The Vietnam War
1954-1975

• American involvement in Vietnam began in the early years of Cold War. It was based on the policy of Containment, expressed as the domino theory, out of fear that one country falling to communism would lead to the fall of its neighbors.

Cold War
containment
communism

• For much of its 2,000 years of history, the Vietnamese had to resist attempts by China to conquer their country. In the 1800s, France became their colonial master.

China
France

• During WWII they were conquered by Japan, though control reverted to the French after the war.

Vietnam

• Ho Chi Minh, who sympathized with communism, fought for independence against these occupations as the head of the Viet Minh.

Ho (1890-1969) left Vietnam in 1911 and worked in several menial jobs while living in France, the United States, and the United Kingdom before spending more time in the USSR and China. He was involved in international communism before returning to Vietnam to lead an independence movement in 1941.

Ho Chi Minh
communism
Viet Minh

• The Republic of Vietnam, led by Bao Dai, collaborated with the colonial power.

Bao Dai (1913-1997) was the last in the line of Vietnamese royalty. He collaborated with the French and Japanese occupiers before abdicating the throne in 1945. The French restored him to power in 1949 (as a puppet) but his reputation had suffered greatly. He spent most of his time outside of Vietnam, often in France, and was deposed in 1955.

Bao Dai

• In May 1954, however, the French were defeated at a battle in Dien Bien Phu and decided to withdraw.

Dien Bien Phu was a military disaster for the French and precipitated their withdrawal (they even removed their dead from their cemeteries).
Interested nations met in Geneva to arrange a peace settlement, and they decided to split Vietnam near the 17th Parallel. The country was to hold a national reunification election within two years, and Ho accepted the division based on his confidence in winning that election. However, the South Vietnam government refused to participate in that election.

Months later, the US and 7 other nations formed an alliance known as SEATO to contain communism. The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization existed from 1954 until 1977 for the purpose of containing communist expansion. Its members were Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, the UK, and the USA.

Ho Chi Minh became president of the Communist north, while Ngo Dinh Diem, an exile who had been living in America, became president of the south. Ngo was far more popular in the West than in Vietnam. He was a Catholic leader for a predominantly Buddhist country. He was also very arrogant and did not like to mingle with his people.

The northern capital was Hanoi; the southern capital was Saigon. Elections to unify the country were supposed to be held in 1956, but South Vietnam refused to go along and the country remained divided.

The US began providing economic aid to resist the communists in South Vietnam by 1960. About 675 military advisors were stationed in the south. When Kennedy took office he sent Lyndon Johnson to South Vietnam to assess the situation.

Based on his reports, Kennedy increased the number of military advisors. By the end of 1963, American troops in South Vietnam numbered more than 16,000.
Military aid could not ensure success. Diem lacked the support of his own country due to his corrupt behavior and atypical faith (he was a Catholic in a predominantly Buddhist country).

Although many Vietnamese had converted, for many the religion was too closely associated with French colonialism. Diem's brother was an Archbishop and Diem strongly favored Catholics for government favors and protection.

Diem's religion was initially seen as an advantage in the US because Catholics were anti-communist.

He lost even more support when he launched a program to relocate peasants to strategic hamlets.

The hamlets were designed to increase security and deny support to the enemy, but meant that the people had to abandon their homes and the graves of their ancestors.

Buddhist monks began setting themselves on fire to protest his policies. The first to do so, Lam Van Tiep, died on June 11, 1963, in a protest over a variety of government policies that discriminated against Buddhists.

With American encouragement, military leaders assassinated Diem and overthrew his government in November 1963.
His successors established a new government that proved both unsuccessful and unpopular. Communist guerrillas in the south, known as Viet Cong, gained more territory and loyalty.

One of the architects of America's Vietnam policy was Robert McNamara, a Republican businessman who became one of Kennedy's closest advisors. As Secretary of Defense, he applied his business knowledge to cut costs while modernizing armed forces. Later, under President Johnson, he ultimately pushed for direct involvement in the war in spite of his previous doubts.

Born in San Francisco in 1916, McNamara graduated from UC-Berkeley and Harvard Business School. He taught accounting at Harvard for three years before entering the US Army Air Force in 1943. He performed statistical analysis for the USAF and left the military in 1946.

He joined a consulting partnership that was hired by Ford Motor Company. He pushed for smaller and safer automobile models (including the seat belt). In 1960 he became the first president of the company not related to the Ford family. Although a Republican, he accepted JFK's nomination to serve as Defense Secretary with an eye toward modernizing Pentagon operations. Managing the war wore him out and he resigned in 1968 to become the director of the World Bank. He died in 2009.

