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Vietnamization of the War

by Joe Escobar - Sunday, May 24, 2015, 9:57 AM

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

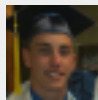
After studying the required materials, address the various questions. To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

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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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Failed Vietnamization

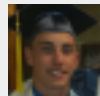
by Marcus Farset - Tuesday, May 26, 2015, 7:48 PM

Vietnamization was Nixon's plan to deescalate the war by placing the brunt of the North Vietnamese military pressure on the south Vietnamese army, and withdrawal US military personnel. This plan failed because at the same time Nixon was trying to deescalate by withdrawing US troops and aid from Vietnam he was trying to train and equip the ARVN, which failed because their aid was reduced drastically while Nixon was trying to get out. Since the number of American troops were decreasing, the north took advantage of this on the Easter Offensive and the south suffered heavy losses(Herring). The South Vietnamese knew that Vietnamization was just a plan to cover US abandonment, so it was not well supported. One more reason Vietnamization failed is because while Nixon was taking out American troops he expanded the war into Cambodia and Laos which spread the ARVN, leaving weak spots for attack. On top of all this Nixon greatly escalated B-52 attacks, and wanted to mine Haiphong harbor(Herring). All of this escalation was happening as the number of US foot soldiers were being extracted and US aid was being decreased, a recipe for failure.

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Re: Failed Vietnamization

by Marcus Farset - Saturday, May 30, 2015, 11:46 AM

Another example of failed Vietnamization is when Lt. Peter Paul Mahoney in episode 7 of the PBS series says after he trained a group South Vietnamese for 6 weeks who went against the typical south image of being uninterested and lethargic. This group was very involved in what was going on, so he thought he was accomplishing something with them. Then he says this: " a month after the training program was completed and the graduation ceremony happened, 3 NLF cadre came into the vill one night and all 29 of the self defense force that I trained walked off and joined the NLF, taking all their weapons and training with them." This is just one account, so who knows how often this sort of thing happened. This seems like a huge problem because after the US spends all the time, money, and supplies them with weapons, they just walk off and fight for the other side.

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Vietnamization and Get Out
by [Adam Mellott](#) - Tuesday, May 26, 2015, 11:08 PM

Nixon’s settlement on the plan for Vietnamization of the war was an out to save face and a failed attempt at a “Peace with Honor” approach. Although the thought of Vietnamization sounded legitimate and a worthy solution, there was no buy-in from the South Vietnamese government. At one point the S. Vietnamese Negotiator asked Kissinger how the U.S. expected pupped soldiers from the South were expected to win if the U.S could not (Herring 295). The South (ARVN soldiers) was equipped and modernized from the U.S. beyond all comprehension, and Vietnamization was said to have had some success in the early 1970’s (Herring). The major problems of Vietnamization were that the South Vietnamese did not all trust their government, they were poorly trained (even post U.S. training) and also poorly led. Thieu had a corruptive government which was dependent on U.S. funding and my take on it was that Thieu did not want to give up the money that was being provided and take on the war by themselves, yet as a catch-22, they wanted the U.S out of Vietnam at the same time.

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Catch-22, a different take
by [Thomas Brokaw](#) - Friday, May 29, 2015, 3:51 PM

About Thieu wanting the US out of Vietnam...

Toward the end of the war when Kissinger was negotiating with the North, there was a lot of negotiation-related tension between Kissinger and Thieu. Kissinger thought Thieu unreasonable and Thieu felt un-represented in negotiations with Hanoi. In spite of the tension, I don’t believe Thieu wanted the US out of Vietnam, although Thieu deeply resented his dependence on the US, he was very afraid the US might leave. (Herring, p 321) Up until the end, Thieu depended on the US for money, ammution and tactical air support for their military operations.

