EDEXCEL GCSE HISTORY - PAPER 3

THE VIETNAM WAR

Name: _____

Group: _____

The Vietnam War – Revision Checklist

How well do I know each topic?				
3	**US Involvement in Vietnam, 1954-75**	☹	😐	☺
4	The Cold War			
4	The End of French Rule in Vietnam			
5	The Division of Vietnam			
6	Greater Involvement Under Eisenhower (1953-61)			
7	Greater Involvement Under Kennedy (1961-63)			
8	Greater Involvement Under Johnson (1963-69)			
10	US Tactics			
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12	The Tet Offensive (1968)			
13	Vietnamisation Under Nixon			
14	Expansion of the War Under Nixon			
15	*Section 1 Recap Questions*			
17	**Reactions to US Involvement in Vietnam, 1964-75**	☹	😐	☺
18	Reasons for Growing Opposition to the War			
19	The My Lai Massacre (1968)			
19	The Kent State Shootings (1970)			
21	Reasons for Support for the War			
22	Peace Negotiations, 1972-73			
23	The Cost of the War for the USA			
24	Reasons for the USA's Failure in Vietnam			
25	*Section 2 Recap Questions*			
27	***Summary of Key Individuals***			
28	***Timeline***			

Section 1:

US Involvement in Vietnam, 1954-75

What was the Cold War?

The **Cold War** was a long period of **tension** between America and the Soviet Union (USSR) after WW2. The two countries had very different ideas about economics and government.

- **The Soviet Union was communist**. **Communism** is where the government controls all businesses and resources, and decides where people live and work. In theory, this means that wealth is shared equally amongst everyone in the country.
- **America was a capitalist country**. **Capitalism** is where people and businesses control themselves, and people decide where they live and work. This might mean that some people in society are very rich and some people are very poor.

The USA and USSR never actually fought each other – this is why it's known as a ***cold*** war. However, they did get involved in other wars between other communist and capitalist countries.

The Cold War:

_____

_____

Communism:

_____

_____

The End of French Rule in Vietnam

Vietnam, in Asia, had once been a French colony. After WW2 a communist group called the **Vietminh** fought against the French for independence.

- The Vietminh was led by **Ho Chi Minh** and its support was strongest in the **north**. They were backed by the Soviet Union and China (which were both also communist).
- In the **south**, the French (desperate to keep hold of Vietnam) put former emperor **Bao Dai** in charge. They wanted a democratic country and were backed by the anti-communist USA.

The Battle of Dien Bien Phu (1954)

In 1954, the Vietminh defeated the French in a battle at **Dien Bien Phu.** The Vietminh won for several reasons:

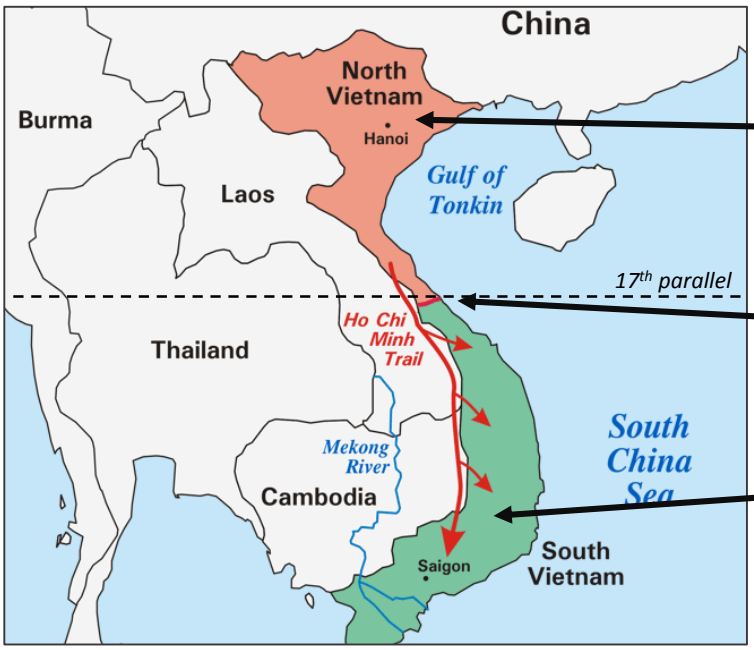
- They were familiar with the local area
- They had the support of local people
- They had more troops – 50,000 v. 15,000 French
- They had support from communist China

The Division of Vietnam

The Geneva Accords (1954)

After the French defeat, nine countries met and came up with the **Geneva Accords.** They agreed that Vietnam would be temporarily divided into **North** and **South** along the **17th parallel.**

Elections would then be held in 1956 to create a united Vietnam.



North Vietnam, ruled by **Ho Chi Minh (Communist)**

*A **demilitarised zone** (DMZ) separated the two countries along the **17th parallel**.*

South Vietnam, ruled by **Bao Dai (anti-communist)** then **Ngo Dinh Diem** from 1955

However, South Vietnam's prime minister Diem **refused to hold elections** in 1956, because he feared Ho Chi Minh (North Vietnam) would win. As a result, Vietnam stayed divided.

A group called the **Vietcong (Vietnamese communists)** began to fight against Diem, encouraging people in the South to support communism. They were supported by North Vietnam, who from 1959 sent troops and weapons into the South via the **Ho Chi Minh Trail.**

- Vietnam had once been a colony belonging to _____France_____.
- In 1954, the French were defeated by the Vietnamese at _____.
- 9 countries then met and reached an agreement called the _____ Accords.
- They decided to divide Vietnam in two along the _____ parallel.
- North Vietnam was ruled by _____. He was a _____.
- South Vietnam was ruled by _____, who was anti-Communist.
- A communist group called the _____ began to fight against Diem in the South.
- North Vietnam sent troops and weapons into the South along the _____.

