

# CHAPTER 17

## 1954–1975 The Vietnam War

### *The Big Ideas*

#### SECTION 1: The United States Focuses on Vietnam

**The fate of nations is forever changed by monumental world events.** American efforts to stop the spread of communism led to U.S. involvement in the affairs of Vietnam.

#### SECTION 2: Going to War in Vietnam

**The fate of nations is forever changed by monumental world events.** After providing South Vietnam with much aid and support, the United States finally sent in troops to fight as well.

#### SECTION 3: Vietnam Divides the Nation

**People react to periods of breathtaking social and cultural change in different ways.** The experience of Vietnam produced sharp divisions between Americans who supported the war and those who did not.

#### SECTION 4: The War Winds Down

**The fate of nations is forever changed by monumental world events.** After nearly eight years of fighting in Vietnam, the United States withdrew its forces.



**The American Vision: Modern Times Video** The Chapter 17 video, "Vietnam: A Different War," explores the causes and the impact of this longest war in American history.



1954

- Vietnam defeat French
- Geneva Accords signed

1964

- Congress passes Gulf of Tonkin Resolution

1965

- U.S. combat troops arrive in Vietnam



United States

PRESIDENTS

Eisenhower  
1953–1961



1955

Kennedy  
1961–1963



1960

L. Johnson  
1963–1969



1965



World

1955

- Khrushchev is dominant leader in USSR

1958

- De Gaulle heads France's Fifth Republic

1964

- Japan introduces first high-speed passenger train



The dedication ceremony for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., November 13, 1982

**1967**

- March on the Pentagon takes place

**1968**

- Tet offensive
- Students protest at Democratic National Convention in Chicago

*Nixon*  
1969–1974



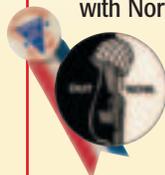
**1970**

- National Guard troops kill students at Kent State University



**1973**

- Cease-fire signed with North Vietnam



*Ford*  
1974–1977



**1975**

- Evacuation of last Americans from Vietnam

**HISTORY**  
*Online*

**Chapter Overview**

Visit the *American Vision: Modern Times* Web site at [tav.mt.glencoe.com](http://tav.mt.glencoe.com) and click on **Chapter Overviews—Chapter 17** to preview chapter information.

1970

1975

**1967**

- First heart transplant performed

**1968**

- Soviets repress Czechoslovakia's rebellion

**1971**

- Pakistani civil war leads to independent Bangladesh

**1975**

- Civil war breaks out in Angola

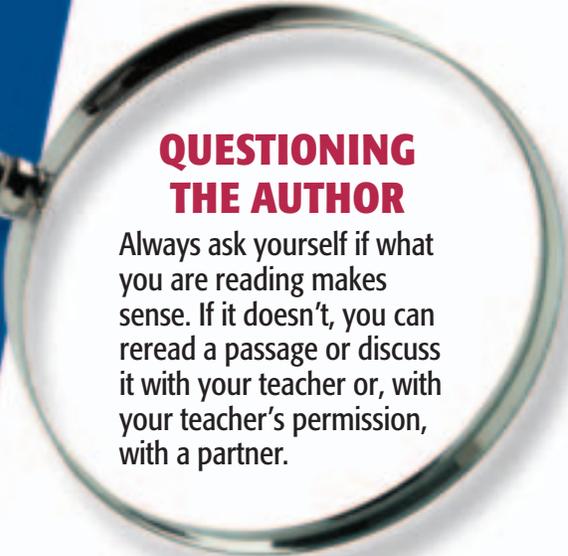
# Preparing to Read Chapter 17

## Reading Skill

## Questioning the Author

While reading this textbook, do you ever wonder what the author was thinking when he wrote a passage? If so, you have questioned the author in your mind. Effective readers understand that every author writes for an audience. When you create questions for the author, you help yourself get to the deeper meaning of the text. You will find answers to some of your questions in the text, but some questions will remain open-ended. The reading strategy called Questioning the Author (QtA) helps you to make connections and read beyond the text.

You can use QtA at any time, whether you are reading the main text or the American Story near the beginning of each section. Stop occasionally during the reading to ask yourself about the author's purpose for a passage, the clarity of the passage, or about experiences that link this information to something else. You will also notice that this textbook contains extended quotes from the people of the time. When you see these quotes, ask yourself why the author has included them.



### QUESTIONING THE AUTHOR

Always ask yourself if what you are reading makes sense. If it doesn't, you can reread a passage or discuss it with your teacher or, with your teacher's permission, with a partner.

*Read the passage below about American officer Archimedes Patti, who helped Vietminh leader Ho Chi Minh write the Vietnam Declaration of Independence in 1945.*

When a translator read aloud the opening—"All men are created equal; they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"—Patti suddenly sat up, startled, recognizing the words as very similar to the American Declaration of Independence. (p. 774)

Use these QtA questions to discuss the text passage.

- **Why did the author include the opening of the declaration?**
- **What does this sentence remind you of?**
- **Do you understand why Patti reacted in such a way?**
- **Based on what you know about the origin of the quote, what do you think will happen next?**

### Apply the Skill

As you read Chapter 17, stop at least once on each page to apply QtA to a passage you have just read. You should also use this strategy for each quote. Understanding why an author has included a particular quote will help you better understand the quote itself and the information surrounding the quote.



## Historical Analysis Skill

Analysis Skill Standard CS1

### Comparing Present and Past

**Chronological and Spatial Thinking** You will understand history better if you learn to compare the present with the past, evaluate the consequences of past events and decisions, and determine the lessons that were learned.

Imagine that you have walked into class and face a test for which you did not prepare. How do you react? When people are faced with a problem, some might ignore it, hoping it will go away. Others may run away from the problem. Still others might face the problem, trying to influence the potential outcome. You may find that the most effective way to address a problem is to review past solutions to similar problems that you or others have tried.

When historians try to understand events, they often use a similar strategy. Historians review information to see if they recognize any patterns. They then use their prior knowledge of similar historical events to compare these events. The events may have occurred before or after the event they are studying. Historians also may compare present events with those that occurred in the past, evaluating the consequences of past events in order to determine lessons learned.

*Read the following passage to see how President Dwight Eisenhower used the consequences of the past in his policy decisions on Vietnam.*

**You have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly. . . . Asia, after all, has already lost 450 million of its peoples to the Communist dictatorship, and we simply can't afford greater losses. . . . (page 775)**

As you learned in previous chapters, after World War II the United States was concerned about the spread of communism around the world. When President Eisenhower took office, China had become a communist country and the United States was negotiating an armistice with communist North Korea. Eisenhower feared that if Vietnam, too, fell to communism, other nations in Southeast Asia would follow. This concern influenced Eisenhower's decision to support the French against the Vietminh.

#### Apply the Skill

As you read the chapter, note how the domino theory influenced United States policy in Vietnam through 1975. At the same time, determine what lessons were learned, or not learned, from this policy.



# The United States Focuses on Vietnam

## Guide to Reading

### Connection

In the previous chapter, you learned about the civil rights movement. In this section, you will discover how the United States became involved in a war in Vietnam.

### Main Idea

- The United States supported the French in an effort to prevent the further spread of communism. (p. 773)
- A newly independent Vietnam was divided in two, the communist North and the pro-Western South. (p. 775)

### Content Vocabulary

domino theory, guerrilla

### Academic Vocabulary

region, occupy, principal

### People and Terms to Identify

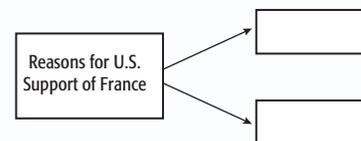
Ho Chi Minh, Dien Bien Phu, Ngo Dinh Diem

### Reading Objectives

- **Describe** the nationalist motives of Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh.
- **Explain** the origins of American involvement in Vietnam during the 1950s.

### Reading Strategy

**Organizing** As you read about the increasing involvement of the United States in Vietnam, complete a graphic organizer similar to the one below by providing reasons that the United States aided France in Vietnam.



### Preview of Events



The following are the main History-Social Science Standards covered in this section.

**11.9.2** Understand the role of military alliances, including NATO and SEATO, in deterring communist aggression and maintaining security during the Cold War.

**11.9.3** Trace the origins and geopolitical consequences (foreign and domestic) of the Cold War and containment policy, including the following: the era of McCarthyism, instances of domestic Communism (e.g., Alger Hiss) and black-listing; the Truman Doctrine; the Berlin Blockade; the Korean War; the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis; atomic testing in the American West, the “mutual assured destruction” doctrine, and disarmament policies; the Vietnam War; Latin American policy.

## The Big Idea

**The fate of nations is forever changed by monumental world events.** In a continuing effort to stop the spread of communism, the United States began to support France’s efforts to control Vietnam after World War II. Despite the help of the United States, the French eventually were defeated by the Vietminh. During negotiations to end the war, the Geneva Accords divided Vietnam into two sections—the pro-Communist North and the pro-Western South. When France pulled out, the United States stepped in to aid South Vietnam as tensions between the North and South escalated.

## Early American Involvement in Vietnam

**Main Idea** The United States supported the French in an effort to prevent the further spread of communism.

**Reading Connection** Have you ever played dominoes? Read on to learn how the concept of a popular game shaped U.S. foreign policy.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, most Americans knew little about Vietnam. During this time, however, American officials came to view the nation as increasingly important in the campaign to halt the spread of communism. American military forces were eventually sent to Vietnam to help combat communism.

### ★ An American Story ★

In 1965 the first major battle between American and North Vietnamese soldiers took place in the Ia Drang Valley in South Vietnam. During the battle, a platoon of American soldiers was cut off and surrounded. Lieutenant Joe Marm's platoon was among those sent to rescue the trapped Americans. When his men came under heavy fire, Marm acted quickly: "I told the men to hold their fire. . . . Then I ran forward. . . . That's the principle we use in the infantry, 'Lead by your own example.'" Marm raced across open ground and hurled grenades at the enemy, and although he was shot in the jaw, he managed to kill the troops firing at his men. For his extraordinary bravery, Lieutenant Marm received the Medal of Honor:

“I feel I'm the recipient of the medal for the many, many brave soldiers whose deeds go unsung . . . [T]he medal is as much theirs as it is mine. It's always tough to get men to go into battle, but we were a tight unit, and there were Americans out there that we were trying to get to. We're all in it together, and we were fighting for each other and for our guys. . . . I had the best soldiers. . . . They were fearless, and they were just great Americans and they're going to go down in history.”

—quoted in *The Soldiers' Story*

Troop involvement in Vietnam happened slowly, though. Despite its concern about communism, the United States at first was reluctant to get directly

involved in the country or to support the French who had been the colonial power in Vietnam before World War II.

**The Growth of Vietnamese Nationalism** When the Japanese seized power in Vietnam during World War II, it was one more example of foreigners ruling the Vietnamese people. China had controlled the region off and on for hundreds of years. From the late 1800s until World War II, France ruled Vietnam and neighboring Laos and Cambodia—a region known collectively as French Indochina.

