

HST 195: History of the Vietnam War F14 (Escobar Meta 21179)

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Vietnamization of the War



by Joe Escobar - Sunday, November 23, 2014, 11:38 PM

This forum thread is for Vietnamization of the War posts and replies.

After studying the required materials, address the various questions. For purposes of encouraging discussion, you may decide to separate your responses into SEPARATE posts. To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post. Do NOT simply leave it RE: Vietnamization of the War

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No Solid Foundation



by Zachary Embree - Monday, November 24, 2014, 6:34 PM

There were many problems that would become apparent as the United States tried to end the war. One of the largest that I can discern was the failure on the part of the United States and the leaders of South Vietnam to create a functioning government and economy. Any hope for an independent non-communist state to continue to exist or exist at all rested on how effective their government was without the US to prop them up. As many others have said in both the Herring book and the PBS series, we built up their military but failed to build an independent state. Without an effective government to organize and manage that military even that effort was a failure. Indeed one of the main problems that surfaced after the American forces pulled out was that the South Vietnamese armed forces despite loads of equipment and artillery support was simply not match for their northern counterparts. I recall one interview from the Patriots book that described thousands of soldiers throwing down their

weapons and running into the ocean. Another problem that stemmed from lack of governmental oversight was that neither the South Vietnamese or the United States efforts to create a functioning, robust capitalist economy got off the ground. Thus when US aid and supplies dried up the country was further thrown into chaos. One problem that was not directly the fault of failed nation building is one that would become increasingly apparent and end the war, that "The war was causing deep division at home" (Nixon). On the American side of things I think this was one of the largest issues to surface as the government tried to wind the war down, a populace that want out of Vietnam as soon as possible.

I think that ultimately with the benefit of hindsight there were no right calls to make. By that I mean there was no way to get North Vietnam on the negotiating table and willing to allow South Vietnam to exist. Putting myself in Nixon's shoes however I cannot help but come to see that the issue of removing the main force keeping the North out of the cities as an essential part of the negotiations. Really it seems like the progress of the talks in Paris, how fast we were removing troops, and the state of the South Vietnamese force was a three part balancing act. The progress of each effected the how far each one of those efforts could proceed. For example removing troops faster than we could train up equivalent in Southern Vietnamese army forces, which we did, lead to disaster.

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Re: No Solid Foundation

by Desria Hansen - Sunday, November 30, 2014, 9:09 AM

I like that you brought up the thing about the war causing a deep division at home. Not only was there chaos in Vietnam, but your right, it was causing a lot of trouble and an extreme division at home. I think it was a good thing that the American people were learning about the war and having an opinion on it, rather than during the beginning of the war when most people were in the dark and seemed to be content and way too trusting of political leaders.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Pride Comes Before a Fall

by Jessica Ballestrazze - Tuesday, November 25, 2014, 7:56 PM

One of the issues that seems to have most clearly hampered our ability to conclude the war was a refusal to admit defeat. Part of this can be blamed on the pride of each individual leader. According to the Herring book, "(Nixon) emphatically reiterated LBJ's vow that he would not be the first American president to lose a war" (Herring 287). It was also a general understanding that any president who lost a battle to communism would inevitably become a sacrificial lamb. In episode three of "Vietnam: A Television History", James Thomson of the National Security Council staff stated, "The final domino in the domino sequence is not some Asian country, it's the

Presidency itself.” None of our leaders were willing to leave behind a legacy of failure, and for that reason they refused to admit defeat, and for many years refused to even compromise in negotiations.

More generally, Nixon’s speech cited many issues for why the war had not been concluded by 1969. He claimed that American withdrawal from the war would, “inevitably allow the Communists to repeat the massacres which followed their takeover of the North fifteen years before.” He cited the brutal killings and mass burials of 3,000 people in the city of Hue just one year prior as evidence of this statement. In alignment with my earlier accusation of pride, Nixon admonished that a defeat would result in “a collapse of confidence in American leadership.” Worried by how withdrawal or defeat would look on the international stage, to both allies and enemies, all of the presidents during the Vietnam War defaulted to a stronger, more militant stance rather than one of negotiation and peace. Nixon’s statement that, “The true objective of this war is peace. It is a war for peace,” clearly showed that his administration had very little confidence in negotiation tactics and compromise.

In short, it became very difficult to conclude the war, because there were three sides who ended up seeking different things. The North Vietnamese wanted a complete US withdrawal and a unified, Communist government with the South. The South Vietnamese were in desperate need of a bolstered economy, a more solid government, and did not want to live in a communist state. And toward the end, I think America lost much of its concern about communism. The domino theory seemed to have become a thing of the past, and the reason we stayed in the war was primarily to save face, and perhaps partially because it was the “right” thing to do. We sought victory because we didn’t want to accept defeat, especially from a tiny third-world country. There wasn’t really a way that all three desires could be satisfied fully.

