

The Vietnam War Years

The United States becomes locked in a military stalemate in Southeast Asia. U.S. forces withdraw after a decade of heavy war casualties abroad and assassinations and antiwar demonstrations at home.

The Vietnam War Years

- SECTION 1** Moving Toward Conflict
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Section 1

Moving Toward Conflict

To stop the spread of communism in Southeast Asia, the United States uses its military to support South Vietnam.

SECTION

1 Moving Toward Conflict

America Supports France in Vietnam

French Rule in Vietnam

- Late 1800s–WW II, France rules most of Indochina
- **Ho Chi Minh**—leader of Vietnamese independence movement
 - helps create Indochinese Communist Party
- 1940, Japanese take control of Vietnam
- **Vietminh**—organization that aims to rid Vietnam of foreign rule
- Sept. 1945, Ho Chi Minh declares Vietnam an independent nation

Continued . . .



NEXT

SECTION

1

continued **America Supports France in Vietnam****France Battles the Vietminh**

- French troops move into Vietnam; French fight, regain cities, South
- 1950, U.S. begins economic aid to France to stop communism

The Vietminh Drive Out the French

- **Domino theory**—countries can fall to communism like row of dominoes
- 1954, Vietminh overrun French at **Dien Bien Phu**; France surrenders
- **Geneva Accords** divide Vietnam at 17th parallel; Communists get north
- Election to unify country called for in 1956

SECTION

1

The United States Steps In

Diem Cancels Elections

- Ho has brutal, repressive regime but is popular for land distribution
- S. Vietnam's anti-Communist president **Ngo Dinh Diem** refuses election
- U.S. promises military aid for stable, reform government in South
- Diem corrupt, stifles opposition, restricts Buddhism
- **Vietcong** (Communist opposition group in South) kills officials
- Ho sends arms to Vietcong along **Ho Chi Minh Trail**

Continued . . .



NEXT

SECTION

1

continued **The United States Steps In****Kennedy and Vietnam**

- Like Eisenhower, JFK backs Diem financially; sends military advisers
- Diem's popularity plummets from corruption, lack of land reform
- Diem starts strategic hamlet program to fight Vietcong
 - villagers resent being moved from ancestral homes
- Diem presses attacks on Buddhism; monks burn themselves in protest
- U.S.-supported military coup topples government; Diem assassinated

SECTION

1

President Johnson Expands the Conflict

The South Grows More Unstable

- Succession of military leaders rule S. Vietnam; country unstable
- LBJ thinks U.S. can lose international prestige if communists win

The Tonkin Gulf Resolution

- Alleged attack in Gulf of Tonkin; LBJ asks for power to repel enemy
- 1964 **Tonkin Gulf Resolution** gives him broad military powers
- 1965 8 Americans killed, LBJ orders sustained bombing of North
- U.S. combat troops sent to S. Vietnam to battle Vietcong

Section 2

U.S. Involvement and Escalation

The United States sends troops to fight in Vietnam, but the war quickly turns into a stalemate.

SECTION

2 U.S. Involvement and Escalation

Johnson Increases U.S. Involvement

Strong Support for Containment

- LBJ hesitates breaking promise to keep troops out; works with:
 - Secretary of Defense **Robert McNamara**, Secretary of State **Dean Rusk**
- Congress, majority of public support sending troops

The Troop Buildup Accelerates

- General **William Westmoreland**—U.S. commander in South Vietnam
- Thinks southern **Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN)** ineffective
- Requests increasing numbers; by 1967 500,000 U.S. troops

SECTION

2

Fighting in the Jungle

An Elusive Enemy

- Vietcong use hit-and-run, ambush tactics, move among civilians
- Tunnels help withstand airstrikes, launch attacks, connect villages
- Terrain laced with booby traps, land mines laid by U.S., Vietcong

A Frustrating War of Attrition

- Westmoreland tries to destroy Vietcong morale through attrition
- Vietcong receive supplies from China, U.S.S.R.; remain defiant
- U.S. sees war as military struggle; Vietcong as battle for survival

Continued . . .