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Re: Catch-22, a different take
by [Jeffrey Moat](#) - Sunday, May 31, 2015, 2:14 PM

It's made pretty apparent in the Herring book that Kissinger knew full well that Hanoi would take South Vietnam and not too long after the US withdrawal. I'm pretty much assuming Thieu as well knew this was an inevitability. It's an odd contrast to the mid-50's when the North expected the U.S. and the South to hold elections but were denied until Diem could eliminate opposition. Both relied upon the U.S. to intervene and both were denied. In the 50's it was the US's collaboration with the south, and then for withdrawal with the North.

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Problems with Withdrawing Troops
by [Paul Turner](#) - Wednesday, May 27, 2015, 1:50 PM

Nixon concluded that immediate withdrawal would cause severe problems. Nixon mentioned in his November, 1969 speech that great nations do not betray or let down their friends. Immediate withdrawal "would spark violence wherever our commitments help maintain the peace—in the Middle East, in Berlin, eventually even in the Western Hemisphere" (Nixon Speech). Instead, Nixon altered American policy in his pursuit of peace. The removal of American troops was tricky because North Vietnam would not accept any U.S. proposals. "They demand our unconditional acceptance of their terms, which are that we withdraw all American forces immediately and unconditionally and that we overthrow the Government of South Vietnam as we leave" (Nixon Speech). Nixon had to find a way to withdrawal troops without leaving South Vietnam defenseless. The U.S. was training South Vietnam forces so they could still put up a fight against Northern Communism. Withdrawal depended largely on the progress of the training, but even more so on enemy activity. If the North decided to attack, then the U.S. couldn't abandon the South. All these factors made Vietnamization risky, but it was a necessary step in concluding the war.

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The Problem With Vietnamization
by [Jeffrey Moat](#) - Wednesday, May 27, 2015, 7:54 PM

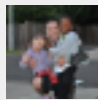
It never fails to astonish me when diving into the intricacies of this conflict how much the will of leaders came into play. Not only through the public world stage where leaders could promote themselves under the masks of altruism or strength or nationalism. But also the secret methods they employed according to their personalities. At times I felt the Herring book was overly critical of Nixon in relation to Johnson (at least in the examination of their personalities. Nixon is childish, Johnson is arrogantly trapped, etc), but history paints the man in that light and I have no evidence to counter it. However, I still feel that compulsion largely because it feels to me so bizarre that someone's arrogance could result in such tragic effects in a country thousands of miles away.

Don't get me wrong, I find the Hanoi leadership and Thieu to be equally at effective at curtailing efforts at peace. Perhaps Hanoi even more so than any other. Their insinstances were no doubt fueled by Vietnam's strong sense of Nationalism. Between that, Thieu's sense of impending doom and Nixon's almost juvenile desire to 'win' (whether that be abroad or domestically), the efforts for resolution were dragged along for a number of years while combatants and civilians alike died.

In retrospect I am not sure if Vietnamization and American withdrawal being de-coupled from the peace talks was absolute and necessary. Mostly because I don't feel like I can foretell accurately any alternative. That is what happened, it is how history played out. As for Nixon's determination to keep them essentially linked? With what he had proposed and what all parties involved had to work with? It's hard for me to think they were not complimentary to each other.

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Negotiation Strategies

by [Adam Mellott](#) - Wednesday, May 27, 2015, 9:14 PM

In regards to Nixon’s separation of American withdrawals from Vietnam and Vietnamization from the negotiations, I believe that the two were needed to be separate as well as a necessary compliment if American troops were ever to fully leave Vietnam. The U.S. still had to maintain a presence in Vietnam to train the South Vietnamese troops as well as be ready for any additional North attacks. The North wanted us out and If these would have continued to be a part of the negotiations who is to say that there would have ever been an agreement without additional bombing?

