

**CWA 4.1 – Origins of the Vietnam War (Page 1 of 6)**

Instructions: On each page, first, underline the dates and time markers (for example, "In the same year...") in the text below. Next, write a chronological list of the dates and include a one-sentence description of its importance and answer the questions posed. The first page is done for you.

**Regional History**

In ancient history, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam were connected to one another through the exchange of culture and religion. They also engaged in trade, as well as fought one another over territory. China bordered these three countries on the north. While they traded with China, they each had a history of conflict with China too. For nearly 1000 years, China held power over Vietnam before Vietnam achieved its independence in 939 under the rule of King Ngo Quyen.



Vietnam South Asia and Vietnam Detail Map, CIA Factbook. Source: Central Intelligence Agency, [https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/maps/vietnam\\_detail\\_map.html](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/maps/vietnam_detail_map.html) & <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/maps/vietnam.html>

List two time markers with explanation (what happened and when):

- *Ancient history: Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam connected through culture & religion; region traded and fought with China*
- *Approximately 200 BC – 939: China controlled by Vietnam*
- *939: Vietnam achieves independence*

## CWA 4.1 – Origins of the Vietnam War (Page 2 of 6)

### French Colonialism

In modern history, many European countries seized areas of Asia and Africa and made them into their colonies. A colony is established when native land or territory is ruled by a distant country. France violently took over Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam in the mid-1800s. By 1893, France re-organized these countries as colonies under one name—“Indochina.” Determined to “civilize” the people of Indochina, the French imposed upon the Southeast Asians Western culture, religion, language, and government. Many endured forced labor in the production of tin, pepper, coal, cotton, rice, and rubber.



*Group of children, with baskets, posed under palm tree, Saigon, South Vietnam, ca. 1890 – 1923. Source: Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98507284/>*

While the primary motivation for colonialism, the system by which colonies are maintained, was economic exploitation, each of the countries within French Indochina experienced colonialism differently. French presence was especially strong in Vietnam where it had set up administrative centers in the South (Cochinchina), Center (Annam), and North (Tonkin). The Vietnamese faced economic oppression, such as high taxes and monopolies on salt and trade. French dominance permeated throughout all of Vietnam’s cultural, educational, and political institutions.

List two time markers with explanation (what happened and when):

What is a colony?

What was the primary motivation for French colonialism in Southeast Asia?

## CWA 4.1 – Origins of the Vietnam War (Page 3 of 6)

### Rebellions and Revolution

From the very beginning, the colonized people wanted to be free of French rule. Over the years, there were many anti-colonial uprisings and rebellions throughout all of Southeast Asia. World War II (1939-1945) was a turning point in the struggle for independence.

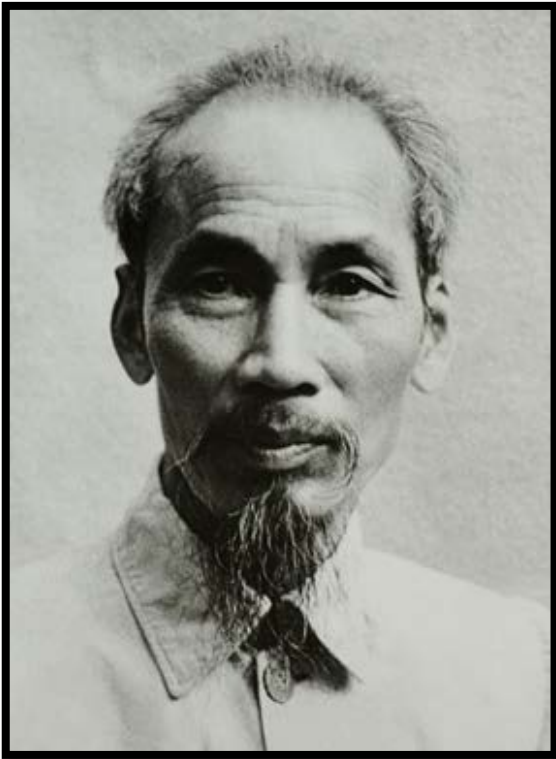
When Germany invaded France in 1940, France was forced to give up control of Indochina to Japan, an ally of Germany. Busy with their war efforts, Japan appointed local government leaders. Taking advantage of French military and political weakness at the time and in protest against Japanese occupation, anti-colonial movements flourished. Seizing on this opportunity, the Viet Minh is formed in 1941, a nationalist movement who called for Vietnamese independence, led by Ho Chi Minh. Japan removed the French from Vietnam in March of 1945. Six months later, the U.S. drops two atomic bombs on Japan, ending WWII, when Japan surrenders to the Allies on August 14. By August 19, Viet Minh revolutionaries seized power in Hanoi, in what becomes known as the August Revolution. On August 25, the emperor of South Vietnam turned over control to the Viet Minh. In the North, Ho Chi Minh declares the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in September. Despite the August Revolution, Vietnam did not have peace. France returned to re-colonize Vietnam in 1946.



