

5HD450 Chapters in History of the Cold War

7. Vietnam War.



EVROPSKÁ UNIE
Evropské strukturální a investiční fondy
Operační program Výzkum, vývoj a vzdělávání

MŠMT
MINISTERSTVO ŠKOLSTVÍ,
MLÁDEŽE A TĚLOVÝCHOVY

Before the war ...

- Originally French colony / area
- 1950 – two governments in Vietnam resulting from the World War II
 - **Democratic Republic of Vietnam** – communist country, capital of Hanoi
 - **State of Vietnam** – backed by the French, led by Emperor, democratic country, capital of Saigon
- Military advisors, weapons, and money coming from China, USSR, U.S.
- Americans considered using nuclear bombs and sent troops to Vietnam
- **1954 France defeated** and Vietnam temporarily divided along 17th parallel, free elections within 2 years
- Suppression of opposition in both countries, elections not unbiased
- **1955 new authoritarian Ngo Dinh Diem's government in the south, stronger communist Ho Chi Minh's government in the north**



The resistance war against America

- **November 1955 – April 1975**
- **A proxy war** during the Cold War – ideological involvement of the U.S. and USSR
- **Officially fought between North Vietnam** (supported by the USSR, China, other communist countries) **and South Vietnam** (supported by U.S., South Korea, others)
- **A war of South Vietnam against North Vietnamese Army + local communist organization of the Viet Cong** (their aim was to reunify Vietnam)
- **After 1960 North Vietnam more involved in the communist movement** in the South, invasion of Laos and Cambodia to supply arms and soldiers to the Viet Cong (Ho Chi Minh's Trail)



Outbreak

- **1961 U.S. determined to keep communism within then borders**, but South Vietnam had to defeat guerillas on their own x 1961, 1962 tripling of U.S. troops in SV (**domino theory**)

Kennedy: *“Now we have a problem making our power credible and Vietnam looks like the place.”*

- **South Vietnam not able to defend**
 - poor army leadership, corruption, nepotism
- **1961–1962 Strategic Hamlet Program**
 - to solve problems with peasants, unresettling of peasants in the South
- **1963 Diem’s overthrowing caused chaos**
 - more support for communist guerillas
- **1964 North Vietnam attacked South Vietnam**
- **1964 Gulf of Tonkin Resolution** – American President can run military operations in Southeast Asia without declaring war



Escalation

- **Aim was to force North Vietnam to stop support of Viet Cong in the South, to destroy infrastructure of Viet Cong**
“we're going to bomb them back into the Stone Age”
- Johnson: “... *the battle against communism ... must be joined ... with strength and determination.*”
- **1965–1968 over 1 mil. bombs, missiles, and rockets in North Vietnam**
- **1965 U.S. Marines sent to defend to South Vietnam** – Americans involved in ground war – American public support
- Americans predicted the end of the war in 1967
Westmoreland: “... *where the end comes into view.*”
- **1968 Tet Offensive** – surprising Viet Cong’s attempt at national uprising, huge offensive in urban areas, Allies won – turning point in **American public support**
- **No more American troops sent to Vietnam**
- **1968 peace talks between U.S. and North Vietnam** (U.S. stopped bombing North Vietnam)
- McNamara: “*the dangerous illusion of victory by the United States was therefore dead.*”



Vietnamization

- **Nixon Doctrine** – “to return” the war back to the Vietnamese, it is not American war
- **President Nixon promised to withdraw troops – began in 1969**
- **1969 My Lai Massacre, Green Beret Affair**
– American public more aggravated
- **1972 U.S. – North Vietnam peace agreement,**
South Vietnam against it – Nixon pushed
South Vietnam and North Vietnam to sign it
- **1973 Paris Peace Accords** – to end to war and restore Vietnam, cease of fire, territorial integrity of Vietnam, national elections, withdrawal of American troops
- 1973 last American soldiers left, naval and air forces stayed in the Gulf of Tonkin



Final stage

- **South Vietnam kept rolling back the Viet Cong supported by the North**
- **North Vietnam prepared a massive invasion to the South** expected 1975–1976 (Saigon must fall before 1st May)
- Viet Cong resumed control over the territory it lost before
- **1974 war started officially again**, Americans cut their financial and material support, South Vietnam very well armed suffered from oil shock, **North Vietnam victorious along the borders**
- 1975 third biggest city of Hue defeated by North Vietnamese Army, **fall of South Vietnamese capital of Saigon** – Operation Frequent Wind
- **Vietnamese war was over on 30th April 1975**



Aftermath



- **1976 emergence of Socialist Republic of Vietnam**
- Thousands of refugees leaving Vietnam – “boat people”
- U.S. Vietnam Syndrome - the reluctance of the American public and politicians to support further international interventions after Vietnam
- **First war very well covered by media (TV)**
- About 1 mil. casualties, over 250 ths. South Vietnamese soldiers, 450 ths. North Vietnamese military, about 60 ths. American troops, the rest were civilians mostly from South Vietnam
- Controversies – Agent Orange, carpet bombing, napalm



Readings & videos

- Documentaries

BBC The Cold War – Vietnam, Make Love Not War

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6s0Z2mwTrXY>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0SSToQvJeA&index=13&list=PLPJ9LLQi9QhP3X73RLUI9SS_RfWSFzvMI

Cold War History Videos

- <http://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/cold-war-history/videos>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/coldwar/>

- Specialized Resources / Collections / Cold War Files

- <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/program/cold-war-international-history-project>
- <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/collections>
- http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/themes/world_politics/cold_war/default.stm
- <https://web.archive.org/web/20080411004848/http://www.coldwarfiles.org/index.cfm?thisunit=0&fuseaction=events.list>
- <http://www.avclub.com/special/cold-war/timeline>



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