

Analyze the events that led to American involvement in Vietnam. How and why. This involvement increase during the 1960s?

INTRODUCTION

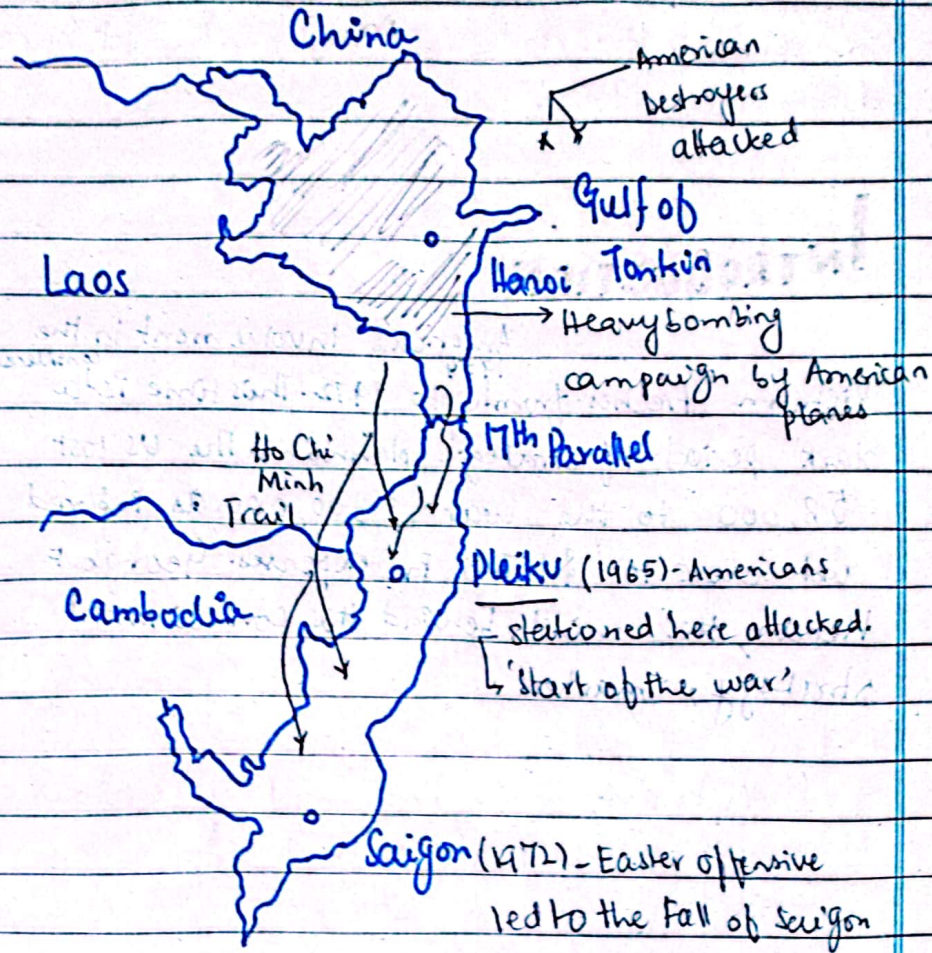
America's involvement in the Vietnam stretches from ¹⁹⁵⁴ up to 1972. This time is ^{considered} a dark period of strategic planning. The US lost 58,000 to the war; 300,000 as injured and close to \$150B in expenses. George F. Kenan, the mind behind the containment strategy, remarked:

"Vietnam" was the most disastrous of all America's undertakings over the whole of 200 years of its history"

(George Kenan)

The US in its pursuit of stopping communism and communist linked expansionist tendencies led itself to the defense of the South Vietnamese. Key moments such as the Gulf of Tonkin resolution played a vital part in the US's entry into the war.

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MAJOR EVENTS THAT LED TO THE AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM

Geneva Accords and Eisenhower's decision

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Post WW-2, the French tried to reassert their authority over the Vietnamese mainland. This led to the rise of Ho Chi Minh, an independence movement leader from the North of the country. The French and Vietnamese fought a bloody war during which the latter also appealed to the Americans for help. Ho Chi Minh was inspired by America's pursuit and journey for independence, but received a cold shoulder as the strategic priorities of the US were not in the area. Later, the French seeing defeat at the hands of Ho Chi Minh requested for American; however Eisenhower declined and what resulted was the Korea-style partition in the Geneva Accords of 1954.