By the early 1900s, nationalism had become a powerful force in Vietnam. The Vietnamese formed several political parties to push for independence or reform of the French colonial government. One of the leaders of the nationalist movement was Nguyen Tat Thanh—better known by his alias, **Ho Chi Minh**, or “Bringer of Light.” He was born in 1890 in central Vietnam. As a young man, Ho Chi Minh taught at a village school. At the age of 21, he sailed for Europe on a French freighter, paying his passage by working in the galley. During his travels abroad, including a stay in the Soviet Union, Ho Chi Minh became an advocate of communism. In 1930 he returned to Southeast Asia, where he helped found the Indochinese Communist Party and worked to overthrow French rule.

Ho Chi Minh's activities made him a wanted man. He fled Indochina and spent several years in exile in the Soviet Union and China. In 1941 he returned to

“We're  
all in it  
together . . .”

—Lieutenant Joe Marm



Vietnam. By then Japan had seized control of the country. Ho Chi Minh organized a nationalist group called the Vietminh. The group united both Communists and non-Communists in the struggle to expel the Japanese forces. Soon afterward, the United States began sending military aid to the Vietminh.

**The United States Supports the French** With the Allies' victory over Japan in August 1945, the Japanese surrendered control of Indochina. Ho Chi Minh and his forces quickly announced that Vietnam

was an independent nation. He even crafted a Vietnam Declaration of Independence. Archimedes Patti, an American officer stationed in Vietnam at the time, helped the rebel leader write the document. When a translator read aloud the opening—"All men are created equal; they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; among these are liberty, life, and the pursuit of happiness"—Patti suddenly sat up, startled, recognizing the words as very similar to the American Declaration of Independence.

“I stopped him and turned to Ho in amazement and asked if he really intended to use it in his declaration . . . Ho sat back in his chair, his palms together with fingertips touching his lips ever so lightly, as though meditating. Then, with a gentle smile he asked softly, ‘Should I not use it?’ I felt sheepish and embarrassed. Of course, I answered, why should he not?”

—quoted in *The Perfect War*

France, however, had no intention of seeing Vietnam become independent. Seeking to regain their colonial empire in Southeast Asia, French troops returned to Vietnam in 1946 and drove the Vietminh forces into hiding in the countryside. By 1949 French officials had set up a new government in Vietnam.



**Geography Skills**

- 1. Interpreting Maps** What three countries border North and South Vietnam?
- 2. Applying Geography Skills** A mountain chain extends nearly 800 miles (1,290 km) from North to South Vietnam. How do you think this terrain aided the Vietnamese guerrillas who were fighting U.S. troops?

**Picturing History**

**Rural Economy** Most of Vietnam's people live in the country's low-lying fertile lands near the Red River delta in the north and the Mekong River delta in the south. **What does the image below suggest about the use of human labor in the country's agricultural economy?**



## Picturing History

**Nationalist Leader** Ho Chi Minh was already involved in fighting for Vietnam's independence when this photograph was taken in 1946. **What foreign country was he opposing at that time?**

The Vietminh fought back against the French-dominated regime and slowly increased their control over large areas of the countryside. As fighting between the two sides escalated, France appealed to the United States for help.

France's request for assistance put American officials in a difficult position. The United States opposed colonialism. It had pressured the Dutch to give up their empire in Indonesia, and it supported the British decision to give India independence in 1947. In Vietnam, however, the independence movement had become entangled with the Communist movement. American officials did not think France should control Vietnam, but they did not want Vietnam to be Communist either.

Two events convinced the Truman administration to help France—the fall of China to communism, and the outbreak of the Korean War. Korea, in particular, convinced American officials that the Soviet Union had begun a major push to impose communism on East Asia. Shortly after the Korean War began, Truman authorized a massive program of military aid to French forces fighting in Vietnam.

On taking office in 1953, President Eisenhower continued to support the French military campaign against the Vietminh. By 1954 the United States was paying roughly three-fourths of France's war costs. During a news conference that year, Eisenhower defended United States policy in Vietnam by stressing what became known as the **domino theory**—the belief that if Vietnam fell to communism, so too would the other nations of Southeast Asia:

“You have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly. . . . Asia, after all, has already lost 450 million of its peoples to the Communist dictatorship, and we simply can't afford greater losses. . . .”

—quoted in *America in Vietnam*

**Reading Check** **Summarizing** Why did Ho Chi Minh lead a resistance movement against France?



## The Vietminh Drive Out the French

**Main Idea** A newly independent Vietnam was divided in two, the communist North and the pro-Western South.

**Reading Connection** When was the United States divided between a “north” and “south”? Read on to discover how the United States became involved in a pending civil war.

Despite significant amounts of aid from the United States, the French struggled against the Vietminh, who consistently frustrated the French with hit-and-run and ambush tactics. These are the tactics of **guerrillas**, irregular troops who usually blend into the civilian population and are often difficult for regular armies to fight. The mounting casualties and the inability of the French to defeat the Vietminh made the war very unpopular in France. Finally, in 1954, the struggle reached a turning point.

**Defeat at Dien Bien Phu** In 1954 the French commander ordered his forces to **occupy** the mountain town of **Dien Bien Phu**. Seizing the town would interfere with the Vietminh's supply lines and force them into open battle.

Soon afterward, a huge Vietminh force surrounded Dien Bien Phu and began bombarding the town. “Shells rained down on us without stopping



## Picturing History

**Last Stand** French troops assemble a tank near the Dien Bien Phu airfield shortly before their defeat by the Vietminh. [How did this defeat influence French policy in Indochina?](#)

like a hailstorm on a fall evening,” recalled one French soldier. “Bunker after bunker, trench after trench collapsed, burying under them men and weapons.” On May 7, 1954, the French force at Dien Bien Phu fell to the Vietminh. The defeat convinced the French to make peace and withdraw from Indochina.

**Geneva Accords** Negotiations to end the conflict were held in Geneva, Switzerland. The Geneva Accords temporarily divided Vietnam along the 17th parallel, with Ho Chi Minh and the Vietminh in control of North Vietnam and a pro-Western regime in control of the South. In 1956 elections were to be held to reunite the country under a single government. The Geneva Conference also recognized Cambodia’s independence. (Laos had gained independence the previous year.)

Shortly after the Geneva Accords partitioned Vietnam, the French finally left. The United States almost immediately stepped in and became the **principal** protector of the new government in the South,

led by a nationalist leader named **Ngo Dinh Diem** (NOH DIHN deh-EHM). Like Ho Chi Minh, Diem had been educated abroad, but unlike the North Vietnamese leader, Diem was pro-Western and fiercely anti-Communist.

A Catholic, he welcomed the roughly one million North Vietnamese Catholics who migrated south to escape Ho Chi Minh’s rule.

When the time came in 1956 to hold countrywide elections, as called for by the Geneva Accords, Diem refused. He knew that the Communist-controlled north would not allow genuinely free elections, and that Ho Chi Minh would almost certainly have won as a result. Eisenhower supported Diem and increased American military and economic aid to South Vietnam. In the wake of Diem’s actions, tensions between the North and South intensified. The nation seemed headed toward civil war, with the United States caught in the middle of it.

**Reading Check** **Examining** What was the effect of the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu?

## HISTORY Online Study Central

For help with the concepts in this section of *American Vision: Modern Times* go to [tav.mt.glencoe.com](http://tav.mt.glencoe.com) and click on **Study Central**.

## SECTION 1 ASSESSMENT

### Checking for Understanding

- Vocabulary** Define: region, domino theory, guerrilla, occupy, principal.
- People and Terms** Identify: Ho Chi Minh, Dien Bien Phu, Ngo Dinh Diem.
- Explain** the goals of the Vietminh.

### Reviewing Big Ideas

- Analyzing** Why did Ngo Dinh Diem refuse to hold country-wide elections in Vietnam in 1956?

### Critical Thinking

- Historical Analysis** **Interpreting** Why do you think the United States supported the government of Ngo Dinh Diem? **CA HI2; HI3**
- Organizing** Use a graphic organizer like the one below to list provisions of the Geneva Accords.

Geneva Accords Provisions

### Analyzing Visuals

- Analyzing** Photographs Study the Vietnam scene on page 774. How would you describe the contrast between American and Vietnamese societies? How do you think this contrast influenced American thinking toward the war?

### Writing About History

- Descriptive Writing** Take on the role of a Vietnamese peasant in the 1940s. Write a journal entry on your thoughts toward the French. **CA 11WS1.2**

# Going to War in Vietnam

## Guide to Reading

### Connection

In the previous section, you learned how the United States became involved in Vietnam. In this section, you will discover how the United States eventually sent troops into Vietnam.

### Main Idea

- American assistance to South Vietnam increased. (p. 778)
- President Johnson sent troops to aid South Vietnam against communism. (p. 779)
- American troops faced guerrilla warfare and a war of attrition. (p. 781)

### Content Vocabulary

napalm, Agent Orange

### Academic Vocabulary

administration, coincidental, sustain

### People and Terms to Identify

Vietcong, Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, Ho Chi Minh trail

### Reading Objectives

- **Describe** how President Johnson deepened American involvement in Vietnam.

- **Discuss** how the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese were able to frustrate the American military.

### Reading Strategy

**Taking Notes** As you read about the beginnings of the Vietnam War, use the major headings of the section to create an outline similar to the one below.

Going to War in Vietnam  
 I. American Involvement Deepens  
 A.  
 B.  
 II.  
 A.  
 B.

### Preview of Events



The following are the main History–Social Science Standards covered in this section.

**11.8.5** Describe the increased powers of the presidency in response to the Great Depression, World War II, and the Cold War.

**11.9.3** Trace the origins and geopolitical consequences (foreign and domestic) of the Cold War and containment policy, including the following: the era of McCarthyism, instances of domestic Communism (e.g., Alger Hiss) and blacklisting; the Truman Doctrine; the Berlin Blockade; the Korean War; the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis; atomic testing in the American West, the “mutual assured destruction” doctrine, and disarmament policies; the Vietnam War; Latin American policy.

## The Big Idea

**The fate of nations is forever changed by monumental world events.** The events in Vietnam eventually led to an armed struggle between North and South. The United States continued its support because it believed the success of South Vietnam was vital in the battle against communism. Following the assassination of Ngo Dinh Diem, the United States became more involved in the conflict. Military aid, earlier restricted to military advisers, now included a bombing campaign and combat troops. The Vietcong used ambushes and guerrilla warfare against American soldiers. As the war raged on, the number of killed and injured Americans continued to grow. Many Americans began to question the nation’s involvement in the war.

## American Involvement Deepens

**Main Idea** American assistance to South Vietnam increased.

**Reading Connection** Do you think the American government should encourage the spread of democracy? Read on to learn about American efforts to support a free South Vietnam.

In the mid-1950s, American officials decided to support the government of South Vietnam in its struggle against North Vietnam. Both President Eisenhower and President Kennedy sent military aid and hundreds of advisers. Over time, though, sending advisers did not seem to be enough. By the time President Johnson took office, American involvement had increased significantly, and within two years, the president committed ground troops.

