

Humanities

NOTES- Chronology of Vietnam and the Vietnam War

start Day 1

@ 60 B.C. -939 A.D. - Vietnam is controlled by the Chinese.

China wanted to benefit from Vietnam's agric. abundance

939 A.D. - 1859 - Vietnam is either under the control of the Cambodians or various warring families.

1859-1940 - Vietnam is controlled by the French as part of Indochina. *French (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia) French wanted access to Asian trade & win converts to Christianity (one of France's richest colonial possessions)*

1940 - 1945 - With France under the control of Germany during World War II, Japan begins its occupation of Vietnam.

1946 - French & Vietnamese once again locked in battle

What can you infer about the Vietnamese people from the first four listings on the chronology?

Always under the control of some other country. For centuries invaders desired the fertile river deltas & coastal lowlands. - rice (an abundant food source)

1949 - China falls to communism and the U.S. fears the "domino theory" (if one more nation falls to communism, then all may fall like a stack of dominoes.) The U.S. begins to aid the French in their effort to retake Vietnam, thus rejecting previous U.S. support for Ho Chi Minh.

Who was Ho Chi Minh? *"He Who Enlightens"*
- nationalist leader who lived in China & the S.U. in the 1920s/30s while working for V. indep.
- he became committed to the ideals of communism
- secretly returned to V. in early 1941 (after 30 yrs away from home)

Why did the U.S. initially support Ho Chi Minh?
- they had been fighting for their indep. which the U.S. supported
- Ho plead for U.S. assistance, but Truman chose to throw U.S. support behind France (T. viewed France as a vital ally in struggle vs. communism in postwar Europe & he was unwilling to back Vietnam b/c of Ho's Comm. Party connection)

1950 - The U.S. offers France \$2.5 billion in aid and sends military advisors to keep Vietnam from falling to communism. By 1954, the U.S. is paying 80% of France's military costs in Vietnam.

French suffered defeat after defeat.

1954 - Ho Chi Minh's forces defeat the French at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu and France pulls out. The Geneva Peace Conference settlement states that in 2 years an election will be held to see who rules Vietnam. *(northern V.)*

→ one day after surrender
- a cease-fire was agreed to, but no definite polit. settlement *- V. temporarily divided @ 17th parallel*

July 1956 - The free election is never held. Ngo Dien Diem, fearing that Ho Chi Minh will win, refuses to hold the election. *→ a former gov't official under the French (held nationalist beliefs) - Roman Catholic - strongly anti-comm.*

Why did Diem have reason to believe that Ho Chi Minh would win the election?

* For far more than 1,000 yrs they fought for their indep. & freedom.

May 7 1954

July

1957 – The National Liberation Front, nicknamed the Viet Cong, is formed in the South to aid the Viet Minh. They launch a civil war against the South.

Differentiate between the Viet Cong and the Viet Minh.

Viet Minh – League for indep. of V. (Ho's resistance movmt)
Viet Cong – Nat'l Liberation Front (NLF) Viet Minh who had stayed in S.V.
(Formed in 1960) – formed from military assistance in the N.
– not all NLF supporters were communists

1961 – The U.S. sends @ \$1 billion in aid to South Vietnam.

1963 – President John F. Kennedy decides to send in military advisors to help South Vietnam. U.S. officials are growing disgusted with Diem's corrupt and dictatorial government and do nothing to stop his assassination by his own men. President Kennedy is also assassinated in November. By the time of Kennedy's death, we have 16,000 "advisors" in Vietnam.

Why do you think the word "advisors" is in quotations?

Kennedy authorized these U.S. forces to engage indirect combat
(the # of Amer. killed or wounded climbed from 14 in 1961 to nearly 500 in 1963)

August 1964 – Known as the "Gulf of Tonkin Incident," President Lyndon B. Johnson announces that ships on routine patrol in international waters off the Gulf of Tonkin are attacked. Later we discover that the attack may have been provoked by the U.S. or possibly never even occurred. However, Congress, convinced that that attack did happen, passes the "Gulf of Tonkin Resolution" which gives the president the power to take "all necessary measures to repel an armed attack."

In what sense was the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution a blank check?

Johnson & his advisers get what they want — authority to expand the war
READ Wayne Morse's quote
– by passing the resolution, Congress had essentially given up its constitutional power to declare war

1965 – President Johnson begins a gradual increase in the number of troops and supplies to South Vietnam.

1966 – By now the U.S. has almost ½ million men and women stationed in Vietnam under the command of General William Westmoreland.

1967 – By this year, over 9,000 Americans have died in Vietnam. Johnson promises and end to the war is near.

