

The effectiveness of nixon's vietnamization policy



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This investigation assesses the effectiveness of Nixons Vietnamization policy from 1969 to 1975. In order to evaluate the policy, this investigation will explore the events leading up to the policy to be valid in the Vietnam War and how Vietnamization was carried out. This investigation will also examine the goals of Vietnamization along with the effects of the policy politically in the United States. Nixons final decisions and his advisors input will also be addressed and taken into consideration along with the closing stages of the Vietnamization policy once taken in effect to come to the conclusion of the question. This investigation will not take account of the causes of the development of the Vietnamization policy, nor will it investigate the Americans position on the policy's effectiveness.

The two main sources chosen for this investigation are No Peace, No Honor by Larry Berman and U. S. Involvement in Vietnam by Martin Gitlin. These two sources will be analyzed for the origins, purposes, values and limitations.

A. Summary of Evidence

The strategies by President Johnson exhausted him and caused him to refuse to run for office in the elections of 1968. Richard Nixon was a seen at the breath of fresh air to the American people. His determination to fix America was shown though his inspired speeches, but what was the key issue to win office was Vietnam. He promised vaguely that he will ' end the war and to win the peace.' Around the time of Nixon's inauguration in January 1969, some 540, 000 Americans were fighting in Vietnam, the newest high troop soldiers by far to fight. (Gitlin 62) Nixon worked with his Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird and developed the policy Vietnamization as a new strategy to

end the war, keep his promise, satisfy the angry troops and to gain credibility.

Vietnamization was a strategy to 'de-Americanize' while winning the war and win the peace. (Green 37) The program goals were to improve and modernize South Vietnam armed forces, establishment of a strong leader for South Vietnam, using the pacification method, and mainly, to shift day to day combat operations from the U. S troops to the ARVN while U. S. troops withdrew slowly out of Vietnam. (Tien Hung, Schecter 97) In 1969, troops were slowly withdrawing out of Vietnam. National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger was committed to negotiate peace with the communists, believing it was the only way to end the war. (Berman 66) But ending the war right away was out of the question, since in early 1969, North Vietnam performed a series of attacks in the south. (Gitlin 65) This caused Nixon to allow heavy bombings in the base camps in Cambodia where the North Vietnamese kept their weapons and supplies. This was first a secret from the American people and most of the government officials, to keep the 'hawks' and other protesters calm. (Gay 44) Also, training the ARVN was impossible. According to Le Duc Tho, a Vietnamese politician assumed correctly that 'Vietnamization would only prolong the war because the South would never be strong enough for the United States to leave.' (Berman 65) Politicians in the U. S. also claimed that the Vietnamization Strategy was a mistake. Senator George McGovern of South Dakota claimed that 'Mr. Nixon's Vietnamization policy is a glaring failure. It is a bandage in a malignant cancer that is disrupting Vietnamese society, demoralizing the American army and weakening America both at home and around the world.' (Berman

82) This was also correctly assumed, since all the protests in the U. S. and dehumanizing the Vietnamese. Because of the bombings in Cambodia, Nixon decided that an early removal of troops by big numbers would result in a ' bloodbath' and a ' loss of faith' in the U. S Congress around the world. (Gitlin 67) By 1970, Vietnamization was still going in the process and beginning to work slowly, even though the attack. The ARVN was improving on their field work, but were not strong enough to be defending their country. U. S. military officials were shocked that the North Vietnamese had found their way around the bombings in Cambodia, reaching the south in different routes to regroup and resupply. (Gitlin 68) It was proven that the more U. S. troops that were being pulled out, the less encouragement there was for the Vietminh to negotiate peace. (Tien Hung, Schechter 61) As U. S. soldiers from Vietnam deescalated, the communist aggression escalated. ' To frustrate the Vietnamization Plan' was the priority for the Vietminh. (Tien Hung, Schechter 96) In late April, Nixon announced the invasion of Cambodia to destroy the bases and to intimidate the communists, even though U. S. combat troops were slowly being withdrawn.

The year 1969 to 1971, the war in Cambodia had negative effects everywhere. The U. S. held protests while the ARVN and U. S. soldiers couldn't find the enemy. The white house was a disaster; political backlash's while demonstrators were at the gates. The concept of Vietnamization was tested though, and the results were damaging. A CIA member Eric Von Marbod had said that the Vietnamization process ' moved too quickly and now that the Americans had gone, the South Vietnamese found themselves with equipment but no logistics system.' (Tien Hung, Schechter 296) When the

ARVN needed the U. S troops support that is when they decided to withdraw. By the end of 1971, fewer than 200, 000 American soldiers were still in Vietnam. March 29, 1973, the last of American troops would leave the country, and South Vietnam fell into the hands of the Communists.