### ★ An American Story ★

Marlene Kramel joined the Army Nurse Corps in 1965 when she was 21, and she went to Vietnam the following year. She was working in a makeshift hospital on what was a particularly quiet night. Most of the patients who filled the beds that evening were suffering from malaria.

Suddenly, a row of helicopters roared in from over the horizon, carrying wounded from a nearby battle. As the casualties came in on stretchers, the hospital turned chaotic. Doctors ran about the facility screaming orders and frantically trying to treat patients.

The only nurse on duty at the time, Kramel felt overwhelmed by the confusion. “Every one of the doctors is yelling for me,” she recalled. “I didn’t know what to do next. ‘Start this. Do that.’ Everybody’s yelling at me. I couldn’t do enough.” Things happened so quickly that night, she insisted, that she could not remember most of it. “I can’t remember blood, even. I can only remember, ‘What am I going to do?’ And the doctors moving at tremendous speed. And I’m there. And I’m not able to move fast enough. . . . That’s all I remember.”

—adapted from *The Living and the Dead*

During Eisenhower’s term in office, troop involvement did not seem imminent, and U.S. aid was limited. Ngo Dinh Diem’s refusal to hold national

elections brought a quick response by Ho Chi Minh and his followers. They began an armed struggle to reunify the nation. Their first step consisted of organizing a new guerrilla army, which became known as the **Vietcong**. As fighting began between the Vietcong and South Vietnam’s forces, President Eisenhower increased American aid and sent hundreds of military advisers to train South Vietnam’s army.

Despite American assistance, the Vietcong continued to grow more powerful, in part because many Vietnamese opposed Diem’s government, and in part because of the Vietcong’s use of terror. By 1961, the Vietcong had assassinated thousands of government officials and established control over much of the countryside. In response, Diem looked increasingly to the United States to keep South Vietnam from collapsing.

**Kennedy Takes Over** On taking office in 1961, President Kennedy continued the nation’s policy of support for South Vietnam. Like presidents Truman and Eisenhower before him, Kennedy saw the Southeast Asian country as vitally important in the battle against communism.

In political terms, Kennedy needed to appear tough on communism, since Republicans often accused Democrats of having lost China to communism during the Truman **administration**. Kennedy’s administration sharply increased military aid and sent more advisers to Vietnam. From 1961 to late 1963, the number of American military personnel in South Vietnam jumped from about 2,000 to around 15,000.

“Everybody’s yelling at me. I couldn’t do enough.”

—Marlene Kramel



American officials believed the Vietcong continued to grow because Diem's government was unpopular and corrupt. They urged him to create a more democratic government and to introduce reforms to help Vietnam's peasants. Diem introduced some limited reforms, but they had little effect.

One program Diem introduced, at the urging of American advisers, made the situation worse. The South Vietnamese created special fortified villages, known as strategic hamlets. These villages were protected by machine guns, bunkers, trenches, and barbed wire. Vietnamese officials then moved villagers to the strategic hamlets, partly to protect them from the Vietcong, and partly to prevent them from giving aid to the Vietcong. The program proved to be extremely unpopular. Many peasants resented being uprooted from their villages, where they had worked to build farms and where many of their ancestors lay buried.

**The Overthrow of Diem** Diem made himself even more unpopular by discriminating against Buddhism, one of the country's most widely practiced religions. In the spring of 1963, Diem, a Catholic, banned the traditional religious flags for Buddha's birthday. When Buddhists took to the streets in protest, Diem's police killed 9 people and injured 14 others. In the demonstrations that followed, a Buddhist monk set himself on fire, the first of several to do so. The photograph of his self-destruction appeared on television and on the front pages of newspapers around the world. It was a stark symbol of the opposition to Diem.

In August 1963, American ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge arrived in Vietnam. He quickly learned that Diem's unpopularity had so alarmed several Vietnamese generals that they were plotting to overthrow him. When Lodge expressed American sympathy for their cause, the generals launched a military coup. They seized power on November 1, 1963, and executed Diem shortly afterward.

Diem's overthrow only made matters worse. Despite his unpopularity with some Vietnamese, Diem had been a respected nationalist and a capable administrator. After his death, South Vietnam's



### Picturing History

**Self-Immolation** On June 11, 1963, flames erupted around a Buddhist monk as he set himself on fire to protest government religious policies. [What policies did Ngo Dinh Diem take toward Buddhism?](#)

government grew increasingly weak and unstable. The United States became even more deeply involved in order to prop up the weak South Vietnamese government. **Coincidentally**, three weeks after Diem's death, President Kennedy was also assassinated. The presidency, as well as the growing problem of Vietnam, now belonged to Kennedy's vice president, Lyndon Johnson.

 **Reading Check** **Examining** What was the main goal of the Vietcong?

## Johnson and Vietnam

**Main Idea** **President Johnson sent troops to aid South Vietnam against communism.**

**Reading Connection** In what other nations had the United States become involved in an effort to promote the ideals of freedom? Read on to find out how President Johnson gained war powers from Congress to assist South Vietnam.

Initially President Johnson exercised caution and restraint regarding the conflict in Vietnam. "We seek no wider war," he repeatedly promised. At the same time, Johnson was determined to prevent South Vietnam from becoming Communist. "The battle against communism," he declared shortly before becoming president, "must be joined . . . with strength and determination."

Politics also played a role in Johnson's Vietnam policy. Like Kennedy, Johnson remembered that many Republicans blamed the Truman administration for the fall of China to communism in 1949. Johnson hoped to prevent another country from becoming Communist. Should the Democrats also "lose" Vietnam, Johnson feared, it might cause a "mean and destructive debate that would shatter my Presidency, kill my administration, and damage our democracy."

**The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution** On August 2, 1964, President Johnson announced that North Vietnamese torpedo boats had fired on two American destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin. Two days later, the president reported that another similar attack against American ships had taken place. Johnson was campaigning for the presidency and was very sensitive to accusations of being soft on communism. He insisted that North Vietnam's attacks were unprovoked and

immediately ordered American aircraft to attack North Vietnamese ships and naval facilities. Johnson did not reveal that the American warships had been helping the South Vietnamese conduct electronic spying and commando raids against North Vietnam.

Johnson then asked Congress to authorize the use of force to defend American forces. Congress agreed to Johnson's request with little debate. Most members of Congress agreed with Republican Representative Ross Adair of Indiana, who defiantly declared, "The American flag has been fired upon. We will not and cannot tolerate such things."

On August 7, 1964, the Senate and House passed the **Gulf of Tonkin Resolution**, authorizing the president to "take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression." With only two dissenting votes, Congress had, in effect, handed its war powers over to the president.  (See page 1003 for more on the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.)

## Different Viewpoints

### The Vietnam War

As the war in Vietnam dragged on, a clear division of American opinion emerged. In January 1966, George W. Ball, undersecretary of state to President Johnson, delivered an address to indicate "how we got [to Vietnam] and why we must stay." George F. Kennan, former ambassador to Russia, testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that same year, arguing that American involvement in Vietnam was "something we would not choose deliberately if the choice were ours to make all over again today."



#### George W. Ball:

"[T]he conflict in Vietnam is a product of the great shifts and changes triggered by the Second World War. Out of the war, two continent-wide powers emerged—the United States and the Soviet Union. The colonial systems through which the nations of Western Europe had governed more than a third of the people of the world were, one by one, dismantled.

... [E]ven while the new national boundaries were still being marked on the map, the Soviet Union under Stalin exploited the confusion to push out the perimeter of its power and influence in an effort to extend the outer limits of Communist domination by force or the threat of force.

The bloody encounters in [Vietnam] are thus in a real sense battles and skirmishes in a continuing war to prevent one Communist power after another from violating internationally recognized boundary lines fixing the outer limits of Communist dominion.

... The evidence shows clearly enough that, at the time of French withdrawal ... the Communist regime in Hanoi never intended that South Vietnam should develop in freedom.

... In the long run our hopes for the people of South Vietnam reflect our hopes for people everywhere. What we seek is a world living in peace and freedom."

**The United States Sends in Troops** Shortly after Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, the Vietcong began to attack bases where American advisers were stationed in South Vietnam. The attacks began in the fall of 1964 and continued to escalate. After a Vietcong attack on a base at Pleiku in February 1965 left 7 Americans dead and more than 100 wounded, President Johnson decided to respond. Less than 14 hours after the attack, American aircraft assaulted North Vietnam.

After the airstrikes, one poll showed that Johnson's approval rating on his handling of Vietnam jumped from 41 percent to 60 percent. The president's actions also met with strong approval from his closest advisers, including Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy.

There were some dissenters in the White House, chief among them Undersecretary of State George Ball, a long-time critic of U.S. policy in Vietnam. He warned that if the United States got too deeply

involved in Vietnam, it might become difficult to get out. "Once on the tiger's back," he warned, "we cannot be sure of picking the place to dismount."

The majority of the advisers who surrounded Johnson, however, firmly believed the nation had a duty to halt communism in Vietnam. They thought it was necessary to maintain stability in Southeast Asia and to ensure the United States's continuing power and prestige in the world. In a memo to the president, Bundy argued:

“The stakes in Vietnam are extremely high. The American investment is very large, and American responsibility is a fact of life which is palpable in the atmosphere of Asia, and even elsewhere. The international prestige of the U.S. and a substantial part of our influence are directly at risk in Vietnam.”

—quoted in *The Best and the Brightest*

In March 1965, Johnson expanded American involvement by shifting his policy to a **sustained** bombing campaign against North Vietnam. The campaign was named Operation Rolling Thunder. That month the president also ordered the first combat troops into Vietnam. American soldiers were now fighting alongside South Vietnamese troops against the Vietcong.

**Reading Check** **Describing** How did politics play a role in President Johnson's Vietnam policy?

## A Bloody Stalemate Emerges

**Main Idea** American troops faced guerrilla warfare and a war of attrition.

**Reading Connection** When had guerrilla warfare been used in the United States? Read on to discover the effects of guerrilla warfare in Vietnam.

By the end of 1965, more than 180,000 American combat troops were fighting in Vietnam. In 1966 that number doubled. Since the American military was extremely strong, it marched into Vietnam with great confidence. "America seemed omnipotent then," said Philip Caputo, one of the first marines to arrive. "We saw ourselves as the champions of a 'cause that was destined to triumph.'"

**Frustrating Warfare** Lacking the firepower of the Americans, the Vietcong used ambushes, booby traps, and guerrilla tactics. Ronald J. Glasser, an

### George F. Kennan:

"Vietnam is not a region of major military and industrial importance. It is difficult to believe that any decisive developments of the world situation would be determined in normal circumstances by what happens on that territory. . . . Even a situation in which South Vietnam was controlled exclusively by the Vietcong, while regrettable . . . would not, in my opinion, present dangers great enough to justify our direct military intervention.

. . . To attempt to crush North Vietnamese strength to a point where [it] could no longer give any support for Vietcong political activity in the South, would . . . have the effect of bringing in Chinese forces at some point.

. . . Our motives are widely misinterpreted, and the spectacle emphasized and reproduced in thousands of press photographs and stories . . . produces reactions among millions of people throughout the world profoundly detrimental to the image we would like them to hold of this country."

