

# The vietnam war

[Countries](#), [Vietnam](#)



The Vietnam War -A History project- Nadine Gan, Grade 9 Part One. The Overview History ~ French Indochina ~ Vietnamisation ~ Epilogue Vietnam was a part of the French colony, Indo-"China. Then at September 1940, the Japanese decided to invade Vietnam to prevent China from sending supplies through French Indo-"China. Having invaded by France and Japan, Vietnam did not have any power over its own territory and added with the famine and the local Vietnamese suffering, at May 19, 1941, the Vietnamese formed a communist resistance organization, Viet Minh or NVA (North Vietnamese Army) that was led by the infamous Ho Chi Minh, a communist himself. A few months passed by and the Chinese agreed to leave but negotiations between France and Vietnam broke down quickly and caused a war that lasted almost 8 years. This war was called The First Indo-"China War. The Viet Minh that claimed to have 500,000 men, fought hard against the French for independence. Ho Chi Minh attacked the French by Guerilla Warfare, where they attack in very small groups so that they would be able to hide behind the trees after attacking the French troops. By time, the Viet Minh grasped victory while the French accepted their unsurprising result, a loss. This sent the French troops home. By 1949, China began to support the Viet Minh. USA who disagreed to let French troops reinvade Vietnam, doubted their decision. They saw Vietnam as a threat as it has a major possibility that the Viet Minh will transform Vietnam into their nemesis, a communist country. They had to follow Truman

Doctrine, helping countries that are under the control of communism in order to stop the spread of communism. Response of the USA included sending back the troops of French with a fee of \$500 million a year and forming a non-communist colony in the south of Vietnam that was led by Ngo Dinh Diem. However, a humiliating event was held at Dien Bien Phu. French troops planned to stop the provision of supplies for their neighbouring country, Laos. With this blockade, Laos will draw the Viet Minh a confrontation that would cripple the Viet Minh. However, the French troops weren't aware of the heavy artillery the Viet Minh owned and how they were capable of moving these weapons through difficult terrain. With their capability, the Viet Minh surrounded the French troops and besieged them. French troops were defeated again. Though, this turn of event caused the Geneva Agreement to take place in 1954. It was agreed that French Indo-China is divided into Laos, Cambodia, South Vietnam and North Vietnam. However, North Vietnam came under the rule of Ho Chi Minh and South Vietnam, Ngo Dinh Diem. It was also agreed that elections would be held in July 1956. However, Diem cancelled the election and was supported by US because they knew Ho Chi Minh will win the election and Vietnam will go left wing. Ngo ran for president of South Vietnam for seven years. However after a few years, US noticed Diem's presidency was not going well, he did not live up to USA's expectancy, to defeat the communists in North Vietnam, being given the huge support from USA. Kennedy, who was the president of

USA at that time even increased the numbers of advisor from 100 to 1600 and spent nearly \$270 million in military to support Diem in 1960. Attempts were made by Diem in 1961, he organized a system where villagers were moved into defended camps to “save” them from the Viet Cong or NLF but the policy did not work because the peasants did not believe in him anymore and NLF promised them to have more land once South Vietnam become a communist. In 1963, Diem ‘s government caused more annoyance towards USA for clashing with local Buddhist. Diem was also a dictator and a corrupt. This worried the USA, as they believed this could cause the South Vietnamese to go left wing too especially when the South Vietnamese didn’t believe in Diem anymore. USA should have learned to appoint a good leader to prevent another country being led by a corrupt as they did to Cuba (by choosing Batista). Thus, USA supported a coup to overthrow Ngo. In November 1963, the same month Kennedy was assassinated, Diem was overthrown and eventually assassinated too. The following year, Viet Cong received support from North Vietnamese forces. They marched down through the infamous Ho Chi Minh trail. South Vietnamese was doomed to communism. USA’s involvement increased rapidly after the Gulf of Tonkin incident that happened in August, where Americans claimed that the North Vietnamese attacked their two ships, Maddox and Turner Joy however reports claimed that it started as a major misunderstanding by the sonar operators. Nonetheless, this gave

the Congress a resolution, supporting the President to 'take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force' in order to defend South Vietnam. Lyndon B Johnson replaced Kennedy and was a much more aggressive President. Johnson believed in the Domino Theory and so he stepped up America's involvement in the war.