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Hampered efforts

by [Thomas Brokaw](#) - Wednesday, May 27, 2015, 9:44 PM

The problems that surfaced that hampered efforts to end the war included:

1. Protesters in the US were putting pressure on the administration, mostly by influencing the electorate, which in turn puts pressure on Congress to vote against administration war policy. Hanoi watched and factored that the protesters were successfully weakening US resolve. Robin Riser, POW, (PBS #9: 15:10) was very critical of anti-war speech by George McGovern, Nixon’s Democratic opponent in the November 1968 election, and Jane Fonda’s (Hanoi Jane) North Vietnam visit, saying the activities and words by those and others like them were victories for the Communists and certainly prolonged the war.
2. Nixon’s invasion of Cambodia was seen as an escalation of the war that infuriated protesters and caused in increase in anti-war sentiment at home, putting more pressure on the administration to get out of Vietnam.
3. The National Guard shot and killed four student protesters and injured more at Kent State University. Photos of dead students appeared on the front pages of newspapers and caused people to question war policy.
4. Vocal protesters followed Nixon everywhere. He could not escape anti-war anger. Hanoi was watching it all and questioning why they should negotiate. Hanoi needed only to stall and watch Nixon besieged by huge US protests.
5. Senator Ed Kennedy in a speech in June 1971 suggested Nixon was playing for peace for the November elections, suggesting Nixon’s personal reelection ambitions may be influencing the timing of successes coming out of the peace talks. The implication being that Nixon is trading US soldier’s lives for another term as president.
6. The South Vietnamese military was not coming around to being able to defend the country in the absence of US soldiers. Nixon’s plan included leaving the South at least able to defend themselves for a short while after the US leaves. In Nixon’s view, the South had to be protected by South Vietnamese soldiers, however long that took.
7. Hanoi was not giving Nixon an honorable opportunity to get out of Vietnam. Hanoi though they had Nixon by the nuts so they played hard-ball in peace negotiations. This prolonged the war.

De-coupling Vietnamization and the US troop withdrawal from peace negotiations was probably a smart idea because the American plan was to leave South Vietnam, but leave them protected by trained South Vietnam troops. The plan called for replacing US soldiers with Vietnamese soldiers, and pulling the US soldiers out of Vietnam. This told Hanoi that America

wanted to leave and leave South Vietnam in control of Vietnamese.

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The Trail Never Closed

by [Daniel Hovet](#) - Saturday, May 30, 2015, 10:53 PM

Another issue with successful Vietnamization was the increasing trouble from the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Over a period of just a few months, the North Vietnamese had expanded the Trail from a corridor about 20 miles wide to almost 90 miles, capturing numerous towns and villages, such as Pakse and Khong Sedone, by 1971. U.S. air power bombing the trail had been taking increasing losses due to increased SAM-7 useage by the North Vietnamese (provided courtesy of the Soviets' aid).

Since geographically speaking, South Vietnam was a narrow, snaky coast, bordered by North Vietnam to the north (obviously) and "neutral" Laos and Cambodia, through which the Ho Chi Minh Trail ran, South Vietnam was always just a few miles away from hostile and unsafe territory, no matter where you were. Enemy forces were constantly reinforcing and resupplying via the trail.

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Vietnamization and its barriers

by [Neil Pena](#) - Wednesday, May 27, 2015, 11:44 PM

Vietnamization was Nixon's plan to pull the troops out and leave the fighting up to the South Vietnamese. Nixon wanted the American military to train the South Vietnamese and supply them with "the tools" to protect their own interest in their country. Some problems arose with trying to put this plan in motion. One of the problems that showed up was trying to contain military efforts. In episode 9 they talk about how the invasion of different countries and consistent military offenses is not going to help them pull out of Vietnam. When negotiating with the north Vietnamese, a lot of the things in the contract were not what they wanted. The north also knew that the struggles with the protestors at home in America and made it hard to come to an understanding. When patience was thinning with the Americans they started to make threats to continue bombing the north, but like he north knew that pressures on congress would make it hard for them to pass these operations of war, making it look like America was posing empty threats.

