Chapter 1: A War Torn History

FQ: How were the countries of Indochina able to develop a national identity?

Crossroads of the East

Indochina – Named from the mixture of Indian and Chinese cultures that have dominated its history, language, culture and religion.

- Is made up of 3 countries: Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

The First Vietnamese/Indochinese

Vietnamese

- Originally from China, migrated through Red River 3BC
- Brought with them their basic economy of wet-rice farming.

Indochinese

- Khmer (Cambodians) – From Sth-West China or Nth-East India,
- Laos – From Sth China into Laos and Thailand between C8-C13 AD
A Chinese Province
- In 111BC Nam-Viet was conquered by China and dominated for about 1000 years.
- Buddhism came to Vietnam and became popular with the people/peasants. Vietnam was dominated by the sophisticated Chinese civilisation.

Nationalist Revolts - The Vietnamese Kingdom
- The Vietnamese developed a sense of nationalism and frequently rebelled against the Chinese. They were crushed but their identity remained strong.
- Independence was eventually gained from China in 938 AD. The Vietnamese set up the tradition of rule by Emperors and a system of government similar to that of the Chinese.
- This Vietnamese state became increasingly powerful and the emperor (Le Loi) established the capital in Hanoi.

Vietnamese Emperors
- Emperors ruled over a complex network of ministers and administrators known as mandarins. At each level provinces/districts had a mandarin to represent them.
- Peasants saw the emperor as the link between heaven and earth.
- A strong standing army, an education system, and a harsh legal code were established.
- Vietnam expanded in the North and South under Emperor Le Loi

Western Interference
- Europeans (French, English, Dutch, Portuguese) began visiting Vietnam in the C16. The Vietnamese resisted these foreigners.
- Roman catholic missionaries had some success. However, the missionaries disrupted the lifestyle of traditional Vietnam – Christian missionaries were harassed and some Emperors had them killed.

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The C17-C19 Time period

- Throughout the C17 and C18 Vietnam fell apart, divided between two rival families - the Trinh Lords in the North and the Nguyen Lords in the South.
- In 1802, with the backing of the French a Southern Lord took control of Vietnam calling himself Gia Long (1802-1820). Gia Long was considered to be the first unifier of Vietnam (his dynasty lasted until 1955)
- Vietnam was divided into administrative regions: Tonkin, Annam and Cochinchina.

Activities:
1. Make a timeline of Vietnam’s history until 1858

Questions:
2. How did Vietnam come to dominate Indochina?
3. How and why did Vietnam develop a sense of nationalism?
4. How has Vietnam suffered from its geographic location?
5. “Vietnam’s history should have warned the French that this would not be an easy country to control” – Explain this quote
Chapter 2: French Colonisation

FQ: How did French colonialism stimulate Indochinese nationalism?

The Arrival of the French

- European powers had colonial races for overseas territory
- Ports were opening up in China and French businessmen were keen on markets and ports on Vietnam.
- French supported Nguyen Anh (to overthrow the reigning Emperor) and so would have a base in Vietnam.
- Together, France and Nguyen Anh won the war. France took most of Cochinchina (including Saigon). Christianity would also now be tolerated in Vietnam.

French Conquest

- It took France 25 years to complete the conquest of Indochina. By 1890 it had set up protectorates over Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.
- France wiped out Vietnam as a single unified country and brought Cochinchina, Cambodia, Annam and Tonkin under the Indochina Union (administered by French headquarters in Hanoi). Cochinchina had special status as French territory – Vietnamese there were considered French citizens.
Economic Transformation

- The primary objective of the French in Indochina was economic – they wanted to exploit the natural resources of the area and open up markets for French manufactured goods.
  - Rubber plantations flourished
  - Industry expanded
  - Coalfields developed in Tonkin
  - Tin and zinc mined
  - Landless peasants became factory/mine workers
  - Increase in rice fields (1880 - 518,000ha, 1939 – 2,201500)
  - Railways and roads constructed for trade purposes

