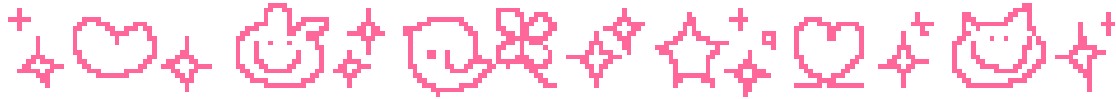


Name:Class:Date:



Chapter 9: Case Study of the Vietnam War, 1954-1975

📖. ✦ Origins of the Vietnam war

⚡ ✦ Subjugation → Nationalism → e.g. freedom

- Vietnam ruled as part of French Indochina
- French governance with French officials
- Mostly resource exploitation, heavy taxes, monopoly on trade
- Hence, locals have been attempting to overthrow French colonial rule since 1930s
- But no success
- 1940, fall of France
- So Japan invaded Vietnam through armistice with French colonial government (Vichy)
- Japanese Occupation = French puppet rule in Vietnam
- Vietnam war = Local [civil] + superpower conflict [proxy]
- USA, USSR, China played huge roles
- But local responses were crucial too
- French, Japanese rules were all harsh to locals
- Hence, encouraged local resistance to foreign rules
- Viet Minh by Ho Chi Minh
- Non-communists + communists
- Main goal of removing Japanese
- But differ on direction of independent Vietnam
- During WWII, USA, USSR, GMD China gave Viet Minh money, weapons, supplies
- To fight common enemy of Japan
- End of WWII, Allies + France re-occupied Vietnam
- But faced with strong resistance
- So Viet Minh quickly declared independence
- Intensification of tensions between French and Viet Minh



Name:Class:Date:

- 1946, First Indochina war
- Viet Minh used WWII tactics
- Underground warfare, stationed in mountains and forests, surprise raids
- But international relations also helped Viet Minh against French
- GMD lost civil war in China
- China now under CCP
- So CCP China supported Viet Minh
- Textbook page 103
- But USA could not allow communism to fester in Vietnam
- Fear of Domino Theory → USA comes in◇◇◇
- So USA started supporting French
- Weapons, supplies
- Superpower involvement = prolonged first Indochina war
- French wanted to lure Viet Minh into open battle
- 1954 = Battle of Dien Bien Phu [split into 3 phases]
- But Viet Minh defeated the French
- Cut off French supplies of food, medicine, ammunition
- Post-1954, France lost interest in Vietnam
- Cost of conflict outweighed colonial benefits
- Geneva conference: Viet Minh wanted Democratic Republic of Vietnam
- But USA refused a communist Vietnam
- So talks dragged for weeks
- Finally divided Vietnam along the 17th parallel
- North: Communist under Ho
- South: Non-communist under Diem
- Elections to be in 1956 for final resolution
- Some peace was achieved but nobody happy with partition
- Basis for further fighting



Name:Class:Date:

★ Domino Theory: prominent Cold War-era U.S. foreign policy concept, most famously articulated by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1954, suggesting that if one country in a region fell to communism, surrounding nations would inevitably follow, like a row of falling dominoes.

📌 A divided Vietnam

- North and South Vietnam had different visions
- Led to conflict, instability
- Both governments wanted to consolidate, unite Vietnam via authoritarianism

📌 North Vietnam

- Ho started consolidation of rule quickly after Geneva Conference
- Scared many to flee communist rule
- But pro-Communists in South Vietnam also moved to the North
- Led to strengthening of Ho's communist rule in the North
- Ho: recognised a great leader in getting rid of Japanese, French
- Also popular due to land reforms
- Confiscated land from large landowners, show trials (rigged) for them, redistributing land to peasant farmers
- But land reforms an economic failure
- Low agricultural output = insufficient food supplies
- Food imports also declined during this time
- Led to famines in North Vietnam
- Unhappiness started to brew
- But Ho did not allow resistance to develop
- Ho was ruthless with opponents; real and imagined
- E.g. mass executions of large landowners
- Harsh suppression + popular support = Ho's stable rule



📌 South Vietnam



Name:Class:Date:

