

# **Vietnam War and Domestic Conflict, 1964-1975**



# Social Change in America

- **Civil Rights Movement and Desegregation**
- **Power Movements**
- **Assassination of JFK 1963; Malcolm X 1965; MLK 1968**
- **Cold War and Anti-Communism**
- **Economic growth and consumerism**
- **Great Society and War on Poverty**

# Great Society and War on Poverty

- JFK and **Lyndon Johnson**
- Programs to help the poor
- Access to education and employment
- Poverty is a personal failure
- No discussion of institutional problems
- Liberal and superficial
- Cold War political environment

# Continued

---

- **Head Start**
  - Preschool
- **Upward Bound**
  - Disadvantaged and “troubled” youth
- **Job Corps**
  - High school retention
- **VISTA**
  - “Domestic Peace Corps”

# More Programs

---

- **Aid to Families with Dependent Children**
- **Public Broadcasting Service (PBS)**
- **Clean Air Act (1963)**
- **Wilderness Act (1964)**
- **Clean Waters Act (1966)**

# Johnson's Great Society

- **Medicare:** 1965 step towards national health care system
- **Medicaid:** 1966 step to help the poor with welfare assistance, employment access
- **Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965**
- **Housing and Urban Development**
- **Department of Transportation**

# The Vietnam War 1950-1975

- The Cold War
- Containment
- Truman Doctrine
- Eisenhower's "Domino Theory"
- Vietnam was the first domino
- Stop communism in S.E. Asia







# Significance of the War

- Over \$200 billion spent
- 60,000 U.S. dead
- 3 million dead in Indo-China
- Destroyed presidency of LBJ
- Destroyed Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia
- Ruined U.S. credibility
- Ruined trust of U.S. public

# Historical Background



- Foreign occupation
- Chinese
- French colonialism
- Ho Chi Minh
- Dien Bien Phu, 1954
- French expelled
- Peasant Warfare

# U.S. Involvement

- Rejected Ho-Chi Minh
- \$2 billion to French
- Divided Vietnam in half
- Democratic Elections
- U.S. rejected them
- Nation building
- Ngo Din Diem “Ziem”
- 1955-63 years



# Growing Civil War

- U.S. supported anti-communist, catholic, pro-western elitist Diem
- No support in Vietnam
- No free speech, reform
- Pushed people to support Ho Chi Minh
- Rebellion in south

# North

- North Vietnamese Army (NVA)
- Reunification
- Expel foreign powers
- “Viet-Cong”
- Repopulation of military forces

# South

- Propped up Diem
- Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN)
- CIA and counter-insurgency
- Napalm, defoliants
- National Liberation Front (NLF)
- Peasants supported Ho Chi Minh

# A Wider War, 1963-1968

- Diem Assassinated
- Chaos in Saigon
- Tonkin Gulf Resolution, 1964
- Da Nang, 1965
- ROLLING THUNDER
- 100,000 troops
- Gen. William Westmoreland



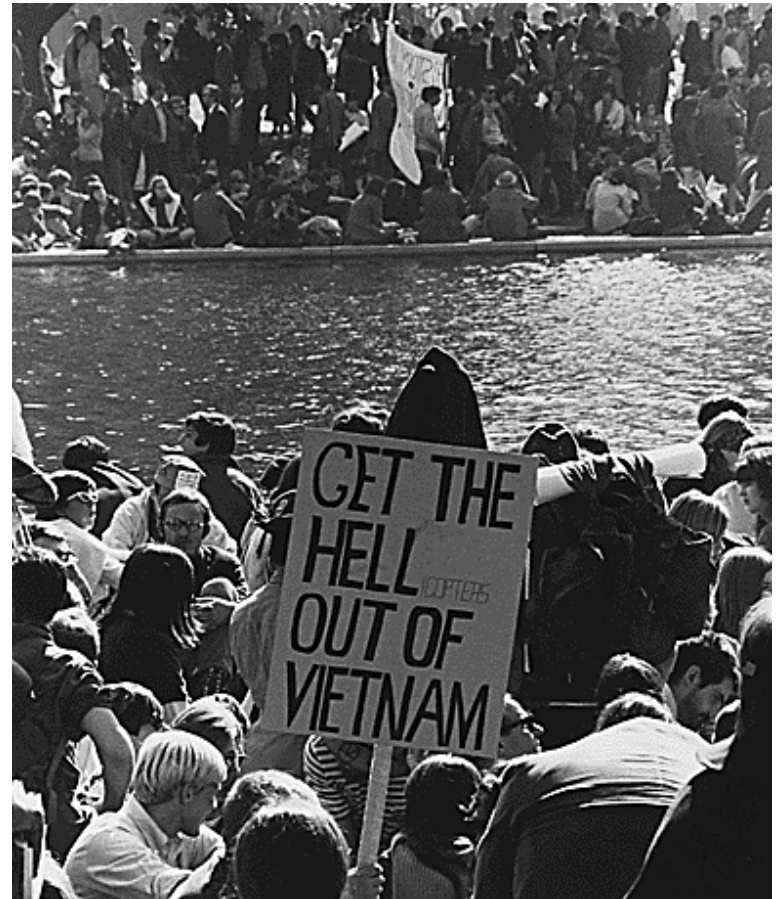
# Goals of the War



- Robert S. McNamara (DOD)
- Limit war to Vietnam
- Stop Vietcong
- Prop up Saigon
- Separate civilians from combatants
- Convince south of U.S. goals