- Despite this, people of Indochina remained poor. Peasants were 85-90% of the population.
- In mines and rubber plantations thousands of natives died of malaria, malnutrition and dysentery.
- Peasants began to resent the increasing wealth of their landlords as they suffered increases in rents and taxes.
- Chinese population of Vietnam increased (shopkeepers and merchants). By 1931, 217,000 had a monopoly over rice mills and rubber plantations.
Chapter 2: French Colonisation

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The ‘Civilising Mission’
- French claimed a moral reason for colonizing Vietnam (sharing their advanced knowledge with a primitive people).
- Education was slow to develop, and outside the main centers it was non-existent.
- French arrogance – treated the Indochinese as ignorant savages with no pride. The Vietnamese felt shame and humiliation.

Revolt
- Anti-French rebellions were common, but dealt with harshly.
- Conflicts developed between the rebel groups:
  - Traditionalists – opposed the French because of their attempts to restructure the traditional Confucian systems.
  - Nationalists – Worked for an independent Vietnam but argued over whether change should be by constitutional or revolutionary means.
- By 1920 a new urban class of well educated young Vietnamese with ideals from the west were becoming a serious threat to French rule.

Communist Rebellion
- Ho chi minh - sought ideals and inspiration from Lenin’s revolution in Russia. He received lengthy training before being sent to the Soviet Consulate in Canton. He trained young Vietnamese nationalists in communism and revolution.
- 1930 – The Indochina Communist Party (ICP) was formed. Aimed to:
  - Overthrow the French
  - Establish a workers’ government
  - Confiscate plantations
  - Establishment of an eight hour working day.
  - Education for all
  - Equity between men and women.
- By 1940 there was a clearly established nationalist movement, drawing its inspiration from many failed rebellions and the ideology of communism.
Japanese occupation

- 1940 – The Japanese invaded Indochina – saw Indochina as a stepping stone into South-East Asia, as well as a vital storehouse of resources.
- Japan still allowed the French control of Indochina’s administration.
- In March 1945 (with allied attacks coming) Japan seized all control of Indochina - almost a century of French rule had ended.
- Within 6 months the Japanese surrendered.

Activities:
1. Explain the French aims: “God, gold and glory”
2. Assess the positive and negative effects of French rule in Indochina
3. Why did Ho chi minh succeed where Phan Boi Chau failed?

Homework:
Find out about the idea of communism:
- What is it?
- How are people treated?
- Why would it be seen as good for the Vietnamese?
Chapter 3: The August Revolution 1945-1946

FQ: Why did the August Revolution succeed and why was it crushed?

Create a profile on the Viet Minh including at least 10 facts about them: (see p18)
Where was it formed? What was its purpose? What were its strengths? What were their successes?

The Viet Minh in control - Factors that allowed this:

Japanese surrender left a power vacuum and gave the Viet Minh an opportunity to assume control.

Shortages in rice resulted in deaths from starvation. The prospect of famine spread discontent.

Viet Minh exploited the situation. They provided food and directed the discontent of peasants towards those who had supported French and Japanese. This saw an increase in Vietminh support.

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**Allied Reaction**
- Unfortunately for Ho chi minh, the USA, Britain, USSR and China all agreed that when the Japanese surrendered, Indochina would be occupied by the Chinese nationalists (non-communists) in the North and by the British in the South – Divided by the 16th parallel.

**The Viet Minh are crushed**
- The British set out to return the French to power.
- Viet minh organized boycotts and demonstrations against the British.
- But the Viet minh were crushed by 1946 – The British had secured South Vietnam for the return of French rule.
- In Feb 1946 the Chinese nationalists (Guomindang) recognised French sovereignty over Indochina and withdrew their troops.

**Negotiations**
- Ho ch min bargained with the French and reached a compromise on 6 March 1946
  - Vietnam would be recognised as a free state within the French union of Indochinese states.
  - Cochinchina would be separate and its future decided later.
  - 25,000 French troops would remain in Vietnam for the next 5 years.
- However, the two sides remained hostile.