



RESEARCH ARTICLE

HOW DID THE TET OFFENSIVE SERVE AS A PIVOTAL MOMENT THAT ALTERED THE COURSE OF THE VIETNAM WAR FOR THE UNITED STATES?

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Manuscript Info

Manuscript History

Received: 22 January 2024

Final Accepted: 24 February 2024

Published: March 2024

Abstract

The Tet Offensive of 1968 stands as a watershed moment in the Vietnam War which compelled the United States to reconsider and alter its strategy. By analyzing the objectives, planning and execution of the offensive, this paper aims to shed light on how the Tet Offensive was successful in exploiting and exposing the gap between the official narratives and on-the-ground realities in America, which would in turn affect subsequent war policy decisions. Moreover, this paper examines how the Tet Offensive was significant in serving as a pivotal moment that altered the course of the war for the United States due to its role in influencing American public opinion, military strategies, political dynamics as well as the relationship between the U.S and South Vietnam.

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Introduction:-

Historical Context

What began in 1949 as a strategic move to assist the French in countering the Viet Minh, a Communist nationalist movement in Vietnam, eventually escalated, compelling the United States to become deeply embroiled in a comprehensive military conflict. Hence, the Vietnam War can be characterized as a complex conflict intertwined with Cold War geopolitics with the United States, motivated by events like Mao's ascent to power in China in 1949, strongly persisting in its commitment to the policy of containment. Initially, the Johnson administration made considerable efforts to restrict the scope of the war¹ but the unyielding determination of the North Vietnamese ultimately ensured that the U.S had greatly escalated its level of engagement. By the end of 1967, the U.S had incurred over sixteen thousand deaths since 1960, with the majority of casualties occurring following the American escalation in 1964-65.² The conflict had evolved into a gruesome stalemate³ with neither side achieving a decisive advantage. As the demand for progress in the war and the stabilization of the South Vietnamese government intensified in the U.S, a corresponding pressure mounted in North Vietnam to bring about a successful close to the conflict². It was against this backdrop that the Tet Offensive was launched in January, 1968.

North Vietnamese Objectives

In order to understand how significant the Tet Offensive was in altering the course of the war for the U.S, it is first important to understand the intentions of the North Vietnamese and why they chose to launch this particular campaign.

In 1967, the North Vietnamese government faced a critical decision that would significantly impact the course of the war. The dilemma lay in choosing between a strategy of endurance, wherein they would rely on outlasting the United States while undermining the South Vietnamese government, or launching a massive offensive aimed at

delivering a severe blow to American and South Vietnamese morales.² The latter approach sought to expedite a negotiated settlement leading to an earlier withdrawal of American forces which seemed more favorable given that it would quickly allow the North Vietnamese leadership to successfully achieve the unification of Vietnam. The Thirteenth Party Plenum cited a need to achieve a “decisive victory in a relatively short period of time”⁴ which suggests that their main objective was to end the stalemate by delivering “thundering blows” to the enemy⁵, allowing them to secure a strategic advantage at the earliest opportunity.

While this outcome was most desirable, achieving a “decisive victory” may not have been the sole military objective. Instead, they might have intended to convey to Washington that a military victory was unattainable, compelling the United States to confront a choice between escalating the conflict or disengaging from it.⁶ Therefore, it can also be suggested that their objective had been to shift the focus of the war from the battlefield to the negotiation table. By doing so, the North Vietnamese aimed to position themselves advantageously and force the U.S to pursue a settlement on terms more favorable to the communist cause.

Another objective may have been to create a rift between South Vietnam and the American government. Their plan involved orchestrating an offensive with the aim of inciting a widespread uprising against the South Vietnamese government.² The North Vietnamese general, Nguyen Giap, clearly perceived the divisions between the United States and South Vietnam and his masterstroke, the Tet Offensive, was designed to exploit them.⁷ Tensions between Americans and the Vietnamese manifested in various ways, including Vietnamese resentment towards perceived American condescension and the imposition of American methods. Questions arose about how South Vietnam could preserve its identity when American influence extended across its economy to the manner of waging the war. Recognizing this, Giap strategically aimed to intensify discord between Americans and South Vietnamese, fostering disunity among the opposition. The Tet Offensive targeted the vulnerable link, South Vietnam, with the intention of sparking a mass uprising and precipitating the collapse of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), thereby limiting the capacity of the United States to sustain the war. Furthermore, this objective also aimed to weaken American trust in the South Vietnamese government⁸, proving how it was incapable of controlling its citizens and maintaining stability. In fact, in 1965, the Johnson administration concluded that the Government of South Vietnam and its military could not successfully fight the National Liberation Front insurgency and a successful communist offensive would help to deepen this frustration, creating heightened tensions.

