

Alexander david garsez

[War](#), [Cold War](#)



Alexander David Garsez ANT 1310 -21 — Hughes 4/28/2012 Colonization Project Southeast Asia is home to many people and countries today. The United States is very familiar with the state internationally recognized as the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam; it is commonly referred to as Vietnam in verbal and printed English-American language. This is because of the relatively recent U. S. and Vietnam War between 1963 and 1974. The influence of this war is still seen today. The Socialist Republic of Viet Nam was formed in 1975 after the fall of Saigon and the South Vietnamese government. U. S. involvement with the state extends back roughly twenty years before this when Japan was forced to surrender to the U. S. in 1945. Japan had occupied much of Southeast Asia during WWII after defeating the French colonial empire that had been established since 1893. Vietnam is a peninsular coastal country located in a very pivotal area. When the French first established colonial power there, it was in competition with Britain for dominance in the region. This region was the corner sea passage to the Eastern markets, China and Japan. Trade routes from Africa and the Suez Canal, seeking to reach China, would have to pass under India and around the Southeast Asian peninsula to turn northward up the Chinese coast. Vietnam is right where that turn is. It is filled with natural resources for production items that include tin, rubber, and rice. All of which became highly valued manufactured goods during the industrial revolution and the advancements of modern industrial warfare. French occupation of the land was adjacent to the British occupation of Burma, further Southeast on the opposite side of the Thailand delta. This middle region was kept independent from colonial powers for the sake of a buffer zone between French and

British imperialism. France's political realm of influence had been called French Indochina, and its land encompassed the areas today known as Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. The inhabitants of Vietnam have lived a remarkably similar lifestyle for thousands of years. During the Vietnam War, American military forces were directed to root out linked communist activity in local villages. This was done by objectively destroying the function of the villages by burning farming lands and buildings, storage centers, and relocating the people of the village. The effect this had in the broad scale situation was the altered state of the Vietnamese culture and economic system. The Vietnam coastline is richly abundant with moisture and vegetation. The temperature and climate are suited just right for the production of rice fields in a regional wide network. Dynastic histories cover the age before European colonial contact had been made in the middle 1800s. However when this happened, the major difference brought into Vietnam besides European contact and thought, was the Catholic religion and its missionaries. For the first time in centuries, Southeast Asians who had been under the effective control of China now had access to organized schools of learning with the production attitudes of imperialistic traders and manufacturers. Vietnamese culture is heavily influenced by the ancient styles of the Chinese in art, philosophy, and religion; however the Vietnamese resent China for the eight centuries of occupation and control which it had exerted in the Vietnamese region. The submission that Vietnam endured came to a halt with the introduction of France in the region. When Vietnamese and French forces had pushed out Chinese control, the Vietnamese were generally relatively relieved to be controlled by a state "

not as bad" as the Chinese had been for so long. This era of French colonial power began to change when popular communist and national organizations began to grow in power and influence. Through historical hindsight, this seems like a very natural and predictable public movement for a relatively small underdeveloped country during the 20th century. The age of colonialism was moving towards an end as the growing superpowers in the world became more widely known as nations. The locations of populations which were not liberated nations were defined as non-independent states, or large colonial assets to larger empires. As these states grew they often would engage in war for liberation, and the empires which had previously held control for so long, were now troubled with revolutionary colonial wars. Ho Chi Minh, a nationalist-communist leader in Vietnam, was a primary reason for concern of the U. S. federal government in foreign policy at the end of WWII. Japan had attacked French Indochina during WWII, and had expelled the French force from the area to assume control of the region. During this time, the Japanese empire had extended its control to include nearly all of Southeast Asia and the Pacific. However, when Japan was ultimately defeated, and WWII had ended, their control in Vietnam had significantly weakened, and the communist leader Ho was intent on filling the military vacuum of national power, as was Vietnam's former military ruler, France. France felt that to maintain its equilibrium of power that it had to hold onto its colonies with all its strength. For the people of Vietnam, Ho's plans for the people's nationalization through communist governance was a logical answer for many Vietnamese. Nationalism and communist regimes are practical movements for the situation that calls for industrialization. The

