

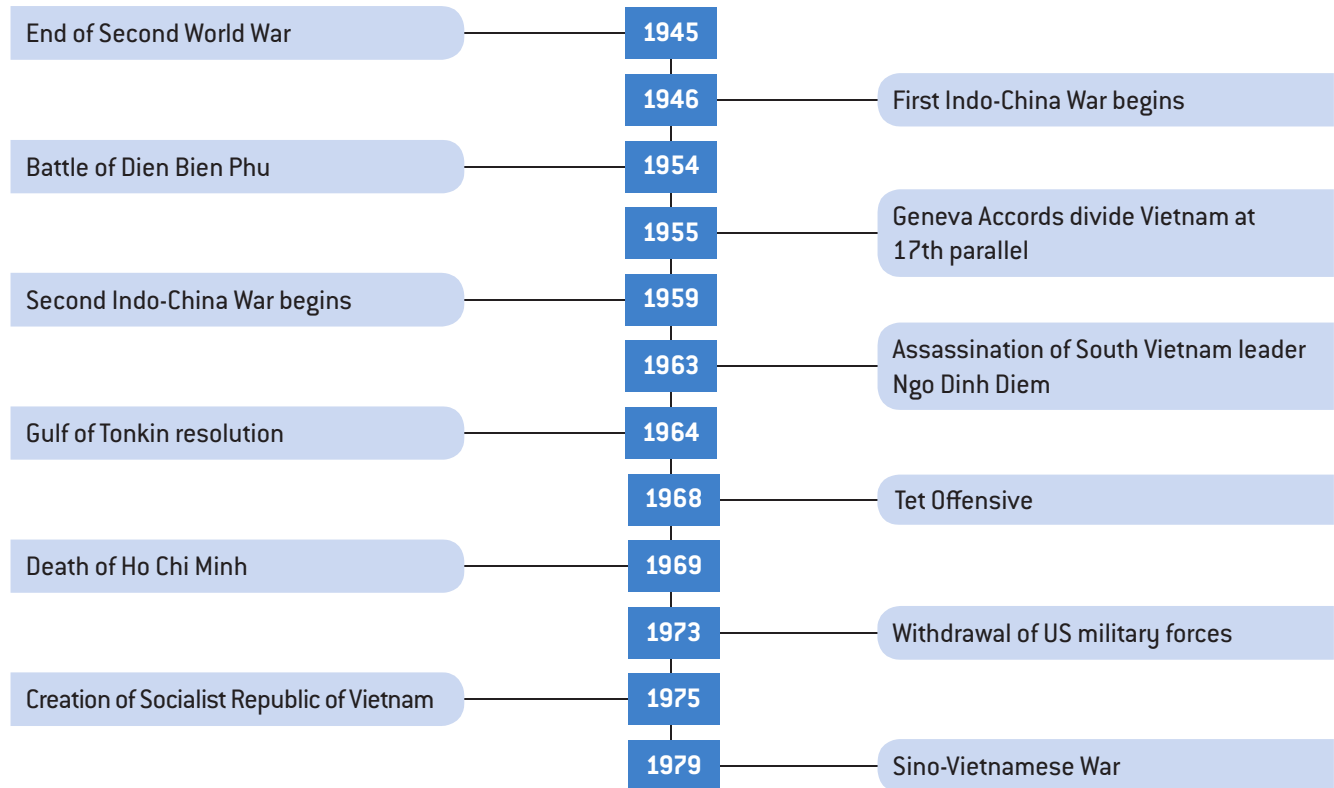
CASE STUDY 3: VIETNAM AND THE COLD WAR

Global context

The process of decolonization that began after the Second World War widened the Cold War struggle and no countries were immune. Many newly created countries sought refuge from the Cold War through the Non-Aligned Movement, while still others were plunged into civil wars in which factions tried to achieve victory with material

assistance from one of the superpowers. After occupation forces left, a civil war began in Vietnam that left the country divided for 20 years. Warfare was perpetuated by direct US involvement that escalated and prolonged the conflict. The Cold War had a direct effect on Vietnam that endured even after the end of the Cold War.

Timeline





Vietnam and the Cold War

Conceptual understanding

Key questions

- Why did North Vietnam defeat South Vietnam in 1975?
- Why did Vietnam become a socialist state?

Key concepts

- Causation
- Consequence

Indo-China to the end of the Second World War

France had begun to influence Vietnam even before it began military campaigns to consolidate control over Indo-China. In the 17th century French Catholic missionaries went to the region to try to convert the indigenous population and had marginal success. As a result, some French established themselves, giving the French government a pretext for action in the region. Formal French colonization began in earnest in 1859 with a series of military campaigns that ended with France establishing a protectorate over Indo-China. Although the Vietnamese royal family continued, it was largely in a ceremonial capacity. The French were interested in Indo-China for its strategic location, proximity to China and its rubber production. Indo-China was one of France's most prized possessions and, as was later seen, France was willing to fight long and hard to retain this possession. Prior to the Second World War, risings against the French were limited and easily suppressed.

