

Vietnam: Major Developments, 1945-1975

US Presidents	Date	Events
Franklin D. Roosevelt Harry S. Truman	1945	March Japanese oust French colonial rule; Emperor Bao Dai asserts Vietnamese independence.
		September Ho Chi Minh establishes government of Democratic Republic of Vietnam; Bao Dai abdicates.
	1946	French troops return to Indochina. Ho Chi Minh negotiates with French for Vietnamese independence.
		December Hostilities break out.
	1947	French move to restore colonial rule, Ho seeks to negotiate Vietnamese independence.
		December Hostilities break out between French and Ho's "Viet Minh" forces.
1949	France installs Bao Dai as head of Vietnamese government. Military stalemate continues.	
Dwight D. Eisenhower	1950	Paris grants Vietnam partial independence "within French Union." US begins military and economic support for French war; US MAAG established in Saigon. Peking begins military aid to Viet Minh.
		October French driven from posts on China border. Fighting intensifies as Viet Minh gain strength.
	1953	December French seize Dien Bien Phu.
	1954	April Multi-power conference opens in Geneva.
		May Viet Minh overrun Dien Bien Phu.
		June Bao Dai names Ngo Dinh Diem Prime Minister of SVN government.
	1955	July Geneva agreements divide Vietnam at 17th parallel, Viet Minh controlling North and Diem in South. US and Diem government agree to observe terms. Lansdale team arrives in Saigon to help Diem. Gen. Collins named US Minister to Vietnam.
		1955
	1956	Diem government adopts constitution. US adds 350 advisors to MAAG Saigon. French withdraw military forces from Indochina. Diem cracks down on Viet Minh supporters in SVN.
	1959	Hanoi approves support for "patriotic movement" in the south, establishes infrastructure to move cadres and supplies to SVN via Laos.
1960	Hanoi calls for reunification of Vietnam by force. Soviets begin support of Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese forces in Laos. Diem survives coup attempt by SVN paratroopers.	
John F. Kennedy	1961	JFK administration moves to bolster Lao government. VP Johnson pledges increased assistance to SVN government.
		October Taylor-Rostow mission recommends massive increase in US military assistance.
	1962	March US establishes MACV, begins deploying combat support to aid SVN military. US forces reach 5,400; US pilots fly "combat training" missions with SVN air forces, provide helicopters for SVN operations.
		July Geneva accord sanctions "neutral" Lao government with Communist forces controlling Laos along Vietnam border.
December US forces in SVN reach 11,300.		

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Lyndon B. Johnson	1963	June Diem government suppresses riotous Buddhist opposition.
		August Diem proclaims martial law, students demonstrate. SVN generals extend feelers for US support of possible coup. USG indicates sympathy.
	1963	September USG threatens to cut aid unless Diem reforms.
		November With tacit US support, military seizes power, executes Diem. Viet Cong increase activity in countryside. Kennedy assassinated.
	1964	Successive coups throughout year as SVN generals vie for power.
		March/April Deteriorating military situation leads LBJ administration to plan escalation. Hanoi increases flow of troops and supplies to south.
		August Tonkin Gulf incident leads to overwhelming Senate endorsement of US policy in Vietnam.
	1965	February After attack on US forces at Pleiku LBJ authorizes bombing of NVN.
		March US Marines landed to protect US air base in Da Nang. Hanoi begins infiltrating regular combat forces to SVN.
	1968	July LBJ orders major increase in combat forces. Escalating stalemate ensues through 1967.
January "Tet Offensive" hits all major towns and cities, is ultimately driven back with heavy losses but stuns public opinion.		
March LBJ curtails bombing in North, calls for talks with Hanoi and announces he will not run for re-electon.		
April Peace talks begin in Paris.		
Richard M. Nixon	1969	Nixon continues Paris talks, announces "Vietnamization" plan, begins withdrawal of military forces.
	1970	May US and SVN forces invade Cambodia to disrupt enemy base areas.
	1971	February SVN military strikes into Laos to disrupt "Ho Chi Minh Trail" supply network in Central Laos but is driven back after heavy fighting.
	1972	March Hanoi's "Easter Offensive" surges across DMZ, temporarily occupying most of two northern provinces in SVN.
	1973	January Ceasefire agreement signed in Paris, but Hanoi and SVN forces continue jockeying for position in SVN.
Gerald R. Ford	1975	March Hanoi mounts all-out offensive, occupies Saigon in late April, ending the war.