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After Tet
by Joe Escobar - Saturday, 6 November 2010, 08:18 PM

This week's question involves one very big question to discuss.

How did the Tet Offensive and its aftermath affect American politics, society, and the military and diplomatic course of the war in Vietnam?

Entire books have been written on this single event that occurred during the war. I do not want you to attempt to replicate that level of detail in this forum, especially in a single post. But I do want you and your group members to address each of the four areas (politics, society, military, diplomacy). When addressing these four issues, don't jumble all of your ideas together in a single post. Be sure you address each in separate/individual posts. Use a descriptive subject lines, such as "Effect on Politics", "Societal Influences", "Military Policy", or "Diplomatic Results". These will make it much easier for your classmates to respond and it will keep the online discussions clearer and easier to follow.

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Tet was symbolic of the war as a whole
by Spencer Smith - Sunday, 7 November 2010, 07:53 AM

Tet had very little to do with military success or failure. More Viet Cong and civilians died than anybody else. The ratio of U.S. soldiers killed compared to Viet Cong Killed was similar to the rest of the war, the Viet Cong/NVA suffered over 10 times more casualties. The "body count" had nothing to do with tet, as well as the rest of the war. If historians went by the body count than the U.S. won the Vietnam War 1 million-58,000, but we all know this isn't true. The Tet Offensive was about national morale, and psychology. It caused Americans and politicians to question whether victory was even possible. More than anything Tet revealed that the "body count" and theory of "attrition" were not accurate ways to gauge success in Vietnam. No matter how many people die on each side of any American war, success or failure is always dependent on how the American public views it.

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Re: Tet was symbolic of the war as a whole
by Jaymie Skeslien - Tuesday, 9 November 2010, 06:04 PM

i agree the body count had absolutely nothing to do with the tet. they didn't have any military success.

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Re: Tet was symbolic of the war as a whole
by David Gallegos - Tuesday, 9 November 2010, 07:42 PM

For the Viet Cong it wasn't about the overall body count. It was about reuniting North and South Vietnam. One of the differences between the Americans and the NVA is that the North was willing to lose everything to achieve their overall goal. The Americans on the other hand sort of shot themselves in the foot by even allowing there to be T.V journalists there in country to show the people back home how chaotic it was. The public was not ready to see the effects of war. They were not prepared for the loss of loved ones. Throughout the war the people at home decided that it was no longer worth the cost to be victorious in Vietnam.

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Rate... **Re: Tet was symbolic of the war as a whole**by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 07:21 PM

I guess I can understand now how the body count has nothing to do with the victory of Tet or not, but I still don't think that the success or failure solely lies on the American public views.

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The Tet Offensive was initially described as a failure for the Vietcong, pointing to their retreat and staggering casualties. When there were proposals for escalation of the war by adding 200,000 reinforcements it had an effect on the public in a huge way. Many supporters of the war began to question America's strategy. From what I have read from the Herring book (232-233) about the exaggerated reports by media, basically stating their own opinions on the offensive it brings me believe that the media was the major deciding factor that turned the public's view against the war. At this time of the war there were already a large amount of people against it, but after the coverage of the Tet Offensive and the opinions of certain figures (Walter Cronkite) were stated to the public it turned a lot of supporters of the war against it.

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Justin hit the nail on the head. The issue here is media. And I know in college all we hear is media, media, media. But this was the first televised war. Media a lot of times dictated success or failure. There is great power in media.

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I agree Justin, there were many complications in the Vietnam War that one cannot overlook, and the media is largely part of the many. Exaggerations and misinformation cost America their heart for the war, as well as their will to win it. Good post

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you did a good job on this justin.

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Good Post

When a man literally pulls out his side arm and executes a enemy soldier in front of an American T.V journalist. That is when the people at home started to see how brutal the war became. In this conflict the "media" was one of the strongest weapons used against the American Armed forces.

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**Re: After Tet**by [Jared Hall](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 07:01 PM

The photographer Eddie Adams won a Pulitzer Prize for his photo of this execution. Adams regretted that his picture wasn't able to tell the whole story of this event.

"The general killed the Viet Cong; I killed the general with my camera. Still photographs are the most powerful weapon in the world. People believe them; but photographs do lie, even without manipulation. They are only half-truths. ... What the photograph didn't say was, 'What would you do if you were the general at that time and place on that hot day, and you caught the so-called bad guy after he blew away one, two or three American people?'"

<http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/204511/there-are-tears-my-eyes/jonah-goldberg#>

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**Re: After Tet**by [Jolene Powell](#) - Friday, 12 November 2010, 08:56 AM

good posting Jared. I think the media issues can be a problem yes, however it did not start with the media, it started with Kennedy, He should have told Americans what we were fighting for and been honest to the public. It only backfired on them and most importantly our soldiers. Maybe instead of down playing the situation, more truth would have been the key. Maybe our soldiers would have been supported by their own country, welcomed home and supported. It can not be blamed on the media, they did not start this war or dive right into something they had no clue about. It was our presidents who mislead the Americans on the truth, the media only enhanced/aggravated it more.

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**Re: After Tet**by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 08:16 PM

I'm not saying that Vietnam was a super bad thing, I do not feel like I am knowledgeable of the topic enough to say one way or the other but media makes things blown out of proportion, and loves to exaggerate the negative things. Media was one of the biggest issues at this time. I think you got it Justin.

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**Re: After Tet**by [Tracy Allen](#) - Friday, 12 November 2010, 09:09 PM

Walter Cronkite's eruption was pretty funny to read. Whatever effect the media had on the war the Johnson administration brought it upon themselves. Their "unduly optimistic pronouncements of 1967 made the shock of Tet greater than it might otherwise have been and widened the already large credibility gap" (244). There was no public announcement about the victory in Tet either, after the media had portrayed it as an enemy victory. Johnson screwed up but it was his second term and he was under immense stress. I am not giving excuses but it is a hard thing to run a country. It probably would have ended better if he had run more things through Congress and if he did not lie to the American public and Congress about what was going on and what he was planning on doing. Even with this being the first televised war, there was a lot of lying.

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**Society**by [Sheila Daughtry](#) - Sunday, 7 November 2010, 11:05 PM

I think a few things took place to ignite the fury of some of the American citizens against the war. The first, before Tet, the fighting was more concentrated in the rural areas of Vietnam, not too much in the cities. Out of sight, out of mind. The second was President Johnson and General Westmoreland presented an optimistic view about the United States and South Vietnam winning the war. We trusted what the government was telling us. Third, and I think the most effective, was the power of the media. The American people watched the evening news at what APPEARS to be the North Vietnamese and NLF seizing the US Embassy in Saigon (the VC never penetrated the embassy compound). A photo shows the

execution of a Vietcong by a Saigon police chief (Herring 224), on television we witness the man's blood pouring out of his head, onto the street. Unfortunately with the media, once it's out there, opinions are quickly formed, regardless of the validity of what was shown. The aftermath of the Tet Offensive had a negative impact on our society.

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Re: Society

by [Ellen Haxby](#) - Tuesday, 9 November 2010, 09:30 PM

Great job on this post!

I agree with you that the media had a social impact due to the Tet Offensive. The media clung to the use of pathos (an appeal to the viewer's emotions), and the viewers certainly took note. I think it is safe to say that negative events stir up more emotions than positive events, and the media used this to their advantage. Herring (p.244) tells us that "up until the Tet Offensive...television coverage of the war had been overwhelmingly neutral or favorable to the government..." Then, all of the sudden, Americans were blasted with an uncomfortable and unknown look into the reality of, although inflated, war in Vietnam.

The aftermath of the Tet Offensive left America in a state of shock. When reading the Herring book, I got the sense that Americans didn't know where to look for relief. One example of this was during the presidency elections, in which "Nixon won a precariously thin victory" (Herring 265).

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Re: Society

by [Jaiirus Godeka](#) - Saturday, 13 November 2010, 11:48 AM

You make very good points. The American society was disillusioned by the unfolding of events during the conflict. It was "them vs us" because the American society could no longer identify with the decisions that were being made by their elected officials. Another point that struck me was, the reports by the government regarding the successful progress of the conflict, which was in stark contrast to the reports by the media.

As Walter Cronkite reported on February 27, "To say that we are closer to victory today is to believe, in the face of the evidence, the optimists who have been wrong in the past.To say that we are mired in stalemate seems the only reasonable, yet unsatisfactory conclusion". (Herring pp 241-242)

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Military

by [Sheila Daughtry](#) - Sunday, 7 November 2010, 11:08 PM

General Westmoreland viewed the Tet Offensive as a victory for the United States "the enemy exposed himself by virtue of his strategy and he suffered heavy casualties" (Herring 225). I think Westmoreland's strategy would have been to move in troops and get the enemy before they had a chance to recover from their debacle attempt to take over South Vietnam. Unfortunately with the media damage, Westmoreland's statements caused more shock and disbelief than support for the war effort. It gave General Earle Wheeler an opportune time to mobilize the reserves for not only Vietnam, but other possible hot spots in our "global commitment" (Herring 234). The Tet Offensive affected the military in a negative way, it forced Johnson's hand. He was forced to get off the fence and make a decision to send in more troops or start de-escalation.

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Re: Military

by [Ellen Haxby](#) - Tuesday, 9 November 2010, 09:55 PM

I agree that it affected American and South Vietnamese military in a negative way.

