

Chapter 18

In this photo taken in 1971, U.S. soldiers maneuver their tanks through the rugged, mountainous terrain of Quang Tri Province. At the time of the Vietnam War, the South Vietnamese province bordered communist North Vietnam and was the site of several fierce battles. Vietnam's mountains, jungles, and dense forests posed a challenge for American troops throughout the war.



THE COLD WAR IN THE THIRD WORLD

If you've ever fought for a cause you believed was just, you probably encountered some obstacles along the way. The United States would run into quite a few as it tried to halt the spread of communism in Southeast Asia.

After Ngo Dinh Diem formed South Vietnam and made himself its president in 1955, tribesmen from the country's mountains and plateaus came to pledge their loyalty to him. Here, President Diem (seated) receives gifts from the tribesmen.



CONFRONTING COMMUNISM IN ASIA

In the 1950s and 1960s, the U.S. government focused to a large extent on domestic policy, particularly on civil rights for African Americans. But foreign policy and events in Southeast Asia also claimed the attention of several presidents during this period, beginning with Dwight Eisenhower. Remember reading about the victory of Ho Chi Minh's communist forces against the French in the Southeast Asian country of Vietnam? After the decisive Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, a peace agreement negotiated in Geneva, Switzerland, temporarily divided the country roughly in half.

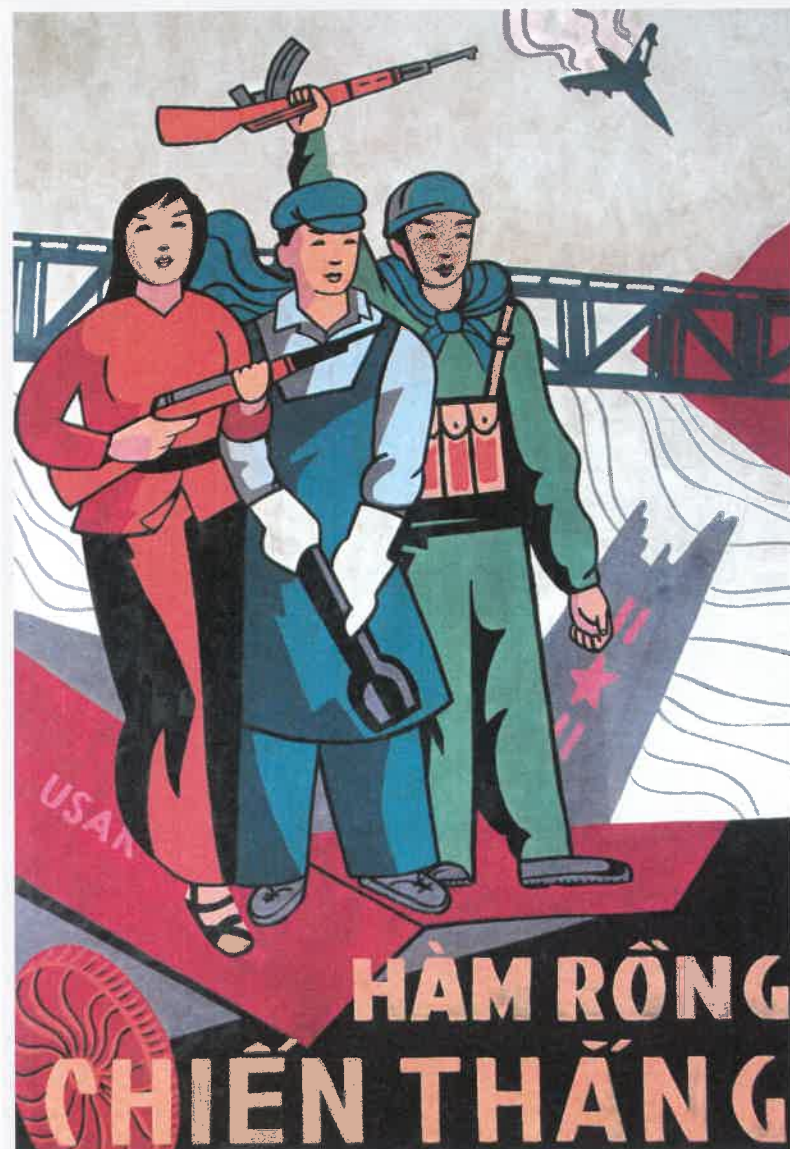
According to the **Geneva Accords**, which detailed the terms of the agreement, Vietnam was split along the 17th parallel. Ho and the Viet Minh governed the northern part of the country, while the French colonial government remained in the south. The accords also called for free democratic elections in 1956, the withdrawal of the French from Indochina, and the reunification of Vietnam under a national government. In 1955, however, **Ngo Dinh Diem** (ungh-oh dihn zih-EHM), the prime minister of the southern part of the country, founded the Republic of Vietnam, or South Vietnam, and proclaimed himself its president. During Ho's anti-imperialist revolution against the French, Diem had lived for a time in the United States.

