

April 30, 1975

The Vietnam War took place in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia* from November 1, 1955, to April 30, 1975. *Textures of Remembrance* explores the continuing impact of this war.

During the First Indochina War (1946-1954), conflict emerged between the French colonial government and the Việt Minh, a revolutionary movement fighting for independence. Following the Geneva Conference in 1954, the French military withdrew from Indochina. This withdrawal divided Vietnam into North Vietnam and South Vietnam.

That year, administration of North Vietnam transferred to the Việt Minh. Hồ Chí Minh was appointed Prime Minister of the country, which would be run as a socialist state. Ngô Đình Diệm, previously appointed Prime Minister of South Vietnam by Emperor Bảo Đại, eventually assumed control of South Vietnam. Soon after, North Vietnam-backed insurgents rose up against Diệm's government.

This led to a sustained conflict, often called the Vietnam War or Second Indochina War in English. Over twenty years (1955-1975), civilian and military casualties added up to the millions. Although officially fought between North and South Vietnam, many countries joined the conflict. Communist allies like the Soviet Union and China supported North Vietnam, while anti-communist countries like the United States and South Korea backed South Vietnam.

On April 30, 1975, the People's Army of Vietnam and Viet Cong captured the South Vietnamese capital city of Saigon, now known as Hồ Chí Minh City. This event marked the end of the war and the country's reunification and transition into the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. While many Vietnamese people celebrated this victory, others fled the city by the tens of thousands in the largest helicopter evacuation in history.

People of Vietnamese descent continue to have a divided view of this event. For some, this event is known as the "Liberation of Saigon," a date that denotes new beginnings, while others call this event the "Fall of Saigon," a date often remembered as a loss and as a time of lamentation.

*Under the French colonial government, the area occupied by Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia was referred to as French Indochina.