

# The communist victory in the vietnam war

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



The U. S. government justified their involvement in the war as a way to prevent the spread of communism to South Vietnam. The North Vietnamese government viewed the conflict as taking what is theirs from the French, later backed by the U. S and South Vietnam itself. Introduction Despite the far wealthier and far more superior powers of the U. S. North Vietnam managed to capture South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, meaning a decisive victory. In this report the factors that lead North Vietnam to victory will be describing each factor in detail. Logistical Issues During the Vietnam War there was a great imbalance of the logistical problems on opposing sides. The American forces were facing difficulties with supporting combat forces.

Not only did they need to support American soldiers but also the military forces of South Vietnam, Republic of Korea, Thailand, Australia and other allied countries. The U. S had over 16, 000 km of supply lines that was quite ineffective; it was costing over 200 billion U. S dollars to maintain this supply offood, water and weaponry. This massive amount of war cost were only realised around the closing of the war. This in addition with the mounting U. S casualties and the fact that victory remained elusive, the American opinion moved from approval to dissatisfaction with the War.

The Communist forces however, had little to no worry about logistics, many portions of their supplies originated from themselves or from China. The supply routes were shorter and much more organized. The support made by the Chinese railway network in the Chinese provinces bordering North Vietnam was also a vital importance in importing war material. The American did not strike this network for fear of Chinese intervention, however

approximately 320, 000 Chinese soldiers served the communist forces in repairing and upgrading miles of track, bridges, tunnels and stations. This made the supply chains cheaper and more effective, creating a major factor that lead to the decisive victory of communist forces.

## **Causality Tolerance**

A key factor that leads to the communist takeover of South Vietnam was the numbers of casualties that they were willing to accept. The tolerance showed by the communists was comparably better than the anti-communists, in particular the U. S. The North Vietnamese ideology was very well summed up by a quote by North Vietnamese icon, Ho Chi Minh: “ You can kill ten of my men for everyone I kill of yours, but even at those odds, you will lose and I will win” That quote was upheld by the North Vietnamese forces, which is proved by the statistics:

- 50, 000-182, 000 civilian dead
- 533, 000-1489, 000 military dead
- 600, 000 missing

This class of ideology was firstly supported by the anti-communists, in particular the U. S, with the quote by the President John F. Kennedy in 1961: “ Let every nation know, whether, it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival of liberty” The U. S. did support this quote highly during the early years of the war but as the time passed many and protests by the public for bringing all the soldiers to home the anti-Communist soon dealt with the fact that it would be cheaper to grant

Vietnam independence; the opposite of which the North Vietnamese were doing.

## **Economic Consequences**

The Vietnam War had several effects on the U. S. economy, which soon led to them withdrawing their forces from Vietnam. The requirements of the war effort strained the nation's production capabilities, which then led to an imbalance of different sectors within the economy. Factories that produced consumer goods were being used to make war material, which caused controversy over the government's handling of funding. Additionally the massive amount of defence expenditure was causing several problems within the American economy.

The funds were going overseas, causing an imbalance in loan payment and a weak American Dollar, since no funds were returning to the country. Also, military expenditure, joined with domestic social spending created a deficit which fuelled inflation. Anti-war sentiments and dissatisfaction with the U. S government then started to eat into consumer confidence, interest rates rose restricting capital for businesses and consumers. These consequences then led to an economic meltdown and then the withdrawal of troops from Vietnam.

**Strategy & Tactics Communist Strategy** The tactics used by the communist and the anti-communists were in different but as time went on tactics used by the belligerents became more of an action reaction style of warfare. The North Vietnamese had firstly made a clear and precise plan on the war and stuck to that plan as said before, deciding on a war of attrition, realising that

they couldn't defeat the U. S which was smart considering it was the world's superpower at the time. The North Vietnamese decided that they would continue to fight the U. S, planning to make the war as long, bloody and expensive for the Americans, in order to turn the American public opinion of the war against its involvement in Vietnam. This strategy was not too absurd, since it was proven successful against the French during the Indochina war (1950-54). General Vo Nguyen Giap, a principal commander during the war, was a key figure during the formation of North Vietnamese strategy developed a three-phase view into how the war will undergo:

- Guerrilla bands would be formed and trained, and would establish bases. They would also begin infiltration, creating links with the South Vietnamese peasants. This phase of the Giap's strategy was proven successful as throughout the 1960s, the majority of fighting was done by the South Vietnamese communists.
- Ambush and assassination would be used to challenge the ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam, also known as the South Vietnamese Army)
- Conventional warfare would then be partaken by the North Vietnamese army.

