**Chapter 2**

**The American War**

Between 1964 and 1975, the United States waged a war against the country and people of Vietnam (Figure 1). In reality, U.S. involvement in Vietnam began decades earlier and was tied to French colonialism.

**French Colonialism and U.S. Support of French “Re-Colonization”**

The Vietnamese refer to what Americans call the Vietnam War as the American War. The American War was tied inextricably to colonialism[[1]](#footnote-1), specifically French colonialism in Southeast Asia (Semm). Between 1887-1954, France colonized most of modern day Southeast Asia. The countries of Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand made up what the French called French Indochina.[[2]](#footnote-2) The Japanese invasion and occupation of Vietnam during World War II was among the initial causes in the ensuing breakdown of French control of its Asian colonies. A broad based anti-colonial organization called the “League for the Independence of Vietnam”, also known as the “Viet Minh,” formed a resistance movement to the Japanese invasion and occupation. The Viet Minh was a nationalist group that had fought against the French colonial occupation. Ho Chi Minh, the leader of the Viet Minh, sought wartime aid from the United States in exchange for intelligence on Japanese military operations, but the United States did not provide the aid (Karnow).

The United States position after the war was based on a promise that it had already made to the French two weeks prior to the signing of the Atlantic Charter, a promise that contradicted the Charter’s principles of self-determination.[[3]](#footnote-3) The Pentagon Papers called the policy “ambivalent” toward Indochina and “expressed or implied that the French had an intention to restore to France its overseas empire after the war” (Zinn 2001:412).

In 1945, after Japan surrendered to the Allies, Ho Chi Minh and his People’s Congress formed the National Liberation Committee of Vietnam as a temporary government. In Hanoi, with one million people on the streets celebrating the defeat of Japan, Ho Chi Minh issued a Declaration of Independence. The Declaration was based on

“The French Declaration of the Rights of Man” and the “American Declaration of Independence.” As the American revolutionaries did, the Vietnamese listed their grievances against French rule.[[4]](#footnote-4) The Declaration concluded, “the whole Vietnamese people, animated by a common purpose, are determined to fight to the bitter end against any attempt by the French colonialists to reconquer their country. We are convinced that the Allied nations, which at Teheran and San Francisco have acknowledged the principles of self-determination and equality of nations, will not refuse to acknowledge the independence of Vietnam” Yet, after Japanese withdrawal, France set out to retake its former colony.

Ho Chi Minh wrote eight letters to President Truman between October 1945 and February 1946. These letters asked for the United States to recognize Vietnam’s right to self-determination. One letter states, “When the Japanese were defeated in August 1945, the whole Vietnam territory was united under a Provisional Republican Government. In five months, peace and order were restored, a democratic republic was established on legal bases, and adequate help was given to the Allies in the carrying out of their disarmament mission.” He went on to explain to Truman that the French were trying to reestablish control over Vietnam. He declared, “This aggression is contrary to all principles of international law and the pledge made by the Allies during World War II.”[[5]](#footnote-5) He asked for U.S. support consistent with the Atlantic Charter and support for U.N. intervention the would be directed at stopping the re-colonizing efforts of the French. Additionally, Ho declared that, “It is with this firm conviction that we request of the United Sates as guardians and champions of World Justice to take a decisive step in support of our independence.”[[6]](#footnote-6) Still, no one replied to Ho Chi Minh’s letters and in an ensuing interview, he told a journalist, “we apparently stand quite alone…We shall have to depend on ourselves” (Zinn 2001:470).[[7]](#footnote-7)

**U.S. Support of France during the French Indo-China War**

The American War was not a war between North and South Vietnam as it was presented to the American people. There was no country of North Vietnam and no country of South Vietnam. According to the Pentagon Papers, “South Vietnam was essentially a creation of the United States” (Zinn 2001:472).[[8]](#footnote-8) The war was not against communism although it was also presented that way to the American people. It was argued by U.S. leaders that the take over of Vietnam by the Vietminh was proof of the domino theory, “you have a row of dominoes set up. You knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly.”[[9]](#footnote-9) However, the Pentagon Papers revealed a quite different story.