speedy development of a village-oriented country is going to be slow if the system is to rely on capitalistic market schemes. The production of goods and services for free market trade were necessary if the country wished to participate in the modern global sphere. Without this production, this country, seemingly, would have nothing to offer in the value of real goods and services. No one would want to send money in the direction of the country, leaving its growing population isolated from the rest of the political and economic world. If this is the case it could seem economically logical for another state of power to militarily assume control of the region for the access to its natural resources. This is because, if this large population does not want to work together to establish independent control of their lifestyle, in correspondence with the mutual recognition of other larger states - some larger force will take control of the country. They will extort capital gains from the natural resources by making lesser powerful people work for them or die. Both scenarios would seem pleasing to a dictator like Ho, but also to a military power like the U. S. Immediately after Japan lost control of Vietnam and martial law was lifted, France went to war with Vietnamese forces to regain control of the area. This was done with the backing of the Vichy French government, a regime that held ties with the Nazi party. The U. S. contributed greatly to the effort. In the interest of both France and U. S., both countries acknowledged that they each sought to control the area for their state's own interests, and not primarily for the liberation of the Vietnamese people from opposing forces. However this changed when President Kennedy took office in the United States. He viewed Khrushchev's enthusiasm for the communist powers in Vietnam, and identification with the

recent Cuban revolution as a sure sign that communism would begin to prevail. The domino theory suggested that with the fall of one nation to communism, soon many nations would begin to fall too. Kennedy feared that this would begin in Southeast Asia. He viewed that this pivotal region of the world the same as he felt he should view the closely interlocked countries of Europe. Containing communism was the only objective for post WWII American presidents and leaders. The answer to the question of who should rule besides Ho Chi Minh was found with the help of President Eisenhower and John Dulles several years before. They chose a man named Ngo Dinh Diem to rule the Southern region of Vietnam while Ho ruled the Northern Communist half, this division occurred along the seventeenth parallel. There was a large migration of some millions of Northern Vietnamese to the South, who largely feared political persecution. However, in South Vietnam there were large scale communist political witch-hunts that resulted in the extermination of thousands. Political unrest and military rule engulfed both the Northern and Southern regions of Vietnam, and Kennedy's response to the situation was to aid Diem in the hopes of halting the flood of communist control across Vietnam. Diem was not a good leader to his people, and because of this the people sought to overthrow South Vietnam's government themselves. Diem and his brother were eventually assassinated by forces from within the South Vietnam government, indicating that a coup de' tat had taken place. U. S. involvement in Vietnam escalated during the presidencies of Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon. Cambodia was invaded and bombed. The war ended in 1975, leaving Ho to take the rest of Vietnam into communist control, ultimately defeating the U. S. after over a decade of

bloody guerilla conflict and industrial war. The indigenous people of Vietnam are not well heard of against the high volume of the country's unstable political government shifts through the middle of the 20th century. There are millions of people who live in the highland areas all along Vietnam. Due to their geographical location, they live in remote areas that do not hold immediate influence on the urban life that has sprang up in the past few decades. Vietnam has become a member of global communities such as the World Trade Organization. However the indigenous cultures of Vietnam hold little say over the actions of its government that operates in urban centers. The villages of smaller political realms have formal representation in government, but they are still the minority view. The constitution of Vietnam promises the equality and fair opportunity for all ethnic groups. There is no difference, there is no discrimination. In terms of distribution and educational opportunities, the indigenous cultures naturally fall below the average line for the country. There are widespread health related issues that have become a serious concern for physicians in the country. They attribute this to malnutrition and poverty, but there is possibly also the resulting effect of chemical warfare and its stain on the ecological networks of forests and deltas. Notably among these indigenous groups are the Koho, who are the poorest group in the Vietnam highlands. During the French occupation, dynastic rule made up the political boundaries between groups in the Vietnamese, Laos, and Cambodian countryside. When the French military leaders spread across the country looking to make alliances and trade throughout the region for their imperial intent, the French leaders set the indigenous societies against each other with the hope of collecting their

