

Impact of conflict in indochina on citizens assignment

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Assess the impact of the conflict in Indochina for the citizens of Vietnam and Cambodia. The conflict in Indochina had both short term and long term social, cultural, environmental, economic and human impacts on the citizens of both Vietnam and Cambodia. Civilians in both countries were affected by political oppression due to American intervention which had, and continues to have, a detrimental effect of all aspects of society in Vietnam and Cambodia. The conflict in Indochina had a detrimental immediate and lasting social impact on the citizens of Vietnam and Cambodia.

The arrival and direct involvement of US soldiers following the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964 led to the rapid westernisation of Vietnamese society. Western material and commercial values gained supremacy with the introduction of American goods such as cars, music and fashion. The influx of western wealth also aided the growth of corruption, prostitution and the drug trade and ultimately led to the decline of traditional village life and a shift from the agrarian society due to migration to the urbanised cities.

Similarly, the conflict in Indochina had a negative impact on civilians in Cambodia not only due to the effects of American intervention on Cambodian society, but most importantly the disastrous impact of Khmer Rouge rule which attempted to rebuild Cambodia as a pre-revolutionary society. The Americanisation of Vietnamese cities and the breakdown of traditional village structures as a result of American intervention in the conflict in Indochina had an extremely negative effect on citizens in both North and South Vietnam.

The pervasive US presence during this period threatened the survival of traditional Vietnamese culture due to the introduction of Western culture and consumer goods. The Strategic Hamlet Program was introduced to peasant villages in 1962 in an attempt to quell the influence of the National Liberation Front (NLF) on the peasants, however this strategy failed as it tried to remove them from where their ancestors were buried, an important aspect of their culture. The conflict in Indochina had a detrimental environmental impact on civilians in Vietnam and Cambodia who relied on the landscape to provide the nation's food resources. However, the B 52 bombing in both Vietnam and Cambodia left a cratered "moonscape" (John Pilger) where it was impossible to cultivate the rice crops on which Indochina relied. The use of herbicides and defoliants such as Agent Orange by the American army during this period led to the destruction of whole forest regions, President Kennedy's Operation Ranch Hand effected in order to destroy vegetation and thus deny guerillas the rainforest cover on which they relied.

The carpet bombing of areas destroyed both existing irrigation and dyke infrastructure, unexploded ordinance remaining a continuing problem for Indochina into the 21st century. The launch of Operation Menu in March of 1969, a covert United States bombing campaign conducted in Eastern Cambodia, similarly had a negative environmental impact on the citizens of Cambodia, destroying valuable infrastructure.

Over a four year period, US forces under the control of American President Nixon, who aimed to achieve "peace with honour", dropped more than half

a million tons of bombs on Cambodia, escalating the war and increasing the social and political tension in a flagrant invasion of Cambodia's neutrality. The need to dedicate a nation's scarce resources to a war of liberation prevented expenditure on more worthy projects and meant that the conflict in Indochina had a negative economic impact on the citizens of Vietnam and Cambodia.