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Was Duck Hook a barrier to Vietnamization?

by [Thomas Brokaw](#) - Friday, May 29, 2015, 5:31 PM

I’m just trying to get the chronology right. In your last statement, *“When patience was thinning with the Americans they started to make threats to continue bombing the north, but like he north knew that pressures on congress would make it hard for them to pass these operations of war, making it look like America was posing empty threats.”* I’m guessing you are referring to 1969, when Nixon worked out a plan for an all-out offensive to end things once and for all called operation “Duck Hook.” Where Nixon sent veiled threats buried in public statements, through leaks to journalists, and as a tool for Kissinger to use in negotiations. The threat didn’t work, Nixon was heavily advised not to go through with the bombing, and yes, this would be interpreted by Hanoi as weakness. (Herring, p286, 287) I believe it was after, and as a result of, Nixon’s desperate empty threat (Duck Hook) had failed that US policy shifted to Vietnamization.

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Fear and Vietnamization

by [Samantha Westrope](#) - Thursday, May 28, 2015, 2:15 PM

Vietnamization and American troop withdrawal strategies were not completely essential compliments of one another. Meaning the Nixon administration could of withdrawn troops without Vietnamization. The two do complement each other extremely well though. The Nixon administration feared the potential hazard of the North Vietnamese moving in as soon as American troops had been withdrawn and taking over a, what was considered to be, a weak nation, incapable of defending themselves. In order to prevent this potential problem the Vietnamization of the war was enacted. American troops could not

have been entirely removed from the war to ensure the South Vietnamese’s ability to defend their nation in the eyes of the administration. A lot of the problems that surfaced around the United States’ exit strategy arose from the fear of what would happen to Vietnam and the surrounding nations if they left the South Vietnamese in jeopardy.

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Re: Fear and Vietnamization
by [Adam Mellott](#) - Saturday, May 30, 2015, 9:54 PM

The Vietnamization program had such great written potential, and you were on the money with the lingering fears of American withdrawal leaving an incapable nation vulnerable. The sad part about it was that the ultimate end game result was just getting the U.S. out of Vietnam. In Nixon's speech on November 3rd when he was discussing Vietnamization, he stated that the Vietnamization policy would "terminate U.S. involvement in an honorable fashion regardless of what North Vietnam did" (Herring 289). This comment shows you that we were not in it to help the South, Nixon's end game was to just get the U.S. out, no peace or no honor in my opinion.

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Re: Fear and Vietnamization
by [Jeffrey Moat](#) - Sunday, May 31, 2015, 6:17 PM

I think Herring does a good job in illustrating Nixon's personality although it felt a little bit assuming. But he seemed to give a thorough deconstruction of how motivated by his own love for power, espionage and influence. To that end I think it's pretty safe to say (and Herring does) that Vietnam was a horrible failure for Nixon and he was attempting to hold onto his position and power in any way he could.

Saying that we were never there to help Vietnam is a little subjective. I'm sure the over all feeling of the soldiers going into the country early on the war genuinely thought there were going to help. Politicians? Not so much.

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Re: Fear and Vietnamization
by [Neil Pena](#) - Sunday, May 31, 2015, 10:45 PM

I definitely understand why you say that it was not a very honorable way for the US to pull out of the war. I definitely do agree that the only thing that Nixon was looking to do was to pull troops out, but he did make an effort to not just leave the south completely defenseless. There was military support as the US was pulling people out by giving weapons. Nixon even stated that he felt we have done what the beginning objective was and that was to train the south Vietnamese military enough to stand on their own and felt that at this point we have done so. The only problem with that was that south Vietnam also needed troops and that was one thing we were taking away from them.

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Turning it over to the B team
by [Daniel Hovet](#) - Friday, May 29, 2015, 11:45 PM

Vietnamization was Nixon's "secret strategy" to end American involvement in Vietnam without surrendering or "bugging out". In his speech, Nixon lays down the reasons the United States cannot surrender outright: collapse of the AVRN, a loss of American credibility (abandoning an ally), a loss of American prestige in the world (defeat by a minor power such as north Vietnam), the potential for emboldened enemies to push the limits, and possibly spread conflict into the western hemisphere.

The rationalization went that if we cannot surrender, and continue to lose lives and resources on such a scale, then this is the way to prevent North Vietnamese victory without continuing American presence in the war.