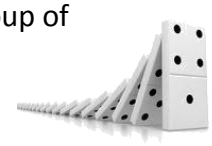
Greater Involvement Under Eisenhower (1953-61)

President Eisenhower (1953-61) wanted to help protect South Vietnam against the communist North. He believed in a **limited war** – sending **advisers** to train the South Vietnamese Army (ARVN), but not fighting with them. Eisenhower got the USA more involved in Vietnam for 2 reasons:

Reason 1: The 'domino theory'

America hated communism. The **domino theory** was the fear that if Vietnam became communist, other countries in that part of Asia would also become communist.

In 1954 Eisenhower set up the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (**SEATO**): a group of countries who would work together to stop communism spreading in the region.



Reason 2: Diem's government was weak

The South Vietnamese government, led by Prime Minister **Ngo Dinh Diem,** was cruel and unpopular:

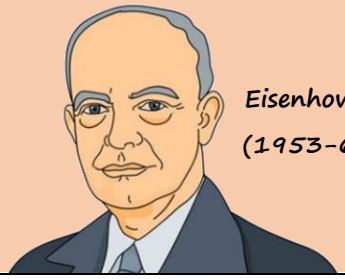
- Diem got rid of Bao Dai in a fixed referendum in 1955, then made himself president.
- He hunted and killed suspected communists in South Vietnam.
- He was a Catholic and he treated Vietnam's Buddhists harshly.
- He gave most government jobs to family members and Catholics.
- He didn't introduce reforms to help ordinary village peasants.
- He was seen as a puppet of the USA, not a man of the people.

By the end of 1960, Diem's government had control of less than half of South Vietnam – without America's help, it seemed unlikely to survive.

How did he increase involvement in Vietnam?

Reason 1

Reason 2



Eisenhower (1953-61)

Greater Involvement Under Kennedy (1961-63)

Kennedy continued Eisenhower's 'limited war' approach:

- He sent 16,000 more US advisers to train the ARVN.
- He focused on **pacification** – winning over local people so that they wouldn't support communism
- He sent in US Special Forces ('Green Berets'), who trained villagers to protect themselves from the VC.
- He agreed the use of chemical spraying to kill crops and jungle areas where the VC could be hiding.

The Strategic Hamlet Program (1962)

The US helped Diem set up **strategic hamlets**: large villages guarded by the ARVN, where people could feel safe and protected by the government. They hoped this would stop peasants being recruited by the Vietcong.

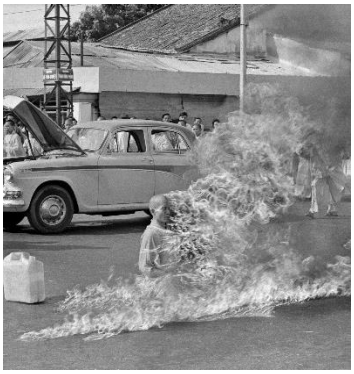
About 5,000 had been built by September 1962. However, the program actually turned more people *against* Diem's government:

- Villagers did not want to leave their old homes
- Diem's government didn't provide enough food, so people went hungry.

The overthrow of Diem (1963)

By 1963 the US had lost faith in Diem:

- **He was increasingly harsh to Buddhists**. His troops killed Buddhists and raided their temples. In June 1963 a Buddhist monk called Quang Duc famously burned himself to death in protest.
- **In January 1963 the ARVN lost the Battle of Ap Bac**, despite having more troops and US air support.
- **It was impossible for the ARVN to win over villagers**, who simply saw the army as part of Diem's corrupt government.



The US knew that Diem's unpopular, undemocratic government would never survive. In November 1963 Diem was assassinated in a coup by ARVN generals **- the USA knew it was coming but deliberately didn't warn him.**

Just 3 weeks after Diem's death, Kennedy was also assassinated. Lyndon B. Johnson took over as US President.

Buddhists	Kennedy's policy of keeping peace by trying to win over the local people.
Pacification	South Vietnamese program which aimed to protect villagers from being recruited by the Vietcong.
ARVN	Religious group which was treated harshly by Diem's government.
Limited war	The South Vietnamese army, which overthrew and assassinated Diem in November 1963.
Strategic Hamlets	The tactic of sending advisers and supplies, but not actually fighting, used by both Kennedy and Eisenhower.

Kennedy (1961-63)

Greater Involvement Under Johnson (1963-69)

President Johnson had the same goals as Kennedy – to set up a stable government in South Vietnam, and to avoid full-blown war. However, his situation was more difficult than Kennedy's.

The Vietcong was stronger

The VC was a much more serious threat than before. It seemed certain that South Vietnam would not survive without more US involvement. Johnson sent in more US advisers – there were 20,000 by 1964.

Why was the Vietcong more of a threat by 1964?

Local support

Respected villagers and made local reforms. Won people round with propaganda

Foreign aid

Could do more damage thanks to troops and supplies from China and the USSR

Organisation

Well organised and could act quickly

Vietcong ideals

Stressed that it was fighting against poverty, corruption and the USA

South Vietnam government

After Diem's death the government was weak, divided and unpopular because of its strategic hamlets program

The Gulf of Tonkin incident (1964)

On 4th August 1964, two US Navy ships – the *Maddox* and *C. Turner Joy* – claimed they had been torpedoed by North Vietnamese boats in the Gulf of Tonkin.

