

## EQ: What were the causes and effects of the Vietnam War?

1 Since the late 1800s, much of Vietnam had been a colony of France. During WWII, communist fighters under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh began to resist the French and eventually defeated them. An international conference was held in 1954 and stated that Vietnam would become independent and elections would be held in two years. Until then, the country would be split into two parts.

2 All the communities who fought with Ho Chi Minh were supposed to go to the north. The Vietnamese soldiers who had fought for the French were supposed to go to the south. With the support of communist Soviet Union and China, North Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh began fighting to unite all of Vietnam under one communist government. South Vietnam did not want communism and fought back. The election of 1956 never happened.

3 The Vietnam War shares many similarities with the Korean Conflict. In both places, the United States became involved to prevent the spread of communism. By the year 1968, there were more than 500,000 American soldiers in Vietnam. They fought with the South Vietnamese to push back the North Vietnamese.

4 The Vietnam Conflict was one of the most difficult wars ever fought by Americans. Much of the land was covered with mountains and thick jungles. Not only did the American soldiers fight the North Vietnamese army, they also fought civilians who were loyal to Ho Chi Minh. There were called the Vietcong.

5 The Vietcong used guerrilla war tactics, which include random, surprise attacks. These fighters did not wear uniforms, so they could be difficult to identify. They would even use women and children to deliver explosives that would kill American soldiers.

6 At home in the United States, people watched film of the fighting on television. This was the first time that Americans could watch scenes from a war on the evening news. Some people began to question what was happening in Vietnam. Many soldiers were dying, yet it was becoming clear that the United States and South Vietnam were not winning. Should the United States continue fighting? In the late 1960s, this question began to divide Americans.

7 Americans who opposed the war were called "doves". They believed the conflict was a Vietnam civil war and should be settled by the Vietnamese people. People who supported the war were known as "hawks". They believed the war was necessary to stop the spread of communism.

8 In January 1973, the United States signed a cease-fire, or an agreement to stop fighting, with North Vietnam. In March of that year, American troops left Vietnam. South Vietnam continued fighting the communists.

9 In 1975, South Vietnam surrendered, and Vietnam was united under a communist government. Now, Vietnam is one of only five communist countries in the world: Vietnam, North Korea, Laos, China, and Cuba.