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Paper 2

HISTORY REVISION GUIDE

THE USA AND VIETNAM: FAILURE ABROAD AND AT HOME 1964-1975

NOTE: This guide only prepares you for the Paper 2 Section B questions on Vietnam. You must use your other guide to prepare for questions on the Roaring Twenties and America in the 1930's. If you no longer have this guide it can be downloaded from the school website Learning/Humanities/History/year 11.

You have two questions to answer on Vietnam

- one 8 mark Explain question
- one 12 mark Analysis and Explanation question

The USA and Vietnam: Failure Abroad and at Home, 1964 – 1975.

1. How effective were guerrilla tactics during the Vietnam War?

Topic	Revised
The theory of guerrilla warfare	
Guerrilla tactics, 1964–1968	
The US response to guerrilla tactics: operation rolling Thunder; 'Hearts and Minds'; Agent orange and Napalm; Search and Destroy	
The My Lai Massacre, 1968.	

2. How did the coverage of the Vietnam War in the USA lead to demands for peace?

Topic	Revised
TV and media coverage of the war, from the gulf of Tonkin to the evacuation of Saigon	
Protest movements in the USA, 1968–1973	
The public reaction to the My Lai Massacre, the trial of Lieutenant Calley	
The Kent State University protest, 1970	
The Fulbright Hearings, 1971.	

3. Why were the US actions to end the Vietnam War unsuccessful?

Topic	Revised
The Tet offensive and its impact on the war, 1968	
Attacks on Laos and Cambodia, 1970	
US bombing of the North and attacks on Laos and Cambodia, 1970–1972	
The Paris Peace Conference and US withdrawal	
The fall of Saigon, 1975.	

Year 11 Revision activities
How effective were guerilla tactics during the Vietnam War?

Vietnam 1964-1975

Task 1: Knowledge check questions. Complete answers to the questions below on paper. The questions are based upon pages 236-241 of AQA GCSE AQA Modern World History by John D Clare.

The theory of guerrilla warfare

1. What were the three phases of guerrilla warfare identified by Mao Zedong?
2. What was the name of the Vietnamese general who followed Mao Zedong's methods?
3. Who was Ho Chi Minh?
4. In 1954 where were the French defeated and by whom?
5. What was agreed at the Geneva Accords?
6. Who became leader of South Vietnam?
7. Why did the Americans support Diem's government?
8. How did the Americans support Diem's government? (at least 2 ways)
9. Why was Diem assassinated in November 1963?

Gulf of Tonkin Incident

1. What was the domino theory and how does it apply to Vietnam?
2. On August 2nd 1964 what incident supposedly happened in the Gulf of Tonkin?
3. What did Johnson tell Congress?
4. What did Congress decide to do?
5. Why is the Gulf of Tonkin resolution a major turning point in the history of Vietnam War?

Military actions in Vietnam

1. Why did the NVA know they could not defeat the Americans in a direct fight?
2. What were the key VC tactics?
3. Why was it difficult for the Americans to spot the VC?
4. What was the Ho Chi Minh trail?
5. Describe Operation Rolling Thunder
6. How many bombs did the Americans drop?
7. Why do you think the Americans did not bomb Hanoi or Haiphong?
8. How did the USA try to win the 'hearts and minds' of the Vietnamese people?
9. What was 'search and destroy'?
10. What was the 'body count'?
11. What were 'cherries'?
12. What evidence is there that US morale had collapsed by 1971?
13. Describe what happened 16 March 1968 at My Lai.

Complete this timeline of key events

1954 Battle of Dien Bien Phu the _____ are driven out of Vietnam
1954 July the _____ Agreement divided Vietnam into a _____
north and _____ south
1954 Ho Chi Minh sets up the _____
1963 November _____ is assassinated
2nd August 1964 _____
7th August 1964 _____
February 1965 _____

Explain questions (8 marks plus 2 spg)

- a. Explain why the US became involved in Vietnam
- b. Explain the Vietcong guerrilla tactics in Vietnam
- c. Explain the US Army tactics in Vietnam
- d. Explain why the 1st platoon massacred the villagers of My Lai.