### Learning From History

- 1. Recognizing Ideologies** How do the two speakers assess the value of Vietnam and its people to the United States? **CA 11RC.5**
- 2. Making Inferences** Why does George Kennan believe that the United States government got involved in Vietnam when it did? How does he feel about this involvement? **CA 11RC.4**

**MOMENT  
in HISTORY**

**AMERICA'S LONGEST  
WAR**

Clinging to his M-16 rifle, a wounded American Marine is shown after being pulled to safety by a fellow soldier. In the late 1950s, American military advisers were sent to help the South Vietnamese army fight guerrillas known as the Vietcong, who were receiving weapons, supplies, and training from Communist North Vietnam. The dense jungles of Vietnam made fighting the guerrillas very difficult. By 1968 about 500,000 U.S. troops were fighting in the increasingly unpopular war. American forces finally withdrew in March 1973.



American army doctor, described the devastating effects of one of these booby traps:

“Three quarters of the way through the tangle, a trooper brushed against a two-inch vine, and a grenade slung at chest high went off, shattering the right side of his head and body. . . . Nearby troopers took hold of the unconscious soldier and, half carrying, half dragging him, pulled him the rest of the way through the jungle.”

—quoted in *Vietnam, A History*

The Vietcong also frustrated American troops by blending in with the general population and then quickly vanishing. “It was a sheer physical impossibility to keep the enemy from slipping away whenever he wished,” one American general said. Journalist Linda Martin noted, “It’s a war where nothing is ever quite certain and nowhere is ever quite safe.”

To counter the Vietcong’s tactics, American troops went on “search and destroy” missions. They tried to find enemy troops, bomb their positions, destroy their supply lines, and force them into the open.

American forces also sought to take away the Vietcong’s ability to hide in the thick jungles by literally destroying the landscape. American planes dropped **napalm**, a jellied gasoline that explodes on contact. They also used **Agent Orange**, a chemical that strips leaves from trees and shrubs, turning farmland and forest into wasteland.

**A Determined Enemy** United States military leaders underestimated the Vietcong’s strength. They also misjudged the enemy’s stamina. American generals believed that continuously bombing and killing large numbers of Vietcong would destroy the enemy’s morale and force them to give up. The guerrillas, however, had no intention of surrendering, and they were willing to accept huge losses in human lives.

In the Vietcong’s war effort, North Vietnamese support was a major factor. Although the Vietcong forces were made up of many South Vietnamese, North Vietnam provided arms, advisers, and significant leadership. Later in the war, as Vietcong casualties mounted, North Vietnam began sending regular North Vietnamese Army units to fight in South Vietnam.

North Vietnam sent arms and supplies south by way of a network of jungle paths known as the **Ho Chi Minh trail**. The trail wound through the countries of Cambodia and Laos, bypassing the border between North and South Vietnam. Because the trail passed through countries not directly involved in the war, President Johnson refused to allow a full-scale attack on the trail to shut it down.

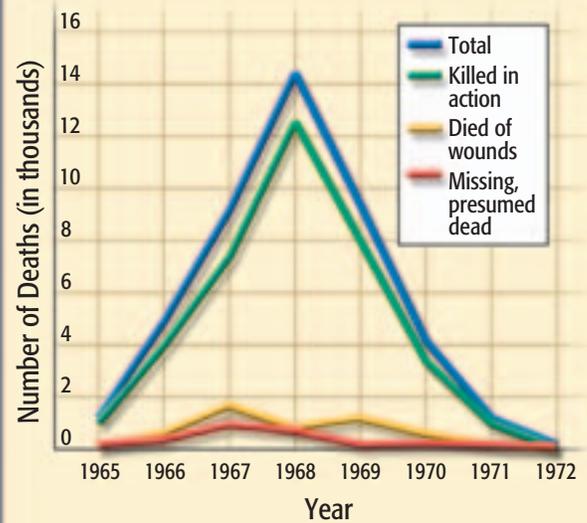
North Vietnam itself received military weapons and other support from the Soviet Union and China. One of the main reasons President Johnson refused to order a full-scale invasion of North Vietnam was his fear that such an attack would bring China into the war, as had happened in Korea. By placing limits on the war, however, Johnson made it very difficult to win. Instead of conquering enemy territory, American troops were forced to fight a war of attrition—a strategy of defeating the enemy forces by slowly wearing them down. This strategy led troops to conduct grisly body counts after battles to determine how many enemy soldiers had been killed.

Bombing from American planes killed as many as 220,000 Vietnamese between 1965 and 1967. Nevertheless, the Vietcong and North Vietnamese troops showed no sign of surrendering. Meanwhile, American casualties continued to mount. By the end of 1966, more than 6,700 American soldiers had been killed.

As the number of Americans killed and wounded continued to grow, the notion of a quick and decisive victory grew increasingly remote. As a result, many citizens back home began to question the nation's involvement in the war.

**Reading Check** **Describing** What tactics did the United States adopt to fight the Vietcong?

### Vietnam War Deaths, 1965–1972



Source: *Statistical Abstract of the United States*.

### Graph Skills

- Interpreting Graphs** How many American soldiers were killed in action in 1968, and how many died of wounds?
- Generalizing** The number of wounded and killed rose rapidly from 1965 to 1968 and then fell quickly over the next few years. By 1970, how much had the total number killed dropped from the peak number of deaths in 1968?

### HISTORY Online Study Central

For help with the concepts in this section of *American Vision: Modern Times* go to [tav.mt.glencoe.com](http://tav.mt.glencoe.com) and click on **Study Central**.

## SECTION 2 ASSESSMENT

### Checking for Understanding

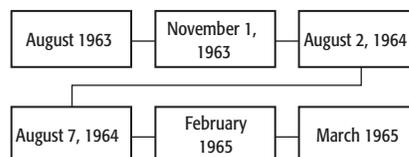
- Vocabulary** Define: administration, coincidental, sustain, napalm, Agent Orange.
- People and Terms** Identify: Vietcong, Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, Ho Chi Minh trail.
- Explain** how the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution affected the powers of Congress and the presidency.

### Reviewing Big Ideas

- Examining** Why did the United States use napalm and Agent Orange in its fight against the Vietcong?

### Critical Thinking

- Analyzing** Why did fighting in Vietnam turn into a stalemate by the mid-1960s?
- Sequencing** Complete a time line similar to the one below to fill in events leading to American involvement in Vietnam.



### Analyzing Visuals

- Analyzing Photographs** Look closely at the photograph on page 779 of *Buddhist monk Reverend Quang Duc*. What in the photograph suggests that this event was planned by Buddhists to protest their treatment in South Vietnam?

### Writing About History

- Persuasive Writing** Imagine that you are a member of Congress in August 1964. Based on the Constitution, write a statement supporting or opposing the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. **CA 11WS1.1**

# You're *the* Historian

## Incident in the Gulf of Tonkin



President Lyndon Johnson

In 1964 the Vietcong in South Vietnam were trying to topple the government and unite the country under communism. To prevent this, the United States had already committed money, supplies, and advisers. President Johnson asked Congress to authorize using force after reports that North Vietnam had made unprovoked attacks on U.S. warships in the Gulf of Tonkin. Congress responded with the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. Had the warship USS *Maddox* provoked the attack? Was Johnson fully informed of events in the Gulf? You're the historian.

Read the following excerpts, then answer the questions and complete the activities that follow.

### From accounts of an unprovoked attack

The sources advising President Johnson on the Gulf of Tonkin incident included the navy and the Defense Department. These excerpts suggest how difficult it was to know what had happened—and also how tension influenced the American interpretation.

#### U.S. Navy Commander John Herrick of the USS *Maddox*:

I am being approached by high-speed craft with apparent intention of torpedo attack. I intend to open fire in self-defense if necessary.

—from a cable of August 2, 1964

#### U.S. Defense Department:

While on routine patrol in international waters . . . the U.S. destroyer *Maddox* underwent an unprovoked attack by three PT-type boats in . . . the Tonkin Gulf.

The attacking boats launched three torpedoes and used 37-millimeter gunfire. The *Maddox* answered

with 5-inch gunfire. . . . The PT boats were driven off, with one seen to be badly damaged and not moving. . . .

No casualties or damage were sustained by the *Maddox* or the aircraft.

—from a press release of August 2, 1964

#### National Security Council Meeting:

**Secretary McNamara:** The North Vietnamese PT boats have continued their attacks on the two U.S. destroyers in international waters in the Gulf of Tonkin. . . .

**Secretary Rusk:** An immediate and direct action by us is necessary. The unprovoked attack on the high seas is an act of war for all practical purposes. . . .

**CIA Director McCone:** The proposed U.S. reprisals will result in sharp North Vietnamese military action, but such actions would not represent a deliberate

decision to provoke or accept a major escalation of the Vietnamese war.

**President Johnson:** Do they want a war by attacking our ships in the middle of the Gulf of Tonkin?

**U.S. Intelligence Agency Director Rowan:** Do we know for a fact that the North Vietnamese provocation took place?

**Secretary McNamara:** We will know definitely in the morning.

—August 2, 1964

#### Secretary Rusk:

We believe that present OPLAN 34-A activities are beginning to rattle Hanoi [capital of North Vietnam], and the *Maddox* incident is directly related to their effort to resist these activities. We have no intention of yielding to pressure.

—from a top secret telegram to Ambassador Maxwell Taylor (South Vietnam), August 3, 1964



Secretary McNamara

## From accounts of a possible mistake

Two days after the alleged attack, the *Turner Joy* joined the *Maddox* in the Gulf. On the night of August 4, 1964, the two destroyers experienced a series of events they interpreted as a second attack. However, Commander Herrick later revised this report. President Johnson referred to the “repeated” attacks later when he asked Congress for war powers.

### Commander Herrick:

Review of action makes many contacts and torpedoes fired appear doubtful. Freak weather effects on radar and overeager sonarmen may have accounted for many reports. No actual visual sightings by *Maddox*. Suggest complete evaluation before any further action. . . .

*Turner Joy* also reports no actual visual sightings or wake. . . . Entire action leaves many doubts

except for apparent attempt to ambush at beginning.

—from two cables of August 4, 1964

### President Johnson:

The initial attack on the destroyer *Maddox*, on August 2, was repeated today by a number of hostile vessels attacking two U.S. destroyers with torpedoes. The destroyers and supporting aircraft acted at once on the orders I gave after the initial act of aggression. . . . Repeated acts of violence against the Armed Forces of the United States must be met not only with alert defense, but with positive reply.

—in a television and radio address, August 4, 1964

In 1968 Senator William Fulbright opened an investigation into the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident. The following exchange took place between Senator Fulbright and Secretary McNamara.

**Secretary McNamara:** I don’t believe Commander Herrick in his cable stated that he had doubt that the attack took place. He questioned certain details of the attack. . . . Secondly, his doubts were resolved that afternoon before the retaliatory action was taken.

**Senator Fulbright:** I think he went further than that. He advised you not to do anything until it had been reevaluated. . . . It is a very strong statement.

