



We Should Get Out

“We feel the administration must know that many, many people, those of us who have lost our sons, feel we should get out of this involvement.”

—Mrs. Ransom, antiwar demonstrator and a soldier's mother, 1969

◀ An American soldier returns home.

The War Ends

Objectives

- Explain how the Vietnam War affected the election of 1968.
- Explain how President Nixon decreased U.S. involvement in Vietnam.
- Describe how the fighting in Vietnam came to an end.
- Describe the long-term impact of the Vietnam War on Southeast Asia and the United States.

Reading Skill

Ask Questions That Go Beyond the Text

There is much more to learn and explore about every topic introduced in this textbook. You can explore topics that interest you through research and discussion. Asking questions will help you. Remember to ask questions that focus on *why* or *how*, rather than questions with yes or no answers.

Key Terms and People

Richard Nixon boat people
Henry Kissinger

Why It Matters Despite years of fighting and thousands of deaths, the United States and South Vietnam had failed to defeat Communist North Vietnam. Meanwhile, antiwar protests intensified and the American people grew increasingly divided. America's leaders looked for a way to end U.S. involvement in the war.

Section Focus Question: What were the causes and effects of American withdrawal from Vietnam?

Election of 1968

The Vietnam War played a central role in the election of 1968. Heavily criticized by some Democrats for his war policies, President Johnson decided not to seek reelection. Vice President Hubert Humphrey, who backed Johnson's Vietnam policies, then entered the race. The Democrats held their nominating convention in Chicago. Thousands of antiwar demonstrators gathered, too. In what was later deemed a “police riot,” officers moved in and struck demonstrators with fists and clubs. Hundreds were injured or arrested.

Inside the hall, the delegates nominated Humphrey. Even as he accepted the nomination, TV cameras cut away to show the chaos in Chicago's streets. Humphrey became the Democratic candidate for President, but the nation was further torn apart.

The Republicans nominated former Vice President Richard Nixon. Nixon promised to restore “law and order” at home and win “peace with honor” in Vietnam. Alabama Governor George Wallace, who had gained national attention by exploiting racial tensions in the South, became a third-party candidate. The election was close, but Nixon won by a small margin.

Checkpoint What position did Nixon take on the Vietnam War?