Johnson came to office with mixed feelings, but ultimately determined to escalate the war. In August 1964, he announced that North Vietnam had attacked U.S. destroyers in international waters known as the Gulf of Tonkin.

This was untrue, but Congress believed it and passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution authorizing the president to take "all necessary measures" to repel attack and prevent further aggression. The measure passed by a vote of 416-0 in the House and 88-2 in the Senate.

The Gulf of Tonkin Incident: What Really Happened and What LBJ Knew

On August 2, 1964, the USS Maddox was in the area conducting electronic surveillance. It engaged three smaller Vietnamese boats in battle (we fired warning shots, which triggered the fight).

On August 4, 1964, during extremely rough weather, the Maddox detected radar images and radio traffic suggesting an attack was underway. It fired repeatedly over the span of four hours at suspected targets. No wreckage could be found and no visual contact with any enemy vessels was made.

Washington DC was cabled the same day that there may not have been an actual attack. It later seemed likely that the extreme weather interfered with the radar and sonar equipment. However, LBJ informed the public that there had been an unprovoked attack in international waters. Neither was true, but it served as a pretext for the Congressional resolution. It may also have helped his re-election campaign.

It seems safe to conclude that LBJ knew or should have known that his statements were false.

LBJ privately admitted that the Gulf of Tonkin Incident was false in 1965.
Nearly 3 million Americans served in the Vietnam War. They had to contend with conditions far different from those they’d previously seen. In this hot and humid climate, diseases including ringworm, hookworm, malaria, dysentery, and trench foot were common. The typical Marine lost 20% of his body weight on deployment.

American forces had superior arms and supplies, but the Viet Cong had their advantages. They were familiar with the swamps and jungles, found protection across the borders of Laos and Cambodia, and could often count on the support of the local population.

Soldiers found the war confusing and disturbing. They were trying to defend the freedom of the South Vietnamese, but many of them seemed indifferent. As one soldier put it, “We are the unwilling working for the unqualified to do the unnecessary for the ungrateful.”

Lacking the sophisticated equipment of US troops, the Viet Cong avoided head-on clashes. Instead they used guerilla warfare, working in small groups to launch sneak attacks and practice sabotage.

They often hid in elaborate tunnels, some of which even included running water and electricity. Tunnels were dark and often accessed through narrow doors. Imagine the mental challenge of entering one of them alone. Tunnels were small and frequently equipped with maps.
“Bouncing Betty”

- One especially deadly anti-personnel landmine was the M16 “Bouncing Betty.” Upon activation it actually launched approximately 3 feet into the air before spreading shrapnel in all directions. This could wound or kill many more soldiers than a single small explosion.

The war was also devastating for Vietnamese civilians, who suffered just as much as soldiers.

- The death and displacement caused by war may be the most obvious impacts on civilians, but the lingering effects of the war are also significant. Unexploded ordnance and environmental toxins continue to kill and cause diseases and birth defects.

Saturation Bombing

- Thousands of tons of explosives dropped over a wide area, completely covering it

The B-52 Stratofortress models first flew in the 1950s and continues to serve in our Air Force. Designed to deliver nuclear weapons, it can carry 70,000 pounds of bombs.

Fragmentation Bombs

- Threw shards of their thick metal casings in all directions

Agent Orange

- Defoliating chemical used to increase visibility in the jungle; it also destroyed crops and caused later health problems

Agent Orange: Painful legacy

Agent Orange is a defoliant used on the Vietnam War. It was used to expose the Vietcong and destroy jungle cover. It also killed many civilians and caused later health problems.

In 1965, Agent Orange was introduced into the war. It was used to destroy crops and jungle cover. It caused many health problems to those exposed to it, including cancer and birth defects.

Agent Orange contains dioxin, which is a powerful neurotoxin.
Napalm

- Jelly-like substance that burned uncontrollably
  Napalm could be used in either incendiary bombs or flamethrowers.

- After winning the 1964 election, Johnson started a gradual military *escalation* of the war. Initially, US soldiers went as *advisors*, but now they took on the task of *propping up* the South Vietnamese government.

- But by 1965, the communists were expanding south via the *Ho Chi Minh Trail* — which ran through Laos and Cambodia.

- That year, after an initial request from Commanding General *William Westmoreland*, the number of US troops in Vietnam grew from **25,000** to **184,000**.