Essay questions (12 marks plus 3 spg)

- a. The Americans entered the war in Vietnam because of the Gulf of Tonkin incident. How far do you agree? Explain your answer
- b. The Americans fought a high tech conventional war: the Vietcong fought a low tech guerrilla war. How far do you agree? Explain your answer
- c. Vietcong guerrilla tactics were the main reason why the US lost the war. How far do you agree? Explain your answer
- d. The bombing of North Vietnam in the late 1960's was the USA's main response to the Vietcong's use of guerrilla tactics. How far do you agree? Explain your answer.
- e. The My Lai massacre was the main reason why the American public turned against US involvement in Vietnam. How far do you agree? Explain your answer

Year 11 Revision Activities

How did the coverage of the Vietnam War in the USA lead to demands for peace?

Vietnam 1964-1975

Task 1: Knowledge check questions. Complete answers to the questions below on paper. The questions are based upon pgs 242-5 of AQA GCSE AQA Modern World History by John D Clare.

TV and media coverage

1. What do you understand by the term 'living room' war?
2. How did the American media view the war initially? Give two examples.
3. What year marks a turning point in attitudes?
4. What was Walter Cronkite's contribution to changing attitudes?
5. When did the story on the Mai Lia massacre first break?
6. What sentence was Lieutenant Calley given at his court martial?
7. Why did Calley end up serving little more than three years of his life sentence?
8. What percentage of the population disapproved of his court martial and what percent refused to accept that what he had done was wrong?
9. What do you understand by the term 'moral right' and how it can be applied to the Vietnam War?
10. How were returning soldiers stigmatised?
11. How significant was media coverage?

Protest movements

1. When did the first protests against the war occur?
2. Describe what happened at the 1965 teach-in.
3. Why is Norman Morrison significant in the protest movement?
4. What sort of people joined the protest movement in the late 1960s?
5. Why did the Vietnam War threaten Johnson's Great Society?
6. What view did the Nation of Islam take of the Vietnam War?
7. Why did Martin Luther King criticise the Vietnam War?
8. What other people dodged the draft?
9. Who was Eugene McCarthy and why did he oppose the Vietnam War?
10. What were the Fulbright hearings?
11. What claims did John Kerry, a war veteran make?
12. What happened in 1971 at the war veterans march?
13. Write down two statistics about the percentage of Americans who thought the war was a mistake e.g. 1965 and 1969
14. What happened at Kent State university in May 1970
15. How did President Nixon try to reduce the opposition to the war?
16. Not all Americans disapproved of the war. Give one example of a pro war march

Complete this timeline of key events

1968 John Wayne stars in the _____

1967 Martin Luther King speaks out against the _____

January 1968 The _____ offensive begins

1968 Eugene McCarthy _____

November 1969 News of the _____ breaks

March 1971 lieutenant _____ is court martialled

April-May 1971 The _____ hearings

May 1970 _____ university _____

May 1970 _____ march in support of the war

Explain questions (8 marks plus 2 spg)

- a. Explain why some Americans began to oppose the war in Vietnam
- b. Explain how TV and media coverage of the war changed
- c. Explain why Lieutenant Calley's court martial divided public opinion.
- d. Explain the arguments used by civil rights protesters against the Vietnam war

Essay questions (12 marks plus 3 spg)

- a. The US lost the war in Vietnam because it lost the support of the American public. How far do you agree? Explain your answer.
- b. The Vietnamese did not win the Vietnam War the Americans lost it. How far do you agree? Explain your answer.
- c. The anti-war movement just consisted of students and hippies. How far do you agree? Explain your answer
- d. Television images showing the true horrors of war had a decisive impact upon the American public turning them against the war. How far do you agree? Explain your answer

Year 11 Revision Activities
Why did the USA lose the Vietnam War?

Vietnam 1968-1975

Task 1: Knowledge check questions. Complete answers to the questions below on paper. The questions are based upon pages 246-9 of AQA GCSE AQA Modern World History by John D Clare.

Tet Offensive and its results

1. Why did the North decide to mount a direct military attack on South Vietnam?
2. How had General Westmoreland responded to intelligence of a possible attack?
3. What was the significance of the timing of the offensive?
4. What was the date of the start of the Tet offensive?
5. What successes did the Vietcong have early on in the offensive?
6. What do these words refer to 'We had to destroy the town to save it'?
7. What was the result of the Tet offensive for the North Vietnamese?
8. What were the results for the South Vietnamese?
9. What was the result for the Americans?
10. What do you understand by the term credibility gap?