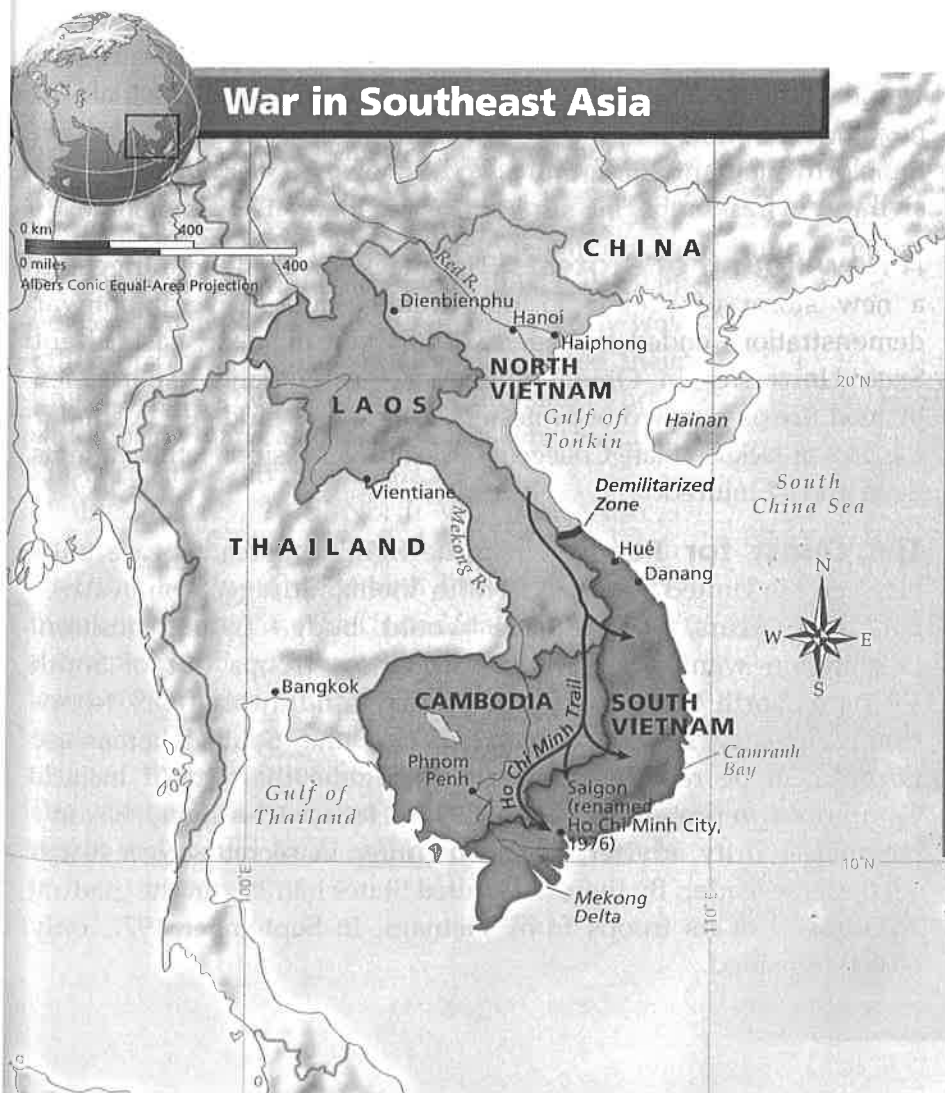
The War Winds Down

Nixon knew that a growing number of Americans believed the war was a mistake. He began looking for a way to get out of Vietnam and still keep his promise of "peace with honor."

Nixon Pursues a New Course To begin scaling down American involvement, in June 1969 Nixon announced a policy known as Vietnamization. Under this plan, American troops gradually withdrew from Vietnam and the South Vietnamese assumed responsibility for fighting the war. The first U.S. combat troops left Vietnam the following month, in July 1969. By August, about 25,000 combat troops returned home. By April 1970, nearly 150,000 soldiers left Vietnam.

At the same time, Nixon expanded the war into Vietnam's neighbor, Cambodia. Cambodia had tried to stay neutral, but North Vietnamese soldiers had been carrying arms and supplies along a mountainous route through Laos and Cambodia into South Vietnam. This route was known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

In 1969, the United States began bombing Communist bases in Cambodia. American and South Vietnamese forces also attacked bases on the ground. The bases were being used to mount attacks on American troops in Vietnam. Nixon hoped that the American action



MAP MASTER

Skills Activity

The Vietnam War spilled over from Vietnam into neighboring countries.

- (a) **Interpret Maps** What four countries did the Ho Chi Minh Trail go through?
- (b) **Evaluate Information** From the Communists' point of view, what were the advantages and disadvantages of a supply line like this?

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A Nurse Reflects

“Those of us who went to Vietnam practiced a lifetime of nursing in one year—our tour of duty there. We were the young, caring for the young. The average age of the wounded soldier in Vietnam was 19.4 years. The average age of the nurse was 23. We quickly learned that the primary reason we were in Vietnam was to get each other home.”

—Diane Carlson Evans,
speech, Washington, D.C., 1998

Nurses care for wounded soldiers about to be shipped home.



Reading Primary Sources

Skills Activity

As many as 10,000 women served in uniform with U.S. military forces in the Vietnam War, most as nurses.

(a) **Rank** What three characteristics do you think were most important for a nurse serving in Vietnam?

(b) **Draw Conclusions** What does the speaker mean when she says the main goal was “to get each other home”?

Vocabulary Builder

eliminate (ee LIHM ih nayt) **v.** to remove from consideration

would eliminate a military threat and pressure North Vietnam to negotiate peace. In fact, the attacks on Cambodia had little effect on the North Vietnamese. The attacks did, however, lead to chaos and civil war in Cambodia.

A New Round of Protests The attacks on Cambodia triggered a new storm of protest in the United States. Several antiwar demonstrations ended in tragedy. The worst incident was at Kent State University in Ohio, where nervous National Guardsmen opened fire on a crowd of protesters, killing four students. A similar incident at Jackson State College in Jackson, Mississippi, left 2 students dead and 12 injured.

