

**US History**  
**The Vietnam War**

**Learning Target:**

*I can examine the Diem Regime in South Vietnam and analyze why the United States supported this regime and then eventually removed their support.*

**3. The Diem Regime**

*The Choice of Ngo Dinh Diem –*

President Eisenhower Chooses to Support Diem –

Positives (Diem) –

- Had lived in US for several years
- Vietnamese Nationalist
- Good credentials (Lawyer and previous government official)
- Strong anticommunist beliefs

Negatives (Diem) –

- Wealthy Catholic in a primarily poor Buddhist nation
- Favored wealthy landowners of South Vietnam
- Tortured and imprisoned political enemies

The Election –

- 1955 Ngo Dinh Diem became president of the Republic of Vietnam or S. Vietnam
- Election was obviously rigged from the beginning
- Saigon Diem received 605,000 votes from 450,000 registered voters

Reunification Elections –

- July 1956 – Diem refuses to hold elections in South Vietnam
- Ignores Geneva Accords with support of the USA
- Knows he has no chance of defeating Ho Chi Minh

National Liberation Front (NLF) –

- Military assistance sent from north to south supporters of the Vietminh
- Southern supporters formed the NLF to overthrow Diem
- This rebel force became known as the Vietcong (South Communists)
- Many peasants joined the Vietcong out of support or sometimes fear

*The Fall of Ngo Dinh Diem –*

The Buddhist Crisis –

Hue – May 8, 1963 –

- Government troops fired into crowd protesting orders forbidding the flying of flags celebrating the 2,507<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Buddha's birth
- 9 demonstrators were killed

Thich Quang Duc –

- Elderly Buddhist monk
- Set himself on fire on street in Saigon
- American new reporters alerted before hand
- Front page news in US
- Dien now an embarrassment to the US and had to go

The Coup of Dien –

Henry Cabot Lodge –

- US ambassador to S. Vietnam
- Plotted with S. Vietnam generals to overthrow Dien

The Coup Begins –

- Nov. 1, 1963 at 1:30PM revolt starts
- Dien and brother held up in presidential palace

-4:30 PM Dien phoned Lodge

Dien: *“Some units have made a rebellion and I want to know what is the attitude of the US?”*

Lodge: *“I do not feel well enough informed to be able to tell you. I have heard the shooting, but am not acquainted with the facts. Also, it is 4:30 AM in Washington and the US government cannot possibly have a view.*

*I have a report that those in charge of the current activity offer you and your brother safe passage out of the country if you resign. Have you heard this?”*

Dien: *“No. You have my phone number?”*

Lodge: *“Yes. If I can do anything for your physical safety, please call me.”*

Dien: *“I am trying to re-establish order.” (Hangs up)*

The Americans would do nothing to interfere with the coup, that the United States, was, in effect, selling out an ally whom it had helped to install in power and whom it had supported for nearly a decade.”

The Coup Ends –

- Dien contacted coup leaders
- Offered to resign in exchange for safe passage
- Armored car sent to get Dien and his brother
- Murdered in armored car

America Responds –

- Americans claimed to know nothing of the coup
- A lie – in fact the coup would have never happened without American encouragement
- Kennedy did not order the murder of Dien though
- JFK felt shocked and troubled in these events – would die later that year himself