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Re: Pride Comes Before a Fall

by Sierra Smith - Saturday, November 29, 2014, 11:37 PM

Well put! I definitely think it had a lot to do with pride. I keep thinking about if we just accepted defeat way sooner that we could've spared so many lives. it's a tragedy that our war there ultimately was worthless but everyone lost so much. And for what? The domino effect never even happened and our plan didn't even pan out.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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A Dirty Job

by Jessica Ballestrazze - Tuesday, November 25, 2014, 8:17 PM

I think Nixon intentionally decoupled Vietnamization/American troop withdrawals from

negotiations so that our ability to leave the war would no longer be contingent on either North or South Vietnamese pliability. It seems that he made the decision to leave South Vietnam to fight its own battle, and tried to do it in a way that would reflect us in a helpful and caring light, rather than a heartless way. Politically, Nixon's strategy of Vietnamization could appeal to all sides. We would be disengaging from the war, but without publicly accepting or admitting defeat. He could give assurance that US troops were coming home, and still maintain the illusion that South Vietnam had a chance at victory, because they were simply taking over the fighting where the US had left off. He definitely portrayed it as a pretty seamless plan, and it seems transparent. I imagine that many people at the time also saw through it and recognized its faults, but were probably just happy to have a means of escape from an unending war. Vietnamization allowed the US to proactively withdraw without requiring any particular response from our allies or enemies in negotiations. It was essentially a way for the US get out of the war before South Vietnam was lost, and then feign surprise that South Vietnam couldn't put forth the effort of tens of thousands of American troops.

I can't say Vietnamization at that particular point in the war had the welfare or success of Vietnam in mind. But I can see how Nixon felt he had to make a decision that gave the US back the power. The South Vietnamese government wielded a strange power over the US administration, and the North Vietnamese government refused to respond to shows of power, even insinuations of nuclear attack. Though the method was a little cowardly, I think that the time for disengagement and withdrawal was long past. It was better to approach the issue in this way than to continue to escalate the war, which I feel undoubtedly would have happened. It was a dirty job, but somebody had to do it.

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Re: A Dirty Job

by Desria Hansen - Sunday, November 30, 2014, 5:22 PM

It would be hard to know the right or wrong way to get out of such a sticky situation. I can understand how hard it would be for Nixon to try and "bow out gracefully." At least at this point, it was acknowledged that the war was unending and they needed to get out. I agree with you that he wanted to leave Vietnam and "do it in a way that would reflect us in a helpful and caring light, rather than a heartless way." However, it was going to end messy for the South Vietnam no matter how helpful and caring it may seem. With the U.S. having taken over the war and the South Vietnamese allowing us to fight the war for them and without them having any type of a stable government, they going to be left pretty much defenseless.

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Re: A Dirty Job

by Andrew Schubert - Sunday, November 30, 2014, 8:20 PM

I must admit that I came to this forum to write a response to someone I disagree with, but after reading Nixon's speech I think you're right on the money. You used the word that kept continually popping into my mind throughout the entire speech; transparency. I was totally blown away by this. In the Herring book I found myself curious after reading "The 'silent majority speech' nonetheless brought Nixon some short-term gains in the public arena", and now I think I can see why. For such a secretive conniving man, it really seems like he's laying down all the cards that he can, and explaining those he cannot. He makes it abundantly clear why he's decoupling vietnamization with American troop withdrawals, he's fulfilling the will of the American people while trying to keep all his bargaining chips at the Paris Agreements.

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Re: A Dirty Job

by Timothy Hammett - Sunday, November 30, 2014, 10:30 PM

I just came here to say i really agree with the points that you made through out your post and it sums things up really well. Watergate gives us a really biased view of Nixon as a president but in this regard he seemed to be very straight forward in the way he approached the problem of Vietnam. I think like you said this was basically Nixon's attempt at making the best out of a bad situation and trying to let America save face while still withdrawing from what appeared to be a potentially endless war. By doing thing the way he did I really do believe Nixon was doing the best anyone really could at that point from a political standpoint at least. i would take issue with the use of the word cowardly because I don't view it as cowardly to withdraw from a war you had no place being in to begin with and finally paving the way towards ending a war. still the overall message you bring up is one I really tend to support and I was really surprised by just how transparent Nixon was in this regard considering it is something that runs counter to the idea of him i had in my head before this class.

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Fighting a losing battle

by Kasey Harmon - Tuesday, November 25, 2014, 8:58 PM

Two big events stand out in my mind that may be categorized as war setbacks. First was the bombing of Cambodia in efforts to disrupt the Ho Chi Minh trail. We learned of this event in the Patriots book. These bombings were an unprovoked and unnecessary act of violence. Cambodia was supposed to be a neutral ground and by bombing them the U.S. just "widened" the war. This lasted for several months and

was a huge waste of resources and manpower. These efforts could have been diverted to a more needed area. The ARVN's dependance on the U.S. military for all weaponry, training, and funds. Also receiving food rations from the U.S. Because we were fighting their war for them they crumbled the minute the U.S. started to withdraw.