What I find interesting, is that when given an opportunity to defend an area, the ARVN (South Vietnamese) really stepped up their game. Herring mentions that the "ARVN fought better under pressure than any American would

have dared predict" (p. 229). The military had recovered from the Tet Offensive quicker than what the North Vietnamese hoped for. For example, "The NLF bore the brunt of the fighting; its regular units were hurt badly and would take months to recover, and its political infrastructure suffered crippling losses" (Herring 232). I'm pretty sure the North Vietnamese didn't want such an outcome.

The military struggled with the idea of giving South Vietnam a larger part in the defense of their country. The ARVN was still very dependent on American military forces, and Clark Clifford mentions that "The South Vietnamese leaders seemed content to have it that way." Therefore, Americans were working on handing over responsibilities to South Vietnam, while the South Vietnamese were hoping America would keep their position and continue to fight for fear of being "left at the mercy of the Vietcong" (Herring 260).

Also, as far as after the Tet Offensive, I would like to bring up another point made in the Herring book that says Johnson "initiated what turned out to be an irreversible process of de-escalation that would in time work in North Vietnam's favor" (p. 268). As you mentioned in your post, Johnson was forced to decide either to put in more troops or slowly take them out. The quote I mentioned shows the impact his decision to take out troops had, and that it was impossible to turn back.

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Re: Military

by [Jaymie Skeslien](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 02:31 PM

here is some pictures i found online.



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Re: Military

by [Tracy Allen](#) - Friday, 12 November 2010, 09:32 PM

Johnson sent less than the proposed troops. It's not much but it is something. Thieu increased the draft calls for the ARVN. Enemy attacks were diminishing and they were withdrawing so Johnson didn't see the point of sending in a lot of troops. He just sent 13,500 to "augment the emergency reinforcements sent in February" (247). Hmmm that is the one thing that has always bothered me about war, not the fighting or the cause behind the fighting (though sometimes I have opinions on that too) it's the way they talk about sending troops some where. Only 13,500 troops, that is a lot of people!

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Military and Tet

by [Tracy Allen](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 08:35 PM

Everything after the Tet offensive was a bit of a mess. After the initial panic the ARVN responded quickly and effectively to remove the Vietcong from the South Vietnamese cities and from the U.S. embassy. This led Washington to believe that South Vietnam was ready to start taking more responsibility in the fighting. Unfortunately, that was not the case. The ARVN still had the same problems as before. In fact, even with increased U.S. aid and training after Tet there was the highest number of dropouts in the South Vietnamese army to date. In addition, they still lacked experienced higher up officials.

In the U.S., the military opposed the concessions that were on the table after Tet. Westmoreland and others wanted

to intensify military pressure, increase bombing and go after the North Vietnamese in their sanctuaries located in Cambodia and Laos. Even after his speech on the 31 of March, Johnson lost his temper and wanted to bomb Vietnam back to the Stone Age. Eventually the bombing began again and things were around the same as they were before Tet. Except for the fact that Westmoreland was recalled to the States.

Over all the military was not affected by Tet. Our forces were able to clear the enemy out of the cities they had taken quickly. The city of Hue held for about three days and it was the longest and bloodiest fight of that offensive.

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Re: Military

by [Spencer Smith](#) - Friday, 12 November 2010, 05:57 PM

A major counter attack might have even worked.

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Re: Military

by [Tracy Allen](#) - Friday, 12 November 2010, 09:35 PM

For the U.S? Maybe, but I have a feeling that the Vietnamese weren't going to give up until there was not one of them left.

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Re: Military

by [Jaymie Skeslien](#) - Friday, 12 November 2010, 06:12 PM

true and even the tet offensive lead america into shock also.good job.

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Re: Military

by [Justin White](#) - Saturday, 13 November 2010, 03:53 PM

Good post, I agree that Tet negatively affected the military, especially because it put the Johnson administration in a position where a decision had to be made in which direction they wanted to take the war. Overall Tet showed the american public that the Vietcong were not faltering but had plenty of fight left, basically the opposite of what the Johnson administration had told them.

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Politics

by [Sheila Daughtry](#) - Sunday, 7 November 2010, 11:10 PM

The Tet Offensive had an interesting effect on the political scene. It blew Johnson out of the White House. It inspired hero's to emerge like Clark Clifford, who genuinely tried to help the President save face as he realized what a mess we were in. I think the Tet Offensive forced the American people to look at the Government in a different light. We no longer trusted what we heard. On a positive note, it forced our Congress to take the power back from Johnson and demand that the people of the United States have a say in what happened in Vietnam.

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**Re: Politics**by [Spencer Smith](#) - Sunday, 7 November 2010, 11:42 PM

Sheila, you made the point that the Tet Offensive forced Congress to take power back from Johnson and demand that the people of the U.S. have a say in what happened. I was wondering if you could go into a little more depth on this matter. I'm interested to hear how the people of the U.S. got to have a say in Vietnam. I was wondering if you were speaking in terms of the pressure protestors tried to put on congress, and also how congress as you said "took the power back from Johnson." Understand, im not disagreeing with you what so ever. I'm genuinly curious to hear how congress achieved this shift of power, and also how ordinary citizens suddenly had a say in military operations.

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**Re: Politics**by [Tracy Allen](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 08:59 PM

Spencer,

I think Shelia was referring to the actions of Congress after the idea of the large troop (206,000) increase was proposed. They demanded that they have a share in any decision to expand the war (242). Then on March 11 and 12 the Senate Foreign Relations Committee interview Rusk on policy and decisions that had been made. We watched some of that in episode six of the PBS series. Congress was definitely not happy with the way Johnson was waging the war and how he was keeping things from them. Later on 139 members of the House of Representatives called for a full review of the policy in Vietnam. I do not think that they really took power back from Johnson at all. Because at the end of his term Johnson's policy was the same as it had been before Tet. As for the American people having a say in military decisions or actually having an affect on how the war was waged. I do not think that we did. People may have applied pressure and fought in the ways that they could. I think all it accomplished was increased generation gaps and policies meant to ease pressure back home but not really fix anything.

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**Re: Politics**by [Jaymie Skeslien](#) - Monday, 8 November 2010, 02:10 PM

yes i have to agree we did see them in a deffrent way because of all forcing that the tet had said and done.

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**Re: Politics**by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 08:01 PM

I think Clark Clifford was a great addition into the issue, and again he was trying to help the president but of course do to his "hotheadedness" he didn't take a second to listed to Clifford.

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**Re: Politics**by [Ellen Haxby](#) - Saturday, 13 November 2010, 03:07 PM

Sheila - you said that the Tet Offensive forced the American people to look at the Government in a different light. That's true. I was also thinking that the Tet also forced the Government to look at themselves in a different light. They started asking questions such as: Can we really obtain the goal we set out for? Will America actually lose this war because of our decisions? These questions, I think, led to the government slowly giving up in Vietnam.

Politics during the Tet Offensive seemed extremely groggy. People in the government seemed tired of Vietnam. Most of the wise men thought that "an independent, non-Communist South Vietnam was probably unattainable and that moves should be made toward eventual disengagement" (Herring 248).

I think that the government was finally realizing that America wasn't going to win this war, and that they just wanted the whole thing to be over with. The Tet Offensive, however, made it much harder for the government to do anything with acceptance from

the people. America's citizens were not going to let the government forget.

I also think the government had many issues because of Johnson's emotional state. He was still indecisive "did not change his goals" even after the March 31st speech (Herring 251). From the Herring book, I also got the idea that Johnson just wanted to get through his term without worrying too much about the impact he was making. He had great plans for his presidency (The Great Society), and I don't think his time in office was what he hoped for. So in the end, he seemed to just give up in a way.

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Diplomacy

by [Sheila Daughtry](#) - Sunday, 7 November 2010, 11:16 PM

Diplomacy is not a word that comes to mind for me when I think of the United States involvement with Vietnam. The Tet Offensive opened up dialogue between the North Vietnamese, South Vietnamese and the United States, which I think helped Nixon work towards ending our involvement in Vietnam. If I think of why we originally became involved with the Vietnam war, and if indeed it was to help the South Vietnamese people become a democratic society, then we were diplomatic and landed on their shores for a noble cause.

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Re: Diplomacy

by [Tracy Allen](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 09:13 PM

Yes, the Tet offensive did open up a dialogue between the United States and North Vietnam. It was part of the plan from the beginning. The Vietnamese call it "danh va dam" or "fighting while negotiating". They were trying to get a reprieve from the bombing and create more division between the South and the U.S.

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Re: Diplomacy

by [Justin White](#) - Saturday, 13 November 2010, 04:36 PM

I agree that if we did get involved in the Vietnam War to try and help the South Vietnamese people become a democratic society it would have been a noble cause, but unfortunately I don't think the U.S was as worried about the South Vietnamese people as they were about their interests in the resources that Southeast Asia held. In the Herring book (pg 9) it says about 90 percent of America's crude rubber and 75 percent of its tin came from Southeast Asia. The reason that America had to get involved in the Vietnam War is because if communism had taken over in Southeast Asia, America would have been pushed out of the equation, and would have been left without a way to get the major resources that it needed to keep itself in the ranking of top super powers of the world. And in Americas eyes that would be an extreme risk to our national security.

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Re: Diplomacy

by [David Verner](#) - Saturday, 13 November 2010, 07:09 PM

This was pretty much my thoughts on diplomacy here as well, there really was not that much involved with Vietnam it seemed.

However, the Tet offensive did result in, as you say, the opening up of a dialogue between the respective sides in looking for a peaceful settlement. Through the US finally realizing that an outcome of absolute victory for their goals was a very unrealistic outcome, they decided the best thing to do was to open up discussions with the North in working out a way of getting out of the situation.

