

Vietnam War
1954 - 1975

Background

- **Domino Theory**: an extension of containment, Eisenhower and others believed if one S.E. Asian nation fell to communism, others would as well.
- Vietnam's fall could threaten Laos, Cambodia, Burma, and Thailand.

Background

- French controlled "Indo-China" for many years.
- Ho Chi Minh defeated the French in 1954 at Dien Bien Phu.
- Vietnam was divided at the 17th parallel
- North (Ho Chi Minh) communist. South (Ngo Dinh Diem) pro-U.S.
- Were supposed to be reunited after elections, but south refused.
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U.S. Involvement

- U.S. Supported French
- Pledged support to Diem.
- By 1960, had 675 advisors in S. Vietnam.
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Diem's Policies

- By 1963, U.S. Forces numbered 16,000.
- Diem ordered the movement of peasants onto collective farms.
- November, 1963, U.S. Supports Diem's overthrow and assassination.

Johnson takes over

- Kennedy had been preparing to end U.S. Involvement. Johnson reversed that course.
- S. Vietnamese Military took over from Diem.
- N. Vietnamese sympathizers Viet Cong, and the National Liberation Front won support from many in the south.
- Johnson: "I am not going to lose Vietnam."

Tonkin Gulf incident

- Reports: N. Vietnam torpedo boats attack U.S. Destroyers.
- **Gulf of Tonkin Resolution**: congress gives Johnson authority to fight in Vietnam.
- Near unanimous support in congress.

Escalation

- Johnson began to increase the number of troops. U.S. Now propping up S. Vietnamese military government.
- Ho Chi Minh Trail: supply line to Viet Cong from north through Laos and Cambodia.

- 1965: Johnson authorizes bombing N. Vietnam.
- 25,000 U.S. Soldiers in Vietnam. By 1966: 184,000.

Escallation

- By 1968: 536,000 U.S. Troops.
- Tet Offensive: attacks by Viet Cong and N. Vietnamese army
- Communists especially brutal, killing American prisoners.
- U.S. Troops also committed atrocities including the massacre at My Lai

My Lai Massacre

Political change

- Deeply unpopular, Johnson decides not to run for re- election in 1968.
- After assassination of Bobby Kennedy, Richard Nixon is elected promising to restore order.
- Nixon escalates the war into Cambodia and Laos, but also begins Vietnamization: taking over of fighting by S. Vietnamese troops.

Protests

- Many Americans protested the war by the late 1960s & 1970s.
- Kent State - 1970. students burned buildings. Natl. Guard attacked students. 4 dead
- Jackson state - 2 dead, 11 wounded.

Withdrawal

- January, 1973: U.S. Out in 60 days
- POWs released
- End activities in Laos & Cambodia.
- Country would continue to be divided at the 17th parallel.
- War kept going despite cease fire, north eventually conquered the south. April 29, 1975

Aftermath

- P.O.W. - Prisoner of War
- M.I.A. - Missing in Action (Nearly 1,800 remain unaccounted for)
- U.S. Spent \$150 billion on the war.
- More bombs fell on Vietnam than on the WWII axis powers.
- U.S. Ended trade embargo in 1994 and restored diplomatic relations in 1995.