I feel that it did hinder his attempts at a successful negotiation by leaving out key parts to his plan. Without these two elements on the table it gave the vietnamese nothing to believe in. There was nothing to lead them to believe that the war was coming to an end. If the vietnamese would have been made aware of Nixon's plan to Vietnamese them and slowly withdraw his troops they would have been more likely to hold off their fight. No one can say for sure if this would have changed the outcome of the war but it would have most likely lead to less blood shed on both sides.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Fighting a losing battle

by Savana Cochrane - Sunday, November 30, 2014, 11:54 AM

I think you make a good point that if the South Vietnamese had been aware of Nixon's plan to withdraw American soldiers as the ARVN gained strength and stability, perhaps they would have been more willing to fight. It would have been easier to convince the South Vietnamese that we were indeed helping them get on their feet and not colonizing their country. Truong Tran mentioned in the Appy book that, "We could not tell our brothers and sisters that we were fighting for ourselves as long as American soldiers were in the country fighting for us," (Appy, pg. 504). However, if they were aware that we were going to withdraw troops as they began to take more of the fighting upon themselves, they may not have felt this way.

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Fear and defeat

by Sierra Smith - Wednesday, November 26, 2014, 2:26 PM

A big problem hampering efforts to conclude the war seemed to be fear on Nixon's part. It was a fear I find to be valid. There was to be expected an inevitable consequence if there were to be an immediate withdrawal. It would "allow the communists to repeat the massacres which followed their takeover in the North 15 years before". More than 50,000 people were murdered and hundreds of thousands more ended up dying in slave labor camps. The South Vietnam went through a bloody massacre when the communists entered the city of Hue a year before Nixon's speech. He was apprehensive of making any drastic move because of those past occurrences. He wanted things to be more gradual. As cited by Nixon, a sudden withdrawal "would mean a collapse not only of South Vietnam, but Southeast Asia.

So we are going to stay there". Nixon also feared the loss of confidence from our allies, as well as loss of confidence in ourselves.

I think at that time it was a good strategy for Vietnamization and troop withdrawals. We did not want to look like we were abandoning the South all together. Although South Vietnam fell to Communist forces in the end anyhow, there really wasn't much else to do at that time in my opinion. Looking back, since the fight to communism was lost over there anyhow, it's easy to say now that withdrawal maybe would have been to our best interest rather than waiting it out and going through with Nixon's strategy. (At least in regards to our troops getting to come home and be safe sooner)Unfortunately Nixon was not predicting or wanting to accept defeat even though we ended up losing the fight in the end.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Fear and defeat

by Kasey Harmon - Friday, November 28, 2014, 7:38 PM

To take over presidency during the time of such a drawn out war that the U.S. was basically trapped in would be very scary, I agree. There definitely would have been extreme consequences in multiple areas if our country would have just immediately withdrawn from the war. I don't think many of the "war protestors" thought of that side of things. They were some issues even with the gradual withdrawal that Nixon put into place so we can only imagine how catastrophic it could have been. We wouldn't have lost as many of ours troops if we would have just brought them all home but the fallout for the south Vietnam would have been much greater.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Fear and defeat

by Sierra Smith - Saturday, November 29, 2014, 11:57 AM

Although I'm all for taking a stand and fighting hard for change such as the intent of protestors, I feel there could be more open mindedness about why things were how they were and the necessary measures that had to be taken. I definitely can say whether it be back then, or now- that I do not want any wars but stuff happens regardless and after it happens you can't just magically undo it, it takes time.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Fear and defeat

by Zachary Embree - Friday, November 28, 2014, 11:44 PM

While it does sound a bit cynical it seemed that Nixon was more concerned with what a defeat in Vietnam would mean for America and his own presidency than what would happen to the Southern Vietnamese. I am not saying that it was completely absent from his thought process, but I can understand it not being his top priority. That is not to say fear did not have a major role in extending the war, it might have even been the largest. And as you said many of those were very valid fears of a cascade of negative effects both at home and abroad. The nation did lose confidence in itself, the government especially, and the North was every bit as brutal as expected. I think Vietnamization was a good idea if a poorly executed one as well. It really was the only hope for Nixon to pull out of the war while giving South Vietnam a chance. But the lack of a foundation for a government and army that actually functioned, plus failing to train up decent troops rather than throw military hardware around doomed the idea from the start. I think perhaps even Nixon knew that pulling out immediately was the better option for the country, he had to know the South never stood a chance, but politically found it impossible.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

