



End of Vietnam War – Knowledge Organiser 3

Alongside the actions of the Vietcong, there are other reasons..

The role of the media

The Vietnam War has been called 'the first televised war'.

In previous wars (such as WW2 just 20 years earlier) media technology made it difficult to capture events for newspapers, magazines or newsreel. In any case strict censorship was in place and government were able to control what was printed or broadcast.

By the 1960s television had become an item in most homes. Cameras were smaller and more lightweight. This meant that battlefield images could be quickly captured and broadcast uncensored.

Initially the media had supported the war, but as it dragged on and casualties increased, they became more sceptical.

Images of the Vietnam War began to appear on the nightly TV news in the USA, and respected reporters such as TV news anchor-man **Walter Cronkite**, began to question whether the War was justified.

Cronkite was believed to be the 'most trusted man in America' and his opinion could significantly influence the US population. His report following the Tet Offensive suggested that America, at best, could only achieve a stalemate. Many of the images made ordinary people question whether or not the USA should be involved in the war. Images such as napalm attacks on children (eg. the photo of Kim Phuc) made people question the morality of the war.

Magazine images were important as well, public opinion around the world began to turn against the USA.

A well-known quote that is good to use in any answer on this topic is **that 'The Vietnam War was lost in the living rooms of America and not on the battlefields of Vietnam'**.



The role of the Anti-War movement

The role of the media meant that the harsh realities of war were broadcast at home and around the world for the first time – people began to protest against it.

The first to protest were '**Draft Dodgers**' – the 'draft' was the compulsory call up to fight in the war (conscription).

Many high profile draft dodgers, such as the boxer Mohammed Ali, refused to fight.

In 1965 the numbers conscripted were increased from 17,000 to 35,000 per month, and many started to refuse to go because they disagreed with the war. Open 'draft card burning' took place

University protests became commonplace as young people refused to fight and openly argued against the war – the most famous example came at Kent State University (see below).

Protest songs became popular by artists such as Bob Dylan, John Lennon and Country Joe MacDonald (who performed Fell Like I'm Fixin to Die).

Returning soldiers (veterans) began to openly protest – in 1967 'Veterans against the War' was founded. In 1967, 100,000 in Washington; 1968, 35,000 in New York, 1969, 500,000 at Woodstock and in 1971 300,000 veterans openly marched on Washington to protest. Veterans also returned their medals.

Veterans Against the War launched the Winter Soldier Investigation which proved that war crimes like My Lai had not been a one off. This led to even more people in the USA turning against the Vietnam War.

By the 1970s open protests against the war were commonplace.

Impact of events at Kent State University

In May 1970 students at Kent State University in Ohio staged a protest about the bombing of Cambodia and at one point burned down an old building used by the local military training corps.

In response, the Governor of Ohio ordered 800 National Guardsmen to enter the University to restore order.

At one point the Guardsmen panicked and opened fire killing 4 students.

The event had a great impact – it went against the US traditional right of free speech and it also seemed as though US soldiers were now also killing their own young people on American soil.

Much negative media coverage followed sparking further waves of University strikes and protest marches across the USA of up to four million students. Protest songs such as 'Ohio' by Neil Young proved to be popular with protestors.



COALITION FORCES



South Vietnam



USA

COMUNIST FORCES



North Vietnam



Vietcong

How did Nixon withdraw from Vietnam?
Richard Nixon replaced Lyndon B Johnson and became US president in **January 1969**. He won the election by promising to end the war. However, Nixon did not want to become the first American president to lose a major war. So, he tried a number of last gambles to force communist North Vietnam to surrender. They all failed, but why?

The Watergate Scandal

Nixon was under pressure to end the war in Vietnam as it was becoming really unpopular in the early 1970s. He had delivered on some of his promises such as bringing US soldiers home in his policy of Vietnamisation – but many wanted him to end the war asap. **BUT** Nixon had also just authorised the bombing of Laos and Cambodia was being accused of widening the scope of the war. During the 1972 presidential election campaign a burglary took place at the Watergate Hotel in Washington which was being used as a base by the Democrat opponents of Nixon. Nixon claimed to know nothing about it and the resulting cover-up. Publicly Nixon said ‘I am not a crook’, he was implicated in the Watergate Affair and forced to resign (because he had lied) in August 1974. He remains the only ever US president to have been forced to resign. This weakened the USA’s position in Vietnam as Nixon was removed from power.

