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Vietnamization of the War

by Joe Escobar - Sunday, May 26, 2013, 3:34 PM

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

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Thoughts on Nixon's withdrawals

by Rebekah Rundstrom - Wednesday, May 29, 2013, 12:01 AM

The problems that surfaced to hamper the efforts to conclude the war are Watergate. President Nixon had a right to de-coupling Vietnamization and American troops withdrawals. I think the withdrawals would have forced the enemy to strike the weak population that had been relying on American aid for numerous years. And I think that it's a good decision to wait to see how the plans unfold to really act upon a withdrawal. They were compliments of each other. They were basically waiting to see how the whole thing panned out to really make a move and that move was to head out.

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Re: Thoughts on Nixon's withdrawals

by Michelle Coming - Friday, May 31, 2013, 12:38 PM

I definitely agree with you that Watergate hampered the efforts to end the war, however I think there are many other things that tied into that. For example; his

secret commitments to Thieu. Even if the Watergate incident did not force him to resign I don't believe that the American people or Congress would have supported Nixon's commitments when/if it was time for him to live up to them just as they didn't support it after his resignation. It seemed Nixon made these commitments on a whim and never expected to have to actually follow through.

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1

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Re: Vietnamization of the War

by Brendan MacDonald - Wednesday, May 29, 2013, 5:14 PM

I think one of the biggest issues that hindered the conclusion of the war was all of the protesting that took place, especially after President Nixon was elected. Episode 9 ***Peace is at Hand***, shows massive protests including a quarter of a million Americans denouncing the war in Washington. POW Robinson Risner states that for every protest, and every speech given by an anti-war activist only encouraged the Vietnamese and prolonged the war. I tend to agree with that statement because I believe that was one major contributor to the Vietnamese not wanting to seek a peace with the United States and put an end to the war because if they knew about all of the protests and division within the country, then all they really had to do was just continue the war long enough for America to become worn out with it. President Nixon made a reference to this fact towards the end of his address to the nation on withdrawing troops from Vietnam and negotiating an honorable peace when he said "Because let us understand that North Vietnam cannot defeat or humiliate the United States, only Americans can do that." And I think to a certain degree, that is exactly what was happening with all of the protests and demonstrations going on because it was proving to the enemy that there were American citizens that stood divided from wanting to keep troops fighting in Vietnam.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Re: Vietnamization of the War

by Ian MacDonald - Friday, May 31, 2013, 11:53 AM

Very interesting point about the quote from Nixon towards the end of his address to the nation. I guess I missed that while watching it or just couldn't remember him saying it. I agree with your interpretation of that quote. "North Vietnam cannot defeat or humiliate the United States, only Americans can do that." Some Americans certainly did! The anti-war protests were a huge contributing factor to prolonging the war. Like you said, it just proved to the enemy that many Americans were divided and did not see the point in the war. It showed them that all they really had to do was keep fighting long enough for America to become exhausted and give up.

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Re: Vietnamization of the War

by Ian MacDonald - Wednesday, May 29, 2013, 5:21 PM

Well, there were several problems that arose during the process of trying to end the war. I think one of the biggest, as stated in the episode *Peace is at Hand*, was the anti-war protests. It not only encouraged the Vietnamese and showed them that Americans were divided, but it also gave them something to use to try and twist the minds of their American prisoners. Robinson Risner, an American POW, said if there were 200 protestors, the Vietnamese would make it seem like 200,000. He claimed that the protests ultimately resulted in prolonging the war, and more American deaths.

Another issue that eventually arose was the disagreement between America and the South Vietnamese on the draft treaty. According to Hoang Duc Nha, aid to President Thieu, the South Vietnamese did not believe that the treaty did anything to resolve the communist position in South Vietnam. So therefore, a full agreement could not be reached for a while. In the meantime, more bombing operations of North Vietnam were launched. The war continued on until January 1973. In January the treaty was finally signed by all parties. The Vietcong, however, still considered it a war until the whole country of Vietnam was unified.

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Re: Vietnamization of the War

by Rebekah Rundstrom - Sunday, June 2, 2013, 4:53 PM

Very interesting. Wasn't that Ho Chi Minh who said that the war wouldn't end on the battle field, but it would end in the streets of America? I thought that was an interesting foresight on his part.