The primary concern for U.S. leaders at the time was not that Vietnam was the first of many dominoes falling to communism, but that it could become what was called a “rotten apple.” Vietnam, under the Vietminh, the Pentagon Papers claimed, was a threat because its aspirations and goals were nationalist, not communist. Vietnam wanted political independence from the French, but also economic independence. It wanted to use its resources for its people. This proved a threat to the U.S. in what was called the “Grand Strategy,” an American-centered imperialism (Chomsky), because it was argued if Vietnam was successful in gaining both political and economic independence, it could set a bad example for other countries that were fighting wars of national liberation. These other countries could be inspired by the success of the Vietnamese to define their goals independent of a global system. Consequently, the U.S. refused to recognize the government of Vietnam and even supported the French re-colonization of Vietnam, politically, economically, and militarily (Chomsky and Zinn).

The U.S. kept the promise that it made to the French during the war by providing ships to transport French soldiers back to Vietnam. On October 1946, the French bombarded Haiphong, a northern port city, and an eight-year war began, called the “French-Indochina War.” The French were not able to defeat the Vietnamese, in fact, they were not able to fund the war, and could not have continued for eight years without the significant aid it got from the U.S. The U.S. funded 80% of the war’s cost, and provided several hundred thousand weapons to the French, enough to equip all the French soldiers.[[10]](#footnote-10) Despite U.S. military aid, the French were defeated at Dien Bien Phu on September 2, 1954, which led to the signing of the “Geneva Accords” in 1954 (Hillstrom and Davis).

**U.S. Involvement in Vietnam between 1954 and 1964**

The Geneva Accords created the conditions for the reunification and independence of Vietnam. The Accords temporarily divided Vietnam at the 17th parallel or the demilitarized zone (Figure 2). According to the Geneva Accords, the 17th parallel would vanish and Vietnam would unite after a democratic election in 1956. In addition, the Accords stated, “these Agreements recognize and guarantee, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Vietnam (Article 6 and 7 of the final Declaration).” The Geneva Agreements prohibited the introduction of additional troops, of military personnel, arms and munitions and the installation of military bases (Article 16 of the Armistice Agreement). It also stated the inclusion of Vietnam in military alliances, this applying to the two zones (Article 9 of the Final Declaration). Yet, the United States, although at Paris during the negotiations, did not sign, nor did it comply with the Geneva Accords.

The Pentagon Papers revealed that the United States knew that Ho Chi Minh would win the election and Vietnam would be unified under a nationalist government. The U.S. then began its more direct involvement in Vietnam. Even before the conclusion of the Geneva Conference, the United States began undermining the agreements. Several weeks before the conclusion of the Geneva Conference, the United States placed Ngo Dinh Diem, a Catholic anti-communist leader who had ties to the French colonial elites, into the presidency of South Vietnam. Diem essentially became a puppet dictator for the United States and successfully blocked the reunification elections. Because the U.S. imposed him, he had no popular support, so during his rule, he used force to govern (Karnow, Zinn, Sheehan).

Diem was able to pass legislation, 10/59 Law, that allowed him to detain suspected communists. As a result, thousands of “communist sympathizers” were imprisoned, tortured, and/or killed. In addition, Diem placed his own military men in the positions of provincial chiefs. He also used his Presidency to reverse economic policies that had been initiated by the post-WWII government. For example, he reversed the post-colonial land reform programs and returned land to the French and Vietnamese elites (Zinn). As a result, the Diem regime became more and more unpopular and this required the U.S. to support the regime more directly. The U.S. therefore proceeded to increase the number of military “advisers” it had in the country and also to increase its economic support for the regime (Hillstrom).[[11]](#footnote-11)

By 1958 extensive opposition to the Diem regime was growing in the countryside. Hanoi gave aid, encouragement, and sent people, mostly those who had lived in the south previously, to the south through the “Ho Chi Minh Trail,” a path that went through Laos and Cambodia (Figure 3). The opposition became known as the “National Liberation Front (NLF);” a term the U.S. disparagingly referred to as the “Viet Cong.” Members of the NLF were organizers much more than they were soldiers. According to U.S. government analyst Douglas Pike, “in the 2561 villages of South Vietnam, the National Liberation Front created a host of nation-wide socio-political organizations in the country . . .the purpose of this vast organizational effort was…to restructure the social order of the village and train the villages to control themselves” (Zinn 2001:473). By 1962, there were an estimated 300,000 NLF members. According to the Pentagon Papers, the Viet Cong were the only political organization with mass based political support in Vietnam (Zinn, Pentagon Papers).

