

Vietnam research paper

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Vietnam Research Paper For much of its history, Vietnam has been ruled by other numerous nations. In 1858, as France invaded Vietnam in order to gain more imperial power, they soon felt it difficult to maintain order within Vietnamese territories. The U. S. soon got involved in part because of their involvement of the Cold War as they view Communism as the sole antithesis of Democracy. In May, 1950 President Harry S. Truman sent financial aid to the French for their war. As a result of the United States' belief and ideals, they entered into one of its longest and bloodiest wars, with many conflicts and controversies, consequentially losing many lives and ultimately considered an unnecessary war. As a result of growing French imperialism, it initiated the First Indochina War, and led to the U. S. involvement with Vietnam in a long and bloody war. In 1858 as European powers were scrambling for territories to add to their imperial wealth and power, France invaded Vietnam and established colonial rule. The French's grip on Vietnam would later fall in World War II but it would thus allow for Japanese occupation of Vietnam from 1940-1945. As the war raged on, Japanese shifted their focus away from Vietnam as they suffered major casualties from the atomic bomb. Upon the Japanese's formal surrender to end World War II, Vietnam declared their independence and named their country Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). The French however, did not recognize their independence and shortly returned to Vietnam. They drove the Viet Minh (the League for Vietnamese Independence) towards the north of the country until they could infiltrate no further. In 1945, Ho Chi Minh, Vietnamese socialist/ nationalist activist who established the DRV, wrote a letter to 33rd president Harry S. Truman for U. S. recognition of the DRV and in hopes of

driving away the French (Hunt 8). Because of postwar tensions from the Cold War against the Communist Soviet Union, the U. S. refused Ho's request on the mentality that they were worried of Ho's Communist leanings. Instead, they decided to aid the French within the next year and began helping them financially and militarily (Hunt 24). By 1949, the French had its first Indochina War with Vietnam which ended in 1954. As the war progressed the French devised a plan to bait the Vietnamese into the outpost Dien Bien Phu and obliterate the Viet Minh in the crossfire. As expected the Viet Minh, did attack, Dien Bien Phu, however, General Vo Nguyen Giap saw through the French's plan; resulting in Dien Bien Phu falling to the Viet Minh in 1954. After humiliating the French in this battle, the French's public opinion of the war changed. The French government organized the Geneva Conference and declared a cease fire with Vietnam officially split at the 17th parallel with the Communist North Vietnam and South Vietnam. The U. S. involvement of the Vietnam War is understood as a larger picture of the entire Cold War. As a result of the Domino Theory this states that, if one nation were to become communist, neighboring countries would also become communist dropping one by one just like dominos. Based on this theory if Vietnam were to become Communist neighboring nations would also become communist. As a countermeasure the U. S. has kept watch of Vietnam for a while and decided to prevent aggression before it could even happen. The Vietnam War became a long and demoralizing for both the U. S. and Vietnam soldiers, it was also one of the first wars in which the U. S. spurred some controversies over how they were going about doing things. Initially, the U. S. established the Military Assistance Command of Vietnam (MACV) which provides

American soldiers to help train the South Vietnam army (ARVN), in its emergent conflict with the Communist North. Within a year, American presence in Vietnam escalated from a mere 1000 men to over 15,000 military advisors. During the early phases of the war, the Kennedy decided to extricate communist influence in South Vietnam and strategic hamlets in order to distinguish undercover Viet Cong who often lived with villagers (Hunt 47). The MACV decided that South Vietnamese peasants be moved to the hamlets in an attempt to label anyone who refused to live in these hamlets as a Viet Cong. However, these hamlets were constructed by Ngo Dinh Diem, U. S. backed South Vietnamese leader, and ultimately ran them as labor intensive camps. As a result many peasants were furious and sided with the Viet Cong. With the ensuing war with Vietnam, the war would soon gain media coverage. As a result the war soon gained pessimism. During one of the first major battles between the ARVN lost to an overwhelmingly outnumbered and outgunned Viet Cong forces. Nonetheless the Viet Congs were able to deal more damage to the ARVN than they had to them. Although the U. S. had reported that this battle was an important victory for the ARVN, two reporters at the scene reported that the battle was a decisive defeat for the U. S. and many began to question the U. S. involvement in the war. The reporter's words would later foreshadow the way much of the war would go. Displeased with the Diem regime, ARVN generals, secretly backed by the CIA planned for the execution of Ngo Dinh Diem. Shortly after Diem's execution, President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas with Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson sworn into office (Hunt 51). Though Kennedy had many talented advisors by his side, there were many policy mistakes that lead to a

