

Outline of the Vietnam War (1945-1975)

- I. European imperialism
 - a. Late 1800s
 - i. Indochine (French Indochina) established
 - b. Early 1900s
 - i. Nationalist movements
 - 1. Ho Chi Minh's Viet Minh
- II. First Indochina War (1945-1954)
 - a. World War II
 - i. France under German control
 - ii. Japan took over Vietnam
 - 1. Viet Minh resisted the Japanese
 - b. After World War II
 - i. Ho Chi Minh took Hanoi
 - 1. Declared the Democratic Republic of Vietnam
 - ii. France returned to Vietnam
 - 1. France defeated in Vietnam
 - c. Geneva Accords (1954)
 - i. Divided into North Vietnam (communist) and South Vietnam (Vietnamese emperor under French control)
 - ii. 17th parallel = DMZ (demilitarized zone)
 - iii. Plans for reunification following 1956 elections
- III. United States involvement
 - a. Domino theory
 - i. U.S. feared communism in North Vietnam would spread throughout SE Asia
 - 1. U.S. supported Ngo Dinh Diem
 - a. Ngo Dinh Diem declared the Republic of Vietnam (1955)
 - i. Canceled upcoming 1956 reunification elections
- IV. Diem's regime
 - a. Very unpopular (corrupt, ruthless, etc.)
 - i. Kept afloat by the U.S.
 - b. Resisted by National Liberation Front (Viet Cong)
 - c. President John F. Kennedy
 - i. 1962 – Sent U.S. military advisers to train the ARVN (Army of the Republic of Viet Nam)
 - ii. 1963 – Supported coup d'état to overthrow Ngo Dinh Diem
 - d. President Lyndon B. Johnson
 - i. Wanted to keep U.S. involvement minimal
 - ii. U.S. Navy allegedly attacked in Gulf of Tonkin (1964)
 - 1. Gulf of Tonkin Resolution
 - a. U.S. troops sent to Vietnam
 - b. Operation Rolling Thunder (March 2, 1965-November 1, 1968)
 - i. Aerial bombardment campaign against North Vietnam

iii. "Americanization" of the war

1. Late 1966 – almost 400,000 U.S. troops in Vietnam

V. War tactics

a. United States

i. Policy of attrition

1. Plan to defeat Viet Cong through massive casualty rate
2. Air strikes, napalm, Agent Orange
3. Result – lots of civilian casualties
 - a. Villagers grew more anti-American
 - b. U.S. troops demoralized

b. Viet Cong tactics

i. Guerrilla warfare

1. Left U.S. with few easy targets
2. American troops could not easily distinguish friend from foe

VI. Bad press for the United States

a. Tet Offensive (1968)

i. Launched by Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army

1. Simultaneous attack on cities and American troops in South Vietnam

b. My Lai Massacre (1968)

i. Hundreds of unarmed civilian villagers murdered by American soldiers

c. Television coverage

i. War footage viewed on nightly news broadcasts

VII. Antiwar movement

a. Many members – hippies, protesting students, and mainstream people

b. Draft protests

- i. Many dodged the draft and burned their draft cards
- ii. Violence erupted
 1. Democratic National Convention (1968)
 2. Kent State University shootings (1970)

c. Richard Nixon

- i. Elected U.S. president in 1968
- ii. Claimed war support from a "silent majority"

d. Vietnamization of the war

- i. Movement to turn war management over to South Vietnam
- ii. But meanwhile Nixon illegally bombed Viet Cong bases in Cambodia and Laos (neutral countries)

e. Pentagon Papers

- i. "United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967: A Study Prepared by the Department of Defense"
- ii. Published by *New York Times* in 1971
- iii. Revealed less than noble reasons for U.S. involvement
- iv. Revealed that successive U.S. presidents had lied to and misled the public

VIII. End of the war

a. Diplomatic and military maneuverings brought a ceasefire in January, 1973

i. Last of the U.S. military left Vietnam in March, 1973

b. U.S. kept funding the army of South Vietnam

i. But Nixon distracted by Watergate scandal

c. Saigon fell to North Vietnam (April 30, 1975)

d. Country reunited as Socialist Republic of Vietnam