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▲ Antiwar demonstrators march in Washington, D.C.

WITNESS HISTORY AUDIO

Antiwar Protests Spread

As Richard Nixon entered the White House in January 1969, students across the country continued to protest the war. And their words were starting to reach ordinary Americans, not just “long-haired radicals.” In late 1969, antiwar protesters organized a series of peaceful demonstrations called “moratoriums.” On October 15, the mayor of New York City addressed a crowd of these protesters:

“We cannot [accept] the charge from Washington that this peaceful protest is unpatriotic. We heard that charge five years ago and three years ago. . . . The fact is that this dissent is the highest form of patriotism. It is the peaceful American way to turn the nation away from a self-defeating course.”

—New York mayor John Lindsay, 1969

The War's End and Impact

Objectives

- Assess Nixon's new approach to the war, and explain why protests continued.
- Explain what led to the Paris Peace Accords and why South Vietnam eventually fell to the communists.
- Evaluate the impact of the Vietnam War on the United States.

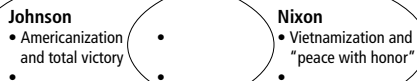
Terms and People

Vietnamization	Paris Peace Accords
My Lai	War Powers Act
Pentagon Papers	

NoteTaking

Reading Skill: Compare and Contrast

Note the similarities and differences between Nixon's Vietnam policy and that of Lyndon Johnson.



Why It Matters As a presidential candidate, Richard Nixon promised “peace with honor” and an end to a war that had fractured American society. Nixon did indeed withdraw American troops, and the Vietnam War finally ended. But the impact of the war endured. As the nation recovered from war, Americans reexamined the struggle against communism, the power of the presidency, and America's role in the world. **Section Focus Question:** How did the Vietnam War end, and what were its lasting effects?

Nixon Starts the Pullout

Nixon's defenders argued that he was a hard-working patriot with a new vision for America. His critics charged that he was a deceitful politician bent on acquiring power and punishing his enemies. There were elements of truth to both views. But defenders and critics alike agreed that Richard Nixon was a determined man with abundant political talent. From his first day in office, the new President realized that ending the Vietnam War was the key to everything else he hoped to achieve.

Peace Talks Stall Though formal peace talks between the warring parties had begun in May 1968, they were bogged down from the outset by disagreements and a lack of compromise. When Richard Nixon took office in January 1969, his peace delegation firmly believed they could break the impasse. The Americans and South Vietnamese wanted all communist troops out of South Vietnam.

They also wanted prisoners of war (POWs) returned. Meanwhile, the North Vietnamese demanded an immediate American withdrawal from Vietnam and the formation of a coalition government in South Vietnam that would include representatives from the Vietcong. Still hoping to win the war in the field, North Vietnam refused to budge from its initial position. And South Vietnam refused to sign any agreement that compromised its security.

Nixon's Plan: Vietnamization and Peace With Honor President Nixon refused to accept the North Vietnamese peace terms. He was committed to a policy of “peace with honor” and believed that there were still military options. He continued a gradual pullout of American troops, and expressed faith in the ability of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam to assume the burden of war. He called his approach **Vietnamization**—U.S. forces would withdraw as ARVN troops assumed more combat duties. The hope was that with continued American aid behind the front lines, the ARVN would fight its own battles to secure South Vietnam.

To reduce the flow of communist supplies to the Vietcong, Nixon ordered the secret bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Cambodia. This was a controversial move because it widened the scope of the war and helped to undermine the neutral government in Cambodia. In the end, neither Vietnamization nor secret bombings dramatically improved South Vietnam's chances of winning a war against the communists.

✓ **Checkpoint** How did Vietnamization differ from the war policies of Nixon's predecessors?

Troubles on the Home Front Intensify

Nixon inherited two things from Lyndon Johnson: an unpopular war and a vocal American opposition to it. The new President wanted “peace with honor,” security for America's ally South Vietnam, and international respect for U.S. foreign policy. Antiwar activists wanted the war ended and American troops out of Vietnam—on any terms. Nixon found it increasingly difficult to achieve his goals and satisfy the snowballing antiwar movement.

American Troops in Cambodia More than a year into office, Nixon had grown impatient with the snail's pace of the peace negotiations. In 1970, he attempted to break the stalemate by ordering a ground attack on North Vietnamese Army and Vietcong bases in Cambodia. Nixon also hoped to aid the pro-American Cambodian government in its fight against the Khmer Rouge, a communist movement supported by North Vietnam.