End
Day 1

start Day 2

January 30, 1968 – This date is known as the beginning of the “TET Offensive.” In the past, both sides have called a cease-fire during TET, the Vietnamese New Year. This time, the cease-fire is agreed to but violated by North Vietnam and the Viet Cong. The attack hits most of the major cities and bases in South Vietnam. The area is finally regained by the Allies, but polls in the U.S. show that a majority of Americans no longer support Johnson’s policy in Vietnam. Because of this, Johnson decides not to run for reelection.

enemy loses 10x as many soldiers as ARVN & Amer. forces

* U.S. wins militarily, but many w/ moderate views begin to turn against war. (a critical)

Why is the TET Offensive considered a turning point in the war?

It was psychologically devastating to the U.S. b/c it exposed the credibility gap b/t official statements & the war's reality.
- shook Americans' confidence in the gov't
- mainstream media began to openly criticize the war

March 16, 1968 – Known as the “My Lai Massacre,” several U.S. soldiers enter My Lai, rape and torture women and kill 567 civilians. Soldiers are not fired on and there does not seem to be any danger from these people. For the next 2 years, debate will rage in the U.S. as to who is responsible. Eventually, the Army charges 25 soldiers and officers with participating in the killings, but only one, Lieutenant William Calley, Jr., is convicted of premeditated murder and is sentenced to life in prison. President Nixon intervenes and reduces his sentence to 3 years under house arrest in an apartment on a military base.

Public find out in Nov. 1968

End Day 2

Day 3

1969 – Ho Chi Minh dies. President Nixon begins the process of “Vietnamization” due to antiwar feelings at home. This plan is to gradually train and equip the South Vietnamese soldiers to take over the fight and begin sending U.S. soldiers home.

However, many of our men are sent on secret bombing missions into Laos and Cambodia to bomb supply routes along the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

What was the Ho Chi Minh Trail?

a network of paths along the borders of Vietnam, Laos & Cambodia (a supply route of arms from N.V. to the Vietcong)

What was the impact of Vietnamization on the United States?

- troops started to come home → by Aug. 1969, first 25,000 had returned
- over next 3 yrs. # of Amer. troops in V. dropped from more than 500,000 to less than 25,000
- “peace w/ honor”
- to preserve U.S. clout at the bargaining table

- he secretly ordered a massive bombing campaign against supply routes & bases in N.V. & on Laos & Cambodia

April 1969 – This is the height of U.S. involvement in the war. The U.S. now has approximately 543,000 troops in Vietnam.

by March 1970 Cambodian Communists were threatening the country's

April 30, 1970 – President Nixon formally announces that he is sending ground forces into Cambodia. This leads to major protests on many college campuses across the U.S. The most publicized protest is at Kent State in Ohio where National Guardsmen kill 4 students and wound 9 others.

non-Communist gov't responding to the gov't's plea for help

Jackson State

1st general student strike in U.S. history - more than 1.5 million students shut down same 1,200 campuses

Why did students and others protest Nixon’s invasion of Cambodia?

although it slowed Communist activity in S. Vietnam, it increased conflict in Cambodia

January 27, 1973 – The U.S., South Vietnam and North Vietnam sign a peace treaty in Paris, France.

March 29, 1973 – The last of the U.S. troops leave for the U.S.

April 30, 1975 – South Vietnam falls to communism under the control of North Vietnam.

COST OF THE VIETNAM WAR TO THE U.S. WAS @ \$164 BILLION (SINCE 1950) AND 58,000 LIVES LOST IN COMBAT. IF ACCIDENTAL DEATHS ARE INCLUDED IN THE COUNT, THIS FIGURE RISES TO 109,000.

SOURCES ON THE COST OF THE VIETNAM WAR TO VIETNAM INDICATE THAT APPROXIMATELY 2 MILLION NORTH AND SOUTH VIETNAMESE PEOPLE DIED DURING THE WAR. THE FIGURE INCLUDES CIVILIANS. FINANCIAL COSTS ARE NOT KNOWN.

(Source: Scholastic Update-April 6, 1990)

What are the lessons of the Vietnam War?

In the years since the war, some Americans pointed to what they called a harmful "Vietnam Syndrome" (the nation's reluctance, in the wake of V. to take decisive action overseas)

- others believed the memory of V. should keep the U.S. cautious about entering another war

Military lessons

- some argued that the military's hands were tied by politicians & that the U.S. could have won w/ more firepower early in the war
- others have noted that Amer. won every major battle, yet did not win the war (the U.S. lacked a clear overall strategy & in any case could not crush the will of the N. Viet & VC who were prepared to take whatever losses were necessary to win)

Polit. & moral lessons

- look carefully @ the implications of alliances
 - be careful about trusting gov't statements
 - Supporters said the war's bloody aftermath proved that it was right to have tried to stop the Communists
 - Critics said U.S. sided w/ an undemocr. regime & domino theory was disproved
- * One lesson most could agree on: the U.S. should not go to war w/out the informed consent of the people