

# WHY DID THE USA GET INVOLVED IN VIETNAM?

THINGS YOU NEED TO INCLUDE IN YOUR ANSWER!!!

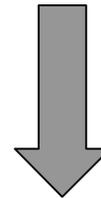
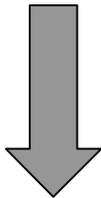
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Your introduction –

VIETNAM, in South-East Asia, was part of the old French colony called Indo-China



When the JAPANESE captured it from the French in the Second World War, a Vietnamese resistance organisation, THE VIETMINH was formed. Its leader was HO CHI MINH, a Communist.



**THE VIETMINH BEGAN A GUERRILLA WAR AGAINST THE FRENCH AFTER 1945**

## HOW DID THE US FIRST GET INVOLVED?



Vietnam was a country 9000 miles away from the United States. Yet America felt that its national interest was threatened strongly enough to fight a war there. The explanation lies in the fear caused by the spread of communism at that time. The communist take-over of China, the Korean War and the communist victory over the French in Vietnam - all led many Americans to fear that the communists were taking over the world and must be stopped.

The US government believed that by helping the South Vietnamese government resist the attacks of the communist North they were helping to prevent the spread of communism throughout the world.

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## THE TRUMAN DOCTRINE AND 'CONTAINMENT'

'Truman Doctrine' and the policy of 'containment.'

- The USA was not going to allow any more countries to turn communist.
- The USA was going to 'contain' the expansion of Communism.

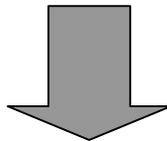
**1949** was a bad year for the USA in the Cold War:

- The USSR exploded its own atom bomb. The USA was no longer the only nuclear power
- China became Communist. The USA had spent \$2 billion supporting ant-communists.



The USA at first disapproved of the French, but from 1949 Communist China began to support the Vietminh, the USA:

- Spent \$500 million a year into the French war effort
- The USA helped the French set up a non-Communist government in the south of the country.



**1954 French defeated at Dien Bien Phu.**

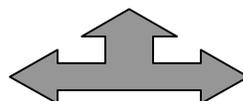


**Geneva Agreement 1954:** Vietnam divided into North Vietnam and South Vietnam.

- Vietnam was supposed to have elections in 1956
- Indo-China was divided into four countries: Laos, Cambodia, North Vietnam and South Vietnam.



**NORTH VIETNAM**  
Leader: Ho Chi Minh



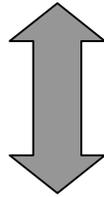
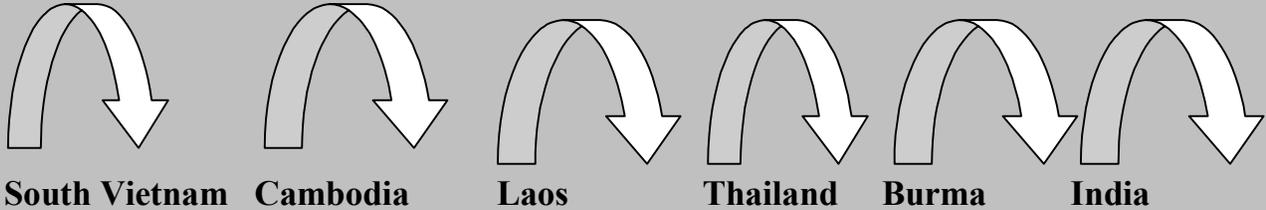
**SOUTH VIETNAM**  
Leader: Ngo Dinh Diem

# THE DOMINO THEORY



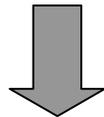
## 1954 Eisenhower Cites "Domino Theory" Regarding Southeast Asia

Responding to the defeat of the French by the Vietminh at Dien Bien Phu, President Eisenhower outlines the Domino Theory: **"You have a row of dominoes set up. You knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly."**



**President Eisenhower's foreign policy followed the 'domino theory'.**

- The idea was that the countries of South East Asia (and elsewhere) were closely linked together.
- If one country fell to communism, then others would also fall, like a row of dominos.



**The USA supported the leader of South Vietnam.**

- America supported Diem by sending money
- Supplies and military equipment
- **1959 Communist government in N Vietnam ordered the Vietminh to begin a terror campaign against Diem's government.**

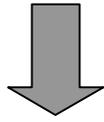


**Ngo Dinh Diem** who was a fanatical catholic. As communism hated religion, Diem hated all that communism stood for. This is why he got America's support - he had a poor record on human rights but his rule was in the era of the "**Domino Theory**" and anybody who was anti-communist in the Far East was likely to receive American backing - regardless of their less than savoury background. Ngo ruled as a dictator along with his brother - Nhu. Their government was corrupt and brutal but it was also backed by America.

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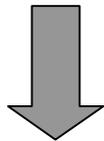
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## WHY DID AMERICA BECOME MORE AND MORE INVOLVED?



**NLF** 1960 The National Liberation Front was set up in South Vietnam. It aimed to:

- Overthrow Diem
- Get rid of the Americans
- Reunite North and South Vietnam

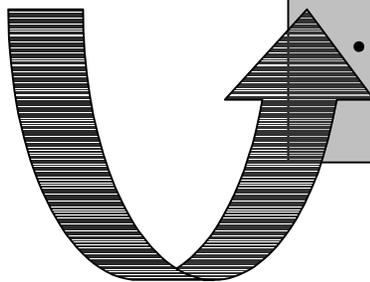


**1960 John F. Kennedy became President**

- Kennedy increased the number of military advisors from 100 to 1600 by 1963. He also helped to equip the South Vietnamese Army.



- 1961 The US spent nearly \$270 million in military support for Diem.



**1961 The 'strategic hamlet' programme.** To "save" the peasants from the Viet Cong, Diem organised a system whereby whole villages were moved into defended camps - known as **fortified villages**.

- This policy did not work because the peasants did not want to be removed from their land
- The policy played into the hands of the Viet Cong who were promising the peasants more land once communism have taken root in the south.

## November 1963 Kennedy assassinated

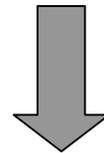
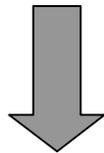
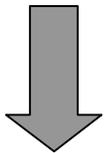


➔ **President Johnson became President**

- Diem's unpopularity was so great that in November 1963, the South Vietnamese Army overthrew and killed him. The confusion at a political level in South Vietnam and the abuse of peasant's rights within the agricultural community were two reasons for the spread of communism within the south.
- Such a development alarmed the American president, Lyndon Johnson, who had asked his military chiefs to formulate plans should a full-scale war break out. The one proviso the chiefs-of-staff had was that America had to be seen as the victim rather than the aggressor.

## Johnson's version of the 'Domino Theory'

- 'If you let a bully come into your front garden one day, the next day he'll be up on your porch, and the day after that he'll rape your wife in your own bed.'
- Johnson wanted a more aggressive war against the communists.
- Johnson didn't think the South Vietnamese government was able to keep the North Vietnamese out of the South.



## 1964 The US military prepared plans for the bombing of North Vietnam.



### The Gulf of Tonkin Incident – July 1964

- **The Tonkin Incident** occurred when two American ships were attacked by North Vietnamese gunboats while they were in international waters.
- In response to this, the American Senate gave Johnson the power to give armed support to assist any country requesting help in defence of its freedom.
- In March 1965, the first American ground troops landed in South Vietnam and by December 1965, there were 150,000 stationed in the country.
- The bombing of North Vietnam had already started in February 1965. This bombing was given the name 'Operation Rolling Thunder'.