President Nixon and a new policy

11. Who became President of the USA in 1969?
12. Why would ending the war be difficult for Nixon?
13. Who were the 'silent majority' to whom Nixon refers?
14. What was the name for Nixon's new policy in Vietnam?
15. How was this policy supposed to work?
16. What was the Madman Theory?
17. What was Operation Menu?
18. What did Nixon order in 1970 'to go for broke'?
19. What was operation Lam Son and how did the US support this ARVN initiative?
20. Where did Nixon bomb in 1972?
21. Why did peace negotiations between South and North Vietnam break down in October 1972?
22. How did Nixon try to get the talks opened again?
23. When were the Paris Peace Accords signed?
24. What were the terms?
25. When did the last American troops leave?
26. What were the consequences for Saigon of the withdrawal of American troops?
27. What happened in March 1975?
28. What were the consequences of the fall of Saigon?

Complete this timeline of key events

31st January 1968 Start of the T _____
January 1969 President _____ takes office
November 1969 Nixon outlines his plan to end the war called _____
1970 Bombing of _____
1971 Attack on _____ by ARVN supported by _____
1972 Bombing of _____
27th January 1973 P _____
29th March 1973 American troops _____
March 1975 North Vietnamese invade _____

Explain questions (8 marks plus 2 spg)

- a. Explain why the Tet offensive was a failure for the Vietcong
- a. Explain why the Tet offensive was a failure for the USA and the South Vietnamese
- b. Explain why Saigon fell in 1975
- c. Explain Nixon's policy towards Vietnam
- d. Explain the steps that led to the defeat of the USA in Vietnam
- e. Explain how peace came 1969-1973

Essay questions (12 marks plus 3 spg)

- a. The Tet offensive was the only military action that both sides lost. How far do you agree? Explain your answer.
- b. The US lost the war in Vietnam because it lost the support of the American public. How far do you agree? Explain your answer.
- c. The Vietnamese did not win the Vietnam War the Americans lost it. How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

8 mark questions

On the following pages there are examples of 8 mark questions and the content you might include in your answers. There are also two completed examples to study.

Explain why the USA got involved in Vietnam (8 marks)

- Because the French had been driven out in 1954
- US supported Diem as he was anti-communist
- To stop the communists
- To stop further communist successes (domino theory)
- Gulf of Tonkin incident August 1964
- Attacks on US helicopter bases
- Once they had got involved the Americans had to keep escalating the war to try to defeat the Vietcong

Explain why the 1st Platoon massacred the villagers of My Lai (8 marks)

- Unclear orders which emphasised killing the body count was the way success was measured
- They were told the VC would be there and everyone else would be at the market
- Racist attitudes towards the Vietnamese people
- Desire for revenge for fallen friends Charlie company had lost many due to mines and booby traps
- Frustration because they could not find an enemy to fight
- Poor officers (Calley was a high school dropout)
- Poor leadership who turned a blind eye and covered up the story presenting it as a success at first
- Emphasis on body count to show success
- Officers programmed to kill Vietnam was a brutal and brutalising war of mass killing and destruction

Explain why coverage of the Vietnam War by the American news media changed (8 marks)

- Early stages of war favourable coverage e.g. US response to Gulf of Tonkin incident. The Green Beret film starring John Wayne made with full support of Johnsons government
- Mood changed around 1968 as details of horrors emerged– napalm attacks; shooting of Vietnamese suspects; My Lai; rising number of deaths.
- Changes of attitudes by key news personalities such as Walter Cronkite – encouraging a mood of defeatism.
- News suggesting that US was losing – eg after Tet Offensive, 1968
- Views of famous film and pop stars (Jane Fonda); effect of Kent State University deaths, 1970
- Fulbright hearings

Explain why the protest movements against the Vietnam War in the USA developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. (8 marks)