So although diplomacy was not a major factor, in my eyes, at play with the Tet offensive - it was a huge factor in the aftermath of the offensive in the ramifications it had in diplomatic circles and its role in making the tide of the war change.

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Rate... **A picture's worth a thousand words**by [Spencer Smith](#) - Sunday, 7 November 2010, 11:43 PM

The video/picture of the vietcong detainee getting shot in the head in the middle of the street persuaded negativity towards the war in Vietnam. It made me think of the classic picture of troops hoisting the American Flag on top of Iwojima. Both pictures were very persuasive. One towards negativity, one towards inspiration. A picture is powerful. Sometimes just one picture that captures just one second of history can symbolize years of blood shed. A picture is worth a thousand words.

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i seen the picture as well and that explains it all. i cant imagine there was alot of blood and pain that they went through.

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One picture or video clip can be very persuasive and effective. One can get a important point across with just one clip.

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Just like the immolation of Thich Quang Duc, the Buddhist who immolated himself earlier in the war during Diem's reign. I have been to a Buddhist pagoda in Hue. The car in the background is set aside in its own room, he was a martyr to people in Vietnam. People travel from all over to pray at that pagoda.

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If the U.S. wanted to win the war once and for all, right after tet with the vietcong vulnerable we could have Bombed Hanoi, possibly used Nukes in key Northern areas and achieved semi-victory within months. Instead of screwing around with groundtroops we could have inflicted mass destruction to hanoi and other places that would have vaporized the majority of North Vietnam. I'm absolutly glad we did not. But if Victory was the actual goal, i believe mass destruction to major Northern cities would have achieved Victory. But thats not what Vietnam was about. It was about "hearts and minds" and a lot of other stuff that tied the militaries hands behind thier back, and made it impossible to win.

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Spencer-Johnson's fear was escalating the war to a point where China or the USSR would feel the need to get involved. I think that may have been one of the reasons Johnson did not go down the nuclear path.

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Rate... **Re: Politics**by [Spencer Smith](#) - Monday, 8 November 2010, 11:21 AM

I was speaking in terms as to what could have been done to win the Vietnam War. I know that mass destruction may have inticed other countries to get involved. And im happy they didn't drop nukes on the North. I was simply saying that after tet, the only way we could have won is through major bombing to big cities in the North. We couldn't win the war on the ground. We would have had to increase our destruction with bombs, and in a very aggressive way.

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I agree with you to a certain extent, I don't think just bombing North Vietnam would have won the war for the U.S. In order to win I think that we would have had to cut off the Ho Chi Minh trail and stop all of the supplies coming from the North from going in to the South and into the Vietcong's hands. In my opinion until the Ho Chi Minh trail was cut off there would have been no way for the U.S to win the war.

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That is a very valid point, bombing north vietnam would of gave us a lead in wining the war, but by cuting of the Ho Chi Minh trail would of gave us the advantage for sure.

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I definitely agree with you White, you have a good point and bombing definitely would have given us a lead but it would not finish it all.

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That is correct. we could not win the war on the ground. we really bit off more then we could chew.

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)Rate... **Re: After Tet**by [Jaymie Skeslien](#) - Monday, 8 November 2010, 02:07 PM

The Tet offensive tried to influence the untited states, and the tet had a difficult impact from the battles.they were the lagest communist of the offensive.

[Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)Rate... **Re: A Vietnamese New Year**by [Brock Berg](#) - Monday, 8 November 2010, 03:51 PM

Previous to the Tet of 1968, it had been a tradition to declare a truce for a few days during Tet, the Vietnamese New Year, to allow people on both sides to celebrate this very important holiday with their families. During Tet of 1968, which came at the end of January, the Communists announced a truce only to launch a stunning offensive, attacking almost every major city in South Vietnam. One Communist unit got inside the walls of the US Embassy in Saigon and remained for several hours before being killed. US forces had made some preparations for the possibility of an attack, but not enough. Most ARVN units were caught totally by surprise.

The Communist forces appear to have been trying to win the war at a single blow. They hoped that the ARVN would weaken under the panic and confusion, and that the civilian population would join in a mass uprising against the government. Neither happened, although the ARVN may have come rather close to a collapse.

The result of the Communists' failure to achieve their objectives was that they lost a large part of their forces. Tens of thousands of the best NLF guerrillas had gone into the cities. When the population did not rise up to support them, and the ARVN did not collapse, a large proportion of these men were killed. This weakened the NLF organization in the countryside very drastically, and it never completely recovered. The Communist apparatus in the South became much more dependent on North Vietnamese support than it had been up to this point.

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Re: Politics

by [David Verner](#) - Monday, 8 November 2010, 03:57 PM

The Tet Offensive is really the moment when the political side of this war began to unravel for the United States, and their optimistic deceit of the American people also began to be uncovered. There's simply only so much the government can pad up and make sound better before the people will find out, and the upscale in fighting and subsequent casualties was always gonna prove to have a negative effect on the Johnson administration - not to mention the 'credibility gap' which finally grew too big to cover after the offensive.

The huge casualty increase had a huge influence on the administrations set-up as well, i feel. This is where the government was finally made accountable and told they have to change the way they do things. McNamara resigned, his mind already being turned against the war - this a key point, for me. For a man who was so involved in the escalation of the war, to change his mind and end up resigning shows me how much this war was mishandled, and how much these men began to regret what was happening. I think the mind changing of heavily involved men such as McNamara showed just how much this situation was damaged at a political level. Couple that with Clark Clifford coming on board, someone who at first was against de-escalation, even conceded that the war was at a point where de-escalation was the only viable option.

The whole debacle also signaled the end of Johnson in office, sadly for him. His lack of comment during the offensive led people to see him as indecisive, and unfortunately led to his approval ranking dropping. Coupled with the advice allround from his advisors that the war needed to be de-escalated, Johnsons feeling of prestige it seemed was hurt. He had failed, in his mind - his mission to finish the job in Vietnam had failed. As much as i feel the approval rankings hurt him, i feel his decision to not run again was a lot of it based on pride.

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Politics after the Tet Offensive

by [Tracy Allen](#) - Tuesday, 9 November 2010, 11:07 PM

After Tet, the destruction in the South caused more problems for the still unstable government. There was an influx of even more refugees (100,000) and there was nowhere for them to go. In the United States Washington was stuck in a "state of confusion and uncertainty" (233) No one knew what was going on. The media stated one thing while Westmoreland assured his superiors of victory. After the NLF was pushed back, more troops were called for. Westmoreland wanted to go on the offensive and take down the weakened V.C. Johnson had two basic choices: one) Stay the course and drag out the war for an undetermined amount of time and possibly lose or two) Go for wide escalation of the war, which would put a heavy monetary demand on people during an election year. These were the options presented by General Wheeler. Not knowing what to do Johnson turned to Clark Clifford and asked for his input. Clifford reevaluated Vietnam policy in its entirety and proposed a middle ground approach. So the Johnson administration returned to the type of policy they had in 1965. Ky and Thieu were put under pressure to take more responsibility for the fighting and to get their governmental house in order. If these things were not accomplished satisfactorily then U.S. aid would be cut.

Rusk proposed a drastic cut in bombing. It was a way to show the North Vietnamese that the U.S was ready to go to

the negotiating table, because some believed that Tet was actually a way for the Vietcong to establish favorable conditions for negotiations. Even if the peace talks did not work, the fact that the administration was trying something would have eased the pressure from domestic critics. The North Vietnamese on the other hand were working on a new phase in the war. It was called "fighting while negotiating" (254). They were trying to increase antiwar pressures in the U.S. and further divide South Vietnam from the United States.

In the end, even after his March 31 speech offering negotiations and that bombing would be limited to the area above the demilitarized zone, Johnson did not alter his policy in any fundamental way or abandon his goals. The U.S ended up increasing air strikes again. I would like to have believed that Johnson had been sincere in his speech, he sounded sincere and a little sad in the video shown by the PBS video, but it seems as if the March speech was just a ploy to keep his policies active until after the election. He left the next person (Nixon) in the office an even bigger mess than the one he had inherited from Kennedy.

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Re: Politics after the Tet Offensive

by [Sheila Daughtry](#) - Friday, 12 November 2010, 04:12 PM

No kidding! Johnson really left a mess behind. I could see where he might be worn out, starting from the way he entered the White House as president (after Kennedy's assassination), and dealing with the war in Vietnam, the uprising in the United States about the war, the economy, civil rights, and all the other things that go along with leading a nation. It was time for him to go.

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Re: Politics

by [Tracy Allen](#) - Tuesday, 9 November 2010, 11:06 PM

Yes, his rating dropped to 26%, an all time low (243). Ouch

The New Hampshire primary election hurt his pride too. Eugene McCarthy was an outspoken dove, that had to rankle Johnsons feathers but the fact that he had a great showing in the primary made it a political challenge. Johnson lost that challenge. McCarthy won 42% of the vote and everyone saw it as a defeat for the President. Therefore, there is evidence for his decision not to run based on pride.

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Re: Politics

by [David Verner](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 09:23 PM

Especially after his rating had been at such highs a few years earlier. I mean when reading and watching all this unfold, i tried thinking about how i would feel in that situation. Thinking about how at one stage i was so loved by the people, but such had been my failures and deception the public had completely turned its back. Being that i have a decent sense of pride in myself and my opinions and actions as well, i felt that had it been me - i would have probably not run again either. It would have been such a demoralizing chain of events that i doubt i could have stepped up my enthusiasm.