  “Westy” (1914-2005) was a West Point graduate and WWII veteran who led US forces in Vietnam from 1964-1968. He tried to wage a war of attrition against the communists to force them to quit fighting. Americans questioned his veracity due to his overly optimistic predictions of victory.

- Politicians split into two groups over Vietnam. **Hawks** supported the war, while **Doves** opposed it.

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- Senators *Fulbright* held televised hearings to examine the war in 1966. Secretary of State *Dean Rusk* supported the policy. *George Kennan*, an expert in foreign policy, opposed it. The war continued.

*Fulbright*, a Senator from Arkansas and the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, held hearings pertaining to Vietnam repeatedly from 1966 until 1971. He opposed the war from 1966 onward.
John Kerry, Testifying in 1971

John Kerry, representing a group known as Vietnam Veterans Against the War, organized demonstrations and testified against the war. His participation in those activities insulted many other veterans, who would later speak out against him when he ran for political office.

I would like to talk on behalf of all those veterans and say that several months ago in Detroit we had an investigation at which over 150 honorably discharged, and many very highly decorated, veterans testified to war crimes committed in Southeast Asia. These were not isolated incidents but crimes committed on a day-to-day basis with the full awareness of officers at all levels of command. They told stories that at times they had personally raped, cut off ears, cut off heads, taped wires from portable telephones to human genitals and turned up the power, cut off limbs, burned up bodies, randomly shot at civilians, razed villages in fashion reminiscent of Genghis Khan; shot little children and dogs for fun, poisoned food stocks, and generally ravaged the countryside of South Vietnam in addition to the normal ravage of war and the normal and very particular ravaging which is done by the applied bombing power of this country.” — John Kerry

Assignment: Prepare to Testify

You have been called to testify as an expert witness before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the effort in Vietnam. You must testify as either a Hawk or a Dove. You must assume a specific role (i.e. Robert McNamara, General William Westmoreland, Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, an average infantryman, etc.). What should we do about the war?

• The number of US troops in Vietnam climbed to 385,000 at the end of 1966, 485,000 at the end of 1967, and 536,000 at the end of 1968.

• On January 30, 1968 – during the Vietnamese New Year holiday called Tet — the communists launched a major offensive. This included surprise attacks on major cities throughout South Vietnam. In Saigon, they even attacked the American embassy and presidential palace.

• During this offensive the communists were uncommonly brutal. They massacred 3,000-5,000 residents in the city of Hue.

This city was the capital of Vietnam from 1802 to 1945 and thus a significant target. It was a base for US Navy patrols, poorly defended, and only 31 miles from the demilitarized zone. In hindsight, the Army should have been far better prepared for an attack.
American soldiers also committed the rare atrocity, such as the massacre at My Lai. In March 1968, Lieutenant William Calley ordered his men to kill the entire population, which consisted of women, children, and old men. Calley had failed out of college in 1964 before enlisting and applying for Officer School. He graduated but did not impress the soldiers in his command.

The My Lai Massacre

- VC units participating in the Tet Offensive had dispersed into the area around My Lai.
- American troops were sent into the area. Captain Medina allegedly instructed them to “kill them all,” meaning “the enemy.” Lt. Calley later stated that he interpreted his orders to mean “kill everyone you find.”
- No one fired upon the approaching American troops, but they fired machine guns and grenade launchers into unarmed crowds of people (including mothers shielding their children). Several soldiers allegedly raped some of the women before killing them. Only one weapon was found in the village after an extensive search.
- The Army apparently tried to cover up the facts (issuing erroneous award citations, for example), but the truth trickled out and the Army began investigating. The story was broken by reporter Seymour Hersh.

- Probably more than 400 died, but some were saved by American pilot Hugh Thompson and his crew.

Thompson, flying over the village, witnessed several atrocities. He landed and helped to guard a group of villagers as they were being evacuated. He spoke to Calley and was shocked by his attitude. He immediately radioed his higher headquarters and later provided a full report of the events.

- Breaches of American military rules did not go unpunished. In 1971, Calley began serving a life sentence. Many saw him as a scapegoat, however, as many senior officers went unpunished.

- Of the 26 who were charged, Calley was the only one who was convicted. Thousands of telegrams and letters flooded into the White House demanding his full pardon. Calley served his time under house arrest rather than in a federal prison.

- As a result, Nixon commuted his sentence to 20 years. He was released on good behavior 3 years later.

