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The war in Vietnam was not conventional. Nor was it purely military. The failure of the United States and, under them, the ARVN (South Vietnam) to recognize this led to the ~~sheer~~ use of ^{many} ineffective strategies & tactics ~~in Vietnam~~ against the North Vietnamese army & the Viet Cong from 1960 - 1975. The United States first supplied only aid to South Vietnam, and, when they became involved, sought a military solution - deploying military tactics such as search & destroy & pacification & the use of massive firepower. (Rolling Thunder)

The North Vietnamese fought a political war, infiltrating villages, using terror tactics and propaganda, as well as guerrilla tactics which proved to be effective against the military tactics from the south.

The North Vietnamese knew they were

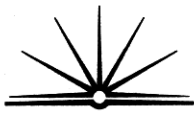


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fighting a political war. ~~They~~ They also knew that, as they could not have an all out ^{military} victory over the far superior firepower of the US, their hope for success lay in the infiltration of the southern villages & the political indoctrination of the people there. There were two separate fighting forces - the ^{regular} Nth Vietnamese army (which made use of all sections of society - as civilians could be called on to help in the war - a state of Total war existed in the North) and the Viet Cong, established in 1960.

~~After~~ After the Geneva conference of 1954, there had been a ^{9 months} period of free movement between Nth & Sth Vietnam, during which many communists had stayed south or moved north for instructions & training before returning south.

~~From~~ From 1960 onwards, the Viet

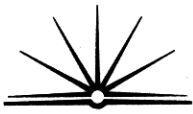


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Cong engaged in an infiltration of the South, whereby they would win over the ^{support of the} villagers through ~~etc~~ terror tactics & propaganda.

The reaction in the south from the Diem Government (led by president Ngo Dinh Diem) was to create 'fortified hamlets' which were designed to keep the villagers safe from Viet Cong infiltration. However, this tactic proved totally ineffective in keeping ~~and~~ VC. out of the villages & only proved to be counter-productive in turning the villagers against the government and pushing them further towards the communists. Most peasants in the south supported the Viet Cong either passively - by not giving them up or actively - fighting in guerrilla warfare. The peasants also provided the VC. with food and shelter.

17/1969
The Gulf of Tonkin incident, where the US aircraft carriers were supposedly



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attacked by V.C. boats, gave the US president Johnson a reason to retaliate. So began the heavy bombing of North Vietnam by the US. This was called Operation 'Rolling Thunder' and went on for years. This was effective in destroying large areas of land and forest as well as killing many civilians, however, ^{largely} it was ineffective in its aims of ^{halting} ~~making~~ the Communist force's ability to conduct war for a number of reasons, mainly; The nature of Vietnam as an agrarian society meant that there was a lack of targets which could be effectively bombed; The V.C. were able to disappear into the jungle - & were largely unaffected by the bombs (they made use of extensive tunnel networks); The war that was being fought by the V.C. was political rather than military, and the bombing by the Americans only

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served to ~~turn the civilians away~~ ^{create} a resentment of the US among the civilians.

As well as political means of operating, the Nth Vietnamese & VC. also made use of guerrilla tactics. They had extensive tunnel networks in which their headquarters were situated, these ~~also~~ were equipped with booby traps, wells & 'U' bends' which were designed to stop gas, and confusing signs to make sure that enemy troops didn't find anything of ~~any~~ importance. The VC. were largely successful as an evasive enemy. They were able to melt into the jungle when US troops appeared, and were able to make surprise attacks & ambushes. The US tactics of 'Search and Destroy' and 'Pacification' were largely unsuccessful against the evasive Nth Vietnamese soldiers. 'Search & Destroy' was a tactic



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whereby US troops would lead out when V.C. forces were, and reinforcements would then be airlifted by helicopter to the site to 'destroy' them. ~~the~~

However, ~~mean~~ the Nth Vietnamese were indistinguishable from the Sth Vietnamese & many civilians were killed as the over zealous anticommunists would overreact to any threat of V.C. ~~the~~ because of the obsessive need to get a high 'body count'. The V.C. exploited this US tactic by entrenching themselves in a village - as a result many civilians were killed & turned against the US.

