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With the Tet Offensive of 1968 being an indisputable turning point of the Vietnam War, the aftershocks of this crisis supplied just as many problems and debates within the military as the actual event itself. There were now more difficult decisions to be made regarding the proposals of both escalation and withdrawal, while at the same time watching casualties in Vietnam reach its peak. With the help of extensive media coverage overseas, the decision making for Lyndon B. Johnson and his administration became stressful as they scrambled to maintain the support of the newly influenced public. Despite all the military-related setbacks in Vietnam, the next turning point of the war would not come directly from the country of Vietnam; instead, it would occur on American soil, as the increasing number of antiwar riots developed into a national focus.

While the Tet Offensive provided to be one of the defining moments of the war as a whole, it caused a wave of predicaments that greatly affected the American society. Due to the public's awareness of the war's brutality and the realization of our actual status, the protesting became more organized, more unified, and more abundant. The attention of the nation had split between the actual war itself and the uprising of what is now considered a social turning point within United States borders.

In the *Patriots* textbook, the story told by Peter Kuznick best exemplifies the scenario from his own personal perspective. At the time Kuznick was a college student at Rutgers University who supported Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), a student activated movement that focused on organizing student radicalism and advocating the "New Left." Kuznick describes how in 1968 he attended the National Democratic Convention in Chicago to participate in the planned protests. He was well aware of the fact that there was a high possibility of violence based on what he had heard coming out of the city, especially since "the Daily Machine and the Chicago Police had given sufficient indication that the last thing they had any respect for was the first amendment right to gather and protest in public." (Appy, p. 313). But the risk of violence ended up much higher after the sudden assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. in April of that year, and because of the responding uprising the police were issued shoot-to-kill orders. The story that Kuznick recounts illustrates how the police force seemed to have nothing but pure hatred toward the organized protesters and were constantly looking for excuses to attack. And when there was an opportunity to attack, it was executed with utter brutality. When he arrived in Chicago he says that there were constant fights right from the beginning. The police, with layers of jackets, shields, gas masks, and weapons charged against the completely unarmed and unprotected protesters. They deployed tear gas and used their clubs at will, beating the civilians mercilessly; even the national guardsmen were there, attacking with their bayonets.

The violent riots in Chicago that year had in a way paved the road for future organized protests and had a great influence primarily on students throughout the nation. As Peter Kuznick states, "Chicago had a radicalizing effect on campuses. It was a real dividing line. In the spring of '68 I felt that on most campuses antiwar students were a distinct minority. But that fall the movement mushroomed and there was a pervasive radicalization." (p. 316). These events, combined with the Tet aftermath, the sudden drop out of President Johnson from the upcoming election, and all the way through the Kent State shootings a couple years later, mark the prominent turning point of the Vietnam War era. From a social standpoint, and from an American standpoint, this increase of protests, riots, and overall change in perspective of the

war are a decisive moment for our country in particular during the Vietnam War.

The Vietnam War formally ended in 1975 after President Richard Nixon began a process of de-escalation and "Vietnamization" few years earlier. Before this though, the United States was under significant political turmoil as the Watergate scandal forced the President to resign in 1974, and his successor, Gerald Ford, was then forced to deal with the fall of Saigon in the first year of his presidency. When the North Vietnamese forces took over the capital of South Vietnam on April 30, 1975, the Vietnam War was officially over with the United States on the losing end. However, the end of the war isn't what the official date says on paper. To me it is more appropriate to classify the end of the war at the beginning of the end. By as early as 1970 many of the troops in Vietnam were as opposed to the war as any protesting dove back home in the United States.

Judith Coburn was a war reporter who arrived in Vietnam in 1970. She remembers how much the Tet Offensive of 1968 had crushed the morale of the many soldiers fighting in Vietnam. There was a distinct lack of effort from troops and on many occasions they were overtly refusing to follow orders. She says, "They'd drop a group of guys in the jungle and they'd just sit there of a couple days calling in fake coordinates, smoke a little weed, and wait to get picked up." Coburn then goes on to exclaim that "it was pretty obvious the military was losing control of its own men." (p. 408). There was also more of an apparent lack of respect for authority among the soldiers. Judith Coburn's story includes how the military had given up on policing regulations regarding uniforms, but when one sergeant major asked a soldier where his hat was, that soldier turned around and knocked him to the ground. There was an increase in the lack of control and discipline throughout the military, primarily because they flat out did not want to be in Vietnam anymore. Even Vietnam War veterans in the United States had become opposed to the war and there was the formation of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW).

The declining levels of commitment were not limited to the American troops; the South Vietnamese Army was just as apathetic. Coburn explains how they were not loyal to their government because they knew it was corrupt and controlled by the Americans, and only joined their army so they wouldn't go to prison. They had become completely dependent on the U.S. forces and as the military began withdrawing troops it was more difficult for them to succeed in any engagements. The plan of Vietnamization, where the South Vietnamese Army was supposed to do a greater and greater portion of the fighting, was not going as well as our government had hoped due to the lack of dedication.

The end of the Vietnam War was in essence a five year process and by as early as 1970 the majority of people were fed up with the ongoing and unnecessary killing that was taking place. Americans especially wanted to be done with Vietnam and even a great amount of our country's own soldiers had checked out after being shaken up by the Tet Offensive. Nixon should have faced the facts and ended it five years sooner to avoid needless casualties, instead of the long drawn out procedure that it ended up being. As a result, all of those deaths in the latter years of Vietnam were consequences of our government's procrastination of reality.

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