

Vietnam

1955 - 1975



Another Korea?

- A **communist North** and a **non-communist South** just like in Korea



Domino Theory

- President Eisenhower's theory that **if one country falls to communism then all those near it will soon follow**
- Used this as justification for American involvement in Vietnam



Background

- Vietnam had a history of nationalism going back 2,000 years
- Spent much of that time resisting takeover by their larger neighbor, China
- 1800's became a colony of France



Post WWII

- Ho Chi Minh, a nationalist who sympathized with communist ideas, led the Vietnamese independence movement
- US, however, only saw him as a communist and therefore an enemy



Geneva Conference

- While France and Vietnam fought, representatives from those countries, along with the US, Soviet Union, and other SE Asian countries met in Geneva, Switzerland to discuss the situation
- Divided Vietnam into 2 separate countries in July, 1954



South Vietnam

- President **Kennedy supported** the unpopular and **corrupt ruler of South Vietnam** (Ngo Dinh Diem) because he was pro-American
- We opposed elections to unify the country because we feared the people would vote in the popular communist Ho Chi Minh



Monks on Fire

- Buddhist monks doused themselves in gasoline and set themselves on fire in the streets of Vietnam **to protest the South Vietnamese ruler's treatment of Buddhists** (he was Catholic)



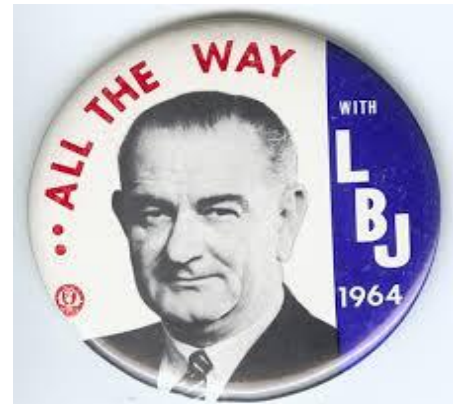
Coup/Overthrow

- Kennedy knew that the S. Vietnamese ruler was going to be overthrown anyway and feared a communist takeover, so he **supported a military coup that ousted him from power**
- **3 weeks later** Kennedy would also be killed



1964 Presidential Election

- LBJ tried to keep the war from becoming an issue
- “We are not about to send American boys nine or ten thousand miles away from home to do what Asian boys ought to be doing for themselves” (but didnt send “advisors”)
- Tried to paint his opponent, Barry Goldwater, as a dangerous radical who would lead the nation into nuclear war (“Daisy Ad”)



Gulf of Tonkin - 1964

- A few months before the election LBJ made a dramatic announcement that North Vietnamese torpedo boats had **attacked US surveillance ships** (some doubted this claim) in international waters 30 miles from North Vietnam



Tonkin Gulf Resolution

- LBJ asked Congress and obtained **authority to expand American involvement** in Vietnam by sending as many troops as needed to prevent further aggression
- Basically gave the President complete control over what the U.S. did in Vietnam



Excuse for War

- This incident was used to deepen American involvement in Vietnam
- 1st American ground troops enter in 1965
- Begins what will become a lengthy and controversial war with more and more young Americans being sent to fight in a foreign land



Ho Chi Minh Trail

- North Vietnamese troops, weapons and supplies poured into the South via this route that passed through Laos and Cambodia (which was off limits to American troops)
- By 1965 it looked like North Vietnam and the communists were close to victory



Escalation

- The number of troops in Vietnam gradually increased throughout the 1960's
 - Start of 1965 – only **25,000**
 - **By the end of the year 184,000**
 - 1966 – 375,000
 - 1968 – **500,000**
-
- **Also stepped up bombing of North**
- **Yet the North only intensified their efforts**



Viet Cong (VC)

- **Communist guerillas** in the south that, with the support of the North Vietnamese (NVA) **fought against South Vietnam**
- Masters at moving through and blending in to the local terrain



Why so difficult to defeat?