Giap's war of attrition was conducted very well providing flexibility and concealment. Most operations done by the night they would move troops and supplies, lay mines, set booby traps and arrange ambushes; this became very crucial towards the end of the war. Guerrilla Tactics Guerrilla tactics were used greatly during the war. Guerrilla tactics or guerrilla warfare uses military tactics by a small number of soldier or armed civilians. The North Vietnamese used a tactic known as 'hit and run' which involves ambushes

with mines and bobby traps to surprise or hinder the Americans, then the aim was to inflict as many casualties as possible by overwhelming them for a short period of time and then withdraw before the Americans or the South Vietnamese could counter attack with artillery support or an air strike.

This tactic was used on more supplies than actually men since the Communists. Another strategy used by the Vietnamese was known 'shoot and scoot', involving attacking an American or South Vietnamese base with mortars or artillery, normally at night, before they could return fire. An hour later, another attack would be made from a different location. This tactic was aimed to draw guards out of the base into an ambush or they would be more guards on patrol so they could simply shoot them down with the use of snipers, this however was very rare since sniper training was limited to a few guerrilla groups.

This pit would usually be covered in natural undergrowth. The North Vietnamese used booby traps extensively throughout the Vietnam War and very effectively. Not only did the booby traps maim and kill many Americans but psychological reports showed that they never felt safe. Bobby traps involved not only explosive, like mines and grenade triggering booby traps, but also non-explosive traps like the deep pits, projectiles, crossbows, spiked mud balls all being triggered by a trip wire. The most famous of the non-explosive traps is known as Punji sticks where fire hardened bamboo stakes were smeared with excrement in a pit so that if the American soldier survived the fall onto the spike that they may die from blood poisoning.

## **American Strategy**

The American strategy throughout the Vietnam War was also a war of attrition; however they simply intended to use their vast amount of resources and overwhelming firepower, to make the war too costly for the communist allies to continue fighting. This ideology may have been similar but Ho Chi Minh, leader of PAVN (People's Army of Vietnam), rightly predicted that the lack of political will would lead the American's to withdraw from a long and bloody war. Their discipline and morale was not strong enough to sustain them throughout the war. The American forces were also made a grave mistake by measuring their successes in the number of bombing raids they carried out and the body count of Vietnamese communists dead – they believed that there was a crossover point which represented the rate at which the PAVN could be killed, faster than they were being replenished. What they didn't realise was most casualties that were dealt were civilians rather than soldiers. Their initial strategy was flawed so their basis of their tactics would be useless. Another mistake that the U. S attempted was the 'Hearts and Minds' program. Which provided aid of the destroyed villages in war torn areas, and attempted to gain the support of South Vietnamese people. Despite the obvious destruction caused by the bombs they dropped which resulted in high civilian casualties, the US government still saw the program as necessary. This money could have been used in more effective ways to help them win the war.

## **Tactical Response**

In response to guerrilla warfare used by the communists the Americans used only one main counter guerrilla tactic which adopted tactics that would kill

as many of the enemy as possible with minimum risk to their forces. Search and destroy missions became a crucial US and ARVN tactic. These involved armoured carriers to move through potential enemy hot spots in search of as many enemy bases as possible. Tanks or soldiers were flown in by helicopters and then quickly flown out before any ambushes can take place. This aimed to locate, occupy and destroy as many of the enemy as possible, either in a fire fight using hand held firearms or calling in an airstrike. This tactic had only one major flaw that was the helicopter. Chinooks was used for troops transport and moving heavy equipment and was the singularly most important tactical weapon the anti-communist used. This technology did allow the tactic search and destroy much easier with air cavalry but the major problem with the tactic was that US and ARVN troops never spent long in the country side meaning that it would always remain under communist control.

#### Vietnamese Terrain Advantages

When fighting the Vietnamese had a crucial advantage that they were able to use the terrain in their favour. Forces in America were not fully equipped and trained for the techniques needed for military units to survive and fight in jungle terrain. The forces were to be trained for the limited lines of sight and arcs of fire, logistical training due to know roads for vehicles and the inherent tropical diseases that have to be prevented or treated by medical service. Most men did not go through this training causing the US forces to struggle. The Vietnamese however underwent this training due to the close proximity of jungle and the large likelihood that they would need to fight in the jungle in order to protect their country.



The terrain also made guerrilla warfare easier for the North Vietnamese due to dense vegetation. Leadership by opposing sides by the war were very different and was a great advantage by the North Vietnamese, this was due to the number of allies on the anti-communist. America, South Vietnam, South Korea, Australia as well as other countries all had a say in which the war should be carried. The Vietnamese though had a very systematic and organized view of leadership. At the head of the PAVN was Ho Chi Minh both the president and prime minister and below him was trusted generals, commanders etc. these people were the key figures of the war even though the Soviet Union and China was involved). This made this allowed the message of the war for them to become clear on the communist Vietnamese side. It also had very little room for argument since each and every general and leader had a common interest. The anti-communist side was facing numerous problems as many countries did not want to lose men but the US were at first willing to lose men in order to contain communism and the quote made by John F. Kennedy summarises there oint of view. All in all, the anti-communist were not agreeing on points for the war which made progress very difficult.

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