

The Vietnam War

Vietnam's History

- Located in South East Asia
- Since the 1800s, it was ruled by the French as part of the colony of Indochina
- In World War II, Japan gained control of Vietnam
- After World War II, Communist leader, Ho Chi Minh led the fight for independence
- The U.S. supported France during the war to stop the spread of communism
- Fighting lasted 8 years.
- France defeated at the battle of Dien Bien Phu

A battleground against Communism

- The Domino Theory argued that if one country fell to the Communist, neighboring countries would follow
- Under the Geneva Accords, Vietnam was divided into 2 countries
- Ho Chi Minh was to rule North Vietnam from its capital of Hanoi
- Ngo Dinh Diem was to rule South Vietnam from its capital of Saigon
- North Vietnamese soldiers were called Vietcong
- Ngo Dinh Diem government was corrupt and harsh
- In November 1963, military leaders of South Vietnam took over the government and killed Diem
- South Vietnam is in Turmoil

United States in Vietnam

- President Kennedy was killed 3 weeks after Diem
- Vice President Johnson becomes President
- The Vietcong are supported by the Soviet Union and China
- In 1964, American Destroyers were attacked by North Vietnamese torpedo boats in the Gulf of Tonkin
- Johnson asks Congress to pass the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution
- It allowed the President to use air strikes against North Vietnam
- In 1964 Johnson runs for reelection, vowing not to send American troops to Vietnam
- Johnson wins the election in a landslide
- In 1965, North Vietnam attacked an American base in South Vietnam killing 8 soldiers
- Johnson orders more air strikes
- Air strikes alone were not going to stop the North Vietnamese, so Johnson decided to send American soldiers to South Vietnam
- At first, troops were sent to defend the American base, but soon were taking part in attacks
- By 1968, 500,000 American troops were in Vietnam

New Weapons and strategies

- Napalm was a jelly-like substance that burst into flames, sticking to people's bodies.
- Agent Orange was a herbicide that killed vast amount of plant life destroying enemy hiding places
- Search and destroy missions began
- Instead of gaining territory they tried to kill as many Vietcong as possible

Tet Offensive

- On Jan. 31, 1968, North Vietnam launched massive attacks on every major city in South Vietnam
- American and South Vietnamese troops were able to retake every city by the end of February
- American support for the war decreased
- Americans at home were no longer sure that the U.S. could win

A Nation Divided

- The war continued and more American soldiers are sent to Vietnam
- At home Hawks supported the war and wanted to increase military involvement
- Doves believed the war could not be won and was morally wrong. They wanted the U.S. to withdraw its troops
- Opposition to the war increases.
- Resisters burned their draft cards
- Some claimed to be conscientious Objectors, or People who oppose war based on religious or philosophical reasons
- About 100,000 went to Canada to avoid military service
- At first protest were peaceful
- Later, violence between protesters and police became common

Election of 1968

- President Johnson decided not to run for reelection
- Democrats ran Vice President Hubert Humphrey, who supported Johnson's policies
- The Democratic convention was held in Chicago
- Massive demonstration took place with violence between police and protesters

- The nation watched televised reports of the turmoil
- Richard Nixon was the Republican candidate
- He promised to bring "Peace with Honor" in Vietnam
- In a close election, Nixon wins.

The War Winds Down

- Nixon's policy is called Vietnamization.
- This policy had U.S. troops withdraw, giving the South Vietnamese more responsibility for the war
- But Nixon expanded the war into Cambodia, bombing Communist bases that supplied the Vietcong.
- This had little impact on the enemy, but resulted in major protests at home
- At Kent State University in Ohio 4 students were killed at an antiwar protest
- National Security Adviser, Henry Kissinger, meets with the North Vietnamese to work out a peace agreement.
- South Vietnam does not agree with the plan
- After starting over, the Paris Peace Accords are signed in January, 1973
- In March the last U.S. combat troops withdraw

The Conflict Continues

- According to the peace accords 150,000 North Vietnamese troops can remain in South Vietnam
- These troops continue to take control of the country
- South Vietnamese troops are forced to retreat
- Thousands of soldiers die and civilians flee in what becomes known as the Convoy of Tears
- In April 1975, the U.S. sent helicopters to Saigon to help 1,000 U.S. workers and about 5,500 South Vietnamese supporters to leave.

- The North Vietnamese capture Saigon and rename it Ho Chi Minh
- Vietnam is united under a Communist government

Vietnam War results for America

- Americans were defeated in a foreign war for the first time
- 58,000 Americans died and 300,000 were injured
- Huge amount of money spent on the war hurt the U.S. economy
- Veterans, who lacked support when they got home suffered
- America's Faith in its government grew weaker
- The 26th Amendment was passed allowing 18 year olds to vote

Results for Vietnam

- More than 350,000 South Vietnamese died in combat
- Between 500,000 and a million North Vietnamese died
- In South Vietnam 10 million people lost their homes.
- Some try to escape by sea and are called boat people.
- About 200,000 die at sea or in refugee camps.