

Case Study of the Vietnam War, 1954 - 1975

Vietnam before WW2

- The modern state of Vietnam was part of the French-ruled area known as Indochina
 - It was conquered and controlled by the French Empire progressively between 1862 and 1904.
- As part of French rule...
 - Local forms of government were replaced with French systems of governance, led by French officials
 - Western education and healthcare
- French rule was largely characterised by....
 - Resource exploitation
 - Heavy local taxes
 - A colonial monopoly on the trade of salt, opium, rice and alcohol.
- Thus, there were several attempts to rebel and overthrow French rule from the 1890s to the 1940s.
 - However, none of them succeeded.

Vietnam during WW2

- After WWII broke out in Europe in 1939, France was defeated by Germany a year later in 1940.
- Japan, which was an ally of Germany, wanted access to French Indochina for its resources and strategic position.
 - As a result, Japanese forces invaded the northern region of French Indochina in September 1940 before coming to an armistice and agreement with the French Indochina colonial government.
- The French colonial government was aligned with Vichy France.
 - Vichy France was the new government set up after the defeat of France in 1940, and was aligned to Nazi Germany.
 - Vichy France allowed the Japanese to station troops in Indochina.
 - The French colonial government was often reduced to a puppet of the Japanese during this period.
- French colonial rule and the subsequent Japanese rule in French Indochina were both harsh.
- As a result, various groups emerged to resist French and Japanese rule.
- The most important of these resistance groups was the Viet Minh, led by Ho Chi Minh.
 - The Viet Minh, short for the League for the Independence of Vietnam (Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh), was a nationalist movement that aimed to achieve independence.
 - It was an umbrella movement made up of two main groups:
 - Non-communists who simply wanted to drive the Japanese out of Vietnam in favour of self-rule
 - Communists who wanted to establish an independent communist state in Vietnam.

- During WWII, the Viet Minh received money, weapons and supplies from the United States, the USSR and the Guomindang (GMD) government in China.
 - Even though the GMD government in China was anti-communist, they supported the Viet Minh against the common enemy that was Japan.