However, there were doubts over what actually happened. Conditions were stormy and some believed there had been no attack at all (although North Vietnamese boats had fired at the US two days earlier, on 2nd August).

- Ignoring the confusion, President Johnson retaliated by ordering US airstrikes on North Vietnam.
- On 7th August, Congress passed the **Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.** This allowed Johnson to send in US troops if necessary.
- The Resolution was not a declaration of war – although North Vietnam saw it that way.

North Vietnam responded by increasing their involvement in the South. They sent more people and supplies south, while the Vietcong attacked US bases.

The Gulf of Tonkin incident escalated the war. By 1965…

- …the US was spending $2m a day on the war
- …there were **184,300 US troops** in Vietnam (up from 23,300 in 1964)
- …both sides were committed to a war neither really wanted
- …many of Johnson's advisers were convinced that the war could be won quickly.

Johnson had the same goals as Kennedy before him: he wanted to keep South Vietnam free from communism, but still avoid full-blown _____. He therefore continued to send in US _____. However, he was in a more difficult situation than Kennedy because the _____ was much stronger and posed a much greater threat than before. Furthermore, the South Vietnamese government was weak and divided following the assassination of _____ in November 1963.

The war escalated following the _____ incident in August 1964. Two US ships claimed to have been attacked by North Vietnamese boats, although there was some confusion about what actually happened. Shortly after, _____ passed the Gulf of Tonkin _____, which allowed Johnson to use troops in Vietnam if necessary. North Vietnam saw this as a _____ of war.

Johnson (1963-69)

advisers	Diem	Gulf of Tonkin	declaration
Congress	Vietcong	Resolution	war

US Tactics

Operation Rolling Thunder (1965-68)

Rolling Thunder was a **bombing campaign** that targeted the Ho Chi Minh Trail and industrial areas in North Vietnam. As well as bombs the US also dropped napalm (a burning chemical) and pineapple bombs (which shoot pellets everywhere when they explode).

The first **ground troops** were sent in in March 1965, to protect the US air bases. Rolling Thunder caused significant damage to its targets. But -

- The Ho Chi Minh Trail was constantly repaired, so supplies still got through to the South.
- Aid from China and the USSR was not targeted.
- The destruction it caused turned the Vietnamese people against the USA.
- It killed thousands of civilians, which was bad for the USA's image.

Search and destroy

Search and destroy missions involved small units of US soldiers searching the jungle for VC camps, then ordering helicopters to bomb or spray them.

The USA thought these missions were successful because they destroyed VC supplies and tunnels. However, they made big mistakes:

- The US troops usually left the area once it had been 'destroyed'. This allowed the VC to move straight back in.
- The bombing and chemical spraying harmed villagers and turned them against the US.

During **Operation Cedar Falls (1967)**, the US and ARVN moved thousands of villagers to refugee camps and burned their villages, then declared the area a 'free-fire zone' – but many villagers didn't understand this and returned to their homes in the firing line.

Chemical warfare – Operation Ranch Hand

The US first used chemical weapons in Vietnam in 1961. They sprayed crops and jungle with herbicides to make the VC easier to find, and to cut off their food supply.

- **Agent Blue** was used to kill crops.
- **Agent Orange** was used to kill jungle forests.
- One plane could spray 300 acres in 4 minutes.
- The chemicals were very strong. They poisoned the soil and rivers, causing health issues and birth defects.
- Killing crops led to starvation.

People back home were outraged by the dangerous effects of spraying chemicals. The government stopped using them in 1971, but by then lots of damage had already been done.

Vietcong Tactics

The Vietcong had the home advantage – unlike the USA, they were familiar with Vietnam's jungle terrain and used it to their advantage. They fought a **guerrilla war:**

- They attacked with **simple traps and sabotage** (e.g. blowing up roads and bridges)
- They used **'hit and run'** tactics, attacking then disappearing back into the jungle
- They only fought big battles occasionally, so that when they did it was a **surprise** tactic
- They dressed like normal people – they were a **'shadowy enemy'**
- They used a complex system of **tunnels** to move around and surprise US troops

Tactics in the Vietnam War

		Key features	*Problems/mistakes for the USA*
Vietcong Tactics	Guerrilla Warfare		
US Tactics	Operation Rolling Thunder	Planes dropped bombs on the Ho Chi Minh Trail and industrial areas in the North.	
	Search and Destroy		
	Chemical Warfare		The harmful chemicals caused long-term health and environmental damage, which triggered outrage and criticism in the USA.

The Tet Offensive (1968)

The Tet Offensive was a series of attacks on cities and US bases by the VC and North Vietnamese. It began on January 30th 1968, which was the Vietnamese New Year (Tet).

Preparing for the offensive

- The VC and North Vietnamese attacked areas near the DMZ, to lure US and ARVN troops away from cities and bases. They surrounded the US base at Khe Sanh.
- The North Vietnamese suggested they might be willing to enter peace talks, to lure the US into a false sense of security.

Key features

- The Tet Offensive wasn't the usual jungle fighting – instead the VC and North Vietnamese attacked cities and military bases.
- The attacks began with the North Vietnamese and VC capturing key sites in Saigon such as the US embassy and ARVN headquarters.
- The attacks were on a much larger scale than usual. **84,000** communist troops took part.

The offensive was a tactical win for the US…

- The US and ARVN recaptured most cities and bases quickly.
- The VC suffered so many losses that they were almost wiped out.
- The offensive did not lead to a revolution in South Vietnam, as the VC had hoped.