The Second World War proved pivotal for the establishment of an independent Vietnam. During the war, Vietnam was taken by the Japanese but its administration was left under the Vichy Regime in France because it was a member of the Axis Powers. However, Vichy's collapse in March 1945 led to direct Japanese annexation; in the north, a military force called the Viet Minh (League for Independence of Vietnam) led by Ho Chi Minh fought against the Japanese using guerrilla tactics and gained momentum as an anti-foreign force. When Japan surrendered on 14 August 1945 the situation reached a critical juncture. On 2 September 1945 Ho Chi Minh proclaimed the creation of the Democratic People's Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam). Ho Chi Minh hoped for US support but found little, given the change in US government. While President Roosevelt had been very sympathetic to its nationalist cause, and General Stillwell (commander of US forces in India, Burma and China) had helped support the Viet Minh, the ascendancy of Harry Truman and the onset of the Cold War left the USA with little ability to support a Marxist regime despite its anti-colonial rhetoric.

The French attempted to mollify the North Vietnamese by forming the Indo-Chinese Federation and recognizing North Vietnam as an independent state within the French Union but to no avail. When the French Union did not immediately materialize, the North Vietnamese maintained their independence and the Viet Minh fought against the French in what is referred to as the First Indo-China War.

The First Indo-China War, 1946– 1954

The First Indo-China War began in November 1946 with a French assault on Vietnamese civilians in the port city of Haiphong. Until 1954 the French military battled against Vietnamese forces. The Viet Minh had considerable popular support in the rural, agricultural regions of Vietnam, and the French strongholds were in the urban areas, making for a long bloody struggle.

In the first four years of the war, there was actually very little fighting. The Viet Minh General Võ Nguyên Giáp spent most of this time gaining peasant support and expanding the size of his army. By 1954, Giáp had enlisted 117 000 to fight with him against the 100 000 French and 300 000 Vietnamese who fought against him. Giáp also found that he had a strong support base after 1949, when Chinese communists prevailed in their Civil War. The Chinese communists provided Giáp with military support that included heavy artillery, which he used later to his advantage in the last battle of the First Indo-China War.

Dien Bien Phu was the final and decisive battle in the First Indo-China War. It took place in an improbable mountain area near the border with Laos. The battle began in late 1953; the French occupied Dien Bien Phu to try to interrupt supply routes from Laos into North Vietnam. The Viet Minh responded by blockading all roads in and out of the area, but the French felt confident that they could supply their forces through aerial drops. However, they were surprised by General Giáp, who arrived with 40 000 Viet Minh forces that surrounded the 13 000 French and broke their lines. On 7 May 1954, the base was taken by the Vietnamese and the French surrendered.

Geneva Accords

At this point, the French government decided that the conflict in Indo-China was too costly, and they negotiated a settlement in an international conference in Geneva. Discussions had already begun in Geneva on 26 April and so now the object was to negotiate an end to the war. The result was known as the Geneva Accords – a set of non-binding agreements:

- establishment of a ceasefire line in Vietnam along the 17th parallel
- 300 days for the withdrawal of troops on both sides
- Viet Minh evacuation from Cambodia and Laos
- evacuation of foreign troops – except military advisors
- prohibition of dispersal of foreign arms and munitions to the region
- free elections in Cambodia and Laos in 1955
- elections for all of Vietnam to be held by July 1956
- the implementation of these to be conducted by representatives from Canada, India and Pakistan.

The Geneva Accords effectively accepted the existence of a communist regime in the north and tried to bring about stability in Vietnam through the temporary division of the country. At the signing of the Accords, the Viet Minh controlled nearly three-quarters of Vietnam, so the non-communist countries hoped that this would weaken their support throughout the country. Instead, it seemed to consolidate their control of the north, and gave them a boundary behind which it could retreat.



In 1954, therefore, Vietnam was free of colonial rule, but it was divided into two states: in the north, the Viet Minh under Ho Chi Minh retained control; in the south, a pro-western regime was established with support from the USA. This division was only meant to last until elections could be held throughout the country. However, such elections never occurred and, instead, conflict in Vietnam renewed as the country engaged in a civil war in which US forces were directly involved, and in which the USSR and PRC provided support.

ATL Communication skills

In attendance at the Geneva Conference (26 April to 21 July 1954) were representatives from:

- Cambodia
- People's Republic of China
- France
- Laos
- USSR
- Great Britain
- USA
- Viet Minh (North Vietnam)
- State of Vietnam (South Vietnam)

The Accords were agreements among Cambodia, France, Laos, North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese representatives. Why were American, British, Chinese and Soviet representatives present? What did they hope to achieve in the negotiations? Who do you think was the most successful?