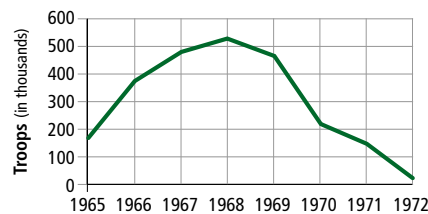
On the evening of April 30, Nixon addressed the American people, informing them of his decision to carry the war into Cambodia. He stressed that the war had become a measure of how committed the United States was to preserving freedom around the world:

Primary Source “If, when the chips are down, the world's most powerful nation, the United States of America, acts like a pitiful, helpless giant, the forces of totalitarianism and anarchy will threaten free nations . . . throughout the world.”

—President Richard Nixon, 1970



U.S. Military Personnel in Vietnam



SOURCE: National Archives and Records Administration

Vietnamizing the War

The United States scaled back its commitment of ground troops to Vietnam after 1968. However, while more American troops left for home, U.S. air forces dropped more bombs on communist targets in North Vietnam and along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. *How did the shift in American tactics ensure Nixon's “peace with honor”?*

The next morning, U.S. and ARVN forces crossed the border into Cambodia. These soldiers captured large stockpiles of weapons and supplies, but they did not break the stalemate. North Vietnam remained determined to have peace on its terms or no peace at all.

Violence Erupts at Kent State The Cambodian incursion had a profound impact on the peace movement at home. It stirred antiwar activists, who argued that Nixon had widened the war and made the world a more dangerous place. Throughout the country, college campuses erupted with protests. Several demonstrations prompted the police and National Guard to step in to preserve order.

On two campuses, confrontations between students and armed authorities led to deaths. Four days after Nixon's speech, demonstrators at Kent State University in Ohio threw rocks and bottles at members of the National Guard. When one guardsman thought he heard a sniper's shot, he fired his rifle. The shot prompted other National Guardsmen to discharge a volley of gunfire into a group of protesters, killing four youths. The Kent State killings led to demonstrations on other campuses. At Jackson State University, a traditionally African American college in Mississippi, a confrontation between students and police ended with two students dead.

College demonstrations against the war sometimes prompted counterprotests by Americans who supported the President. In response to a May 8, 1970, antiwar rally in downtown New York City, construction workers decided to demonstrate, carrying American flags and chanting "All the Way USA." Believing that some anti-

Protest and Death in Ohio

A student photographer at Kent State snapped this photograph moments after the Ohio National Guard opened fire on student protesters on May 4, 1970. *How do you think people reacted to seeing this photograph in the newspaper?*



war demonstrators had spit on the American flag, they pushed into the crowd and started hitting protesters. The clash drew national attention. Days later, thousands of construction workers, businessmen, secretaries, and housewives marched peacefully through Manhattan's streets in support of Nixon and the war effort. One man expressed his feelings about the march:

Primary Source “I’m very proud to be an American, and I know my boy that was killed in Vietnam would be here today if he was alive, marching with us. . . . I know he died for the right cause, because in his letters he wrote to me he knew what he was fighting for: to keep America free. . . .”


—Robert Geary, May 20, 1970

As the fighting continued in Vietnam, the American home front became its own physical and emotional battlefield.

American Soldiers Kill Civilians at My Lai In 1971, two events increased the pressure on Nixon to pull U.S. troops out of Vietnam. The first event had roots in a U.S. action in South Vietnam three years earlier. On March 16, 1968, American forces searching for enemy troops in an area with a strong Vietcong presence came upon the village of **My Lai**. By this point in the war, many American troops had been injured and killed by Vietcong fighters posing as civilians. It was a recipe for disaster at My Lai, where Lieutenant William Calley’s unit began shooting and killing unarmed civilians. During the assault, U.S. soldiers killed between four and five hundred Vietnamese.

Lt. Calley later maintained that he was following orders, but many of the soldiers present did not participate in the massacre. At least one risked his own life to stop it. The tragedy was made even worse by an inadequate military investigation of the incident. *Life* magazine eventually published photos taken during the event, and in March 1971, a military court convicted Lt. Calley of his participation in the attack. News of the My Lai massacre, the coverup, and Calley’s trial shocked many Americans and added fuel to the burning antiwar fire.