- Despite being outgunned (with more advanced weapons) and outnumbered, the VC had advantages
- Could be **“invisible”** because they knew the terrain – sniper fire and then disappear
- Had **supporters in the South** so could move around easily
- Were **willing to die** for their cause



Search & Destroy

- Unlike previous wars (such as WWII), success was not determined by land captured, but rather by the body count
- A successful mission was one in which a large number of VC and NVA were killed



Unclear Objectives

- A hill or other location might be overtaken only to be abandoned a few days or weeks later
- Didn't capture an area and keep it
- How do you know when you've "won"?



Enemy is Everywhere



- One of the most challenging aspect of this war was not knowing who was a friend and who was an enemy
- VC dressed same as civilians
- A 9-year old child could shoot and kill you or an elderly woman might be hiding weapons in her hut (or providing VC with info)
- Darkness of nighttime was especially challenging as you could be killed before you knew what hit you

Other Challenges

- The South Vietnamese (for whom we were supposedly fighting for) seemed *indifferent* to our efforts
- Fighting conditions – carried heavy weapons through 10-foot-tall elephant grass and across flooded rice paddies that were infested with poisonous snakes and insects – disease (foot rot)
- Lack of conventional tactics made defeating VC very difficult – often escaped before able to be captured or killed



An Ugly War

- Saturation bombing tore North Vietnam apart – bombing destroyed the country and contributed to over a million deaths (mainly civilian)
- American soldiers constantly faced the hazards of Viet Cong booby traps, diseases and surprise attacks
- VC used South Vietnamese as human shields. Americans would fire back into villages of innocent civilians – made them not trust Americans



A Quick War?

- Many believed early on that VC would be easily defeated by the might of America
- Traditional warfare not effective against guerilla tactics – didn't fight on open battlefield
- America did not count on the resilience and determination of VC and NVA
- Thought we were on the brink of driving them out of South Vietnam and victory would come soon



Tet Offensive



- A series of massive attacks by the Viet Cong against major cities in the South (January 30th 1968 – Vietnamese Lunar New Year) – normally a cease fire
- Most importantly, it was a ***psychological* defeat because Americans began to see that the war was unwinnable**
- Those being sent to Vietnam *after this* knew they were going to fight for a **lost cause**

American casualties

- By 1968 over **1,000 Americans** were being killed **each month** in Vietnam
- 60% of these deaths were 21yrs. old or younger
- Yet, this same year 4 times as many young men were drafted as the year before

Casualties mount as enemy presses all across V-Nam

Saigon (AP) — Casualty tolls mounted today as heavy fighting continued across South Vietnam for the third day. Allied military sources claimed more than 1,800 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong killed, many of them by American bombers, helicopter gunships and artillery.

Military sources estimated more than 100 U.S. troops had been killed and several hundred wounded since the sudden upsurge in enemy attacks Sunday night.

South Vietnamese losses were put at 273 troops killed, 748 wounded and 22 missing.

The heaviest fight of the last 24 hours raged 30 miles northwest of Saigon as American infantrymen from the 25th Division and U.S. bombers and artillery battered North Vietnamese troops entrenched in forested mountains

the night, killing five Vietnamese and wounding 12 Vietnamese and one American.

North Vietnamese gunners along the Demilitarized Zone continued to harass American outposts along the northern frontier. Ten rocket rounds landed on Marine positions two miles south of the DMZ, wounding several Leathernecks.

U.S. headquarters said other North Vietnamese gunners 500 yards inside the DMZ fired 15 rounds of mortar shells at U.S. Marines based seven miles west-southwest of Con Thien.

The U.S. Command also reported the loss of three American helicopters Tuesday to enemy ground fire, with three U.S. troops killed and three others wounded. This raised to 15 the number of U.S. helicopters reported shot down and destroyed in the past four days and to 2,624 the number re-



The 1st Television War

- Unlike previous wars, news coverage is not subject to government censorship
- 50 million Americans tune in nightly
- This is the first *unrestricted view* of graphic images of war
- Over 50% of Americans knew someone who was killed or wounded



Images of Violence

- *90% of the evening news* is dedicated to the Vietnam War after the Tet Offensive
- *Images of horror* are broadcast into homes of millions of Americans
- Famous image of prisoner being shot dead in the street becomes a symbol of the war's brutality



