

The Scar That Binds

Samantha Clayton

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How Did American Culture Grapple With The Vietnam War?

On the verge of the Vietnamese War, American culture was greatly affected where their way of life was altered by ceasing some cultural practices, advancing, or adding into their way of life. Keith Beattie examines the central metaphors of the Vietnamese War and its full manifestation in American culture and life in his book "The Scar That Binds: American Culture and the Vietnam War." Keith incorporates cultural criticism and a blending history in a lucid style to discuss the unity that emerged through comprehensive cultural and rhetorical reference to the War. Keith reveals "the wound," "the voice," and "the home" of the veteran as the three dominant themes of her ideology. The scar that binds thus follows chronological aspects to illustrate the compelling interpretation of the ideology of unity in the American culture (Keith, 1998). The scar that binds indicates the positive implications the wounds of the Vietnamese War imposed on the American culture. It is from this perception that this essay will analyze how the Vietnamese War led the American culture to grapple.

The main aim of America's involvement in the Vietnamese War was to spread its ideology of liberty to everyone. The reworking of America within its history of the operation of ideological strategies of unity was the ultimate outcome of her involvement in the War. The American government, through President J. F. Kennedy, suggested that America was ready to support its allies, destroy its enemies, and go to unmeasurable extent to spread its ideologies of liberty to around the world. The extent to which America went to safeguard its ideologies and make its point reverberated well with the American culture from the Vietnamese war era to the present age. Keith suggested that America's voice to police the globe is a reckoning voice on its unity and cultural way of life (Keith, 1998). Additionally, American culture has been directed towards caring and popping eyes on countries involved with dictatorship and human abuse. The Vietnamese War greatly influenced their relentless efforts to bring peace across the globe.

Foreign policy is an essential aspect of American culture. The political sphere of the American government has a foreign policy as one of the largest sectors in its major decision making. The cultural change may have evolved or strengthened from the Vietnamese War. The two presidents involved in the War, Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, had choices of engaging or withdrawing from the War. However, the two presidents portrayed their interest in foreign policy since it affected the American way of life, either economically or politically. There was much increase in funding, motivation, and push to ensure that communists never spread in the Southern China.

Additionally, America wanted to send a clear message to be pinpointed by other leaders who had the same intentions. Until now, foreign policy in America is a crucial part of their cultural way of life. Engaging in outside matters ensures America is safe, thus ensuring that “the wound” will not be open again, like in the Vietnamese War. Additionally, Keith suggests that the veterans tried to have a home in Vietnam, where they spent most of their time. They were rather fighting to ensure peace and stability in the area for Vietnamese, Americans, and other people to cohabitate peacefully.

Public opinion is very prevalent in American culture today. Public opinion is grounded on liberty and democracy, which guides the way of life for the American people. Public discourse is essential in America since it signifies that the government's power rests in the hands of the people. WWI and WWII were characterized by greater inhumanity, tricks, and dictatorship. Many leaders did what they felt was appropriate to win the War. The citizens were never consulted or never knew what was really happening in the battlefield. The Vietnamese War was a paradigm shift in warfare-media-coverage and citizens' involvement. The media played a significant role in depicting incidences of the War directly from the war field. Americans were able to see how fellow Americans underwent unbearable challenges to fight for Americans' ideologies. The chemicals used in the War were targeted to the Vietnamese, but most American soldiers added up being the collateral damage of their own weapons. The War led to the death of about 3 million people with the inclusion of 58,000 American soldiers (Keith, 1998). The American people started demonstrating and terming the War as a "mistake" these demonstrations formed some of

the causes for America's withdrawal from the War. Today, the government has to consider “the voice” of American people before engaging in such a massive conflict. The public opinion thus creates the voice of the people, which makes them feel appreciated and patriotic for the American regime. Some media presentations termed the War as "the wound that will never heal." However, it was from these wounds that America got the strength to speak with one voice and call of the conflict.

Beattie cites several cultural sites from the post-Vietnamese era, which have never been approved. In contrast, the Vietnamese were approved and now shapes the history of American political and cultural perseverance to external forces. History is a treasured thing in American culture (Keith, 1998). The American civilization is based on a continuous history of faults which guides their recent actions. Vietnamese War shaped the American and future prospects on such an engagement. Some of the memorial sites have been destroyed depicting pain they cause to the living, while others promoted to always be a landmark for the losses and successes America achieved. America has worked to erect several Vietnamese war memorial sites all across the country, which brings together politicians, historians, veterans, and their families for collective dialogue. Keith cites the contours that memorial sites have buried, which every American relates to and which works to ensure patriotism.