…but a political win for North Vietnam and the VC:

- It was a huge propaganda victory for the VC – they had successfully caught the US off guard.
- People in America were shocked by the fighting, and lost faith in the government who said that the war would be won soon. Anti-war feeling increased.

Match these statements about the Tet Offensive with the person who would have made them.

The government tells us we're winning the war, yet somehow the VC managed to catch the US totally off guard! It's about time America got out of Vietnam.

Although we lost many men, the Tet Offensive was a political victory for the VC. We frightened the Americans and they are quickly losing public support for the war.

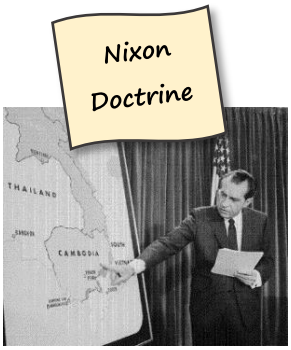
Tet was a victory for the US. We may have been caught off guard to begin with, but we quickly regained control and what's more, we've practically wiped the VC out.

A US soldier in Vietnam

A member of the US public

A VC fighter

Vietnamisation Under Nixon (1969-73)



Johnson didn't stand for re-election in 1968 because of the increasing criticism of the war. He was succeeded by **Richard Nixon**, who promised to get the USA out of the war.

Nixon's ideas – known as the **Nixon Doctrine -** said that the US would **no longer provide troops to its allies**, only aid and training.

This meant that the US would gradually withdraw and leave South Vietnam to fight their own war, a process called **Vietnamisation**.

Vietnamisation

Vietnamisation meant shifting responsibility for fighting to the South Vietnamese Army (ARVN).

- US ground troops would withdraw (but not the Air Force)
- The US would still provide training and equipment
- The US would leave with honour (it wouldn't simply abandon South Vietnam)
- South Vietnam would remain a separate (non-communist) country

Most Americans were pleased about troops being withdrawn, because it meant fewer US deaths. However, many army generals thought that with the VC weakened after the Tet Offensive, the US should be sending in *more* troops to finish them off. Vietnamisation failed for several reasons:

Why Vietnamisation failed

The ARVN

The ARVN was not strong enough to carry on the war without US troop support.

- It didn't have enough soldiers
  - Desertion was common
  - Corruption was common

US troops

US troops lost the will to fight once they knew they would soon be going home.

- Fragging was common (where soldiers killed their own officer)
- Many US soldiers used drugs (especially heroin)

Training and equipment

The US supplied the ARVN with training and equipment, but there were problems:

- The training was often rushed
- Instruction manuals were in English, not Vietnamese

Problems in South Vietnam

- When the US personnel left, 300,000 South Vietnamese lost their jobs and there was an economic crisis
- The government was still seen as a puppet of the USA

Expansion of the War Under Nixon (1969-73)

Cambodia (1970)

In 1969 Nixon secretly ordered the bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail in neighbouring Cambodia, and in **1970** he sent in **30,000 US troops.**

America achieved its aim of damaging the Ho Chi Minh Trail and preventing a communist government in Cambodia, but people back home were outraged at Nixon for expanding the war. Congress cancelled the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.

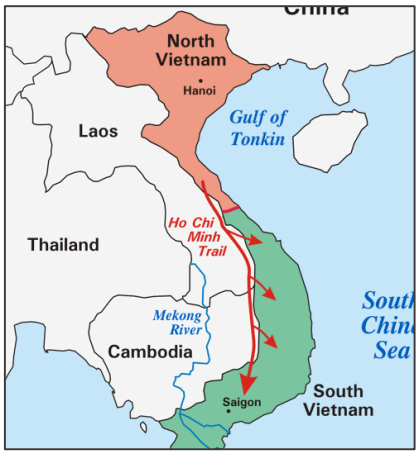
Laos (1971)

In 1971 the US agreed to provide air support for an ARVN invasion of Laos, where communists were still using the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The ARVN attacked the city of Tchepone but were driven out by the communists – an embarrassment for the USA.

Bombing of North Vietnam (1972)

In 1972 the North Vietnamese attacked the South in the **Easter Offensive,** so the USA responded with **Operation Linebacker** – heavy bombing of North Vietnam.

- Major cities including Hanoi were targeted
- North Vietnamese industry and communication was destroyed
- Supplies from China and the USSR were disrupted



Ceasefire (1973)

By 1972 both sides felt pressured to make peace, and a ceasefire was agreed in the **Paris Agreement** in 1973. However, America never got what it had been fighting for all along - in March 1975 North Vietnam invaded the South, and Vietnam became united as a communist country.

Select the correct answer to these questions (some may have more than one).

Nixon (1969-73)