Changing Public Opinion

- With each year that the war drags on public opinion turns *more and more against it*
- No longer just the “hippies” and young people opposed to it
- Anger gets turned toward returning Vets
- Stories of atrocities in Vietnam are revealed in US media



Agent Orange

- A *chemical* used to destroy Viet Cong hiding places by killing leaves and thick jungle plants
- Also killed crops and caused *health* problems in humans, including **American soldiers**



Napalm

- **Napalm** - jellylike substance that burns uncontrollably (at up to 3,600 degrees) when dropped from planes
- Hot enough to melt steel



My Lai Massacre



- In March 1968, American troops entered the South Vietnamese village of My Lai
- Had heard that Viet Cong forces were hiding in the village, but instead found only women, children, and old men
- Several soldiers, already on edge, tired, and frustrated by guerilla tactics *opened fire killing at least 175 innocent civilians*

The Toll of War

- **Symbolized the brutality of the war**
- Many saw Americans as just as bad as the enemy
- **Many vets got called “baby killers” after this**



LBJ's failure

- LBJ failed to win the “hearts and minds” of the American people because he chose to use the *draft* to supply troops and people believed it was a *pointless war*



LBJ's Surprise announcements

- In March of 1968 LBJ announced he would **stop bombing North Vietnam so that peace negotiations could begin**
- Also announced he **would not run for reelection**



Peace With Honor

- Richard Nixon runs for President in 1968 claiming that he has *a plan for peace to end the war*
- Becomes evident after he is elected that *peace is not at hand* as he had promised



Failed Peace Talks



- Protestors become frustrated with Nixon and the failed peace talks in Paris (2 years)
- In early 1970 Nixon secretly authorizes sending American troops into Cambodia (previously forbidden) to stop ability of NVA from launching attacks into South Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh Trail)
- A political gamble because it looks like an invasion of Cambodia/expansion of the war

The Draft

The lottery you didn't want to win



- During the Vietnam War, young men gathered in college dorms and friends' homes to listen to live TV and radio broadcasts of the U.S. Selective Service System drawing **lottery numbers to determine who would and would not be drafted** (any male between the ages of 19-26)
- 366 blue plastic capsules contained the **birthdays** that **would be chosen in the first Vietnam draft lottery drawing** on December 1, 1969. The first birth date drawn that night, assigned the lowest number, "001," was September 14.



How would YOU have done?

1970 RANDOM SELECTION SEQUENCE, BY MONTH AND DAY

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
1	305	086	108	032	330	249	093	111	225	359	019	129
2	159	144	029	271	298	228	350	045	161	125	034	328
3	251	297	267	083	040	301	115	261	049	244	348	157
4	215	210	275	081	276	020	279	145	232	202	266	165
5	101	214	293	269	364	028	188	054	082	024	310	056
6	224	347	139	253	155	110	327	114	006	087	076	010
7	306	091	122	147	035	085	050	168	008	234	051	012
8	199	181	213	312	321	366	013	048	184	283	097	105
9	194	338	317	219	197	335	277	106	263	342	080	043
10	325	216	323	218	065	206	284	021	071	220	282	041
11	329	150	136	014	037	134	248	324	158	237	046	039
12	221	068	300	346	133	272	015	142	242	072	066	314
13	318	152	259	124	295	069	042	307	175	138	126	163
14	238	004	354	231	178	356	331	198	001	294	127	026
15	017	089	169	273	130	180	322	102	113	171	131	320
16	121	212	166	148	055	274	120	044	207	254	107	096
17	235	189	033	260	112	073	098	154	255	288	143	304
18	140	292	332	090	278	341	190	141	246	005	146	128
19	058	025	200	336	075	104	227	311	177	241	203	240
20	280	302	239	345	183	360	187	344	063	192	185	135
21	186	363	334	062	250	060	027	291	204	243	156	070
22	337	290	265	316	326	247	153	339	160	117	009	053
23	118	057	256	252	319	109	172	116	119	201	182	162
24	059	236	258	002	031	358	023	036	195	196	230	095
25	052	179	343	351	361	137	067	286	149	176	132	084
26	092	365	170	340	357	022	303	245	018	007	309	173
27	355	205	268	074	296	064	289	352	233	264	047	078
28	077	299	223	262	308	222	088	167	257	094	281	123
29	349	285	362	191	226	353	270	061	151	229	099	016
30	164	---	217	208	103	209	287	333	315	038	174	003
31	211	---	030	---	313	---	193	011	---	079	---	100

