

## **Fighting the “Bully” – America’s War in Vietnam**

The entity the U.S. fought in Vietnam can be likened to a schoolyard bully. Someone that goes around, inflicting pain and suffering on its victims. With each and every bystander that chooses to be silent, the bully is empowered just a little bit more. In Vietnam, however, the U.S. chose not to be a bystander. We chose to fight this “bully” – communism. We made the conscious decision to fight for the principles and morals of a democratic nation. We decided to shield the rest of Southeast Asia from the economic, social, and political consequences that result from the instatement of a communist regime.

In the Vietnam War, the “Falling Domino Principle” played a large role. Essentially, this principle stated that, unless the U.S. and other democratic nations intervened and attempted to halt the Vietcong, the rest of Southeast Asia would become communist as well. In retrospect, this principle is entirely true. While Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia ultimately became communist nations, lack of United States intervention would have led to the fall of many more Asian nations to communism. Without the presence of a democratic nation, especially in places close to China and the USSR, millions more people would be oppressed by a communist regime. While we ultimately lost the war in Vietnam, we won the greater war – the fight for equality and democracy worldwide.

The expression “hindsight is 20/20” is extremely applicable when discussing the war in Vietnam. Critics cite low citizen approval of the war. However, at the beginning of the War, 64% of Americans approved our involvement in Vietnam. Those who opposed the War said that the majority of U.S. soldiers were coerced into fighting by the draft. This is simply untrue. Two thirds of the soldiers who served in Vietnam were volunteers; not draftees. Again, critics of the

war cite the riots and protests resulting from the draft. However, the fact is, most veterans of the war, drafted or not, wouldn't do anything differently. Polls show that 74% of Vietnam veterans would serve again, knowing the outcome of the War.

Finally, in preparation for this essay, I talked to my Uncle, a Vietnam veteran who served in the U.S. Navy, directly fighting the Vietcong. As a man who personally saw some of his best friends killed by Vietcong troops, and who witnessed firsthand the horrors of war, he told me that he would not do anything differently. Even coming back to America with PTSD and memories that would never go away, my Uncle is honored to have served our country and uphold the principles of our great country.

In fighting a war in Vietnam, the United States prevented the bully that is communism from expanding. Richard Nixon once stated, "The Vietnam War [...] was misreported then, and it is misremembered now". I urge all Americans to recognize those who fought for the principles the United States embodies – freedom, democracy, and equality for all people.