Pentagon Papers Undermine Public Trust On the heels of My Lai came the 1971 publication of the **Pentagon Papers** in *The New York Times*. The term referred to a classified government history of America’s involvement in Vietnam. The study was leaked to *The Times* by one of its coauthors, Daniel Ellsberg. Nixon tried to block the full publication, but in *New York Times v. United States*, the Supreme Court ruled against the administration. The study revealed that American leaders involved the U.S. in Vietnam without fully informing the American people and occasionally even lied to Congress.

 **Checkpoint** What happened at Kent State and Jackson State universities in 1970?

The War Finally Ends

The failings of Vietnamization and growing dissent at home forced President Nixon to search for some final way out of the conflict. A 1971 public-opinion poll revealed that two thirds of Americans favored withdrawing American troops, even if it meant a communist takeover of South Vietnam. Sensitive to the public mood, Congress pressed Nixon to bring the troops home. Many believed that to win reelection in 1972, he had to end the war.



Slaughter and Coverup in South Vietnam

A photographer captured the terror in the village of My Lai as American troops were killing hundreds of civilians. The massacre was followed by a military investigation, but only Lt. William Calley was convicted. *Why were many Americans dissatisfied with the result of the military investigation?*

Vocabulary Builder

induce—(ihn DOOS) *v.* to bring about; cause

American Troops Leave Vietnam In October 1972, the United States and North Vietnam came to terms on a peace settlement. One month later, with lasting peace almost at hand, Nixon easily defeated the antiwar Democrat George McGovern for reelection. But Nixon's triumph was short-lived. The Vietnamese peace fell apart when North Vietnam refused to sign the agreement. Talks broke off, but renewed American bombing in North Vietnam finally induced the North Vietnamese to resume negotiations.

At last, in January 1973, the United States, South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and the Vietcong signed the **Paris Peace Accords**. The parties agreed to a cease-fire and a U.S. troop withdrawal from South Vietnam. POWs would be exchanged, but North Vietnamese troops would remain in South Vietnam. The National Liberation Front would become a legitimate political party in South Vietnam, and South Vietnam's noncommunist government would remain in power pending a political settlement. With the war ended, the last American troops came home. Among the returning soldiers were more than 550 POWs, most of whom were pilots shot down during the war.

Saigon Falls For the United States, the war in Vietnam was over. For the Vietnamese, however, it continued. Neither North nor South Vietnam honored the cease-fire or worked toward a diplomatic settlement of their differences. In the spring of 1975, minor fighting escalated when North Vietnam launched an offensive against the South. Without American aid and ground support, the ARVN was no match for the Soviet-supplied North Vietnamese Army. By the end of April, the communists had taken Saigon. After decades of fighting and millions of deaths, Vietnam was unified under one flag.



Checkpoint What did the signing parties agree to in the Paris Peace Accords?

◀ A Purple Heart is awarded to members of the U.S. armed forces who are wounded or killed by an enemy in combat.

INFOGRAPHIC

America's Veterans Return From Vietnam

In April 1973, a plane carrying the last American prisoners of war from Vietnam touched down in Hawaii. The flight marked the end of an era that had seen hundreds of thousands of American troops deployed to fight in the Vietnam War. The homecoming for many of these soldiers had been bittersweet. While some came home to exuberant family reunions and community parades, many Vietnam veterans received little or no public acknowledgment of their sacrifices. It was not until nearly a decade later that the nation dedicated the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (see photo at far right) to honor these brave Americans.

◀ A Vietnam veteran takes part in a 1973 parade in New York City to honor those who served in the war.

Some veterans, like this man in San Francisco in 1994, faced hard times after they reentered American society.



The Vietnam War Has a Lasting Impact

More than 58,000 American soldiers gave their lives serving their country in Vietnam; another 300,000 were wounded. Although figures are not exact, the Vietnamese death toll most likely exceeded 2 million. Peace, however, did not mean the end of pain and hardship. The end of the war created other problems in Southeast Asia. The war also affected American attitudes toward world affairs.

Southeast Asia Suffers Further Turmoil Many foreign-policy experts in the United States had predicted that if North Vietnam won the Vietnamese civil war, communism would spread to other nations in Southeast Asia. In a limited sense, they were right. Communist regimes eventually came to power in both Laos and Cambodia. In Cambodia, the ruling Khmer Rouge unleashed a genocide on the populace, killing everyone who had ties to the West or previous Cambodian governments. Between 1975 and 1979, upwards of 2 million Cambodians were executed or died in labor camps.