wealth and fortune after the tribes destroyed each other. This is not different from any other colonial society that has been strongly influenced by seemingly stronger state forces. It statistically seems to be an evolutionary process which involves an empire's consolidation of indigenous power for the extortion of imperial market domination. Vietnamese generally preferred this routine rather than be ruled by China. Perhaps because during this time the Vietnamese felt more advanced in competition with other states, or maybe the Vietnamese hold a general dislike and even racism towards Chinese culture and people. That is why at the end of WWII, instead of working with China (a neighboring ally of the winners) for help in the wake of Japan's surrender, the Vietnamese statesmen generally accepted the assumption of Vichy French government, which was assisted by the U. S. The U. S. and the French Vichy governments did not accept communist politics. The history of Vietnam is not too distant from today. They were brought into the harrowing role of being a global identity after Japan attempted to take total control of the country. This gave the U. S. political and economic interest in the state. And now the result is known as the Socialist Republic a Viet Nam. This is a strong current outcome in the stance that Vietnam has remained a state since 1975 and has worked its way into the global trade market as a serious player. However for the traditional and rural sense of the civilization, it is a very new and unknown outcome to many indigenous people whose history does not include capital gains and imperial expansion. They were colonized; they were ruled by the Chinese for hundreds of years. The recent political independence remained to its current form. France, Japan, and the U. S. can, in some sense, be thanked for that, but it was never their intention to allow

this. The indigenous populations had to keep on as they had been for as long as their history knows. It is strange to imagine being a farmer in the highlands of Vietnam, almost living above the cloud line. When storms pass by beneath your elevation, they are like calm seas that grow and shrink with the tide. But when the storm blows up your way, your world begins to flood amongst the violent tossing and turning of the weather. The cultures of Vietnam held onto their ground, and they weathered the storm. Their current issues today include poverty and social healthcare. The national language is Vietnamese, but there are scores of indigenous languages spoken across the country. The nation's constitution dictates that these people are all of one federal state that is based on social equality. The image Vietnam holds today in the U. S. is one a tragedy. This is most often in the view of American soldiers dying in jungles and not necessarily Southeast Asians being terrorized for decades. Many contemporary views believe that the U. S. efforts in the country were disastrous with no achievement in the outcome, declaring that the war was lost. Some people attribute or blame this on the domestic attitude during the war, which is said to have caused the military powers of the U. S. government to fail. Supposedly due to the lack of the country's support for the war. A lot of people agreed with the idea of using nuclear weapons on Southeast Asian countries. These were fervent anti-communists who believed that the political Asian world would all become communists and that the Cold War would reach a tipping point at any moment. This attitude did not abruptly disappear with the end of the war. Racism and xenophobia extended in the coming generations and there are still basic social differences which people create to divide themselves from

other groups of people. This is true in the case of the Vietnamese who are the target for jokes and redirected anger concerning America's war with Vietnam. The popular image in America today would hardly express that Vietnam War was lost, indeed it has become an idolized time of "true-Americanism" with the reflections of today's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. It has become a generational affair for Americans to involve themselves into a global war that creates serious social change. The Vietnamese people were at the wrong place at the wrong time. Their tool for nationalization was through communist theory, marking them as a blood red flag to the raging American anti-communist bull. This fundamentally altered their society and its general lifestyle as an agrarian civilization. Bibliography Jerry Bentley, and Herbert Ziegler, *Traditions & Encounters: A Global Perspective on the Past*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011), 740. Binh, Nguyen. Vietnamese Delegation, "Socialist Republic of Viet Nam." Last modified 9/3/2001. Accessed April 28, 2012. <http://www.un.org/WCAR/statements/vietE.htm>. John Murrin, Paul Johnson, James McPherson, Alice Fahs, Gary Gerstle, Emily Rosenberg, and Norman Rosenberg, *Liberty, Equality, Power: A History of the American People*, (Boston: Wadsworth, 2012), 826, 827. Robert Paxton, *Europe in the Twentieth Century*, (Boston/ New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2005), 541. UN News Center, "Viet Nam: UN-backed study shows well-being disparities for children, women." Last modified 12/12/2011. Accessed April 28, 2012. <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=40755&Cr=UN-Department+of+Public+Information+-+News+and+Media+-+New+York,+Sixty-fourth+General+Assembly>." Last modified 5/6/2010. Accessed April 28, 2012. <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2010/ga10938.doc>.