The point on McCarthy is indeed a good one as well. When someone who's views contradict your own gets such a positive result in the votes, it would serve as even bigger hint at how much popular opinion had gone against Johnson. Unfortunately for LBJ, he had bitten off more than he could chew and though he tried for a while, eventually bits started to spray back out. There was no reeling it back in.

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**Re: Politics**by [Jairus Godeka](#) - Saturday, 13 November 2010, 12:35 PM

WE are told that indexes of public opinion showed that support for the war between Nov. 1967 and March 1968 was hovering around 45%, however, 78% of Americans were certain that the United States was not making any progress in Vietnam. It was the first television war, and it was possible, over a long period of time, that nightly exposure to violence did contribute to public-war weariness. (Herring pp 243-244).

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**Society**by [David Verner](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 09:16 PM

Society after Tet was forever changed as far as what happened, and its ramifications back on the home front. What Tet did was finally make the war too big for the American government to pad up with figures and make it sound better than it was. Casualties came quick and fast once the offensive began, and the people back home started to realize this war really was not going the way that the government had been saying it was going.

The major reason for the growth in unrest back on American soil in reaction to Tet was the media's heavy coverage. The Vietnam war was widely regarded as the first war that really had a heavy media influence, and is indeed regarded as the first 'Media War' - the media were basically given a VIP pass to this war, thus allowing them to go wherever they wanted.

With Tet, the government found themselves undone by those who were flying into the field of battle with their soldiers. The media, despite the government's attempts to discredit their stories, gave the public the real story of what was happening, and contradicted the government's optimistic picture of the war.

This gave the people back home the absolute justification for the antiwar actions. The media were beaming right into the living rooms of every American the true war, not the fluff war that the government was shoving down their throats. Not only did it make the people go against the war, it also made them lose a lot of trust in the government. How were they to trust whatever the government was saying when for years they had been contradicting what was really happening in Vietnam? Society was going through a plethora of changes and upheaval in the whole makeup of society itself (race, gender roles, etc) and thus people were almost 'waking up' from the society that had been the norm up until that point. The fact that they then learned that the government was deceiving them in what was happening in Vietnam was right at the time when people were questioning everything in society, and thus the government then started to cop the full brunt of society's discontent towards their actions. The Tet offensive played a major role in the swing of support and popular opinion from for to against the Vietnam War.

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**Re: Society**by [Sheila Daughtry](#) - Friday, 12 November 2010, 04:28 PM

David-I think the media presented information that may not have told the entire story. It appeared on television that the North Vietnamese and the NLF entered the US Embassy compound, that was untrue they never penetrated the compound. When the terrible photo and video showed the execution of a Vietcong by a Saigon police chief (Herring 224), the media failed to mention the Saigon police chief had witnessed the Vietcong man shoot one of his best soldiers. The media only showed the side they wanted us to see and as you said "swung support and popular opinion from "for" to "against" the Vietnam war."

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**Re: Society**by [Spencer Smith](#) - Friday, 12 November 2010, 05:59 PM

Its amazing how much influence the media has.

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**Re: Society**by [David Verner](#) - Friday, 12 November 2010, 09:45 PM

Of course, being an avid follower of English football i know all too well about how the media can serve its own agendas. However, in hindsight i still look back and feel the media played a good part in representing a more realistic view of the war, certainly more so than what the government was doing anyways.

The point about the execution is a good one, though.

Fact for me is still that this was an illegal war in the sense of not being what the government had told the people it was, and how it was going. The media showed a more clearer view of it - still clouded, maybe, but a lot closer to the truth compared to what the government was saying.

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**Re: Society after Media**by [Brock Berg](#) - Monday, 8 November 2010, 03:58 PM

The Tet Offensive made the brutality of the war very visible to Americans. The US Air Force had been bombing South Vietnamese villages for years; during Tet the Air Force was bombing South Vietnamese cities. The ARVN had been killing prisoners for years; during Tet the American television viewing public actually got to watch a prisoner, with his hands bound behind his back, being shot through the head by a South Vietnamese general. The Communists also committed atrocities, of course; the Communists appear to have killed several thousand civilians in the city of Hue during the period they held parts of that city. That, however, did not happen within sight of American television cameras.

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**Re: Society after Media**by [David Gallegos](#) - Tuesday, 9 November 2010, 07:55 PM

The sad part is when you talk to vets today and ask them what they thought when executions would occur they will say it's just part of war. Seeing civilian bodies on the side of the streets, oh that is just part of war. I understand that collateral damage is a given in a war time environment but we Americans should know better. We should have had our men better under control. It wasn't an American who was videotaped shooting a captured man with his arms bound behind his back, but that was our ally. The tragic part is that there was nothing done about those murders. Even today in the present war the saying is still used "it's just war".

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**Re: Society after Media**by [Tracy Allen](#) - Tuesday, 9 November 2010, 11:14 PM

It is sad that they have to think like that. I think its a coping mechansim. Many of them, no matter what the AIM series says, have issues with the things that happened. I have a friend who has served and who is currently serving in Iraq. They were checking a house. My friend came face to face with a "terrorist". He shot first and no one in his company died. It turned out that the terrorist was a 12 year old boy but he had been aiming to kill as well. The image of that boy haunts my friend but he has to live with it. If he has to tell me and himself that "it's just war" then I am going to accept that. I am not saying either of the wars were right or justified. I am not saying that killing children is justified in war. All I am saying is that war is a complicated piece of work. Bad stuff happens and hopefully we can learn from it.

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**Re: Society after Media**by [Jolene Powell](#) - Saturday, 13 November 2010, 07:53 AM

Tracy- I agree, I am a mother with 2 children and cannot fathom hurting a child, however in those cirrumstances, what do you do? The videos show cute, sweet, innocent looking kids, that would slice you throat in a second. Imagine how the soldiers felt emotionally having to watch out for anything big enough to

hold a weapon. Killing children is not justified your so right and it is so complicated. In some other countries though they do not value life as we do so they are trained from early on how to fight, kill and destroy, that is what is so scary. but it is war how do you come out with perfectly clean hands?

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Re: Society after Media

by [Tracy Allen](#) - Saturday, 13 November 2010, 06:20 PM

Exactly, I don't think that you can come back clean.

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Re: Society after Media

by [Sheila Daughtry](#) - Friday, 12 November 2010, 04:36 PM

David-your post stirred many emotions for me. For one, I'm stuck with the images of the little kids in the videos. Their faces looked so frightened when the American soldiers entered their village, evacuated the people, and set the huts on fire. I understand the soldiers were following orders and trying to free the people of South Vietnam, but I still found it difficult to watch.

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Re: Society after Media

by [Justin White](#) - Saturday, 13 November 2010, 09:03 PM

It is unfortunate that there were atrocities committed by an ally of the U.S, such as the shooting of the Vietcong soldier, because it was an ally of ours who committed this crime, the American public saw it as something the U.S should not have let happen. In my opinion there would not have been much anyone could have done to stop the murder, especially because of the caos and mayham that was happening at that time.

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Re: Will to Win

by [Brock Berg](#) - Monday, 8 November 2010, 04:02 PM

The Tet Offensive made the US news media, and the US public, much less enthusiastic about the war than they had been previously. General Westmoreland did not get the 200,000 additional troops he had requested, and in less than two years the US began withdrawing substantial numbers of troops. Negotiations began between the US and the Communists, and for most of the time the negotiations were going on, the US imposed limits on its bombing of North Vietnam. One might reasonably say that in the long run the Tet Offensive was a victory for the Communists, because of the way it reduced the American will to fight

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Re: After Tet

by [Justin Powell](#) - Tuesday, 9 November 2010, 10:10 AM

The Tet Offensive was a turning turning point in the war, the US believed it to be a victory for the simple fact that 37,000 NLF soldiers where killed compared to 2,500 of our american soldiers. But in reality, it just proved that the NLF had unlimited suppleie's of soldiers willing to fight for the overthrow of the south vietnamese government. This brought out the concern in Americans if we even had a chance for victory. Then on top of that, the media and there exaggerated reports on the offensive influenced the opinions of the Americans even more.

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**Re: After Tet**by [Justin White](#) - Tuesday, 9 November 2010, 12:54 PM

The Tet Offensive affected American politics in that it turned a lot of politicians that were neutral or for the war against it. As soon as there was the question of sending 200,000 more U.S reinforcements into Vietnam it made many politicians question whether America needed to reassess the way we were fighting the war. After Tet many politicians openly criticized the war which intern had huge impact on the people of America's opinions on the war.

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**Re: After Tet**by [Kyle Hutton](#) - Tuesday, 9 November 2010, 03:16 PM

I think another way it had affected politics, is that it exposed a lot of the politicians as liars, and showed that they hadn't been completely honest with the American public. Months before Tet politicians/military commanders had claimed that American and South Vietnamese forces were gaining the upper hand, the the enemy was faltering, and the war was coming near an end. Then Tet happened, and it showed the truth about the war. The Vietcong were not faltering, in fact the opposite. This in turn led to changes on society's views.

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**Re: After Tet**by [Kyle Hutton](#) - Tuesday, 9 November 2010, 03:30 PM

I believe Tet affected society by that it really opened the eyes of the American public as to some of the stuff that was really happening in the war. As to this point, most of society only new what they were being told. This showed what they were being told necessarily wasn't true, and helped to open them up to the real truths. It showed them that the war was indeed not going as smoothly as they had thought. It also opened them up to the brutality of the war, (Street corner execution of Viet Cong prisoner by Saigon Vietnamese Police Chief comes to mind,(Appy 287)). I believe this event along changed a lot of society's public views towards the war.