Finally, a potential objective of this offensive might have been to undermine U.S. claims of progress⁸, as the North Vietnamese realized that doing so could fuel the anti-war movement in America. Within the United States, the protracted nature of the war and revelations exposing the government's lack of transparency regarding the conflict contributed to a decline in public support for the Johnson administration.³ A sense of distrust was sown as many Americans perceived a disparity between the White House's public assurances of potential victory and the reality conveyed by journalists covering the war, describing it as a stalemate. At this point of time, a successful communist offensive could have exacerbated the growing discontent among the American public and the lack of support back home may have compelled the U.S. administration to reconsider its level of involvement in the conflict. Exploiting America's political instability would have served the North Vietnamese interest, providing them with a strategic advantage in the broader context of the war.

With these objectives in mind, the North Vietnamese planned the offensive accordingly and the fact that they intended to ensure that they gained the upper hand by undermining the U.S, whether it be through a decisive military victory or by deepening tensions with the Vietnamese, proves that the Tet Offensive would serve as an event that would bear severe consequences for the American war policy.

North Vietnamese strategies used to achieve their objectives

The strategic planning behind the Tet Offensive played an essential role in making it a turning point in the Vietnam War. The nature and scope of the campaign were instrumental in shattering the prevailing perception of substantial progress made by the United States, which would in turn, shift public opinion and influence the American strategy.

The element of surprise had been crucial in ensuring that American troops remained unaware of the impending events during the Tet Offensive. The strategic timing of the campaign was a key contributing factor to this element of surprise, as Vietnam's Tet holiday was a period marked not only by festivities, feasts, and fireworks but also by familial worship at ancestral altars. Traditionally, both sides in the war had observed cease-fires over the Tet holiday, therefore, the North Vietnamese calculated that if the timing coincided with Tet, it would result in a

significant number of South Vietnamese army and national police personnel being on leave. This, in turn, would catch Saigon unprepared for a countrywide attack. Moreover the decision to exploit the Tet truce and launch the offensive during a time of celebration proved advantageous, as the movement of South Vietnamese National Liberation Forces (NLF), supporting the communist forces, could be disguised amidst the influx of Vietnamese traveling to spend the festival with their relatives. These forces could easily blend in as ordinary villagers, concealing deadly weapons in carts.²⁵ The exploitation of the Tet truce ensured that the initial attacks stunned both American and South Vietnamese troops, preventing a swift and coordinated response and this helped the North Vietnamese to temporarily gain the upper hand, a crucial factor in discrediting the American notion that the war was drawing to a close.

Adding to this element of surprise, North Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap orchestrated a preparatory phase commencing in 1967. During this preliminary stage, targeted attacks were launched on outlying regions along South Vietnam's borders with Cambodia and Laos. The objective was to lure American and South Vietnamese forces away from densely populated urban centers. By doing so, Giap aimed to leave cities and towns vulnerable, allowing his troops to refine their combat skills, amass weapons caches in staging areas for the forthcoming assault on urban areas, and increase American casualties.² The strategic move by Giap to entice the enemy into a conventional battle in remote, sparsely populated areas where the North Vietnamese could leverage their superior weaponry delighted General Westmoreland. In response, Westmoreland deployed massive firepower, with B-52s conducting 300 missions and over 2,000 fighter-bombers carrying out assaults, bombarding enemy positions with an onslaught of bombs. Estimates of communist casualties during the three months leading up to Tet bolstered Westmoreland's optimism, leading him to declare during a visit to Washington in November that "the enemy's hopes are bankrupt."⁶ However, unbeknownst to Westmoreland, this was merely the prelude to a much larger offensive.