The Quest for Peace While the fighting spread, peace talks between the United States and North Vietnam dragged on in Paris. For three years, neither side would budge in its position. Washington wanted all North Vietnamese troops out of South Vietnam. North Vietnam insisted on the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam. It also demanded that the South Vietnamese government be replaced with a new regime that would include Communist representatives. In 1970, Henry Kissinger, Nixon's national security adviser, began to confer in secret with a North Vietnamese leader. By then, the United States had begun the gradual withdrawal of its troops from Vietnam. In September 1972, only 60,000 remained.

Vocabulary Builder

confer (kahn FER) **v.** to exchange ideas

In October 1972, just before the U.S. presidential election, Kissinger stated that an agreement was near. "Peace is at hand," he exclaimed. But his statement proved premature. The South Vietnamese, who had not been consulted, rejected the proposed agreement.

In order to put more pressure on the Communists, President Nixon then ordered new bombings of North Vietnam. After 12 days of concentrated bombing, the North Vietnamese agreed to return to the bargaining table. This time, an accord was reached that all sides accepted. The Paris Peace Accords were signed on January 27, 1973. They closely resembled what had been agreed to in October of the previous year. The last American serviceman to die in combat in Vietnam, Lt. Colonel William B. Nolde, was killed by an artillery shell only 11 hours before a cease-fire went into effect. The last U.S. combat troops were out of Vietnam by March 1973. The longest war in U.S. history was finally over.

Checkpoint What was President Nixon's policy of Vietnamization?

The Final Years of Conflict

Although direct American involvement in the Vietnam War ended in 1973, the struggle between North and South continued for two more years. The Paris Peace Accords allowed North Vietnam to keep some 150,000 troops in the South. Once the Americans were gone, the Communists set out to seize control of the country.

At the end of 1974, the North Vietnamese launched a series of strikes against the South Vietnamese army. The South Vietnamese army tried without success to stop the Communist advance. In March 1975, the North Vietnamese captured the ancient capital of Hue. At the same time, they forced South Vietnamese troops into a retreat from the Central Highlands, along the Cambodian border. Much of the South Vietnamese army was killed or captured, and other soldiers shed their uniforms and fled into the countryside. Thousands of civilians also perished in what became known as the Convoy of Tears.

By April 29, 1975, North Vietnamese forces were nearing Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam. Fearing a blood bath when the Communists entered the city, the United States carried out a dramatic helicopter evacuation of 1,000 American workers and some 5,500 South Vietnamese supporters. At the same time, American ships rescued thousands of South Vietnamese at sea. The Vietnamese had fled the mainland in any vessel they could find, and many of the vessels proved unseaworthy.



Ask Questions That Go Beyond the Text

Ask a possible research question about Nixon's choice to bomb North Vietnam at this time.

Fleeing Saigon

Vietnamese civilians try to climb aboard a U.S. airplane during the hectic evacuation of Saigon in 1975. **Critical Thinking:**

Analyze Cause and Effect What was the cause of the evacuation, and what were its effects?



On April 30, North Vietnamese troops entered Saigon. The South Vietnamese government formally surrendered. After decades of fighting, Vietnam was united under a Communist government. And Saigon received a new name: Ho Chi Minh City.

✓Checkpoint What happened in Vietnam after the United States withdrew its combat forces?

Vietnam Balance Sheet

The Vietnam War was the first foreign war in which American forces suffered defeat. This failure damaged the nation's pride. It also caused Americans to rethink their role in the world.

Effect on the United States The U.S. costs of the war were enormous. More than 58,000 Americans died in combat, and some 300,000 were wounded. On the economic side, the high price tag for the war—around \$200 billion—damaged the U.S. economy for years. Unlike veterans of earlier wars, Vietnam vets were not welcomed home with cheering and parades. For many of the survivors, war memories were a nightmare. Many veterans adjusted poorly to civilian life. They suffered high rates of divorce, unemployment, and homelessness.

The Vietnam War undermined the nation's trust in the government and its leaders. In 1971, leading newspapers had published secret government documents known as the Pentagon Papers. They traced the steps by which the United States had committed itself to the Vietnam War and showed that government officials had concealed actions and often misled Americans about their motives.

Two Presidents had sent American troops into battle without a formal declaration of war. Hoping to curb presidential power, Congress passed the War Powers Act in 1973. It declared that a President could not send military forces into action for longer than 60 days without congressional approval.

