

The Vietnam War 1955 - 1975

Another proxy conflict...





China

Hanoi

Laos

Mekong

Thailand

Vietnam

Cambodia

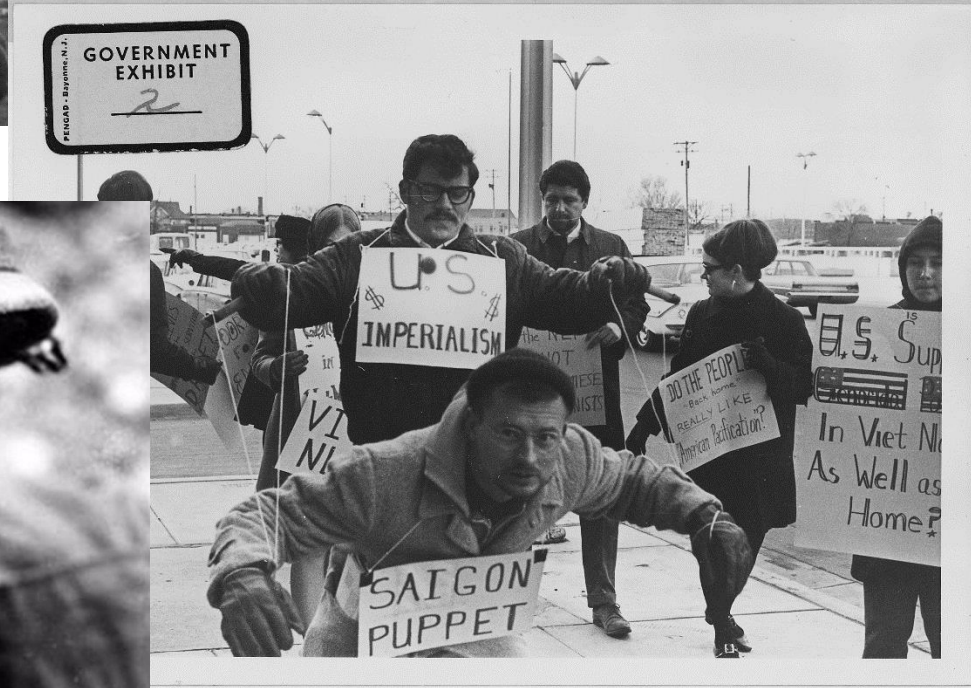
Ho Chi Minh City

Philippines

WORLD

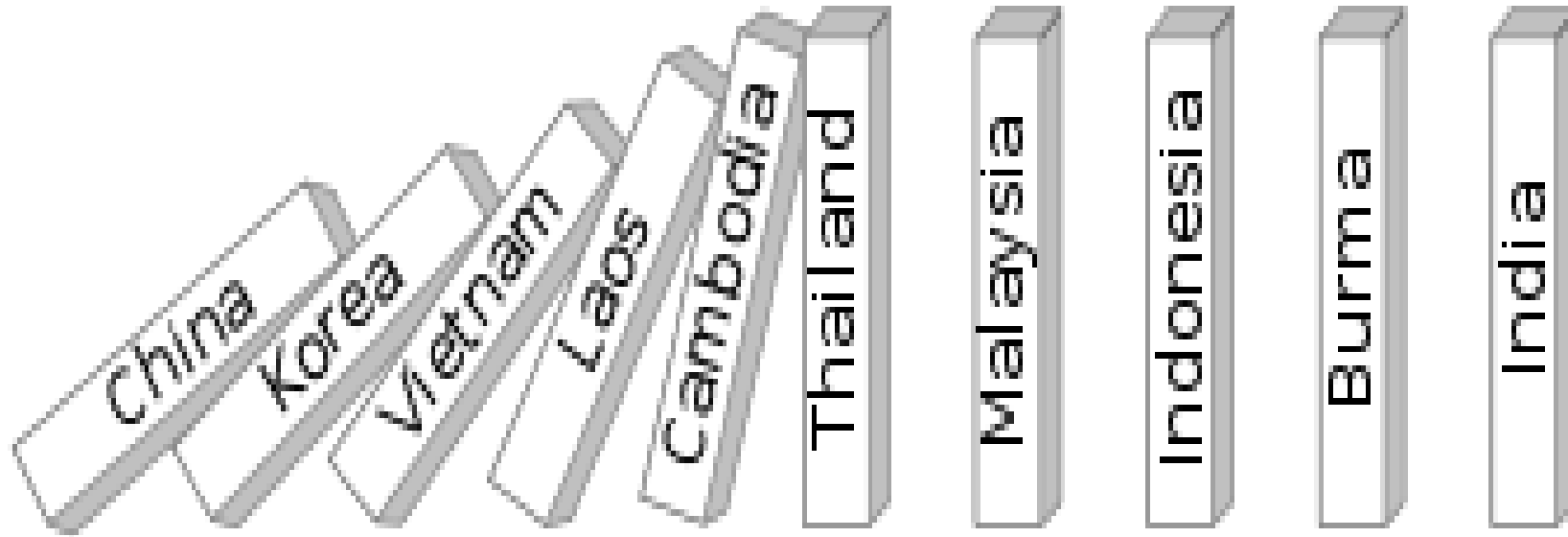
LOCATION OF VIETNAM





Vietnam War Simplified! (4:33)

Domino Theory:



The lead up!

- ▶ Vietnam (and Laos and Cambodia) was a **French** colony called Indochina that was annexed by Japan during WW2.
- ▶ After Japan was defeated, the French tried unsuccessfully to reassert their influence. A group called the **Viet Minh set up a government in the North with its capital in Hanoi, and attempted to become independent. The result was the first Indochina War, 1946-1954.**
- ▶ What we refer to as the Vietnam War is also called the second Indochina war.
- ▶ The Viet Minh were influenced by **Communism**, and were allied with China (and also the USSR). In the South, another government was established that allied itself with the West.



Two Vietnams?

- ▶ In April 1954, the world's powers had met at Geneva to discuss Vietnam. In July 1954, it was decided to divide the country in two at the 17th parallel.
- ▶ Bao Dai was to lead the south and Ho Chi Minh the north.
- ▶ The meeting also decided that in 1956, there would be an election in both the north and south to decide who would rule the whole country.
- ▶ The election would be supervised by neutral countries.
- ▶ This election did not take place and the split had become permanent by 1956.

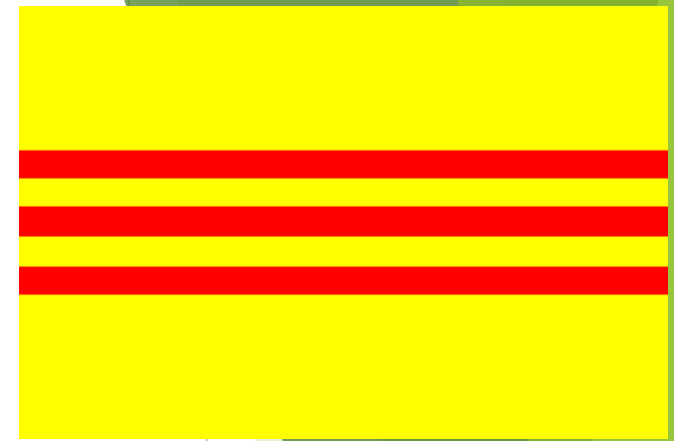


North Vietnam