**Secretary McNamara:** Nothing was done until it was reevaluated.

**Senator Fulbright:** He says “Suggest complete reevaluation before any further action.” Now that is a very strong recommendation from a man on the scene in charge of the operation. . . . Both committees, except for the Senator from Oregon [Morse], unanimously accepted your testimony then as the whole story, and I must say this raises very serious questions about how you make decisions to go to war.

## Understanding the Issue

1. What statement by Rusk suggests the United States may have provoked the attack on the *Maddox*?
2. Do you think President Johnson was misled by his advisers? Explain.
3. How soon after the alleged attacks did the president address the American people? Did the United States rush to judgment in this case? Explain.

## Activities

1. **Investigate** What were the conclusions of the Fulbright investigations into the Gulf of Tonkin incident? Check sources, including the Internet.
2. **Discuss** Research and review American decisions to go to war in 1898, 1917, and 1941. What were the concerns? Do you think the nation made the right decisions?



Vietcong guerrillas

# Vietnam Divides the Nation

## Guide to Reading

### Connection

In the previous section, you learned how U.S. troops became involved in the Vietnam War. In this section, you will find out how the war divided the nation.

### Main Idea

- Americans grew discouraged as the death toll increased and official reports contradicted the reality of the war. (p. 787)
- Protests during the war focused on the draft policy. (p. 788)
- With violence escalating and his popularity dwindling, Johnson decided not to seek another term of office. (p. 789)

### Content Vocabulary

credibility gap, teach-in, dove, hawk

### Academic Vocabulary

contradict, proportion, alternative

### People and Terms to Identify

William Westmoreland, Tet offensive

### Reading Objective

- **Analyze** why support for the war began to weaken.
- **Describe** the motives of those in the antiwar movement.

### Reading Strategy

**Organizing** As you read about Americans' reactions to the Vietnam War, complete a graphic organizer like the one below to list the reasons for opposition to the war.



### Preview of Events



The following are the main History–Social Science Standards covered in this section.

**11.9.3** Trace the origins and geopolitical consequences (foreign and domestic) of the Cold War and containment policy, including the following: the era of McCarthyism, instances of domestic Communism (e.g., Alger Hiss) and blacklisting; the Truman Doctrine; the Berlin Blockade; the Korean War; the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis; atomic testing in the American West, the “mutual assured destruction” doctrine, and disarmament policies; the Vietnam War; Latin American policy.

**11.9.4** List the effects of foreign policy on domestic policies and vice versa (e.g., protests during the war in Vietnam, the “nuclear freeze” movement).

**11.10.4** Examine the roles of civil rights advocates (e.g., A. Philip Randolph, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Thurgood Marshall, James Farmer, Rosa

Parks), including the significance of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” and “I Have a Dream” speech.

## The Big Idea

**People react to periods of breathtaking social and cultural change in different ways.** As the war raged on and the death toll of American soldiers grew, an antiwar movement began, with protesters holding teach-ins and antiwar rallies to speak out against the war and the draft. Not all Americans opposed the war. Supporters accused protesters of being unpatriotic. Following the Tet offensive, political support for President Johnson began to decline. Faced with steadily decreasing approval ratings, Johnson decided not to seek reelection. The division within the Democratic Party and voter dissatisfaction with the war led to the election of Republican nominee Richard Nixon.

## A Growing Credibility Gap

**Main Idea** Americans grew discouraged as the death toll increased and official reports contradicted the reality of the war.

**Reading Connection** What role does the media play in covering the events of a war? Read on to learn about the effect of television on the Vietnam War.

When American troops first entered the Vietnam War in the spring of 1965, many Americans had supported the military effort. A Gallup poll published around that time showed that 66 percent of Americans approved of the policy in Vietnam. As the war dragged on, however, public support began to drop.

### ★ An American Story ★

Martin Jezer, a 27-year-old copywriter living in New York City, had never considered himself a radical. “I campaigned for Lyndon Johnson in 1964,” he recalled. As his opposition to the war in Vietnam grew, however, Jezer decided to stage a public protest.

On April 15, 1967, he and dozens of other young men gathered with their military draft cards in New York’s Central Park. Before an audience of reporters, photographers, FBI officials, and citizens, the men pulled out matches and lighters and burned the cards.

“We began singing freedom songs and chanting, ‘Resist! Resist!’ and ‘Burn Draft Cards, Not People’ . . . People in the audience were applauding us, shouting encouragement. Then some guys began to come out of the audience with draft cards in hand. They burned them. Alone, in pairs, by threes they came. Each flaming draft card brought renewed cheering and more people out of the crowd. . . . Some of the draft card burners were girls, wives, or girlfriends of male card burners. . . . It lasted this way for about half an hour.”

—quoted in *The Vietnam War: Opposing Viewpoints*

Jezer’s protest was just one of many as American opposition to the Vietnam War grew. Suspicion of the government’s truthfulness about the war was a significant reason. Throughout the early years of the war, the American commander in South Vietnam, General **William Westmoreland**, reported that the enemy was on the brink of defeat. In 1967 he confi-

dently declared that the “enemy’s hopes are bankrupt” and added, “we have reached an important point where the end begins to come into view.”

Contradicting such reports were less optimistic media accounts, especially on television. Vietnam was the first “television war,” with footage of combat appearing nightly on the evening news. Day after day, millions of people saw images of wounded and dead Americans and began to doubt government reports. In the view of many, a **credibility gap** had developed, meaning it was hard to believe what the Johnson administration said about the war.

Congress, which had given the president a nearly free hand in Vietnam, soon grew uncertain about the war. Beginning in February 1966, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held “educational” hearings on Vietnam, calling in Secretary of State Dean Rusk and other policy makers to explain the administration’s war program. The committee also listened to critics



### Analyzing Political Cartoons

**Dark Passage** One particular phrase came to represent the government’s claims that it was on the verge of ending the Vietnam War: “the light at the end of the tunnel.” **Why did many people become skeptical about such government claims?**





### Picturing History

**Flower Power** Student antiwar protests ranged from violent confrontation to this peaceful but dramatic demonstration near the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. **What were some reasons many people opposed the war?**

such as American diplomat George Kennan. Although Kennan had helped create the policy of containment, he argued that Vietnam was not strategically important to the United States.

 **Reading Check** **Explaining** Why was the Vietnam War the first “television war”?

## An Antiwar Movement Emerges

**Main Idea** Protests during the war focused on the draft policy.

**Reading Connection** Have you ever been chosen to compete on a team or participate in a task you did not like? Read on to discover the controversies of and responses to the draft during the Vietnam War.

As casualties mounted in Vietnam, many people began to protest publicly against the war and to demand that the United States pull out. Although many other Americans supported the war, opponents of the conflict received the most attention.

**Teach-Ins Begin** In March 1965, a group of faculty members and students at the University of Michigan abandoned their classes and joined together in a

**teach-in.** Here, they informally discussed the issues surrounding the war and reaffirmed their reasons for opposing it. The gathering inspired teach-ins at many campuses. In May 1965, 122 colleges held a “National Teach-In” by radio for more than 100,000 antiwar demonstrators.

People who opposed the war did so for different reasons. Some saw the conflict as a civil war in which the United States had no business. Others viewed South Vietnam as a corrupt dictatorship and insisted that defending that country was immoral and unjust.

**Anger at the Draft** Young protesters especially focused on what they saw as an unfair draft system. At the beginning of the war, a college student was often able to defer military service until after graduation. By contrast, young people from low-income families were more likely to be sent to Vietnam because they were unable to afford college. This meant minorities, particularly African Americans, made up a disproportionately large number of the soldiers in Vietnam. By 1967, for example, African Americans accounted for about 20 percent of American combat deaths—about twice their **proportion** of the population within the United States. That number would decline to roughly match their population proportion by the war’s end.

The high number of African Americans and poor Americans dying in Vietnam angered African American leaders, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Early on, King had refrained from speaking out against the war for fear that it would draw attention from the civil rights movement. In April 1967, however, he broke his silence and publicly condemned the conflict:

“Somehow this madness must cease. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam and the poor of America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home and death and corruption in Vietnam. I speak as a citizen of the world, for the world as it stands aghast at the path we have taken. I speak as an American to the leader of my own nation. The great initiative in this war is ours. The initiative to stop must be ours.”

—quoted in *A Testament of Hope*

As the war escalated, American officials increased the draft call, putting many college students at risk. An estimated 500,000 draftees refused to go. Many publicly burned their draft cards or simply did not report when called for induction. Some fled the country, moving to Canada, Sweden, or other nations. Others stayed and went to prison rather than fight in a war they opposed.

Between 1965 and 1968, officials prosecuted more than 3,300 Americans for refusing to serve. The draft became less of an issue in 1969 when the government introduced a lottery system, in which only those with low lottery numbers were subject to the draft.

Protests against the war were not confined to college campuses. Demonstrators held public rallies and marches in towns across the country. In April 1965, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), a left-wing student organization, organized a march on Washington, D.C., that drew more than 20,000 participants. Two years later, in October 1967, a rally at Washington’s Lincoln Memorial drew tens of thousands of protesters as well.

Anger over the draft also fueled discussions of voting age. Many draftees argued that if they were old enough to fight, they were old enough to vote. In 1971 the Twenty-sixth Amendment to the Constitution was ratified, giving all citizens age 18 and older the right to vote.

**Hawks and Doves** In the face of growing opposition to the war, President Johnson remained determined to continue fighting. The president was not alone in his views. Although the antiwar protesters

became a vocal group, they did not represent majority opinion on Vietnam. In a poll taken in mid-1967, about 68 percent of the respondents favored continuing the war, compared to about 32 percent who wanted to end it. Of those Americans who supported the policy in Vietnam, many openly criticized the protesters for a lack of patriotism.

By 1968 the nation seemed to be divided into two camps. Those who wanted the United States to withdraw from Vietnam were known as **doves**. Those who insisted that the United States stay and fight came to be known as **hawks**. As the two groups debated, the war took a dramatic turn for the worse, and the nation endured a year of shock and crisis.

 **Reading Check** **Explaining** What led to the passage of the Twenty-sixth Amendment?

## 1968: The Pivotal Year

**Main Idea** With violence escalating and his popularity dwindling, Johnson decided not to seek another term of office.

**Reading Connection** Have you ever decided not to continue participating in a group or extra-curricular activity? Read on to find out about the events that caused President Johnson not to run for reelection.

The most turbulent year of the chaotic 1960s was 1968. The year saw a shocking political announcement, a pair of traumatic assassinations, and a violent political convention. First, however, the nation endured a surprise attack in Vietnam.

**The Tet Offensive** On January 30, 1968, during Tet, the Vietnamese New Year, the Vietcong and North Vietnamese launched a massive surprise attack. In this **Tet offensive**, the guerrilla fighters attacked virtually all American airbases in South Vietnam and most of the South’s major cities and provincial capitals. The bloodiest battle took place in Hué, South Vietnam’s third largest city. The Communist forces seized much of the city, and it took American and South Vietnamese troops almost four weeks to drive them out. Afterward, American troops found mass graves. The Communist forces had massacred the city’s political and religious leaders as well as many foreigners, intellectuals, and others associated with South Vietnam’s government. Nearly 3,000 bodies were found. Thousands more remained missing.