B. Evaluation of Sources

No Peace, No Honor is written by Larry Berman. Berman was a professor and director of University of California Washington Center and wrote two other books on Vietnam. The purpose of this book is the analyzing the era of Nixon in the Vietnam War. Berman supports the idea of peace crafted by Nixon and Kissinger was anything but honorable in the Vietnam situation. It shows his point of views on the subject and supports it by quotes made during the Vietnam War from major politicians both in the U. S. and Vietnam. Its values are that Larry Berman was featured in several major documentaries on the war, which shows his deep knowledge on the subject. The book itself has many quotes from both sides of views and goes into great detail about what was debated between the politicians in Vietnam and the U. S. It also gives support details to back his ideas that are valid. A limitation of this book is that is does not include different perspectives on the war. This book is focused mainly on the betrayal and dishonesty made by Nixon and Kissinger to the American public and to Vietnam.

U. S. Involvement in Vietnam written by Martin Gitlin is a book focused on the facts and historical events in Vietnam and how it shaped politics, society and technology. Gitlin has won over 40 awards as a newspaper reporter in the Associated Press and wrote over 12 educational books. The purpose of

this book is to give factual information on major events in the Vietnam War and how it influenced Vietnam and America. The intended audience is for everyone who is studying the war or wants to know the basics of what happened in Vietnam because the format is simple to read and the book itself is limited. The values are giving true facts about the Vietnam War from primary research and sources. There are also photos in the book that helps us understand what exactly happened. The author intends for us to learn and know some of the key details of the war without spending lots of time researching on the war. Other values are that the author did not express his opinion or perspective, which makes the book more applicable into learning about the Vietnam War. Its limitations are that it doesn't provide information in great detail. It mentions just the basics of facts.

C. Analysis

From ' Search and Destroy' missions to ' Clear and Hold' tactics used in the war, Vietnamization was no different. In theory, the Vietnamization plan seemed flawless and logical. But during the worst years of the war, it was impossible to pull out without destroying America's image and leadership. Marbod also believed that ' Vietnamization had not worked because it did not really serve the needs of South Vietnam. Rather, carried a paternalistic and arrogant ring.' Nixon and Melvin Laird created the program keeping the most component in their minds, which was ' credibility.' (Tien Hung, Schecter 322) When Nixon campaigned for presidency, he promised to end the war quickly. But when he did win the election, he pursued the similar strategy of the prior administration.

Even though plan was being tested and U. S troops were slowly being withdrawn, some argued that the procedure was too fast. Because of this, the ARVN forces were lacking and insufficiently equipped. The ARVN suffered more than three thousand casualties whenever they battled with the North Vietnamese clever soldiers. Not only was the process fast, it was vague about how the process should advance. When the Vietnamization plan was being officially tested in 1969, Kissinger described it as being ' the operation, conceived in doubt and assailed by skepticism, proceeded in confusion.' (Karnow 629) And it was a confusing process, since it was a contradictory process, in which Nixon decided to launch this plan while launching the attack on Cambodia in the same year. It was true that troops with being withdrawn, but only from the ground forces. Nixon was stepping up the expansion of the war by using airplanes. (Kallen 63)

The goals of Vietnamization were also very unrealistic. It was obvious that the ARVN were unable to defend their country on their own. Needless to say, South Vietnam was in chaotic condition culturally and the army was very weak. (Kent 100) Also, the one of the goals of establishing a strong leader is very unlikely. After Diem was assassinated, numerous leaders tried to take over, but they were just a weak or worse than Diem. U. S. had no choice but to finish what they started by continuing bombing and use the pacification method on the Vietnamese to stop the Vietminh from gaining control.

The ' hawks' had come to believe that Vietnamization was a fa'ade. George S. McGovern, the democratic senator from South Dakota and runner up for presidency with Nixon, has claimed that ' the Vietnamization policy is based on the same premises in which have doomed to failure our previous military

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efforts in Vietnam' and that it was ' basically an effort to tranquilize the consciences of the American people while our government wages a cruel and needless war by proxy.' (Dudley, Bender 47) Nixon was a determined person who wants to be the winner and credit given to him. Ending the war with Vietnamization was not the answer since South Vietnam would surly fall under communists rule. However, Vietnamization was a vision in which he used for the American public. (Dudley, Bender 47) Even though the process was experienced, achieving the Vietnamization goals failed.

D. Conclusion

The Vietnamization policy is not entirely considered a success because its goals were not reached. Teaching the North Vietnamese was unsuccessful and establishing a strong leader and army was impossible. This strategy was meant to come to terms and negotiate peace while strengthening South Vietnam through this process, but in practice, they both failed. (Tien Hung, Schechter 61) For North Vietnam, there was no reason to make compromises in the peace discussions as long as American withdrawals were happening as part of plan. In fact, this plan is what made the Vietminh more determined, as they can see the light at the end of the tunnel.

The secret bombings in Cambodia perhaps ruined the process of Vietnamization. Trying to make peace will bombing a country is contradictory. Vietnamization was also looked at as a process in which a bigger war will be formed. Hanoi claimed that ' the plan of the Nixon Vietnamization is not to end the war but to replace the war of aggression fought by U. S troops with a war of aggression fought by the puppet of the U.

S. (ARVN).’ (Berman 51)The goals were clear, but how to achieve them was very confusing and vague.