Causes of USA failure/withdrawal from Vietnam

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| Point | Evidence | Explain |
| Public opinion  (Media and protests) | This was the first televised war and people saw for the first time the realities of war, for example the massacre at My Lai. The media had a significant impact. It showed children being burned by napalm and people in villages massacred. Many students protested against the war, reaching their height 1968-70, with 700000 people attending a demonstration in Washington DC in 1969. | Public opinion was changing. People were horrified at the barbaric nature of American attacks public opinion turned. It led to open criticism of Johnson – “Hey, Hey, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today”.  The protests raised awareness of the unhappiness of many people in relation to the war. The killing of 4 students at Kent University outraged the public and media and meant the government lost even more support. |
| Military failure (Casualties) | Casualties were high. Over 50,000 troops were to lose their lives. By 1968, 300 were dying each week. Most Americans knew a relative or friend who had died, was affected mentally or on drugs. | The American public saw body bag after body bag being returned home and did not see the army making any progress. People were angry that people were dying for a war that many felt was nothing to do with America. |
| Military failure (Cost of war) | . There were nearly 500,000 troops in Vietnam and America was spending between $20 and $30 billion a year yet little impression was being made and the Vietcong were still able to launch major offensives, like the Tet offensive in 1968. This huge spending meant cutbacks in spending on social reform. In 1967 ‘Life Magazine’ calculated it cost $400,000 for each Vietcong guerrilla killed. | People were annoyed that the government were spending more on a war that many did not support rather than on their own country. Which at the time was facing serious poverty and social divisions. |
| Military failure (tactics) | The Vietcong were no match for the American forces in open warfare and so developed guerrilla tactics. The principles were simple. Retreat when the enemy attacks, raid when the enemy camps, attack when the enemy tires and pursue when the enemy retreats.’ ‘The Vietcong tactics were a nightmare the US soldiers. Guerrillas did not wear uniform and did not have base camps or headquarters. They were hard to tell from the peasants in the villages. They attacked and then disappeared into the jungle.’ ‘ | These tactics wore down the American soldiers and reduced morale. US soldiers lived in constant fear of attack. The Americans outnumbered the Vietcong in terms of man power and resources but could not take advantage of this because of the Vietcong’s tactics. They also failed to win the ‘hearts and minds’ of the Vietnamese people, which also hindered their effort. |
| Tet offensive | In early 1968, the Vietcong attacked over 100 cities and other military targets, including the US embassy in Saigon.  It showed that the policy of search and destroy, bombing and the use of chemical weapons was failing. | Whilst they were quickly able to regain control they used enormous amounts of artillery and air power. Many civilians were killed. The ancient city of Hue was destroyed. Even though the Tet offensive had been a disaster for the communists, many questions were raised about the war. People questions whether it was morally right and also if the US army was making any progress if they could be taken by surprise by the Vietcong. Johnson changed the policy after the Tet Offensive as he realised the war could not be won militarily |

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| Public opinion  (Media and protests) |  |  |
| Military failure (Casualties) |  |  |
| Military failure (Cost of war) | . |  |
| Military failure (tactics) |  |  |
| Tet offensive |  |  |

**Why did the USA fail/ withdraw from Vietnam?**

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| Point | Evidence | Explanation |
| **Public opinion**  (Media, protests, shock at immoral behaviour of US soldiers)  (p11,12,13) |  |  |
| **Military failure** (Casualties)  (p15) |  |  |
| **Military failure** (Cost of war)  (p16) | . |  |
| **Military failure** (could not defeat Vietcong tactics)  (p9) |  |  |
| **Tet offensive**  (p14) |  |  |