

The nixon doctrine of 1969



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The Nixon Doctrine of 1969 Andrea Payne POL 300 Professor John Cronin November 02, 2011 Abstract “ First, the United States will keep all of its treaty commitments. Second, we shall provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation allied with us or of a nation whose survival we consider vital to our security. Third, in cases involving other types of aggression, we shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested in accordance with our treaty commitments. But we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense. ([http://www. presidency. ucsb. edu/](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/)) This quote is from President Richard Nixon’s speech on “ Vietnamization” in 1969.

Vietnamization was a U. S. policy during the Vietnam War which gave the South Vietnamese government ultimate responsibility for the war to allow for the withdrawal of American troops. I will explain in further detail the overall goal, effects and outcome of this policy. I would like to give a brief synopsis of the Vietnam War and the factors which prompted the “ Nixon Doctrine. The Vietnam War, also known as the Second Indochina War or the Vietnam Conflict, occurred in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia from 1959 to 1975. The war was fought between the communist North Vietnam and supported by its communist allies, and South Vietnam which were supported by the United States and other member nations of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). Also involved in the war were the Vietcong, the lightly armed South Vietnamese communist insurgency, which largely fought against anti-communist forces in the South Vietnam region.

The North Vietnamese Army fought a more conventional war by sending large-sized units into battle. The South Vietnamese and United States forces also fought in a more conventional manner by relying on air superiority and overwhelming firepower involving ground forces, artillery and air strikes. The United States entered the war as part of a larger strategy called "Containment" to prevent a Communist takeover of South Vietnam. U. S. military advisors arrived in 1950, and U. S. involvement escalated in the early 1960s. Combat units were deployed beginning in 1965 and involvement peaked in 1968. ([http://faculty. mu. edu/dsimon/Change-Viet4. html](http://faculty.mu.edu/dsimon/Change-Viet4.html))

When President Richard Nixon took office in January 1969, Henry Kissinger was chosen as his National Security Advisor. Kissinger realized the war in Vietnam was a mistake and wanted to withdraw American forces from the war. During a press conference in July of 1969, President Nixon outlined his "Nixon Doctrine." This approach to foreign policy stated that the United States would supply arms but not military forces to its allies in Asia and elsewhere. ([http://www. commandposts. com](http://www.commandposts.com)) Southeast Asia was the area most visible of the application visible of the Nixon Doctrine.

In an attempt to remove the United States from the war in Vietnam, Nixon sought to turn the actual fighting of the war over to the South Vietnamese. Nixon wanted the South Vietnamese to be self sufficient. By taking these steps, it provided a way for the United States to exit the conflict without completely abandoning South Vietnam. The United States would still fund, supply, and train the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). The hopes

were a slow troop withdrawal would appease voters and reduce the number of troop casualties in the field.

President Nixon knew that the American public was growing tired of the war and he needed to keep his approval rating boosted. This plan of action took ultimately four years to complete, with the last of the U. S. troops leaving Saigon in 1973. The war in Vietnam became the longest war in U. S. history. By 1970, almost 50, 000 soldiers had been killed and up to 200, 000 wounded. Even though these numbers were considered low when factoring the amount of South and North Vietnamese that died. Still Americans thought the numbers were far too high for another country's war. Morale had fallen.

Families were ready for their loved ones to come home and the soldiers in the field were growing anxious. To add insult to injury, the United States came under further fire in June 1971 with the publication of the “ Pentagon Papers”. The papers detailed U. S. government and military activity in Vietnam from the 1940s. The papers also revealed that the U. S. Army, as well as Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson, had authorized a number of undercover actions that increased U. S. involvement in Vietnam, leaving the American public in the dark. (Roskin, M. & Berry N. 2010, IR: The New World of International Relations p. 3) Talk about hitting the president while he was down! Ultimately, Vietnamization and the Nixon Doctrine did reduce U. S. combat casualties, but it also turned U. S. foreign policy upside-down. In declaring that the United States would no longer commit troops to stop Communist revolutions abroad, Nixon essentially abolished Eisenhower's, Kennedy's, and Johnson's policies of using the U. S.

military to prevent Communism from spreading. It is ironic that Nixon, who had risen to national acclaim as a hard-nosed anti-Communist in the 1950s, was also the President responsible for U. S. withdrawal from Vietnam.

This war was the most visible in the Cold War against Communism. In addition, Nixon and Kissinger used the lengthy withdrawal from Vietnam as part of a larger vision of easing tensions among the superpowers. (www.history.com) Many may argue that Nixon's slow withdrawal took too long. Nevertheless, Nixon did keep his promise of removing U. S. troops, and he and Kissinger were able to withdraw the United States thoroughly and relatively quickly from the Vietnam dilemma they had inherited from Johnson. I believe Americans do not completely understand what goes into withdrawing troops from a war.

All one see's is the devastating effects and just want the troops to come home. Troop removal is not something that can be completed over night. There is protocol that must be followed. The President must ensure that the troops can be removed safely and the country that the U. S. is sent to aide is in a position to handle things on their own. Although Nixon himself made several poor decisions and resigned because of scandal, he kept the Vietnam issue from having a devastating impact on the United States' position in international relations in the middle of the Cold War.

In addition to withdrawing from Vietnam, Nixon also achieved improved relations with China and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. These actions relieved tensions and likely decreased the threat of a nuclear war. (http://www.history.com) Overall, I believe President Nixon was trying to do

what was best for the nation by introducing the Nixon Doctrine. Like anyone else, he made mistakes, but if one has not been President, it is hard to truly understand what he endured. When one does not fully understand a situation in its entirety, it is easy to say what they would have done.

There is no guarantee that particular solution would be the most viable.

Nixon made great accomplishments in the area of foreign policy in the midst at that time, the longest running war in U. S. history and against the war on Communism. References History. com a€" History Made Every Day a€" American & World History. (n. d.). History. com a€" History Made Every Day a€" American & World History. Retrieved November 2, 2011, from <http://www.history.com> Home - Vassar College. (n. d.). Home - Vassar College. Retrieved November 2, 2011, from <http://vietnam.vassar.edu> Nixon and Vietnam. n. d.). Southern Methodist University. Retrieved November 3, 2011, from <http://faculty.smu.edu/dsimon/Change-Viet4.html> Oettinger, C. (n. d.). Command Posts. Command Posts. Retrieved November 2, 2011, from <http://www.commandposts.com> Roskin, M. , & Berry, N. (2010). Wrong, Terribly Wrong: The United States and Vietnam. IR: The New World of International Relations (pp. 37-51). Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall. SparkNotes: Today's Most Popular Study Guides. (n. d.). SparkNotes: Today's Most Popular Study Guides. Retrieved November 2, 2011, from <http://www.sparknotes.com>