A divided Vietnam

The division of Vietnam reflected the situation in the country during the remainder of Ho Chi Minh's life. Like the Vietnamese themselves, the country was divided into a northern, largely rural peasantry that supported the Marxist ideas of Ho Chi Minh. In the south, a number of inept and corrupt leaders – beginning with the Emperor Bao Dai and Dinh Diem – ruled. In 1959, Vietnam was plunged into a civil war that determined most of the policies of both Vietnams. Meanwhile, Ho Chi Minh became more of a figurehead and less of an active political figure. His death in 1969 did not mark the end of the war, or of revolutionary struggle in the north.

North Vietnam

The Democratic Republic of Vietnam was recognized by all of the communist states while other countries waited for elections that never came. The North Vietnamese received limited assistance from both the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union, but in the early years, Ho Chi Minh was focusing more on internal affairs in the north than the spread of his revolution to the south.

The main reason for this was that Ho Chi Minh was consolidating communist power. Unlike his counterpart to the south, Ho Chi Minh was incorruptible, but he adhered strictly to his nationalist-Marxist ideas. This meant the elimination of class enemies. In 1955 and 1956, anyone branded a landlord, traitor or French sympathizer could be targeted, and many were killed by the North Vietnamese.



▲ A bourgeois landowner executed after a trial before a committee in North Vietnam in 1955

Since they were seen as pro-French, northern Catholics were identified, and so whole villages fled to the south. During these years, 1 million Vietnamese fled to the south, hoping to escape persecution or execution.

In the north, the communists continued to implement policies of land reform, which they had begun during the First Indo-China War. From 1946 onwards, the Viet Minh had launched a programme of agrarian reform centred on distribution of land to the peasants. Much like their Chinese counterparts, the Viet Minh prided themselves on moving into regions, liberating the peasantry and assisting them in their acquisition of land tenure. Landlords lost their economic and social control over the peasantry as the Viet Minh relieved peasants of their annual rents and established communities in which the peasants worked together, without the dominance of the landlords.

He assisted southern communists through founding the National Liberation Front and the Viet Cong, and began the construction of what would become the Ho Chi Minh Trail that went through Laos and Cambodia. He also began to support the communist Pathet Lao and Khmer Rouge in Laos and Cambodia respectively.

He was recognized as the father of Vietnamese independence. His death in 1969 did not mean an end to the revolutionary struggle or the drive for Vietnamese independence. Indeed, many of his followers saw it as imperative to complete his mission.

South Vietnam

The situation in South Vietnam was more complex as a number of the country's leaders had different plans and policies for stopping the spread of communism into the south; all of them had regimes that were characterized by corruption, brutality towards perceived enemies of the state and chaos.

The French initially had a plan to restore the Vietnamese Emperor Bao Dai to serve as a puppet leader of what they hoped would be a client state, but this idea had been frustrated – France had withdrawn and Bao Dai proved to be too weak. The USA, with its fears of communist expansion, assumed the position of patron of southern Vietnam. In the waning years of the First Indo-China War, the USA had provided France with \$3 billion to fund its war against the Viet Minh. It sought a stronger leader for its Vietnamese client state and found it in Ngo Dinh Diem, a nationalist and Catholic who had patriotic credentials stemming from his open opposition to French rule in the 1930s. Under US direction, Bao Dai recalled Diem in 1954 and made him Prime Minister. In 1955, Diem ousted Bao Dai and recreated the government in the south. In a referendum that was clearly “rigged” the south Vietnamese voted in favour of a Vietnam Republic with Diem as President. His regime became increasingly corrupt and brutal, leading eventually to the renewal of war in Vietnam.

Vietnam was a rural, agrarian society, and so one of the first issues that Diem faced was that of land distribution. A number of radical and moderate groups advocated land distribution so that the Vietnamese peasantry would have sufficient land to farm. When they occupied the south, the Viet Minh had helped the peasants by redistributing roughly 1.5 million acres (600 000 hectares) of land and countless peasants had acquired land tenure



▲ These smiling women soldiers take time off from fighting to help plant rice in a paddy in North Vietnam in 1968



through Viet Minh occupation, not paying rent from the end of the Second World War. In 1955, Diem reversed this, and required peasants to pay rent again. Further, in 1958 peasants were expected to purchase the land they farmed in six annual installments. This was extremely costly, and it alienated a peasantry who had come to see that land as their own.

Diem's policies were often a reaction against the communist regime to the north. He was constantly afraid of opposition and, increasingly, assassination, so he launched a widespread campaign against anyone he considered a threat. In 1956, he refused to hold the elections stipulated in the Geneva Accords, arguing that northerners would be compelled to vote communist. He imprisoned opposition leaders and targeted Viet Minh that remained in the south. He also favoured Catholics over the Buddhist majority; roughly 10% of the population was Catholic, and many were northerners who had escaped south as refugees and appreciated Diem's leadership. But, this favouring of the minority from which he came led to further dissatisfaction with his regime.