The most significant diversionary attack organized by the communists occurred with their siege of Khe Sanh, prompting General Westmoreland to deploy 6,000 U.S. Marines to the region. Westmoreland's counterattack plan included substantial bombing and the potential deployment of tactical nuclear weapons. The feigned threat at Khe Sanh compelled a significant movement of U.S. troops to the northern region, while the security responsibility for the Saigon area was handed over to ARVN forces. This reallocation, born out of necessity, also served as a gesture of confidence in the Vietnamese military. Exploiting the resultant lax security, Viet Cong attack teams successfully transported arms, ammunition, and explosives into the city from a base located 30 miles north of Saigon. As Tet approached, over half of the ARVN forces were granted leave in late January to celebrate the holiday with their families. Seizing this opportunity, the North Vietnamese launched a full-scale offensive on January 31, 1968, with simultaneous attacks on five major cities, 36 provincial capitals, 64 district capitals, and numerous villages. The intensity and widespread scope of the offensive caught General Westmoreland and other U.S. military leaders in Vietnam completely off guard.⁹

Finally, another strategy of the North Vietnamese plan was the decision to launch a countrywide assault, targeting the South Vietnamese cities. This aimed to showcase their capability to confront the U.S. military on multiple fronts. Additionally, by shifting the focus of the war to urban areas, the communists sought to alleviate pressure on the liberated regions in the countryside. The United States, through its military actions, had been causing considerable devastation in rural areas, prompting the local population to seek refuge in urban centers for safety. This mass migration of refugees deprived the insurgency of crucial manpower, tax revenue, and resources. In choosing to attack towns and cities, the insurgents intended to bring the horrors of war to urban areas, making them as insecure and inhospitable as the villages.⁶ The hope was to induce the urban population to flee, further weakening the insurgency's adversaries.

Furthermore, this assault on urban areas was strategically designed to trigger an insurrection against the Americans. To amplify this impact, a concurrent massive propaganda campaign was planned, intending to persuade southern troops to rally to the Communist side. The comprehensive approach aimed to create a multifaceted challenge for the U.S. forces and their South Vietnamese allies during the Tet Offensive.

The strategy of the North Vietnamese during the Tet Offensive was significant in making this particular campaign a turning point of the war. The strategic timing and success of the Tet Offensive would begin to erode the confidence of U.S. military leaders and policymakers. It also prompted a reassessment of the feasibility of achieving a decisive military victory, leading to a shift in focus from escalation to negotiation and de-escalation. The rest of this research paper covers the impact of this well-thought strategy in depth.

Impact of the Tet Offensive on: American public opinion

Before the launch of the Tet Offensive in 1968, the American public had already begun expressing their disapproval of the Vietnam conflict in the face of hollow government claims that the war was nearing an end. Even those who had initially been in favor of the war effort were becoming increasingly disillusioned with Johnson's failure to declare a decisive victory, prolonging the conflict.³ At this crucial point, amidst wavering public opinion, the Tet Offensive served as irrefutable evidence that shattered Westmoreland's claims of how the enemy "is certainly losing."¹⁰ What was ironic about the offensive was that its unexpected nature "led to a psychological defeat in the face of a genuine military victory."¹¹ In fact, the reason why the Tet Offensive played such a pivotal role that affected the course of the war was because of the detrimental impact it had on the American public opinion, forcing the government to reevaluate its war policy for the first time in three years.¹² This effect of the Tet offensive was reflected in the public's change in preference from 'hawk' ('step up our military effort') to 'dove' ('reduce our military effort') between the January and March 1968 Gallup polls and another Tet-related change was the decline from one-half to one-third in the proportion of Americans who thought that the U.S. was 'making progress' in Vietnam.¹³ Consequently, several significant and powerful figures realized that the American public would be unwilling "to go on paying the price in casualties and dollars for continuing the war indefinitely in Vietnam."¹⁴ Secretary of Defense, Clark Clifford, and other key advisors predicted that a rebellion would break out unless there was a clear indication of imminent success.

Furthermore, the antiwar movement among the GI personnel grew swiftly, gained better organization, and established stronger ties with the civilian movement in the aftermath of the Tet Offensive. Following the siege of Khe Sanh, which marked a "breaking point" in army response,¹⁵ the morale and discipline of American troops deteriorated, leading them to openly voice their resentment and discontent.

