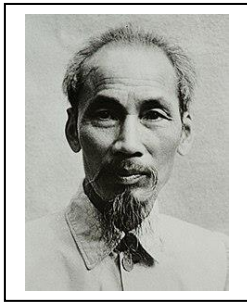
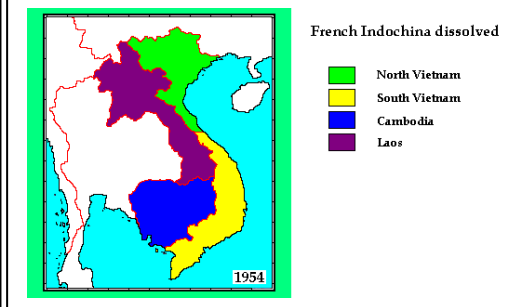
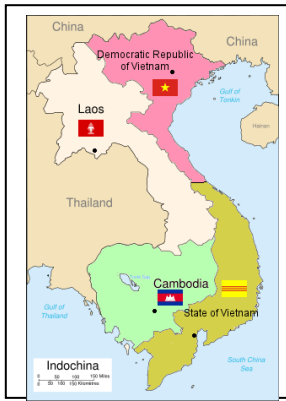


## Aim #14: How did decolonization affect Cambodia & Vietnam?



### Mini Lecture

- Like India, Vietnam had experienced European colonialism for many years and desired self-rule. But while India followed nonviolent resistance, Vietnam suffered through decades of war.
- The leader of the Vietnamese anticolonial movement was **Ho Chi Minh**, an educated nationalist. He studied in France, learning Enlightenment ideas and also studied in Russia, where he developed his belief in the importance of Vietnam's peasantry in any future communist-revolutionary movement. He combined his Vietnamese nationalism with a belief in communism.
- The turmoil of WWII gave Ho a chance to fight for Vietnamese independence. During the war, the Japanese liberated Vietnam from France, but seized the country for themselves.
- Ho and his followers started a **guerilla war** against Japan. When the Japanese surrendered at the end of WWII, Ho declared Vietnam independent.
- However, the French attempted to regain control of their colony. They occupied several major cities. Ho's **Viet Minh** forces opposed the French. The Viet Minh won a decisive victory over the French at Dien Bien Phu in May 1954.
- Peace negotiations established a temporarily divided Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh ruled the north and a U.S.-backed government led the south. Elections were to establish a unified country in 1956, but the American & South Vietnamese leaders feared Ho might win & spread communism, so they prevented the elections.
- The fight between the north and the south continued in Vietnam for decades, with the U.S. providing up to 600,000 troops to support the South. The North eventually won, and Vietnam was unified under a Communist government in 1976.
- In the turmoil of the **Vietnam War**, Communists gained control over neighboring countries of Laos and Cambodia. In 1975, Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh, was seized by the forces of the Communist **Khmer Rouge**, led by **Pol Pot**.
- In Pot's new order, the peasantry was elevated to an exalted status, while intellectuals, ethnic minorities (Vietnamese), and city dwellers were seen as potential enemies. Many thousands of them were murdered.
- To achieve his classless utopia of farmers, Pot & Khmer Rouge began emptying the nation's cities, forcing their inhabitants into the countryside into "reeducation camps". Here, they essentially worked as slave laborers in agricultural camps. Over the following four years, between 1.5 and 2.5 million Cambodians (1/4 of the total population) died from violence, starvation, overwork, and disease.
- Although Cambodia was closed off to foreigners at this time, news of the slaughter and starvation on a massive scale reached the outside world.
- However, with their defeat in Vietnam so fresh in their memories, American policymakers were unwilling to involve themselves in another conflict in Southeast Asia. Similarly, other Western powers chose not to intervene. China was the source of 90% of the Khmer Rouge's foreign assistance.
- The people of Cambodia were left in a virtual human rights void until late 1978. At that time, Vietnam invaded the country after years of mutual border raids and skirmishes. The Vietnamese quickly overthrew the Khmer Rouge and took control of Cambodia for about 10 years- ending the genocide.

### Review Questions:

1. Why did a civil war erupt in Vietnam & what were the results?
2. Why did Pol Pot commit genocide & what were the results?

**Enduring Issue: Conflict; Nationalism; Genocide; Human Rights Violation**

## The Cambodian Genocide

**Directions:** Read the quotes below and answer the questions that follow.

The following quotes were slogans used by the Khmer Rouge, a political party responsible for crimes against humanity in Cambodia in the 1970s.

*“To keep you is no gain; to lose you is no loss.”*

1. In your own words, what does this quote mean?

*“It is better to arrest ten people by mistake than to let one guilty person go free.”*

2. In your own words, what does this quote mean?
3. Based on these two quotes, what can you infer about the Khmer Rouge?
4. What do you think it was like to live in a country ruled by the Khmer Rouge?

**Directions:** Watch [this Biography.com mini-biography of Pol Pot](#), the leader of the Khmer Rouge, then answer questions below.

1. Where did the Cambodian genocide take place?
2. When did the Cambodian genocide take place?
3. Which groups were involved in the Cambodian genocide?