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Crippling South Vietnam

by Michelle Coming - Wednesday, May 29, 2013, 7:08 PM



I think President Nixon was right in decoupling Vietnamization and American troop withdrawals. If the process would have been thought through and executed properly I believe it would have worked and South Vietnam would have had a much better chance at defending their independence. South Vietnam was extremely dependant on America's intervention both economically and militarily. In our quest to help South Vietnam we ended up crippling them in the end. "The massive infusion of American aid thus kept South Vietnam alive, but it fostered dependency rather than laying the foundation for genuine independence." (Herring, pg75) We went into Vietnam trying so hard to rid the world of communism that we forgot all about the reason we were fighting communism to begin with, to give countries a chance at independence.

Vietnamization and the withdrawals of American troops were definitely essential compliments. Too much of Vietnams economy relied on America and its intervention, we needed to teach them how to control their own military and sustain their own economy. By slowly withdrawing our troops and teaching them the essentials of keeping an independent country running, the South Vietnamese could have succeeded.

On the other hand teaching the South Vietnamese to continue to fight the war the way we were would not have been beneficial unless America supplied the South with the bombs necessary to continue the pressure America was placing on North Vietnam, the only thing that seemed to have significant effect on the dedicated North. America was fighting a traditional war while the North was using the less traditional guerilla warfare. "The basic problem was that the army was trained for the wrong mission." (Herring, pg71)

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Re: Crippling South Vietnam

by Rebekah Rundstrom - Wednesday, May 29, 2013, 8:47 PM

Very good point about us crippling the Vietnamese in the war. I completely agree. It's so evident through all materials that we've watched and all the text that we have read. Another great point about trying to end the war when - riding the world of communisim, but really almost enslaving a whole country to falling towards dependence in additional outside help.

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Re: Vietnamization of the War

by Andrew Lavengood - Wednesday, May 29, 2013, 9:36 PM

Nixon was right to decouple the peace talks from Vietnamization, but I'm not sure

about whether he should have decoupled them from troop withdrawals. I'm sure that everyone in the administration had serious reservations about the prospects of Vietnamization and the results it might produce. If they coupled the peace talks with the advancement of Vietnamization, they might have quickly found themselves stuck in a quicksand-like effect. However, I think it would have been wise to couple peace talks with troop withdrawals. If they saw real, measurable progress being made in Paris, then they would authorize additional troops withdrawals. That would've encouraged Hanoi to be more willing to negotiate, I think.

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Re: Vietnamization of the War

by Jungmin Um - Sunday, June 2, 2013, 3:27 PM

I also think that they would have coupled the peace talks with the advancement, but if I imagine being one of the person in that period, I don't think it is going to be easy because at that time period, every country thought of land, resource and those things very importantly. So some countries tried to conquest, and other countries tried to keep their country. Therefore, peace talk was going to be hard because of their eager toward the land, resource, etc.

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Re: Vietnamization of the War

by Melissa Booth - Wednesday, May 29, 2013, 10:03 PM

There were some problems that Nixon mentioned in the beginning of his speech about the different proposals that he was giving out. Hanoi was not willing to negotiate with America on the proposals. Nixon said that they wanted the Americans to leave immediately and to overthrow Saigon as they left. Also, that they wanted the Americans to accept only their terms. Nixon even mentioned, "We have not put forth our proposals on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. We have indicated that we are willing to discuss the proposals that have been put forth by the other side." So, if Hanoi would have just talked to Nixon, they may have been able to come to an agreement sooner. Another problem that Nixon faced was that leaving on good terms was very important to do after a war so long. Although since the war was so long it can be hard to do. If the Americans just left all at once, it would have devastated South Vietnam and damaged any connections with them. "In January I could only conclude that the precipitate withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam would be a disaster not only for South Vietnam but for the United States and for the cause of peace," said Nixon. (page 3) I think that Nixon should have used both vietnamization and troop withdrawal in the negotiations. I think that it would have been a smart idea to slowly remove the troops while working on the vietnamization of South Vietnam. Not only would the Americans start pulling out troops, but they would be helping South Vietnam become strong instead of just leaving them alone with no training or

anything.