- Diem was strongly anti-communist
- Wanted to modernise Vietnamese economy, society
- Hoped to guard Vietnam against foreign intervention
- So implemented modernisation programmes
- E.g. universities, expanded agriculture
- But Diem was unpopular◇◇◇
- Due to authoritarianism
- E.g. frequent imprisonment, executions
- 1955, Diem ignored Geneva agreement for elections◇◇◇
- Instead, Diem held referendum to remove Emperor Bao Dai
- Installed himself as President
- But referendum was rigged
- Hence led to massive unhappiness towards Diem
- But Diem continued ruling due to US support (willing to work with dictators)
- USA wanted a strong anti-communist figure in South Vietnam
- Since Diem was deeply unpopular, US tried to pressure Diem into land reforms
- Redistribution of land to poor peasants
- But Diem was uninterested
- Wanted to focus on landlords to support his rule
- So whatever land reforms stalled by 1960
- Income gap continued
- Corruption also further caused lack of support for Diem
- Nepotism, no elections...
- Led to widespread protests
- Usually by influential, well-educated Buddhist monks
- Due to Diem's lack of respect for Buddhism
- E.g. Diem's pro-catholic policies
- Sometimes, protests involved self-immolation
- Graphic images intensified opposition to Diem



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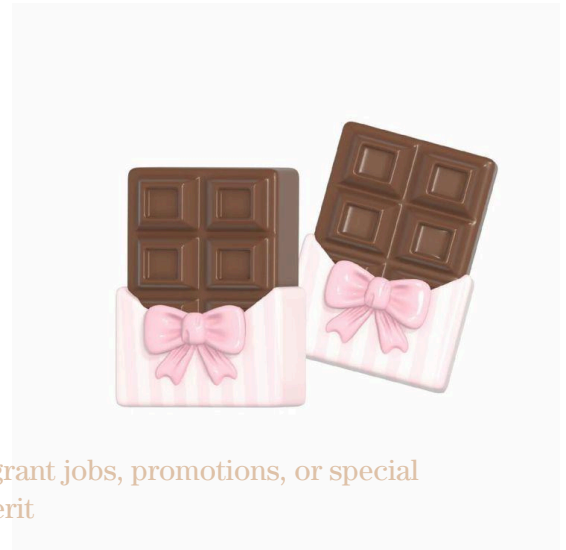
- But USA continued supporting Diem due to lack of alternatives
- To no avail for Diem's support base
- But Buddhist monks not the only opposition
- Opposition also from former viet minh members
- Especially invested in unification of Vietnam
- So when Diem cancelled 1956 reunification elections, start of insurgency
- Armed resistance from former Viet Minh members = Viet cong
- Diem responded with harsh repression
- Communist suspects imprisoned, tortured, executed
- Some successes in striking at military bases
- But not a complete weeding
- North Vietnam government supported Viet Cong
- Ho Chi Minh Trail as central resource
- Viet Cong took orders from Ho
- Assassinations, attacks of South Vietnamese government

★.☐ Nepotism: the unfair practice of using power or influence to grant jobs, promotions, or special advantages to relatives or friends, rather than hiring based on merit

★.☐ Self-immolation: the act of **deliberately killing oneself by fire**, typically as a violent form of protest or extreme self-sacrifice. It is a rare, severe method of suicide often chosen to draw intense public attention to political, religious, or personal distress

🇻🇳. + North-South Vietnam tensions

- 1960s, Viet Cong stepped up guerilla warfare
- Attacks on South Vietnamese forces, officials, buildings, US Air Force bases
- Countryside unsafe for South Vietnamese forces
- South Vietnam's response: Strategic hamlet programme
- Forceful relocation of peasants to fortified villages
- Break connection with Viet Cong



Name:Class:Date:

- Also prevent civilians in crossfire from US Air Force, South Vietnamese Army against Viet Cong

★.📖 summary of Strategic hamlet programme: The Strategic Hamlet Programme aimed to isolate villagers from the Viet Cong by placing them in fortified settlements, but it failed due to poor implementation and lack of popular support. It made the government look oppressive.

📖. External players

- Vietnam War as civil war
- But also part of larger Cold War context
- USA wanted to use Vietnam as Asian foothold
- USSR, China wanted to support communism

📖. China

- 1949, Communist victory in China
- Mao saw USA as a threat
- Worried that USA would attack China via South Korea, Vietnam, GMD Taiwan
- So Mao saw North Vietnam as anti-US buffer
- Also wanted to support communist cause in North Vietnam
- Most importantly, Mao wanted support from Chinese people
- Chinese involvement in Korean War had strengthened his leadership
- So wanted to repeat positive precedence with Vietnam War

📖. USSR

- Early 1960s, USSR cautious about Vietnam involvement
- Due to Sino-Soviet Split
- Less cooperation with China = less resources
- So only minor involvement: support Ho against French, formed Viet Cong
- Mid-1960s, more intense in Vietnam
- USSR wanted to dominate China in communist leadership, outdo USA
- Hence, started sending aircraft, air defences, missiles



Name:Class:Date:

🇺🇸 * USA

- USA worried about the spread of communism
- Domino Theory
- Hence, embarked on containment
- Supported ANY anti-communist governments
- 1961, Kennedy's presidency
- Military Assistance Command Vietnam(MACV)
- Training for South Vietnamese Army, supplied military equipment
- 1963, Johnson's presidency
- Ready for full-scale conflict in Vietnam
- Diem's assassination heightened political instability
- Johnson worried about communist takeover
- USSR, China gaining traction as communist powers
- E.g. China's first atomic bomb
- So superpower tensions increased
- USA had to intensify military, economic aid to South Vietnam



🇻🇳 * Vietnam War

- Second Indochina War
- 1964, North Vietnamese boats attacked US destroyer (USS Maddox) in Gulf of Tonkin
- Encouraged US action = Gulf of Tonkin resolution
- Direct US military intervention
- Also sent in ally armies
- Australia, Britain, New Zealand, South Korea
- Massive advantage in fire power
- 1965, Ia Drang Valley battle as first major battle
- No clear victory for USA despite large Viet Cong casualties = stalemate



★.📖Stalemate: a situation in a competition, dispute, or negotiation where no progress is possible, resulting in a deadlock where neither side can win

Name:Class:Date:

	🇻🇳 North Vietnam	🇺🇸 USA
🇻🇳 Strategy	• Guerilla warfare • Hidden tunnels, trails	Air power (Operation rolling thunder)
🇻🇳 Local support	Good relationship with peasants through assistance	Harmed civilians through Agent Orange, Napalm (“Search and Destroy”) ★.🇻🇳 causes severe, long-term health issues by damaging organs, cells, and hormones ★.🇻🇳 2000 degrees celsius → can melt clothes off
🇻🇳 Morale	Committed to removing USA	• Protests over involvement in Vietnam • Public opposed Vietnam War

★.🇻🇳 What Agent Orange contains: a 50:50 mixture of two phenoxy herbicides: 2,4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4-D) and 2,4,5-trichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4,5-T). Its extreme toxicity, however, stemmed from a dangerous byproduct contaminant called 2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin (TCDD), a highly toxic dioxin produced during the manufacturing of 2,4,5-T

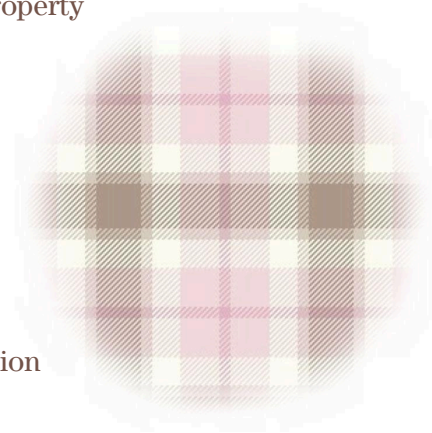
- 1965-7: US felt positive about war
- “Body count” as metric for success
- So goal to kill as many Viet Cong as possible
- But early 1968, confidence was shattered

Prepared by Mrs Nettie Viknesh



Name:Class:Date:

- Tet Offensive
- Viet Cong, North Vietnam Army attacked over 100 cities, military targets (from north to south)
- Bitter fighting over Hue, Khe Sanh
- Viet Cong badly weakened
- Due to massive deaths, lack of support from South Vietnam
- But Tet offensive proved to be a turning point in the war
- US failure to anticipate, loss of civilian lives, artillery, air power and property
- Media portrayal of the USA did not help their case either
- Initially, media and US government had good relations
- E.g. Journalists allowed in war zones
- But Tet Offensive changed media restraint
- Media felt USA would not win the war
- Led to public criticism of US war efforts in Vietnam on national television
- Inadvertently swung US public opinion towards USA in Vietnam War
- Anti-war sentiments were raised
- Additional media coverage intensified it
- E.g. My Lai Massacre
- US soldiers murdered 347-547 unarmed South Vietnamese civilians, shocked American public
- So American public started to demonstrate, protest against US involvement in Vietnam War
- Post-Tet Offensive, Johnson wanted to conclude war through peace talks
- Nixon started Vietnamisation
- South Vietnamese forces to take over, withdrawal of US troops
- Paris Peace Accords
- Nixon wanted to continue financial, military assistance to Vietnam
- But stopped by US Congress, Watergate Scandal = Nixon impeached
- By 1973, last US forces left Vietnam
- Ford wanted to continue financial aid to South Vietnam



Name:Class:Date:

