

The Vietnam War

Background

1945 – **Ho Chi Minh** to power in Vietnam, wants independence from **France**, communist

1950 – U.S. gives military and economic support to France, \$15 million – why?

1954 – **domino theory** introduced by Eisenhower to deal with containment in Indochina

1954 – **Vietminh** defeat French at **Dien Bien Phu**, French surrender and pullout of Vietnam

1954 – **Geneva Accords** reached, divide Vietnam along 17th parallel, call for elections to unify

1956 – elections are cancelled by **Ngo Dinh Diem**, candidate in SV, supported by U.S. – why?

1957 – rise of the **Vietcong**, begin attacking Diem gov't in south, supported by Ho Chi Minh

Kennedy

1961 – Kennedy sends first **advisors** (300 Green Berets) to SV, purpose?, by end of 1961 – 3000

1962 – number of advisors reaches 11,000

1963 – **Buddhist monk protests**, Diem is overthrown, assassinated, sponsored by U.S.

1963 – number of advisors reaches 15,000, power of Vietcong has increased, JFK assassinated

Johnson

1964 – NV torpedo boat attacks a U.S. destroyer – first direct attack on U.S. in Vietnam

1964 – LBJ takes hard stance on communism, receives **Gulf of Tonkin Resolution** from Congress

Effects: 1.
 2.

1965 – U.S. begins **Operation Rolling Thunder** – sustained bombing of NV

1965 – number of advisors goes from 50,000 to 180,000

1967 – number of advisors peaks at 500,000 – this is referred to as the **“escalation”** of the war

1968

- **The Tet Offensive** - N. Vietnamese Army + Viet Cong attack South simultaneously (67,000 attack 100 cities, bases, and the US embassy in Saigon)
- U.S. and SV Army beat back the offensive but seen as a defeat by the American media
- Domestic U.S. Reaction: Disbelief, Anger, Distrust of Johnson Administration
- **Johnson Shocks the Nation** *...I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President.*
- **Antiwar demonstrations** – Columbia University, the Pentagon, Cal-Berkeley, Democratic National Convention
- **Walter Cronkite reports** – the war is “unwinnable”

Nixon

1968

- Campaign promised an end to the war: *Peace with Honor*
- **Vietnamization**
- Expansion of the conflict → The “Secret War” – invasion of Cambodia
- **Counterculture protests** increase – college campuses
- **My Lai Massacre** – Lt. William Calley

1970 – Students killed

- Kent State University
- Jackson State University

1971

“**Pentagon Papers**” released – former defense analyst **Daniel Ellsberg**

leaked govt. docs. regarding war efforts during Johnson’s administration to the *New York Times*.

- 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*.

1972

Peace is at hand → Secretary of State **Henry Kissinger**

- North Vietnam attacks South
- Most massive U.S. bombing commences

1973

- Ceasefire signed between U.S., South Vietnam, & North Vietnam

1975

- Fall of Saigon
- America abandons its embassy

Impact of the Tet Offensive

1.

2.

3.

4.

a.

b.

c.

d.

5.

The Cold War Ends – Four Major Events

1.

2.

3.

4.