The United States fully backed Diem and his new government. Eisenhower embraced President Harry Truman's containment policy to prevent the spread of communism throughout Asia. To achieve that goal, Eisenhower believed that an anticommunist government had to be established in South Vietnam, which was considered a "third world" country. During the Cold War, a country that was not aligned with either the United States or the Soviet Union was called a **third world** country. Communist and democratic forces struggled to gain influence over third world countries. The United States used the Southeast Asia

Treaty Organization (SEATO) to justify its increasing involvement in Southeast Asia after the French conceded to the Vietnamese in 1956. You may recall that the United States and other countries, including France, Great Britain, Thailand, and the Philippines, formed SEATO in 1955 to help prevent communist expansion in Southeast Asia. The United States claimed Vietnam as a whole to be a territory that fell under SEATO protection.

DIEM'S GOVERNMENT

Diem had declared that he would uphold democratic principles as stipulated by the Geneva Accords. However, with Eisenhower's support and encouragement, he refused to allow free elections to take place in 1956. Instead, he ruled



This North Vietnamese poster shows two soldiers and a worker standing in front of the Thang Hoa Bridge. In 1945, the Viet Minh destroyed the bridge (nicknamed Ham Rong, or "Dragon's Jaw") to prevent the French from transporting arms across it. The bridge was rebuilt in 1957.



On July 17, 1963, police set up barbed wire to block a demonstration at the Giac Minh pagoda in Saigon during the Buddhist crisis. In this photo, demonstrators try to pull down the barbed wire. The police beat and arrested some of the protesters.

as an **autocrat**, a tyrant with absolute power, and appointed members of his own wealthy family to serve in the highest levels of his government. For example, Diem's younger brother was his chief advisor.

Furthermore, even though the majority of Vietnamese people were Buddhist, Diem, a Roman Catholic, strongly favored those of his own faith. He filled his government with Catholics and retained the anti-Buddhist laws the French had put in place. On the positive side, Diem provided refuge in his country for the hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese fleeing communist rule in the north. However, he dealt harshly with **insurgents**, or rebels, within his country who belonged to the National Liberation Front, or **Viet Cong**. These insurgents tried to spread communism among the South Vietnamese and wage war against Diem's government. Diem put his

younger brother in charge of a special army unit that tracked down communists and imprisoned or killed them. Even those who were only suspected of aiding the rebels—often with little or no evidence—were likely to meet the same fate.

Diem's heavy-handed tactics against the insurgents and his treatment of Buddhists made him increasingly unpopular among the people of South Vietnam. Nonetheless, presidents John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson continued to support President Eisenhower's domino theory, formulated in 1954. As you may recall, this theory states that if one Southeast Asian country were to become communist, all the rest would follow like falling dominoes. Kennedy and Johnson used the domino theory to explain the presence of the U.S. military in South Vietnam.