*A view of the U.S. embassy in Saigon after it was bombed during the Tet offensive.*

**Geography Skills**

- 1. Interpreting Maps** Most of the Ho Chi Minh Trail lies within which countries?
- 2. Applying Geography Skills** How broad was the Tet offensive, and why did this shock Americans?

Militarily, Tet turned out to be a disaster for the Communist forces. After about a month of fighting, the American and South Vietnamese soldiers repelled the enemy troops, inflicting heavy losses on them. General Westmoreland boasted that the Communists' "well-laid plans went afoul," while President Johnson triumphantly added that the enemy's effort had ended in "complete failure."

In fact, the North Vietnamese had scored a major political victory. The American people were shocked that an enemy supposedly on the verge of defeat could launch such a large-scale attack. When General Westmoreland requested 206,000 troops in addition to the 500,000 already in Vietnam, it seemed to be an admission that the United States could not win the war.

To make matters worse, the media, which had tried to remain balanced in their war coverage, now openly criticized the effort. Walter Cronkite, then the nation's most respected newscaster, announced after Tet that it seemed "more certain than ever that the bloody experience in Vietnam is to end in a stalemate."

Public opinion no longer favored the president. In the weeks following the Tet offensive, the president's approval rating plummeted to a dismal 35 percent, while support for his handling of the war fell even lower, to 26 percent.

**Johnson Leaves the Presidential Race** With the war growing increasingly unpopular and Johnson's credibility all but gone, some Democrats began looking for an **alternative** candidate to nominate for president in 1968. In November 1967, even before the Tet disaster, a little-known liberal senator from Minnesota, Eugene McCarthy, became the first dove to announce his candidacy against Johnson. In March 1968, McCarthy stunned the nation by winning more than 40 percent of the votes in the New Hampshire primary and almost defeating the president. Realizing that Johnson was vulnerable, Senator Robert Kennedy, who also opposed the war, quickly entered the race for the Democratic nomination.

With the division in the country and within his own party growing, Johnson addressed the public on

television on March 31, 1968. He stunned viewers by stating, “I have concluded that I should not permit the presidency to become involved in the partisan divisions that are developing in this political year. Accordingly, I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President.”

**A Season of Violence** Following Johnson’s announcement, the nation endured even more shocking events. In April James Earl Ray was arrested for killing Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., an event which led to riots in several major cities. Just two months later, another assassination rocked the country—that of Robert Kennedy. Kennedy, who appeared to be on his way to winning the Democratic nomination, was gunned down on June 5 in a California hotel just after winning the state’s Democratic primary.

The violence seemed to culminate with a chaotic and well-publicized clash between protesters and police at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Thousands of protesters descended on the August convention, demanding that the Democrats adopt an antiwar platform. On the third day of the convention, the delegates chose Hubert Humphrey, President Johnson’s vice president, as their presidential nominee.

**Nixon Wins the Presidency** The violence and chaos now associated with the Democratic Party benefited the 1968 Republican presidential candidate, Richard Nixon. Although defeated in the 1960 election, Nixon had remained active in national politics. A third candidate, Governor George Wallace of Alabama, also decided to run in 1968 as an independent. Wallace, an outspoken segregationist, sought to

attract those Americans who felt threatened by the civil rights movement and urban social unrest.

Public opinion polls gave Nixon a wide lead over Humphrey and Wallace. Nixon’s campaign promise to unify the nation and restore law and order appealed to many Americans. Nixon also declared that he had a plan for ending the war in Vietnam.

At first Humphrey’s support of President Johnson’s Vietnam policies hurt his campaign. After Humphrey broke with the president and called for a complete end to the bombing of North Vietnam, he began to move up in the polls. A week before the election, President Johnson announced that the bombing of North Vietnam had halted and that a cease-fire would follow.

Johnson’s announcement had come too late. In the end, Nixon’s promises to end the war and restore order at home were enough to sway the American people. On Election Day, Nixon defeated Humphrey by more than 100 electoral votes, although he won the popular vote by a slim margin of just over 43 percent to Humphrey’s 42.7. Wallace helped account for the razor-thin margin by winning 46 electoral votes and more than 13 percent of the popular vote.

Speaking to reporters after his election, Nixon recalled seeing a young girl carrying a sign at one of his rallies that said: “Bring Us Together.” This, he promised, would be his chief goal as president.

 **Reading Check** **Explaining** Why did President Johnson decide not to run for reelection in 1968?

**HISTORY**  **Study Central**  
*Online*

For help with the concepts in this section of *American Vision: Modern Times* go to [tav.mt.glencoe.com](http://tav.mt.glencoe.com) and click on **Study Central**.

## SECTION 3 ASSESSMENT

### Checking for Understanding

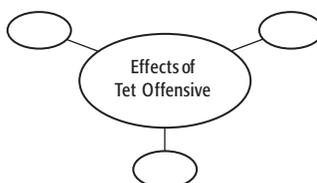
1. **Vocabulary** Define: contradict, credibility gap, teach-in, proportion, dove, hawk, alternative.
2. **People and Terms** Identify: William Westmoreland, Tet offensive.
3. **Summarize** three important events that occurred in 1968.

### Reviewing Big Ideas

4. **Explaining** Why did many people believe that the Vietnam War reflected racial and economic injustices in the United States?

### Critical Thinking

5. **Synthesizing** Why did support of the Vietnam War begin to dwindle by the late 1960s?
6. **Organizing** Use a graphic organizer similar to the one below to list the effects of the Tet offensive.



### Analyzing Visuals

7. **Analyzing Photographs** Study the photograph on page 788. The phrase “flower power” was a slogan of the hippie movement. Explain what you think the phrase meant and how it was used to express opposition to the war.

### Writing About History

8. **Expository Writing** Imagine that you are living in 1968. Write an editorial for the local newspaper in which you explain your reasons for either supporting or opposing the Vietnam War.

CA 11WA2.4a

## Guide to Reading

### Connection

In the previous section, you learned how the war divided the United States. In this section, you will learn about President Nixon's decision to pull out of Vietnam.

### Main Idea

- President Nixon reduced the number of troops in Vietnam and relied on Henry Kissinger to negotiate peace. (p. 793)
- Protests in the United States continued after the invasion of Cambodia and the killing of South Vietnamese citizens. (p. 793)
- South Vietnam fell to North Vietnam shortly after the removal of United States troops. (p. 795)

- Vietnam veterans had a difficult time returning to civilian life. (p. 796)

### Content Vocabulary linkage

**Academic Vocabulary**  
ultimate, generation, explicit

### People and Terms to Identify

Henry Kissinger, Vietnamization, Pentagon Papers, War Powers Act

### Reading Objectives

- **Explain** the events of Nixon's first administration that inspired more anti-war protests.

- **Summarize** the major lessons the United States learned from the Vietnam War experience.

### Reading Strategy

**Organizing** As you read about the end of the Vietnam War, complete a graphic organizer similar to the one below by listing the steps that President Nixon took to end American involvement in Vietnam.

Steps Nixon Took

### Preview of Events



The following are the main History–Social Science Standards covered in this section.

**11.9.3** Trace the origins and geopolitical consequences (foreign and domestic) of the Cold War and containment policy, including the following: the era of McCarthyism, instances of domestic Communism (e.g., Alger Hiss) and blacklisting; the Truman Doctrine; the Berlin Blockade; the Korean War; the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis; atomic testing in the American West, the “mutual assured destruction” doctrine, and disarmament policies; the Vietnam War; Latin American policy.

**11.9.4** List the effects of foreign policy on domestic policies and vice versa (e.g., protests during the war in Vietnam, the “nuclear freeze” movement).

## The Big Idea

**The fate of nations is forever changed by monumental world events.**

President Nixon reduced the number of troops in Vietnam and worked to end U.S. involvement in the war. He appointed Henry Kissinger to negotiate peace with North Vietnam. The nation remained divided, however, as the war continued. Nixon's decision to invade Cambodia and the revelations of the Pentagon Papers led to increased protests. After continued peace negotiations, the United States finally ended its involvement in Vietnam. The peace agreement did not last long. Soon after the withdrawal of American troops, the North Vietnamese invaded the South and united Vietnam under Communist rule.

## Nixon Moves to End the War

**Main Idea** President Nixon reduced the number of troops in Vietnam and relied on Henry Kissinger to negotiate peace.

**Reading Connection** Have you ever tried to resolve a disagreement between friends? Read on to learn about the process of attempting to negotiate peace.

Shortly after taking office, President Nixon began taking steps to end the nation's involvement in the war. It was not until 1975 that Frank Snepp became one of the last Americans to leave Vietnam.

### ★ An American Story ★

On the evening of April 29, 1975, Frank Snepp, a young CIA officer, scrambled up to the American embassy rooftop to catch one of the last helicopters out of Saigon. Throughout that day, Snepp had witnessed the desperation of the South Vietnamese people as they besieged the embassy grounds in an effort to escape the approaching Communist army. Now he was leaving. Later, he recalled the scene:

“The roof of the Embassy was a vision out of a nightmare. In the center of the dimly lit helo-pad a CH-47 was already waiting for us, its engines setting up a roar like a primeval scream. The crew and controllers all wore what looked like oversized football helmets, and in the blinking under-light of the landing signals they reminded me of grotesque insects rearing on their hindquarters. Out beyond the edge of the building a Phantom jet streaked across the horizon as tracers darted up here and there into the night sky.”

—quoted in *Decent Interval*

More than five years before Frank Snepp left Vietnam, President Nixon began working toward ending the war. As a first step, he appointed Harvard professor **Henry Kissinger** as special assistant for national security affairs and gave him wide authority to use diplomacy to end the conflict. Kissinger embarked upon a policy he called **linkage**, which meant improving relations with the Soviet Union and China—suppliers of aid to North Vietnam—so he could persuade them to cut back on their aid.

Kissinger also rekindled peace talks with the North Vietnamese. In August 1969, Kissinger entered

into secret negotiations with North Vietnam's negotiator, Le Duc Tho. In their talks, which dragged on for four years, Kissinger and Le Duc Tho argued over a possible cease-fire, the return of American prisoners of war, and the **ultimate** fate of South Vietnam.

Meanwhile, Nixon cut back the number of American troops in Vietnam. Known as **Vietnamization**, this process involved the gradual withdrawal of U.S. troops while South Vietnam assumed more of the fighting. On June 8, 1969, Nixon announced the withdrawal of 25,000 soldiers. Nixon refused to view this troop withdrawal as a form of surrender. He was determined to maintain a strong American presence in Vietnam to ensure bargaining power during peace negotiations. In support of that goal, the president increased airstrikes against North Vietnam and began bombing Vietcong sanctuaries in neighboring Cambodia.

**Reading Check Identifying** When did secret negotiations with the North Vietnamese begin?

## Turmoil at Home Continues

**Main Idea** Protests in the United States continued after the invasion of Cambodia and the killing of South Vietnamese citizens.

**Reading Connection** What do you think are the most effective ways to bring about a change in government policy? Read on to find out about the demonstrations in the United States as the war continued.