greater involvement in war. The hamlet program became an utter failure as it was unable to decrease Viet Cong influence in South Vietnam but made it stronger. This war was also the first time in which journalists has played a role in checking the validity of a war. Initially Americans have only heard of the success of the American implemented South Vietnamese leader Ngo Dinh Diem, however, shortly after the Battle of Ap Bac, the media began to have an increasingly critical perspective of the U. S. involvement and policy of the Vietnam War (Dolan 39). Slowly people began to turn against the war. With Johnson in office, he pledges to continue the Kennedy's moderate military policies in Vietnam without drastically escalating the war. However, on August 1964, two U. S. Navy destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin (near the coast of North Vietnam) has testified to suffering unprovoked shooting from a North Vietnamese gunboat. Johnson, keeping in mind the protection of the U. S. request that Congress gives him the authority to do whatever is necessary to protect the U. S. in Vietnam. Soon after, the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was passed by Congress with all but two members objecting it. Bombing runs on North Vietnam followed shortly (Hunt 67). The American public was ambivalent of the resolution and even questioned the validity of the unprovoked attacks. The U. S. government took advantage of this confusion and anger in order to justify escalation of the war. A year later, in 1965, the Viet Cong's attacks on the U. S. forces became progressively violent. In February 1965, Viet Cong revolutionaries raided an American Marine barracks in the South Vietnamese hamlet, Pleiku; 8 were killed and hundreds were wounded. With authorized power from Congress, Johnson ordered for the U. S. Air Force and Navy to commence series of air strikes

called Operation Rolling Thunder. He did this in hopes of reducing the spread of Communism and demonstrates the U. S.'s commitment to their cause. Later on, Johnson believed that increased military presence in Vietnam would gradually intimidate Ho Chi Minh and force him to negotiate with the U. S. Thus by June of 1965, the U. S. has sent an addition 100, 000 and another 100, 000 by 1966 (Hunt 57). Continued bombing from Operation Rolling Thunder was still active in Vietnam and forced Ho Chi Minh had no other choice but to evacuate much of the population. As war continue to rage on, General Westmoreland implemented a new strategy of search-and-destroy where U. S. troops will be sent out into the field to find and kill Viet Cong members (Hunt 89). He was confident that this strategy will wear down the Viet Cong and turn it into basically a war of attrition- a war in which extended combat is meant to inflict as much damage and casualties to the enemies that they can no longer continue the war. However, the United States have seemed to underestimated the Viet Cong tenacity; although the war of attrition did have a significant impact but it allowed Viet Congs to draw out a more favorable tactic which includes fighting in a guerilla warfare which the U. S. were ill-equipped with. During this time, new weaponries were used in the war. The U. S. by 1966 was authorized to use chemical weapons such as napalm, a spray-able thick gasoline gel that can be burned in high temperatures. Additionally, a new type of chemical defoliant called Agent Orange was developed that helped destroy jungle vegetation; this made it easier to cut off Viet Cong supplies as well as a good counter measure to guerilla warfare as it opposes various hideouts (Dolan 65). Through 1967, Viet Cong attacks become deadlier and they began to launch

a major offensive strike against the U. S. Marine base at Khe Sanh. This was essentially a diversion to draw U. S. troops towards Khe Sanh in order for the Viet Cong forces to advance more troops further south. This operation was later called the Tet Offensive, upon the Vietnam holiday Tet, Viet Cong forces attacked twenty-seven different U. S. military bases and installments through South Vietnam simultaneously. Although the Tet Offensive was put down relatively quickly, it was a resounding political defeat for the U. S. and turned millions of Americans against the war. Additionally, it split the Democratic Party as well as the entire U. S. government into anti-war and pro-war factions (Hunt 103). What was ironic about this however, is that it was a great military victory for the U. S. they were able to kill about 13 Viet Cong for every American death. Nonetheless, the public opinion seems to have outweighed the tactical victory. The Tet Offensive also took a significant toll on the U. S. troop's moral leading to increased drug abuse and " fragging"; killing of superior officers in order to avoid going on missions. As a direct result of this discontent within the U. S. military, it lead to one of the most horrific incidents of war. In March of 1968, while being frustrated with their search-and-destroy mission, One U. S. Company killed approximately 500 noncombatants including, woman, child, and the elderly. A U. S. soldier who witnessed this account regrettably reminiscence, "...a woman came out of the village and someone knocked her down and Medina [squad leader of the witness's platoon] shot her with his M16 rifle. I was 50-60 feet from him and saw this. There was no reason to shoot this girl..." (Hunt145). The commander of the company was sentenced to life in prison and further angered the public (Hunt 143). Shortly after that year, President Johnson

