

## US History The Vietnam War

### Learning Target:

*I can identify the reasons for war between France & Vietnam and examine the outbreak of war between the two nations.*

### 2. France vs. The Vietminh

#### *Outbreak Of War (1945 – 1954)*

##### France or The Vietminh?

- France – a vital ally in the fight against communism
- Ho Chi Minh – Anti-colonial leader who quoted Dec. of Independence
- USA chose to support France due to China and Korea falling to communism

##### Style of Fighting –

- Vietminh use guerilla warfare against the French
- Very frustrating for French forces
- Ho Chi Minh describes the contrasting styles of fighting:

*“If the tiger ever stands still, the elephant will crush him with his mighty tusks. But the tiger does not stand still . . . He will leap upon the back of the elephant, tearing huge chunks from his hide, and then the tiger will leap back into the dark jungle. And slowly the elephant will bleed to death . That will be the war of Indochina.”*

#### *End of French Rule – Battle of Dien Bien Phu*

##### Leaders –

- General Henri Navarre – French commander in Vietnam
  - 13,000 troops
  - Believed French firepower would dominate
  - Make the Vietminh fight in a way other than guerilla warfare
- General Giap – Commander of Vietminh
  - 50,000 main force troops
  - Soviets supplied trucks and artillery

## The Battle –

- Vietminh prepared for 3 months for attack
  - Battle began on March 13, 1954
  - Vietminh artillery shut down two French airstrips
  - French had to parachute drop supplies
  
- Navarre had not anticipated Vietminh could bring such firepower
  - Counted on French air force to take out Vietminh artillery
  - Vietminh guns had been placed in camouflaged tunnels dug into mountains

*“Giap ordered a series of assaults beginning May 1. Night and day the Vietminh soldiers attacked the French positions. They came in waves, unrelentingly. The French defenders, gallant to the end, fought hard, even heroically. They made the Vietminh pay dearly in blood and pain for their victory. On May 7, the Vietminh broke through into the center of the French defenses. It was all over. On May 8, the French surrendered. They had lost about 7,500 men killed or wounded. About 10,000 French soldiers were marched off into captivity, over half of whom perished while prisoners-of-war. During the 55 day battle, the Vietminh sustained an estimated 25,000 casualties. But they had won a glorious victory, the most important one of the war. Asians had defeated Europeans in a large-scale pitched battle.”*

## ***The Geneva Accords***

- The peace treaty that ended French involvement in Vietnam
- Would lead to the US Vietnam War

## Terms –

1. Vietnam divided at 17<sup>th</sup> parallel
2. In 1956 elections would be held for reunification, winner take all