

The Vietnam War

I. The French in Vietnam

- The French controlled Vietnam from the middle of the 1800s...this was a time where the major European powers were gaining colonies all throughout the world
 - The French went into Vietnam for many reasons:
 1. Economic
 - a. exploit natural resources of Vietnam including rubber, rice
 2. Prestige, National Pride
 - a. to help compete with other large and powerful nations
 3. National survival—“only the fittest nations survive and those who don’t adapt will be left behind”

II. French Colonialism

Divided Vietnam into 3 parts and this made it easier to control the territory. A divide and rule strategy

Three territories:

1. North: Tonkin
2. Central: Annam
3. South: Cochin

China (most important, where all the natural resources were)



The French ruled the North and Central areas indirectly: It was densely populated, had little resources.

- Direct rule in the South. The French participated in everything. They led a cultural transformation into southern Vietnam. The children of the wealthy went to university in France. The students in South Vietnam were educated under French rule in French schools. They developed an admiration for French culture.
- Problem? The Vietnamese elite who went to France to study were also introduced to Marxism which was popular among intellectuals in Paris. Marxism gave an anti-imperialist message and promised independence from European rule.

III. Ho Chi Minh



- Attracted to Marxism because he felt it was best for the people
- Went to Paris around the time of WW1 - Demanded to speak to the “Big 4” - They ‘brushed him off’
- Founding member of the French Communist Party
 - trained in Moscow, USSR
 - Feb, 1930—helped create Vietnamese Communist Party in Hong Kong
 - Fall, 1930—name changed to Indochinese Communist Party to promote change in Laos and Cambodia as well.

He was a Vietnamese “everyman.” He could connect well with everyone. He dealt with westerners all his life so he could work well with them as well as his own people. In the 1940s he put together a military and political army to fight against the French. This war removed the automatic assumption that western ideas were best and they were able to fight off a western power. Ho Chi Minh went underground and led a revolution from the mountains.



- WWII: Vietnam invaded by Japan; France lost its colonies
- After WWII: France tries to retake Indochina w/U.S. help and \$\$\$

→ September 2, 1945: Declare Independence!

- American support is important to Ho Chi Minh - he quotes US Declaration of Independence when declaring Vietnamese Independence; has American flag flying; plays our national anthem
- But we support...The French!
 - Why? They were our ally in WWII and Ho Chi Minh supports Communism



IV. First Indochina War 1945-1954



- Domino Theory - US afraid of Vietnam “falling” to communism
- 1949 - China “falls” to Communism
- By 1954, US is paying most of the French costs associated with the war
 - Still losing battle after battle
- France abandons Vietnam after defeat at Dien Bien Phu

V. Geneva Conference - 1954 - conference to end the First Indochina War

→ There was a cease-fire but no definite political settlement was formed.

- Vietnam was divided ‘temporarily’ at the 17th parallel
- There was a call for elections to be scheduled in July, 1956

North Vietnam:

- Ho Chi Minh
- Communist
- Viet Minh - political party of independence



South Vietnam:

- Ngo Dinh Diem
- “Democratically elected leader”
 - 1955: Received 605,000 votes out of 450,000
- Supported by US
- Refused to hold 1956 election (knew he was going to lose to HCM)

VI. Ngo Dinh Diem

Diem was unpopular and did not have the political backing necessary. As a Roman Catholic, the largely Buddhist population resented the fact that he showed favoritism towards other Catholics. Peasants didn't like him either because he showed favoritism towards the wealthy landowners as well. Everyone disliked the fact that his family seemed to hold all the power and control in the government. In addition, people also feared Diem's tactics in getting rid of his enemies, where his security forces often tortured, killed, and imprisoned opponents.



Resistance Begins ...

- VietMinh – those who wanted to unite all of Vietnam as one country
- VietCong (VC, Charlie) – those who wanted to united all of Vietnam as one country under Communism
- In the late 1950s armed revolution in the south began and in 1959, the Vietminh in the north began sending military aid to those in the south were part of the Vietminh who decided to stay in the south.

- In 1960, the Vietminh who were in the south formed the National Liberation Front (or the NLF) whose main goal was to overthrow Diem. A group of those in the NLF were also Vietcong (or members of the Vietnamese communist party).
- However not all members of the NLF were part of the Vietcong. As part of their control, the NLF used some the same tactics as Diem did to get their way. They eventually assassinated hundreds of goverment officials and soon much of the country-side was under VC control.



VII. America's Involvement:



JFK believed in the Domino Theory that Eisenhower described. He was also concerned with America's image throughout the world. This image was flawed because of the Bay of Pigs incident and with the USSR putting up the Berlin Wall in 1961. JFK felt that by aiding the South Vietnamese against the communists, this would demonstrate the US's power throughout the world.