The Vietnamese War used various weaponry and tactics from both sides. Beattie cites uses of sophisticated warfare aimed at the total destruction of both sides. However, American soldiers suffered a great deal of mental and physical destruction. Most of the veterans suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder PTSD. These veterans were assisted using therapy. Assistive therapy becomes a way of addressing both the physical and mental challenges for veterans in America for a higher goal of human wellness (Keith, 1998). Today therapy is very prevalent in the United States, where several people with both physical and mental problems get better treatment.

The escalation of the Vietnamese War led to the initiation of an operation called "Americanization of the war" by President Johnson. The move led to deployment of nearly 400,000 us troops, which was a large number of military officers in a foreign land. The Americans dropped over

20,000,000 of Agent Orange and napalm chemical weapons were brutal, shocking, and indiscriminate towards the Vietnamese people as they caused great destructions in the land (Keith, 1998). There was also, the use of air artillery by the American troops where some American soldiers were used as baits to draw out the enemy, and also escalation; Ho Chi Minh ordered change in tactics for the Vietnamese soldiers terming unequal odds with Americans and adopted Guerilla tactic where they would pick battles they would win and used booby traps, mines, artillery shells, grenades and wearing no uniforms. The War thus led to a huge focus on America's success in the War by the American people. From this description, the theme of unity is depicted, which was cemented even further when America lost and had to withdraw its soldiers from Vietnam. Fighting together and crying together as the wounded veterans returned home.

The Vietnamese war caused pain and suffering to the American people. Following the media and photos from the battlefield, Americans realized that the Americans were undergoing much suffering. The weapons used were very hostile, not only to Vietcong and Vietnamese civilians but to the American soldiers. Several service members lost their lives and others sustained serious and permanent injuries. The pain of several families inflicted the same on other Americans who felt obliged for the happenings of the war. The incidents of the conflict led Americans to demonstrate for the American government to call off the fight. The demonstrations spread over the whole country as more casualties were brought in while deaths increased. What the war did was to unite the Americans. The entire country bared the responsibilities of the losses incurred during the war. The economic burden was huge due to the increased funding of military operations. However, America realized that they are one regardless of their increased differentiation in terms of race, ethnicity, social status, religion, and political affiliation. Keith cited that America gained the voice to propel their agenda, opinion and the country's dream collectively. The scar from the war thus acted as a unifying factor for Americans (Keith, 1998). On the verge of despair and hopelessness, the American people become more unified than ever before, which indicated how being an America goes beyond their increased differentiation. Additionally, Americans were able to visualize the American dream, which is based on hard work and patriotism.

Vietnamese War is the conflict that has had the greatest number of United States troops outside her borders in America's warfare history. American troops in Vietnam were almost half a million higher than in any other conflict ever witnessed in the world. Americans were dedicated and ready to lose it all to win in this War. Contrary to their expectations, they lost the War, and Vietnam became a communist. However, the message America wanted to spread was vividly pinpointed by other leaders across the globe who had such intentions. Therefore, the War was not a total loss. It was in these conflicts when America witnessed that it had to ensure that no conflict will make it send such huge numbers of their troops outside America. Although several American troops are still outside the American soil, the numbers are usually regulated to ensure no such numbers will ever be witnessed in a foreign land. Keith's metaphor of "Home" was instilled in the American culture, which has led to the minimization of its troops in foreign countries (Keith, 1998).

In conclusion, "The Scar that Binds" depicts unity ensured by the Vietnamese War and impacts on the American culture. Americans learned that it was necessary to engage in foreign policies and stand firm to spread their ideologies. Although there were many wounded physically and mentally, everyone worked hard to ensure that their voices were heard and their homes prepared to incorporate their increased challenges and ensure future prosperity. After the War, Americans worked hard to ensure that the veterans were taken care of and that they had a safe place to call home. The War thus enhanced America's culture, and although much pain permits, it created more unity than breakages in the United States' culture.

References

Keith Beattie (1998). *The Scar That Binds: American Culture and the Vietnam War* (New York: New York University Press).