Even though the United States had begun scaling back its involvement in Vietnam, the American home front remained divided and volatile as Nixon's war policies stirred up new waves of protest.

“The roof of the Embassy was a vision out of a nightmare.”

—Frank Snepp



**Massacre at My Lai** In November 1969, Americans learned of a horrifying event. That month, the media reported that in the spring of 1968, an American platoon under the command of Lieutenant William Calley had massacred possibly more than 200 unarmed South Vietnamese civilians in the hamlet of My Lai. Most of the victims were old men, women, and children. Calley eventually went to prison for his role in the killings.

Most American soldiers acted responsibly and honorably throughout the war. The actions of one soldier, however, increased the feeling among many citizens that this was a brutal and senseless conflict. Jan Barry, a founder of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, viewed the massacre at My Lai as a symbol of the dilemma his **generation** faced in the conflict:

“To kill on military orders and be a criminal, or to refuse to kill and be a criminal is the moral agony of America’s Vietnam war generation. It is what has forced upward of sixty thousand young Americans, draft resisters and deserters to Canada, and created one hundred thousand military deserters a year in this country and abroad.”

—quoted in *Who Spoke Up?*

### The Invasion of Cambodia Sparks Protest

Americans heard more startling news when Nixon announced in April 1970 that American troops had

invaded Cambodia. The troops wanted to destroy Vietcong military bases there.

Many viewed the Cambodian invasion as a widening of the war, and it set off many protests. At Kent State University on May 4, 1970, Ohio National Guard soldiers, armed with tear gas and rifles, fired on demonstrators without an order to do so. The soldiers killed four students and wounded at least nine others. Ten days later, police killed two African American students during a demonstration at Jackson State College in Mississippi.

**The Pentagon Papers** In addition to sparking violence on campuses, the invasion of Cambodia cost Nixon significant congressional support. Numerous legislators expressed outrage over the president’s failure to notify them of the action. In December 1970, an angry Congress repealed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which had given the president near complete power in directing the war in Vietnam.

Support for the war weakened further in 1971 when Daniel Ellsberg, a disillusioned former Defense Department worker, leaked what became known as the **Pentagon Papers** to the *New York Times*. The documents revealed that many government officials during the Johnson administration privately questioned the war while publicly defending it.

The documents contained details of decisions that were made by the presidents and their advisers without the consent of Congress. They also showed how the various administrations acted to deceive Congress, the press, and the public about the situation in Vietnam. The Pentagon Papers confirmed what many Americans had long believed: The government had not been honest with them.

#### ✓ Reading Check Evaluating

What did the Pentagon Papers confirm for many Americans?



#### Picturing History

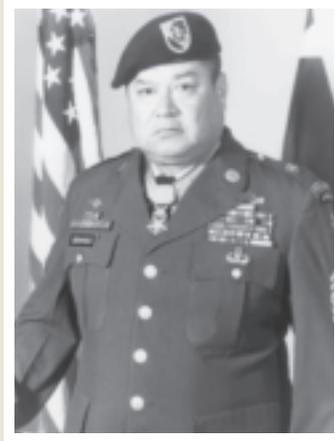
**National Trauma** When members of the Ohio National Guard fired on Kent State University demonstrators, the event triggered a nationwide student strike that forced hundreds of colleges and universities to close. **How does this image connect with the phrase “the war at home”?**

# Profiles IN HISTORY

## Roy P. Benavidez

1935–1998

Roy P. Benavidez received the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest award for heroism, for his actions in the Vietnam War. Growing up, Benavidez worked on the streets selling empty soda bottles and cleaning a local stockyard. His father's family had been *vaqueros* (cowboys from Mexico), immigrating in the 1830s during the Texas War for Independence. His mother, a Yaqui Native American, was born in northern Mexico. Both parents died by the time Benavidez was seven, and he was raised by his uncle.



A tough life made Benavidez a fighter. In May 1968 while fighting in Vietnam, Benavidez rescued members of his Special Forces group who were surrounded by the enemy. Wounded three times while getting to the men by helicopter, he stayed with them some eight hours, preparing an evacuation. Then while carrying the men to the rescue helicopters, he was attacked from behind but managed to kill his attacker. Only after loading all the dead and wounded did Benavidez himself board a helicopter.



## The United States Pulls Out of Vietnam

**Main Idea** South Vietnam fell to North Vietnam shortly after the removal of United States troops.

**Reading Connection** What effect can Congress have on a war? Read on to learn how in 1975 Congress refused to support continued assistance to South Vietnam.

By 1971 polls showed that nearly two-thirds of Americans wanted to end the Vietnam War as quickly as possible. In April 1972, President Nixon dropped his longtime insistence that North Vietnamese troops had to withdraw from South Vietnam before any peace treaty could be signed. In October, less than a month before the 1972 presidential election, Henry Kissinger emerged from his secret talks with Le Duc Tho to announce that “peace is at hand.”

A month later, Americans went to the polls to decide on a president. Senator George McGovern, the Democratic candidate, was an outspoken critic of the war. He did not appeal to many middle-class Americans, however, who were tired of antiwar protesters. When the votes were cast, Nixon won reelection in a landslide.

**The Two Sides Reach Peace** Just weeks after the presidential election, the peace negotiations broke down. South Vietnam's president, Nguyen Van Thieu, refused to agree to any plan that left North Vietnamese troops in the South. Kissinger tried to win additional concessions from the Communists, but talks broke off in mid-December.

The next day, to force North Vietnam to resume negotiations, the Nixon administration began the most destructive air raids of the entire war. In what became known as the “Christmas bombings,” American B-52s dropped thousands of tons of bombs on North Vietnamese targets for 12 straight days, pausing only on Christmas day.

In the wake of the bombing campaign, the United States and North Vietnam returned to the bargaining table. Thieu finally gave in to American pressure and allowed North Vietnamese troops to remain in the South. On January 27, 1973, the warring sides signed an agreement “ending the war and restoring the peace in Vietnam.”

The United States promised to withdraw the rest of its troops, and both sides agreed to an exchange of prisoners of war. The parties did not resolve the issue of South Vietnam's future, however. After almost eight years of war—the longest war in American history—the nation ended its direct involvement in Vietnam.



**South Vietnam Falls** The United States had barely pulled out its last troops from Vietnam when the peace agreement collapsed. In March 1975, the North Vietnamese army launched a full-scale invasion of the South. Thieu desperately appealed to Washington, D.C., for help.

President Nixon had assured Thieu during the peace negotiations that the United States “[would] respond with full force should the settlement be violated by North Vietnam.” Nixon, however, had resigned under pressure following the Watergate scandal. The new president, Gerald Ford, asked for funds to aid the South Vietnamese, but Congress refused.

On April 30, the North Vietnamese captured Saigon, South Vietnam’s capital, and united Vietnam under Communist rule. They then renamed Saigon Ho Chi Minh City.

**Reading Check** **Explaining** Why did the peace talks break down in December 1972?

## Picturing History

**Desperate Pleas** When President Ford ordered all Americans to leave Vietnam immediately in April 1975, many Saigon residents stormed the U.S. embassy pleading for rescue. **When did the North Vietnamese take control of Saigon?**

## The Legacy of Vietnam

**Main Idea** Vietnam veterans had a difficult time returning to civilian life.

**Reading Connection** Have you ever visited a war memorial? Read on to discover how a war memorial helped heal some of the divisions that the Vietnam War created.

“The lessons of the past in Vietnam,” President Ford declared in 1975, “have already been learned—learned by Presidents, learned by Congress, learned by the American people—and we should have our focus on the future.” Although Americans tried to put the war behind them, Vietnam left a deep and lasting impact on American society.

**The War’s Human Toll** The United States paid a heavy price for its involvement in Vietnam, in both lives lost and monetary expenses. The war had cost the nation over \$170 billion in direct costs and much more in indirect economic expenses. More significantly, it had resulted in the deaths of approximately 58,000 young Americans and the injury of more than 300,000. In Vietnam, around one million North and South Vietnamese soldiers died in the conflict, as did countless civilians.

Even after they returned home from fighting, some American veterans, as in other wars, found it hard to escape the war’s impact. Many soldiers faced a variety of psychological problems. Army Specialist Doug Johnson recalled the concerns he faced on returning home:

“It took a while for me to recognize that I did suffer some psychological problems in trying to deal with my experience in Vietnam. The first recollection I have of the effect took place shortly after I arrived back in the States. One evening . . . I went to see a movie on post. I don’t recall the name of the movie or what it was about, but I remember there was a sad part, and that I started crying uncontrollably. It hadn’t dawned on me before this episode that I had . . . succeeded in burying my emotions.”

—quoted in *Touched by the Dragon*

One reason it may have been harder for some Vietnam veterans to readjust to civilian life was that many considered the war a defeat. Many Americans wanted to forget the war. Thus, the sacrifices of many veterans often went unrecognized. There were relatively few welcome-home parades and celebrations after the war. To some soldiers, this diminished their sacrifices.

The war also lingered for the American families whose relatives and friends were classified as prisoners of war (POWs) or missing in action (MIA). Despite many official investigations, these families were not convinced that the government had told the truth about POW/MIA policies during the last years of the war. Many were left not knowing if their loved ones were dead or alive or if they would ever return home.

The nation finally began to come to terms with the war almost a decade later. In 1982 the nation dedicated the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., a large black stone wall inscribed with the names of those killed and missing in action in the war. "It's a first step to remind America of what we did," veteran Larry Cox of Virginia said at the dedication of the monument.

**The War's Impact on the Nation** The long Vietnam War also left its mark on the nation as a whole. In 1973 Congress passed the **War Powers Act** as a way to reestablish some limits on executive power. The act required the president to inform Congress of any commitment of troops abroad within 48 hours and to withdraw them in 60 to 90 days unless Congress explicitly approved the troop commitment.

The legislation addresses the struggle between the executive and legislative branches over what checks and balances are proper in matters of war and foreign policy. No president has recognized this limitation, and the courts have tended to avoid the issue as a strictly political question. In general, the war shook the nation's confidence and led some to embrace a new kind of isolationism. In the years after the war, many Americans became more reluctant to intervene in the affairs of other nations and to commit United States troops in conflicts overseas.

On the domestic front, the Vietnam War increased Americans' cynicism about their government. Many felt the nation's leaders had misled them. Americans were still not convinced they had been told the whole truth. Together with Watergate, a scandal that broke as the war was winding down, Vietnam made Americans more wary of their leaders.

**Reading Check** **Describing** How did the Vietnam War affect Americans' attitudes toward international conflicts and the use of United States troops overseas?



**Student Web Activity** Visit the *American Vision: Modern Times* Web site at [tav.mt.glencoe.com](http://tav.mt.glencoe.com) and click on **Student Web Activities—Chapter 17** for an activity on the Vietnam War.



For help with the concepts in this section of *American Vision: Modern Times* go to [tav.mt.glencoe.com](http://tav.mt.glencoe.com) and click on **Study Central**.