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**Re: After Tet**by [Spencer Smith](#) - Thursday, 11 November 2010, 06:07 PM

It opened them up to the side of the war the media wanted to portray.

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**Re: After Tet**by [David Gallegos](#) - Tuesday, 9 November 2010, 07:24 PM

The American people had a rude awakening when they would watch their TVs at night. The things the public saw would shift the remaining time of the war. Once the public started to see the casualty rates gaining by the day and the actual video footage of what was happening on the battle field two things happened. Either the American people kept living their lives, maybe having opinions but really not saying anything. Or they let the government know that it was time to bring or boys home from a war that was looking to be non victorious. For those people who believed that being in Vietnam was the wrong thing to do. They let it known by protesting and speaking out against the war. As time went on our home front was split and the government lost support for the foreign relations policy.

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**Re: After Tet**by [Jaymie Skeslien](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 02:27 PM

I bet they were terrified when they turned those tvs on. i know i would have been.just imagine all the thoughts going through their heads and all the emotions.

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Re: After Tet

by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 07:55 PM

Its kinda like what's going on in our heads with the war that is happening right now? we hear on the news people getting killed or a bomb exploding and killing 7 of our troops and what not, that effects peoples life everyday. I feel like since we have had this media for a while now, people do not react as bad as they did 40, 50 years ago when it was the first war televised, it no is just kind of forgotten that we are in a war right now, I can even admit I am one of those people that hear those bombings on the news and stuff, and think its sad, but at the same time its just kind of normal to me and other now that we have been in Iraq for the past few years. But when I am reading and watching these videos on Vietnam all I can picture in my head is the movie *Forrest Gump*, and how many protesters there were, and people watching the TV and seeing this war happen in their own barber shops and diners. Its crazy!!

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Re: After Tet

by [Spencer Smith](#) - Thursday, 11 November 2010, 06:17 PM

The death toll in Iraq isn't even close to Vietnam. The two wars are completely different. Theres been months that have gone by in Iraq without a KIA, plus there was no draft, thats why people aren't as interested.

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Re: After Tet

by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Saturday, 13 November 2010, 03:24 PM

You have a good point Spencer. what is a KIA? Is that killed in action? lol

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Societal Influence and Media

by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Tuesday, 9 November 2010, 09:49 PM

The biggest part of the social affect in Tet was the fact that Vietnam was the first televised war, people in America was seeing the war take place through the news on their television. The media was broadcasting the war, and the negatives were the focus and the most remembered with America at the time. The media was showing "awful, endlessness of the war. . . and unethical quality that was not recognized." (PBS Series) It showed things such as General Long capturing and killing a viet cong member. It was showing the brutalities of the war more towards the negative side, and the society was riled up about this. There were bad contradictions throughout this time as well.

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Re: Societal Influence and Media

by [Tracy Allen](#) - Tuesday, 9 November 2010, 10:33 PM

Yeah that wasn't fake blood coming out of his head. I bet that really got peoples attention.

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**Re: Societal Influence and Media**by [Jolene Powell](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 11:03 AM

The horror the news and the media produced through this was horrific. It only produced the realization of the truth going on in Vietnam, which the U.S down played for so many years.

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**Re: Societal Influence and Media**by [Jaymie Skeslien](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 02:24 PM

yes it was horrific the media did show all the real things happening there and all the truths going on there.good job.

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**Re: Societal Influence and Media**by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 07:46 PM

I feel like the media definitely was bias tho, and still are. America feeds off of the negative and that seems to be what the media gives the public.

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**Re: Societal Influence and Media**by [Jolene Powell](#) - Thursday, 11 November 2010, 10:28 AM

I do agree to that most of the time, however what good or positive could they show regarding this? I believe the american public needed to know what was going on, they were surrendering there loved ones without the truth.

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**Re: Societal Influence and Media**by [Tracy Allen](#) - Friday, 12 November 2010, 09:52 PM

Well no one is really interested in watching news stories about happy things. The fluff pieces I believe they call it. The fluff pieces only work if there is something bad before it.

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**Re: Societal Influence and Media**by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Saturday, 13 November 2010, 03:25 PM

thats so Tracy, people are out of instinct drawn to sad stories.

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**Re: Societal Influence and Media**by [Justin Powell](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 05:45 PM

War is not a prety thing, a lot of people cant even handle seeing a bird die let alone what was put out in the media, so of coarse the US will down play the war otherwise everyone with a weak gut will put in there opinion and trying to change everything. In war you have to do what you have to do to not just win but to servive and it is not prety.

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**Re: Societal Influence and Media**by [Kelley Allender](#) - Friday, 12 November 2010, 04:17 PM

I agree that the media had a huge influence over America's view of the war and their depiction was skewed, emphasizing the negatives going on in Vietnam. However, I also think that Johnson and his administration painted an equally skewed picture of the war, however their depiction was overly optimistic. America wouldn't have had such a shocked and dramatic reaction to the Tet Offensive if they had a more realistic idea of how balanced the war really was. Johnson tried to make it seem like the U.S. was winning hands down and so naturally people were shocked to hear that the U.S. Embassy was under attack in Saigon. They were even more shocked by the images and video that followed in the media, because they had, had a very different idea of what was happening in Vietnam.

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**Re: Societal Influence and Media**by [Sheila Daughtry](#) - Friday, 12 November 2010, 04:45 PM

Kelley-I totally agree with you. I think both sides did a great job on presenting their narrow points of view.

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**Polotics, peace or war?**by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Tuesday, 9 November 2010, 10:04 PM

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When the politics really started to come in the picture was around Tet, the truths were starting to come out a little more about the war and how we weren't doing too great, people were starting to not believe what they always heard from the government and President Johnson's standing wasn't looking so good, Clifford was coming in with the anti war Idea and Eugene McCarthy for the "vote for peace" campaign was looking a lot better than sending 206,000 more troops over like Johnson was reluctantly having to do. The fact that the actual number of casualties were being put out there were just making the politics worse, Clifford thought the ideas needed to need much changing about the Tet, and not so many people need to be sent out and what not. The need for peace is what people want. Clifford wanted peace; Johnson had to do what he had to do. Later on the president made the decision to not exceed a certain amount of troops and to not send the 206,000 troops.

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**Re: Polotics, peace or war?**by [Jaymie Skeslien](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 02:22 PM

i agree johnson really didnt have a really good reputation from the peoples side of view or even through the presses eyes.people didnt think he would pull through and it.

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**Effects of Tet on society**by [Tracy Allen](#) - Tuesday, 9 November 2010, 10:32 PM

This was the first televised war. It was kind of like the first reality show. At least that is how I believe many people at home must have felt. Up until the Tet offensive, the media had remained neutral on the issue and supportive of the government. Afterwards the media raised questions about why we were there in the first place. In addition, after watching the public execution of a Vietnamese man by a General of the South Vietnamese army and the attack on the U.S. embassy in their own homes many Americans became more disillusioned with the war in Vietnam. Their support of the war did not waver (45% of Americans supported the war (Herring 242)) but protesting became more fervent and

sometimes even violent. People may still have believed in the war but not many believed that Johnson could handle the situation.

While the Tet offensive was still going on the media broadcast that the enemy had won, and no one really corrected then afterwards. The Johnson administration was not sure what was going on so they did not make a statement. Westmoreland had pressured the President to send in 206,000 troops and go on the offensive. The media got a hold of that information and it fueled the fire for even more dissension. More and more people were beginning to wonder if "destroying the village to save it" was right. That statement of a U.S. soldier became the epitome of purposeless destruction and a statement that violence triumphed over law (233).

Also tv made a mockery of Johnson and Westmorelands optimistic year end report which widened the credibility gap. It is no wonder college students drew graffiti calling him a murderer and a war criminal.

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Re: Effects of Tet on society

by [Jolene Powell](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 11:12 AM

I do not know how many people actually "supported the War" or supported their "country". I believe there is a difference. I can not believe the hatred through the years about the Vietnam War that people feel against the war and their country, however many people do not understand that war, why we were there, what we were fighting for, but yet they know they are mad or disgruntled, and everyone has an opinion, but not alot of information to support it,(I am referring to the general US public that I have encountered through the years). However you can ask anyone about what and why we are fighting in Afghanistan or Desert storm and they have knowledge, they get why we were there, whether they agree or disagree, the answers are more clear. I think Americans are proud and are willing to support there country, not the war.

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Re: Effects of Tet on society

by [Jaymie Skeslien](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 02:16 PM

I think they were very poud as well and to support their country is so amazing to me cause its hard sometimes to find people that would do such a thing like USA soldiers do that takes heart to do all this.

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Re: Effects of Tet on society

by [Jolene Powell](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 04:06 PM

Absolutely, I am one of those people who is proud to be an American, this is my home and I too would support my country and any soldier who stands up to defend my rights, right, wrong or indifferent. They all deserve support and my hat is off to them as well. It takes great heart and courage.

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Re: Effects of Tet on society

by [Justin Powell](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 05:36 PM

I agree with both of u 100%, us americans fight for our country for the love of our loved ones to be free and have the life they have always wanted. In my opinion one of the reasons we had such a hard time in this war was because the vietnamese put there country before there loved ones wich made them even more brutal in every way. There own life was second to there country.

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Re: Effects of Tet on society

by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 07:38 PM

That is a good point Justin, They did put their country above the people for the most part as it seemed, but then again we could even look at the U.S as putting the country above the loved ones because we were sending thousands and thousands of our men over to fight a war that wasn't even ours in the first place.