- **Why did we get involved in Vietnam?**
 - Prevent the spread of Communism
 - Strengthen the US's image

Kennedy took office (January, 1961):

- 700 US military “advisors” in Vietnam

End of Administration (November, 1963):

- 16,000 US Troops in Vietnam



As the Viet Cong attacks continued to escalate, Kennedy authorized US forces to engage in direct contact. Because of this, the number of US casualties in Vietnam continued to increase.

- 1961 - 14 men were killed
- 1963 – 300 men killed
 - Why? JFK allowed US forces to fight

VIII. Diem is Overthrown

- Buddhist leaders in Vietnam openly demonstrating against Diem
- Hundreds arrested; many killed
- Response - Demonstrated their opposition by lighting themselves on fire
- Media coverage → gets back to US and JFK
 - JFK → Diem - Do something about this!
 - Diem → JFK - mind your business!
 - US supported a group to overthrow Diem
- Diem and brother assassinated: November 1, 1963
- JFK's Response: "In the final analysis it's their war. They are the ones who have to win or lose it."



IX. JFK's Assassination



November 22, 1963:

- Dallas, Texas
- Who did it?
 - USSR?
 - Castro?
 - Vietnam?
 - Mafia?
 - CIA?



→ 16,000 US Troops in Vietnam

→ US Spending \$1.5 million/day
in Vietnam



X. JFK's Successor: Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ)

- Didn't want to be the president to "lose" Vietnam
- Needed a reason to send more money and troops:

Gulf of Tonkin - August, 1964 - two US ships "fired" upon

US Response - "Gulf of Tonkin Resolution" - granted the president the authority to take "all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against forces of the United States."

- Not a declared war
- President can do what he wants
- Now 23,000 troops stationed

Election of 1964 - LBJ defeats Barry Goldwater (R-AZ)

Operation Rolling Thunder - continual bombing of North Vietnam



XI. The Troops



- Avg. age in WW2 - 26
- Vietnam - 19
- Beginning → Gung Ho! Fight against Communism!

Drafted/go in field combat at 18

- Voting Age 21: those drafted couldn't even vote for the person who sent them there (26th Amendment, 1971)
- Deferments for medical issues, college, marriage, kids
- Working class fights the war; wealthy put them there

The Draft

- 1965: 180,000 troops
 - Need More!
- Summer, 1965 - Don't call up reserves - signal to USSR we are committed to war
- National Guard/Military Reserves - safe haven for wealthy and connected
 - George W. Bush, Al Gore, Bill Bradley, Nolan Ryan, Seven members of the Dallas Cowboys
- Military Draft begins April, 1965
- 1967: 200/week killed; 1400 wounded

SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM
REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SELECTIVE SERVICE LAW

JOSEPH FRANCIS CORRIGAN, III

SELECTIVE SERVICE NO. 26 6 12 825

PLACE OF BIRTH: Pittsburgh, Pa.

HAIR: Blue EYES: Blond

Other notable physical characteristics:
Scar above right eye - on eyebrow

WAS FIRST REGISTERED ON THE 25th Nov. 60

Joseph F. Corrigan III
SIGNATURE OF LOCAL BOARD CLERK



XII. The Homefront

The Media - given more access to this war than any other war

- “Living Room War”
- Showing ‘the truth’
 - How can we be ‘winning the war’ if all these kids are dying everyday?
- Hawks - Do more, send more troops/money
- Doves - We’re doing too much!
- No one happy with LBJ!



Anti-War Movement:

Lots of people against the war: religious leaders, pacifists, civil rights, student groups, etc...

SDS - Students for a Democratic Society - Group on College Campuses

- Held rallies, debates, angry with their colleges - universities assisted the govt. In research and devt. of military supplies
- April 17, 1965 rally - largest anti-war protest → 25,000 people



The War and Racism - Civil Rights leaders - most outspoken in the war

MLK, JR:

- War taking valuable resources from poverty stricken neighborhoods
- Govt. drafting large number of African Americans but did little to end racism at home

Muhammed Ali - refused to fight; conscientious objector; banned from boxing (restored in 1970); 1971 Supreme Court overturned his conviction



- The Anti-War Movement concentrated on two questions—
1. Did we have the right to be in Vietnam?
 2. Were the sacrifices that the US made on the homefront worth us being there?

LBJ:

→ Protest v. Loyalty

- Protesters disloyal?
- Patriotic duty to fight
- Protesters: we are the ultimate patriots!
- “Hey LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?”
 - US just supporting its ally
 - If we withdraw, who will trust us in the future?