# Reactions to the War

- **Anti-War Movement**
- **Free Speech Movement**
- **Buddhist Monks**
- **Forced southern civilians to support NLF and HO**









# Pentagon Rationale

- **70% to avoid a humiliating defeat, especially to our reputation and credibility as a guarantor**
- **20% to keep SVN and area out of Chinese hands**
- **10% to permit the people of SVN to enjoy better life**

– Department of Defense Report, 1965

# An Impossible War....



- 1965 - 1968 escalated troops to 550,000
- Search & destroy missions
- Carpet Bombing
- Body count
- VC initiated 90% of firefights
- “Destroy the village to save it”
- Strategic Hamlets

# U.S.

- Largest military in world history
- Herbicides & defoliants
- Napalm
- 100 million pounds onto 6 million acres
- Agent Orange
- \$2 bill per month

# Vietcong

- 1967, 97,000 worked daily to repair roads, bridges
- 500,000 workers
- 30,000 miles of tunnel
- VC initiated battles
- Integrated into civilian population
- Total war

# Tet Offensive

- **January 31, 1968**
- **NVN launch massive attack on all provinces and Cities**
- **Nearly 100,000 NVA/NLF**
- **Entered American Embassy**
- **Massive Attack that stunned America**
- **Caused LBJ to de-escalate and refused to run for election**

# My Lai Massacre, 1968

- Lt. William Calley, platoon of soldiers
- “Clearing out” a small village
- Killed over 300 Vietnamese civilians
- U.S. helicopter forced them to stop, evacuated the Vietnamese survivors
- U.S. government cover-up
- Shocked America, helped anti-war movement

# My Lai Massacre





# Reactions to the War

- Chicago, 1968
- MLK killed
- Kent State, 1970
- Draft Resistance
- Canada
- Conscientious Objector status



# Anti-War Movement



- **“Teach-Ins”**
- **Occupations**
- **Chicano War Moratorium**
- **Vietnam Veterans Against the War**
- **CALCAV: Clergy and Laity Concerned about Vietnam**

# Vietnam Veterans Against the War



# More Protests....



# Pentagon Protest, 1971



# Chicago, 1970



# Nixon's "Secret Plan"

---

- Vietnam killed LBJ's presidency and Great Society
- Nixon won election with a "Secret Plan" to end the war
- "Vietnamization"
- Phoenix Program

# Nixon's Vietnam

- **Cambodia/Laos (1969-79)**
  - Invaded Laos and Cambodia
  - Hope to find Ho Chi Minh Trail & VC HQ
- **Carpet bombings**
  - Violated national sovereignty and neutrality
  - Breakfast, Lunch, Snack
  - More bombs than all of World War Two
- **Lied to American public**
  - Secret and unauthorized by Congress



# End of War

- Peace Treaty in 1973
- Last Americans out of Embassy in 1975
- Kissinger won a Nobel Peace Prize
- Vietnamese counterpart refused it



# Significance of the War

- **Cost more than \$200 billion**
- **Ruined the Great Society**
- **60,000 dead**
- **Over 600,000 wounded**
- **3 million served**
- **Agent Orange, PTSD, addictions, ruined families**
- **Ruined U.S. foreign policy**
- **Cynicism of American politicians**
- **Corruption in government**

# Significance of the War

- **For Southeast Asia**
- **Ruined Vietnamese economy and culture for 20 years or more**
- **Agent Orange and chemicals destroyed crops and polluted environment**
- **Extreme Communism and dictatorship**
- **Persecution of Catholic and French Vietnamese**

# Continued

- 3 million dead in Southeast Asia
- Cambodia, Laos, China, U.S.S.R
- NLF/NVA nearly 500,000 dead
- 9,000 out of 15,000 hamlets destroyed
- 25 million acres of farmland destroyed
- 12 million acres of forest ruined
- 900,000 orphans
- 181,000 disabled persons
- Vietnamese “boat people” and 1.5 million who fled the country

# **“Lessons” from Vietnam (DOD)**

- **Kissinger discredits the Domino theory**
- **Saigon regime was a puppet government**
- **American efforts doomed from the start**
- **North Vietnamese had superior leadership, access to the people, and historical legitimacy in their fight against outside powers**
- **Comprehensive and integrated warfare**
- **Vietnamese manipulated Soviets and Chinese**
- **Did not understand Vietnamese History & Culture**
- **Vietnam had no real National Security Value**

# Vietnam and Social Unrest

- **Power Movements gained influence**
- **Black Power**
- **Brown Power**
- **Anger at U.S. international policy and domestic treatment of “minorities”**
- **Militant and nationalistic**
- **Vietnam War and deaths**

# Black Power

- Black Panther Party for Self Defense
- Oakland, CA
- Police Brutality
- Racism
- Vietnam War
- Community
- Global view



# Chicano Movement



- Farm worker struggles
- Cesar Chavez & Delores Huerta
- School walk-outs
- Reis Lopez Tijerina and NM land grants
- Corky Gonzalez
- Brown Berets
- War Moratorium



# Conclusions from the Era

- Vietnam War as background and central story
- Reactions against injustice at home and U.S. foreign policy
- Anti-war protests & free speech
- Radicalization as reaction to growing oppression
- Power movements as source of pride, political empowerment and challenge to inequality
- Mistrust of the government