Vietnam
• Vietnamese civilization began as early as 2000 BC.

• The first Vietnamese state was the Hong Bang Dynasty from 257 BC.

• The Chinese Han Dynasty conquered Vietnam in 200 BC and in 111 BC consolidated it. For the next 1000 years, China controlled Vietnam.

• In 938 AD Vietnamese gained independence at the Battle of Bach Dang River.

• A succession of Vietnamese dynasties maintained independence with brief periods of Chinese control or civil war unrest until the mid 19th century when France colonized the area as part of French Indochina.

• French control continued until the Japanese invasion in 1941. France’s pro-Nazi Vichy government administered Vietnam in collaboration with Japanese. Two million Vietnamese starved to death while supplying rice to Japanese armies.
Ho Chi Minh (1890-1969)

- son of a Confucian scholar, educated in French colonial schools.

- 1910: left Vietnam as kitchen help on ship. Over the next 31 years he lived in France, U.S., England, China, Soviet Union often working menial jobs.

- 1919: unsuccessfully petitioned Woodrow Wilson and others gathered at Versailles for Vietnamese independence after World War I.

- 1941: returned to Vietnam to found Revolutionary League for the Independence of Vietnam (Viet Minh), fighting Japanese with U.S. military aid.

- 1945: after defeat of Japanese, declared independence and petitioned President Truman for support, but U.S. reversed former policy and backed French.

- 1946-1954: with support of Chinese, led Viet Minh fight against French that ended with the Siege of Dien Bien Phu
• 1954: Geneva Accords divided nation at 17th parallel. North was led by Ho Chi Minh; South Vietnam by Ngo Dinh Diem. Accords required national elections to be held in 1956, but they never took place because Diem and his U.S. supporters knew that Ho would win.

• 1954-1960: Diem uses repressive tactics to solidify control.

• 1960: National Liberation Front (NLF)—called Viet Cong—begins revolution against Diem regime.

• 1961: President Kennedy approves covert military operations in Vietnam and up to 3,000 U.S. advisors, increased to 16,000 by the time of his 1963 assassination.

• 1963: Military coup assassinates Diem.

• 1964: U.S. claim that ships are attacked and Congress passes Gulf of Tonkin Resolution giving Johnson power to conduct war in Southeast Asia.

• March 1965: U.S. begins Operation Rolling Thunder, sustained bombing of North Vietnam that continues until October 1968.
• 1965: first acknowledged U.S. combat troops arrive in Vietnam. By the end of 1966, 385,000 are in country.

• 1967 massive anti-war demonstrations begin and U.S. troop strength increases to 500,000. In November, General Westmoreland promises that South Vietnamese army will soon “take charge of the final mopping up of the Vietcong.”

• January-February 1968 Tet Offensive in which NLF launches simultaneous attacks in 110 cities.

• November 1968: Richard Nixon elected president.

• March 1969: U.S. forces peak at 543,000.


• 1972: massive “Christmas bombing” of Hanoi and Haiphong


• 1974: Vietnam cease fire breaks down and Saigon launches offensive.

• 1975: NLF offensive overruns Saigon government. April last U.S. personnel leave in emergency helicopter airlift from the roof of the U.S. embassy.

1977: Socialist Republic of Vietnam admitted to UN.


• 1986: “New Age” reforms introduce free-market economy to Vietnam

• 1995: President Clinton reestablished diplomatic relations with Vietnam

• 2000: President Clinton visits Vietnam.

• 2006: President Bush visits Vietnam.