- ▶ North Vietnam had a population of 16 million.
- ▶ It was an agricultural nation.
- ▶ The Viet Minh trained guerrillas to go to the south to spread the word of communism.
- ▶ Their weapons mostly came from communist China.
- ▶ To the surprise of the South Vietnamese, those Viet Minh who went to the south helped them on their farms and did not abuse them.
- ▶ They had become used to fearing soldiers.
- ▶ Instead, the Viet Minh were courteous and helpful.

South Vietnam



- ▶ South Vietnam also had a population of 16 million.
- ▶ Its first proper leader was Ngo Dinh Diem who was a fanatical catholic.
- ▶ As communism hated religion, Diem hated all that communism stood for.
- ▶ This is why he got America's support - he had a poor record on human rights but his rule was in the era of the "Domino Theory" and anybody who was anti-communist in the Far East was likely to receive American backing - regardless of their less than savoury background.
- ▶ Ngo ruled as a dictator along with his brother - Nhu.
- ▶ Their government was corrupt and brutal but it was also backed by America.

- ▶ After the non-election of 1956, the Viet Minh became more active militarily. Their guerrillas – now called the Viet Cong – attacked soft targets in the south.
- ▶ They used the Ho Chi Minh Trail which was a 1000 mile trail along the border with Laos with heavy jungle coverage so that detection from the air was very difficult.
- ▶ They introduced a “hearts and minds” policy long before the Americans got militarily involved in Vietnam.



The leaders...at the beginning...