1. Which neighbours of Vietnam were bombed under Nixon's orders?

Cambodia | Thailand | China | Laos

2. President Nixon's ideas on Vietnam were known as the Nixon _____?

Theory | Doctrine | Principle | Concept

3. In which year did America carry out heavy bombing of North Vietnam?

1970 | 1971 | 1972 | 1973

4. Under its 'Vietnamisation' policy, which of these would America still provide?

Ground troops | Air support | Training & equipment

Section 1 Recap Questions

1. Before WW2, Vietnam had been a colony belonging to which country?

2. Who was the communist leader of North Vietnam?

3. What happened to Vietnam as a result of the 1954 Geneva Accords?

4. What was Eisenhower's 'domino theory'?

5. Give one reason why the President of South Vietnam, Diem, was unpopular.

6. What were strategic hamlets?

7. What happened as a result of the Gulf of Tonkin incident?

8. What tactics did the Vietcong use?

9. What was Operation Rolling Thunder?

10. When was the Tet Offensive?

11. Why did the US consider the Tet Offensive a tactical victory?

12. What was Vietnamisation?

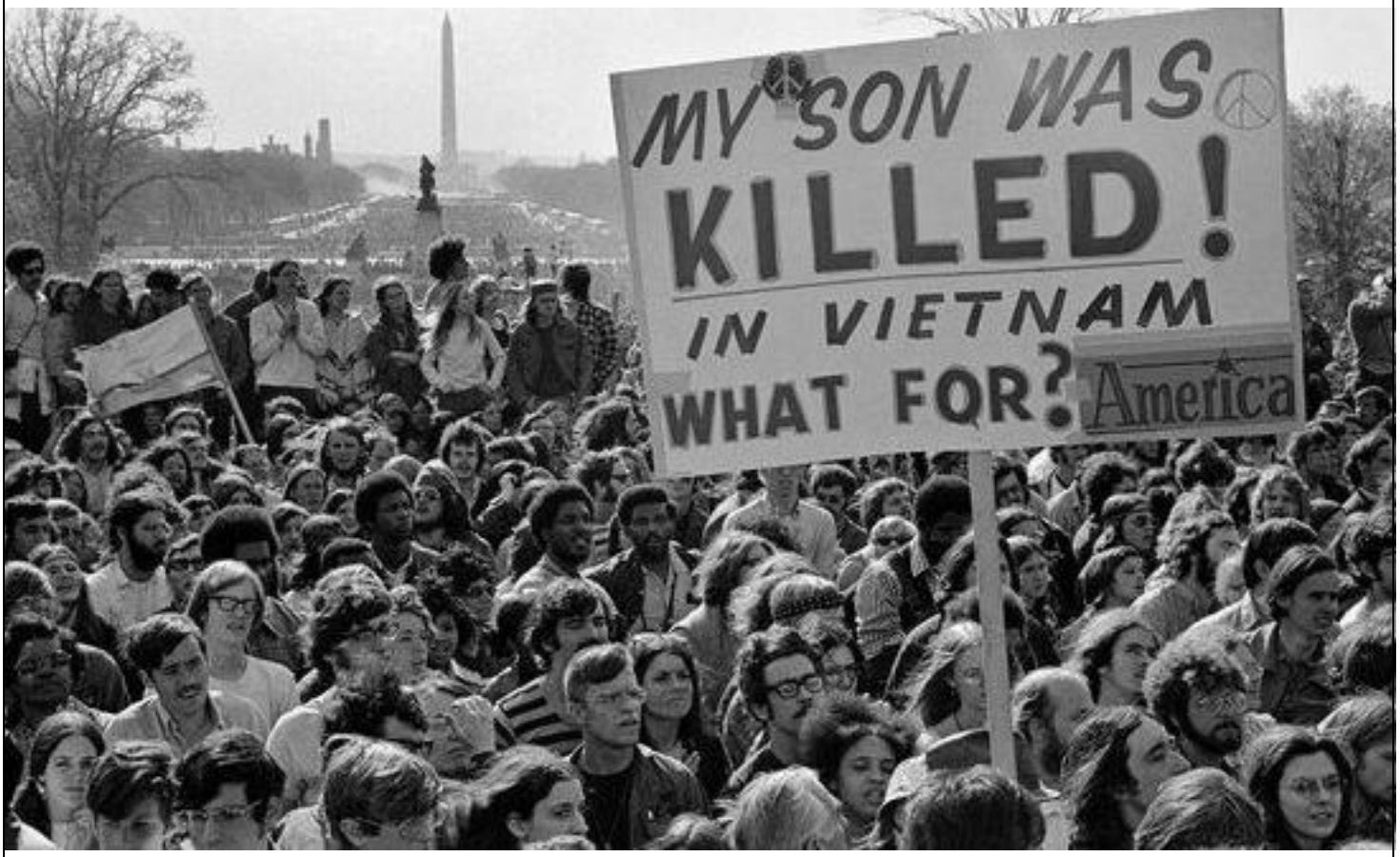
13. Give two reasons why Vietnamisation failed.

14. How did Nixon expand the war in the early 1970s?

15. Put these Presidents in the correct chronological order: Kennedy, Nixon, Johnson, Eisenhower.

Section 2:

Reactions to US Involvement in Vietnam, 1964-75



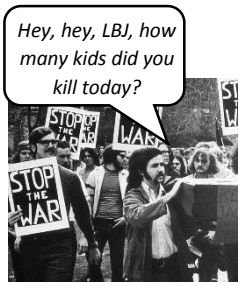
Reasons for Growing Opposition to the War

Escalation of the war

Before 1965 there was general support for the war, but this decreased as more troops were sent in:

- People worried about the **rising death toll** and loss/injury of loved ones
- **Politicians** opposed the **high cost** of the war, and its bad impact on **America's image** abroad.

The student movement



Many students were part of the 1960s 'counter-culture' which rejected the values of their parents' generation.

- Students campaigned against the war using sit-ins, boycotts, strikes and protest marches. These got bigger and more violent through the 1960s.
- Student protests often got more media coverage because they were mainly white and middle-class.
- **Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)** was set up in 1960 and had 3000 members by 1965. The group angered some people because it actually supported the communist North Vietnamese.

The draft

The draft was compulsory military service which many felt was unfair. Men were drafted from the age of 18 and given basic training before going to fight.