- During war there were huge demonstrations calling for the withdrawal of US forces. Protest movement included VVAW (Vietnamese Veterans against War) civil rights movement, students and hippies
- Televised pictures showed horror of war - stories of brutality and pointless suffering
- Protests against the unfairness of the draft. MLK against the war as most recruits were young blacks. Seen as poor and black man's war.
- Prominent individuals refused to go e.g. Muhamad Ali 'They never called me a
- Other war veterans also spoke out John Kerry
- When cost of war became apparent it was viewed as a waste of money Johnsons Great Society programme jeopardised
- When marchers attacked by police it gave the movement more determination e.g. University violence – especially Kent State University (1970) with four deaths.
- Impact of protest movement debatable but undoubtedly it split US public opinion

How was peace finally achieved in Vietnam? (Awarded full marks by the Board)

Throughout the last half of the war, US opinion of the war had greatly changed. By 1973 the public were very against the war and Nixon was under huge pressure to pull out. He had promised 'Peace with Honour' in his election campaign and the US people were desperate for an end to the war.

The Paris Peace Conference finally brought an end to the war for the US, they agreed to remove all US troops in return for US POWs, a ceasefire, and promises of free elections. It is debatable whether Nixon achieved peace with honour, and many argue that he sold out the South Vietnamese (S.V).

After 1973 US troops began to pull out of Vietnam, and their duties were handed over to the South Vietnamese Army (SVA). In effect the US policy of Vietnamisation was put to the test, as the SVA took control. US officials stayed in Vietnam to make sure it would be able to support itself and survive without US military help.

For a while it seemed as though peace had been achieved, as the North Vietnamese (N.V) remained peaceful and did not break the ceasefire. However in 1975 Ho Chi Minh launched a huge offensive to try and take the city of Saigon and capture the South. Without US support the North Vietnamese army (NVA) were able to make their way down south to Saigon, effectively showing that the SVA were not able to defeat the NVA displaying that Vietnamisation had failed.

The NVA were easily able to defeat the SVA at Saigon and the iconic image at the fall of Saigon shown by source L, is the US officials abandoning the S.V people.

The source shows US officials going to the top of the Embassy building in order to evacuate from Vietnam, leaving S.V at the hands of the NVA. I think this shows that they

were unable to achieve peace with honour, as despite being in the war for 10 years, they were still unable to stop the communist North from taking over. The fall of Saigon symbolises and shows how the US gave up on Vietnam and in the end abandoned it.

Explain the consequences of French defeat in Vietnam in 1954 for both Vietnam and the USA. [8 marks]

The French defeat at Dien Bien Phu meant that the Viet Minh had succeeded in driving the French out of Vietnam after eight years of struggle. About 8000 Viet Minh died in the battle. The immediate consequence was the beginning of the Geneva Conference to decide on Vietnam's future. This led to the Geneva Accords, dividing Vietnam in half at the 17th parallel. The North would be communist, ruled by Ho Chi Minh when he returned from hiding, and Ngo Dinh Diem would be Prime Minister of the South. Elections were to be held in two years to reunify the country. However, the deadline passed without the elections being held.

As a result, Ho Chi Minh was determined to fight for unification, building the Ho Chi Minh trail in 1959 to get troops and supplies into South Vietnam. 4000 guerrillas were sent in that year. Diem, President in the south since 1955, put down as many guerrillas as he could. The US sent aid to Diem.

Commentary

This is a relatively short answer but it is specific about what resulted from the French defeat of 1954. There is detail on immediate results leading to the Geneva Accords and then the follow-on from those, i.e. development on consequences for Vietnam. However, apart from a passing comment, consequences for the USA are ignored. One well developed area, therefore, would bring Level 2, **6 marks**.

12 mark questions

On the following pages are examples of 12 mark questions. The questions all have partially completed answers - bullet points so you can argue both for and against the opinion in the question. There is also a possible conclusion. Have a go at writing out some of the answers in full. Use your toolkit to help you too. Remember as there are 3 spg marks available you will need to incorporate key words, dates and phrases.

There are also 2 examples of answers awarded full marks by the Board

Question 1

The Gulf of Tonkin incident was the main reason why the US became involved in the Vietnam War.

How far do you agree with this interpretation? Explain your answer (12 marks plus 3 spg)

Yes

- Gulf of Tonkin incident gave US an opportunity to become directly involved in the war.
- It allowed Johnson to escalate US involvement. The Gulf of Tonkin resolution gave Johnson very special powers - the power to wage war without a declaration of war by Congress. He did this on 8 March 1965 when 3,500 marines came ashore at Da Nang and America was then at war with Vietnam.