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Re: Fear and defeat

by Sierra Smith - Saturday, November 29, 2014, 11:52 AM

It's only natural to be a bit cynical regarding politics! I agree Nixon most likely cared more about his own benefit than he admitted to. He even made a point to make sure the nation knew that he was not concerned about himself regarding the war and it being called "Nixon's war" but I don't fully believe his intentions. He wasn't as selfless and caring about the south as he wanted to be perceived in my opinion. And along with whatever his intentions were- definitely lingered fear I am sure.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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Re: Fear and defeat

by Racheal Bryant - Saturday, November 29, 2014, 7:26 PM

I do agree that Nixon was more concerned with a win in Vietnam and his own legacy. His focus was not a future of peace for Vietnam even if he is quoted as saying so. His actions speak louder than his words. Nixon had proclaimed shortly after taking office, "The true objective of this war is peace." (Herring Pg. 280) We also know he had a "love of power". (Herring Pg. 278) It seems Nixon wanted the presidency so he could be recognized as the president who ended the Vietnam war when 3 other presidents couldn't. I think he wanted to prove he was a better president than Johnson. Nixon said, "I'm not going to end up like LBJ. Holed up in the White House afraid to show my face on the street, I'm going to stop that

war. Fast." (Herring Pg. 280) In a speech Nixon gave on April 30th, 1970 Herring says, "Nixon indicated that he would rather be a one-term president than preside over America's first defeat." (Herring Pg. 299) It seems he wanted a win more than he wanted peace. In a twisted turn he ends up the most tarnished of all presidents with the Watergate scandal, ending in his resignation. Instead of being remembered for the President who ended the Vietnam war, we remember him as the first president to resign.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

2

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Re: Fear and defeat



by Sierra Smith - Saturday, November 29, 2014, 11:53 PM

Ya, Nixon was not putting himself in a good light. Trying to avoid appearing as a bad guy in the war- he still showed his true colors of corruption and shady nature anyhow.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Fear and defeat



by Bryan Lewis - Sunday, November 30, 2014, 11:11 AM

I feel that any 'fear' of losing the war slowly became more irrational as it dragged on. When the war started we were afraid of a "domino effect", that if North Vietnam fell to communism the rest of the world slowly would. Though as we continued to fight we saw this was not as probable. First the slow split between China and Russia prevented any united communist front that could pose a threat. Second the attempted coups of communists in other Asian countries had failed. And thirdly as we continued to fight we could see the North Vietnamese cared more about uniting their country than being a puppet of Russia. I feel that if we had continued to back Ho Chi Minh after WWII (as we did during to overthrow the Japanese) we very might have not only prevented the Vietnam war but also perhaps bridge a connection between the Western nations and Communists. I feel that the U.S. narrow view of how weak the people of Vietnam was a main reason the South Vietnamese army never became a strong standing army, we felt as though they were somehow inferior and thus didn't need the same amount of equipment and training as U.S. military troops.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

2

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Re: Fear and defeat





by Jessica Ballestrazze - Sunday, November 30, 2014, 12:24 AM

You looked at Nixon's decision in a different way than I did, but I like your perspective better. I am always inclined to believe that there is usually some sort of cover-up or ulterior motive to what the White House announces to the public. For instance, my guess at why it took the war so long to conclude was because of pride, that Nixon, nor any of the presidents before him, didn't want to admit defeat. I sometimes leave little room for actual human emotions other than self-serving ones when I am judging politicians. So it's actually a little refreshing to hear you take the side that perhaps the Nixon administration was genuinely concerned with the fate of South Vietnam, and not just because it could potentially act as a domino. Maybe he really was concerned for South Vietnam's sake, rather than Southeast Asia's sake, or democracy's sake, or America's sake. And, as you point out, those concerns turned out to be very well founded. Your post was a good reminder to me that there were more motives than one for staying in South Vietnam, and that Nixon's motivations certainly weren't thoroughly good, but they weren't thoroughly selfish, either.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Nixon had it right



by Savana Cochrane - Wednesday, November 26, 2014, 3:52 PM

I think Nixon was right in separating Vietnamization of the war and negotiations for peace. As Nixon stated in his speech, "They [North Vietnam] would simply wait until our forces had withdrawn and then move in." This makes reasonable sense, because the North Vietnamese could easily lay in the shadows and wait until America placed enough confidence in the ARVN to withdraw. Once America had removed itself from the situation, North Vietnamese forces would strike again. With this in mind, the Communist North would have no incentive to agree with a negotiation settlement.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Nixon had it right



by Bryan Lewis - Sunday, November 30, 2014, 11:15 AM

I do agree that North Vietnam could easily have moved in and conquered the South if American troops were to pull out. But not simply because they were a better fighting force, but because the people of Vietnam wanted. One reason the South never seemed to pursue the enemy was because it was their brother, their own people they were trying to kill. This, along with the defoliation caused by Agent Orange caused life in the South to deteriorate, causing dissent. This dissent would have been the main reason the North would have won so easily, the South was ready to end the war just for unification. But by instead forcing

