



VIETNAM

The conquest of Vietnam by France began in 1858 and was completed by 1884. It became part of French Indochina in 1887. Vietnam declared independence after World War II, but France continued to rule until its 1954 defeat by communist forces under Ho Chi Minh. Under the Geneva Accords of 1954, Vietnam was divided into the communist North and anti-communist South. US economic and military aid to South Vietnam grew through the 1960s in an attempt to bolster the government, but US armed forces were withdrawn following a cease-fire agreement in 1973. Two years later, North Vietnamese forces overran the South reuniting the country under communist rule. Despite the return of peace, for over a decade the country experienced little economic growth because of conservative leadership policies, the persecution and mass exodus of individuals - many of them successful South Vietnamese merchants - and growing international isolation. However, since the enactment of Vietnam's "doi moi" (renovation) policy in 1986, Vietnamese authorities have committed to increased economic liberalization and enacted structural reforms needed to modernize the economy and to produce more competitive, export-driven industries. The communist leaders maintain tight control on political expression but have demonstrated some modest steps toward better protection of human rights. The country continues to experience small-scale protests, the vast majority connected to either land-use issues, calls for increased political space, or the lack of equitable mechanisms for resolving disputes. The small-scale protests in the urban areas are often organized by human rights activists, but many occur in rural areas and involve various ethnic minorities such as the Montagnards of the Central Highlands, H'mong in the Northwest Highlands, and the Khmer Krom in the southern delta region.

Physical Geography

Official name: **Socialist Republic of Vietnam**

Region: **Southeastern Asia**

Size in Square Kilometers **331,210 sq km**

Bordering Countries: **Cambodia, China, Laos**

Physical Features: **low, flat delta in south and north; central highlands; hilly, mountainous in far north and northwest**

Climate: **tropical in south; monsoonal in north with hot, rainy season (May to September) and warm, dry season (October to March)**

Cultural Geography

Population: 94,348,835 (July 2015 est.)

Ethnic Groups: Kinh (Viet) 85.7%, Tay 1.9%, Thai 1.8%, Muong 1.5%, Khmer 1.5%, Mong 1.2%, Nung 1.1%, Hoa 1%, other 4.3% (2009 est.)

Official Language: Vietnamese

Other Language: English (increasingly favored as a second language), some French, Chinese, and Khmer, mountain area languages (Mon-Khmer and Malayo-Polynesian)

Capital: Hanoi

Major Cities: Can Tho, Da Nang, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City

Average Quality of life: Lower average

Political Geography

Founded: 2 September 1945

Type of government: communist state

Country's leaders:

President: Trần Đại Quang

Prime Minister: Nguyễn Xuân Phúc

Chairwoman of National Assembly: Nguyễn Thị Kim Ngân

Country's military: 482,000 active personnel

Allies: Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, EU members, Russia, Belarus, Ireland, Serbia, United Kingdom, Argentina, Australia, India, Israel, Mexico, Mongolia, Venezuela

Enemies: China, Cambodia, Laos, USA

Economic Geography

Gross domestic product (GDP): \$552.3 billion (2015 est.)

Natural resources: phosphates, coal, manganese, rare earth elements, bauxite, chromate, offshore oil and gas deposits, timber, hydropower, rice, coffee, rubber, tea, pepper, soybeans, cashews, sugar cane, peanuts, bananas; poultry; fish, seafood

Currency: đồng

Exports: clothes, shoes, electronics, seafood, crude oil, rice, coffee, wooden products, machinery

Imports: machinery and equipment, petroleum products, steel products, raw materials for the clothing and shoe industries, electronics, plastics, automobiles

Export partners: US 21.2%, China 13.3%, Japan 8.4%, South Korea 5.5%, Germany 4.1%

Import partners: China 34.1%, South Korea 14.3%, Singapore 6.5%, Japan 6.4%, Hong Kong 5.1%, Thailand 4.5%
