



## Background to the War



- ❑ France controlled "Indochina" since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century
- ❑ Japan took control during World War II
- ❑ With U.S. aid, France attempted re-colonization in the postwar period



## Background to the War



- ❑ The French lost control to **Ho Chi Minh's Viet Minh** forces in 1954 at **Dien Bien Phu**
- ❑ President Eisenhower declined to intervene on behalf of France.



## Background to the War



- ❑ International Conference at Geneva
  - Vietnam was divided at 17<sup>th</sup> parallel
    - **Ho Chi Minh's** nationalist forces controlled the North
    - **Ngo Dinh Diem**, a French-educated, Roman Catholic claimed control of the South



## Background to the War



- ❑ A date was set for democratic elections to reunify Vietnam
- ❑ Diem backed out of the elections, leading to military conflict between North and South



## U.S. Military Involvement Begins



- ❑ Repressive dictatorial rule by Diem
  - Diem's family holds all power
  - Wealth is hoarded by the elite
  - Buddhist majority persecuted
  - Torture, lack of political freedom prevail
- ❑ The U.S. aided Diem's government
  - Ike sent financial and military aid
  - 675 U.S. Army advisors sent by 1960.



**Early Protests of Diem's Government**



Self-Emolation by a Buddhist Monk

**U.S. Military Involvement Begins**

- ☐ Kennedy elected 1960
- ☐ Increases military "advisors" to 16,000
- ☐ 1963: JFK supports a Vietnamese military *coup d'etat* - Diem and his brother are murdered (Nov. 2)
- ☐ Kennedy was assassinated just weeks later (Nov. 22)

**Johnson Sends Ground Forces**

- ☐ Remembers Truman's "loss" of China → **Domino Theory** revived

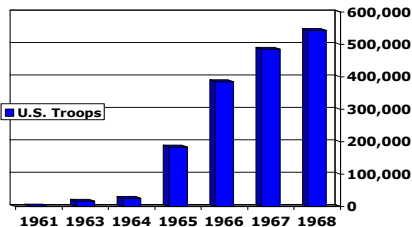


*I'm not going to be the president who saw Southeast Asia go the way China went.*

**Johnson Sends Ground Forces**

- ☐ Advised to rout the communists by Secretary of State, **Robert S. McNamara**
- ☐ Tonkin Gulf Incident → 1964 (acc. to Johnson, the attacks were unprovoked)
- ☐ **Tonkin Gulf Resolution**
  - ▶ "The Blank Check" \*

**U.S. Troop Deployments in Vietnam**



**The Ground War 1965-1968**

- ☐ No territorial goals
- ☐ Body counts on TV every night (first "living room" war)



- ☐ Viet Cong supplies over the **Ho Chi Minh Trail**



## The Air War 1965-1968



- 1965: Sustained bombing of North Vietnam
- Operation Rolling Thunder (March 2, 1965)



- 1966-68: Ongoing bombing of Hanoi nonstop for 3 years! Esp. targets the Ho Chi Minh Trail.
- Downed Pilots: P.O.W.s
- Carpet Bombing - napalm



## The Air War: A Napalm Attack



## Who Is the Enemy?



- 1 Vietcong:
  - Farmers by day; guerillas at night.
  - Very patient people willing to accept many casualties.
  - The US grossly underestimated their resolve and their resourcefulness.

*The guerilla wins if he does not lose, the conventional army loses if it does not win.*  
-- Mao Zedong



## Who Is the Enemy?



## The Ground War 1965-1968



- 1 General Westmoreland, late 1967:



*We can see the "light at the end of the tunnel."*







## The Tet Offensive, January 1968



- ☐ N. Vietnamese Army + Viet Cong attack South simultaneously (67,000 attack 100 cities, bases, and the US embassy in Saigon)
- ☐ Take many major southern cities
- ☐ U.S. + ARVN beat back the offensive
- ☐ Viet Cong destroyed
- ☐ N. Vietnamese army debilitated
- ☐ BUT...it's seen as an American defeat by the media



## The Tet Offensive, January 1968



## Impact of the Tet Offensive



- ☐ Domestic U.S. Reaction: Disbelief, Anger, Distrust of Johnson Administration

☐ *Hey, Hey LBJ! How many kids did you kill today?*



Johnson's popularity dropped in 1968 from 48% to 36%.



## Impact of the Vietnam War



Johnson announces (March, 1968):



▶ *Accordingly, I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President.*



**American Morale Begins to Dip**

- Disproportionate representation of poor people and minorities.
- Severe racial problems.
- Major drug problems.
- Officers in combat 6 mo.; in rear 6 mo. Enlisted men in combat for 12 mo.