America started Operation Rolling Thunder in the early 1965, to coerce the North Vietnamese into abandoning its support for the Southern insurgency or by reducing the infiltration of man and material being sent to the South but Johnson didn't think it would be enough and so he sent 180.000 American troops to Vietnam. By the next three years, the number of US troops in Vietnam increased to 540.000 American soldiers. Unfortunately, America's tactics only brought little success as their wars always depended on technology unlike Vietnam's tactics. Their tactic was to drop massive amounts of bombs to villages and use of Napalm, a chemical gas bomb that will burn people right to the bones and Agent Orange. Another tactic was Search and Destroy, where American troops would burn down the whole village if there were suspicions of Viet Cong presence. Most of their tactics harmed the innocent villagers and due to the war being the first televised war, the people back in America saw how innocent families being burned and their house exploding. The tactics of the Viet Cong overwhelmed the American soldiers. They had landmines planted here and there causing the poor American soldiers to be terrified of every step they take. Booby traps were also used and of course

Guerilla Warfare was applied too. These clever tactics drove the American troops crazy because most of them weren't professional; some were even only 16 or 17, causing their morale being washed up. Unlike the American soldiers, the Vietnamese soldiers were better fighters. They knew their battleground and were very fired up about the purpose of the war, standing up for their country because most of the American troops were clueless of what they were fighting for. They had no idea why they were sent to a foreign country to fight. One other thing that the American troops had something different with the Vietnamese was that the Vietnamese warriors had no uniform and the American troops had a hard time identifying them because even women could be involved in the war. The Vietnamese never gave up on fighting for their own country; they kept sending supplies through the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Even though the North Vietnamese didn't have the best guns, they mastered their warzone. The Vietnamese even had a tunnel system where civilians could hide and live underground to avoid the bombs and Napalm. After 3 years of an exhausting war, in January 1968, North Vietnam decided to launch a massive attack on the heart of Saigon at the time of Tet, a religious festival. They believed the war had to end because Ho chi Minh was dying. Thus, they expected a revolution to take place after the attack however America won back the city. The Tet Offensive caused North Vietnam an enormous loss on their troops. However, the media portrayed the attack as a failure for USA because photographs showed

how massive the attack was and how strong the North Vietnamese was. Unfortunately, America required more troops to fight against the North Vietnamese and with the unpopularity added with the perspective of the Americans at home towards the attack, sending more troops to Vietnam would cause the Americans to rage and numbers in protests would increase. Subsequently, the days of war at Vietnam for America were numbered. Nixon, who was the present President, did a few attempts to solve the crisis in the best way. He bluffed and threatened a major attack if the North Vietnamese wouldn't back down but they knew Nixon was bluffing. Nixon even asked for help from USSR and China to beat the North Vietnamese and promised to assist the two countries. To state the obvious, Nixon was desperate enough to ask communist countries to help America, a capitalist country to beat down a communist party. Unsurprisingly, USSR and China see no point on helping Nixon. His last solution was called "Vietnamisation" a.k.a The Nixon Doctrine, where America will train ARVN to go against North Vietnamese themselves. However, he knows it will not be a legit solution because one of the reason American troops were sent to pull triggers in Vietnam was due to ARVN's defeat against The Viet Cong when they were under Diem's rule. A massacre led by Lieutenant Calley, took place at the same year, the Charlie Company raided My Lai citizens and 350 civilians were killed. It was proved that all the civilians who were killed couldn't be any less innocent. The My Lai Massacre

was simply a revenge done by American troops who had their morale washed up along the war. They put all their frustration out on the My Lai civilians. Evidence proved that there were a few raped victims. This massacre horrified the Americans at home. Two years later, students in Kent State, Ohio carried out a big protest. 1000 students gathered at Kent State University. The demonstration took place for three nights however on the third night, the Army Reserve Officers Training Corps was burned to the ground. Then, Martial Law was declared. The massive protest was held because they disagreed towards Nixon's declaration about the Cambodian Campaign and were supporting the Viet Cong. Some were even waving the Viet Cong flag. This protest was different than the others because 4 students were shot dead. Some believed the act was justified as students hurdling stones at them surrounded the guardsmen and they ran out of tear gas too. They claimed that it was self-"defense. However, there were no warnings given and reports claimed there were no students sniping either. General Canterbury confirmed that there were no such orders giving the guardsmen to open fire but he also stated that the firing was inevitable and anything could have happened. Investigation carried out even though the Justice Department initially declined the need of investigation. Eventually, 8 out of 28 guardsmen were indicted but the charges were dismissed due to lack of evidence. Until this very day the body to blame is still arguable. Nevertheless, all parties agreed that it was an avoidable tragedy.