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----- [1]. ...French imperialists built the large Southeast Asian colony of French Indochina, consisting of the modern states of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, between 1859 and 1893. 740 (Bentley et al. 2011) [2]. The state department had concluded in 1951 that Indochina had to be controlled for its " much-needed rice, rubber, and tin" and because its fall " would be taken by many as a sign that the force of communism is irresistible. " 120 (LeFeber et al. 2008) [3]. ...all of southeast Asia had come under European imperial rule except for the kingdom of Siam (modern Thailand), which preserved its independence largely because colonial officials regarded it as a convenient buffer state between British-dominated Burma and French Indo-China. 740 (Bentley et al. 2011) [4]. " Shortly after, the 1968 Tet offensive, U. S. troops had entered the small South Vietnamese hamlet of My Lai and murdered more than 200 civilians, most of them women and children. " 826 (Murrin et al. 2012) [5]. ...Vietnamese life depended on self-contained villages that had remained little changed for centuries. The Vietnamese considered individualism destructive to the integrated, settled, rural life that centered on the family and the memories of ancestors. 148 (LaFeber et al. 2008) [6]. More than 80 percent of the Vietnamese were Buddhists, and their religion was tightly integrated with

their everyday life. 148 (LaFeber et al. 2008) [7]. ...French colonial officials introduced European-style schools and sought to establish close connections with native elites...French officials also encouraged conversion to Christianity, and as a result the Roman Catholic Church became prominent throughout French Indochina, especially in Vietnam. 740 (Bentley et al. 20011) [8]. France engaged nonstop, but futilely, in one colonial war after another during sixteen years after World War II: first against communist-led Vietminh in Indochina (1946-1954), and then against the nationalist FLN (Front de Liberation Nationale) in Algeria (1954-1961). 541 (Paxton, 2005) [9]. Before the final French defeat in Indochina at Dien Bien Phu, the United States had reached the point of supplying 80 percent of their materiel. 541 (Paxton 2005) [10]. The Soviet leader declared that revolutions, such as the " national liberation war" in Vietnam, were " not only admissible but inevitable. " He asserted that the communists did not have to start such wars, for nationalists within each country would fight to drive out imperialism. Communists would, however, " fully support" such conflicts. Khrushchev then focused, perhaps unfortunately, on Cuba by saying that Castro's victory was a herald of what was to come. (LeFeber et al. 2008) 145 [11]. ...Eisenhower brought in Ngo Dinh Diem...to head the new South Vietnamese government. 119 (LeFeber et al. 2008) [12]. The defeated French then met with Ho's government and other interested nations at Geneva, Switzerland...Two agreements emerged in July 1954. The first... worked out a cease-fire arrangement...a temporary dividing line was drawn across Vietnam at the seventeenth parallel. The second document...provided for reuniting the country under procedures that were to climax with elections

in 1956. The document stated that the seventeenth parallel line " is provisional and should in no way be interpreted as a political or territorial boundary. " 119 (LeFeber et al. 2008) [13]. On November 1 the South Vietnamese president and his brother were captured and shot by army leaders. 152 (La Feber et al. 2008) [14]. Viet Nam is a multi-ethnic country with nearly 60 ethnic communities. Of 77 million Vietnamese, nearly 10 million people belong to ethnic minorities living mostly in mountainous and remote regions of the country. (Binh) [15]. HOANG THI THANH NGA (Viet Nam)...Viet Nam's Constitution and entire legal system guaranteed the equal rights and participation of all indigenous groups and ethnic minorities(" Sixty-Fourth General Assembly" 5/6/2010) [16]. While the report shows that nearly one in every four children under the age of five in Viet Nam is stunted — shorter than he or she should be for his or her age — it found that the stunting rate among ethnic minority children is twice as high compared to their Kinh or Hoa peers.(Viet Nam: UN-backed study.) [17]. ...like many other groups in this area of Vietnam [the Koho], they were persecuted after Vietnam's 1975 reunification. Recent persecution led to the Koho uprising alongside other minority groups in 2000; an uprising that eventually forced many to neighboring Cambodia as asylum seekers and, ultimately, to re-settlement in 2002 in the USA. (Waddington, 2002) [18]. By 1975, an estimated 1 million people, mainly ethnic Kinh, were relocated into areas previously the domain of various highland minorities. (Waddington 2002)