- But again stopped by Congress
- Clear indication that us public had no support for Vietnam war
- Without US support, South Vietnam was unable to defend itself against the North (doomed to fall)
- 1974, North Vietnam launched major offensive
- Saigon fell to communist forces
- 1975, US launched Operation Frequent Wind
- Final evacuation of US, Vietnamese civilians as communist forces swarmed Saigon
- Desperation of Vietnamese men, women, children to board last US helicopters
- Symbol of US failure in Vietnam
- Reunification of Vietnam as communist state
- Saigon renamed to Ho Chi Minh City
- 1976, Socialist Republic of Vietnam under Le Duan
- Aided by USSR
- Start of communist iron-fisted rule
- “re-education camps”
- Prison camps for former supporters, collaborators of South Vietnam
- Indoctrination, torture, forced labour



🚩. * Aftermath of Vietnam War

- Vietnam War raised domestic self-doubts in US
- US also faced damages to international reputation
- Vietnam War was US' moral crusade against communism
- But US failed to show moral superiority
- Especially with atrocities, chemical weapons
- Even with extensive military strength, the US was unable to defeat the communist forces in SEA
- In fact, Domino Theory took over
- After fall of South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia also turned communist



Name:Class:Date:

- Domino Theory sparked fears of communist spread
- So 1967 formation of ASEAN
- Goal of preventing foreign intervention in ASEAN
- US Congress no longer supported US Presidents in their foreign policies
- E.g. forbade US military aid to Cambodia, 1973 War Powers Act
- Marked a decline in the power / weakening of the US Presidency
- US failures prompted mending relations with communist world
- **Détente** = a relaxation of tensions between the US and communist powers (especially the USSR and China)
- 1972, Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty
- Reduce nuclear weapons
- Started series of successful negotiations: Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I)
- 1975, discussion on borders, human rights
- US also made efforts/improved relations with China (e.g. Nixon's visit to China in 1972)

📌 Conclusion

- Vietnam War was long, destructive
- Cold War proxy conflict
- Showed ideologies cannot be imposed through unpopular governments
- E.g. Diem's South Vietnam
- Will only lead to strong resistance
- But Vietnam War also allowed warming of superpower relations in its wake
- E.g. disarmament treaties, re-establishment of diplomatic relations



📌 Video → 3 things I learnt: 1. Viet Minh use clever tactics like moving heavy artillery through mountains using labourers → surprise attacks, hard to pin point

2. in 2 weeks, Vietnamese troops regained most of Vietnam

3. Vietnam split at the 17th parallel

→ 2 things im unsure of:

Gulf of Tonkin resolution: → two US destroyers reported they were attacked by North Vietnamese vessels

Name:Class:Date:

→ President Lyndon B. Johnson requested permission from the U.S. Congress to increase the U.S. military presence in Indochina.

→ paved the way for the 1973 war powers act (To restore the balance of power between Congress and the President regarding the use of military force, largely in response to the Vietnam War.)

My Lai Massacre: - It was the mass killing of 500 unarmed Vietnamese civilians by US soldiers on March 16, 1968 in the hamlet. Of the 14 arrested, only 1 was charged but later released on parole

what happened: subdivision of Son My village, Quang Ngai province Vietnam. U.S. soldiers from Charlie Company killed as many as 500 unarmed villagers. The soldiers rounded up and shot groups of women, children, and elderly men at close range, and committed numerous rapes.

who were involved: William Calley: As the 1st Platoon commander, he was the only American found guilty of any crime and was initially sentenced to life in prison, but was paroled in 1974.

Hugh Thompson: A U.S. Army warrant officer, Thompson, along with his crew, stopped the massacre by threatening to fire on U.S. soldiers if they continued to kill civilians. He, Lawrence Colburn, and Glenn Andreotta (posthumously) received the Soldier's Medal for their bravery.

Other members of Charlie Company: Many participated in the killings, but most were acquitted.

Ron Ridenhour: A helicopter door gunner who trained with Charlie Company members, he investigated and reported the massacre, prompting official investigations.

Oran Henderson: Commander of the 11th Infantry Brigade, he was court-martialed for dereliction of duty for failing to fully investigate the killings, but was found not guilty.

why it happened: Charlie Company, arriving in Vietnam in December 1967, perceived My Lai as a Viet Cong hotbed. After losses in February and early March 1968, intelligence suggested the 48th Battalion, an especially effective Viet Cong unit, was in My Lai.

On March 15, Charlie Company's commander, Capt. Ernest Medina, said that anyone found in My Lai should be considered a Viet Cong fighter or sympathizer, and troops were free to fire at anyone or anything. They were also ordered to destroy crops, buildings, and livestock.