the negotiations we allowed the South to get the draw the desperately needed but didn't care as much to receive a peace.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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A True Narcissist of the Time

by Rachel Wells - Wednesday, November 26, 2014, 4:28 PM

Pride, control, and secrets all seem to be underlying issues hampering efforts to conclude the Vietnam War. Before Nixon took office, he pledged “an honorable end to the war” (PBS Episode 9, his election commercial). In his speech on November 3, 1969, he made sure Americans knew what he walked into when he became President: “no progress made at the negotiations in Paris and the U.S. had not put forth any kind of peace proposal.” In some ways, I feel like his speech was preparing the Nation for what he expected would make him a hero (Vietnamization), especially in comparison to Johnson. His secret bombings that started in early 1969 were primarily to prove to Hanoi and Moscow that he was more ruthless and tougher than Johnson was, and he was prepared to take every means necessary to achieve his ends (Appy pg. 378). Nixon certainly would have never admitted or wanted any sort of defeat and he made big moves to prove that (Christmas bombing). In his speech on November 3, 1969 he said, “This withdrawal will be made from strength and not from weakness.” He really wanted it clear that the Vietnamization proposal was based on strengths, not weaknesses. That the U.S. was not surrendering, but we would be leaving the “hero” to South Vietnam. Ultimately, it was really pride and control on all sides—North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and the United States. Ultimately, they all signed the agreement with the identical terms to those from October 1972. Although, Nixon’s narcissistic, prideful actions continued even after the agreement was signed which may even supersede all of the above in my opinion.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: A True Narcissist of the Time

by Sierra Smith - Saturday, November 29, 2014, 11:44 PM

Pride was a huge part in my opinion for sure. There was a lot a big talk going on but not much success coming out of it yet we just kept continuing despite our losses. It's truly a shame that so many had to die or be damaged over a worthless ending to it all. Good call about Nixon being a narcissist. I didn't even think about that.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: A True Narcissist of the Time

by Savana Cochrane - Sunday, November 30, 2014, 11:14 AM



I agree that pride was a huge factor. It seems that each president who tried to tackle the issues rooted in Vietnam, made some major decisions purely out of pride. They all feared "losing" the war and feared what other countries would think of America as a result. Some wanted to show our power and others like Nixon simply wanted "peace with honor". Like you mentioned, Vietnam struggled with pride as well. For instance, the peace treaties could have been signed much sooner had North and South Vietnam not been so intent on including or neglecting certain parties. Regarding Nixons phrase of "peace with honor", I would say that "honor", respect, and power, were all sought after much more wholeheartedly than "peace".

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Was There a Right Decision?

by Rachelle Wells - Wednesday, November 26, 2014, 5:00 PM

Is there a right or wrong in any of the decisions that were made? Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird felt strongly that the United States should bolster South Vietnamese military aid (which we did \$1 billion worth in early December 1972) and get American Troops out of Vietnam (PBS Episode 9). Laird presented a timeline to Nixon, and Nixon accepted that timeline. General Abrams felt Vietnamization was a 'slow surrender' and protested the slow troop withdrawal (Herring pg. 291). However, most military experts believed that South Vietnam could not handle the North Vietnamese Army on their own without American assistance (Herring pg. 291). I think in essence the two strategies complemented each other, but were also potential negotiation tactics by de-coupling them. By pulling American Troops all at once, it likely put everyone at risk, especially all of South Vietnam as well as our own POW's in the North. I think either way it all came at a high price and not necessarily monetarily. The longer it took to get our troops home, the worse the morale became, more drug use, and enlisted personnel refusing to obey their officers (Herring pg. 309).

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Divisiveness and Lack of Effort

by Savana Cochrane - Wednesday, November 26, 2014, 5:14 PM

I think America's divisiveness was a major hamper to the efforts to end the war. As Nixon said, "For the more divided we are at home, the less likely the enemy is to negotiate at Paris." Because the nation was so divided, each president struggled to make a decision as to what to do about the war in Vietnam. There was only a weak effort to end it, both on the battle field and in the office. There was never an "all-in" mentality which is needed in order to win a war. I think that if the U.S. had gone the

extreme on the battlefield at the very beginning, many years of casualties, bitterness, and heartache, could have been avoided.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Divisiveness and Lack of Effort

by Rachelle Wells - Friday, November 28, 2014, 6:58 AM

I agree with you that divisiveness was a factor, not only across the nation but also within the White House. Reading about Nixon, his secrets, and the decisions he made even with the opposition from his secretaries of state and defense often times is incredible. For him to still make those intense decisions and then choose to carry the burden of those decisions alone, regardless of what the rest of his team was advising is gutsy! In the end, according to Herring (pg. 350) we (Americans) had made the South Vietnamese armed forces "dependent and then left them to save themselves before they were ready and without air support on which they had come to rely." The peace agreement was said to have given Thieu support to encourage his defiance, but not enough to ensure his survival. Liken it to parents who enable their adult children—Thieu (and his cohorts) believed the U.S. would return and rescue them. In addition, similarly, Thieu is as easily to blame as well, because the outcomes in 1975 likely would have been the same (Herring pg. 351).