SECTION

2

continued **Fighting in the Jungle****The Battle for “Hearts and Minds”**

- U.S. wants to stop Vietcong from winning support of rural population
- Weapons for exposing tunnels often wound civilians, destroy villages
 - **napalm**: gasoline-based bomb that sets fire to jungle
 - **Agent Orange**: leaf-killing, toxic chemical
- **Search-and-destroy missions** move civilian suspects, destroy property
- Villagers go to cities, refugee camps; 1967, over 3 million refugees

Continued . . .

NEXT

SECTION

2

continued **Fighting in the Jungle****Sinking Morale**

- Guerrilla warfare, jungle conditions, lack of progress lower morale
- Many soldiers turn to alcohol, drugs; some kill superior officers
- Government corruption, instability lead S. Vietnam to demonstrate

Fulfilling a Duty

- Most U.S. soldiers believe in justice of halting communism
- Fight courageously, take patriotic pride in fulfilling their duty

SECTION

2

The Early War at Home

The Great Society Suffers

- War grows more costly with more troops; inflation rate rising
- LBJ gets tax increase to pay for war, check inflation
 - has to accept \$6 billion funding cut for Great Society

The Living-Room War

- Combat footage on nightly TV news shows stark picture of war
- Critics say **credibility gap** between administration reports and events
- Senator J. William Fulbright's hearings add to doubts about war

Section 3

A Nation Divided

An antiwar movement in the U.S. pits supporters of the government's war policy against those who oppose it.

SECTION

3 A Nation Divided

The Working Class Goes to War

A “Manipulatable” Draft

- Selective Service System, **draft**, calls men 18–26 to military service
- Thousands look for ways to avoid the draft
- Many—mostly white, affluent—get college deferment
- 80% of U.S. soldiers come from lower economic levels

Continued . . .



SECTION

3

continued **The Working Class Goes to War****African Americans in Vietnam**

- African Americans serve in disproportionate numbers in ground combat
- Defense Dept. corrects problem by instituting draft lottery in 1969
- Racial tensions high in many platoons; add to low troop morale

Women Join the Ranks

- 10,000 women serve, mostly as military nurses
- Thousands volunteer: American Red Cross, United Services Organization

SECTION

3

The Roots of Opposition

The New Left

- **New Left**—youth movement of 1960s, demand sweeping changes
- **Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), Free Speech Movement (FSM):**
 - criticize big business, government; want greater individual freedom

Campus Activism

- New Left ideas spread across colleges
- Students protest campus issues, Vietnam war



SECTION

3

The Protest Movement Emerges

The Movement Grows

- In 1965, protest marches, rallies draw tens of thousands
- 1966, student deferments require good academic standing
 - SDS calls for civil disobedience; counsels students to go abroad
- Small numbers of returning veterans protest; protest songs popular

From Protest to Resistance

- Antiwar demonstrations, protests increase, some become violent
- Some men burn draft cards; some refuse to serve; some flee to Canada

Continued . . .



NEXT

SECTION

3

continued The Protest Movement Emerges**War Divides the Nation**

- **Doves** strongly oppose war, believe U.S. should withdraw
- **Hawks** favor sending greater forces to win the war
- 1967 majority of Americans support war, consider protesters disloyal

Johnson Remains Determined

- LBJ continues slow escalation, is criticized by both hawks and doves
- Combat stalemate leads Defense Secretary McNamara to resign

Section 4

1968: A Tumultuous Year

An enemy attack in Vietnam, two assassinations, and a chaotic political convention make 1968 an explosive year.

SECTION

4 1968: A Tumultuous Year

The Tet Offensive Turns the War

A Surprise Attack

- 1968 villagers go to cities to celebrate Tet (Vietnamese new year)
- Vietcong among crowd attack over 100 towns, 12 U.S. air bases
- **Tet offensive** lasts 1 month before U.S., S. Vietnam regain control
- Westmoreland declares attacks are military defeat for Vietcong

Continued . . .