—Calley remained a hero to some; Thompson a villain to others. Over time, as the passions over Vietnam have cooled, a consensus emerged against Calley.
The Tet Offensive became a turning point in the war. Even though the Viet Cong were unsuccessful and suffered heavy losses, they won a psychological victory. The event demonstrated that the Viet Cong could launch a massive attack throughout South Vietnam.

Many Americans began to express reservations about continued involvement in Vietnam.

Others supported a policy tougher than the one pursued by the administration.

Caught in the middle, President Johnson saw his popularity plunge.

As the war progressed, many favored increasing the war effort to achieve victory; others viewed the war as morally wrong and urged the immediate withdrawal of US troops.

In the early 1960s, members of the baby boom generation began to graduate from high school. Years of prosperity gave many of these people opportunities to continue their education. On college campuses across the country, civil rights activists laid the foundations for a student movement.

This movement included a tiny organization of radicals known as the Students for a Democratic Society that had a larger influence on a political movement known as the New Left.

– SDS, growing out of an earlier socialist organization, was very active in the 1960s. Its manifesto, the “Port Huron Statement,” focused on many social and international problems – especially race, disarmament, and political reform. The group became more radical as time went on.
• Student activism led to a 1964 confrontation at the University of California at Berkeley. The university administration had refused to allow students to distribute leaflets. A series of unfortunate events culminated in thousands of students occupying the administration building.

• Police arrested more than 700 for trespassing. Other students, encouraged by some faculty, then stopped attending classes in protest. Although Berkeley remained the most radical campus, students at several others also launched protests.

• Students were among the first to protest the Vietnam War. Some opposed what they regarded as American imperialism, while others viewed it as a problem to be resolved by the Vietnamese alone.

—Do you think it was a coincidence that young people were both most likely to protest the war and the most likely to be drafted? How do you think self-interest balanced with idealism in the protest movement?

• At the University of Michigan some faculty members pioneered a new protest method known as a teach-in. Supporters, as well as opponents of the war appeared at the early events, but soon anti-war voices dominated them.

The teach-in was born on March 24, 1965 as a compromise only after the original plans to simply cancel classes in protest of the war was widely criticized.

• A Selective Service Act allowed the government to draft men between the ages of 18 and 26. Relatively few people refused the draft in the early 1960s, and most of these were conscientious objectors who opposed fighting on moral or religious grounds.

—Supreme Court rulings in 1965 and 1970 expanded the list of those who could claim conscientious objector status. About 170,000 CO’s were approved during the war and about 300,000 were denied.

The Most Famous Conscientious Objector

“I ain’t got no quarrel with them Viet Cong - no Viet Cong ever called me N****r.”

Ali joined the radical Nation of Islam in 1964 and proclaimed himself a pacifist. He initially failed the Army entry exam but, when standards were lowered in 1966 and he became eligible, he refused to serve. He was barred from boxing for three years as a result.

• As more and more young men were called to fight, Americans began to question the morality and fairness of the draft system. College students could receive deferment, which usually meant they would not go to war. Those who could not afford college did not have this opportunity. In 1966, the system began to draft college students, who ranked low academically.

• In 1967, resistance to the draft swept the country. Many tried to avoid it by claiming they had disabilities. Others applied for conscientious objector status. Others—an estimated 100,000—left the country.

An estimated 500,000 Americans illegally evaded the draft by various means during the Vietnam War.

Dodging the Draft

• “Dodging” the draft has multiple meanings. It clearly includes those who were called by lottery but refused to report for duty. It also usually includes those who manipulated the system to secure a deferment by faking a medical or other disqualifying problem. It could even include those who sought legitimate deferments that they otherwise might not have (such as going to graduate school).
Burning draft cards, though illegal, was a common form of protest against the war.

In early 1968, more than ___200___ major demonstrations erupted at colleges around the country. One of the most dramatic occurred at Columbia University where students from two organizations took over the president’s office. Police were called and hundreds were arrested. The university closed following a sympathy strike.

Continuing protests and a growing list of American casualties steadily increased opposition to Johnson’s leadership. By 1967, McNamara had lost faith in the war and he urged the president to turn more of the fighting over to the Vietnamese and to stop the bombing of North Vietnam. He refused.

As a result of the Tet Offensive, polls showed a majority of Americans opposed the war. Millions watched as trusted news anchor Walter Cronkite opined that the experience would end in stalemate. Johnson, hearing this, reportedly said that he had lost Middle America.