resigns early allowing for other Democrats to step in. However, Republican Richard M. Nixon was elected on a pro-war platform. When he took office in January of 1969, he announced a new policy called Vietnamization in order to slowly withdraw troops from Vietnam and return control of the war to the South Vietnamese ARVN. Additionally he also announced the Nixon Doctrine and proclaimed that the U. S. would fulfill its own defense commitments to the country and will no longer commit troops anywhere else. Vietnamization and the Nixon Doctrine did reduce much combat causality but it drastically changed American foreign policy as they are now no longer committing troops to stop Communist revolutions around the world. Nonetheless, this war has become the longest war in U. S. history. Many Americans felt that the amount of casualties we have are far too great a number for a small strip of jungle in Asia. The public are also beginning to criticize the military as many U. S. soldiers publicly, or anonymously confess there war crimes; even those involved in the My Lai Massacre of 1968. Regardless, keeping true to his words, by 1972, Nixon had reduced U. S. troops in Vietnam to 150, 000. Due to the unpopularity of the war, Nixon tries to hopefully alleviate tension through negotiation with Viet Cong. Nixon's National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, began secret meetings with Viet Cong official Le Duc Tho in Paris. The talks proved to be meaningless as Duc Tho became increasingly stubborn and refused to negotiate. Changing strategies now, Nixon decide to improve relations with Communist China who are now not on good terms with the Soviet Union. He believed that increased relations with China will intimidate both the USSR and North Vietnam. Indeed it did, and as a result it gave them a slight advantage in their negotiations

with North Vietnam. As the 1972 presidential election approaches, Nixon clearly holds the upper hand as he kept his promises of withdrawing U. S. troops from Vietnam as well as improved relationship with China. He shortly defeated his antiwar opponent, Democrat George McGovern in a landslide (Hunt 183). However, it was difficult to come to equal terms with the Viet Cong; Nixon became very frustrated and ordered an intensive bombing campaign called the Christmas Bombing in hopes of pressuring them to end the war. This plan proved to be successful and in January of 1973 Kissinger and North Vietnam announced a cease fire. Nixon now pledged to withdraw all remaining military forces from Vietnam but warns that the U. S. will intervene again if North Vietnam. Nixon's landslide reelection became short-lived as an uproar called; the Watergate Scandal had broken in late 1972. Nixon had approved of a secret burglary of the Democratic Party's headquarters at the Watergate hotel in Washington D. C, however the burglars were caught and evidence has serviced that Nixon has authorized these illegals measures in order to discredit his opponent. Once it had become clear that Nixon had broken the law and also tried to cover up the scandal, many in the U. S. began to call for his impeachment. Seizing the opportunity, North Vietnamese Communist leader Le Duan believed that because of their domestic problems, the U. S would be less likely to intervene in Vietnam; as a result, North Vietnam began moving south again. Vice President Gerald R. Ford took over and Congress now refuses to provide any financial support for the war; thus, defeat was imminent. North Vietnamese forces launched a massive attack in the spring of 1975 in the city of Saigon. On April 30, 1975, Saigon fell to North Vietnam; all of Vietnam

is now united under Communist rule consequently ending the war. The Vietnamese War has become the longest and also one of the bloodiest wars in American history; despite this it did bring upon many significant impacts in America. It began the first war to be televised and truly provoked a huge riot and protest amongst the American people who opposed the war. The war draft was also first utilized here and thus led to the 26th amendment; calling for the reduction of the voting age to 18. Overall it did improve relations with other countries such as China and the USSR and thus decreased the chances of a nuclear war also. Works Cited Barak Goodman. Dir. My Lai. PBS, 2010. Documentary . Dolan, Edward F. America after Vietnam: Legacies of a Hated War. New York: F. Watts, 1989. Print. Hunt, Michael H. A Vietnam War Reader: A Documentary History from American and Vietnamese Perspectives. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 2010. Print. Hendrix, Charles C., and Lisa M. Anelli. " Impact of Vietnam War Service on Veterans' Perceptions of Family Life." Family Relations (1993): 87-92. JSTOR. Web. 26 Feb. 2013.< <http://www.jstor.org/stable/584927>> " In 1968, more than 100 unarmed South Vietnamese civilians were massacred near the village of My Lai." Gale Encyclopedia of U. S. History: War. Vol. 2. Detroit: Gale, 2008. U. S. History In Context. Web. 27 Feb. 2013. Palmer, Laura. Shrapnel in the Heart: Letters and Remembrances from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. New York: Random House, 1987. Print. Scruggs, Jan C. The War and the Wall: Service, Sacrifice and Honor. [Washington, D. C.]: Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, 2002. Print.