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Re: Effects of Tet on society

by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 07:41 PM

I found it sad that the soldiers when coming home the second they got off a plane they had to watch their backs and had to be escorted or be watching out for the protesters because they were mad at the soldiers for some odd reason even though they were fighting for the country and doing what they were told to do.

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Re: Effects of Tet on society

by [Jolene Powell](#) - Thursday, 11 November 2010, 10:30 AM

I could not agree more, it was sad and as far as I am concerned those people that taunted our soldiers should have been sent over there for a day, I bet they would have had a whole new attitude! Give them a gun and tell them to figure it out, see how they feel.

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Re: Effects of Tet on society

by [Tracy Allen](#) - Saturday, 13 November 2010, 06:25 PM

Exactly! A soldiers a soldier and they should not be treated the way they were after Vietnam. Looking at the sketches down by Mike McGrath, the last one was very touching. The joy and happiness in that reunion was perfectly evident. It is interesting how each side treated their soldiers as the war went on. The North Vietnamese were revolutionary heroes and our boys well sometimes things didn't go well for them.

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Re: Effects of Tet on society

by [Tracy Allen](#) - Friday, 12 November 2010, 10:02 PM

You can support your country and not support the war at the same time. Sometimes people blurred the line between the these two things during the Vietnam war. For example I could be against the war in Iraq but support my little brother fighting in it.

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Re: Effects of Tet on society

by [Jolene Powell](#) - Saturday, 13 November 2010, 07:59 AM

I agree to that- But I am sure when your brother came home, you would welcome him with open arms? not turn your back on him, or watch everyone else ridicule him? after all it would be him that was fighting for all of us? It would not be his fault the war was waging, that lies within the congress and presidency. The Americans took out there opposition to the war on the wrong people.

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Re: Effects of Tet on society

by [Kelley Allender](#) - Saturday, 13 November 2010, 04:18 PM

I agree with this statement 100%. I also disagreed with our reasons for going to war in Iraq but at the same time I support the soldiers who fought in it. It broke my heart to hear/ read about the Vietnam veterans talking about coming back to America and having people throw food at their buses and act out against the soldiers. Some of them were drafted and had no choice but to go, others chose to go with their own free will but still did so to defend and fight for the good of our country. Soldiers aren't the ones making the political decisions.

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Re: Effects of Tet on society

by [Jaymie Skeslien](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 02:19 PM

I to belive that many people probly thought that johnson could not pull it off and do it.good job

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Re: After Tet

by [Jolene Powell](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 11:01 AM

The cost in North Vietnamese casualties were tremendous but the situation produced a pivotal media disaster for the White House and the presidency of Lyndon Johnson. Giap's strategy toppled the president. It did turn the tide of the war and sealed General Giap's fame as the dominant military genius of the second half of the 20th century.

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Re: After Tet

by [Jaymie Skeslien](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 02:12 PM

yes this is true and also the americans stood up for their country as well and supported what needed to be done.

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Re: After Tet (American Politics)

by [Benjamin Trautman](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 02:39 PM

The Tet Offensive campaign resulted in large numbers of casualties for both sides. Though the campaign was seen as a small victory against communism by the Johnson's administration, it was seen as a failure by the American public. Due to the heavy fighting that the Tet Offensive demanded Johnson requested another 42,000 Americans to be drafted and deployed. This new draft resulted in a resignation from Robert McNamara because of his prior opposition toward the war. Johnson was in need of a new Secretary of Defense and replaced Robert McNamara with Clark Clifford. Clark Clifford stood by the ideals of McNamara, within the first month of his time at the pentagon he already began talking about peace treaties. I feel as if the Tet Offensive had a positive impact on U.S. politics because it brought in Clifford, a figure many of the American public agreed with. He wanted no further troop levels to be increased in Vietnam, supported the bomb halt, and gradually disengaged the Vietnam conflict.

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Re: After Tet(Society in Vietnam)

by [Benjamin Trautman](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 02:58 PM

War brings destruction to any country in it's path. The Tet Offensive specifically asked that the battle be fought at civilian and military control centers. Most of these control centers were located in large cities. This resulted in a Vietnam society being destroyed, monumental buildings wrecked, innocent civilians lined up and executed (Massacre at Hue). The dictionary defines a society as, "an organized group of persons associated together." Together is the key word in this definition, once the Tet Offensive hit these targeted cities "together" became no more and people took sides. A society destroyed by not just the tactics of the Tet Offensive, but a society destroyed by war.

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**Re: After Tet(Society in Vietnam)**by [Sheila Daughtry](#) - Saturday, 13 November 2010, 08:48 AM

Benjamin-good post. I agree with your comment about "War brings destruction to any country in its path." I would hope as our civilization evolves we would be able to find more constructive ways of resolving our differences. I volunteer at a homeless shelter, and some of the volunteers have an attitude of us versus them. I sometimes fall into that rut myself. My point being, we need to take time to empathize, walk in their shoes, pass no judgment, and find our place where we can be helpful and not harmful.

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**Re: After Tet - Social Influences**by [Kelley Allender](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 03:20 PM

The North Vietnamese and NFL had hoped the Tet Offensive would bring about negotiations of American withdrawal from South Vietnam, force the acceptance of a coalition government controlled by the NFL in South Vietnam, and at the very least would weaken Saigon's regime and stop bombing for the duration of negotiations. The Tet Offensive was a failure in a tactical sense however it was a huge victory psychologically and politically. The Tet Offensive had huge social impacts both during the offensive and in its aftermath. Not only were these impacts felt greatly in South Vietnam where the assaults were taking place but also in the U.S.

The Tet Offensive left many of South Vietnam's cities in a state of complete destruction, and is also estimated to have created as many as one million new refugees. While the offensive claimed lives on all sides, it also greatly victimized Vietnamese civilians, as it is estimated that 12,500 were killed during the attacks, in addition to the million that were forced into displacement and homelessness.

When news broke of the U.S. embassy being attacked in Saigon it sent shock waves throughout America. This was partially due to the fact that early reports were exaggerated and overstated the success of the attack, but primarily because up to this point the general consensus of American belief was that U.S. was winning the war. The graphic and bloody images of the battle in Saigon hardly seemed consistent with the optimistic depictions that had been reported by Johnson and Westmoreland. The battles of Tet, "seemed to epitomize the purposeless destruction of the war" (Herring, 233), as well as provoke the public to ask basic questions that had long been lurking about the war and its merits. Some feared that the Tet Offensive was merely the first phase in a much larger plan of Communist takeover, and begged at the option of American withdrawal. The Tet Offensive forced the American public and politicians to reassess the war and for the first time, many were turning against it; including those who had previously been in full support of the war, like Clark Clifford. Americans were questioning when the war would finally be over and how many more troops would have to be deployed to ensure victory in Vietnam. As it became more and more clear that these questions couldn't be answered, the dissatisfaction of Americans and their opposition of the war grew. Even of those whom still supported the war, many disapproved of Johnson's conduct of it. The reality that victory was nowhere in sight and the war was at a stalemate began to sink in. By March of 1967, 78% of Americans were certain that the U.S. was not making any progress in Vietnam (Herring, 243).

Media coverage of the Tet Offensive may be partially to blame for the swing in American support of the war, considering it was more candid and graphic than anything that Americans had been exposed to up to that point. Some like Westmoreland, criticized the media for providing the public with skewed accounts of the attacks in South Vietnam. However Johnson and his administration also shared in the blame and responsibility; if they hadn't mislead Americans into believing that the U.S. was winning the war hands-down, then incidents such as the attack against the embassy in Saigon wouldn't have come as such a shock. The biggest social impacts of the Tet Offensive in the U.S. were; the rise in American opposition of the war, which simultaneously led to a decline in the support of LBJ, and ultimately Johnson's decision not to run for re-election. The social impacts of the Tet Offensive in South Vietnam primarily consisted of the thousands of civilians killed, the suffering and loss felt by their families, the mass destruction of several cities, and the estimated million people that became refugees as a result.

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**military policy**by [Justin White](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 04:21 PM

The military and diplomatic course of the war was greatly affected by the Tet Offensive. Tet was considered a victory in Westmoreland's eyes. Immediately following Tet Westmoreland advised Saigon that "the United States is not prepared to accept defeat in Vietnam." (233 Herring) When Westmoreland indicated to Johnson that he would appreciate any help he could get, Johnson immediately ordered an additional 10,500 men to Vietnam. Overall the Tet Offensive put our military and President in a position where a decision had to be made, either increase involvement in the war or start the de-escalation of it.

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Re: military policy

by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 07:34 PM

After I read some other posts brought up, and even though i as well put that the war was a victory due to casualties, Spencer I think it was brought up a good point, not sure tho, but it was brought up on how if we kept track of body counts and what not, the war would have looked much different, and we cannot just look at how many people were killed as a victory. I am still believing that we could have called it a victory, but we lost people too...

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Re: military policy

by [Tracy Allen](#) - Friday, 12 November 2010, 10:11 PM

Well the "body count" doesn't really count as anything because all of the numbers were greatly inflated. It wasn't a good way to determine victory.

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Re: military policy

by [David Verner](#) - Friday, 12 November 2010, 10:46 PM

Especially when you take into consideration the point made in the book (which, for the life of me i cannot find right now) about how they were basically counting anyone who looked Vietnamese as part of their count. So any civilian found dead as part of the count was used, and thus showed how fatally flawed this stupid form of justification was. I actually scoffed when i read it, i just couldn't believe it.