American soldiers during the Tet Offensive

Tet Offensive - January 30, 1968

- Vietnamese New Year
- Yearly ‘Truce’
- North Vietnamese took advantage
- Attacked the South
 - Invaded US Embassy!
 - Horrible Optics!



Response to Tet:

- General Westmoreland - calls for an increase in number of troops sent to Vietnam
 - 206,000 more!
 - LBJ - no - too much criticism of the war
- ¾ of Americans now against the war
- Walter Cronkite speaks out against the war
 - Known as “the most trusted man in America”
- LBJ - “If I’ve lost Cronkite, I’ve lost the country”



IT SEEMS NOW MORE CERTAIN
THAN EVER THAT THE BLOODY
EXPERIENCE OF VIETNAM IS TO
END IN A STALEMATE.

- WALTER CRONKITE -

LIBQUOTES.COM



Review of LBJ:

Foreign Policy - All Vietnam!

Domestic Policy -

- “War on Poverty”: Great Society Programs
- Civil Rights
 - Amazing with Civil Rights!

Credibility Gap - difference between what the government says and the truth



1967 - “Summer of Love”

- Flower children; going to SF; hippie communes

1968 - More Political & turns ugly

- 1968 Convention (next slide)
- Manson family → peace/love → ugly

→ 1960s Upheaval:

- Population - baby boomers now teenagers
- Protests - Vietnam (at the core, don't believe govt. now; racism), denial of individuality
- Prosperity - all took place during a 20 year economic boom. Hippies came from middle class families; more criticisms than solutions

XIII. Election of 1968

- March 1, 1968 - LBJ out
- April 4, 1968 - MLK Assassinated
- 1968 Presidential Candidates:
 - American Independent Party - George Wallace
 - Gov. of Alabama; Segregationist
 - Republicans - Richard Nixon, former VP
 - Democrats:
 - Senator Eugene McCarthy (D- Minnesota)
 - Anti-War
 - Senator Robert F. Kennedy (D-NY)
 - Loved by everyone! Anti-war; Won state after state
 - Assassinated after CA primary at Ambassador Hotel, LA
 - June 5, 1968
 - Sirhan Sirhan
 - Young Jordanian immigrant; Didn't like RFK's policy on Israel
 - VP Hubert Humphrey (*gets Dem. nomination)
- August, 1968 - Riots at Democratic Convention in Chicago ("Trial of the Chicago 7")
 - Protested US involvement in Vietnam



Nixon v. Humphrey - Nixon Wins

- Silent Majority - don't protest, vote, follow the laws
- Nixon gave all his attention to foreign policy
- Secret strategy to win the war:
 - Vietnamization: turn fighting over to the Vietnamese while bringing US troops home
 - Americanization of war?

→ January 1969: 540,000 US troops in Vietnam (end of LBJ admin); immediate withdrawal of 25,000 troops

→ End of 1972: 24,200 troops in Vietnam



XIV. Nixon Starts Bombing in Cambodia

→ Where Ho Chi Minh trail is located

OUTRAGE:

1. College Campuses

- Kent State Univ (Ohio) , May 4, 1970
 - ROTC shoots into a group of students
 - Control demonstrators?
 - 4 killed
- Jackson State College (10 days after Kent)
 - Fired into dorm
 - Killed 2; injured 9



2. Outrage in Congress:

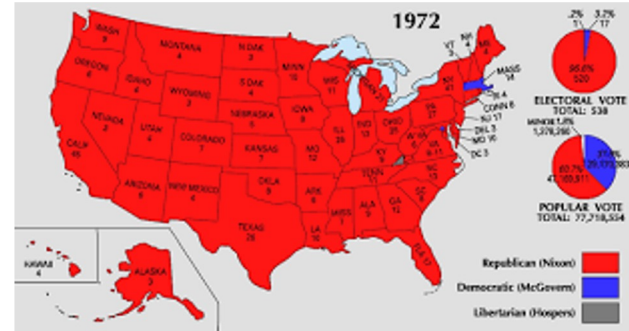
- Repealed Gulf of Tonkin Resolution

XV. End of the “War”-

1971 - Pentagon Papers

- Government continuously lied to the public
- Published by *NY Times*
- Papers “released” by Daniel Ellsberg: In CIA; Previously pro-war until he went to Vietnam
 - Nixon tried to discredit him - where issues began
 - “Break-In” at Watergate Hotel/Office complex and tried to steal papers from psychologists office

- Election of 1972:
 - Nixon v. George McGovern (D-SD)
 - Nixon won in a landslide



Ceasefire, 1973:

- Arranged by Foreign Policy Advisor - Henry Kissinger
- January 27, 1973
- Points of the Plan:
 - Pull out all remaining US troops in Vietnam
 - US to help rebuild Vietnam
 - Prisoner Exchange Program

** Does not address political future of Vietnam

Fall of Saigon, 1975

Despite the ceasefire, two years after US forces withdrew from Vietnam, Saigon's military collapsed.