NO

- America wanted to stop communism spreading in South East Asia
 - Had given \$3 billion in aid to France
 - Supported Diem for leadership in 1954
 - Set up Saigon Military Mission in 1954 - military advisors sent to train the ARVN
 - Colluded in the assassination of Diem in 1963
- Domino theory belief that once one country turns communist others would turn as well

Conclusion

- Johnson was most probably looking for an excuse to go to war by 1964. Tension between North and South Vietnam had been increasing and Johnson was more prepared than Kennedy to commit the USA to a full scale conflict in Vietnam to prevent the spread of communism. Gulf of Tonkin incident provided the pretext Johnson was looking for... so support the interpretation.

Question 2

Guerrilla warfare was the main reason why the USA failed to win the Vietnam War."

How far do you agree with this interpretation? Explain your answer (12 marks plus 3 spg)

Yes

- Guerrilla warfare helped to defeat the US – no open battles
- Tunnel networks
- Hit and run tactics

- Americans not equipped for guerrilla warfare

No

- USA failed to win hearts and minds
- USA lost local support with Search and Destroy missions
- US bombing raids focussed on Ho Chi Minh trail and only had limited success
- US did not focus on bombing major cities in North Vietnam such as Haiphong
- Changing public opinion in USA linked to media and escalating costs.

Conclusion

- Only partly support the interpretation - certainly tactics used by America to fight a guerrilla war were largely ineffective and unpopular amongst the locals. Equally important was the US failure to win the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese. The combination of these two factors meant that support for the war at home declined and ultimately the US lost the war in Vietnam

NOTE

There is an argument which says the Americans did not lose the war in Vietnam.

- *The American military was not defeated in any battle. From a military standpoint it was an unprecedented performance.*
- *The US did not lose the South Vietnamese did. The fall of Saigon happened in April 1975 two years after the last Americans departed.*
- *There were almost as many casualties in SE Asia in the first two years after the fall of Saigon in 75 than there were in the 10 years the US were involved*

Question 3

'The bombing of North Vietnam in the 1960s was the USA's main response to the Vietcong's use of guerrilla tactics.'

How far do you agree with this interpretation? Explain your answer (12 marks plus 3 spg)

Yes

- Main response was heavy bombing of North Vietnam - Operation Rolling Thunder launched by President Johnson in, February 1965. In addition to conventional bombs US dropped napalm and cluster bombs. 8 million tons dropped between 1965 and 1973. An estimated 300 tons for every man woman and child in Vietnam.

No

- Attempts to win hearts and minds in South Vietnam; investment.
- Search and destroy policies, especially My Lai Massacre.
- Use of Agent Orange.
- Invasions of Cambodia and Laos in early 70s

Conclusion

- Agree with the interpretation - Bombing was certainly USAs most costly operation. Cost of these raids was estimated at \$900 million Unfortunately It had little impact on both the economy of North Vietnam and morale of the people. Money could have been spent more wisely on winning hearts and minds.....

Question 4

'Media coverage of the Vietnam War was the most important reason for growing demands for peace from the American public.'

How far do you agree with this interpretation? Explain your answer (12 marks plus 3 spg)

Yes

- Television could now be seen in colour and reporters at the scene described bloody events in graphic detail;
My Lai massacre – details graphically portrayed 18 months after the event;
Victims of chemical warfare such as use of napalm; child running naked after tearing her burning clothes from her body
Film of fighting in Saigon during Tet Offensive; US embassy
Also film showing execution in the street of a Vietcong suspect by a South Vietnamese policeman
- Also domestic violence portrayed in media, such as Kent State University deaths.

No

- The cost of the war in terms of casualties and money;
- Protest marches, demonstrations and speeches in the USA;
- Fulbright Hearings, 1971.

Conclusion

- Partly support the interpretation. Only a quarter of reports contained images of dead bodies and before 1968 most news reports were pro American. TV reporting only became hostile after public opinion began to turn against the war. So it may be that TV reporting followed rather than led public opinion?

Question 5

The US media did more damage to the US army than did the Vietcong.