## SECTION 4 ASSESSMENT

### Checking for Understanding

- Vocabulary** Define: linkage, ultimate, generation, explicit.
- People and Terms** Identify: Henry Kissinger, Vietnamization, Pentagon Papers, War Powers Act.
- Describe** what happened in Vietnam in 1975 after the United States withdrew.

### Reviewing Big Ideas

- Explaining** Why did Congress pass the War Powers Act? How did this act reflect a struggle between the legislative and executive branches?

### Critical Thinking

- Historical Analysis** **Analyzing** Why did the invasion of Cambodia cost President Nixon congressional support?  
**CA HI**
- Organizing** Use a graphic organizer similar to the one below to list the effects of the Vietnam War on the nation.

Effects of Vietnam War


### Analyzing Visuals

- Analyzing Photographs** Study the photograph on page 796 of *South Vietnamese citizens attempting to enter the U.S. embassy*. How do you think this image affected American attitudes toward the war? Why do you think so?

### Writing About History

- Descriptive Writing** Imagine that you are a college student in 1970. Write a journal entry expressing your feelings about the events at Kent State University and Jackson State College.

**CA 11WA2.1a; 11WA2.1b**

# Primary Sources

## Eyewitness to History

*The United States steadily increased its involvement in Vietnam following World War II. During the 1960s, as the United States began sending ground troops to Vietnam and protests started at home, Vietnam became a subject of sharp debate.*

### SOURCE 1:

*Senator J. William Fulbright, a Democrat from Arkansas, chaired the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. One of the earliest and most vocal congressional opponents of the Vietnam War, he spoke before the Senate on May 5, 1966.*

The attitude above all others which I feel sure is no longer valid is the arrogance of power, the tendency of great nations to equate power with virtue and major responsibilities with a universal mission. The dilemmas involved are preeminently American dilemmas, not because America has weaknesses that others do not have but because America is powerful as no nation has ever been before and the discrepancy between its power and the power of others appears to be increasing. . . .

▼ *Senator William Fulbright (right) talks with Defense Secretary Robert McNamara (left)*



We are now engaged in a war to “defend freedom” in South Vietnam. . . . The official war aims of the United States Government, as I understand them, are to defeat what is regarded as North Vietnamese aggression, to demonstrate the **futility**<sup>1</sup> of what the communists call “wars of national liberation,” and to create conditions under which the South Vietnamese people will be able freely to determine their own future. . . . What I do doubt—and doubt very much—is the ability of the United States to achieve these aims by the means being used. I do not question the power of our weapons and the efficiency of our **logistics**<sup>2</sup>. . . . What I do question is the ability of the United States, or France or any other Western nation, to go into a small, alien, undeveloped Asian nation and create stability where there is chaos, the will to fight where there is defeatism, democracy where there is no tradition of it and honest government where corruption is almost a way of life. . . .

### SOURCE 2:

*Edwin Willis, a Democrat who had represented Louisiana since 1949, chaired the House Un-American Activities Committee. In the spring of 1968, he reported to the full House about what he believed to be Communist infiltration of the student and antiwar movements.*

At the culmination of Vietnam Week last year, the American citizen was left stunned. Indelibly stamped on his mind were the front page photos of his country’s beloved flag being burned in New York City. Other photographs of the demonstrations showed an unruly mob waving flags of the Vietcong and raising large portraits of Ho Chi Minh. . . .

<sup>1</sup>**futility:** uselessness

<sup>2</sup>**logistics:** detailed handling of military operations



▲ Robert McNamara in Hanoi in 1995

... On April 15, 1967, demonstrations were clearly staged in defiance of the determination of our people to help resist Communist aggression in Southeast Asia. . . .

What began as a “Massive protest demonstration against U.S. Government policy” in Vietnam, was skillfully maneuvered into a carnival of unmistakable support for a Communist victory in Vietnam. . . .

The student strike and mass actions day April 27, 1968—will be the Communist run vehicle of irresponsible dissent and internal disruption within the United States. This dissent and disruption is designed to benefit the North Vietnamese enemy and the world Communist movement in general by undermining public support of the present U.S. policy of resisting Communist aggression in South Vietnam. . . .

If the Communists are successful in inducing a significant number of college and high school students to strike . . . the international Communist propaganda network will use this incident to attempt to: First, create widespread demand for reversal of present U.S. foreign policy; second, propagandistically give aid and comfort to Communists everywhere in the world Communist movement, but particularly in Vietnam; and third, further dampen the resolve of America’s allies who presently support U.S. policy in Vietnam, and make the war effort appear solely “America’s problem.”

### SOURCE 3:

*Robert S. McNamara served as secretary of defense under President Lyndon B. Johnson. In his 1995 memoir, McNamara concluded that he and the Johnson administration made a mistake in July 1965 when they escalated U.S. military involvement in Vietnam.*

We of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations who participated in the decision on Vietnam acted according to what we thought were the principles and traditions of this nation. We made our decisions in light of those values. . . .

On July 21 [1965], I returned to Washington and presented the report I had prepared along the way to the president. It began with a frank but disturbing assessment:

The situation in South Vietnam is worse than a year ago. . . . There are no signs that we have throttled the inflow of supplies for the VC [Vietcong]. . . . Nor have our air attacks in North Vietnam produced tangible evidence of the willingness on the part of Hanoi to come to the conference table in a reasonable mood. . . .

I then reviewed the three alternatives we had examined so many times before: (1) withdraw under the best conditions obtainable—almost certainly meaning something close to unconditional surrender; (2) continue at the present level—almost certainly forcing us into Option 1 later; or (3) expand our forces. . . .

I was driven to Option 3, which I considered “**pre-requisite**”<sup>3</sup> to the achievement of any acceptable settlement.” I ended by expressing my judgment that “the course of action recommended . . . stands a good chance of achieving an acceptable outcome within a reasonable time.” Subsequent events proved my judgment wrong.

▶ <sup>3</sup>**prerequisite:** something required to meet an end

## DBQ Document-Based Questions

Historical Analysis

CA HR3; HI3

**Source 1:** Why does Fulbright believe that the United States will fail in Vietnam?

**Source 2:** Why does Willis believe that protests aid the enemy?

**Source 3:** According to McNamara, why did the United States increase its troop strength in Vietnam?

### Comparing and Contrasting Sources

How do Fulbright, Willis, and McNamara differ on the reasons for American involvement in Vietnam?

Reviewing Key Terms

On a sheet of paper, use each of these terms in a sentence.

- |                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1. domino theory   | 6. teach-in        |
| 2. guerrilla       | 7. dove            |
| 3. Vietcong        | 8. hawk            |
| 4. napalm          | 9. linkage         |
| 5. credibility gap | 10. Vietnamization |

Reviewing Academic Vocabulary

On a sheet of paper, use each of these terms in a sentence that reflects the term's meaning in the chapter.

- |                    |                  |                 |
|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 11. region         | 15. coincidental | 19. alternative |
| 12. occupy         | 16. sustain      | 20. ultimate    |
| 13. principal      | 17. contradict   | 21. generation  |
| 14. administration | 18. proportion   | 22. explicit    |

Chapter Summary

American Involvement in Vietnam

Roots of the Conflict

- Eisenhower financially supported French war against Vietnam
- Geneva Accords established North and South Vietnam
- U.S.-backed leader of South Vietnam refused national elections, fearing defeat by Communist opponent
- Kennedy sharply increased military aid and presence in South Vietnam
- Johnson escalated U.S. involvement and gained war powers after the incident in the Gulf of Tonkin

Full-Scale War

- President Johnson responded to a Vietcong attack with aggressive airstrikes; American people applauded his actions
- U.S. committed over 380,000 ground troops to fighting in Vietnam by the end of 1966

Opposition to the War

- American people questioned the government's honesty about the war, creating the so-called "credibility gap"
- Wartime economy hurt domestic spending efforts
- President Nixon was elected largely on promises to end the war and unite the divided country

The End of the War

- Nixon withdrew troops but increased airstrikes
- American troops pulled out after a 1973 peace agreement
- Congress passed the War Powers Act to limit the power of the president during times of war

Reviewing the Main Ideas

Section 1

23. How did President Eisenhower defend American policy in Vietnam?

Section 2

24. What actions made Ngo Dinh Diem an unpopular leader in South Vietnam?

Section 3

25. What was the effect of the Tet offensive on Americans?

Section 4

26. What did the Pentagon Papers reveal?

Critical Thinking

27. **Reading Skill** **Questioning the Author** Reread the text under the heading "The Invasion of Cambodia Sparks Protest" on page 794. In your opinion, what is the author's purpose for this passage? What personal connection can you make with this passage?
28. **Civics** How did Americans show their frustration with the direction the country was taking in 1968?
29. **Organizing** Use a graphic organizer to list the reasons the United States became involved in Vietnam and the effects the war had on the nation.



Writing About History

30. **Historical Analysis** **Comparing Present and Past** Explain in a letter to your congressional representative why the War Powers Act was passed and its consequences for the U.S. government today. Provide evidence for your claims.

CA CSI

**Self-Check Quiz**

Visit the *American Vision: Modern Times* Web site at [tav.mt.glencoe.com](http://tav.mt.glencoe.com) and click on **Self-Check Quizzes—Chapter 17** to assess your knowledge of chapter content.

31. **Big Idea** Write an editorial to your local newspaper supporting or opposing the Twenty-sixth Amendment to the Constitution. Explain the amendment and discuss its importance to the antiwar movement. **CA 11WA2.4a**

**DBQ Document-Based Questions**

32. **Interpreting Primary Sources** In the 1960s many young Americans enlisted or were drafted for military service. Some believed they had a duty to serve their country. Many had no clear idea of what they were doing or why. In the following excerpt, a young man interviewed for Mark Baker's book *Nam* presents his thoughts about going to war.

“I read a lot of pacifist literature to determine whether or not I was a conscientious objector. I finally concluded that I wasn't. . . . The one clear decision I made in 1968 about me and the war was that if I was going to get out of it, I was going to get out in a legal way. I was not going to defraud the system in order to beat the system. I wasn't going to leave the country, because the odds of coming back looked real slim. . . .

With all my terror of going into the Army . . . there was something seductive about it, too. I was seduced by World War II and John Wayne movies. . . . I had been, as we all were, victimized by a romantic, truly uninformed view of war.”

—quoted in *Nam*

- What options did the young man have regarding going to war?
- Do you think World War II movies gave him a realistic view of what fighting in Vietnam would be like?

**Geography and History**

33. The map on this page shows supply routes and troop movements during the Vietnam War. Study the map and answer the questions below.
- Interpreting Maps** What nations besides North and South Vietnam were the sites of battles or invasions?
  - Analyzing** Why did the Ho Chi Minh Trail pass through Laos and Cambodia instead of South Vietnam?



**Standards Practice**

**Directions:** Choose the phrase that best completes the following statement.

34. The purpose of the War Powers Act was to ensure that the president would

- have greater authority over the military.
- consult Congress before committing troops to extended conflicts.
- have the authority to sign treaties without Senate approval.
- have a freer hand in fighting the spread of communism.

**Standard 11.8.5:** Describe the increased powers of the presidency in response to the Great Depression, World War II, and the Cold War.