The end of the Diem regime began with religious conflict. Buddhist monks experienced religious persecution under the Diem’s rule. Catholic priests began to send private armies to force conversions and if conversions were not successful, these private armies would loot and then destroy the pagodas. The oppression of the Buddhists majority, accounting for between seventy and eighty percent of Vietnam’s population, resulted in political upheaval (Karnow).

By 1963, Buddhist monks began to use non-violent civil disobedience as a means to protest against Catholic rule. On May 8, 1963, as Buddhists assembled in Hue to celebrate the 2527th birthday of the Buddha, a Catholic Major, Dan Xi, enforced an old decree, Decree Number 10 of 1958. This law banned the Buddhist flag. In response, several thousand Buddhist gathered to listen to a speech by Tri Quang, a Buddhist leader. Yet, the station director was pressured to cancel the speech and the crowd was ordered to disperse. Immediately, the army and police fired toward the crowd and the people stampeded. A woman and eight children were killed.

This event led Buddhist demonstrations to intensify. Days later, Tuich Quag Duc, responded by drenching himself with gasoline and burning himself to death on a busy road intersection in Saigon (Figure 4). Many other Buddhist monks began to commit suicide in the same way. In response to the protests, Diem imposed martial law and the Army began to raid and close down pagodas and temples (Karnow).

Despite the reactionary nature of the Diem regime, the U.S. continued to support it and continued to give the same ideological justification for this support: the “domino theory.” Robert McNamara, who became the key architect in the escalation of the American War reported to Kennedy in 1961 on the U. S. national interests and objectives in South Vietnam and said, “The loss of the South Viet-Nam to Communism would not only destroy SEATO[[12]](#footnote-12) but would undermine the credibility of American commitments elsewhere. Further, loss of South Viet-Nam would stimulate bitter domestic controversies in the United States and would be seized upon extreme elements to divide the country and the Administration.” (Sheehan: 1971:494-495). McNamara concluded that it is therefore up to the government to “take measures necessary for that purpose in exchange for large-scale United States assistance in the military, economic, and political fields[[13]](#footnote-13)” (Sheehan: 1971:496).

The U.S. accelerated its commitment to the Diem regime by increasing its troop commitment by eleven thousand and initiating and directing a counterinsurgency program called the “Strategic Hamlet Programs.” This program forced the mass transfer of the rural Vietnamese population into relocation camps. The Hamlet Programs had two goals. First, it was to separate the peasants from the NLF in order to minimize the influence of the NLF while simultaneously cutting off resources and aid that was coming from the villages and villagers. Secondly, the program involved the tactic of burning the villages, from this tactic came the term “Zippo job” (Schell). Homes were burned; water poisoned, crops burned, food stores poisoned and animals killed. This second goal also involved another tactic, which was the shelling of villages by ARVN artillery. Because many civilians escaped the forcible relocation program, this tactic resulted in killing many civilians (Hillstrom and Sheehan).

The program was a failure for many reasons. It was riddled with corruption; it was based on ignorance of the population, its cultural beliefs and its relation to the Vietcong.[[14]](#footnote-14) Ignoring all of the more important factors that led to its failure, Robert McNamara reported that the program was an ultimate failure because the Hamlets “did not meet minimum security standards” and the program ended in 1966.