The Viet Cong launched another massive attack in 1972 but they realized that they could not conquer the main centre of population. Both sides knew victory was unreachable. Therefore, peace talks began. The Paris Peace Accords brought the Governments of North Vietnam, South Vietnam and the United States signing the Agreement of Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam on January 27, 1973. By the next two months, no US soldiers were in Vietnam. After this war, Americans had lower confidence in their military. Unfortunately and unsurprisingly, Vietnamisation failed and The Viet Cong stayed invincible. At the year of 1975, South Vietnam falls to communism and the fall of Saigon was another epic event to be added to a History book.

Part Two. The Significant Event My Lai Massacre On the 16th of March 1968, a historical controversy took place in one of the village in Vietnam and it was called the My Lai Massacre. My Lai, which is located in the South Vietnamese district of Son My. An area blanketed with landmines, causing numerous members of Charlie Company maimed or killed. The Charlie Company was already in My Lai three months prior but the North Vietnamese launched a major attack in January causing a lot of deaths for both sides. The surviving members were very frustrated and furious about the raging war and the tactics the Viet Cong used on them. Unlike the Viet Cong, the American soldiers especially the members of Charlie Company, were unprofessional, most were 17. They had no experience in war and didn't expect the war as terrifying. Some people believed this

massacre was justified because the soldiers were under great agitation and they deserved to do revenge on the people that had the same blood as those who killed their friends right in front of their eyes with such an unexpected way. " This is what you've been waiting for — search and destroy — and you've got it, " stated by Lieutenant Calley, their leader. The Charlie Company did their own version of Search and Destroy. Calley ordered his men to enter the village firing every Vietnamese they see despite the fact that there was no opposing firing. Within 3 hours, over 500 innocent civilians were killed. Families were shown no mercy, women were gang raped then killed, old men were bayotenned, civilians emerged with hands held high were murdered as well and even babies were not spared a life. Some victims were mutilated with the signature " C Company" carved onto their chest. Though a few members of the Charlie Company did not enjoy the atrocity. One member refused to pull the trigger on a group of 60 civilians they had rounded up so Lt. Calley took over and blazed his gun at them. A few hours later, news about the massacre reached higher authorities and ceasefire was ordered. Reports stated that 504 bodies were found and only one American soldier was injured due to shooting himself when he was cleaning his gun. However, it was not the end. Photographs of scattered dead bodies and some mutilated were published, showing their brutality even to children and women. Americans at home were dismayed to see the inhumanity of their so-"called heroes. The war became even

unpopular. Part 3. The Leader Ho Chi Minh The Vietnamese communist leader was born in Vietnam in 1890. His father, Nguyen Sinh was a teacher employed by the French. His father taught him to never obey the rule of the French. Ho and his sister grew up to be a patriotic Vietnamese, willing to fight for their independence. Ho's sister, who worked with the French Army, was imprisoned for life as she was caught stealing weapons hoping one day it would be used to drive the French out of Vietnam. Ho was an intelligent man. He laid low and was a sailor for a short period of time, allowing him to see other countries that were part of the French Empire and witnessed the exploitation. A few years later Ho lived in China, near the borders of Vietnam and there he helped organize exiled nationalists into the 'Vietnam Revolutionary League'. This was the start of his leadership. To him and his country's advantage, in 1940 Japanese invaded Vietnam and France decided to raise the white flag because France was occupied by Germany while some of their troops were against Japanese in Vietnam. This gave him a chance to finally free his country. A new army was born and it was called Viet Minh. His army received weapons from his fellow communist, Soviet Union and after the bombing of Pearl Harbor they also received supplies from America. Then in August 1945, after the bombing in Nagasaki and Hiroshima, Japan decided to withdraw. A month after that, Ho announced the formation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. However, he was not aware that in the Potsdam Conference, it was