In an expanded sense, however, many American foreign-policy strategists misjudged the spread of communism. They concluded it was a monolithic global movement controlled by Moscow and Beijing. However, as the war's aftermath would attest, communist movements in Southeast Asia were nationalistic and intolerant of outside influences. After the Vietnam War ended, Vietnamese communists went to war against the Khmer Rouge, who in turn received help from Chinese communists to battle the Vietnamese. In this conflict, the United States supported the Chinese.

Veterans Return Home to Mixed Reactions The war and the peace divided Americans. Some argued that the United States should never have entered the war and that their leaders had lied to them. Others countered that the war was part of an ongoing struggle against communism and that in the

The families of Americans still missing after the Vietnam War hope that those prisoners and missing will one day be returned to them. ▼

▼ Released POW Lt. Col. Robert Stirm is eagerly greeted by his family at a California air base upon his return home from Vietnam.

Called the "wall that heals," the memorial has provided a place for veterans to "reflect, remember lost friends, and heal wounds." ▶



Thinking Critically

- 1. Synthesize Information** Why did returning U.S. soldiers face a mixed reaction?
- 2. Draw Conclusions** Why was the Vietnam Veterans Memorial built many years after the war?

end, the United States betrayed South Vietnam. An unfortunate result of the controversy was that the nation never fully expressed its appreciation to the returning veterans.

Overwhelmingly, the 2.5 million enlisted men who served in Vietnam did so with honor and distinction. Yet, unlike the soldiers that returned to the United States after World Wars I and II—the famed Doughboys and G.I. Joes—few Vietnam vets enjoyed the warmth and adulation of victory parades. In addition to the indifference that some veterans encountered, some also suffered from physical and psychological ailments for years when they returned home.

Not until almost a decade after the end of the war did Americans begin to fully honor the courage and sacrifice of these veterans. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, dedicated in Washington, D.C., in 1982, stands as an eloquent testament to the men and women who served and died in Vietnam.

Vietnam Changes American Policies The war was costly both monetarily and in the human toll of shattered lives. The war also altered American domestic and foreign policies. Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society campaign against poverty and racism fell victim to the conflict. Increasingly, between 1964 and 1968, Johnson could not pay for both the Vietnam War and the Great Society. Paying for more guns left less money to pay for textbooks, school lunches, and prenatal care.

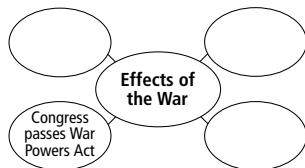
Additionally, the war undermined Americans’ trust in their leaders and fragmented the Cold War consensus on foreign affairs. In 1973, Congress passed the **War Powers Act**. The act restricted the President’s war-making powers by requiring him to consult with Congress within 48 hours of committing American forces to a foreign conflict. The act was a congressional attempt to check the unilateral formation of American foreign policy and stop the growth of the “imperial presidency.”

Finally, the Vietnam War made Americans more suspicious of foreign commitments and less likely to intervene in the affairs of other countries. For the next 30 years, many Americans would view conflicts in Central America, Africa, the Balkans, and the Middle East through a lens tinted by the Vietnamese quagmire. The fear of “another Vietnam” had profound effects on American foreign policy in the postwar world.

 **Checkpoint** What did the War Powers Act do?

NoteTaking

Reading Skill: Recognize Effects As you read, use a concept web to identify the effects of the Vietnam War.



SECTION

4 Assessment

Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-test with vocabulary practice
Web Code: nea-1610

Comprehension

- 1. Terms and People** For each term below, write a sentence explaining its significance.
 - Vietnamization
 - Paris Peace Accords
 - War Powers Act

- 2. NoteTaking Reading Skill: Compare and Contrast** Use your Venn diagram to answer the Section Focus Question: How did the Vietnam War end, and what were its lasting effects?

Writing About History

- 3. Quick Write: Choose Strongest Argument** Consider this thesis statement: Richard Nixon won the Vietnam War. List possible arguments for a persuasive essay that supports this thesis. Review each argument and choose the strongest one. Make sure that factual points from the text support your argument.

Critical Thinking

- 4. Synthesize Information** How did Nixon redirect the peace process when he became President? Did his plan have the desired result?
- 5. Explain Effects** What impact did the events of 1970 and 1971 have on Nixon’s actions in Vietnam?
- 6. Draw Conclusions** Which two effects of the Vietnam War do you think had the biggest long-term impact? Explain.