The United States initiated what was called “Operations Trail Dust” in 1962, a series of operations involving chemical warfare, clearly violating the Geneva Conventions of 1925. The operation’s objectives were to destroy crops, rid the Vietcong of jungle coverage, and to expose the Ho Chi Minh Trail. These chemical agents, known as “rainbow herbicides,” were sprayed from airplanes. The most common herbicide used was “Agent Orange.” U.S. ‘experts’ at the time claimed that these chemical agents were harmless, short-lived in the environment and a “prototype smart weapon.” DOW and Monsanto, the chemical corporations who produced the agents, knew about the harmful effects of the herbicides and defoliants in humans. In addition, by 1968, numerous studies were published about the long-term harmful effects of the agents on humans and vegetation. Yet, herbicidal warfare in Vietnam did not cease until 1972. Ranchhanders, U.S. soldiers who dispersed the agents, released a total of 200 million gallons of defoliants and herbicides.[[15]](#footnote-15) Operation Trail Dust resulted in the destruction of about 14 percent of Vietnam’s total land area equating to about 25 million acres of land destroyed, the size of Massachusetts. By the end of the war, the use of herbicides by the U.S. turned Vietnam into the largest dioxin contaminated site in the world (Zinn).

The United States abandoned the unpopular Diem regime and supported a coup and the assassination of Diem in 1963.[[16]](#footnote-16) The U.S. then supported seven successive puppet governments none of which had anymore-popular support then the Diem regime. None were successful in ending the popular insurgency.

By late 1963, there were more than 16,000 U.S. advisors in Vietnam, but despite this increase, General Westmoreland, the commander of U.S. troops in Vietnam, requested more troops. As General Maxwell Taylor said, “The ability of the Viet Cong continuously to rebuild their units and to make good their losses remained one of the mysteries of guerrilla war…Not only did the Viet-Cong units have the recuperative powers of the phoenix, but they had an amazing ability to maintain morale” (Zinn 2001:475). Only in rare cases did the United States find evidences of bad morale among Viet-Cong prisoners or recorded in captured Viet-Cong documents. However, it was not until a controversial incident occurred that the military leaderships request for more troops was answered.

**The Gulf of Tonkin Incident and the Escalation of the American War: 1964-1968**

In 1964, there were allegedly two attacks on two different U.S. destroyers. These attacks, according to the allegations made by U.S. authorities at the time, were unprovoked and occurred on international waters in the Tonkin Gulf . U.S. authorities claimed that on August 2nd, three North Vietnamese patrol torpedo (PT) boats fired torpedoes at the USS Maddox. Two days later, North Vietnamese PT boats allegedly attacked the C. Turner Joy. According to the Pentagon Papers, the attack was quickly reported as a radar signal error. In his book, *Legacy of Ashes*, Tim Weiner claimed that the first attack was actually two U.S. destroyers firing at each other. The two destroyers could not see each other because of the heavy fog. In fact, as Senator Gurening claimed, the CIA was conducting a covert operation on North Vietnamese coastal facilities (Brown and Silber). The Maddox was not on a “routine patrol” on international waters: the Maddox was on a special electronic spying mission in Vietnamese territorial waters and no torpedoes had been fired at the U.S. ships (Brown, Silber, and Zinn). However, the alleged attacks on the USS Maddox and C. Turner Joy were used as justification to massively escalate the American war (Pentagon Papers).

Three days after the Tonkin “attacks,” a congressional resolution was passed in the House with only two dissenting votes.[[17]](#footnote-17) This resolution gave the President the power to “take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression” (Hillstrom 1998:263). The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution allowed Johnson to wage war against Vietnam without securing a formal Declaration of War from Congress. In retaliation for the “attacks” of the USS Maddox and C. Turner Joy, President Johnson approved Operation Pierce Arrow, the bombing of North Vietnam’s coastal facilities and authorized the increased bombing of the south. In addition, according to the Pentagon Papers, Johnson authorized the secret bombing of the Laotian trails, near the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Furthermore, Johnson authorized a massive bombing campaign in U.S. history, “Operation Rolling Thunder,” an operation that lasted two and a half years that was intended to bomb the north into submission (Karnow).

Most importantly, though, the alleged attacks on U.S. ships and the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution gave the U.S. the justification, popular support, and the legal framework to engage in a massive military buildup in Vietnam. By 1965 the U.S. had 200,000 American soldiers in Vietnam, and in the next year, an additional 200,000 soldiers were sent to Vietnam. At the peak of the War, early 1968, there were more than 500,000 American troops in Vietnam.