South Vietnam and Election for Reunification

In 1954, the Geneva Accords laid out the path for elections. The government of Ngo Dinh Diem in the south of the country refused to hold elections as they knew they were in no position to win. While Ho Chi Minh with the backing of the Chinese and Soviets built up his forces to fight the fight for unification. To his aid, guerilla fighters within the South banded under the NLF (National Liberation Front) or Viet Cong. The South

during this time was aided by the US who themselves considered Ngo binh diem's government to be incompetent and corrupt.

Containment of Communism in South East Asia

The principle foreign policy goal during the initial days of the Vietnam crisis was to contain the spread of communism in South East Asia. With the fall of China to the communists, it seemed ^{even} more than ever to stop the spread of Communism. US thinkers supported the Southern Government by sending 5000 military advisers and another 5000 additional troops by the end of the 1950s. Sporadic conflicts used to take place between the Viet Cong and Southern troops. In 1960, the Viet Cong initiated the campaign to unify the country in a conflict what came to known as the Vietnam war.

Gulf of Tonkin Resolution

The US became actively involved when two American naval destroyers were attacked during patrols by North Vietnamese torpedo boats. The US ^{retaliation passed a} in resolution that said authorized the President to "Take all necessary measures

DATE: ___/___/___

to protect American forces and prevent further aggression in the South East Asian region."

The President, at that time was Lyndon B Johnson authorized and ordered the bombing of key military infrastructure in the North and South. Later on, it would be revealed that the resolution lacked critical details and the government was dishonest in the portrayal of the incident.

Bombing of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Forces

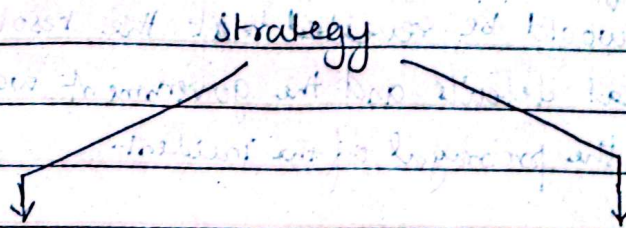
The US initiated massive firebombing campaigns in order to disrupt vital supply lines and infrastructure used by the Viet Cong and Northern Forces. During this time, ground forces faced heavy resistance from the Viet Cong. The most famous campaign led by the North and Viet Cong was the Tet Offensive in 1968.

During many of these skirmishes, Viet Cong soldiers and fighters would assimilate into the local or villagers; Americans having a hard time distinguishing between who is who would often fall prey to ambushes. Resultingly, incidents like the My Lai Massacre seemed to pop up.

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American Strategy Throughout the War

American strategy during the entire war consisted of two key objectives:



Attrition

US war planners believed that they could inflict more damage to the enemy than they could absorb.

Pacification

US war planners strategised to push the Viet Cong from particular areas and pacify those areas by winning the hearts and minds of the people.

These 2 strategies gave the way for increased prudence in the war. The US devised a relocation strategy to move the people from the pacified areas. In the words of senior military officials during the war:

"It became a necessity to destroy the village, in order to save it."

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Soviet and Chinese Military Equipment being used by the Viet Cong

The Vietnam war provided an indirect way for the Soviets to bleed the US and its allies. The former began to supply the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces with heavy weaponry such as fighter jets, surface-to-air missile defenses, and infantry weapons. The Chinese also aided the Vietnamese in this cause. The US was up against an aggressor that had the backing of its arch rival. The South, on the other hand, was ill-equipped and lacked the capability to effectively defend against the North and Viet Cong. It is no surprise that during the Tet Offensive, the Viet Cong and Northern forces and wiped off more than $\frac{1}{2}$ of the South's forces.

McNamara's Inaction During the Start of the War

US Bomber crews before the start used to practise bombing drills from the Islands of Guam and others in South Pacific. However, at the time McNamara would delay the firebombing campaign. During this time the North got regular supplies of arms and munitions from communist powers. By the end of 1965, the

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had amassed hundreds of T-34 tanks, Mig-21 fighter jets and a fighting force of close to 475,000 according to the CIA. The US was in a job one fight that they could never achieve to win.

CONCLUSION

The Vietnam war is considered the most brutal conflict that Americans dipped their feet into, apart from the Great wars. It is a series of commitments and continuation of big-stick diplomacy that led to ^{the} American defeat. The South eventually became such a burden that it took down the American commitment along with, thus destroying any hopes for American presence in the country.