The tactic of 'pacification' was also largely ineffective in achieving its goals. The idea of 'Pacification' was the removal of all people from an area & their relocation to a new & secure area - where ~~the~~ village leadership was placed under

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the control of non-communists. This tactic was ineffective for a number of reasons; The Viet Cong were still able to move freely; Removal & relocation of the villagers (once again) created resentment towards the US. Also, the villagers couldn't rely on the ~~the~~ ARVN & US soldiers to protect them from the VC as they ~~never~~ ^{never} stayed long ^{enough} in one place. Thus, subordination to the VC was necessary as they would move back into an area & wreak vengeance once the US and ARVN troops had left.

The US ^{the} ~~reliance on~~ ^{heavy} ~~artillery~~ ^{artillery}

The terror tactics which the VC employed against the US ~~the~~ ^{the} South Vietnamese forces as well as the villagers, peasants was particularly brutal. From 1960, terror had been a tactic employed by the VC in ^{the} South as they took villages into their own hands while waiting for action

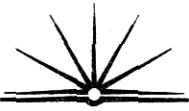


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from the Nth. They kidnaped & murdered government officials & their families as a way of coercion & these tactics continued throughout the war. One US soldier recalled ^{that} one of their men had gone missing & was skinned alive & soaked in salt water, his penis ripped off. ~~And~~ A village chief was given a warning when an earthenware pot was left outside his house - it contained what looked like stewed tomatoes - it was ~~at~~ his son.

As well as these terror tactics, Ho Chi Minh also placed great importance in the courteous treatment of the peasants by the V.C. He set out a list of 6 permissibles & 6 forbiddances, which placed emphasis on the respect of the villagers.

The Nth Vietnamese, in 1968, against their usual tactics - staged a major



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offensive. The Tet offensive occurred in 1968

the VC attacked ^{what} over 100 places
at once - a number of the provincial
capitals including Saigon, Hue & Da Nang.

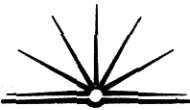
~~The Tet offensive~~ VC soldiers ^{also} managed
to get inside the US embassy in
Saigon. The Tet offensive was a major
political failure for the NVA Vietnamese.

They lost a huge number of ~~men~~ soldiers
& didn't achieve any of their aims of
an overthrow of the ~~the~~ Southern
Government or a social uprising.

However, in the long run, Tet
proved to be a great political success.

It drew attention to the fact that
the VC could attack at any time,
and disproved what General Westmoreland
was telling the American public - that
the war was being won & going well.

The Tet offensive was watched by
1000s of US citizens on their TV's. &



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it was this offensive that began the process of withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam.

The President Nixon introduced the policy of Vietnamisation, whereby the Vietnamese people would take responsibility for their own affairs. This proved to be

a great failure as the South Vietnamese were ^{too} reliant ~~totally~~ on the US

& Air power. They had poor officers & little officer training. Although there

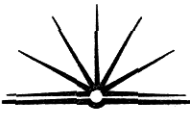
were vast improvements, (The ARVN

increased from 427,000 to 516,000 between 1968 & 1971) evidently it was

not enough, as the ~~solely~~ ARVN ~~the~~ invasion of Laos shows.

1/3 of the ARVN soldiers sent were reported dead or missing. The Vietnamisation was a failure.

In 1975 on April 30, the ~~Vietnam~~ North Vietnamese took Saigon. US troops had been pulled out in 1973. The



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first war that they had not won. Both sides had used ~~factor~~ strategies of Attrition ~~Howe~~ ~~They would~~. The US aimed to simply pound the Nth until they could fight no longer. The Nth, however, just aimed to hang on. It was, after all, their country. They knew that sooner or later the US would get tired & go home. The Americans failed to realize the type of war they were fighting - political, not military, & it was the political & guerilla tactics of the Nth that proved the most effective. In a ^{conventional war} ~~guerilla war~~, it has been noted, those that don't win, lose. In guerilla war, if they don't ^{lose} ~~win~~, they win.