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Divisiveness and Lack of Effort

by Sierra Smith - Sunday, November 30, 2014, 12:04 AM

You have a good point. Because of us being divided, nothing was being done in a timely manner. Things got so drawn out and for that reason we lost so many lives. I wonder how it would've turned out if we never feared the domino effect and just never had the Vietnam war to begin with. interesting to think about considering we lost the fight anyhow and are still the good ole' U.S. of A and communism did not take over the world.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Divisiveness and Lack of Effort

by Jessica Ballestrazze - Sunday, November 30, 2014, 12:45 AM

Attrition certainly drew the war out for much longer than need be. The US initially underestimated our opponent in the North, and seems to have applied

only the amount of pressure we thought would win, rather than enough pressure to thoroughly dismantle the enemy. In trying to think of how this situation differed from other international conflicts and wars around the same time, the only differences I can point out with any certainty are the lack of a clear and present danger for the United States, and the fatigue of war that must have been circulating throughout the world. There was no aggression directed at the United States, or its allies, by North Vietnam. As Robert McNamara made perfectly clear, the Vietnamese knew it was a civil war, and thought the US was there to colonize their country. Had we stayed disengaged, Vietnam would have seemingly had no particular interest in the US. Though there was a perceived threat of communism spreading, there wasn't actually any violence threatened towards North American that needed to be dealt with and stopped immediately. Therefore, the initial policy in Vietnam was more suitable for controlling the situation, rather than overcoming it. Also, many countries, most notably our allies, were still regrouping from the devastation of the world wars. The sense of camaraderie that helped to carry us through previous wars was undoubtedly wearing thin from years of casualties and excessive spending. We weren't fighting on behalf of ourselves or a major power, in a traditional sense. We weren't even fighting on behalf of a tangible threat. I think this led to a half-hearted effort. The analogy that frequently enters my mind is someone who bleeds chips at a poker table until they realize they are hopelessly in over their head, and then desperately tries to win their money back just to break even. Had we gone all in to begin with on a good hand, we could have controlled the situation from the start.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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Re: Divisiveness and Lack of Effort

by Sierra Smith - Sunday, November 30, 2014, 11:42 AM

Great analogy! Yea, there seemed to be a kind of desperation out of pride which led to more grief than anything else.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Divisiveness and Lack of Effort

by Bryan Lewis - Sunday, November 30, 2014, 11:01 AM

I feel that your point of our division was a key factor in the war. The unity we lacked was something the people of Vietnam desperately wanted, both the North and the South. I feel that is one reason why the North was able to recruit Southerners to fight for them. I do feel that if we had more unity it would have been a more winnable war, but at the same time it would have been a long tedious war. In order for U.S. backed South Vietnamese to win they needed to have the will, something they lacked as Truong Tran says "We also lost

because we agreed to fight a war we could either lose or tie, but not win." (506 Appy). This clearly demonstrates the lack of South Vietnamese's moral for the war, they never saw it as a winnable war. Even if the U.S. was united on the war in Vietnam I still feel it would have had nearly the same results, mainly because the North knew what they were fighting for: their home; we only knew we were fighting, unclear of our actual objective.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Divisiveness and Lack of Effort

by Dennis Calciano - Sunday, November 30, 2014, 10:03 PM

I totally agree. There was definitely a lack of effort for the U.S. to evacuate Vietnam. Nixon was under a lot of pressure not only in Vietnam, but also on the home front. The same thing happened to LBJ not wanting to run for another term because of the mass amounts of problems and stress that had accumulated while he was running. To claim that LBJ and the North Vietnamese ever had negotiations on good faith, let alone were about to reach a "peace settlement" when Nixon took office in 1968 is a liberal illusion that never occurred. After the Tet Offensive the communists were just trying to rebuild their shattered army and get into position to attack South Vietnam. I honestly don't know how the presidents dealt with all that amount of stress and keep themselves level headed.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Oh we've got problems....