As Johnson escalated the American war, he spoke publicly about the need to win the “hearts and minds” of the Vietnamese people, however the strategic goal was to kill as many of the enemy as possible. And the tactics employed were designed to do that. However, because the war was popularly supported by the Vietnamese people, the “enemy” frequently became “anyone who ran” or “anyone who was still there,” or “anyone who was killed.” The “body count” became the measure of success, and according to the body count, the United States was winning the War (Sheehan and Wiest).

The tactic of defoliation was continued and accelerated as mentioned earlier as was the use of napalm. The tactic of declaring areas “free fire zones” and then sending troops on “search and destroy” missions in the “zones” became common. The initial phase of this tactic involved the clearing of the area of non-combatants by various means, leaflets, loud speakers, and then entering the areas and killing anything that was still there. All persons remaining were considered “enemy.” The free fire zones and search and destroy missions led to massive destruction of villages, crops, and animals to the killing of many civilians (Sheehan). Jonathan Schell’s book, *The Village of Ben Suc,* described one such operation, “a village surrounded, attacked, a man riding a bicycle shot down, three people picnicking by the river shot to death, the houses, the women, children, old people herded together, taken away from their ancestral homes”[[18]](#footnote-18) (Zinn2004:433).

The U.S. military continued “carpet bombing,” high altitude saturation bombing, of both North and South Vietnam.[[19]](#footnote-19) There were many covert operations. For example, the CIA in Vietnam orchestrated a program called “Operation Phoenix.” This was designated a targeted assassination program. At least twenty thousand civilians suspected to be communists were executed without trial. (Zinn 2001:478).

The United States declared that it was winning the war because the goal had been killing the enemy and the success rate was being measured by “body count,” And the U.S. was claiming a 10:1 kill ratio. The body count statistics given to the American public at this time led many to believe that final defeat of the enemy was near.[[20]](#footnote-20) Yet, the Pentagon Papers revealed that the United States was not winning the war because of the influence of the NLF. The NLF continued to be successful in occupying and redistributing land among the peasants. In 1967, a secret congressional report said, “the Viet Cong was distributing about five times more land to the peasants than the South Vietnamese government, whose land distribution program had come to a virtual standstill” (Zinn 2001:480). The report said, “The Viet Cong have eliminated landlord domination and reallocated lands owned by absentee landlords and the Government of Viet Nam (G.V.N.) to the landless and others who cooperate with the Viet Cong authorities” (Zinn 2001:480). The truth about the success and failure of the American war was revealed in 1968 in what is called the “Tet Offensive.” Although the offensive was a significant military defeat for the insurgency, it was a much greater propaganda victory for the NLF and an equally if not larger propaganda loss for the U.S (Karnow).

North Vietnamese regulars and Vietcong forces carried out the Tet Offensive. On January 30th and the 31st in 1968 and it revealed to the American public that the United States was not winning the war nor was it winning the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people. Tet is the celebration of the Lunar New Year on the first day of spring and is the most important national holiday for the Vietnamese. The Offensive involved a coordinated attack on 150 cities, hamlets, and military installations in the south such as Saigon, Hue, and Khe Sanh (Dougen and Hillstrom).[[21]](#footnote-21) Battles went on all over the south for nearly two months and in the end, the Viet Cong lost 58,000 men, seventy percent of it soldiers. The attack, however, revealed the Vietnamese determination to win and it created more popular support for the resistance. Furthermore, it caused a decline in support for the war with the American public.[[22]](#footnote-22)

Another event in 1968 served to undermine the war effort and its publicly stated goal of winning the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people; the “My Lai Massacre.” The massacre was an obvious example, and not an exception, of the consequences of the “search and destroy” missions. Soldiers from “C” Company, within a twenty-four hour period, killed five hundred non-combatant villagers. These victims were women, children, and the elderly. News of the massacre was not revealed to the American public until November 1969. News of the My Lai Massacre led to a further decline in support from both GIs and the American public (Barringer).[[23]](#footnote-23)

There was not only the growing public disenchantment with the war; there was a growing disenchantment with the war among the American governing class. At the end of Johnson’s presidency, Clark Clifford, Secretary of Defense, stated, “I could not find out when the war was going to end: I could not find out the manner in which it was going to end. I could not find out whether the new requests for men and equipment was going to be enough, or whether it would take more and, if more, how much…All I had was the statement, given with too little self-assurance to be comforting, that if we persisted for an indeterminate length of time, the enemy would choose not to go on” (Wiest 2002:47-49).