This in turn led to opposition within the south itself. Beginning in 1957, South Vietnamese Communists, called the Viet Cong, took advantage of peasant alienation and began to organize resistance groups in the countryside and plot political assassinations against government officials. The number of assassinations grew; in 1959 there were 1200 and in 1961, 4000. Despite these figures and the growth of the Viet Cong and its political arm, the National Liberation Front (founded in 1960 by Ho Chi Minh), Diem maintained control over the cities of South Vietnam and much of the countryside.

To the ire of many South Vietnamese peasants, their villages were forcibly disbanded and the peasants were placed in what were called Strategic Hamlets. While the South Vietnamese government said that these were to protect the peasantry from looting and pillaging by Viet Cong and other bandits, the main objective was to isolate the Viet Cong from the bases and prevent them from gaining any support from the peasants. The hamlets were regularly patrolled by the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) to prevent Viet Cong infiltration, but this policy was less than successful. It further alienated the peasantry, making them less likely to assist the government in eliminating the Viet Cong.

Even the USA was increasingly alarmed by Diem's brutality. In particular, his widely publicised suppression of Buddhist monks left many Americans horrified that they were supporting such a leader. Thus, it should come as no surprise that a plan to overthrow Diem by members of the South Vietnamese military received the tacit support of the US government. In November 1963, Diem was assassinated and initially replaced by a military junta that had little popular support. In 1965, General Nguyen Van Thieu became President, providing a veneer of stability, but his regime was just as corrupt, and his officers as inept as those under Diem. His policies were not ideologically based. Instead, they were based on the necessity of fighting the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong, and of maintaining his support base through personal favours and connections that perpetuated the corruption of Diem, rather than eradicating it.

On the other side, it was under Thieu that the South Vietnamese government attempted land reform. In 1954, 60% of the peasantry were landless, and 20% owned parcels that were less than 2 acres

(0.8 hectares). Furthermore, the tenant farmers had to pay approximately 74% of their annual crop yield to their landlords. In the 1940s and 1950s, the Viet Minh had gained the support of much of the southern peasantry through rigorous redistribution of land. The Viet Minh had done this by going into villages, imprisoning the landlords and forcing them to cede their lands to the peasants who actually farmed the land. The Viet Cong continued these policies and appealed to the peasantry through distribution of land owned by absentee landlords; this increased their support, which helped the Viet Cong in their guerrilla operation.



South Vietnamese women pray for peace, 1969

Diem had sided with the landlords and attempted to return the land to them. To try and undercut peasant support for the Viet Cong and distance himself from Diem, Thieu introduced the first of his land reforms in 1968. The first programme gave 50 000 families government land and prohibited local officials from returning land to landlords. Even more sweeping was the March 1970 Land-to-the-Tiller Act which ended rent payments for those who farmed the land and granted ownership to those who worked the land. To distribute land fairly, he determined that the maximum amount of land that

could be owned was 37 acres. Through this act, 1.5 million acres (600 000 hectares) were distributed to 400 000 landless peasants by 1972, and by 1973 all but 7% of peasant farmers owned their own land.

Despite positive measures of agrarian reform, the poor treatment of the population by the ARVN and the corruption and ineptitude of the leadership continued to alienate much of the population, and the combined forces of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Viet Cong – who were determined to fight until Vietnam was united and socialist – fought a war of attrition against the USA until American public opinion demanded the withdrawal of US forces and the ARVN collapsed under the combined assault of regular and guerrilla warfare from the north.

Second Indo-China War 1959–1975

Even more than the First Indo-China War, this war inflicted tremendous damage on the people of Vietnam. The statistics are horrifying: approximately 1 in 7 or 6.5 million Vietnamese were killed in this conflict; there were countless casualties; and the country was destroyed by the massive bombing campaigns and the use of Agent Orange to exfoliate the jungles and expose guerrillas.

Neither side could take the high ground in the treatment of the population. Both sides used coercion and indoctrination to engage the support of the population. While a few were ideologically bound to supporting one side or another, most people chose sides by necessity. Both sides augmented their armed forces through conscription – and there was no option to remain neutral. Whichever side arrived first in a village took all able men to fight. Not only did the Vietnamese lose lives, but this also limited agricultural production. The women, children and elderly who remained did the best they could with the resources available, but the absence of adult men led to food shortages in many areas.



Army officer peers from a tunnel exit near Saigon. During the war, Viet Cong hid in the tunnels; now they are a tourist attraction.



In South Vietnam, the Viet Cong began guerrilla operations and the assassination of public officials in 1957. It was often assumed that the Viet Cong were simply taking orders from North Vietnam but this was untrue. In fact, the Viet Cong were a largely autonomous group of cells working independently of one another and of North Vietnam, partly in an attempt to keep their cadres from being identified by the South Vietnamese government. One of the main advantages they had was their anonymity and their apparent ability to strike anywhere unexpectedly. While they relied on military assistance from the north, most of their operations were designed by local commanders who knew well the areas where they fought. Throughout the 1960s the Viet Cong became increasingly powerful and their ranks swelled, reaching a high in 1968 just before the Tet Offensive.