Johnson rarely left the White House for fear of being assaulted by protesters. He watched the campaign of antiwar candidate Eugene McCarthy gain momentum. McCarthy served Minnesota in the US House and US Senate before challenging LBJ for the Democratic nomination in 1968 (his first of five failed attempts at winning the presidency). His strong showing in New Hampshire and Wisconsin helped to change Johnson’s mind about running for reelection. McCarthy for President

Then another war critic, Robert Kennedy, joined the race. RFK had worked as his brother’s Attorney General and was elected to the US Senate from New York. He sincerely disliked LBJ and thought about running against him but held off until he saw McCarthy’s strong showing in the New Hampshire primary. RFK was assassinated while campaigning in California, however.

On March 31, 1968, President Johnson dramatically declared that he would not seek reelection.

The same issues dividing America split the Democratic party in the 1968 election. Robert Kennedy had been assassinated and Eugene McCarthy seemed too radical. Sirhan Sirhan, a 24-year-old Palestinian immigrant, shot RFK in Los Angeles on June 5, 1968. He later claimed to have been motivated solely by RFK’s support for the state of Israel during the 1967 Six Day War, but his behavior during the trial led many to doubt his mental stability. He remains in prison.
• Party regulars wound up supporting Vice President Hubert Humphrey for the nomination, but he was hurt by his defense of Johnson’s policies.
Humphrey relied on party professionals rather than primary victories to win the nomination. He had to be respectful of LBJ and so could not adequately distance himself from his unpopular boss.

• The party’s image was further tarnished when police __________ moved against nearby protestors. Connecticut Senator Ribicoff claimed Chicago Mayor Daley had used gestapo tactics.
Daley was shown on TV shaking his fist and appearing to be much a word that began with the sixth letter of the alphabet so nearby witnesses insisted he was shouting “Faker!”

• Republicans, meanwhile, had nominated Richard Nixon.
Nixon, the former Congressman, Senator, and Vice President, assumed his political career ended when he lost the 1960 Presidential and 1962 California Governor elections. However, so many Republicans were defeated in 1964 that Nixon was able to mounted a comeback. He stressed his ability to secure peace with honor and restore law and order to the United States.

• He tried to act presidential while letting his running mate, Maryland Governor Spiro Agnew, attack his opponents.
Governor of Maryland, he served with Nixon for several years before he was investigated for extortion, tax fraud, bribery, and conspiracy. He was permitted to plead guilty to a single offense if he resigned the Vice Presidency. He resigned on October 10, 1973 and later paid nearly $500,000 in penalties.

• Alabama Governor George Wallace, a lifelong Democrat, also chose to run for the American Independent Party.
Wallace is best remembered for supporting segregation, but he seems to have been an opportunist on race. He actually secured the NAACP endorsement in his first run for governor of Alabama but lost that race; he would serve four separate terms as governor before retiring in 1987. His wife succeeded him in 1967 because he could not serve consecutive terms.
Though the popular vote was very close, Nixon won 302 electoral votes and the presidency.

Nixon’s popular vote margin was much closer, with 43.4% to Humphrey’s 42.3% and Wallace’s 12.9%.

His win marked the start of a Republican hold on the presidency that would last, with one interruption, for more than 20 years. This political shift reflected how unsettling the 1960s had become for mainstream Americans.

In an era of chaos and confrontation, Middle America turned to the Republicans for stability.

As Johnson’s term drew to a close, he called for peace negotiations that began in Paris in May 1968.

No agreement could be reached, and Nixon’s claim that he had a “secret plan” to help end the war helped him win the election.

In June 1969, he announced a new policy known as Vietnamization. This involved removing Americans and replacing them with Vietnamese.

By 1972, American troops numbered only 24,000. As much as Nixon wanted to defuse anti-war sentiments at home, he did not want to lose the war. Therefore, he ordered secret bombing raids on some major targets.
• He also widened the war by moving ground forces into Cambodia to clear out communist camps.

• He was willing to intensify the war to strengthen the American position at the peace talks, but he also brought chaos to Cambodia and a fresh wave of protests at home.

• One of Nixon’s campaign pledges had been to restore law and order. This seemed important when, in 1969, a branch of Students for a Democratic Society known as the Weathermen turned to violence.

• They converged on Chicago and rampaged through the streets. This turned many against the antiwar movement.