Avoiding the Draft

- Those who **had money could avoid the draft** either by **enrolling in college** or **fleeing to Canada** or other countries (could also receive a deferment for medical or “other” reasons or if you volunteered for other service)
- If you fled to Canada you were considered a draft dodger and would be arrested if you ever returned (later pardoned)
- The **poor and minorities** made up the bulk of the soldiers **drafted** because wealthy could get deferments



Body Bags

- As more body bags were seen on TV coming home from Vietnam the **anti-war movement began to gain momentum**



College campuses

- **Large demonstrations** against the war were held on college campuses across the country
- Many campuses had to temporarily close down because **protests became more violent – burned draft cards** and chanted “Hell no we won’t go”
- Many returning Vets joined the Anti-War movement



The Generation Gap

- The “battle” between young people and “anyone over 30”
- **Two different ways of viewing the world**
- *“Don’t trust anyone over 30”*



Counterculture Movement

- Young people in the 60's who **rejected the values of the rest of society** - a different interpretation of the American dream
- Believed in **peace and love** and wanted to **end the war in Vietnam**













**More than 250,000 protestors gather in
Washington, D.C., in the largest anti-war
demonstration to occur during the Vietnam War.**

Online Photo Source:

<http://www.multied.com/vietnam/bigantiwar.html>

Hippies

- A derogatory term used for **those who acted and dressed a particular way** (abbreviated form of “hipster”)
- Emphasized **change and experimentation** that the older generation saw as *immoral* and even *Un-American*



Hippies cont.

- Embraced **human sexuality, women's rights, and experimentation** with recreational use of **marijuana and LSD**
- Young people in **long hair** (men too) wore what seemed to older people like “**bizarre**” **gypsy/homeless outfits**







Music of the 60's

- Many musicians came to impact the counterculture movement including the **Beatles**, **Jimi Hendrix**, and **the Grateful Dead**



Bob Dylan & Janis Joplin



Government Reaction

- The government assumed that the counterculture movement was backed by the **communists**
- Used the FBI and even CIA to **infiltrate antiwar organizations**
- In reality, most were everyday 20-29 year-olds who simply were disgusted and outraged by the war



Robert F. Kennedy (RFK)

- Brother of JFK
- The **most electable anti-war candidate for President**



Another Kennedy Assassination

- Running as anti-war Democratic nominee for President
- Assassinated 2 months after MLK Jr. in 1968



1968 Democratic National Convention

- **10,000 anti-war protestors gathered in Chicago** to oppose the Democratic candidate, Hubert Humphrey who was not against the war
- **Republican candidate Richard Nixon wins the election with promise to end the war**



D'etente

- Richard Nixon's **strategy to get us out of the war**
- Means “normalizing” relations
- **Played nice with China and Soviet Union** to reduce the tension
- Trade and arms limitation agreement



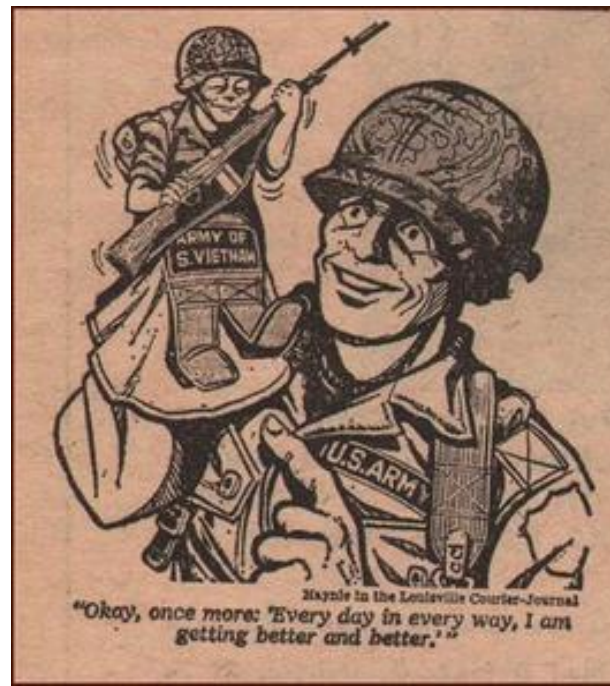
“Saving Face”