How far do you agree with this interpretation? Explain your answer (12 marks plus 3 spg)

Yes

- War heavily reported – first televised war
- Television produced images which showed the true horror of war
Innocent villagers fleeing from a napalm attack
Execution of a Vietcong captive in Saigon by an ARVN colonel
VC in the streets of Saigon and US embassy grounds during the Tet offensive
- Media showed US soldiers committing acts of brutality against prisoners and civilians
My Lai massacre photographs
- People turned off by these images challenged the idea that 'we are the good guys in the war'.
- Walter Cronkite 'We are mired in a stalemate' broadcast - a moderate and respected journalist had lost confidence in the war. His opinion was very influential

- Media gave anti-war movement the momentum.

No

- People became desensitised by the imagery and immune to it.
- People still eat their dinner watching the news!
- Even at the height of anti-war sentiment only 58% of public opposed the war and 50% agreed with invasion of Cambodia

Conclusion

- Partly support the interpretation as impact of media coverage is very difficult to calculate. However you can't win a war when you lose support of the people and media split US public opinion. This contributed to the eventual US withdrawal from Vietnam rather than the Vietcong as the US never lost a major battle against them.

Question 6

"The My Lai Massacre (1968) was the main reason why American public opinion turned against US involvement in Vietnam."

How far do you agree with this interpretation? Explain your answer (12 marks plus 3 spg)

YES

- Graphic photographs shocked public in America and throughout the world
- Calley put on trial for mass murder in September 1969
- In November 1969 700,000 anti-war protesters demonstrated in Washington DC the largest political protest in American history
- Behaviour of troops at My Lai destroyed the idea of 'the moral right' that Americans might have felt they had about the war. Brave soldiers now seen as baby killers

NO

- 79% of public disapproved of Lieutenant Calley's court martial 20% refused to accept that what he had done was wrong
- Other events had similar effect to My Lai Massacre Chemical bombing napalm and Agent Orange all made Americans question who the good guys were.
- War costs - approximately half a million dollars to kill one Vietcong soldier - war wasted money which could be spent on combating poverty at home.
- Civil Rights issue young black men fought and died disproportionately
- Fulbright hearings

Conclusion

- Support the interpretation -Revelations of My Lai shocked American public - clearest evidence that the war had gone wrong. My Lai was a turning point in support for the war. For the first time public questioned whether America was right to impose its democracy on others. The credibility gap had been opened.

Question 7

The Tet offensive was a disaster for the communists. How far do you agree with this interpretation? Explain your answer (12 marks plus 3 spg)

YES

- People of South Vietnam did not rise up and join the Communists in their fight against the Americans
- The ARVN (Army of Republic of South Vietnam) did not crumble
- 47% of the people killed during the Tet Offensive were Vietcong, 24% were NVA and 22% were civilians. Just 5% were ARVN and 2% were US troops. This seems to show it was a massive success for the Americans
- As a result of what they saw as a failure, the North Vietnamese agreed to **peace talks** soon after the Tet Offensive ended.
- From now on, the NVA did most of the fighting, as the **Vietcong never recovered** from the setback of Tet.

NO

- Before the Tet Offensive, the Americans had been quite **confident** - maybe complacent - about the way the war was going. The US media had given the Americans back home the impression that the war would soon end.
- But, when the news of Tet appeared, many Americans felt that they had been **deceived** by the army. Vietcong troops were shown inside the US embassy in Saigon, which seemed to show that the war could not be won, or at least not for a long time.
- US quickly took towns captured in the offensive but in the process they used tremendous amounts of artillery and air power. Many civilians were killed the ancient city of Hue was destroyed
- Most Americans became convinced that the war had to be ended as soon as possible.
- Tet also played a large part in Johnson's decision to give up hopes of standing as President again. Richard Nixon, the Republican candidate, **promised to end the war** and was elected as President.

Conclusion

- Only partly agree with the interpretation. Tet may have been a disaster for the VC but General Westmoreland was unable to capitalise on the victory and was denied more troops. So the war was a disaster for the US too. More importantly Tet was a turning point for US because the media turned against the government. A credibility gap opened between what the government was telling people and what they believed to be true. An attitude grew up that the war was unwinnable.