**Are We Becoming the Enemy?**

Charlie Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 20<sup>th</sup> Infantry



**Lt. William Calley, Platoon Leader**

- Mylai Massacre, 1968**
- 200-500 unarmed villagers



**Anti-War Demonstrations**




**Columbia University 1967**



**Hell no, we won't go!**





## Anti-War Demonstrations



Democratic Convention in Chicago, 1968

Student Protestors at Univ. of CA in Berkeley, 1968



## "Hanoi Jane"



Jane Fonda: Traitor?



## Anti-War Demonstrations



Kent State University

- 📅 May 4, 1970
- 📅 4 students shot dead.
- 📅 11 students wounded
- 📅 Jackson State University
- 📅 May 10, 1970
- 📅 2 dead; 12 wounded



## Nixon on Vietnam



- 📅 Nixon's 1968 Campaign promised an end to the war: *Peace with Honor*
  - Appealed to the great "Silent Majority"
- 📅 Vietnamization
- 📅 Expansion of the conflict → The "Secret War"
  - Cambodia
  - Laos
- 📅 Agent Orange (chemical defoliant)







## "Pentagon Papers," 1971



- ☐ Former defense analyst **Daniel Ellsberg** leaked govt. docs. regarding war efforts during Johnson's administration to the *New York Times*.
- ☐ Docs. → Govt. misled Congress & Amer. People regarding its intentions in Vietnam during mid-1960s.
  - Primary reason for fighting not to eliminate communism, but to avoid humiliating defeat.
  - *New York Times v. United States* (1971) \*



## The Ceasefire, 1973



- ☐ *Peace is at hand* → Kissinger, 1972
  - North Vietnam attacks South
  - Most Massive U.S. bombing commences
- ☐ 1973: Ceasefire signed between
  - U.S., South Vietnam, & North Vietnam
- ☐ *Peace with honor* (President Nixon)



## Peace Negotiations



Dr. Henry Kissinger & Le Duc Tho

- ☐ US & Vietnamese argue for 5 months over the size of the conference table!



## The Ceasefire, 1973



- ☐ Conditions:
  1. U.S. to remove all troops
  2. North Vietnam could leave troops already in S.V.
  3. North Vietnam would resume war
  4. No provision for POWs or MIAs
- ☐ Last American troops left South Vietnam on March 29, 1973
- ☐ 1975: North Vietnam defeats South Vietnam
- ☐ Saigon renamed **Ho Chi Minh City**



## The Fall of Saigon



South Vietnamese Attempt to Flee the Country



## The Fall of Saigon



America Abandons Its Embassy



## The Fall of Saigon



North Vietnamese at the Presidential Palace



## A United Vietnam



## The Costs



1. 3,000,000 Vietnamese killed
2. 58,000 Americans killed; 300,000 wounded
3. Under-funding of Great Society programs
4. \$150,000,000,000 in U.S. spending
5. U.S. morale, self-confidence, trust of government, decimated



## The Impact



- 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment: 18-year-olds vote
- Nixon abolished the draft → all-volunteer army
- War Powers Act, 1973 \*
  - President must notify Congress within 48 hours of deploying military force
  - President must withdraw forces unless he gains Congressional approval within 90 days
- Disregard for Veterans → seen as "baby killers"
- POW/MIA issue lingered



## Some American POWs Returned from the "Hanoi Hilton"



Senator John McCain (R-AZ)



2,583 American POWs / MIAs still unaccounted for today.







## And in the End....



### Ho Chi Minh:

*If we have to fight, we will fight. You will kill ten of our men and we will kill one of yours, and in the end it will be you who tires of it.*



## Lessons for Future American Presidents



1. Wars must be of short duration.
2. Wars must yield few American casualties.
3. Restrict media access to battlefields.
4. Develop and maintain Congressional and public support.
5. Set clear, winnable goals.
6. Set deadline for troop withdrawals.



## The Vietnam Memorial, Washington, D.C.



## Memorial to US Servicemen in Vietnam



## Memorial to US Nurses in Vietnam



**58,000**





**President Clinton  
formally recognized  
Vietnam on  
July 11, 1995**



**Where Were You  
in the War, Daddy?**



*This war  
haunts  
us still!*



**AND TODAY.....  
The "Light" at the  
End of This Tunnel?**



2003 to ? : "Operation Iraqi Freedom"  
4000+ American dead and counting...?



**Another  
Vietnam?**



**OR**

**A transformation of  
the Middle East?**



**Only time & history  
can tell!**



## **Bibliography**



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