*Three Japanese oilers burning in Camranh Bay, Indochina. TBM's from the US Hornet (CV-12) which delivered the fatal bombs fly overhead, ca. January 12, 1945. Department of Defense. Department of the Navy. Source: National Archives, ARC Identifier: 520865.*

| Time Marker   | What happened? Why is this important? |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1940  |                                       |
| 1941  |                                       |
| March, 1945   |                                       |
| August 14, 1945                                       |                                       |
| August 19, 1945                                       |                                       |
| August 25, 1945                                       |                                       |
| September, 1945                                       |                                       |
| 1946  |                                       |
| What was the effect of Japanese surrender on Vietnam? |                                       |

## CWA 4.1 – Origins of the Vietnam War (Page 4 of 6)



Ho Chi Minh, 1946. Cropped version Source: Wikipedia Commons, Vietnamese Public Domain, [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ho\\_Chi\\_Minh\\_1946\\_and\\_signature.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ho_Chi_Minh_1946_and_signature.jpg)

### The Cold War

Unlike WWII, which was fought between the Axis (Germany, Italy, Japan) and the Allies (U.S., Soviet Union, Britain), the Cold War saw the United States and Soviet Union on opposite sides. Both the U.S. and the Soviet Union viewed Vietnam as strategically important. Ho Chi Minh made several requests for U.S. support for Vietnamese independence in the 1940s. He even modeled the Vietnamese Declaration of Independence (September 2, 1945) after America's. However, Ho Chi Minh was a communist and the U.S. and France were long-time allies. France had lent its support of America's Marshall Plan in 1947 to rebuild Europe economically. The United States was committed to this containment policy. France sought and received funds from the U.S. in its campaign to retake Vietnam. In 1950, the U.S. established the U.S. Military Advisory Group-Indochina. In the same year, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China officially recognized the DRV and sent aid to Ho Chi Minh. From 1950-52, the U.S. spent \$50 million in military and economic aid to support nation-building and fight the communists in South Vietnam. Elsewhere in Asia, the Korean War was fought from 1950-1953. The U.S. sent troops to fight on behalf of South Korea against communist-led forces in North Korea, which was supported by China. The Korean peace treaty made permanent the division of Korea along the demilitarized zone (DMZ).

| Time Marker                                  | What happened? Why is this important? |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1940s  |                                       |
| Sept. 2, 1945                                |                                       |
| 1947   |                                       |
| 1950   |                                       |
| 1950   |                                       |
| 1950-52                                      |                                       |
| 1950-53                                      |                                       |
| Why did the U.S. refuse to help Ho Chi Minh? |                                       |

## CWA 4.1 – Origins of the Vietnam War (Page 5 of 6)

### First Indochina War

From 1946-1954, Southeast Asians fought the First Indochina War in a war of independence from French reoccupation. On May 7, 1954, Ho Chi Minh's forces finally defeated the French in the battle of Dien Bien Phu. The Geneva Accords, the peace treaty, called for the French to withdraw and give independence to Cambodia and Laos. Vietnam was more complicated. The country was divided between North and South at the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel, known as the demilitarized zone (DMZ), until 1956 when reunification would be decided by a presidential election. North Vietnam would be communist, governed by Ho Chi Minh. South Vietnam would be anti-communist. To give South Vietnam international recognition as a new country, the United States, along with France, Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines, Thailand and Pakistan formed the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, or SEATO, in September 1954; South Vietnam was signed on as a formal member. SEATO existed to prevent the spread of communism in Southeast Asia. The U.S. installed a pro-western leader, Ngo Dinh Diem as the president of the Republic of Vietnam in the South in 1955. The same year, with U.S. assistance, South Vietnam forms the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN).



*President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles (from left) greet South Vietnam President Ngo Dinh Diem, Washington National Airport, May 8, 1957. Dept. of Defense, Dept. of the Air Force. Source: National Archives, ARC Identifier: 542189.*

| Time Marker                                   | What happened? Why is this important? |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1946 - 54                                     |                                       |
| May 7, 1954                                   |                                       |
| 1954  |                                       |
| 1955  |                                       |
| 1955  |                                       |
| What did the Geneva Accords mean for Vietnam? |                                       |
| What was the purpose of SEATO?                |                                       |

CWA 4.1 – Origins of the Vietnam War (Page 6 of 6)



*Vietnam. Vietnamese army personnel training in the jungle, May, 1962. U.S. Dept. of Defense, Department of the Army. Source: National Archives, ARC Identifier: 530607.*

**The Vietnam War**

An election never took place in Vietnam because the two opposing sides—South Vietnam supported by the U.S., and North Vietnam supported by China and Russia—could not agree on the terms of the presidential election. The U.S. believed that Ho Chi Minh would win the election, because of his popularity. North and South Vietnam were positioned to fight a civil war to determine which government would rule post-colonial Vietnam. Both sides built up their armed forces and engaged in battles. Thus began the Second Indochina War, known to Americans as the Vietnam War. It is called the Second Indochina War by historians because fighting also took place in Cambodia and Laos.

Why did the Second Indochina War start in 1956?

Why did the U.S. get involved in this conflict?

Why do historians call it the Second Indochina War?

CWA 4.2 – Southeast Asia Map

# The Vietnam War



*Map of Vietnam War, Sonali Dujari, for California History-Social Science Project. Copyright © 2013 Regents of the University of California, All Rights Reserved.*