Question 8

Nixons policy of Vietnamisation finally led to peace

How far do you agree with this interpretation? Explain your answer (12 marks plus 3 spg)

Yes

- Process of Vietnamisation - building up South Vietnamese forces and withdrawing troops began in April 1969 and ended in 1971. Almost 400.0000 troops left Vietnam

No

- Nixon increased bombing campaigns against North Vietnam to show he was not weak. He also invaded Vietcong bases in Cambodia causing outrage across the world even in the USA.
- Nixon began peace negotiations with North Vietnam. From early 1969 Kissinger had regular meetings with chief Vietnamese negotiator Le Duc Tho
- Nixon put pressure on the USSR and China. In 1969 USSR and China fell out. As a result both USSR and China tried to improve relations with the US. In 1970 Nixon began Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT) with the USSR to limit nuclear weapons. He asked Moscow to encourage North Vietnam to end the war. Nixon also started to improve relations with China. In Feb 1972 Nixon was invited to China. As with the USSR he asked China to pressure North Vietnam to end the war.

Conclusion

- Support the interpretation Vietnamisation did **finally** lead to peace but it took 4 years at the cost of thousands of lives before the peace agreement was signed in January 1973. Nixon described the peace agreement signed with the North Vietnamese as 'peace with honour' but it was a meaningless peace and within two years South Vietnam had fallen to the communists

Question 9

The USA lost the war and the Vietcong won?

How far do you agree with this interpretation? Explain your answer (12 marks plus 3 spg)

United States lost

- Failure of the US army to defeat Vietcong guerrillas
- Search and destroy body count tactics
- Young inexperienced troops low morale
- South Vietnam government corrupt and weak
- Opposition at home

Vietcong won

- The peasants supported and hid the Vietcong who wore ordinary black peasants pyjamas
- Vietcong guerrilla ambush tactics 'to the belt' using knowledge of area tunnels
- Supplied from China and Russia
- Bravery of North Vietnamese fighters

Conclusion

- Support the interpretation Vietnam represents a failure of US policy. The American military may not have been defeated but the American policy of containment was..... The war had shown that even the USA's vast military strength could not stop the spread of communism. America had failed politically. The US failed to stop South Vietnam going communist and the heavy bombing of Vietnam's neighbours Laos and Cambodia actually helped the communist forces in those countries to win support. By 1975 both Laos and Cambodia had communist governments. Instead of slowing it down American politics actually speeded up the domino effect in the region.

Pupil Responses

Below is a complete example of 12 mark answer that was awarded 12 marks plus 3 spg by the Board. This is pre 2015 so note the slightly simpler wording of the question. It says *do you agree* rather than *How far do you agree*.

“The My Lai Massacre (1968) was the main reason why American public opinion turned against US involvement in Vietnam.”

Do you agree? Explain your answer. 12 marks (plus 3 spg)

The My Lai massacre was a very important event in the war in terms of media coverage and public support for the war.

When the media first reported on My Lai, over 18 months after it had happened, many Americans simply didn't believe what they saw, but those who did were appalled and horrified. When they saw the horrors that the US troops had committed to the civilians at My Lai, people began to question the validity of the war. It also came into people's minds that the US had become no better than the people that they were fighting against. There were comparisons between what the troops did at My Lai and the actions of the Nazis. Soldiers who fought in Vietnam were referred to as 'baby killers'. This shows how this one event had changed the US public's opinion of the war and those who fought in it.

However there were also other reasons for this change in public opinion, such as the response of the US government to protests, and the Fulbright Hearings. An example of this is the Kent State protests, in 1972, where students were protesting about the invasion of Laos and Cambodia. The National Guard were called out to stop the protests and four students, who hadn't even been involved, were killed by the soldiers. This was hugely shocking for the US people, as one of the principles the USA was built on was the right to protest, and it seemed as though Vietnam had driven the government to such a point that they would not even allow protests.

The Fulbright Hearings were a formal enquiry into the validity of the invasion of Vietnam, where evidence was taken from 22 people including senators and other officials. This was greatly influential to the change of public opinion as it was no longer just 'hippies' protesting the war, but officials. One famous statement from the hearings was 'how can you ask a man to be the last man to die in Vietnam...to die for a mistake.' This was very powerful as officials were openly calling Vietnam a mistake and this showed the public that there had been no real need to invade Vietnam and therefore changed public opinion.