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Re: Vietnamization of the War

by Andrew Lavengood - Friday, May 31, 2013, 7:39 PM

I agree that Vietnamization and troop withdrawals should go hand in hand in theory. However, Vietnamization in practice was a sloppy, crash-course like idea that simply wasn't working. While in some areas it showed progress, in others it was just draining away resources. The South Vietnamese simply lacked the proper leadership (outside of Americans). While Nixon was probably right to not just pull out of the war immediately, I think it would be a mistake to say that Vietnamization would have worked in the long run. It lacked proper implementation and the leadership skills needed to succeed.

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Re: Vietnamization of the War

by Jungmin Um - Wednesday, May 29, 2013, 10:56 PM

President Nixon was trying to bring peace over the world, at least in America, because so many Americans were dying from the war. What is more, America was spending too much money and people for Vietnam War. Therefore, he was trying to conclude war, but South Vietnamese government was against it. Hence, Nixon somehow made a decision so that they can withdraw part of American troops and make Vietnamization happen for the rest of the war, which means America will help Vietnam fighting, but not Americans fighting for Vietnamese.

I think the two strategies of de-coupling Vietnamization and American troop withdrawals from negotiations are essential complements to each other because if America was trying to Vietnamize the war, but still offered lots of military force, it would not be Vietnamized, yet it would still have been Americanized. To be specific, American troops are listening primarily to the U.S. government, but not Vietnam government; therefore, if most of the military force are listening and following what U.S. demands them to do, the war is automatically going to be Americanized. Hence, I think the two strategies are essential complements to each other.

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Re: Vietnamization of the War

by Melissa Booth - Saturday, June 1, 2013, 10:21 PM

It is hard to say that Vietnam is fully Vietnamized when there are still Americans giving orders and such. I think that Vietnam needs to learn to work on their own and not rely on America to support them everytime something goes wrong. Although there needs to be someone who is willing to take charge and lead them in order to become strong and independent. One of the replies to my post made me think about how South Vietnam really didn't have a strong government and that they probably would not have lasted too long on their own. I do think that the two strategies work together. It is a good idea to not have the troops withdrawal all at once, otherwise that would have cause complete chaos in the country. If we slowly moved out, and the soldiers and leaders for America was still there, they could help the government as best as they could until they had to leave.

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Re: Vietnamization of the War

by Rebekah Rundstrom - Sunday, June 2, 2013, 7:59 AM

Good point about South Vietnam being against the end of the war coming. I think American support in the economy, and fighting power definitely made them not want America to leave. I think America should have started out just letting the North and South fight against each other without Americans fighting. I wonder if things would have been settled in the same manner, and time.

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Re: Vietnamization of the War

by Skyla Brocksmyth - Wednesday, May 29, 2013, 11:21 PM

The largest problem to conclude the war was that Ho Chi Minh wasn't willing to negotiate a just peace. He wanted it his way and was not going to compromise. Another problem was that President Nixon believed there would be more harm done by suddenly and completely pulling out of Vietnam. He thought that this would result in an escalation in the war.

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Re: Vietnamization of the War

by Brendan MacDonald - Thursday, May 30, 2013, 6:14 PM

You are absolutely correct when you say that the largest problem was that Ho Chi Minh was reluctant to budge on negotiating a peace. I think that one big contributing factor to his decision however was knowing that America was divided on whether to keep troops in Vietnam or pull all of them out. Seeing that

there were major protests and demonstrations being held undoubtedly showed to the North Vietnamese that the United States was clearly at a disagreement with continuing to send troops into Vietnam and thus gave Ho Chi Minh and the North Vietnamese encouragement to hold on until America finally pulled out.

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Re: Vietnamization of the War

by Skyla Brocksmit - Friday, May 31, 2013, 10:40 AM

Good point. Ho Chi Minh probably did see that America was at a disagreement on whether to send more troops or to pull out completely. Though I wonder what would have resulted had he decided to negotiate with the U.S.

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Re: Vietnamization of the War

by Patrick Haider - Sunday, June 2, 2013, 10:08 PM

That did indeed seem like a very big factor. As he said, the war was going to be fought on the streets of America. I'm sure this played a huge part in peace talks, as Ho Chi Minh had very little reason to budge. He probably felt that the protests would end the war before the fighting would end the war.

