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Tom Grace's account of the Kent State shooting provides an excellent definition of the "war at home". Up until Kent State the American people were growing more and more dismayed with the government and its handling of Vietnam. Students, Veterans (both Vietnam, Korea, and WWII), white, black, Latino, were all protesting at various institutions, capitals and local recruiting offices. The "war at home" was waging not only among our citizens but within our own government as well. Several "us vs them" dynamics broke out with our officials and citizens. With the invasion of Cambodia and the continued bombing of North Vietnam, the US citizens felt ignored and betrayed. Public opinion of Nixon was at an all time low of 31%, and with the ever growing dissent from past soldiers and current evaders, Nixon's tolerance of protesters was growing thin. At Kent State, a demonstration against the war was being held. Tom Grace was in attendance as the National Guards men were being taunted by the students and rocks were being thrown at the NG jeeps that were parked along the campus.

The story of Kent State provides an interesting parallel between the Vietnamese and American troops, to that of American Citizens and their government. American troops in Vietnam were seen as guides to help the Vietnamese people obtain independence and to resist the Communist North Vietnamese power. Troops were to help establish and build a working economic and democratic system within Vietnam. They were to maintain order and peace among the people and to help protect their land. Just as our government is our guides in keeping our independence and peace as a nation, our government is to keep our established working economic and democratic system. But like in Vietnam, our government was instead failing to realize our competence as a nation, our ability to know when policies and strategies are not working, and when peace and order are not being kept.

Kent State brought to light that turning point in history where our own government was turning against its citizens in fully realizing the failure of the war. The shooting at Kent State was said to have lasted only 13 seconds, those seconds fueled the fires of anti-war protests even more. Now the government didn't have to send you to war to die, they will just shoot you while you question their policies. Violence bred violence in America during Vietnam, but the shootings at Kent State really solidified that sentiment. Protesters and police were always at odds with each other, tear gas, rocks, clubbing, etc. But when a gun is pulled on students, working class students, and they are shot with no means to defend themselves, that was when America decided that something had to be done. Violent policies were not working, either here or in Vietnam. The public knew that, people within the government knew that, but those with the power to change that ignored it. Nixon, Kissinger, Johnson, all of those capable of ending and ceasing the violence knew it, but ignored it. It was that ignorance and that college shooting that created a collective turning point in the American view of Vietnam, it just wasn't a war in a foreign country. It had spread to America, we let it spread to America, and there were no Viet Cong holding the guns here.

Frank Maguire's story chips away at the Vietnam Wars veneer, it brings forth the steady decline in American involvement in "helping" Vietnam fight against the Viet Cong. While the finer points of the war were never very clear, the general understanding was that America was to aid Southern Vietnam in reclaiming their country from Communist threat. America was to aid in housing, economics, democracy, and in establishing an independent nation. Vietnam was to be our poster child for the way we could build nations. Instead, we left Southern Vietnam in the dark and fought their war for them. They became reliant upon the US for more than just military power, we were the ones to build their houses, schools, and hospitals. We took charge in establishing politics and tried to impose a democratic rule in a place where input was only flowing from one side.

The end of this so called nation building, which was what the war was presumed to be based upon, started when disillusionment set in for American soldiers. During Vietnam the progress reports shifted from being that of how many societal changes we have made to how many Viet Cong have we killed. The pressure to destroy the enemy over-shadowed the main goal of freeing a country from an imposing rule. When there ceased to be accurate data on the enemy, figures were moved around, statistics were altered, we couldn't honestly say we were losing. The facade of the war had to be upheld, and with the pressure to uphold something many Americans already seen as false, soldiers engaged in other types of behavior. Many of the US funds for the war went to continued bombing, air strikes, weapons, and other normal military expenditures. The things that Maguire's story brings to light, about hotels with "girls in every room" being funded and paid for by the State Department are not things that go into nation building nor war.

When American troops started to become more focused on body count, rather than actually getting the enemy is a little point in knowing the war is ending. Instead of instilling a sense of responsibility in the native people, they

instilled reliance, co-dependence, and fear is another little point in knowing the war is over. My Lai was an example of the war coming to an horrific end in some soldiers eyes. American troops just completely massacring Vietnamese citizens, women, children, whole villages. Lines blurred in who the enemy really was, was it the Viet Cong? Was it the North Vietnamese? South? All of Vietnam? We ignored our nation building quest, we ignored the people we were sent in to help, and in the end, most Americans lost their sense of self. Everyone was the enemy at some point, Americans and Vietnamese alike. It became an all out war against everyone and everything.

When you do not know who your enemy is in war, it can have devastating effects. This type of behavior is a key indicator that there is no war, or that there is a war, but there is no leader calling the shots. Soldiers are left to guess who their next target is and where their next mission is taking place. There is a false war being presented to the soldiers and to both the American and Vietnamese public. Boozing, drugs, prostitution, and arms dealing under the table are not things that are foreign to wars. But the magnitude of which those things were done in Vietnam and for the extent to which they were done, played a very big part in showing how the Vietnam War was not only finished, but lost. America had taken over, we had successfully "Americanized" Vietnam in the worst ways.

The way in which the American and Vietnamese were let down by the American government both in terms of much needed guidance and knowledge will forever be the worst kind of ending for Vietnam. Conspiracy, secrecy, and lies over-shadowed much of the information that was needed on the basic levels of Vietnam. To quote Frank Maguire; *"I think it's a national trait that we always feel we know what's better for everybody. It was an attitude of misguided benevolence – that we know what's good for them and they don't really understand what's happening. We really wanted to win their hearts and minds, except we could never find one or the other."*

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