Being a traditionally trained army, the ARVN had great difficulties in combatting the guerrilla tactics employed by the Viet Cong. Furthermore, they lacked leadership in their military; too many officers held their positions due to family connections and tended to be incompetent or corrupt. They were also infiltrated by Viet Cong who worked as their servants and delivered information to the communists. It was all too easy for the Viet Cong to launch a guerrilla attack, cause destruction and then melt into the jungle where the ARVN could not follow them.

In spring 1959 the Viet Cong felt strong enough to engage openly against their adversaries and began to confront the ARVN in direct combat, rather than keep with their initial methods of ambush and assassination. In Hanoi, the Party leadership met to discuss the formalization of hostilities. The decision to renew war was the result of a meeting of the Central Committee Worker's Party in July 1959. There it was agreed that to truly establish socialism in the north, unification with the south was necessary.

As the ARVN faltered, the USA sought to fill the gap by providing the South Vietnamese with supplies and, eventually, men. The intensification of US involvement led to further escalation of the war as North Vietnam began to treat it as an anti-imperial war in which their objective – along with unification – was to expel the USA.

To support and perhaps exert some control over the Viet Cong, the North Vietnamese sent a number of their troops south using the Ho Chi Minh Trail to transport them through Laos to avoid the border crossing. This increased the pressure on the ARVN and the government of South Vietnam, which proved to be unstable until the appointment of General Nguyen Van Thieu in 1965. Even so, South Vietnam was in political disarray and the ARVN seemed incapable of stemming the tide of North Vietnam. This meant a further escalation in assistance from the USA, which felt that it was imperative to prevent the spread of communism south. It was not just the USA that believed the idea of the domino theory; Australian and New Zealand sent troops to Vietnam in support of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). They felt threatened by the idea of a communist Vietnam, fearing that they were puppets of the USSR and PRC and determined to expand as far as possible. These were fears of people ignorant of Ho Chi Minh's plans for nationalism and socialism, who overestimated the role of larger communist powers.

The Tet Offensive is generally remembered as a turning point in US public opinion, but it is also a turning point for the role of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese army in the course and outcome of the war. The

Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO)

Also called the Manila Pact, this was a collective security agreement signed by Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, Thailand, United Kingdom and United States to protect Southeast Asia from foreign aggression. It lasted from 1954 to 1977. Interestingly, the Southeast Asian states themselves were not members of the agreement.

Viet Cong, with between 70 000 and 100 000 soldiers in their ranks, decided to conduct a formal attack on the urban areas of South Vietnam. The attack was truly a surprise as this holiday was traditionally a period of ceasefire for the Vietnamese. Thus, the attack of the Viet Cong in January 1968 was a shock for the South Vietnamese and Americans. The Viet Cong had the element of surprise and the determination to fight, but in the end they had to withdraw. The ARVN did not break ranks and held out until they received reinforcement from US troops.

The casualties for the Viet Cong were disastrous. It has been estimated that they suffered between 40 000 and 50 000 deaths in the offensive and they never managed to regain their strength. Instead, their ranks were replaced by the North Vietnamese Army, which began to assert itself in the south. As an autonomous unit, the Viet Cong contributed very little to the fighting after the Tet Offensive, and henceforth most of the fighting was between the ARVN (and the USA) and the North Vietnamese army.

After the Tet Offensive, the USA and ARVN recovered quickly but at home, American confidence was shaken and there was increasing pressure to negotiate for a withdrawal. American diplomats in Moscow were used in secret talks to intimate this US willingness. At the same time, US President Nixon began to phase in US withdrawal, with an announcement that 25 000 soldiers would be coming home in 1969, and plans for a further 150 000 in 1970. This mollified the public at home but contributed to demoralization of those troops still stationed in Vietnam.

In 1968 peace talks began in Paris that lasted until 1973. The main participants in these talks were US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and North Vietnamese Le Duc Tho. North Vietnam insisted on complete withdrawal of American forces and the replacement of the South Vietnamese regime with a coalition government. Their position was strengthened by an increasing number of military defeats and the pressure that the US government felt from the public to withdraw from Vietnam. By 1971 the USA had openly considered withdrawal, and the North Vietnamese no longer insisted on a coalition government in the South. These two changes were compromises that allowed the talks to move forward and both sides felt confident that an agreement could be reached.

They did not consider the South Vietnamese, however. When presented with what they saw as a *fait accompli*, the government in Saigon insisted on making changes to the treaty to show its input in the process. Kissinger's presentation of these changes incensed the North Vietnamese who thought they had negotiated a settlement. In return, they demanded further changes. The USA responded with an intense bombing campaign that succeeded in bringing the North Vietnamese back to the negotiation table and on 27 January 1973 the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam was signed by representatives of South Vietnamese Communists, North Vietnam, South Vietnam and the USA. The USA agreed to withdraw all its forces in 60 days, and a ceasefire was scheduled to begin on 28 January.