The draft process was changed to a fairer lottery system in 1969, where men were chosen using a random number system. People could delay or avoid the draft:

- People burned or tore up their draft cards in protest
- College students could delay being drafted until they graduated
- Clergymen and workers in certain industries were exempt
- People who were the only sons or wage earner of a family were exempt
- Physically or mentally unfit people were exempt
- Conscientious objectors didn't have to fight, but they still had to do some kind of war work (e.g. in a weapons factory)
- Some people left the country illegally or went into hiding

About 650,000 of the 2.6m soldiers in Vietnam were drafted. About 15m eligible men avoided the draft.

TV and media

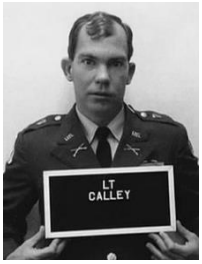
Vietnam was the first war that was widely watched on TV.

- Ordinary people saw uncomfortable footage of the war (and anti-war protests) which made them think about it.
- People lost faith in the government, because news reporters in Vietnam showed that the war was not being won like the government claimed.

The My Lai Massacre (1968)

In 1968, Charlie Company, led by Lieutenant William Calley, killed all the people in the village of My Lai. Most of the villagers were women and children, not members of the Vietcong.

The army organised a **cover-up** of the massacre, but it was exposed in 1969. An enquiry was held in 1970 and found that 347 civilians had been killed by US soldiers.



Calley's trial

Although Calley was acting under orders from above, no high-ranking officers were charged for their part in the massacre.

In 1971 Calley was sentenced to life imprisonment for murder. However, President Nixon reviewed the case and Calley only served 3 ½ years under house arrest on his military base.

Public reaction to the massacre

- The public was **shocked and horrified** at the massacre and its cover-up.
- People felt more strongly than ever that they should **trust the media**, not the government.
- Many people were **disgusted** that Calley served such a small sentence.
- Some felt that the soldiers were only following orders, and Calley was **being used** to take the blame for more senior officers.

The Kent State Shootings (1970)

On 4th May 1970, four unarmed students were shot dead by the Ohio National Guard during a protest at Kent State University.

Protests against Nixon's invasion of Cambodia had been taking place at the university for several days. On May 4th the National Guard were unable to break up the large crowd using tear gas, so began shooting instead.

The public were horrified by the shootings because they mainly involved white middle-class students; even more tragically, two of the victims were students simply walking between classes.

The shootings inspired protests and student strikes across the country, as well as a famous anti-war song (*Ohio*) by Neil Young.

Below are five reasons why people were opposed to the Vietnam War. Match each statement with the person most likely to say it.

The draft system is unfair. My sons or husband could be killed if they're drafted.

I don't agree with fighting – what have the Vietnamese ever done to me?

The government claims we're winning the war, but that's not how it looks on the news!

Four innocent students have died because of Vietnam. We have a right to protest.

The war is costing far too much money and is bad for America's image!

A college student

A conscientious objector

A politician

A woman with a family

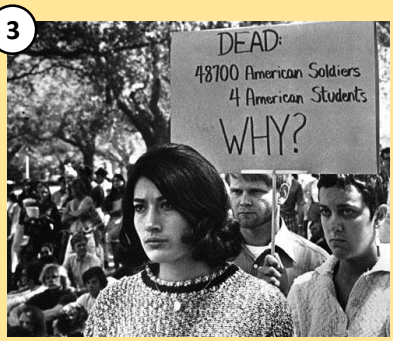
A TV viewer

What can we infer from these photos about **why** people opposed the Vietnam War? Match each photo with the correct description.

1

2

3



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A These protestors are criticising the **high number of US death**s, as well as the US government's actions at Kent State University.

B The people in this photo are conscientious objectors who oppose the war on **moral grounds**.

C These people are protesting against the **draft system**, which many felt was unfair.

D These people are protesting against the expectation that black people should fight, even though they **haven't got equal civil rights** at home.

Reasons for Support for the War

Fear of communism

During the 1950s people in America feared **communism** (the 'Red Scare').

Many were scared that it would spread around the world, and therefore felt that America was doing the right thing by fighting it in Vietnam. They didn't want it to look as though America was giving in to a communist country.

Patriotism

Many Americans were incredibly **patriotic** – they **loved their country** and supported whatever decisions the government made.

Patriots felt that people who refused to fight were letting their country down. They wanted America to win the war so that it didn't look weak.

'Hard hats' was a nickname given to **construction workers** who supported the war. In May 1970, a group of 'hard hats' in New York beat up anti-war protestors and held a pro-war rally outside City Hall involving about 60,000 people.

The 'silent majority'

In 1969 President Nixon called for the **'silent majority'** to speak up – people who agreed with the war, but who didn't actively campaign either for or against it.

The speech was successful. Nixon received thousands of messages of support and a poll showed that 77% of people supported his policy in Vietnam. This high level of public support convinced Congress to keep funding the war.

Not everyone in America opposed the Vietnam War. In fact, many people supported the war. One of the main reasons for this was a fear of _____, while others were simply _____ who loved their country.

One group who fiercely supported the war were the 'hard _____'. These were construction workers who _____ _____ anti-war protesters in 1970, then held their own pro-war rally.

In 1969, President _____ called for support from people who agreed with his policy in Vietnam, but who rarely spoke out in support. He called this group the '_____ _____'. Nixon's speech was very successful, inspiring thousands of people to send messages of support. Opinion polls afterwards showed strong public support for the war, which helped to persuade _____ to keep funding it.