- Nixon tried to get both sides to have “*peace with honor*”
- This way no one has to lose this Cold War battle
- 1st President to visit China since WWII



Vietnamization

- When it became clear that the war was dragging on and more and more Americans were being killed, **Nixon decided to turn the war over to South Vietnam**



- Would continue to supply weapons and training, but **reduced American soldiers**
- Between 1968 and 1972 went from 500,000 to only 39,000 Americans



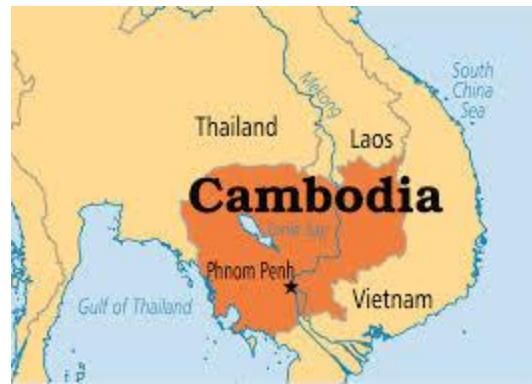
Did this strategy work?

- No – the **South Vietnamese couldn't hold off the North on their own**
- South Vietnamese didn't support their own government and had little will to fight



Cambodia

- In early 1970 Nixon *secretly authorizes sending American troops into Cambodia* (previously forbidden) to stop ability of NVA from launching attacks into South Vietnam (along Ho Chi Minh Trail)
- A political gamble because it looks like an invasion of Cambodia/expansion of the war



Kent State University



- Next day students across the country protest this on college campuses
- Demonstrators at **Kent State** in Ohio become violent
- Inexperienced **National Guard troops** were called in to “restore order”
- In span of 13 seconds 67 shots are **fired on the crowd killing 4 students** and injuring 9 others (incl. one permanently paralyzed)

Public Reaction

- **Public reaction is horrified & widespread**
- **4 million college students go on strike**
- **450 colleges & high schools forced to shut down**
- **100,000 demonstrators marched on Washington in protest**
- Nixon withdrew troops from Cambodia (which the war had spilled into), but stepped up bombing raids
- **Congress took back the Tonkin Gulf Resolution in protest**



Loss of Morale

- **Honorable Exit** becomes goal instead of victory – soldiers just try to ride out their time and get back home to their families
- **Troops** that remained in Vietnam in the early 1970's **began to feel like pawns** in a lost cause and many lost their morale



Drug & Alcohol Abuse

- Lots of **drug and alcohol abuse** (50% admit to trying marijuana, opium or heroin)
- Many became openly rebellious refusing to risk their lives in battles that they saw as pointless



Nixon's reelection

- Guaranteed his reelection by promising that *“peace is at hand”*



How did we finally get out?

- Signed a **peace agreement with North Vietnam in 1973** which withdrew our troops and returned POW's



POW's

- **Prisoners Of War** – soldiers captured during the war
- **Many sat in miserable North Vietnamese prisons for nearly a decade (*Hanoi Hilton*)**
- Some were never found or returned



The fall of Saigon



- As Nixon's presidency fell apart **South Vietnam was defeated by the North Vietnamese (April 1975) because Congress refused to send any more aid to South Vietnam since it had been such an *ugly and pointless war***