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Re: military policy

by [Justin Powell](#) - Saturday, 13 November 2010, 09:06 PM

Body count may be the way some people look at winning the war, But is that really what deterrmans who won or who lost? I think it is more on who got what they went there for in the first place, if it's to take over land or to help a weaker side win for what ever reason. I guess thats just my opinion.

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Re: After Tet - Effects on Politics

by [Kelley Allender](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 05:36 PM

The Tet Offensive and its aftermath had many unforeseeable effects on American and Vietnamese politics. Originally, the North Vietnamese and NFL's political goals were to negotiate American withdrawal from South Vietnam and create a coalition government in the south that would be controlled by the NFL. While they may have failed to achieve these things and suffered a defeat technically, they attained a huge political victory over the U.S. at the same time. Evidence of this political victory can most easily be seen in the fact that the Tet Offensive "convinced most Americans that the war could not be won in an acceptable time and at an acceptable cost" (Herring, 268). It also led Johnson to make decisions that would initiate an irreversible process of de-escalation, which inevitably worked in North Vietnam's favor.

The Tet Offensive forced all of America, including everyone from LBJ and his administration to the millions of citizens that

elected them, to reassess the ongoing war in Vietnam. For many this time of turmoil and confusion served as a wake-up call and turning point in their support of the war, or at the very least their support of the President. The attack against the U.S. embassy in Saigon shocked many Americans and damaged the credibility of Johnson and Westmoreland, whom had both optimistically and misleadingly reported that the U.S. was winning the war. The Tet Offensive's political damage is further demonstrated by this statement from Herring, saying that it, "left Washington in a state of 'troubled confusion and uncertainty' (Herring, 233). With American opposition of the war at an all-time high Johnson was forced to make the difficult decision of whether to escalate U.S. involvement in the war, or begin to withdraw it. LBJ had been clear in his opposition to the expansion of war but he was even more outspoken about his refusal to accept a defeat. Wheeler and Westmoreland used Johnson's stubbornness to their advantage when they requested Johnson's approval of an additional 206,000 soldiers, which would be a major step in escalating the war. Secretary of Defense, Clark Clifford, came up with an opposing recommendation, suggesting that only 22,000 troops be deployed and while LBJ didn't formally approve of this recommendation, he did agree with it.

The steadily increasing dissatisfaction of Americans with the war also prompted LBJ and his administration to move in a new direction. It wasn't just the public that expressed their discontent with the war, some political leaders, including members of Johnson's own administration began to openly oppose the war and renounce their support for the war and/or Johnson. This change in public opinion and support, seriously challenged Johnson's chances at re-election, which had previously been a sure thing. Presumably, the pressure of public opinion swayed LBJ's decision but ultimately he rejected Westmoreland's proposal in March of 1968, and only agreed to deploy 13,500 troops. Disagreement over what steps should be taken next heightened in Washington, even after Johnson sought council from an advisory group known as the "Wise Men". Clifford furthered his position of opposition to the war and his concern over the nation's financial position grew, until he eventually deserted Johnson all together.

In a speech given by LBJ on March 31st, Johnson announced the decision to limit bombing in North Vietnam, clearly stated that the U.S. was open and willing to engage in the discussion of peace at any time and place, and in a final announcement, shockingly declared his decision not to run for re-election. While Johnson made these decisions in attempt to help the U.S. move forward towards peace negotiations and the "restoration of national unity" (Herring, 251), his administration became more divided than ever, which caused the final few months of his term to be extremely exhausting and frustrating for everyone involved. Vietnam and the U.S. finally agreed to meet in Paris for long-awaited discussions of peace; however these negotiations became deadlocked almost immediately.

In South Vietnam the aftermath of Tet actually led to positive political advancements. The NFL's hold on the country was weaker than ever, and the Southern Vietnamese government took advantage of this enabling it to regain much of what it had lost in initial Tet attacks, plus expand its influence into new areas. Despite the government's evident improvement, it "remained uneven at best, its stability uncertain" (Herring, 259). Some argued that the government of South Vietnam was functioning more effectively than it had since the 1950's, which was considerable progress, but it was still far from being able to function or survive on its own.

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Re: After Tet - Diplomatic Results

by [Kelley Allender](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 06:04 PM

The Tet Offense indirectly initiated one positive result for both South Vietnam and the U.S., and that was the long-awaited discussion of peace. Even though these negotiations immediately became deadlocked, it was still the first step taken to end the war. Bombing was limited during the time of negotiations, and Vietnam took some initial steps towards de-escalation. Had the Tet Offense never occurred, it is impossible to guess at how much time would have passed before the two nations were able to come together in the initial stages of discussing peace. The U.S. had originally stated diplomacy as one of its reasons for intervening in Vietnam, and after many years of war and bloodshed, the Tet Offense ignited a chain of events that would bring the U.S.'s pursuit of domestic peace and diplomacy full circle. The offensive triggered a nation-wide reassessment of the war, which led many whom initially had supported the war to turn against it. The pressure of public opposition of the war, both in and out of the White House, pushed Johnson into making several decisions with the hopes of obtaining peace. Several major decisions were announced in a speech Johnson delivered on March 31st and included; limiting the bombing of North Vietnam, rejecting Westmoreland's proposal to deploy an additional 206,000 troops, declining to run for re-election, and most importantly on the diplomatic front; he clearly stated the U.S.'s interest and willingness to discuss peace, at any place and any time. Just over a month later, on May 13th, North Vietnamese and American leaders met in Paris for the opening of peace negotiations. There is an evident trail leading from the events of Tet Offense and it's aftermath to these initial talks of peace.

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Rate... **Effect of Tet on the society.**by [Jared Hall](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 06:04 PM

Seeing warfare has a great emotional impact on a majority of people. With the advancements in technology over the years, civilians have been able to see a clearer picture of what war is. Pushing the frontline into the cities, where the press could document the battles, increased the public's exposure to the war. When faced with these images, support for the war can only be kept if the public has a deep emotional investment in the reasons of the war. It was inevitable that the public would lose interest in the war after seeing the footage.

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The American public saw the war from the filtered version the media gave them.

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They also saw it from the even more filtered and narrow view prior to that through what the government told them.

I feel regardless of obvious media bias, they still did their job of providing a more truthful view of the war to the people at home. Media is always with a certain degree of bias, however with actual footage and quotes from people on the ground, it is still more truthful to me than a bunch of suits in Washington holding a dossier of statistics.

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I agree that seeing images from war will result in a huge emotional impact on the public but whether that leads to support or protest of the war, all depends on how the media tries to portray it. The media has a ton of power and they have the ability to sway a lot of people and change their opinion and support of the war.

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For the military, the Tet war was a victory comparing the amount of casualties on both sides. The fact that Westmoreland was open to have any help to help defeat and win the war, it turned into some major decision making time for the presidency and administration whether or not to send more troops over and keep fighting or too pull out.

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**Tet Diplomacy**by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 07:32 PM

Whole the attempt of peace making was going on, America was still full bound in the war until there was a definite decision, "The united states kept maximum pressure on enemy fores for South Vietnam, assisted South Vietnamese in a frantic drive to gain control of the country side," (Herring 252) While we were trying to make peace, we would not let up until there was direct talk of peace.

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**Re: Tet Diplomacy**by [Jairus Godeka](#) - Saturday, 13 November 2010, 12:20 PM

The whole process was a diplomatic failure. For one, it lacked the involvement of other world key players and was only limited to the Kremlin, the United States and France, non of which had direct talks about the conflict. The international opinion was not valued and diplomacy in my view completely failed.

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**Re: After Tet- Effect on politics**by [Jairus Godeka](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 08:06 PM

Those in politics who had been in favor of a continued conflict (hawks) started raising questions about the war and at times were on the same side as the doves....."Democrats and Republicans, hawks and doves, demanded an explanation and insisted that congress share in any decision to expand the war". Herring (Page 242). The tide had changed, as the president and those around him were brought into question about our overall policy in Vietnam." A week later, 139 members of the house of representatives sponsored a resolution calling for a full review of American policy in Vietnam".....Herring (page 242). Johnson's approval rating plummeted to an all time low of 26% during Tet.

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**Re: After Tet- Effect on politics**by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 08:19 PM

I like how you brought in the "doves and hawks" I see that analogy helping me put a picture with a name type of things, and i like what you have to say. I think this overall demand for an explanation made things escalate a little bit more.

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**Re: After Tet- Societal influences**by [Jairus Godeka](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 08:38 PM

The impact of public opinion on the decision making process in march of 1968 was a difficult one to measure. Some leaders including Westmoreland have charged that the media played a significant role in turning public opinion on what was otherwise, a victory for the United States....."Indexes of public opinion also revealed a sharp rise in disillusionment".(Herring PP 242-243). The Johnson administration was partially responsible for media and public disillusionment during Tet. The unduly optimistic pronouncements of 1967 made the shock of Tet greater than it might otherwise have been and widened an already large credibility gap. Evidence of growing popular discontent merely confirmed that it would be disastrous to escalate the war.

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**Re: After Tet- Societal influences**by [David Verner](#) - Friday, 12 November 2010, 10:50 PM

Exactly. I believe it was called a "Credibility gap" and once the gap gets to a certain point, the public simply can't ignore it anymore. The gap between what was being told to the public by the government, and then what they started seeing on the news coming from Tet was simply to big to ignore, and created a huge blow to the Johnson administration. Unfortunately, when deceit like that is discovered - there isn't a hell of a lot you can do to escape it.