Congress	Silent majority	communism	Nixon
patriots	hats	beat up	

Peace Negotiations, 1972-73

Official peace talks began in **Paris** in **1968** but got nowhere - America wanted South Vietnam to be independent, but North Vietnam wanted Vietnam reunified as one country.

⇩

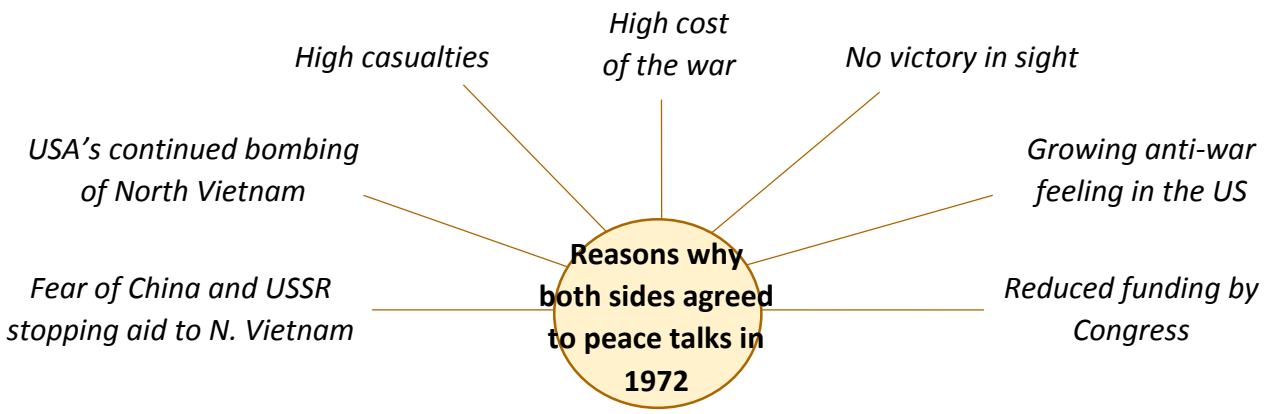
As a result, Nixon also held **secret talks** with North Vietnam and its allies China and the USSR, pressuring them to reach an agreement.

⇩

America and North Vietnam reached an agreement in Paris in **1972**, but it was never signed because South Vietnam's President Thieu (who was not involved in the discussions) refused to accept it.

⇩

Talks eventually began again in **January 1973** – after Nixon continued bombing North Vietnam, and persuaded South Vietnam to come to the talks by promising them aid and supplies.



Paris Peace Accords (1973)

In **1973** the **Paris Peace Accords** were signed. This agreement said:

- **Vietnam was to be a single country**. A new government would be elected without interference from other countries.
- **A ceasefire would begin**, and all US military would be withdrawn.
- **America would not interfere in Vietnam anymore,** and US aid to the ARVN would stop.
- **The USA would give aid for reconstruction.**

Significance of the Paris Peace Accords:

America: The peace deal allowed the USA to leave the war. Afterwards, Congress cut levels of funding and aid to South Vietnam.

South Vietnam: Without US support, South Vietnam's economy and military were weak. Support for the VC in the villages grew again.

North Vietnam: North Vietnam got fed up with President Thieu's refusal to negotiate and attacked the South in 1974. **Saigon fell to the communists in April 1975.**

The Cost of the War for the USA

Financial

The war cost the US **$167 billion.** In order to pay for the war, the government took money from elsewhere. This meant that issues at home (e.g. improving black ghettos) lost out on funding.

America's image

Americans saw themselves differently – they had lost the war to a much smaller and less developed country. Despite all their efforts South Vietnam had still ended up communist.

Americans also **lost trust** in their government, who it seemed had misled them throughout the war.

Human cost

- **58,220** US soldiers were killed
- **303,704** were wounded
- **About 850,000** were left with psychological problems

Many returning soldiers struggled to readjust to normal life. There was a lot of **hostility** towards veterans and few large 'welcome home' parades.

There was little understanding of post-traumatic shock, and the **suicide rate** amongst Vietnam veterans was almost twice the average.

Below are some of the reasons why both sides agreed to peace talks in 1973. Which ones apply to America, and which ones apply to North Vietnam? (Some may apply to both).

Scared that China and USSR might stop aid | *No victory in sight* | *High number of casualties*

High financial cost | *Reduced funding by Congress* | *Growing public anti-war feeling*

Continued bombing of North Vietnam | *Negative image abroad*

North Vietnam

USA

Reasons for the USA's Failure in Vietnam

Russian and Chinese support

China and the USSR gave money and weapons to North Vietnam - **$3 billion** between 1954 and 1967.

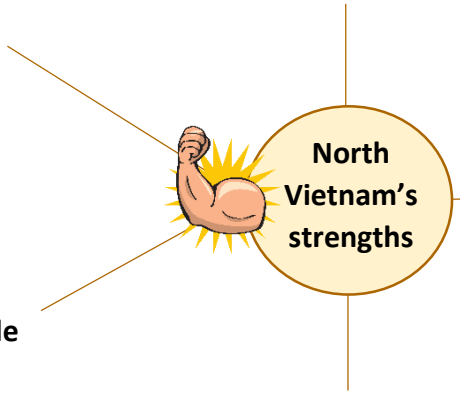
The 'home advantage'

The North Vietnamese were familiar with Vietnam's **landscape** and **language**. They knew how to fight in the conditions and **win people onto their side**.

Vietcong tactics

The VC were **well-organised** and experienced in **guerrilla fighting**. They had **tunnel systems** to move around quickly and had the **support of villagers**.

(They were badly weakened after the Tet Offensive though – the North Vietnamese army did most of the fighting after this point.)