THE BUDDHIST CRISIS

Eisenhower began to send military personnel and aid to South Vietnam in 1955. By the time Kennedy became president in January 1961, however, this aid effort had decreased. An anticommunist, Kennedy revitalized the effort and sent 500 Special Forces troops as military advisors to South Vietnam in May. Kennedy ignored the advice of French general Charles de Gaulle, who warned him that war in Vietnam would drag the United States into “a bottomless military and political swamp.” The American president continued to send military advisors to South Vietnam until their numbers totaled about 16,000 in 1963.

Meanwhile, Diem’s discrimination against Buddhists reached a critical point. On May 7, 1963, government forces angered Buddhists by tearing down the religious flags they hung on homes and buildings in the city of Hue (HWAY). Diem had passed a law against such displays, but up to that point, the law had not been enforced. In protest, a crowd of more than 3,000 Buddhists gathered the next day—on the Buddha’s birthday—and marched to the center of town. Later that evening, as the protests continued, soldiers fired bullets and tossed grenades at the crowd, killing 8 people and seriously injuring another 4. Diem blamed the Buddhists for the violence.

Seeking nonviolent solutions, Buddhist clergy presented a list of demands to the government. They asked the government to grant Buddhists the right to display their flags, worship freely, and enjoy the same rights as Catholics. Some Buddhists also staged hunger strikes. Kennedy encouraged Diem to reform his policy toward the Buddhists, but Diem ignored his advice. Finally, in June, 500 monks and nuns gathered in Saigon, South Vietnam’s capital. They watched while a monk immolated himself, or burned himself to death, to protest Diem’s treatment of Buddhists. A photographer captured the event, drawing worldwide attention to the Buddhists’ plight in South Vietnam.

Protests continued throughout the summer, and more Buddhist monks and nuns immolated themselves. Then, on August 21, Diem declared martial law, giving military forces, rather than the police, the authority to enforce order. That night, the military raided Buddhist pagodas in cities throughout South Vietnam. When monks and nuns used sticks

PRIMARY SOURCE

For Lam Quang Thi, the years from 1950 to 1975 were the most important of the 20th century. He spent that time serving in South Vietnam’s army. Thi wrote about his experiences as a soldier and general in his memoir, *The Twenty-Five Year Century*. In this excerpt from the memoir, Thi recalls the pagoda raids in August 1963.

We heard the news of the raids on the pagodas in Saigon by armed troops. More than 1,400 monks had been arrested and some of them had been beaten. This brutal act of repression . . . sealed the fate of the regime and marked the beginning of its downfall. Washington . . . was stunned by the pagoda raids. President Kennedy . . . authorized the suspension of economic subsidies for South Vietnam’s commercial imports and a cutoff of financial aid to the Vietnamese Special Forces. The financial assistance would resume only under the specific condition that the Special Forces be put under the control of the Joint General Staff . . . who were plotting against the regime.

—from *The Twenty-Five Year Century*, by Lam Quang Thi, 2001

and stones to resist the soldiers, many were arrested on charges of possessing weapons.

As the Buddhist crisis continued, the United States began to distance itself from Diem and withdraw its support from his government. When officers in the South Vietnamese Army approached U.S. officials about staging a **coup**, (KOO), or an illegal overthrow of the government, the Americans stated they would do nothing to prevent it. According to some accounts, in fact, the U.S. officials even encouraged the action. As a result, Diem was arrested on November 1, 1963, and assassinated the next day.

Diem’s death caused political instability in South Vietnam. A series of military leaders followed who, like Diem, never actually instituted a democratic government. As you know, President Kennedy was also assassinated in November 1963. Under President Johnson, U.S. engagement in South Vietnam increased. As in Korea, the United States conducted a proxy war in Vietnam.

HISTORICAL THINKING

1. **READING CHECK** Why did the United States back Ngo Dinh Diem’s government?
2. **DRAW CONCLUSIONS** Why did Kennedy suspend financial aid to South Vietnam after the Buddhist pagoda raids?
3. **MAKE INFERENCES** Why do you think the U.S. government did nothing to prevent the coup against Diem?
4. **ANALYZE CAUSE AND EFFECT** What complex string of events led to the assassination of Diem?