By March 1973 all US troops were gone from Vietnam and war among the Vietnamese was renewed. The North Vietnamese already had numerous troops in South Vietnam, and they gained momentum after the withdrawal of American forces and an end to US bombing campaigns. Additionally,



the regime in the South was plagued with inflation, corruption and food shortages, making it even less popular than it had been. The situation was exacerbated by massive desertions from the ARVN.

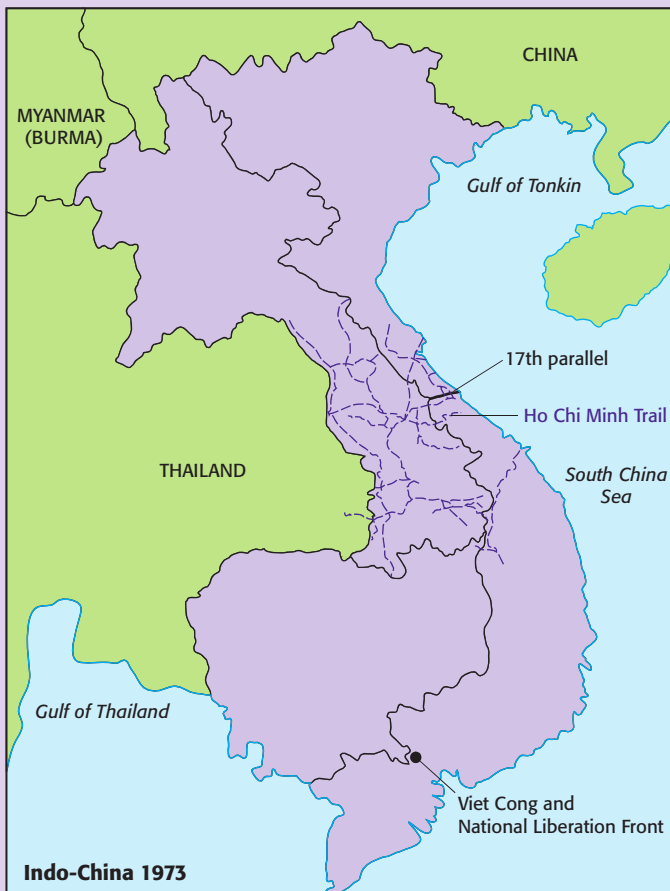
In March 1975 the North launched their final offensive. Planning for it to last two years, they were as surprised as anyone when it lasted for two months instead. The government in Saigon collapsed and, with it, the army. Thieu resigned from office on 21 April and fled to Taiwan. The North Vietnamese army took city after city, culminating with Saigon on 30 April 1975.

This action is often referred to as the fall of Saigon, but in reality, the North Vietnamese Army marched unopposed into the city. No army remained to fight against them, and the population seemed resigned to their occupation. The USA evacuated, leaving behind hundreds of thousands of South Vietnamese civil servants and officers who would face the wrath of the North Vietnamese. However, the war was finally over and Vietnam was unified.

ATL Research skills

The Vietnam War had a number of sides and factions. Using the map, identify the following countries:

- 1 Socialist Republic of Vietnam
- 2 Republic of Vietnam
- 3 Laos
- 4 Cambodia



Why did the North Vietnamese win the Second Indo-China War?

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam

With unification of Vietnam, the north sought to impose communist policies on the entire country. This was done systematically and ruthlessly. This single-party state prohibited opposition parties and groups, imposed rule through censorship and forced collectivization and industrialization on the country. This created very negative consequences for the country as productivity declined and malnutrition resulted. To remedy this, in the 1980s the country introduced market-oriented policies and limited its spread of revolution to its neighbours.

The surrender of South Vietnam to the advancing North Vietnamese armies prevented the destruction of Saigon and led to the consolidation of communist control over the country. In 1976, the country was officially unified and renamed the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The country was a single-party state with the Communist Party the only legal party. The country was governed by executive and legislative branches that were elected by the population, but the Communist Party determined who could run for office, and so, as in many other single-party states, the system appeared to be bottom-up democracy, but in reality it was top-down autocracy.

Unlike other recently unified and independent states, the Vietnamese political leadership had political experience and saw the unification of Vietnam as an extension of the governance they had over North Vietnam previously. The Central Committee was composed of colleagues of Ho Chi Minh, increasingly elderly, and most of them officers and active combatants in the war for unification, but still determined to implement communist policies.

The civil servants and military officers from the South Vietnamese regime were quickly identified and arrested by the North Vietnamese. Rather than systematic execution, they were instead sent to rural re-education camps to be indoctrinated.