The Ho Chi Minh Trail

The trail allowed the North Vietnamese to **move people and equipment** into the South easily. Neighbours Laos and Cambodia **allowed the trail to operate** in their countries.

Public support

Vietnam had been one country before and many people wanted it to be one again. Villagers helped **shelter the VC** and were **determined** to win the war.

Poor understanding of Vietnam

US soldiers were **unfamiliar** with Vietnam's **geography**, **culture** and **language**. They didn't understand that villagers didn't want to leave their villages, or that most couldn't read.

Political problems

The US-backed South Vietnamese government was **corrupt** and **unpopular**, and many people still associated it with French rule. To the Vietnamese, the USA was a **foreign invader** trying to force its own ideas on them.

Military tactics

The military thought **more troops** and **bombing** would win the war, but **failed to win over ordinary Vietnamese people**.

They measured their success by the number of enemy troops killed, but ignored the fact that the **ARVN still didn't control large areas of the South**. **The draft** meant that US troops were **young** and **inexperienced**.

Opposition to the war at home

Presidents and Congress needed public support, and it was **impossible to ignore the large opposition** to the war. It was the war in which a large section of the population was against the US's involvement.

Section 2 Recap Questions

1. What was the SDS?

2. What was the draft?

3. Give one way in which people avoided or delayed the draft.

4. How did the public react to the 1968 My Lai Massacre?

5. What happened at Kent State University in 1970?

6. Give 2 reasons why some people supported the war.

7. Who were the 'hard hats'?

8. Which president called for the support of the 'silent majority'?

9. Give one reason why both sides agreed to peace talks in 1973.

10. What did the Paris Peace Accords say should happen to Vietnam?

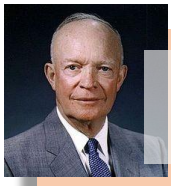
11. What happened to South Vietnam in 1975, after America had left?

12. In total, how many US soldiers were killed in Vietnam?

13. What was the total cost of the war for the USA?

14. Name two strengths which helped North Vietnam win the war.

15. Describe one problem/weakness with the USA's military tactics in the Vietnam War.



Dwight D. Eisenhower

USA President, 1953-61

- Believed in limited war
- Sent advisers to train the ARVN, but not ground troops
- Got involved in Vietnam to prevent the spread of communism ('domino theory') and to support Diem's weak government in the South

John F. Kennedy

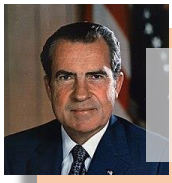
USA President, 1961-63

- Continued limited war approach
- Sent in 16,000 more advisers
- Focused on winning over the villagers (pacification)
- Sent in Special Forces to train villagers against the VC
- Began chemical spraying of jungle
- Helped set up strategic hamlets

Lyndon B. Johnson

USA President, 1963-69

- Escalated the war following the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964
- Got the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution passed, allowing the use of ground troops
- Authorised Operation Rolling Thunder and search and destroy tactics



Richard Nixon

USA President, 1969-74

- Nixon Doctrine – no more ground troops, only aid
- Vietnamisation handed responsibility for fighting back to the ARVN
- Expanded the war into Laos and Cambodia
- Bombed North Vietnam
- Held peace talks 1972-73

Bao Dai

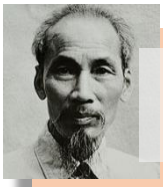
Leader of South Vietnam, 1949-55

- Former Emperor of Vietnam
- Put in charge of South Vietnam by the French after WW2
- Removed from power and replaced by Diem in 1955

Ngo Dinh Diem

President of South Vietnam, 1955-63

- Got rid of Bao Dai in a rigged referendum in 1955, then made himself president
- His government was corrupt and unpopular
- Catholic – he persecuted South Vietnam's Buddhist population
- Assassinated in a coup in November 1963



Ho Chi Minh

President of North Vietnam, 1945-69

- Leader of the Vietnam Communist Party
- Leader of North Vietnam until his death in 1969

Timeline – Vietnam War

1953: Eisenhower becomes President

1954: Battle of Dien Bien Phu – *French defeated by Vietnamese communists*

1954: Geneva Accords – *Vietnam temporarily divided along the 17th parallel*

1955: Diem kicks Bao Dai out and makes himself president of South Vietnam

1956: Diem refuses to hold elections as agreed at Geneva

1959: North Vietnam starts using the Ho Chi Minh Trail

1961: Kennedy becomes President – *increases US involvement in Vietnam*

1962: Strategic Hamlets Program

1963: Diem assassinated in a military coup

1963: Kennedy assassinated; Johnson becomes President

1964: Gulf of Tonkin incident - *Gulf of Tonkin Resolution authorises the use of ground troops if necessary*

1965: Operation Rolling Thunder launched

1965: Major increase in number of US troops in Vietnam

1968: Tet Offensive

1968: My Lai Massacre

1969: Nixon becomes President – *puts forward the Nixon Doctrine and policy of Vietnamisation; calls for the support of the 'silent majority'*

1969: Start of secret peace talks with North Vietnam

1970: Expansion of the war into Cambodia

1970: Kent State University Massacre

1970: 'Hard hats' pro-war protest in New York

1971: Expansion of the war into Laos

1971: William Calley sentenced to life imprisonment for My Lai Massacre – *serves 3 ½ years*

1972: USA launches Operation Linebacker – *heavy bombing of North Vietnam*

1972: Start of official peace talks

1973: Paris Peace Accords – *agrees ceasefire and eventual reunification of Vietnam*

1975: Saigon falls to North Vietnam