- January 1975 - North Vietnamese troops crossed the 17th parallel
- April 30, 1975 the government of South Vietnam collapsed and the North overtook it.



XVI. Outcomes:

Despite the fact that the US is a world superpower, Vietnam fell to Communism

Major Policy Changes:

- War Powers Act, 1973: The actions of both Johnson and Nixon left the people to ask one very important question—under what authority do the presidents have the right to wage an undeclared war?
- To prevent another Vietnam and to prevent presidents from obtaining too much power
 - The president must obtain Congress's approval to commit US troops to fight in foreign conflicts if the troops are in that specific location for over 60 days.

Since Vietnam every president has been very weary about sending troops to fight a conflict because they are afraid of “another Vietnam”



XVII. Vietnam Veterans

- Over 2.6 million Americans involved in the war
- More than 58,000 Americans died
- Over 300,000 wounded
- Nearly 2300 still missing and presumed dead
- Over 600 POW's (Prisoners of War)



Vietnam POW, and later Senator and Presidential candidate, John McCain

DISRESPECTED when they returned home

→ For many it wasn't their choice to fight

→ Many failed to kick drug habits in war

→ Many became homeless

This is why so many people now make it clear they support troops, even if they may not support the war



XVIII. The Vietnam Memorial

- Completed in 1982
- National Design Competition:
 - Open to any American, 18+
 - Blind competition; identified by only a number
 - Designed by Maya Lin
- Names organized in order of death
 - Find the time you served, find your friends
- “See” yourself in the memorial



...WAT • HAROLD C WHITTAKER • RICKY FAY ADAMS • EARL I ALTHOFF
...L BRUNT • RICHARD J BURNETT • ROBERT I CRANE • STEPHEN J BOBKOVICH • LINDEN
...BENCE • LAWRENCE A DODD • JOE D DUNN • ADOLPHUS ELLIS • JERRY WAYNE FERREN
...FETLUCCA • NICHOLAS H FRITZ • RICHARD L GARLUCK • WILLIE GILES Jr • CARLOS L GON
...AS C GOSEK • MICHAEL W HOLZMAN • PAUL W HEINZ • JOHN C HILL • NATHAN HOLME
...DEL K HASTINGS • RICHARD W KAPP Jr • LAWRENCE J KLAHSEN • WILLIAM R KLAWITTER •
...BENT KLUGAS • RICHARD C LANNOM • DANNY LEDFORD • STANLEY R LEWTER • FREDERICK
...SEYD LYDDE • GERALD W MARKWITH • CARY A MARTIN • JOSEPH MAYES • RICHARD D MIL
...RO M MISUTA • BENNIE KAY MONCUS • JOHN H MORENO • ALDEN F MOREY Jr • ROBERT
...E MURPHY • JEFFERY MCCLATCHY Jr • WILLIAM R MCMILSEY • DAN LEE NEELY • ROBERT
...L WILLIAMS Jr • FRANK D PINA • ROGER L REED • WILLIE LEE RICHARDSON • GARY L OLIVE
...MAS D ROSTAMO • THOMAS E SCHEURICH • JOHN S SIMMONS • THOMAS SPADARO • MIC
...RONI O STRINGER • STEVEN P SWATEK • ROGER A THOMPSON • WALTER J THOMPSON • JO
...JOE VALENZUELA • JOE W VANDERPOOL • JOHN H WHITE Jr • RICHARD J PETRIE • JOE L
...LY ANDRE • ERALD L WATERY • GUY A BERNARD • CHARLES E BONDS • JOHN M ROY
...LAN R BRANDTS • ANTHONY J BREUER • MARK D COOL • RICHARD J THOMPSON • MIC
...RICO CARANZA • WILLIAM B CAWLEY Jr • ALVIN L CAYSON • ROBERT G BURMAN • JO
...ERAE COREY • NICHOLAS J CUTINHA • DAVID K DEMATEY • JIM
...PHIL AVENSON • EARLE FITCH • GARY V EY • KENNETH
...BYRON D CALLACHER • ROY C CERRY • GARY V EY • KENNETH
...THE HEGGER Jr • DAVID N
...GENES S HILL • DAVID N
...NETH