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Re: Vietnamization of the War

by Andrew Lavengood - Friday, May 31, 2013, 7:24 PM

While Ho Chi Minh's reluctance to negotiate was obviously a hinderance, I'm not sure if it's justifiable to just push all off on him. From the outset, he was a nationalist first. He was willing to play hardball to ensure that his country - both North and South - were free and independent, and I'm sure he had good reason to believe that as long as American troops were in the country that it would be subject to their desires. Many times we threatened to cut funding to them, which would devastate their economy. Having the troops in the South just gave them another bargaining chip on the negotiating table. I think one of the bigger problems was that Nixon was so back-and-forth on his policy. One minute he's escalating the war by drastic proportions, the next he's pulling troops out of the country. His "wishy-washy" approach to foreign policy (or "throw it all at the wall and see what sticks" approach) told Hanoi that they were dealing with a man that talks but doesn't walk.

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Re: Vietnamization of the War

by Rebekah Rundstrom - Sunday, June 2, 2013, 4:56 PM

Ho Chi Minh was also trying to "fight" a war on the streets of America based on the propaganda that they sent back to America.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Vietnamization of the War

by Skyla Brocksmit - Wednesday, May 29, 2013, 11:23 PM

Since Ho Chi Minh was not willing to negotiate whatsoever, Nixon had to withdraw from negotiations. Nixon did state that there were many instances of effort in negotiation. Since there was no budge on Ho Chi Minh's end, there was no hope for negotiation. This is why we had to withdraw. The second strategy to de-couple Vietnamization was very much a compliment to his first strategy. This is because If we never separated ourselves from Vietnamese than they would never have learned how to defend themselves. Nixon said that pulling out of the war would make the United States look like a coward for not standing behind our allies.

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Re: Vietnamization of the War

by Rebekah Rundstrom - Thursday, May 30, 2013, 11:08 AM

Very good points to bring up. Nixon tried his best to negotiate, but it's hard to negotiate with someone who won't listen to begin with.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Vietnamization of the War

by Brendan MacDonald - Friday, May 31, 2013, 12:35 PM

I don't necessarily think that it was wrong for President Nixon to de-couple Vietnamization and Troop Withdrawals from negotiations even though both those matters go hand in hand and were compliments to each other. To find a certain analogy to liken it to, if you are trying to instruct a young child how to ride a bike without the training wheels, you don't simply remove the training wheels and let the kid just hop on and peddle off on his own, you probably want to keep at least one hand held on in case they start to peddle away and lose their balance and fall over. Likewise with pulling troops out of Vietnam, it was important to do it sparingly while

teaching South Vietnam how to become dependent on itself both economically and militarily.

But I can maybe see the reason why Nixon chose to de-couple the two topics during negotiations because we didn't want to make it seem as if though we were going to up and abandon them after supporting them for the length of time we did. We wanted to make them believe that we would still support them however decrease the amount of it in order to allow them to become more independent.

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Re: Vietnamization of the War

by Melissa Booth - Sunday, June 2, 2013, 9:01 PM

This is why I thought that both Vietnamization and troop withdrawal went hand in hand. I agree that you cannot just leave the country all at once. They have gotten so used to us being there for so long and fighting for them that they would not know what to do if you just went up and left. They would be in utter chaos. This is why I think that if you withdrew the troops slowly, it would work much better in the long run. The troops that are still there can even help train and teach South Vietnam to function on its own without American help. South Vietnam probably wouldn't be as upset with us if we left a little at a time. Alliances would have been ruined if we just left all at once, because they would have thought that we abandoned them and that would not have been good. Overall I think that the two scenarios work together great.

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Re: Vietnamization of the War

by Patrick Haider - Sunday, June 2, 2013, 8:56 PM

It is interesting that our withdrawl from Vietnam was in many ways similar to our withdrawl from Iraq. We felt this certain amount of duty to not leave the country in shambles as we withdrew from a perhaps unwinnable war. This can have a downside of taking much longer for our troops to return home, and possibly facilitating further hatred from the occupied country. However, to simply leave a country in worse shape than we found it could leave that country open to hostility from other nations.

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Re: Vietnamization of the War

by Skylia Brocksmith - Sunday, June 2, 2013, 11:19 PM

I like your comparison of the withdrawals from Vietnam and Iraq. I hadn't thought of it before, but they really are quite similar. You also make some very good points. Removing all troops suddenly and completely and leaving the country in bad shape could be extremely problematic for everyone.

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