• President Nixon recognized that student radicals, antiwar protesters, and the counterculture in general had never appealed to many Americans. Many held the protesters responsible for rising crime, drug use, and permissive attitudes toward sex. Nixon referred to this large group of Americans as the Silent Majority.

• Tensions reached a peak in 1970. At Kent State University in Ohio, students broke windows in the business district and burned down the campus ROTC building.

• In response, the governor mobilized the National Guard. When students threw rocks at them, they loaded their weapons and donned their gas masks.
• As they retreated to the top of a hill, they turned and fired ___ on the students. Four ___ died and nine ___ were wounded.

• Similar violence between students and police at Jackson State in Mississippi left two ___ dead and eleven ___ wounded.

• In a sign of deep divisions in the nation, 100,000 ___ construction workers marched in New York City in support of the President.

• In January 1973, the USA, South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and the Viet Cong signed a formal peace agreement at Paris.

• The agreement stipulated that:
  – 1. All US forces would leave South Vietnam within 60 days
  – 2. All POWs would be released
  – 3. All parties would cease all activities in Laos and Cambodia
  – 4. The 17th Parallel would continue to divide North and South Vietnam

• After the withdrawal of American forces, South Vietnam steadily lost ground to North Vietnam.
In the spring of 1975, the North Vietnamese launched a campaign against strategic cities with the final objective as Saigon. The defenders crumbled. The collapse of South Vietnam was rather sad to see. It had planes but could not provide fuel to fly them. It had vehicles but corrupt soldiers had stripped them of valuable parts. It had units but soldiers refused to report for duty. While many fought valiantly to the last, it was as if many had simply concluded that the war was already lost.

On April 29, 1975, the USA carried out a last-minute evacuations. Helicopters airlifted more than 1,000 Americans and 6,000 Vietnamese from the city.

On April 30, the Saigon government officially surrendered. Saigon was officially renamed Ho Chi Minh City.

Americans had believed they could defend the world from communism anywhere, at any time. American technology and money, they assumed, would always bring victory. Vietnam proved that assumption to be false.

With the North Vietnamese victory, two other countries - Laos and Cambodia - did fall to communism just as the domino theory predicted. The rest of the region, however, did not fall.

The suffering of the Cambodian people was one of the most tragic effects of the war. In April 1975, it fell to the Khmer Rhouge, a force of communists led by the fanatical Pol Pot. Pol Pot was born into a moderately successful family in 1925 but by the 1950s was active in communist activities. He studied in Europe for a time and led a rebellion in the 1960s before seizing total power in the 1970s. He died in 1997.

They effectively declared war on anyone tainted by western ways and killed as many as 1.5 million - a quarter of the population.

Although not so extreme, Vietnam’s new leaders also forced hundreds of thousands into reeducation camps. Inmates often spent years in these forced labor camps. They were often required to memorize communist propaganda and sit through long lectures.
• More than **1.5 million** fled their country by **boat**. In addition to these **refugees**, hundreds of thousands from **Cambodia** and **Laos** also fled their homelands.

• The Vietnam War resulted in more than **58,000** American dead and **300,000** wounded. In addition, more than **2,500** Americans were listed as **POW's** and **MIA's** at the end of the war. After Vietnam, many soldiers came home to a hostile reception.

• The Vietnam War was the **longest** and **least successful** war in American history. The government spent at least **$150 billion** on this war. This expense contributed to growing **inflation** and economic **instability**.

• More bombs rained down on Vietnam than had fallen on all the **Axis Powers** during **WWII**. The number of dead or wounded Vietnamese soldiers ran into the **millions**, with **countless** civilian casualties.

• More than **1.5 million** boat refugees from Cambodia and Laos also fled their homelands.

• In 1994, the United States ended its long-standing **trade embargo** against Vietnam. The next year they restored full **diplomatic relations**.

• In 2014, more than **$36 billion** in trade was exchanged between the two countries, with the US buying much more from Vietnam than selling to it.

• Aside from the **Civil War**, the Vietnam War divided the nation more than any other conflict. Yet in 1979, a group of **veterans** began making plans for a **memorial**. The organizing committee chose the design of **Maya Lin**, a Chinese American, was still just a 21 year-old college student when she won the national design competition for the memorial. She continues to work as an architect and designer.

• The memorial bears the names of every **American who died in the war**. It was completed in **1982** and still sits near the **Lincoln Memorial** in Washington D.C.
The Ghost of Vietnam

Some believe that the Vietnam War made Americans so casualty-averse that it has severely hampered our efforts to wage war ever since.