Even the media took an increasingly unfavorable view of U.S. policy.¹⁶ Reporters refused to believe the official statements that were released by the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) during and after the Tet Offensive and the media coverage tended to reflect their suspicions.³ This can be traced back to the credibility gap that emerged earlier, a result of conflicting information from the MACV, the Pentagon, and President Johnson himself, and press-military relations having already been strained before 1968, were further exacerbated by the Tet Offensive. As the first war covered extensively on U.S. television, the course of the Vietnam War was greatly influenced by media coverage and their negative portrayal of the Tet Offensive only added to the public's growing anti-war sentiment, helping to make it an event that would alter the course of the war.

Hence it can be concluded, the Tet Offensive was significant in serving as a critical turning point because it starkly revealed the true complexities of the war, prompting a reassessment of the nation's commitment.¹⁴ Despite previous assurances from political and military leaders that the Communist forces were weakening, the public was painfully taken aback when they witnessed how the enemy remained capable of large-scale offenses and this revelation reinforced public disillusionment with the war. The accelerating anti war sentiments and increasing skepticism about the U.S. involvement in Vietnam not only contributed to a growing anti war movement, with protests and demonstrations becoming more widespread across the United States, but it also highlighted the challenges and costs associated with the conflict. Consequently, this period of heightened awareness would lead to notable political and military changes, which is explored in the later sections.

American military strategy

The Tet Offensive in 1968 was responsible for proving that the optimistic claims of General Westmoreland had been highly misleading. Despite an increasing number of Americans in favor of reducing military efforts in Vietnam,¹³ General Westmoreland sought approval for the mobilization of more troops. While acknowledging the Tet Offensive as a "bold move by the enemy," he perceived that Hanoi had exposed itself to a potential decisive counterattack.¹⁷ Reflecting on Tet, Westmoreland noted both its temporary risks and the opportunities it presented, emphasizing the chance to inflict heavier casualties on the enemy. Furthermore, he believed that a robust mobilization effort would provide a psychological edge over Hanoi, serving as a visible demonstration of the United States' commitment and resolve. This strategic shift aimed to convey to Hanoi that their ongoing efforts were ultimately futile.¹⁷

Dispatched by the President, General Earl Wheeler, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, traveled to Saigon on 23 February to understand the situation firsthand, consulting with Westmoreland. In the end, the two generals formulated a troop request amounting to 206,000, to be phased in three increments throughout the remainder of 1968.¹⁷ The challenge with this proposal stemmed from the significant strain on American forces globally, with

Vietnam consuming a substantial portion of manpower resources.² The dilemma lay in the domestic political ramifications for the Johnson administration associated with both options: expanding the draft or mobilizing the reserves. However, choosing to call up reserves appeared to be the less politically costly alternative.

Taking this into consideration, Johnson assigned Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford to establish a committee to reassess Westmoreland's request. The committee's findings indicated that the existing attrition strategy was ineffective, and additional troops would not hasten the conclusion of the war. Complicating matters, on March 10, news of the troop request leaked to the press, creating a conflicting narrative for the already skeptical American public, raising the question: if the Johnson administration had portrayed the Tet Offensive as an American victory, why was there a perceived necessity for more troops?²

In order to change Johnson's perception of the war, Clifford suggested convening a group of influential elder statesmen, including among others, Dean Acheson, Secretary of State under Truman; Arthur Goldberg, the president's envoy to the United Nations; and Douglas Dillon, a New York banker who had served both Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy. These individuals, known as the "wise men" of the Eastern establishment, were influential figures with the ability to navigate prestigious roles both inside and outside government, exerting considerable influence over the president.⁶ With Johnson's approval, this assembly convened in Washington in March 1968, advising the President that the withdrawal of American troops was imperative. They also recommended ceasing the bombing of North Vietnam with the aim of initiating meaningful negotiations with the North Vietnamese.²

In light of these factors, along with the growing anti-war movement and critical media, Johnson ultimately made the decision to reject Westmoreland's request for troop increases. Instead, he chose to restrict U.S. airstrikes against North Vietnam to the region below the 20th parallel, effectively ruling out bombardments over 90 percent of North Vietnamese territory, in hopes of initiating peace talks with North Vietnam.⁶ While the President did not abandon the objective of securing a stable, noncommunist South Vietnam, he chose to pursue this policy without resorting to the mobilization of reserves, expanding bombing in North Vietnam, or broadening the geographic scope of the war.¹⁷

Hence, the Tet Offensive had been significant in triggering a series of events and responses that would dramatically change the American military strategy to one where the American leadership became more cautious about expanding the war into North Vietnam and sought ways to de-escalate. By exposing the limitations of the existing U.S. strategy, which was heavily focused on wearing down the enemy through superior firepower, Tet highlighted that the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces were still capable of launching large-scale offensives despite significant losses. Moreover, the offensive prompted a shift towards a more comprehensive and nuanced approach that considered political and social factors alongside traditional military considerations. This change would prove vital in altering the course of the war for the United States as a revised military strategy could lead to potentially unforeseen outcomes, given that the administration had adhered to a highly different military strategy for so long.

