

Explain why the
united states
withdrew it forces
from vietnam in
1973? essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

There were many reasons, which lead to the extraction of the American Military forces from Vietnam. America had gotten involved with the Vietnam War in order to stop the spread of communism.

Considering that the war took place at the height of the cold war and propaganda was quite strong; many people did not trust Communism and the East. The Domino theory was also very popular, so people were prepared to let Johnson stop it at any cost. The Domino theory was where, if one country were to fall to communism, then other neighbouring countries would also fall to communism. Much like the structure of dominos, where if one domino fell then the others would begin to fall one by one. Besides America had won every war it had ever entered, and what harm could a 3rd world country full of peasants and farmers do? America also had the best army and air force in the world, and at the time they were the richest country in the world, so they did not have much to worry about.

One of the many reasons, which lead to the extraction of US forces from Vietnam, was Guerrilla Warfare. The North Vietnamese army, NLF or Viet Cong, very rarely fought pitched battles. They used guerrilla tactics. This made it impossible to identify Viet Cong soldiers, as they did not wear uniform. After a fight they would scatter and it would be impossible to find them.

The Viet Cong also built thousands of miles of tunnels so that they could hide. When the US forces found the tunnels they were heavily booby-trapped. The Viet Cong became experts at building booby traps, using pits,

sharpened sticks and mines. This meant that US soldiers could never relax. Even in the centre of Saigon it was possible for the US forces to be attacked.

The Viet Cong were supplied from the north by the Ho Chi Minh trail, which ran through Laos and Cambodia. Because of such reasons the American troops did not want to fight in Vietnam anymore. They found it difficult to kill Viet Cong soldiers. They were fighting a losing battle against the Vietnam.

Many of the soldiers were draftees who were normal civilians back in America. These draftees were young and inexperienced in combat, they were also not used to the heat. Also many of these draftees took drugs to get away from the fear and pain of war. This added to the withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam as the troops saw that they were unable to win against an enemy they could not see and could not fight.

In addition to the fact that GI's were not able to tell the difference between Vietcong and Vietminh, they burnt down many cities and houses often killing many innocent people. Resultantly, when news of this reached people at home, it appalled them. Because the public had shown a general disliking in the way the American troops were trying to solve the situation in Vietnam it was obvious that many people had only grown to disliking the war in Vietnam. As the government grew to know of how the public opinion was changing towards the war, pressures were added on the fact that American troops were to be pulled out of Vietnam. In addition to this images of the suffering of soldiers were also shown back at home.

This war became known as the T. V war. The American government decided not to censor the war and let the press have free access. The result of this <https://assignbuster.com/explain-why-the-united-states-withdrew-it-forces-from-vietnam-in-1973-essay/>

brought home live uncensored pictures of scenes like small children being burned alive by American napalm. This shocked the Americans back home, as everybody owned a TV set.

These shocking images bombarded the public, and sympathy for the war fell. The free press brought home the reality of the war and soon people were sick of it. One example of this was the My Lai massacre. On March 16, 1968 armed troops in nine large black helicopter gun ships landed near the Vietnamese village of My Lai in the belief that the village housed 700 Vietcong or Vietcong sympathisers. The total number of casualties numbered around 400 - 500 innocent civilians. This was the only war crime that was brought to trial by the courts, and this only happened because of pressure from some newspapers.

This shocked the world, and created yet more opposition to the war, and the withdrawal of American troops. Events like the My Lai massacre really horrified the general population. Pictures showing the sheer killing of innocent young people could have forced the withdrawal of American troops. The late 60s showed a real shift in public opinion.

The Tet Offensive on the night of 31st January 1968 humiliated the government. The army and the public lost respect for their leaders and it lost all credibility. It became apparent to everyone that the USA couldn't win the war, and that they had been lied to by their government in order to make them believe that they were winning the war. The previous year, the Defence Secretary, Robert McNamara resigned saying that America couldn't win. This sent an extremely negative message to the army and the public,

<https://assignbuster.com/explain-why-the-united-states-withdrew-it-forces-from-vietnam-in-1973-essay/>

and they couldn't see why soldiers were still being sent in. Another example of government losing confidence was that of Johnson, previously one of the main supporters of the war, refused to stand for election.