by Desria Hansen - Wednesday, November 26, 2014, 7:31 PM

Getting out of the war in Vietnam was a sticky and difficult situation. Because the South Vietnamese government was so dependent on us fighting the war for them, one of the problems was not leaving the South Vietnamese completely defenseless against the North Vietnamese communists. As stated in the Herring book, "The two men [referring to Nixon and Kissinger] nevertheless insisted that the war must be ended 'honorably.' Simply to pull out of Vietnam, they believed, would be a callous abandonment of those South Vietnamese who had depended on American protection and would be unworthy of the actions of a great nation." (Herring pg. 273) Another problem that had a massive effect to conclude the war was America's pride and not wanting to seem "weak" in the eyes of other nations. All the ideas and plans proved to be easier said than done. In every case there was several other factors that would lengthen and complicate extricating ourselves from the war.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Happy Thanksgiving! 🍁 S

by Marquita Lucier - Wednesday, November 26, 2014, 8:28 PM

Some of the problems that hampered efforts to conclude the war as Nixon stated in his speech was “the other side’s absolute refusal to show the least willingness to join us in seeking a just peace.” Even up until a few days before his Death Ho Chi Minh still held on to the war strategy favored by himself and Vo Nguyen Giap that they were confident that U.S. public opinion would in time force Nixon to withdraw unilaterally from Vietnam Hanoi prepared to wait him out, no matter the cost (Herring 284.) With Hanoi unwilling to negotiate seriously and to compromise, Nixon used rhetoric in his speech that our allies would lose confidence in America and even more dangerous we would lose confidence in ourselves if we pulled out of the war too soon. Another consequence he gave was that our divisive recrimination would scar our spirit as a people. Nixon administration used public relations to draw attention to those who supported his policies and discredit those who opposed him. He used VP Spiro Agnew to criticize and attack antiwar protesters and the liberal media (Herring p. 285.) In his “silent majority speech, Nixon appealed to the patriotism of his listeners what he referred to as the silent majority to build support. The administration tried to pull more support for his Vietnam policies by using public relations for the release of POW’s and by meeting with the prisoner of war families (Herring 289.) Vietnamization work proved a much more difficult task and most military advisors agreed that without American assistance the South Vietnamese count not stand up against the combined threat to the North Vietnamese Army and NLF forces (Herring 291.) Nixon referred to a fixed timetable and the need to be flexible and address our withdrawal on the situation at that time and not on estimations that were no longer valid. Due to the timetable training programs of the South Vietnamese, I believe he was right in decoupling Vietnamization and American troop withdrawals from negotiations knowing that North Vietnam would take full advantage of a premature departure. Nixon in his speech acknowledged that some of the American people would disagree with his plan for peace, the youth of American being concerned about the war and stressed that his goal was for lasting peace. Peace talks and negotiations must have been difficult for Nixon if Herring was right in his assessment that while Nixon was intelligent and hard-working he was tormented, combative, and viciously vindictive and his hatred burned deeply especially when fueled by alcohol (p. 278.) Something I am sure that North Vietnam was aware of and only encouraged them to hold out on their peace negotiations.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3



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Tet 🍁 S

by Dennis Calciano - Wednesday, November 26, 2014, 10:07 PM

I think that Tet represented the mark where America began to realize that it couldn't support a war economically. We were trying to reduce support in an already unstable

environment were the ARVN government needed all the resources that it could get. It seemed like when we'd get close to negotiations with Hanoi that Thieu would back off from any terms of a treaty. Thieu didn't want defections to increase from the U.S.. The problem being that most of the ARVN wanted America's undying support even if we were getting most of the backlash for it. I think that a lot of the economic recovery during the after math of the Tet offensive could have used more resources to rebuild Southern cities.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Tough war to end

by Bryan Lewis - Wednesday, November 26, 2014, 10:15 PM

The major problem that surfaced in attempting to conclude the war was simply agreeing on the treaty written. Since neither side was willing to be bullied they both prolonged the war while trying to get more favorable terms. Nixon also feared that if the United States was defeated in Vietnam the humiliation would spark violence in other regions of interest. Another factor preventing North Vietnam from negotiating was the military support it was still receiving from Russia and China, this combined with the Ho Chi Minh trail allowed them to consistently supply their army fighting in the South. Lastly a major issue in concluding the war was the inability of South Vietnam to stand on its own, with the surplus of military and economic aid they received from the U.S. it made them incredibly dependent.

I feel that Vietnamization and American troop withdrawals could be de-coupled but it was difficult with how the Vietnam War happened. With the massive support South Vietnam had been given by the U.S. they had become dependent on them, there has been countless references this term to how unorganized the ARVN was. This problem made it nearly impossible for Vietnamization to take place since they still needed American aid and supervision. Nixon was right in de-coupling them because it really was the only way for us to leave Vietnam; even with the South being unprepared to stand alone we couldn't continue to have a strong military presence and expect peace.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Tough war to end

by Zachary Embree - Friday, November 28, 2014, 11:25 PM

Very true, the most important part of negotiating is making compromises. On the side of the Vietnamese you had their belief in a military victory when the US left, and the United States was not going to bend in the issues the North Vietnamese wanted. As has been said my multiple sources in eh PBS series and from Herring, the North was not going to settle for anything less than a united communist Vietnam, the very thing Nixon could never allow. In addition the American side seemed to lack the leverage to push the issue, even threatening