In a unified Vietnam, 80% of the population lived in the countryside and most were poor peasants. Left to their own devices they would not have supported the northern or southern regimes that had previously existed, but they accepted North Vietnamese control because they had to. Once again, the rural peasantry saw its livelihood threatened as the government insisted on the imposition of socialist economic policies in the countryside.

The economy

The economy was centrally planned and from 1975 to 1985 the government tried to implement collectivization and the development of heavy industry. The peasants that had recently been granted land in redistribution programmes in both the north and the south were now forced onto government-owned collectives. Also, at this time, private businesses were seized by the government and it was illegal to transport food and goods between provinces. The entire economy was directed by the state, which had very little revenue. As a result, Vietnam joined the COMECON, hoping to have a market there and, until Gorbachev came to power, received approximately \$3 billion per year in assistance from the USSR.



In 1986, however, Vietnam changed its economic policies dramatically, with the implementation of Doi Moi, or renovation. The economy had stagnated, and there were shortages of food, fuel and consumer goods throughout the country. The people were so poor that malnutrition was rife and threatened the well-being of the population. Furthermore, in the early 1980s there had been hyperinflation that was countered through the imposition of austerity measures. The political leadership was divided: the reform-minded pragmatists advocated a shift towards more capitalistic policies while the ideologues held onto the ideas of a socialist economy, fearing that economic liberalization could lead to the decline of socialism in the country. The pragmatists prevailed and in acknowledgment of the changing economic policies in the PRC and USSR, Doi Moi introduced market-oriented policies, allowing entrepreneurs to develop businesses that created small-scale consumer goods. This was initially successful, but seeing the political problems faced by the USSR after the introduction of *glasnost*, the government once again clamped down on reform policies. Seeing China's ability to implement economic reform while maintaining its political control gave them renewed confidence in Doi Moi, and reforms were once again encouraged. Vietnam achieved around 8% annual GDP growth from 1990 to 1997 while foreign investment grew threefold and domestic savings quintupled.

Social policies

Like other single-party states, the will of the state was enforced through a secret police, the Cong An. These security forces were responsible for maintaining order, and any sort of negative speech, art or publication could be a reason for public punishment, including imprisonment. To rid the country of its colonial and capitalist influences, paintings, sculpture and literature created before 1975 were banned. Instead, all had to be government sanctioned with pro-communist, pro-nationalist messages.

To this end, there was censorship of the arts and also the media. Government-sanctioned news agencies produced the news that was delivered in government-owned newspapers, on the radio and eventually television. Due to the country's proximity to Thailand it was not possible to keep out all foreign news, but it was greatly limited.

Over 90% of the population of Vietnam comes from the same ethnic group, so minority issues are limited mostly to religious minorities, rather than ethnic or racial minorities. Religion was brought under government control; only state-controlled churches were allowed to exist and their activities were closely monitored by the Cong An. The Protestant Montagnard of the central highlands and the Hoa Hao Buddhists of the south have made claims of religious persecution due to religion and have protested the seizure of their land during the war. Generally, however, the homogeneity of the country has meant that persecution was due mostly to class, with landowners and southern elites targeted and sent either to re-education or labour camps.

Like other communist countries, Vietnam has had to contend with the flight of refugees from their country. In the days immediately after the fall of Saigon, hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese escaped in any way

possible across the frontiers to bordering countries or through the South China Sea on makeshift rafts and boats. It is estimated that one million Vietnamese fled, ending up in refugee camps in Thailand, Indonesia or Malaysia for as long as five years while they waited for asylum. These boat people have been accepted in Australia, New Zealand and the USA. Also, a number of Vietnamese in the north sought refuge in China and remain there.

Foreign policies

During the Cold War, Vietnam was clearly in the communist bloc, and at times served as a bridge between the USSR and PRC, receiving assistance from both during the Vietnam War. However, the Vietnamese had been under Chinese influence for centuries and sought to eliminate that, along with the western, colonial influences of France and the USA. Relations between communist China and Vietnam were strained as both sought to establish their influence in Cambodia, and in 1979 there was a brief conflict between the two countries that led to a three-week invasion of Vietnam by Chinese forces. Although the Chinese withdrew and the matter was reconciled, relations were poor between the two countries.

On the other hand, Vietnam enjoyed the benefits of Soviet patronage. In addition to economic assistance, the USSR provided Vietnam with military assistance in the form of training and materials. This allowed for the build-up of the Vietnamese army, which the USSR encouraged to deter western aggression in the region. The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the end of the USSR meant the end of Soviet assistance and markets for Vietnam. This led to a decline in the economy, and the Vietnamese struggled to find other trading partners.

Twenty years after its withdrawal, the USA extended diplomatic recognition to Vietnam, and with it opened up trade relations. The end of the Soviet regime in Russia did not exactly benefit Vietnam but it did give the country new markets where the public had more disposable income and more purchasing power. Additionally, it opened Vietnam to tourism from the West, which benefited the country as well.