Another political change resulting from the war was passage in 1971 of the Twenty-sixth Amendment to the Constitution, which lowered the voting age to 18. Supporters of the amendment argued that if 18-year-olds were old enough to fight and die in Vietnam, they were old enough to vote.

Remembering the Vietnam War In 1982, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was completed in Washington, D.C. Known by many simply as "the Wall," it consists of two slabs of black granite sloping into the ground. Etched into the surface are the names of the more than 58,000 Americans who died

Biography Quest



Maya Lin
born 1959

Maya Lin was a 21-year-old art student when she entered a national contest to design the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Lin's design for a black granite wall was selected over some 1,400 other entries. Today, the memorial is one of the most visited sites in Washington, D.C.

After that powerful achievement, Lin has gone on to become one of the nation's most respected sculptors and architects.

Biography Quest online

Why did Lin's design for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial cause controversy?

For: The answer to the question about Lin

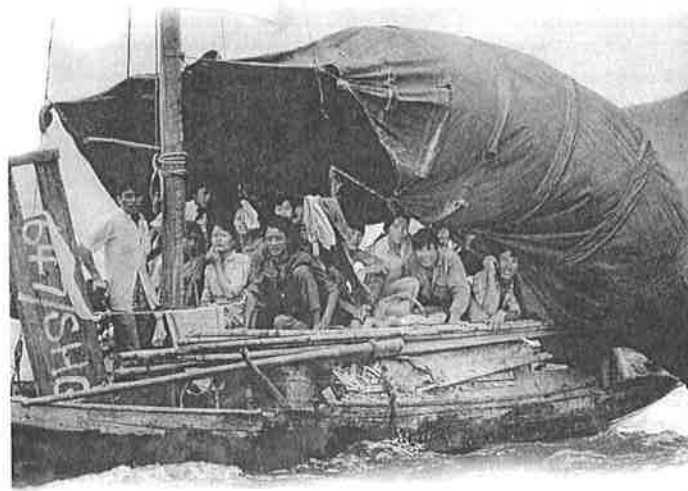
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in Vietnam. In the words of Jack Wheeler, a Vietnam veteran who played a major role in getting the memorial built, "[the Wall] is probably the single most important step in the process of healing."

Effect on Vietnam Vietnamese losses were huge. South Vietnamese battle deaths exceeded 350,000. Estimates of North Vietnamese battle losses range between 500,000 and one million. Millions of civilians also died. The bombing destroyed much of North Vietnam's industry and transportation, but the greatest damage was in South Vietnam. There, 10 million people were left homeless by the war.

At the end of the war, more than a million people fled the new regime. Those who attempted to escape in small boats were called **boat people**. Perhaps 200,000 boat people died at sea or in refugee camps. Eventually, the United Nations acted to relocate the boat people. The United States took in many refugees, as did other nations. Private groups also worked hard to help the refugees from Vietnam.



Vietnamese boat people

✓Checkpoint How did the Vietnam War affect the people in North Vietnam and in South Vietnam?

★ **Looking Back and Ahead** The Nixon administration began withdrawing troops from Vietnam and negotiated a peace pact. After U.S. troops left, fighting resumed and North Vietnam overtook South Vietnam and united the country under communism. In the next section, you will read of other issues that affected the United States in this period.

Section 3 | Check Your Progress

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Comprehension and Critical Thinking

1. **(a) Recall** What campaign promise did Nixon make regarding the war in Vietnam?
(b) Apply Information Why do you think Nixon broke his campaign promise?
2. **(a) Identify** What is the War Powers Act?
(b) Explain Problems Why did Congress believe it was necessary to pass the act?



Reading Skill

3. **Ask Questions That Go Beyond the Text** Ask a possible research question about current Vietnamese views about the war era.

Key Terms

Read the following sentence. If the sentence is true, write YES. If the sentence is not true, write NO and explain why.

4. Henry Kissinger did not feel that the United States should withdraw from Vietnam.

Writing

5. Write a paragraph from the viewpoint of one of the following: (a) a Vietnamese refugee settling in the United States in 1975, (b) an American soldier returning home after the war, or (c) a student protesting the invasion of Cambodia. Give the speaker's opinion of the situation in which he or she is involved. Add details to make the experience seem real.