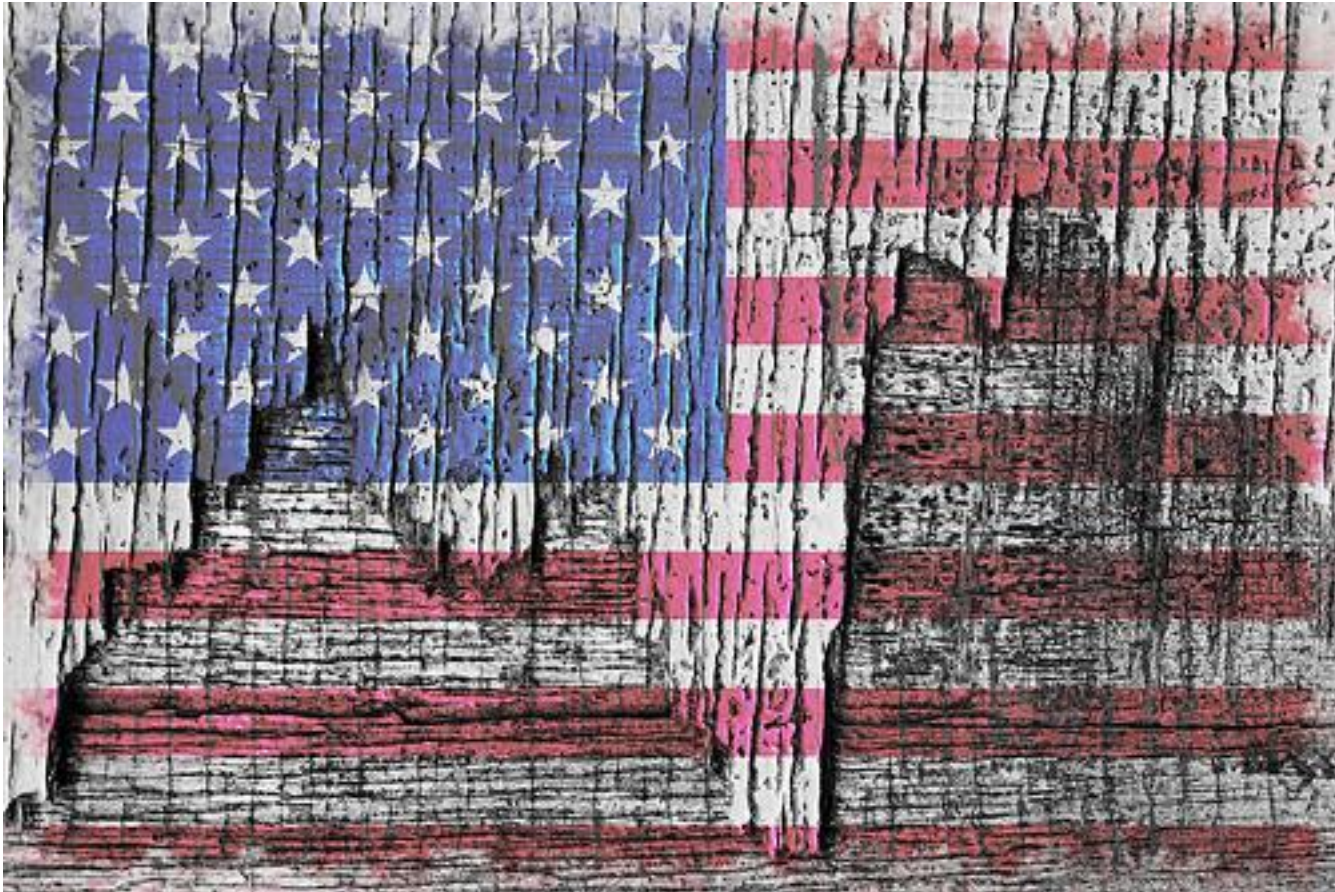
The most unpopular and divisive war in American history

- We spent \$150 billion
- Lost 58,000 American soldiers
- **Ended up losing the war**



Impact on our Government

- People **lost faith in the government and our nation's leaders** as a result of this war



TIMELINE

- Create a timeline of events beginning with *American involvement in Vietnam* and ending with the *fall of Saigon*.
- You should include a total of 10 labeled events, each with a drawing or visual of some sort that represents each event