Political changes

"I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President," were the words of Lyndon B. Johnson on March 31, 1968, as he decided not to seek reelection.¹⁸ Walter Cronkite, the CBS Evening News anchorman, had flown to South Vietnam and after interviewing Marines during the fighting had declared "We have been too often disappointed by the optimism of the American leaders." It was this report that had a significant impact on Johnson and he reportedly remarked to his press secretary, "If I've lost Cronkite, I've lost middle America."³ Ironically, approval of President Johnson's handling of the Vietnam situation increased by 15 percentage points in the month after announcing a partial halt of the bombing campaign in North Vietnam and expressing readiness to engage in negotiations for a resolution to the war.¹³ However, this upswing in approval held little significance, given that he had already announced his decision against reelection.

With the Presidential election of 1968 around the corner, former vice president Richard Nixon received the Republican nomination for presidency, claiming that a military conclusion to the conflict would be imminent within two to four years if his suggestions were followed. Meanwhile, the Democratic Party splintered over the war issue. Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy won most of the primaries in spring but Kennedy was assassinated, providing an opportunity for the entry of Hubert Humphrey. In August, he won the Democratic Party's nomination at the national convention in Chicago, which was marred by blood street battles between antiwar protestors and

Chicago police. Television managed to capture this 'police riot' and about 90 million Americans were seeing images of televised violence.²⁰ These television images of violence paired with the fact that Humphrey was too closely identified with Lyndon Johnson's failed policies in Vietnam defined the collapse of party unity. Consequently, Richard Nixon was elected president of the United States on November 5, 1968 and this change in administration would have major repercussions.

President Richard M. Nixon came into office in January 1969 with a new set of foreign-policy principles that were later dubbed the "Nixon Doctrine." In Vietnam, this doctrine was implemented through "Vietnamization", by which he intended to withdraw American troops from Vietnam while simultaneously defending South Vietnam. However, he did not begin to implement Vietnamization in earnest until many months into his presidency, and he did so only after other components of his strategy failed to produce victory and as members of his own administration and the public demanded that he withdraw American troops more rapidly.²¹

The change in American leadership triggered by the Tet Offensive would therefore result in a new approach to the war, drastically altering its course. For instance, Nixon's decision to secretly extend the war into Cambodia under Operation Menu, represented for him, and for his Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, a daring maneuver that would allow the United States to reclaim the strategic initiative, impose substantial pressure on North Vietnam, provide a window for the Vietnamization process, and offer Hanoi an incentive to consider concessions. But, this was far from the case since the Cambodia invasion that commenced on April 29, 1970, backfired badly, giving new life to the antiwar movement and leading to the suspension of the Paris peace talks while producing minimal military advances.²²

The Tet Offensive had played a major role in Johnson's decision not to seek reelection amidst increasing lack of support for his policies and the consequences of this would in turn, mark a turning point of the war. Before announcing his decision, Johnson had dispatched diplomat Averell Harriman to Paris to meet with North Vietnam's Foreign Minister Xuan Thuy to discuss a settlement of the war. More meetings—known as the Paris peace talks—between U.S. and North Vietnamese delegates would be held and there was a sense of suspended animation as the scene of action shifted to Paris, where the peace-talks attracted worldwide attention, and to Washington, where the administration of Richard Nixon charted a new course for Vietnam.⁶

U.S. and South Vietnam relations

The Tet Offensive exacerbated existing tensions and suspicions between the United States and South Vietnam, placing considerable pressure on each. The widespread physical devastation during Tet intensified Vietnamese resentment towards the United States and the already limited ability of Americans to distinguish between friend and foe was completely compromised amidst the fury of the offensive. American soldiers found it challenging to identify the enemy in a nation torn by civil war²³ so the extensive and indiscriminate application of firepower resulted in the loss of both friends and foes, fostering animosity and fear towards Americans among hundreds of the South Vietnamese people.⁷

