

## SOUTH VIETNAM

Polity5 regime codes:

fac	scode	polity	pers	bmon	bday	byear	emon	eday	eyear	exec	exconst	polcomp
1X	RVN	-3	8	10	26	1955	11	1	1963	3	3	6
1Xa	RVN	-3	2	11	2	1963	6	11	1965	4	1	6
1Xb	RVN	-66	8	6	12	1965	3	29	1973	-66	-66	-66
1Xc	RVN	-77	3	3	30	1973	12	31	1975	-77	-77	-77

PITF Problem Events:

- 1) 01/58-04/75 (REV 01/58-04/75; GEN 01/65-04/75)

**1X) Date of Change to Factional-Autocratic:** October 26, 1955 (independence)

### Brief Explanation of Change To:

The nationalist resistance to French occupation eventually led to a settlement through the Geneva Accords between the French government and Viet Minh representatives. According to the agreement, the country was divided between communist (north) and non-communist (south), led by Ngo Dinh Diem. The agreement also called for an election to be held by July 1956 to bring the two provisional zones under a unified government. However, the South Vietnamese Government refused to accept this provision and, on October 26, 1955, South Vietnam declared itself the Republic of Vietnam. In attempts to consolidate his power, Diem eliminated pro-French elements in the military and suppressed the local autonomy of other religious and political groups. Diem removed Bao Dai as chief of state and made himself president of the Republic in a government-manipulated referendum in October 1955. The Government scheduled general elections for a Constituent Assembly to be held on March 4, 1956. Diem, however, barred communist sympathizers from participating in the elections. President Diem's supporters won the majority of seats for the Constituent Assembly.

### Identify Main Factions:

- *Anti-Communist Government* — Ngo Dinh Diem's government was supported by the US and proved itself to be staunchly anti-communist. Diem's Movement for National Revolution and its supporting parties won the majority of seats in the 1956 elections. Diem gathered his principal support from the minority Catholic population and seriously alienated the majority Buddhists. After Diem's ouster in November 1963, the military-maintained control of the anti-communist faction and the central government until its surrender in April 1975; the military remained highly fragmented, reflecting the deep divisions within the larger society.
- *Nationalists-Communists* — A collection of various nationalist and political opposition groups fighting the government of President Diem formed the Viet Cong in late 1950s. The Viet Cong became the military arm of the National Liberation Front supported by communist North Vietnam. The insurgency in the south was strengthened by the training and infiltration of fighters from the north.
- *Religious sects* — During the rule of Bao Dai prior to 1955, religious sects enjoyed autonomy and rights to manage their own affairs in return for their acceptance of the Bao Dai regime. The early insurgent activities against the Diem's government were conducted by the members of the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai religious sects. The Buddhist community maintained a very potent, civil disobedience campaign against the various governments in the South, especially in Saigon.

### **Revolutionary War: January 1958 - April 1975**

South Vietnamese communists, supported by North Vietnam, rebel against the regime; the conflict became an internationalized civil war with massive US intervention following the Gulf of Tonkin incident (an alleged attack by North Vietnam on US naval vessels) in August 1964.

### **Changes within Factional-Autocratic Period:**

#### **1Xa) November 2, 1963 (military coup)**

Diem's government became increasingly unpopular when it resorted to violent suppression of non-communist opposition groups, especially the Buddhists. The United States lost patience with Diem when he failed to address the legitimate grievance of the Buddhist communities, which constituted the largest share of the population. The US disillusionment with the Diem regime encouraged dissent within the military and signaled to disgruntled military officers that they were free to remove the Diem regime from power. Military forces led by General Duong Van Minh seized control, ending Diem's rule on November 1, 1963. The Revolutionary Military Committee led by Lt-Gen. Duong Van Minh dissolved the National Assembly, suspended the 1956 constitution, and proclaimed the abolition of the presidential system. Gen. Minh was subsequently ousted by Maj-Gen. Nguyen Krahn on January 30, 1964. Widespread public demonstrations forced the military junta to dissolve itself and set up a provisional civilian government in October 1964; however, Gen. Krahn remained in control of the government until the Armed Forces Committee voted to remove him from his command on February 20, 1965. Krahn's role as Commander-in-Chief was assigned to Gen. Tran Van Minh but political power shifted to Gen. Nguyen Van Thieu and his ally Gen. Nguyen Cao Ky as the US increased its direct military intervention in South Vietnam.

### **Genocide/Politicide: January 1965 - April 1975**

Government military and paramilitary forces engage in killings, reprisals, and bombardments against villagers supporting the Viet Cong.

**1Xb) June 12, 1965 (foreign occupation)** – Following the August 2, 1964, incident in the Gulf of Tonkin, US military involvement in South Vietnam escalated quickly until there were about 45,000 US troops in the country by June 1965. In face of increasing domestic dissent against the government and armed conflict with North Vietnamese-aided Viet Cong rebels, the nominal civilian government handed over power to the US-backed military on June 11, 1965. The US military intervention peaked at about 537,000 troops in 1968 and continued until the last troops were withdrawn on March 29, 1973.

**1Xc) March 30, 1973 (collapse of central government)** – The Paris peace talks concluded with the signing, on January 27, 1973, of the "Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam." Terms of the peace agreement called for an immediate and comprehensive cease-fire and for all US military personnel to be withdrawn within 60 days. It also recognized the "South Vietnam peoples' right of self-determination" and called for the establishment of a National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord charged with "implementation of this agreement, achievement of national reconciliation and concord and ensurance of democratic liberties" involving the contending governments of South Vietnam: the Republic of Vietnam and

the Provisional Revolutionary Government. Such reconciliation and concord did not occur and the authority of the government of the Republic of Vietnam continued to weaken and contract until the territory was absorbed into, and united with, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.