

IRAQ and VIETNAM

More Similarities than You Thought

Vietnam was a war fought more than 30 years ago in the jungles of Southeast Asia. Iraq is a war fought in the cities and deserts of the Middle East.

Vietnam was fought purportedly as part of the larger battle against international communism. Iraq is being fought purportedly as part of a larger war on international terrorism.

But there are many similarities:

IRAQ	VIETNAM	SHARED CHARACTERISTIC
✓	✓	Administration misled Congress and the public to get the United States into the conflict
✓ (Weapons of mass destruction)	✓ (Gulf of Tonkin)	Disingenuous reasons for war (false <i>causus belli</i>)
✓	✓	Government makes frequent, false claims of progress
✓	✓	War turns into a quagmire
✓	✓	Huge budgetary costs
✓	✓	Budget costs not paid for, increasing US deficit
✓	✓	Low level of American military deaths in early stages of the conflict
✓	✓	"Staying the course" justified in part by previous military casualties
✓	✓	Insurgents motivated in part by foreign occupiers
✓	✓	Lack of understanding of history and culture of the other country
✓ (Terrorism)	✓ (Communism)	War is justified and framed in the context of a larger struggle
✓	✓	Many "collateral" deaths of innocent civilians
✓	✓	U.S. is uncertain about number of civilian casualties
✓	✓	Use of enemy body counts to demonstrate progress
✓	✓	War used as an election issue
✓	✓	War undermines U.S. position in the world as rest of world opposes and refuses to participate
✓	✓	Little support from U.S. allies
✓	✓	War erodes fighting capability of American military
✓	✓	Lowering standards for military recruitment
✓	✓	Failure to understand the limitations of high tech military equipment and doctrine
✓	✓	Election results which have little effect on the situation on the ground are cited as evidence of progress
✓	✓	Administration frequently claims that insurgents are politically isolated and do not reflect sentiments of the general population
✓	✓	Public support turns into disenchantment and opposition
✓	✓	No exit strategy or timeframe for ending the war

"How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake."

— JOHN KERRY, APRIL 22, 1971