GULF OF TONKIN

A challenge by one side in wartime often results in an increase in hostilities by the other side. That's exactly what happened when a perceived threat occurred in the waters off the coast of Vietnam.



UNOFFICIAL DECLARATION OF WAR

When Lyndon Johnson assumed the presidency after John Kennedy's assassination in 1963, he had little foreign policy experience. As a result, he chose to continue the former president's course of action in Southeast Asia. But he also decided to make Vietnam a priority. Determined not to lose South Vietnam to the communists, Johnson intensified the effort there. For example, he authorized the U.S. military to carry out covert operations in North Vietnam and gather information on communist activity. However, Johnson was opposed to sending American ground forces to Vietnam. As he said, "We are not about to send American boys nine or ten thousand miles away from home to do what Asian boys ought to be doing for themselves." Johnson insisted the ultimate responsibility for resolving the conflict lay with the Vietnamese.

Soon, though, several events made him re-evaluate his position. On August 2, 1964, the USS *Maddox* reported that it had been attacked by a North Vietnamese torpedo boat while patrolling off the coast of northern Vietnam in the Gulf of Tonkin. The U.S. destroyer fought off the attack, and the torpedo boat retreated. Then, on August 4, the *Maddox* and another destroyer, the USS *C. Turner Joy*, reported renewed unprovoked attacks. In response, Johnson ordered an air attack on North Vietnamese naval bases and put the **Gulf of Tonkin Resolution** before Congress. The resolution would give the president the power to take any action necessary to repel armed aggression and defend South Vietnam.

Congress passed the resolution within days. Although the resolution was not an official declaration of war against North Vietnam, it came to be considered as such. Almost immediately, however, some people questioned whether the second attack had actually occurred. After reviewing the often contradictory tape recordings from the incident, even Johnson said that the Vietnamese in the boats were probably just "sailors shooting at flying fish!" Others even believed the attack had been provoked by American forces. Nevertheless, the Johnson administration publicly stuck to its official line, claiming the Vietnamese had been the aggressors.

WAR EXPANDS

Johnson's secretary of defense, Robert McNamara, who strongly championed war, made many of the decisions related to the conflict in Vietnam. In fact, over the next few years, the war would come to be called "McNamara's War." As you may remember, McNamara had been part of Kennedy's Cabinet and continued to serve Johnson after the latter won re-election in November 1964. The secretary favored **escalation**, or

On March 8, 1965, about 3,500 Marines landed in Da Nang to protect its airbase. They were the first U.S. combat troops in South Vietnam. Although both the United States and South Vietnam had wanted the troops to come ashore without fanfare, the Marines were greeted by a cheering crowd.



an increase in intensity, of the war. Under McNamara's advice, Johnson increased the number of military advisors in Vietnam to 23,000 and ordered limited air raids on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, a series of connected paths linking North Vietnam with South Vietnam by way of neighboring Laos and Cambodia.

The war escalated further in February 1965. The Viet Cong attacked a U.S. air base at Pleiku (PLAY-koo), South Vietnam, killing eight Americans. Johnson

countered by initiating a sustained air bombing campaign of North Vietnam, known as Operation Rolling Thunder. The campaign involved a series of gradually intensified bombings designed to decrease the flow of supplies from North Vietnam to the Viet Cong and force the communists to negotiate a lasting peace. Operation Rolling Thunder would continue for more than three years. During this period, bombs dropped by air strikes on the Ho Chi Minh Trail and other targets in Southeast Asia would be twice the number of those dropped during World War II.

Soon after Rolling Thunder began, Johnson sent the first ground troops to South Vietnam—even though, as you know, he had vowed he would not do so. In the beginning, the troops were instructed to protect U.S. air bases, not to fight. But before long, American soldiers would be drawn into combat as the U.S. military embarked on an air and ground war that aimed to eliminate the communist threat from South Vietnam.