This shocked the world, and created yet more opposition to the war. America began to realise their unpopularity throughout the world. The Tet offensive came at a time when the US forces appeared to be winning the war. This made the shock even greater. Although Viet Cong losses were frightful, it was really a defeat for the US army. It showed that the Viet Cong could strike anywhere and at any time and that there was nothing that the Americans could do about it.

It made it clear that the war in Vietnam could not be won. It persuaded Richard Nixon, the Republican candidate in the 1968 presidential election that US forces must be withdrawn from Vietnam. Nixon called this programme of the withdrawal of American troops 'Vietnamization'. Richard Nixon was elected as the next president of the United States of America. He promised that he would end the war with "Vietnamization", or troop withdrawals.

Whereas, in actual fact more American soldiers were entering Vietnam to maintain a high American presence. Consequently more American soldiers were dying. This added to the cost of running the war, which made it more expensive. Revealing that Nixon's plan to attack communist supply locations in Cambodia failed and had resultantly set off another round of protests. This added to the pressure on the government to withdraw American troops from

Vietnam, because Nixon also issued operation Rolling Thunder simultaneously with Vietnamization.

This was an operation where North Vietnam was continually bombarded with bombs so that they can be pinned down and not allowed to make an attack on South Vietnam while American troops were being withdrawn. However, the American public did not approve of carpet-bombing because it lacked accuracy and tactical awareness. Resultantly more innocents were being killed, so it had very little affect on the Vietcong. Therefore, due to public awareness of the matters taking place within Vietnam because of the media, the 'Vietnamization' of Vietnam added to why American troops had to be withdrawn from Vietnam. Not only that, Vietnam was so expensive that it was sending the US economy into recession, and people were having to pay higher taxes in order to fund it. Prosperity was in danger, which caused resentment for the war and added to reason as to why American troops should be brought back.

People saw through the news and newspaper articles, and recent events such as the My Lai Massacre, and the Tet offensive that America was nit particularly winning the war. By the end of the war, the war had costed \$352,000,000,000. Since so much money was needed to pay for the war, US forces elsewhere didn't have much money, men and equipment. This lead to an increase in the amount of soldiers being killed in Vietnam.

In 1956 over 65% of the population had voted against the war. The war was costing so much money. People though that the very same money would be used I improving the lifestyle back at home instead of it being wasted on a

loosing war. Because of this there were huge anti war demonstrations. Such an example is that of the Kent State student protest in May of 1970 which turned deadly when National Guardsman fired into crowds, killing 4 American students and injuring more. Nixon's plans to end the Vietnam War had not been realized.

American citizens were not impressed, however, after Kent State Anti-war activism seemed to decline. Yet the people still demanded to know why their country was involved in a war where an end was nowhere in sight. Such demands added to pressures to the government as they realised that the American public were deeply becoming more anti-war as they learnt more about what was being done to win the war. Therefore by the government being under pressure from the American public to end the war, this could have acted as one of the reasons to why American soldiers were withdrawn from Vietnam. It can be seen that the public opinion of the war and media coverage of the war played a very big part in why the American troops were withdrawn from Vietnam. America realised they didn't gain anything from their war with Vietnam.

America had lost countless numbers of soldiers. Whereas others returned back home from Vietnam handicapped or mentally scarred. Towards the end of the war, American troops were deserting and America was fighting a bigger battle on two fronts. In addition to this America was ridiculed, as the situation was looked at as the defeat of a super power by one of the smallest and poorest countries in the world that supported communism. Also they failed to complete their main objective, to stop the spread of communism.

This showed that it was now almost pointless to be fighting anymore, such thoughts started to affect government officials. American troops were withdrawn based on the fact that the war was now getting pointless, as neither enemy was willing to give up.