

The Vietnam War and American Society (1960-1975)

The End of the Vietnam War

OBJECTIVES

- Explain why President Johnson decided not to seek reelection.
- Describe the effect the Vietnam War had on the election of 1968.
- Be able to answer: How did the Vietnam War end?
- Explain and evaluate the legacy of the Vietnam War.

President Johnson's Departure

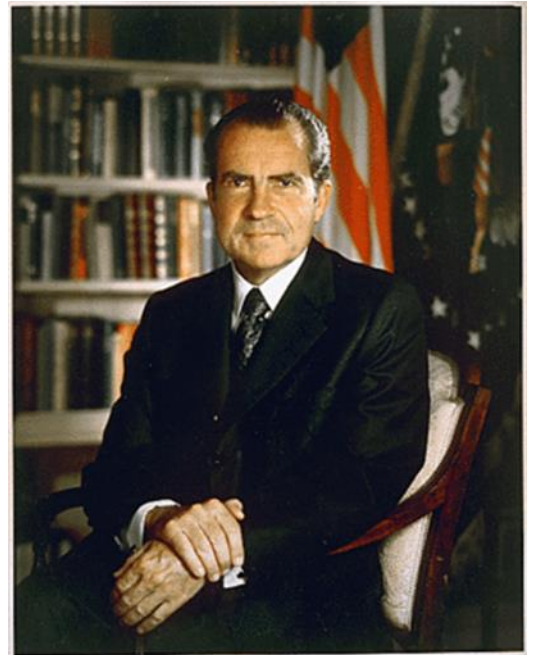
- Years of protests and a growing list of American casualties had steadily increased public opposition to Johnson's handling of the war
 - By 1967, Robert McNamara, Johnson's Sec. of Defense, had lost faith in the war effort
 - He advised the President to turn the fighting over to the South Vietnamese and to stop bombing North Vietnam
- President Johnson refused the advice and in the later years of his presidency rarely left the White House
 - Was afraid of being assaulted by angry crowds of protestors
 - He felt "*like a jackrabbit in a hailstorm, hunkering up and taking it.*"
- March 31, 1968...Pres. Johnson declared on national television that he would not seek reelection



"I do not believe that I should devote an hour or a day of my time to any personal partisan causes or to any duties other than the awesome duties of this office – the presidency of your country. Accordingly, I shall not seek, and will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term."

President Nixon & Vietnamization

- Richard Nixon was elected President in 1968.
 - Nixon ran for the presidency with the claim that he had a plan to end the war.
 - He won the support of *Middle America* — mainstream Americans.
 - They were unhappy with the instability of the 1960s.
- *Vietnamization*...a policy which involved removing American forces and replacing them with South Vietnamese soldiers.
 - Between 1968 and 1972 U.S. troop strength dropped from 550,000 to 24,000.
 - Opposition to the war also declined in that time.
 - Nixon did not want to lose the war, and continued to bomb the countryside heavily.



- April 1970, Nixon announced that US soldiers would be entering Cambodia and began bombing inside the Cambodian border.
 - Goal: get rid of Communism in Cambodia
 - Viet Cong had begun setting up camps to spread outward from Cambodia
 - Nixon said that the United States would not stand by “like a pitiful helpless giant” while the Viet Cong attacked Cambodia.

“We take this action not for the purpose of expanding the war into Cambodia but for the purpose of ending the war in Vietnam and winning the just peace we all desire. We have made and we will continue to make every possible effort to end this war through negotiation at the conference table rather than through more fighting on the field.”

- American public unhappy – Nixon promised to withdraw troops, not send them to another country.



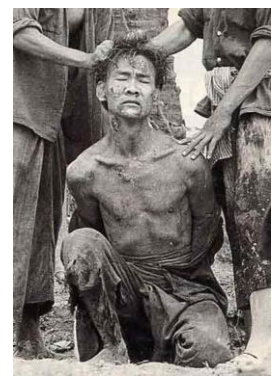
American Withdrawal

- In 1972, North Vietnam refused to accept a peace proposal settlement.
 - The United States responded with the heaviest bombing campaign of the war.
 - U.S. bombed Hanoi, the N.V. capital and by mining the N.V. harbors.
- 1973...after Nixon was reelected, peace finally arrived.
 - January 27, 1973 - Viet Cong, North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and the United States came to a formal peace agreement in Paris, France.
 - Provisions:
 - 1) U.S. would withdraw all its forces from South Vietnam within 60 days.
 - 2) All prisoners of war would be released.
 - 3) All parties to agreement would end military activities in Laos and Cambodia
 - 4) The 17th parallel would continue to divide North and South Vietnam until the country could be reunited.
- U.S. involvement in the war came to an end, but the fighting between North and South Vietnam continued until 1975.
 - In the spring of 1975, North Vietnam captured many South Vietnamese cities, including the capital, Saigon.
 - Fighting continued in Vietnam for 2 years after American withdrawal.
- On April 29, 1975, with Communist forces surrounding Saigon, the U.S. carried out a dramatic last-minute evacuation.
 - Helicopters airlifted more than 1,000 Americans and nearly 6,000 Vietnamese from the city to aircraft carriers offshore.
 - April 30, 1975 – S. Vietnam lost and Vietnam became a single nation with an official Communist government.



Legacy of the Vietnam War

- The Vietnam War resulted in 58,169 deaths and 304,000 wounded.
 - V.C. and North Vietnamese Army lost between **1 and 5 million!**



- The Vietnam War cost \$150 billion.
- U.S. dropped 6,072,084 tons of bombs (3 times as many as WWI and WWII combined).
- Domino Theory?...Laos and Cambodia both became communist.
- Cambodia after the war was taken over by the Khmer Rouge, led by Pol Pot.
- Khmer Rouge declared war on anyone “tainted” by Western ways.
 - They killed 1.5 million Cambodians...anyone educated, or even looked like a middle-to-upper-class citizen.
 - Communism “killing fields” - GENOCIDE
- In the U.S., the war splintered our foreign policy beliefs.
 - Can we be the global leaders fighting against communism?
- *“A house divided against itself cannot stand.”*
-Abraham Lincoln
- The impact of the war lasted longer with the Vietnam veterans.
 - Soldiers came home to a different reception than the veterans of WWII.
 - Many veterans were treated as killers, not appreciated by the war protestors or anti-war counterculture and society as a whole.
- Vietnam War Memorial was completed in 1982.

