

how significant was
the vietnam war in
stimulating the
protest culture of the
19...

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The popular protest culture that formed within the 1960's, that rebelled against the American traditional system arguably occurred because of the involvement in the Vietnam war from the federal government. Many young student and black Americans specifically, were highly against American intervention, prompting the protest culture.

However, other reasons could have prompted this too, like the assassination of Kennedy, more political interest and involvement from young radicals now favouring communist and socialist ideas, and also, arguably the increase in education meaning young adults now didn't have to earn their livings as early on in their lives. Firstly, the Vietnam war was undoubtedly a very significant factor in the increased protests during the 60's.

For example, the excessive bombing of North Vietnam led in 1965 to many student protests, as so many civilians including women and children were being purposefully killed in order to ultimately win the war by flattening Vietnam. This caused outrage amongst the student rebels. In particular, the student rebel group called Students for Democratic Society (SDS) used the Vietnam war to suggest that the US government was corrupt. The cause struck a chord with those at university more so than other groups of people due to the immense number of students that were made to go and fight.

The average age of soldiers fighting the Vietnam war for America was 19, meaning almost every student knew someone that had been killed or injured due to the combat they were being forced to take part in. This led to not only resentment for the war, but also fear that they would be called up to

fight, and therefore even more resistance and protesting towards continuing the fight. The war faced huge resistance, and in a way gave the rebels a force and action to fight against. This could be argued as the stimulant for the protests, as they could now use the ideas of the racist, corrupt government with evidence.

Many said the Vietnam war was a racist war, and that white America wanted to conquer Asia, as well as attack the gaining blackequalitywithin America. This was because in order to avoid 'the draft' (being called up to fight once a month), many wealthy white Americans would enrol in universities or colleges. This would excuse them from having to fight, unlike other working classes and black Americans, who could simply not afford this escape route as they could not manipulate the system as easily, leading to a hugely disproportionate number fighting being black or working class.

This figure was around 80%, increasing the ominous fear in students as the news of the deaths returned. Over 11000 were killed in 67, increasing to 16500 in 68. The many reasons for why the Vietnam war was so hated by many of the protests suggests its significance and its undoubtable impact on the Student Rebels. Although many argue the Vietnam war was the reason for the protests, it could be said that the protest culture would not have happened without a big spark effecting the nation. This was the assassination of president J F Kennedy, who was shot in November 1963 causing deep sadness in much of the population.

There were many theories concerning his death that spread around the youths of America, leading to further diminished trust amongst young

people. Before the assassination, America was a different place; despite the Vietnam war, many said there was hope in this period, but the hope shattered when he was killed. Questions were raised about US society, as the civil rights movement took over encouraging civil disobedience as they said Kennedy would have wanted this because of his backing of the Freedom Rides.

The shock of his death was overwhelming and arguably this caused the most fuel for the counter culture emerging than anything else. Along with the assassination of Martin Luther King and Kennedy, followed by the involvement in the Vietnam war, the impact upon the public was huge, and arguably, it was those drug crazed, protest evolved and in some cases, politically aware teenagers that came from this. However, this is not the only reason for the now more rebellious teenagers of America.

As education became increased within a pupils lifetime and schooling lasting longer, many students were turning towards the SDS, who particularly focused on political issues and came up with ideas for change within America. Many were becoming fed up with the untrustworthy American Federal government, and as this view became wider spread and more popular within the youth culture, many began favouring the idea of communism or a socialist movement. This new left group were key in organising protests and became more and more influential as numbers increased.

In October 1963, their total membership was 610, however, after protests of Vietnam they became even more influential and an even more recognisable

and known group. Those involved were still in education at various Universities and colleges, meaning this age when previously they would have to go out and find a job and work to make a living was gone, and instead they could still afford to live off parents money. This split teenagers, some taking a political route, while others became more interested in 'finding themselves' within the flower power movement.

The opportunities for young people opened up within the 60s, and they were no longer held to finding a job and starting the typical American family lifestyle. They now had a time in their life that they could experiment with - possibly with various drugs - and this new sense of freedom and flexibility allowed more time for those wanting to reject the 'too good' American society have the opportunity to protest. In conclusion, I think the main reason for the sudden development of the protest culture was the Vietnam war, as it gave students a cause to fight because of genuine opposition as well as the opportunity.

It was incredibly significant in stimulating the protest culture as they faced the fear of being called up to fight themselves, causing incredible resentment of the war, as well as the arguments the students proposed that the war was indeed racist and the government corrupt. This alone was undoubtedly the most significant factor, although without events like the assassination of JF Kennedy, I do not think the movement would have been so big and influential, as there would have been less people backing the cause.