

U.s. history i



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The Vietnam War The Vietnam War was fought from 1959 to 1975 and involved the North Viet se and the National Liberation Front (NLF) in military conflict with the United States and the South Vietnamese army. During the first Indochina War between 1946 and 1954, the Vietnamese had fought to seek independence from French rule. When that war ended, Vietnam was for a time split into North and South Vietnam. The former came under the rule of the Vietnamese Communists who opposed French control and sought a united Communist ruled Vietnam. South Vietnam came under the rule of the Vietnamese who had cooperated with the French in the past.

The war itself did not have a starting point, but began in a series of steps and a number of American Presidents had a part to play during the period. With the French fighting a losing battle to retain control of the Indochina colony and Vietnam, the then US President Harry Truman, offered a small economic and military support to the French. But after the Vietnamese defeat of the French and the northern half came under communist rule, the threat of the southern non-communist half also falling under northern control was unacceptable to the next US President Dwight Eisenhower who sent military advisers to train the South Vietnamese army.

The domino effect that communism might have on Asian nations was the main reason why the US became involved in the war. In order to prevent the Communist Vietnamese from gaining control, the United States in 1965 sent military forces to Vietnam to keep the weak South Vietnamese government in power of their region. America had other political ambitions tied with economic ones. Trade domination in the Asia Pacific region would open US markets to Japan. The British who had rubber plantations in Malaya would be comforted with American presence in the region. Aid would enable France to

send back their troops back to Europe to assist rearmament of West Germany permitting the US to have an upper hand at the cold war. The prevention of the spread of communism was the primary focus for the US. Communism to America meant disregard for democracy, human rights violations, military hostility and the creation of closed economies that rarely traded with the West. All this the US took as a threat to freedom and liberty. Following John F Kennedy's assassination, the next US president, Lyndon B. Johnson committed the US into the Vietnam conflict with prolonged bombings of North Vietnam. The war took a heavy toll on the Vietnamese who lost 3 to 4 million lives on either side, along with 1. 5 to 2 million Lao and Cambodians. 58, 000 American lives were lost. The war cost American taxpayers \$150 billion during the time (Dan's History 2006).

The Vietnam War was the longest military conflict in U. S. history. On the whole Americans at home backed the government's rhetoric that it was fighting communism but the antiwar movement had gained momentum and proved to be a major force in determining the foreign policy stance of the then and future governments.

When the Vietnam War ended, the United States was unsuccessful in achieving its objective. US troops withdrew, leaving the country to be reunified in 1975 under Communist rule. The following year Vietnam officially became the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. It was a major victory for communism.

Except for the rise of the anti-war movement America gained very little from the Vietnam conflict. It was a long and unpopular war which divided Americans more than anything else.

References

Dan's History (2006). Casualties and Costs. 31st Jul 06 Wikipedia (2006). Vietnam War.