

# The significance of the vietnam war to new zealanders assignment

[History](#)



The Vietnam War was the first losing war New Zealand had ever fought. It was the first war that had the public and political parties divided in opinion. It was the first war that was so uncensored, and widely televised. The significance to New Zealand can be classified into three main areas: political, social, and militarily strategic. Firstly Vietnam was significant to New Zealand as it had many political long term and short term consequences. Throughout the war the National Government, and more directly Prime Minister Holyoke, took huge criticism for our participation in the war.

This was mainly due to a bipartisan split between the two main political parties, National and Labor. As the majority of New Zealanders disagreed with our participation in the war, it meant that labor became more popular as it did not support the war and wanted to remove our troops from Vietnam. This had a severe impact on Holyoke's reputation as he was seen to be in the wrong for supporting the war. Although he was seen to be pragmatic, and thought that the allies were in Vietnam for the wrong reasons, he was also seen to be principled in the fact that he valued our NATO's treaty with USA and Australia.

However this mentality would eventually lead to his demise in February 1972 when he resigned from being Prime Minister. This led to National losing the election later in the year with Norman Kirk coming into Government for Labor. A long term political outcome of the war for New Zealand was the abandoning of NATO's. Due to Holyoke's parsimonious attitude he would only send a minimum of troops and equipment to Vietnam to assist the Americans and the Australians and he was described as "the most dovish of the Hawks".

<https://assignbuster.com/the-significance-of-the-vietnam-war-to-new-zealanders-assignment/>

This was shown in that New Zealand only committed approximately 0.1% of what America did each year and totaled 3500 troops that went to Vietnam compared to Australia that sent 60000. This poor contribution to the war further weakened the already tarnished relationship between New Zealand and America and caused great tension by questioning the loyalty of New Zealand. According to New Zealand academic Roberto Rebel, Australia went "All the way with LB]" in regard to the war in Vietnam whereas New Zealand only half heartedly went part of the way.

This relationship disintegrated even further until 1985 where the fourth Labor Government banned all nuclear ships docking in New Zealand. This was a main factor of the bipartisan split which had originated during the war. This brought on the demise of ANGUS and curtailed trade with America. It is only in recent years that our relationship with America has entered the early stages of repair. Secondly, the Vietnam War was significant to New Zealand as it had long and short term social consequences.

The Vietnam War, although fought in Vietnam, had devastating effects on New Zealand's social sector. Huge amounts of protests took place over the disagreement on our participation in the controversial war. Our population was divided causing significant strain to those directly involved in the war. With the end of the war still out of sight, tension rose in the many communities of New Zealand. This was most notable in May, 1971, when a parade, to mark the return of the 161 Battery was organized in Auckland.

As the parade neared the Auckland Town Hall paint bombs and firecrackers were thrown onto the road at the parading military. These were designed to

represent the blood shed in Vietnam. After this three protestors broke free from the crowd and lay across the road in an attempt to block the parade. The parade was forced to alter course but the protesters were quickly removed by the police. This was just one of many anti war protests that took place. Also at the time, and in the years up to 2008, ex Vietnam War veterans took criticism from their involvement in the war.

Many of the honorable men who fought in the war came home to be discriminated against because of their “ voluntary’ participation in the war. This was one of the first wars that was so widely televised which added to the protests hate as it showed many graphic atrocities of war. Colonel Ray Seymour recalls how he was “ attacked in bed by a women who had seen me in the paper and accused me of being a child rapist and a murderer.... It doesn’t make me happy’. He was not the only one to be abused. Many other veterans were attacked because of their participation in the war.