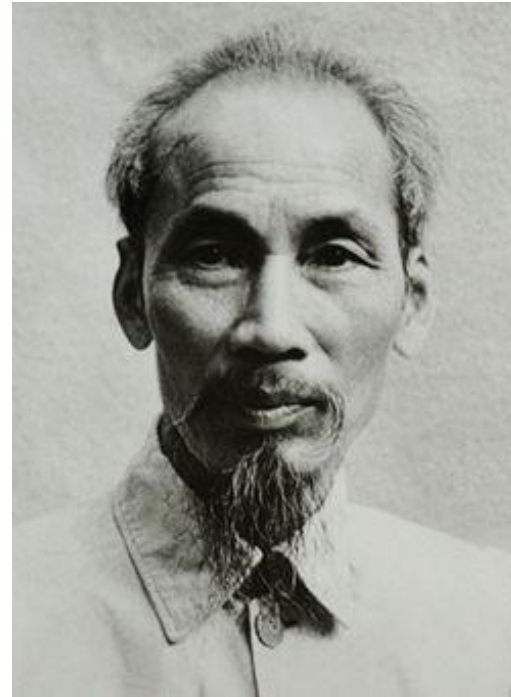
Ngo Dinh Diem

Republic of South Vietnam



Ho Chi Minh

Democratic Republic of
North Vietnam



Leaders of the Superpowers

Soviet Leaders

- ▶ Nikita Krushchev (1953 – 1964)
- ▶ Leonid Brezhnev (1964 – 1982)



American Leaders

- ▶ Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953-1961)
- ▶ John F. Kennedy (1961-1963) Kennedy pledged extra aid to Diem regime when he was in office in 1961...But!.....
- ▶ Lyndon B. Johnson (1963 – 1969)
- ▶ Richard Nixon (1969 -1974)
- ▶ Gerald R. Ford (1974 – 1977)



Viet Minh...or Viet Cong?

Viet Minh

- ▶ The Nationalists who fought against the French and later Americans!
- ▶ Not all were Communist.

Viet Cong

- ▶ The Communist guerilla forces fighting in the South!
- ▶ Viet Cong is an abbreviation of Vietnamese Communist! But many were peasants who knew nothing of Communist theory.
- ▶ When the Viet Minh dissolved, some went on to fight for the Viet Cong.

The Causes...

- ▶ Imperialism (French and American)
- ▶ Communist Expansion and American Containment
- ▶ The Gulf of Tonkin Incident

The Gulf of Tonkin

- ▶ On August 2, 1964, the destroyer USS Maddox was pursued by three North Vietnamese Navy torpedo boats while on patrol. The Maddox fired warning shots, and then the Vietnamese ships allegedly attacked.
- ▶ The Maddox was only ever hit with a single bullet, but the Vietnamese ships were badly damaged.
- ▶ This led to the passing of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in America, that allowed the US to take further military action in the area, thus expanding the conflict immensely.



The Vietnam War

- ▶ The war was fought between the Americans and South Vietnamese on one side, and the North Vietnamese who were supported by China and the USSR.
- ▶ The North Vietnamese had the NVA (North Vietnamese army) and the Viet Cong, A guerilla force that was formed from the Viet Cong party.
- ▶ U.S. involvement escalated in the early 1960s, with troop levels tripling in 1961 and again in 1962
- ▶ Regular U.S. combat units were deployed beginning in 1965. Operations crossed international borders: bordering areas of Laos and Cambodia were heavily bombed by U.S. forces as American involvement in the war peaked in 1968, the same year that the communist side launched the Tet Offensive.

The Tet Offensive

- ▶ The Tet Offensive was a major surprise attack launched by the North during the time of Tet, a religious time for Vietnamese people.
- ▶ The Tet Offensive failed in its goal of overthrowing the South Vietnamese government, but became the turning point in the war, as it persuaded a large segment of the United States population that its government's claims of progress toward winning the war were illusory despite many years of massive U.S. military aid to South Vietnam.



Walter Cronkite

- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nn4w-ud-TyE>



It seemed like
a mismatch



But in reality....

- ▶ The Vietnamese fought a Guerilla war. They used sneak attacks and would then disappear.
- ▶ The Vietnamese had AAA and SAM sites all over the country.
- ▶ “Hearts and Minds”... by both... two different results!
- ▶ Their technology gap began to lessen to an extent!



Vietnamization

- This was a long drawn out conflict that became very unpopular in America because of the length, conscription, and the fact that the media was able to report on the conflict frequently (the spread of TV!)
- Gradually pulling soldiers out of Vietnam was part of the Vietnamization plan...to have the South Vietnamese fight the war instead of the Americans

The Fall of Saigon

- ▶ When the Americans finally pulled out their Military forces the North was able to defeat the South Vietnamese army.



So...The Results?

- ▶ What would you say are the results of the Vietnam war?
 - ▶ Consider the following...the Americans had the most advanced army in the world...