A major issue with this plan was that even with time, the AVRN and South Vietnamese police were unlikely to ever be up to the task of defending South Vietnam, let alone keeping the peace or forcing the north into submission. Plagued with rampant corruption, graft, and nepotism, rife with cowardice, in addition to what can only be described as general incompetence and

at times downright vileness, the AVRN and South Vietnam police was not anyone's vision of a model military or law enforcement body.

Consider:

"The South had a softer culture than the north...their armies were the same way. The army in the South would have siesta from twelve to three. If you dropped them into an area at nine in the morning you couldn't come out to get them between twelve and three because they'd be sleeping... [they] would call us in to get a dead body and ten guys would want to jump on the chopper to get the hell out of there." p.63-64, Appy

"everybody in the area...was ordered to get an ID card...to get their ID cards, the girls had to go to bed with the police." p.374, Appy

"South Vietnamese soldiers were deserting, shedding their uniforms, and mixing into the refugee crowds for protection." p.410, Appy

"the AVRN [was] to attack three NLF units near the village of Ap Bac. But the South Vietnamese dallied for a day, enabling the insurgents to learn of the attack and prepare deadly defenses. The AVRN outnumbered the NLF by 10 to 1...but at the first sign of resistance, the attackers balked. One group refused to advance. Others failed to block enemy escape routes...the battle ended, ingloriously, with the South Vietnamese firing on one another while the NLF slipped away." p.110, Herring

"the ARVN units...extorted taxes and fees from the villagers and stole chickens and pigs. When asked what would most help pacification in his area, one U.S. adviser responded: 'Get the 22nd [AVRN] Division out of the province'...the AVRN was incapable of providing security. p.202, Herring

The list goes on with no end in sight. While the North's forces were markedly more cruel on the whole, they were generally more effective, and while all AVRN soldiers were not incompetent or corrupt, they nearly tended to be the exception, not the rule, and would never be able to handle the war on their own.

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Re: Turning it over to the B team

by [Jeffrey Moat](#) - Sunday, May 31, 2015, 7:10 PM

This is something I've been trying to wrap my head around since this class started and I heard the first stories of the ARVN being ineffective. What was it between the cultures that was so different that this occurred? The North at times had (arguably) clever and shrewd commanders (Giap for example) but there was no equivalent in the South. Was it entirely because of our presence or was there something in their day-to-day? Was life more adapt to war above the 17th?

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Difficulties in Getting Out

by [Marcus Farset](#) - Saturday, May 30, 2015, 12:20 AM

There were quite a few things that hampered efforts to conclude the war. First, the US army was committed to stop the spread of communism, so when troops went to Vietnam they were kind of stuck until they defeated the communists which in turn did not happen. Second, the war was extremely unpopular in America with high numbers of anti-war demonstrations, putting even more pressure on the government. Third, the whole plan of Vietnamization was failing, South Vietnam could not stand on its own without US aid. Fourth, the peace talks with Hanoi were going nowhere, also the Thieu government did not want the US to leave so they were purposely in the way of Nixon getting out. Finally it seemed Nixon was escalating the war while he was trying to get out by invading Cambodia and Laos. The US had a terrible time withdrawing from Vietnam, in my opinion it was way past due. They should have started the process as soon as they knew victory was not within their grasp.

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Re: Difficulties in Getting Out

by [Neil Pena](#) - Sunday, May 31, 2015, 11:41 PM

One of the things you mentioned about the peace hearings in Hanoi was especially difficult in the attempts for the US to

pull out. With all of the demands for both sides prolonged them from reaching agreeable terms to finally start initiating a plan for the troops to return home. Because the other side wouldn't make a decision Nixon kept escalating the war in hopes that they might be ushered into seeing eye to eye. Because the north Vietnamese saw issues with the protestors back in the US supporting the war they knew that some threats Nixon would not be able to go through with because the American people would not back it. To me I think those agreements is what really hampered their efforts of leaving Vietnam through vietnamization.

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