**Vietnamization**

In 1969, Richard Nixon became the 37th President of the United States. His campaign promise was to “end the war [in Vietnam] and win the peace.” Nixon’s plan to end the war was called “Vietnamization.” His stated goal was to withdraw U.S. troops and to gradually turn the fighting of the war over to the Army of Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) until they were strong enough to defend the Saigon government. In the fall of 1969, Nixon asked for public support of the new policy, “To you, the great silent majority of my fellow Americans—I ask for your support. Let us be united for peace. Let us be united against defeat. Because let us understand: North Vietnam cannot defeat or humiliate the United States. Only Americans can do that” (Hillstrom 1998:209). Nixon began to withdraw troops and by 1972, there were less than 150,000 troops left in Vietnam. Yet, the bombing continued.

According to Howard Zinn, the reality of Vietnamization was quite different than the stated goal. It was true, according to Zinn, the goal was to withdraw U.S. troops from Vietnam and turn the ground fighting over to ARVN. Yet, the real goal was only to end the most unpopular aspect of the war, American casualties, and regain support for the war at home. The reality was that the U.S. continued its economic, political and military support such as training, weapons, and advising, for the Saigon government and continued it until the very end. But Vietnamization was really a plan to win the war by increased bombing, and not just increased bombing of North Vietnam, but expanded bombing and expanded ground military operations into adjoining countries, Laos[[24]](#footnote-24) and Cambodia[[25]](#footnote-25).

Vietnamization began on February 8, 1971, the South Vietnamese infantry invaded Laos with U.S. air support, an operation known as Lamson 719, intended to destroy the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The operation failed, yet Nixon lied to the American public in April, “I can report that Vietnamization has succeeded” (Karnow 1983:645). In May, the Nixon Administration decided to mine Haiphong harbor and intensify the bombing in North Vietnam. In December, the United States dropped forty thousand tons of bombs over the heavily populated areas between Hanoi and Haiphong. Within eleven days, Vietnam had experienced the largest bombing campaign ever seen in history. Within a six month period, the United States dropped a greater tonnage of bombs than they had in the entire Operation Rolling Thunder (Karnow).

The bombing of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos ended in military and public relations failure. By 1973, the U.S. was forced to admit that it was unable to win the war and agreed to a settlement. The Saigon government, however, refused to accept the settlement and the U.S. made one last attempt to win the war by bombing Hanoi and Haiphong. This was known as the Christmas Bombing. This was again a military and public opinion failure and the U.S. was forced to sign a peace agreement. A cease-fire was agreed to on January 28th and the draft ended. As American troops withdrew from the south, the Viet Minh conducted the Ho Chi Minh Campaign, resulting to the Fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975 (Karnow).

Between 1964 and 1973, the wealthiest and most powerful nation in the world applied its maximum military effort, except for the use of an atomic bomb, to defeat a nationalist revolutionary movement in a tiny peasant country. The American War was a war waged against the Vietnamese people. More than four million Vietnamese soldiers and civilians died during the course of the war (Chomsky, Karnow, Zinn). Vietnam, for centuries, fought against Chinese and French colonialism and won. Despite this, the United States, determined to win the war, underestimated the will of the people to fight against U.S. aggression. In the words of Howard Zinn, “it was organized modern technology versus organized human beings, and the human beings won” (Zinn 2001:269). During the course of the war, the United States experienced the largest antiwar movement ever seen in history. The next chapter will look at the different segments of American society who participated in the Anti-Vietnam War Movement and how it led to the ending of the American war.