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Rate... **Re: After Tet - Military Policy**by [Kelley Allender](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 08:46 PM

The Tet Offensive and its aftermath resulted in greater impacts on American politics and social influence than on military policy. This being said, North Vietnam and the NFL had changed their military strategy so naturally the U.S. had to change theirs in response. Johnson's initial response to the Tet Offensive was a strong-headed, persistence to hold the line in Khe Sanh, as he assured Westmoreland that he would deploy as many troops as needed to do this. An additional 10,500 troops were deployed immediately to Vietnam. American military leaders saw this as the perfect opportunity to force decisions to be made that had previously been deferred. Westmoreland was so confident that now was the time to capitalize on North Vietnam's weakness that he revived the proposals he had made in 1967, to expand the war. Clark Clifford also saw this as an opportunity, but instead of looking to escalate the war, he initiated a full reevaluation of Vietnam policy, asking questions about the war that had been avoided for years. Clifford recommended against Westmoreland's proposal, suggesting that it was only necessary to deploy 22,000 troops. Because Clifford's proposal was a much more conservative one, the Johnson administration approved it without debate. At this time, American forces seemed to have a pretty good handle on things in South Vietnam, compared to the chaos and confusion that followed in the immediate aftermath, so ultimately Johnson only authorized the deployment of 13,500 support troops. Johnson made a few other changes in result of the aftermath of the Tet Offensive; he recalled Westmoreland back from Vietnam to be chief of staff of the army, restricted the bombing in North Vietnam, shifted some military responsibility to the Vietnamese, withdrew from Presidency, and welcomed any peace discussions. These changes didn't indicate a change in policy, but rather a shift of tactics to defend a policy that had come under extensive attack. These new tactics were very vague, and somewhat contradictory, however the Johnson administration made it clear that although it had shifted their tactics, this was in no way a retreat from its original goals. The U.S. became further divided on issues of the war, and American forces continued to fight in South Vietnam even as negotiations for peace were initiated. Negotiations immediately reached a deadlock and remained deadlocked even after Johnson agreed to halt bombing all together in the hopes of moving negotiations forward. Tet had indirectly initiated the beginning of peace agreements, and also pushed Johnson from his fairly neutral position, forcing him to make some tough decisions. The promises Johnson made in his March 31st speech, initiated an irreversible process of de-escalation of war, that he later came to regret.

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Rate... **Re: After Tet- Military policy**by [Jairus Godeka](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 09:06 PM

As a result of the gold crisis of 1968, Westmoreland's request for additional troops was increasingly linked to the nation's economic woes. Some leading establishment figures, including the architects of America's major cold war policies, concluded that the war was doing irreparable damage to the nation's overall national security position and began to press for disengagement..... Herring (page 246).

On March 22, Johnson formally rejected Westmoreland's proposals to seek victory through an expanded war. Under these circumstances, Johnson saw no need for a major increase in American forces. He didn't even authorize the 22,000 soldiers recommended by Clifford, agreeing to merely 13,500 support troops to augment the emergency reinforcements sent in February....(Herring page 247)

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Rate... **Re: After Tet- Diplomatic results**by [Jairus Godeka](#) - Wednesday, 10 November 2010, 09:27 PM

Clifford and Harriman sought to extricate the United States from what they viewed as a hopeless tangle. They were certain the war was crippling America's ability to deal with more important problems. Worst of all, it was undermining its position as the ... "Standard bearer of moral principle in the world"..... Herring (page 253).

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Rate... **Re: After Tet- Diplomatic results**by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Friday, 12 November 2010, 05:14 PM

You have a good point Jairus, and I can kind of agree with them as well, we could have dealt with more important problems.

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Thank You Vietnam Vets

by [Spencer Smith](#) - Thursday, 11 November 2010, 03:49 PM

There are "good" wars. And "bad" wars. Its Veteran's Day (i think) and I thought I would make a post thanking Vietnam Veterans for their service. Vietnam Veterans did a lot for future veterans. A lot of the VA programs originated from the Vietnam War. A lot of soldiers were spit on, and sometimes treated even worse just for serving thier country during the Vietnam War. They didnt recieve the heroes welcome that WW2 soldiers got, or the praise that soldiers get now. The idea of "support the troops" came from Vietnam, after people had seen how terribly troops were treated. Vietnam Veterans hold a special place in our countries heart. Not only was it the toughest war, but a lot of the troops came back to a world that wasnt ready to deal with the psychological effects of the war. No american will ever have to deal with what Vietnam infantrymen had to deal with. To fight in a war, and not know if your country is behind you, is something that I hope no american will ever have to go through again. There were draftees that didnt have a choice, that came home to people calling them "baby killers." So today I choose to remember these men, as well as the 58,000+ that died. There will never be a Veteran like a Vietnam Veteran.

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Re: Thank You Vietnam Vets

by [Jolene Powell](#) - Friday, 12 November 2010, 07:33 AM

Well said, good job Spencer. Im with you on that. Happy Veterans Day!

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Re: Thank You Vietnam Vets

by [Kate Lonstron](#) - Friday, 12 November 2010, 05:15 PM

happy belated veterans day!!

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Re: Thank You Vietnam Vets

by [Jaymie Skeslien](#) - Friday, 12 November 2010, 06:23 PM

I agree with you,vietrens day is for remembering all the soldiers that fought for us and for the ones that still live on and for those who didnt make it back home to their familys.They done exellent work in fighting for our country.they had it so rough in vietnam,i dont think i could have been there fighting like they did, that takes alot of heros to stand up and fight in vietnam war.

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Re: Thank You Vietnam Vets

by [David Verner](#) - Friday, 12 November 2010, 10:38 PM

Amen to that. A sincere and wholehearted thankyou to all veterans out there.

This is an Australian song by someone who fought in Vietnam. Makes me emotional every time i hear it, and i make sure to listen to it at this time every year.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Urtiyp-G6jY>

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Rate... **Re: Thank You Vietnam Vets**by [Justin Powell](#) - Saturday, 13 November 2010, 09:15 PM

I cant even put into words how thankfull i am to all the veterans and the soldiers that are fighting right now, plus dont forget the ones that are geting ready to go. Thankyou!

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The Tet Offensive is an interesting piece of history to look at from a military persepctive. It was of course a huge battle, costing many lives (many, many more for the North) yet despite technically being a resounding victory for the US, it ended up being the turning point against them in the tide of war.

I find this fascinating, for the main reason it goes against the conventions of warfare - and backs up what I always thought about military policy in Vietnam, that the US policy was fatally flawed from the beginning. It was only with Tet they finally realized this it seems, but it was too late.

By the conventions of warfare, i mean the more traditional view of killing more of your enemy than you lose to win. Now, this of course is a pretty good way to look at it as humans are not instantly replenished - but at the same time, Vietnam was unique. There was a huge population of people against the US, and i feel the US constantly underestimated how isolated they actually were. Public support in Vietnam was against them so much, and they would have to wipe out a hell of a big chunk of the total population to "win" the war - and what would be the point of that? The war was lost before Tet, Tet just opened the eyes of those to blind to see it before.

With the media portrayal of the battle, and despite it being a technical "win" for the United States, all it did was expose the flaws once and for all. 'Body Count' was not working as a way of determining how the war was won, and this was ever more clear after Tet. The NV suffered losses hugely above what the US did, yet the US came out the more bruised as far as its effect on the overall war. This is why the US government finally decided they were fighting a losing battle, as it "Convinced most Americans that the war could not be won in an acceptable time and at an acceptable cost" (Herring, 268) - the war was simply costing too much for the US to justify its continuance, and this put the final nail in the coffin of LBJ's grand plan.

Though the battles did weaken the North to some extent for a while, the battle had still changed the mindset of those involved - the North, though maybe not seeing it at the time, had won a major psychological battle over not just the United States Military, but the entire nation of America. They had turned the tide of public support, one of the most important keys in war.

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You make very good points. However, part of the reason we did not fare well in this conflict is the fact that our military didn't have clearly defined goals at the time of involvement. War was never clearly declared against our enemies. First, we snack in as military advisers, but then, the number of advisers got so large we had to change our strategy. I came to the conclusion that, either our military strategy was a top government secret, or we didn't have any strategy at all and changed our policy as events unfolded. The latter seems to hold more substance than the former.

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I believe the strategy was superior fire power and military technology will win. Unfortunately you can't fight people who know how to hide, no matter how good the technology is.

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Rate... **Re: Military**by [David Verner](#) - Saturday, 13 November 2010, 06:59 PM

That was my point as well. The strategy was basically to beat them into submission with the superior firepower and manpower they had. However, as mentioned in the texts the Vietnamese were not heavily industrialized, so heavy bombing made no significant impact, not one that justified how heavy the bombing was.

The other thing was the Vietnamese strategies of hit and run attacks, they took small bites at the US rather than all out attacks, usually. That's why they failed with Tet for me, as they did not have the technology and tactics to be able to compete with the US on a conventional battlefield. However, apart from that the war was fought in the way the North Vietnamese wanted, and the US never adapted to that.

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I think the fault lies more with the civilian leadership rather than military. With the restrictions the civilian leadership had to put on the military for political reasons, we should never have committed to the war.

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Military leadership was still responsible for tactics in the field though, which for me is the major point in the war. I still don't believe that there would have been a positive outcome IF the US had tried playing the war on the Vietnamese terms of guerilla tactics and such, as I think the Vietnamese deep knowledge of terrain was still a major plus for them. But, I feel it may have been a lot closer than it was.

I posted in the previous forum about how the Australians in Vietnam fought the war a lot more like the Vietnamese, and how of the North Vietnamese actually feared the Australians more as they were more cunning and fought more like guerillas. I think them admitting that fear shows how much they that form of fighting may have changed the war had the US tried it more.

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