US bombing campaigns and North Vietnamese transportation networks had involved Laos and Cambodia in their struggle during the Vietnam War and thus, regionally, Vietnam was isolated during the Cold War. Furthermore, its policy of supporting communist regimes in Indo-China further alienated their neighbours. In Laos, Vietnam assisted the Laotian communists in their attempt to seize power. And, in 1978 Vietnam occupied Cambodia, or Kampuchea. The Khmer Rouge government under Pol Pot had Chinese backing but the Vietnamese supported a pro-Vietnamese regime and thus invaded their neighbour. This led to a ten-year occupation; it was only in 1989 that Vietnam withdrew its forces. Since then, relations with its neighbours have improved as Vietnam has become less aggressive towards its neighbours and more capitalistic in its outlook.



Conclusion

After nearly 60 years of hardship and upheaval, Vietnam finally seems to have a stable government that is accepted in the international community. Like its neighbour to the north, Vietnam has a capitalist economic programme while maintaining its socialist government. There have been changes in governance since the collapse of the USSR, but they have made small inroads. The Communist Party is an institutionalized party, and the means for political success in the country. But, the country has seen limited social and political reforms. Despite the volatility that the country suffered from 1945 to 1975, it is now one of the longest-lasting socialist regimes in the world, politically stable and economically dynamic.

ATL Research skills

Once you have finished your research and written your analysis you are ready to explain your conclusion. Remember, a research paper is not a mystery novel – the reader should not find a surprise ending, that is, an ending that has not been supported by the research and analysis you presented in the main section. That would make you seem inconsistent. If the paper had a research question presented in the introduction, your conclusion should answer the research question in a direct and explicit manner. If the paper was structured with the presentation of a thesis in the introduction, the conclusion will be something of a restatement of your thesis with explanatory comments. It should be relatively brief, and perhaps point to unresolved issues or the bigger picture.

After you have completed your paper, your teacher might ask you to reflect on the process. In this process you should consider how you conducted your research, what was successful or unsuccessful, and how you made any corrections. Another element to consider is the quality and number of sources you have used. Were there enough? Was there a good range that considered different perspectives? Were there enough primary sources available to you? What did you learn as a historian, in the historical process? In answering your questions you should have a good idea of what worked well, where more assistance or time would have been helpful, and what you will do differently in the future.

TOK discussion

While the North Vietnamese Army was fighting South Vietnam and the USA, they were taught that the South Vietnamese people were oppressed by South Vietnamese and American elites and had very little control over their own lives. Much to their surprise, when they began the occupation of the south after the fall of Saigon, they saw that the people in the south had far more than they did: their fields were more productive and consumer goods were available.

Imagine for a moment that you are a soldier in the North Vietnamese Army who runs across this contradiction. You are a dedicated socialist and have fought for years to spread communism throughout Vietnam and to liberate the south from its overlords.

For a person who believed firmly in the socialist ideals of North Vietnam, how would you rationalize this discrepancy? To what extent would you admit that you might have been misled by your government? Would this change your ideas about your government? What about towards socialism?

Exam-style questions

1. Evaluate the effect of the Cold War on Vietnam from 1945 to 1975.
2. To what extent did the Cold War affect the outcome of the Vietnam War?

Writing the body of the essay

Question

Discuss the impact of one country in either Europe or Asia on the emergence of superpower rivalry between 1943 and 1949.

Analysis

Once you have formulated your introduction, in which you presented a thesis and identified the events you would use to make your argument in answer to the question, you can now structure the main body of the essay. When students first start writing essays they tend to either describe situations or tell a story, and the words examiners use for these types of essays are descriptive and narrative, respectively. However, an essay needs to go further than this and to use the events being described to advance an argument.

A body paragraph is, in some respects, a mini-essay in itself that should have an introduction, a body and conclusion. However, it is within the larger context of the entire essay so it also needs to be related back to the whole essay.

Once again, there is a mnemonic that can help you: **PEEL**.

- **P** = Point – your topic sentence where you present the argument for this paragraph
- **E** = Evidence – the facts you will use to support the argument
- **E** = Explanation – the analysis of the evidence you present
- **L** = Linkage – where you relate this argument back to the larger question.

Read through the following body paragraph:

At Yalta the Big 3 decided they needed to make decisions about Germany as it was definitely going to fall soon. At first they decided to divide Germany into three parts – one each for the UK, USSR and US – but later the UK wanted France to get a share but the Soviets did not want to give up their portion, so Stalin told FDR and Churchill that France could have a part, but it had to come out of the US and UK spheres so the Soviets took one third of Germany and the other two-thirds were divided between France, the UK and the USA. The four were supposed to have joint command of Germany but soon after the German surrender it was obvious that the western powers did not have the same goals as the USSR.

Now answer the following questions in groups of four:

1. Indo-ChineseIs there useful information in this paragraph? If so, what is it?
2. How could the information be more useful? What would you add?
3. Is there an argument here?