1. 111 B.C., Vietnam was conquered by China for a thousand years. In A.D. 939, the Vietnamese gained independence, yet, faced persistent incursions by China and bordering countries through the mid-1400s (Karnow). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. French missionaries and traders worked in Vietnam for several decades. By 1858, France sought to control Vietnam. Forty-years later, in 1897, Vietnam became a colony and split in three States (Karnow). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. August 1941, Roosevelt and Churchill released the Atlantic Charter consisting of four goals for the post-war world, their countries would “seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other” and respected “the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will to live.” The Charter was declared the right of nations to self-determination (Chomsky). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See Appendix [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. http://rationalrevolution.net/war/collections\_of\_letters\_by\_ho\_chi\_.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. rationalrevolution.net/war/collection\_of\_letters\_by\_ho\_chi\_.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ho Chi Minh also sent a letter to the United Nations. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See Appendix [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. It was believed that if one country becomes communist, then neighboring countries will fall to communism. This led to the justification for the United States to intervene to suppress communism in Southeast Asia (Chomsky, Karnow, and Zinn). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. By 1952, the United States’ aid totaled 775 million. And France spent half it’s military budget that weakened its position in Europe and negotiations began. After the end of the Korean War, China began support the Vietminh (Hillstrom). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The United States sent the U.S. Military Assistance Advisor Group (MAAG) to train the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) in combat tactics and logistical tasks. The Geneva Accords only permitted 685 military advisors in southern Vietnam, yet Eisenhower secretly sent several thousand (Chomsky). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. In 1954, the United States, Australia, France, East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), the Philippines, Thailand, and the United Kingdom formed Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). SEATO mimicked the same military, political, and economic policies of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). The goal of the organization was to form an “international collective defense to contain communism.” SEATO disbanded in 1977, two years after the fall of Saigon (Chomsky). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Kennedy sent two thousand, some involved in combat operations, including four hundred Green Berets (Army Special Forces) to the Central Highlands to train Montongards, indigenous tribesman in counterinsurgency tactics, in early 1961. And by the fall of 1962, Kennedy sent an additional nine thousand military advisors to aid ARVN, now known as the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) (Anderson and Chomsky). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. The Pentagon Papers noted that there was an estimated 4.3 million Vietnamese located in 3,225 hamlets by 1962. By the end of July 1963, over eight million people lived in hamlets and 7,250 hamlets were built. Yet, the Vietcong overran 25 percent of the hamlets, the majority of them located along the Mekong Delta. The hamlets that were over-run by the Viet Cong were later bombed or dropped with drums of napalm. Rampant corruption occurred during the operation. Many government officials pocketed the compensation promised and many angry peasants, who were not already Viet Cong, became Viet Cong sympathizers (Chomsky and Karnow). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. The agents are known to cause kidney damage, various forms of cancers, diabetes, neuropathies, and birth defects. Years after the war, Vietnamese and American veterans’ babies are being born stillbirth or with birth defects such as Down Syndrome and Spina Bifida. The agents are still present the in the Vietnam’s ground today. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Three weeks later, President Kennedy was assassinated. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. By 1972, about half of the nation’s rural population had refugee status (Wiest). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Seven million tons of bombs were dropped during the war. In a seven-year period 1965-1971, the area of Indochina, slightly larger than Texas, was bombarded by a tonnage of munitions amounting to approximately twice the total used by the U.S. in all the theater of the World War II. By the end of the war, there were 21 million bomb craters in south Vietnam and1,200 square miles of land was bulldozed flat, striped of all life (Chomsky, Karnow, and Zinn). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. In previous wars, success and efficiency of the war was measured by land accumulation. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. See Appendix [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Support in the war in 1965 was 52 percent and by1968 it declined to only 32 percent. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. The story of the massacre was revealed in May 1968 in two French newspapers and another published by the North Vietnamese delegation to the peace talks in Paris. The American press did not pay any attention, except for Seymour Hersh, then working for an anti-war newspaper agency in Southeast Asia.. The only person convicted for the mass murder was platoon leader Lieutenant William Calley, a low ranking officer. His sentence was reduced to only three years in house arrest. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. See Appendix. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. See Appendix. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)