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| The Vietnam War  Catherine Borges  AXIA |

As you, describe the connection between student unrest and the Vietnam War,

please understand that the entire period of the 1960s in America embodied

revolutionary attitudes. Note how MLK’s leadership and the Civil Rights

Movement also paralleled. A particular note might be how students formed the 1959

group called the semi-socialist Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) where they

held “teach-in” rallies. These protest rallies showed their attitude against the draft. Acts

such as students burning their draft cards or draft dodgers fleeing to Canada and other

countries to escape military service also showed the effects of the anti-war movement in

America. When looking at the connection among the hippies and the counterculture with

the war, it reflected how many young Americans were completely disillusions about

American politics at the time. While politicians were focusing on Vietnam, the Beat

Generation of 50s often wrote and protested about racial and gender; they also spoke

against consumerism and materialism. Since they were concentrating on these issues,

it allowed political focus to rather dismiss them as maniacal. Because of this, you might

look at how the CIA investigated antiwar activists, which further caused many

Americans to distrust the government, not to mention how Johnson made the FBI use

its counterintelligence program, to monitor activists and arrest protesters. Because of

Johnson’s illegal use of governmental agencies against American citizens, it caused

hatred and lack of support for the war. America’s lack of support also stemmed from the

Chicago Riot and Kent State incident. These violent acts caused further distress in the

country. Thus, the war divided the nation (**Davidson, Gienapp, Heyrman, Lytle and**

**Stoff 2005)**. student unrest happened all over the world The mass media gave intensive

coverage to the Berkeley events, and Americans were exposed for the first time to a

new sort of news story --the tumultuous campus disruption. It was news in a traditional

sense because it involved conflict and controversy. It was especially suitable for

television because it was colorful and visually interesting. Night after night, television

film of events on one campus carried the methods and spirit of protest to every other

campus in the country. The public reacted to Berkeley with concern and anger. In

California and throughout the nation, campus events became, controversial political

issues. Many citizens believed that students had no reason to protest. Many were

deeply opposed to the protestors' disruptive tactics. Many also criticized the faculty and

administration for not taking a sufficiently "hard line." As student protest spread to more

campuses and as its tactics became more disruptive or violent, citizens and political

leaders called for action to prevent further campus disturbances. The rapid escalation of

American military efforts in Vietnam in 1965 made the Vietnam war one of the bitterest

issues of the decade. This issue gave student activists an ever-increasing self-

assurance and solidarity for growing public concern over the constant escalation of the

war seemed to legitimate the activists' early opposition. They redoubled their efforts; the

Vietnam issue came to dominate their thoughts; and the previously scattered pattern of

campus protest began to alter accordingly. The war was strenuously debated among

students and faculty. At first, there were considerable differences of opinion on the

subject. During this early period, students and faculty at the University of Michigan

created a new method for discussing the war,the teach-in. When it began, the teach-in

was a balanced affair that took the form of an extended debate, rather than a vehicle for

antiwar protest, But it did not last in this form. When the teach-in reached Berkeley, it

was simply a mass demonstration in which no supporters of the war were heard. Soon,

government representatives who went to campuses to explain or defend American

foreign policy were shouted down and, at times, physically attacked. In some cases, the

students responsible were never disciplined. This transformation of the teach-in

suggests one consequence of growing opposition to the war and of the rising tide of

campus unrest that was to persist and expand through the rest of the

decade(.**www.vietvet.org/resour.htm).** As opposition to the war grew and the war

continued to escalate, explanations of America's involvement in it became more radical.

From having been a "mistake," the war was soon interpreted by radical students as a

logical outcome of the American political system. They argued that what was most

objectionable was not the war itself, but rather "the system" that had entered, justified,

and pursued it. According to this logic, the appropriate target of protest was "the system

itself, and especially those parts of it that were involved in the war. The university, too,

came to be seen as a part of "the system," and therefore it became a target --as distinct

from an accidental arena --of antiwar protest. As it did, the Berkeley invention, with its

dual issues, increasingly dominated the pattern of campus protest. The escalation of the

war in Southeast Asia produced an increasing demand for military manpower that

resulted in larger draft calls.

In 1965, the federal government decided to defer college students from the draft on

the basis of their academic standing. Draft boards asked universities to provide such

information, and students and faculty passionately debated the propriety of compliance.

