

US History

The Vietnam War

Learning Target:

I can examine the events leading to the end of the Vietnam War under Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger.

10. Richard Nixon & The End of Vietnam –

Richard Nixon –

-Republican president who capitalized on the assassination of RFK

Henry Kissinger –

-Richard Nixon's national security advisor and later secretary of state

-Won Nobel Peace Prize for negotiations ending the war

Vietnamization –

-A plan to end the war by gradually turning over the fighting to the South

Vietnamese while pulling out US troops – Developed by Nixon and Kissinger

-Nixon said this would bring “peace with honor” and replace attrition

The Bombing of Cambodia –

-Early 1969 Nixon ordered widespread bombing of Cambodia

-Wanted to cut off supplies and troops coming down the Ho Chi Minh Trail

-Wanted to send message to North Vietnam that the US was still willing to use force to obtain “peace with honor”

-Air strikes were concealed from the public, Congress, and other key people since Cambodia was neutral Nixon feared international uproar

-1970 Cambodia revolted and instituted a pro-US government – Nixon justified bombings as defending a friendly ally

-Americans shocked because they thought the war was ending

The War Escalates –

-With invasion of Cambodia and renewed bombings of North Vietnam, Nixon unexpectedly continued the war

The Madman Theory –

“I want the North Vietnamese to believe that I've reached the point where I might do anything to stop the war. We'll just slip the word to them that, 'for God's sake, you know Nixon is obsessed about Communists. We can't restrain him when he's angry – and he has his hand on the nuclear button' – and Ho Chi Minh himself will be in Paris in two days begging for peace.” – Nixon

-Nixon miscalculated the opposition's will to fight in this war of attrition

-Madman theory backfired and the war grew more intense rather than ending

-North Vietnam fought harder and harder to prove that they would not lose a war of attrition

Peace Is Reached –

The First Peace Negotiations –

August 1969 –

- Kissinger and Le Duc Tho met secretly to begin negotiations; would last 3 years

October 1972 –

- The North Vietnamese offered an acceptable peace treaty to the USA

Conditions of Peace –

- Cease-fire would happen
- Removal of all foreign troops from Vietnam and an end of US aid
- A new S. Vietnam government with the current president, Thieu, and NLF representatives in control

Rejection of Peace –

- S. Vietnam asked the US to reject the treaty – Power would be compromised
- We agreed and rejected it

Bombing Continues –

- North Vietnam demanded the agreement be reinstated
- This made Nixon furious and he ordered round-the-clock bombing of Hanoi and N. Vietnam
- 40,000 tons of bombs were dropped for two weeks with only one day off for Christmas
- Bombings did not sway North Vietnam and Nixon resumed talks

Peace Treaty Reached –

- January 27, 1973 an agreement was reached similar to the first one
 - US would withdraw and a prisoner exchange would take place
 - Did not address the major issue of the war, the political future of Vietnam
 - Nixon secretly pledged that the US would come to the aid of S. Vietnam if fighting resumed
- Two years after the withdraw of the US South Vietnam's government collapsed
- By April 1975 the US rushed to evacuate all Americans still left in Saigon
- April 30, 1975 South Vietnam surrendered unconditionally

Results –

- Vietnam became a unified communist nation
- Cambodia and Laos were heavily damaged from the war
- The Domino Theory did not proceed as predicted
 - Fights broke out between communist China, Vietnam, and Cambodia
 - International communism was not as unified as the US thought