

VIETNAM WAR

A DETAILED TIMELINE

ESTABLISHMENT OF VIET MINH

Viet Minh, established by Communist leader Ho Chi Minh, was a coalition formed during Vietnam's struggle for independence against Japan and France.

MAY, 1941

VIETNAM DECLARES INDEPENDENCE

Ho Chi Minh, leader of Viet Minh, declares independence from French colonial rule and the formation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

2ND SEPTEMBER, 1945

FIRST INDOCHINA WAR

The First Indochina war was a conflict between Viet Minh (recently declared independent) and French imperial forces seeking to regain control over Vietnam after WW2.

1946-1954

DIEN BIEN PHU FALLS

The Battle of Dien Bien Phu was a decisive Vietnamese victory that led to French withdrawal from Vietnam. Vietnamese forces, led by General Vo Nguyen Giap, surrounded and defeated the heavily fortified French garrison at Dien Bien Phu.

7TH MAY, 1954

GENEVA ACCORDS

The Geneva Accords were a set of agreements made in order to conclude the First Indochina War. They separated Vietnam into two halves, North (communist and led by Ho Chi Minh) and South (US Backed). In addition, the Geneva Accords called for nationwide elections in 1956 to reunify the nation, however these elections were never held. Failure to implement the guidelines laid out by the accords was groundwork for the Vietnam War.

21ST JULY, 1954

NGO DINH DIEM REJECTS GENEVA ACCORDS

On the 7th of July, Ngo Dinh Diem, Prime Minister of Vietnam, delivered a speech explaining that South Vietnam would not hold the reunifying elections outlined by the Geneva Accords.

7TH JULY, 1955

DIEM PRESIDENCY

Ngo Dinh Diem, who was previously appointed Prime Minister, holds a referendum to oust French Backed Emperor Bao Dai in order to become President of Vietnam. This referendum is widely considered to be rigged in favor of Diem.

26TH OCTOBER, 1955

FORMATION OF THE NLF

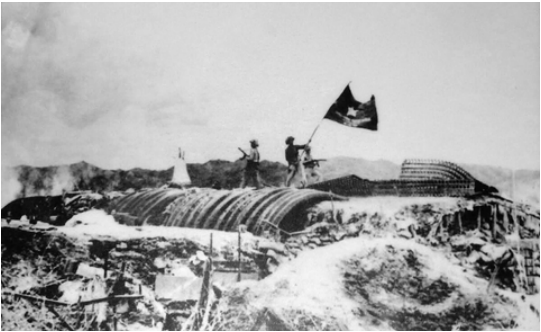
The National Liberation Front (NLF), also known as Viet Cong, was Northern Vietnam's response to Southern Vietnam's refusal to hold elections. The NLF was a force to initiate an armed conflict with Southern Vietnam, as the North decided that non-violent methods were ineffective.

1960

INSTABILITY IN SOUTHERN VIETNAM

Diem's regime became increasingly unpopular, as it was seen as authoritarian, especially by Buddhists and peasants. US aid to South Vietnam increased during this period in an attempt to maintain Diem's presidency.

1960-1963





SELF-IMMOLATION OF THÍCH QUẢNG ĐỨC

In one of the most influential photos of the century, Thích Quảng Đức assumes the lotus position and self-immolates and becomes a symbol of resistance against the religious oppression of the Catholic-dominated Southern Vietnam.

1ST NOVEMBER, 1963

GULF OF TONKIN INCIDENT

US naval ships reported having being attacked by North Vietnamese patrol boats. This report is widely regarded to be falsified, however US President Lyndon B. Johnson used the incident to push Congress for US involvement in Vietnam.

1965-1968

TET OFFENSIVE

The Tet Offensive began on January 30th, Vietnamese New Year. Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces launched surprise attacks on over 100 South Vietnamese cities and military bases. South Vietnam, with US aid, eventually fended off the attack, however heavy losses were suffered. This offensive shattered the image that the US were winning the war in Vietnam, and anti-war sentiment in the US grew.

1968

MY LAI MASSACRE

A unit of US soldiers killed over 500 unarmed Vietnamese civilians, mostly women and children, in the village of My Lai. This massacre came to public attention in 1969, sparking global outrage and protests to end the war. Only one soldier was convicted for the My Lai Massacre, and the event became a critical event in the ethical debate associated with the Vietnam War.

5TH NOVEMBER, 1968

WITHDRAWAL PERIOD

Between 1970 and 1972, the US gradually withdrew troops from Vietnam. In addition, Nixon approved the controversial US invasion of Cambodia in 1970, which resulted in protests at home such as the Kent State Shootings. Furthermore, US-backed Southern Vietnamese forces launched an offensive into Laos in 1971, which resulted in little success. Whilst troops were being pulled from Vietnam, US bombing continued, most notably the "Christmas Bombings" in 1972.

27TH JANUARY, 1973

FALL OF SAIGON

North Vietnamese captured Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam. This led to an unconditional South Vietnamese surrender and Vietnam would soon be unified under communist rule. The fall of Saigon symbolized the American failure to prevent the spread of Communism in Asia.

11TH JUNE, 1963

NGO DINH DIEM OVERTHROWN

In August, 1963, the US sent Cable 243 to the US ambassador in Saigon indirectly authorizing a coup to overthrow Diem. The coup was successful and Duong Van Minh, the leader, assumed power. Despite this power shift, South Vietnam still wasn't stable.

2ND AUGUST, 1964

OPERATION ROLLING THUNDER

Operation Rolling Thunder was a sustained bombing operation carried out by the US against North Vietnam. The goal was to weaken North Vietnam's position and will to fight, whilst simultaneously strengthening South Vietnamese morale.

1968

SHIFT IN PUBLIC OPINION OF THE WAR

After more and more pictures of the conflict are released to the public, protest movements in the US drastically increase and the Johnson administration's credibility is called into question.

16TH MARCH, 1968

RICHARD NIXON ELECTED PRESIDENT

Richard Nixon was elected president with the promise to achieve "peace with honor." He introduced the policy of Vietnamization, which aimed to gradually withdraw US troops from Vietnam whilst setting up the South Vietnamese to be self-sufficient in their struggle against the North.

1970-1972

PARIS PEACE ACCORDS

The Paris Peace Accords officially ended US involvement in Vietnam. The agreement called for an immediate ceasefire, withdrawal of American troops and the return of American Prisoners of War, as well as resolving the conflict between North and South Vietnam. The US honored its withdrawal (last troops left in 1973), however fighting between the North and South quickly resumed.

30TH APRIL, 1975