possible nuclear action was not bring the North around, on the flip side the US was losing steam and both sides knew it. I don't know how much of the continued resistance can be attributed to continued support from other communist powers. I am relatively certain that their was a push from their backers to end the conflict. But it definitely allowed them to continue operating so aggressively despite the bombing campaign. I do agree that the large dead weight that South Vietnam's economy and ARVN had become made pulling out of the region without South Vietnam collapsing impossible.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Tough war to end

by Kasey Harmon - Sunday, November 30, 2014, 7:53 PM

I agree with you that the main downfall was not being able to come to a peace treaty agreement. Whether that be our fault our theirs. I feel that the North Vietnamese could have been at least a little bit willing to negotiate. We the U.S. are to blame for the outcome of how the south Vietnamese soldiers were trained. They lacked so much confidence wise that they just couldn't stand on their own. If Nixon would have set up a stronger training regimen maybe they could have been able to fight their own war.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Problems...

by Racheal Bryant - Wednesday, November 26, 2014, 10:47 PM

What problems surfaced to hamper the efforts to conclude the war?

In our film Fog of War, it was interesting to hear from McNamara that Kennedy had plans in 1963 to be out of Vietnam in 1965, just 2 years later. Kennedy's assassination hampered that plan to conclude the war. By the time Nixon inherited the war, the U.S. was deeply committed. In his speech he talks about the popularity of withdrawing from the war, but there was greater responsibility for future of peace and freedom. Nixon's decision was to change American policy and negotiate for peace in Vietnam. One of the problems that arouse was the South wanted the removal of Northern troops in the South. Nixon did not negotiate this for the South leaving Vietnam with northern troops still occupying southern areas. Another problem was the South was not self-sufficient. PBS reported that in the 15 years America was in Vietnam, they footed the 100 billion dollar cost of the war. The South couldn't survive financially on its own. South also had the assumption that the U.S. could not walk away after funding so much of the war. They tried using the investment as a

way to keep the U.S. engaged to fight for them instead of stepping up and taking control of the situation. This led to Nixon having to referee the two sides, ultimately forcing a signed treaty in January 1973.

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Re: Problems...

by Desria Hansen - Saturday, November 29, 2014, 7:27 PM

That definitely did put a hamper on the effort to conclude the war. What a sticky situation. It's very frustrating knowing that the US was stuck between such a big rock and a hard place. Not only could they not survive financially on their own, but they also did not have military or independent political support for the South fend off the North. Also, in a way the South was kind of right that the U.S. didn't want to walk away after financially supporting so much of the war, they wanted to have something to show for all their investment.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Get Our Soldiers Home

by Arvind Raman - Sunday, November 30, 2014, 10:40 PM

There were numerous problems that existed with the War in Vietnam. The biggest problem was getting the South Vietnamese ready to fight the Communists. There were problems getting their soldiers ready and prepared enough, where we could begin troop withdrawal in the country.

President Nixon was correct in what he was doing in Paris negotiations. He needed a solution, and he needed it fast. De-coupling Vietnamization and troop withdrawal were essentially compliments because things would eventually go back to being the same problem again. This war had escalated, Nixon just wanted our soldiers back, and it's ridiculous that the war involved four presidents.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Vietnamization of the War

by Timothy Hammett - Sunday, November 30, 2014, 10:56 PM

I do believe that President Nixon was right in decoupling Vietnamization and American troop withdrawals from negotiations. It think that while to us it might seem to go hand in hand to have these things being included in negotiations it would actually undermine part of what Nixon wanted. One thing i think Nixon wanted was for this to be a very transparent operation and I think that he wanted America to be able to maintain face on the national stage. Nixon himself was quoted many times saying

how important that winning the war in Vietnam was. When he takes a step back and starts talking about handing the fight over to the Vietnamese it will really be popular for most sides except for the most hard line war hawks. It isn't admitting defeat for America but it is getting are servicemen out of war that could have stretched on for decades more. We dropped more conventional bombing power on Vietnam then we did on Germany or japan in world war 2 and still they fought on this was an enemy that would not be giving up and the plans to win the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese were not looking to be effective enough to make sizable changes to the war and ultimately seem like a failure. Now obviously there were some people who did not support us leaving Vietnam and looked to hamper withdraw. despite all the problems that sprung up politically to our getting out of Vietnam I think that Nixon made the right choice. At the end of the day what Nixon did was make the best of an otherwise very bad situation and he paved the way to a lasting peace once the dust had settled at least in my opinion the way that we exited was not perfect but it was the best we could hope for when dealing with all of the complicated issues swirling around at that time both foreign and domestic.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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