These tensions, aggravated by the Tet offensive, would continue to escalate during Vietnamization, when resentment among the GIs grew into outright hostility. The morale of the U.S. Army experienced a severe decline, leading some Americans to express their frustration on the Vietnamese population. Soldiers engaged in firing weapons at civilians, throwing rocks and cans at villagers, and driving vehicles recklessly, posing life-threatening situations. There was a growing tendency among GIs to refer to the United States and other locations outside Vietnam as "the world," creating a perception that Vietnam was on a different planet. American author, Jonathan Schell, best explained the irony that these soldiers had been deployed to safeguard the South Vietnamese, only to discover that their assistance was not welcomed.²³

Another consequence of the Tet offensive was that it delegitimized the South Vietnamese military in the eyes of many Americans, especially some top officials. Already skeptical about the effectiveness of South Vietnam's forces in delivering significant blows to the enemy, the American administration also started to doubt the viability of the Saigon government following the ease with which the enemy penetrated the centers of the U.S.-South Vietnamese power during Tet. Furthermore, the ruthless street execution of a Vietcong captive by the Saigon police chief, captured vividly by photographer Eddie Adams and broadcasted on NBC television, created a significant disconnect between the United States and its ally. White House staffer Harry McPherson remembered that the incident

symbolized to him "that we were involved up to our necks in a war among very alien peoples with whom we shared few values."⁷

As the American administration initiated peace talks in the aftermath of Tet, the South Vietnamese voiced their protest, contending that they were pushed into negotiations prematurely and expressing deep concerns that they would be vulnerable to the NLF and North Vietnam. According to their assertions, American peace initiatives were perceived as prioritizing the interests of the United States, with little regard for the necessities of South Vietnam, a nation facing a critical threat to its survival.⁷

Moreover, during the Tet Offensive and the subsequent months, Saigon buzzed with political speculation regarding the reasons behind the Viet Cong's attack and whether the United States had collaborated with them, allowing the offensive to take place. The circulation and widespread acceptance of this unfounded rumor, coupled with its apparent plausibility to many individuals, revealed the population's astonishment at the Tet Offensive and its awareness of issues such as the potential for peace negotiations between the United States and Hanoi. It also signaled the heightened political sensitivity and fear within certain groups about the prospect of American troop withdrawal, which they viewed as a U.S. "sellout" to the Viet Cong.²⁴

Therefore, it becomes evident that the Tet Offensive dealt a significant blow to U.S.-South Vietnam relations, marking a turning point of the war as the United States found itself unable to craft its strategy while simultaneously prioritizing the best interests of South Vietnam. The U.S. seemed to be no longer willing to make sacrifices and compromises, leading to the mutual blame between the allies intensified. The South Vietnamese claimed that the United States had fostered dependence and then abandoned them but the Americans, unwilling to admit that its sacrifices had been futile, attributed their setbacks to Saigon's incompetence and reluctance to heed U.S. counsel. They consoled themselves with the belief that they had provided sufficient support for the South Vietnamese to defend themselves and that from now on, they would limit their involvement- a process that determined a new outcome for the war.

Conclusion:-

In conclusion, the Tet Offensive of 1968 played a highly significant role in altering the course of the war for the United States. The North Vietnamese launched this campaign with the intention of inflicting a complete defeat on the United States but while this objective may not have been achieved and the South Vietnamese did not rise up against the government, they succeeded in ensuring that the U.S. began to consider peace negotiations by exploiting the lack of public support back home. The North Vietnamese strategically timed the offensive, with the element of surprise and scale of the attack taking the United States aback. This would serve to have major ramifications as the Tet Offensive shattered the perception that the war was nearing an end. Consequently, the tensions between the public and the administration rose which forced the American leadership to reevaluate their war policy as well as their military strategy. With Nixon taking office, the political changes caused by the offensive would also ensure that the United States followed a much different approach as compared to the previous one. Moreover, the Tet Offensive led to a sense of growing mistrust and alienation between the United States and South Vietnam, with the U.S. eager to withdraw completely from the conflict, leaving the South Vietnamese feeling betrayed. The social, military, political and diplomatic effects of the Tet Offensive on the United States would prove to be a pivotal moment that marked the beginning of the end of U.S involvement in the Vietnam War.

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