In the end, the issue was usually resolved by agreeing that draft data would continue to

be divulged only at the student's request. As the escalation of the war in Vietnam

proceeded and as a radical analysis of the wider society evolved, few campus issues

were seen as not related to the basic problems of the nation. By 1967 America was

mired in its own urban problems,As the bombings and body count in Vietnam continued

to escalate so did civil unrest. 100,000 Anti-war protesters gathered in New York and

thousands more in San Francisco. There were urban riots in Detroit. Johnson’s support

was falling drastically on all fronts. Anti-war rallies, speeches, demonstrations and

concerts continued being organized all over the country. There was a backlash against

all that was military. Soldiers returning home from the war were no longer regarded as

heroes but as “baby killers”. Young men sought to evade the draft by being

conscientious objectors or leaving for Canada. North Vietnam’s bloody TET Offensive of

1968 and the resultant horrendous casualties the Americans suffered eroded the

situation at home even further. The assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert

Kennedy also sparked racial tension and unrest. Wisely, Lyndon Johnson did

not seek re-election.

Richard Nixon’s number one campaign promise to Americans was

that he would end the war with “Vietnamization”, or systematic troop withdrawals. Yet

the American presence in Vietnam remained high and casualties mounted, as did the

cost of running the war effort. Taxpayers were paying 25 billion dollars per year to

finance a conflict no one believed in anymore. The Woodstock concert brought 500,000

together from across North America in a non-violent protest against the war. Nixon’s

plan to attack communist supply locations in Cambodia failed and set off another round

of protests. The Kent State student protest in May of 1970 turned deadly when National

Guardsman fired into crowds, killing four students and injuring dozens more. Students

all across the country became enraged and over the next few days campuses all over

the US came to a virtual standstill(**www.vietvet.org/resour.htm)**. As the year drew to a

close 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 wane,Yet

the people still demanded to know why their country was involved in a war where a

resolution seemed impossible. 1971 also saw the Mylai massacre come to light, an

atrocity committed by American soldiers that shocked the world and gained huge media

attention. Another round of peace talks were organized on the heels of this controversy

but again all attempts to end the fighting in Vietnam failed. Bombings raids on North

Vietnam were re-escalated in the spring of 1972, after peace talks headed by Henry

Kissinger once again collapsed. The cities of Hanoi and Haiphong were subjected to

night raids by American B-52 bombers that was unprecedented and that left the world in

shock. Peace talks resumed in Paris and by the end of January, 1973, a pact had been

signed by the United States, South and North Vietnam and the Viet Cong. By March all

American troops were pulled out of the country in addition, systematic release of

prisoners of war on both sides was initiated. Yet by the time the Watergate scandal

came to light and ruined Nixon’s presidency at the close of 1974, Communist forces had

overrun Saigon((www.esuhistoryprof.com/**vietnam**\_bibliography.htm).Within a few

short months most of Indochina would fall into Communist hands.

The Anti-war movement’s mantra of “what are we fighting for” seemed eerily

prophetic. The Communist-held Democratic Republic of Vietnam was opposed by the

US-supported Republic of Vietnam. Disagreements soon emerged over the organizing

of elections and reunification, and the U.S. began increasing its contribution of military

advisers. U.S. forces were soon embroiled in a guerrilla war with the National Front for

the Liberation of South Vietnam (NLF), the insurgents who were indigenous to South

Vietnam. North Vietnamese forces unsuccessfully attempted to overrun the South

during the 1968 Tet Offensive and the war soon spread into neighboring Laos and

Cambodia, in both of which the United States bombed Communist forces supplying the

North Vietnamese Army. With its own casualties mounting, the U.S. began transferring

combat roles to the South Vietnamese military in a process the U.S. called

Vietnamization,The effort had mixed results. The Paris Peace Accords of January 27,

1973, formally recognized the sovereignty of both sides, Under the terms of the accords

all American combat troops were withdrawn by March 29, 1973. Limited fighting

continued, but all major fighting ended until the North once again sent troops to the

South on April 30, 1975, following the collapse of the South Vietnamese government.

South Vietnam briefly became the Republic of South Vietnam, under military occupation

by North Vietnam, before being officially integrated with the North under communist rule

as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on July 2, 1976.

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