vast differences in technology in the two wars. Television, better image resolution in cameras and telephones enabled the population to become educated by an array of contrasting sources. This allowed the population to form their own opinions by different sources. In The Spanish-American War the American population was exposed to much less. The propaganda that was fed the citizens gave no room for contrary beliefs. The lack of technology made this ignorance possible. With no television and very few cameras, the newspapers were very not able to be choosing in the limited photographs that were presented to them. The photographers and journalists that were in Cuba during the war were reliant on the government not only for transportation but also for protection, and as a result were very conscious in what they published. In Vietnam that was not the case, journalists and photographers were looking for the negative aspects of the war and magnifying them in their work. Technology also played a role in the communication between the soldiers and the American public in the 60's and 70's. Telephone calls enabled soldiers to recount the atrocities first hand to their loved ones, which generated the already negative feelings towards the

war back in The United States. The next point to be analyzed is the support for the soldiers. In The Spanish-American War an abundance of soldiers was at the disposal of the government. Fighting for your country was an honor that was looked very highly of by civilians and soldiers alike. The soldiers fighting in Cuba were fighting for what was labeled a noble cause and could claim that they supported the cause to the fullest extent. In Vietnam an abundance of support was not the case. President Nixon enacted a draft lottery in which young men were forced to go to war regardless of their ideas on the war or war in general. The demonstrations opposing the war not only condemned the government and the war but the soldiers themselves. The fact that the soldiers were not being supported back home, created cause for psychological disturbance, which would obviously affect the performance on the battlefield. To that effect, many Vietnam soldiers did not fully understand and much less support the motives of The Vietnam War, which also contributed to efforts for the war. These are leading factors that contributed to the defeat of The United States. The lack of support and blatant condemnation discouraged the soldiers and government itself. The actions of The United States' senate and congress brings light to the power that the population indirectly had on the president's foreign policies and actions. The circumstances of the two wars were drastically contrasting on many different levels. The fact that congress overruled President Nixon's proposal to stay in Vietnam for longer supports the idea that the public opinion took the liberty to have their representation (the congress) to support what they rightfully agreed with.

E: Conclusion In The Spanish-American War nationalism played a role in the government's strong appearance and much less in the actual

foreign policy and direct actions in the war. The support of The Spanish American War led to the glorification of returning soldiers and the to the support of the government itself. In The Vietnam War the access to technology resulted in strong opinions which ultimately led to the hatred towards the war. Seeing as the public had such strong feelings against the war the pressure applied to t the government demonstrated the large role that their opinion did play. It is clear through the actions of The United States Congress that the national opinion played a larger role in the 1970's than at the turn of the century. F: List of sources 1. " Poll: Was The Vietnam War Worth Fighting?" ABC San Francisco . 25 Apr. 2005. 27 Feb. 2007 . 2. Wood, Mike. National Opinion in Song, 1914-1918. 27 Feb. 2007 . Path: America Popular Music. 3. Sapir, Marc, and Mickey Huff. " The Public Opinion Polling Fraud." From the News. Oct. 2003. 1 Mar. 2007 . 4. Delwiche, Aaron. " The Drifts Toward War." Propoganda. 29 Sept. 2002. 27 Feb. 2007 . 5. Centril, Hadley. " Opinion Trends in World War II: Some Guides to Interpretation ." The Public Opinion Quarterly 12. 1 (Spring 1948): 30-44. 27 Feb. 2007 . 6. " Information About Electronic Records in NARA from the Era of World War II." Research at the National Archives. The National Archives. 27 Feb. 2007 . 7. Mitchel, V. " Spanish-American War / War of Philippine Independence 1898 - 1901." University of Alberta Information. University of Alberta . 27 Feb. 2007 . 8. Beede, Benjamin R. " Spanish-American War." Answers. 27 Feb. 2007 9. Baker, John. " Effects of the Press on Spanish-American Relations in 1898." Humboldt. Humboldt University. 3 Mar. 2007 . 10. Hodierne, Robert. " Down on the War." Military Times Polls. 29 Dec. 2006. 27 Feb. 2007 . 11. The United States. U. S. Senate

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