Paris Peace Conference and the Fall of Saigon

Peace talks between the USA and North Vietnam had been taking place since 1968. Nixon’s heavy bombing of North Vietnam in December 1972 (**Operation Linebacker**) and rumours of the ‘madman’ theory brought the North Vietnamese back to the negotiating table. In January 1973 peace talks resumed. **Henry Kissinger** represented the USA at the talks and **Le Duc Tho** represented North Vietnam. The Paris Peace Conference, agreed that all US soldiers should withdraw from Vietnam in return for the safe return of all US Prisoners of War (POWs) and by April 1973 they had all returned home, leaving a small number of military advisors in South Vietnam. However, once the majority had left this left the country vulnerable to attack from the North. In December 1974 the North Vietnamese Army (VC), broke their promise and then fully invaded the South and made fast progress. Refugees fled towards Saigon (the **Convoy of Tears**) to try and escape from the communists. Other people left Vietnam by boat (**The Boat People**). In April 1975 the VC entered Saigon the capital of South Vietnam, and remaining US officials were airlifted out by helicopter and the war was over. N and S Vietnam reunited to form one communist country.

	What was Nixon’s plan?	Why did it fail?
1968 Paris peace talks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Peace talks between the USA, South Vietnam and North Vietnam had already started in 1968 in Paris.When Nixon became president he continued with the talks to try to end the War.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">North Vietnam wanted to take over the South to form a united Communist Vietnam.The USA would never agree to this.The talks dragged on and went no- where.No agreement was reached.
Vietnamisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Vietnamisation was an attempt by President Nixon to deliver on his promises and return American soldiers home.He would gradually withdraw US soldiers from Vietnam and replace them with local soldiers from the South Vietnamese army (ARVN).The US would provide training, money and equipment to the South Vietnam Army- ARVN.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">400,000 US soldiers did return home.Money was spent on training and equipping South Vietnamese soldiers to replace themHowever the local ARVN soldiers (South Vietnamese Army) did not have the expertise needed to fight the North Vietnamese.Many deserted when faced by attacks from the VC.
1970 – 1971 The bombing/invasion of Laos and Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">An attempt by President Nixon to bomb North Vietnamese bases and supply routes (eg. the Ho Chi Minh Trail) in the neighbouring countries of Laos and Cambodia.He hoped this would force the communists to negotiate an end to the War.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The campaign had some initial success in Cambodia - 8,000 B52 missions forced many VC to leave.It was less successful in Laos.However many back home in the USA felt Nixon was expanding the War and began to protest.The Kent State University shootings and Veterans marches on Washington were a result.Congress passed a law after the invasion of Cambodia which banned Nixon from sending more soldiers into the war.As a result, the invasion of Laos in 1971 was done by ARVN soldiers, with the US only offering air support. This was unsuccessful due to the poor quality of the ARVN.Extra pressure mounted on Nixon to end the war.
1972 – 1973 Operation Linebacker	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A last ditch attempt by President Nixon to bomb North Vietnam into surrenderBy the 1972 he saw this as his last chance to win the war.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">This was another large scale indiscriminate bombing campaign like Operation Rolling Thunder before it.Again the bombing killed many innocent people and hit the wrong targets.It largely failed.However it did force the North Vietnamese to resume peace talks in Paris.
The ‘Mad Man’ theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">In one last desperate attempt to make the North Vietnamese surrender, Nixon pretended he was irrational, reckless and was prepared to drop a nuclear bomb on North Vietnam.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Nixon was bluffing and the North Vietnamese didn’t fall for it.

Consequences of the Vietnam War

Impact on people in Vietnam	Impact on the USA	Impact on the environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Around one million Vietnamese soldiers (from both sides) died.• 2 million civilians died.• 11 million people became refugees due to the war.• Many refugees moved to near US bases seeking protection – but poverty, drug abuse and prostitution were common.• Around 100,000 children were born due to relationships between Vietnamese and Americans. They were seen as ‘different’ by some and faced abuse.• Agent Orange led to birth defects over many years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The war cost over \$170 billion.• Johnson had to divert money away from the Great Society to pay for the war, limiting its impact.• 58,000 Americans died and over 300,000 were wounded.• Many soldiers suffered psychologically and experienced drug dependency.• American society was split between those who supported and opposed the war.• USA’s reputation as an invincible superpower and as a leader of freedom and democracy was damaged.• USA had failed to stop the spread of communism – Laos and Cambodia also became communist.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Huge areas of jungle and farmland were destroyed by chemicals such as Agent Orange.• Over seven million tonnes of bombs were dropped, destroying irrigation systems.• Even today, large numbers of unexploded bombs cause deaths and injuries when dug up by farmers.

