



Going to War in Vietnam

Chapter 17 Section 1
USH Honors

Lesson Objectives:

- **Students will be able to**
 - **Explain how the United States became involved in the French Indochina War.**
 - **Evaluate how American involvement in Vietnam changed during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.**
 - **Explain why the US could not quickly defeat the North Vietnamese forces.**
 - **Identify the problems that the Vietnam War caused at home.**

Essential Question:

What were the military and political events of the Vietnam War; and, how did this conflict impact life in the United States?

AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM

- **1940: Japan invaded Vietnam – not a new concept: MANY nations had ruled this country!**
 - **China controlled the region for hundreds of years.**
 - **From the 19th century to WWII: France ruled Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia (French Indochina)**
- **By the early 20th century:**
 - **Nationalism was growing in Vietnam.**
 - **The people WANT independence.**



The Growth of Vietnamese Nationalism

- **Who is leading this movement?**
 - **Nguyen That Thanh (Ho Chi Minh)**
- **Who is Ho Chi Minh?**
 - **Vietnamese national who spent time in Europe, China, and the USSR**
 - **Returned to Southeast Asia**
 - **Helped to found the Indochinese Communist Party (1930)**
 - **Worked to gain independence of the region**
- **Did EVERYONE like Minh? NO**
 - **Forced to flee Indochina and live in the Soviet Union and China for years**
 - **Returned to Vietnam in 1941**
 - **Organized the Vietminh: united communists & non-communists to remove Japan from Indochina.**



1945: Japan surrendered

- **Lost control of French Indochina after World War II**
- **Vietnam briefly became independent.**
- **France was unwilling to lose the former colony!**
- **French troops returned in 1946...**
- **Vietminh driven into hiding!**

Were the Vietminh willing to give up their new-found freedom? NO

- **The Vietminh fought back**
- **Fighting increases and France asks America to help**

Would the US intervene to help a colonial power? NO

- **America opposed colonialism: pressured the Dutch and the British**
- **What changed our mind? The spread of communism**
- **DOMINO THEORY: the belief that if one nation in Asia fell to communism, others in the region would follow**

America Aids the French



The Fall of Dien Bien Phu & the Geneva Accords

- **1950s: Vietminh soldiers used guerilla tactics**
 - **Guerilla warfare: an armed band that carries out surprise attacks and sabotage rather than open warfare.**
- **What was the turning point? The fall of Dien Bien Phu (1954)**
 - **France planned to cut the Vietminh resources and force surrender**
 - **Vietminh forces seized the town forcing the French surrender**
 - **France would peacefully leave the region...America will NOT let go!**
- **The Geneva Accords temporarily divided Vietnam between North and South.**
- **American Involvement in Vietnam:**
 - **Eisenhower supported Ngo Dinh Diem's plan for open elections by 1956**
 - **Did Diem hold elections? NO (absolute power corrupts absolutely!)**



**AMERICAN
INVOLVEMENT
DEEPENS**

Kennedy Takes Over



- **The struggle for unity heats up again after Diem denied elections.**
- **How did Kennedy respond?**
 - **1961: Kennedy supports South Vietnam.**
 - **Vital to fighting the spread of Communism.**
 - **Kennedy increased US military in South Vietnam to 16,000.**
- **Were these troops enough to help the Diem regime? NO**
 - **Strategic hamlets (fortified villages) presented a problem.**
 - **Some were forcibly moved to better control the fighting.**



The Overthrow of Diem



- **Diem became very unpopular:**
 - **Discriminated against the Buddhists in Vietnam**
 - **Banned the traditional religious flags celebrating Buddha's birthday**
 - **Buddhists protested in the streets**
- **How did the Buddhists respond?**
 - **Nonviolent protest: Buddhist monks attempted to economically strike at Diem**
 - **Buddhist monks set themselves on fire in the busiest streets.**
 - **Images of self-destruction horrified America.**
- **1963: Vietnamese generals launched a coup against Diem.**
 - **South Vietnam's government weakened after his death.**



Johnson and Vietnam

- **President Kennedy was assassinated 3 weeks after Diem.**
- **Lyndon Johnson succeeded Kennedy as president.**
 - **Johnson would increase US involvement in Vietnam.**
 - **Vietnam was critical to Johnson.**
- **Aug. 2, 1964: Johnson announces the Gulf of Tonkin events**
 - **US destroyers were torpedoed in the Gulf of Tonkin.**
 - **Johnson ordered American military escalation**
- **Gulf of Tonkin Resolution: grants the president “broad military powers”**
 - **Basically, the president DID NOT have to answer to congress concerning Vietnam ☹**