SECTION

4

continued **The Tet Offensive Turns the War****Tet Changes Public Opinion**

- Before Tet, most Americans hawks; after Tet, hawks, doves both 40%
- Mainstream media openly criticizes war
- LBJ appoints **Clark Clifford** as new Secretary of Defense
- After studying situation, Clifford concludes war is unwinnable
- LBJ's popularity drops; 60% disapprove his handling of the war

SECTION

4

Days of Loss and Rage

Johnson Withdraws

- Senator **Eugene McCarthy** runs for Democratic nomination as dove
- Senator **Robert Kennedy** enters race after LBJ's poor showing in NH
- LBJ announces will seek peace talks, will not run for reelection

Violence and Protest Grip the Nation

- Riots rock over 100 cities after Martin Luther King, Jr. is killed
- Kennedy wins CA primary; is fatally shot for supporting Israel
- Major demonstrations on over 100 college campuses



SECTION

4

A Turbulent Race for President

Turmoil in Chicago

- Vice-president **Hubert Humphrey** wins Democratic nomination
- Over 10,000 demonstrators go to Chicago
- Mayor Richard J. Daley mobilizes police, National Guard
- Protesters try to march to convention; police beat them; rioting
- Delegates to convention bitterly debate antiwar plank

Continued . . .



SECTION

4

continued **A Turbulent Race for President****Nixon Triumphs**

- Nixon works for party for years, wins 1968 Republican nomination
- Campaign promises: restore law and order, end war in Vietnam
- Governor **George Wallace** is third-party candidate
- Champions segregation, states' rights; attracts protest-weary whites
- Nixon wins presidency

Section 5

The End of the War and Its Legacy

President Nixon institutes his Vietnamization policy, and America's longest war finally comes to an end.

SECTION

5 The End of the War and Its Legacy

President Nixon and Vietnamization

The Pullout Begins

- New president **Richard Nixon** finds negotiations not progressing
- National Security Adviser **Henry Kissinger** works on new plan
- **Vietnamization**—U.S. troops withdraw, S. Vietnam troops take over

“Peace with Honor”

- Nixon calls for “peace with honor” to maintain U.S. dignity
- Orders bombing of N. Vietnam, Vietcong hideouts in Laos, Cambodia

SECTION

5

Trouble Continues on the Home Front

Mainstream America

- **Silent majority**—moderate, mainstream people who support war

The My Lai Massacre

- News breaks that U.S. platoon massacred civilians in **My Lai** village
- Lt. William Calley, Jr., in command, is convicted, imprisoned

The Invasion of Cambodia

- 1970, U.S. troops invade Cambodia to clear out enemy supply centers
- 1.5 million protesting college students close down 1,200 campuses

Continued . . .



NEXT

SECTION

5

continued **Trouble Continues on the Home Front****Violence on Campus**

- National Guard kills 4 in confrontation at **Kent State University**
- Guardsmen kill 2 during confrontation at Jackson State in MS
- 100,000 construction workers rally in NYC to support government

The Pentagon Papers

- Nixon invades Cambodia; Congress repeals Tonkin Gulf Resolution
- **Pentagon Papers** show plans to enter war under LBJ
- Confirm belief of many that government not honest about intentions

SECTION

5

America's Longest War Ends

“Peace is at Hand”

- 1971, 60% think U.S. should withdraw from Vietnam by end of year
- 1972 N. Vietnamese attack; U.S. bombs cities, mines Haiphong harbor
- Kissinger agrees to complete withdrawal of U.S.: “Peace is at hand”

The Final Push

- S. Vietnam rejects Kissinger plan; talks break off; bombing resumes
- Congress calls for end to war; peace signed January 1973

The Fall of Saigon

- Cease-fire breaks down; South surrenders after North invades 1975



SECTION

5

The War Leaves a Painful Legacy

American Veterans Cope Back Home

- 58,000 Americans, over 2 million North, South Vietnamese die in war
- Returning veterans face indifference, hostility at home
- About 15% develop post-traumatic stress disorder

Further Turmoil in Southeast Asia

- Communists put 400,000 S. Vietnamese in labor camps; 1.5 million flee
- Civil war breaks out in Cambodia; Khmer Rouge seize power
- Want to establish peasant society; kill at least 1 million people

Continued . . .



NEXT

SECTION

5

continued **The War Leaves a Painful Legacy****The Legacy of Vietnam**

- Government abolishes military draft
- 1973 Congress passes **War Powers Act**:
 - president must inform Congress within 48 hours of deploying troops
 - 90 day maximum deployment without Congressional approval
- War contributes to cynicism about government, political leaders



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