However despite these other reasons, I do think My Lai was the most important, as it came in 1968, before the others and when there was still general public support for the war. It showed the people of the USA the horrors that were committed in the war and also displayed the 'body count method' that allowed the US to claim they were winning the war. It showed people that the US viewed a dead Vietnamese as a dead VC (Vietcong). It disgusted people that the government allowed the soldiers to commit such atrocities to citizens and hide it, as they had attempted to cover it up before one of the soldiers involved had talked to the media about it. I feel that the fact it horrified and appalled the public in the way it did shows how it was the main reason for a change in American public opinion.

Media coverage of the Vietnam War was the most important reason for growing demands for peace from the American public.’ How far do you agree with this interpretation? Explain your answer. [12 marks] [SPaG 3 marks]

This interpretation looks as if it was written by someone who wanted to put the blame for American defeat on the media rather than on the US government or American citizens.

There are arguments for and against this interpretation.

Firstly, increased media coverage of the war meant that any mistake by the American forces was scrutinised by the public. For example, the Tet Offensive in 1968 when VC fighters took the American embassy, the American public were outraged that such a thing could happen and blamed it on the incompetence of the military. This led to demands for peace.

Secondly, TV coverage meant that people could see the horrors of modern day war, which made them wonder if they were fighting for the right cause. The famous images include a girl fleeing from a napalm attack (clothes blown away by the force) and the execution of a VC fighter in the Tet Offensive at point-blank range. Both of these images made the American public question whether the army was doing the right thing and conducting themselves properly – which led to demands for withdrawal.

Therefore the effects of TV and media coverage were very important. For instance, anti-war protests were often televised and were widespread throughout the US. It is estimated that 700,000 people marched in Washington overall and the televising of these protests made America seem on the brink of a revolution. The protests became more and more popular thanks to media coverage which only led to more and more demands for peace.

However, on the other hand, you could argue that this interpretation is not watertight. There would not have been a problem with TV and media coverage if the US army had conducted themselves properly in Vietnam. For example, Zippo raids were verging on inhumane, and search and destroy tactics were scrutinised critically. You could argue that these peace calls only came because the US army did not fight with dignity or decency – which is why coverage of the war appeared so bad. When, over a year after the event, details of the My Lai massacre were published, the whole of America was horrified. How could over 300 innocent women and children be massacred like this? How many other similar incidents were being covered up by the military?

Another reason you could argue for such huge calls for peace is the demoralisation of the US troops due to guerrilla tactics. When troops returned home the public could see how mentally scarred these troops were by their experiences (eg evident in the Fullbright hearings of 1971). Increasingly the US public wanted a withdrawal because they didn't want any more young lives to be ruined by the effects of a cruel war. There were even instances where the US troops fragged their own officers – more evidence that the US military was disintegrating and the war needed to be stopped.

Finally, you could argue that calls for peace came simply because the American public saw a lack of progress in a war in which they didn't understand why they were involved. The army had now been in Vietnam for nearly a decade and the US public already expected a victory. When the army had failed to stop the 'evil' Communists after nearly 10 years, some Americans saw that the best policy was to get out of an unwinnable war.

So overall, although TV and media coverage played a huge part in exposing the horror of Vietnam to the public, I believe that calls for peace in Vietnam would have come about no matter what US civilians were able to see. If anything, TV and media coverage sped up the

calls for peace, particularly in the early 1970s, but I cannot say that overall media coverage was the most important cause of the calls for peace.

Commentary

This is an excellent answer, not because of the level of detail (it is sufficient but not overwhelming) but because of the level of argument and understanding shown. The answer provides several reasons for and against the interpretation, and then tries to assess the validity of the interpretation itself by linking media coverage with other factors. It is interesting that the opening paragraph attempted to investigate the provenance strand in the mark scheme, but it is only at Level 2 standard. Overall, the essay is worth Level 4, 12 marks. Plus 3 spg marks

June 2015 Questions (with new wording)

- Why did the USA become involved in Vietnam in the years 1954-1966? (8 marks)
- The Tet offensive was the main reason the USA lost the Vietnam War. How far do you agree with this interpretation? Explain your answer (12 marks plus 3 spg)