agreed that two will divide Vietnam. North Vietnam will be in the power of China and South will be under Britain. After World War 2, China left Vietnam in exchange for a promise from France that she would give up her rights to territory in China. France knew Ho Chi Minh declared the formation of Democratic Republic of Vietnam but ignored it. What France did not know as that the Viet Minh have been training to fight against anybody that will stop Vietnam from getting it's independence. By 1953, the Viet Minh controlled most of the areas in the Northern part of Vietnam. France was then aware of the potential long-"drawn out war and attempted to negotiate with Ho. Unsurprisingly, Ho Chi Minh and the other leaders did not trust France and continued the war. The following year, the Viet Minh in Dien Bien Phu besieged French troops. Eventually, France surrendered. After the battle in Dien Bien Phu, it was decided that Ho Chi Minh would be leader of North Vietnam in the Geneva Peace Talks on the year of 1954. 2 years after the peace talk, the meeting decided to have an election on the leader of the whole Vietnam but America knew better. They knew the winning candidate already, Ho Chi Minh. Therefore, the election ended before it even begun. Ho Chi Minh led the Viet Minh or NLF to battle with the USA troops. He had personal reasons to fight for his country's independence. His father had his life made by the French and his sister was imprisoned for life too. He took this war personally and wanted his country's independence for so long because patriotism had been rooted in his heart. He was the

glue for the unity of communist Vietnamese. Even though the Viet Cong lost more troops than USA, Ho Chi Minh was able to keep the fire burning in the heart of his GI Joes. His true leadership, added with America's atrocious tactics (Napalm and Agent Orange) they used against the innocent Vietnamese, pushed the Vietnamese towards communism. He was one of the best examples of a communist and so the peasants of Vietnam believed in Ho Chi Minh more than Diem. USA failed to win the hearts and minds of the communist Vietnamese because Ho Chi Minh won it already. The peasants refused to let Diem help them, they believed in the communists. He was inspirational to the people and was worshipped in his homeland. He was their hero. Uncle Ho even had a trail named after him. It is a 16 km long trail that crosses Cambodia and Laos, connecting North Vietnam and South Vietnam. It was built to carry supplies to the south during the war. There were alternative roads, the trail was not just a single pathway, and it was a network that had more than one entrances and exits. Young men and women cycled and even walked through the trails to support their troops. Under the trails were base camps for the Viet Cong, a place for them to hide and rest. Medical treatment was even provided under the very trail. America wasn't able to block the Ho Chi Minh trail with ground forces as the countries it passed through were officially neutral, even carpet bombing didn't stop the North Vietnamese from moving hundreds of tons of war supplies per day down to the south. Tet Offensive was in a way dedicated to

him. The North Vietnamese knew Ho Chi Minh was dying and the war had to stop. Even though Ho Chi Minh passed away before the war officially ended, his dreams did not leave with him because after the outraging war, Vietnam stayed independent until this very day and he was still honored by the Vietnamese because in the year of 1975, when Saigon falls to the hands of communists, it had a new name, The Ho Chi Minh City. Part 4. The Creative Work

The First TV War The Vietnam War was the first war brought into America's living rooms. The United States gave vast freedom towards the media, allowing them to follow the troops during war. This freedom was said to be one of the reason why America was defeated. At first the media was interested in the dramatization in the war that would make great profit in their business. Before 1967, 90% of the evening news was all about the Vietnam War and around 50 million people watched television news each night. The media was a great support towards the war and the military too. However, gradually the videos and pictures shown on their television screen horrified families, especially the ones that had their relatives conscripted to the war. There were no censorship, showing the atrocity of the war. With the terrifying photographs, the war turned unpopular. Interviewed soldiers started expressing their frustrations towards the journalists. Support began to decrease in the fall of 1967 and sides were made in America itself. Some claimed themselves as the Hawks, the pro-"war and most were anti-"war, the Doves (mostly students who believed in

peace). However, The Tet Offensive was the major turning point. The photographs of the attack portrayed a brutal defeat for the US, giving the perception that US was unable to defeat the North Vietnamese. The Tet Offensive was the first time North Vietnamese ever launched a massive attack against America. They had to because Ho Chi Minh was dying and they wanted to end the war before Ho Chi Minh passes away. However, the truth was the attack caused great loss on the North Vietnamese and it was a great victory towards US. Nonetheless, they needed roughly 200,000 more troops to go to war but thanks to the media causing the war to be unpopular, the Americans would never agree to send more troops to pull triggers on Vietnamese who are mostly innocent. Since Tet, the combat scenes were more graphic and the news featured more of the negative side of the American troops. Their drug use, unprofessionalism, racial conflict and disobedience. My Lai Massacre worsened the situation. The whole America was shell-"shocked of what their so-"called heroes had become. They did not see any justification on this massacre as reports claimed the people attacked were innocent. Without the report it was obvious that none of them were a member of the Viet Cong because the photographs showed mutilated bodies of children, women and elderly. Everybody knew it was simply mad American troops putting out their anger. With the war televised, the savagery of the war was brought to the very hearts and minds of Americans at home.