PRIMARY SOURCE

In a televised address on August 4, 1964, Johnson informed the nation about the attacks in the Gulf of Tonkin and the retaliation that would be taken against North Vietnam. In this excerpt from the address, the president paints a frightening picture of the situation.

Aggression by terror against the peaceful villagers of South Vietnam has now been joined by open aggression on the high seas against the United States of America. The determination of all Americans to carry out our full commitment to the people and to the government of South Vietnam will be redoubled [increased all the more] by this outrage. Yet our response, for the present, will be limited and fitting. We Americans know, although others appear to forget, the risks of spreading conflict. We still seek no wider war.

—from President Lyndon B. Johnson's report on the Gulf of Tonkin Incident, August 4, 1964

HISTORICAL THINKING

- 1. READING CHECK** What authority did the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution give Johnson?
- 2. EVALUATE** Identify examples of bias in Johnson's televised address used to sway the American people into thinking that retaliation against North Vietnam was justified.
- 3. FORM AND SUPPORT OPINIONS** Do you think Johnson was right to escalate the war? Cite evidence from the text to support your opinion.

WAR STRATEGIES

Imagine running onto a field with a game plan in hand for playing a soccer match only to find you're actually playing baseball. Something like that happened to the U.S. military forces when they came to fight in Vietnam.

HEARTS AND MINDS

The United States employed two key strategies to win the war in Vietnam. First, it planned to use its superior military technology and weaponry to defeat the enemy through both air strikes and ground force operations. Second, it set out to gain the complete support of the South Vietnamese people—to win their hearts and minds. The United States particularly

wanted their help in defeating the Viet Cong. But many South Vietnamese believed life under their U.S.-supported government was no better than life under the North Vietnamese communists.

The increasing influx of American troops arriving in South Vietnam did not help win the people's hearts and minds. General **William Westmoreland**,



CRITICAL VIEWING U.S. Army paratroopers wade across a river in the rain, searching for Viet Cong in a jungle area of South Vietnam in September 1965. Paratroopers are military personnel who parachute into a war zone. What details in the photo convey the conditions the soldiers had to deal with?

who had begun commanding the American forces in Vietnam in June 1964, persuaded leaders in Washington to increase the number of ground troops in Vietnam. By the end of 1965, nearly 185,000 American troops had landed. The American soldiers were originally supposed to train the South Vietnamese troops of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). The idea was that, once they were transformed into a strong fighting force, the ARVN would be equipped to combat the communists from the north. Unfortunately, many of the South Vietnamese troops—and their generals—were ineffectual. While some ARVN soldiers were well trained, disciplined, and dedicated to the cause, others were not. In some cases, they were reluctant to fight against those they considered their countrymen. As a result, American troops soon found themselves engaged in actual combat.

Still, Westmoreland hoped to weaken and wear down the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong through a **war of attrition**. The American general thought he could win the war by inflicting heavy losses on the enemy through fighting many small battles that would add up, ultimately, to victory. But the communists refused

to back down, no matter how many casualties they suffered. They were engaged in what they considered a national struggle for independence. Men from the North and the South were willing to take the place of fallen soldiers and reoccupy areas that the Americans and ARVN had cleared. The communist forces in Vietnam also benefited from the weapons and other supplies they received from the Soviet Union and China.

A GUERRILLA WAR

General Westmoreland underestimated his enemy's determination. He and other military leaders were also not prepared for the type of war the Vietnamese fought. The United States was supremely ready to fight a conventional war against another industrialized country. But Vietnam was not industrialized, and the Viet Cong and others opposing U.S. forces engaged in unconventional warfare. Bands of trained and untrained Viet Cong soldiers fought a guerrilla war against the ARVN and the U.S. military. Their arsenal included guns, grenades, and **mortars**, or short range, muzzle-loaded cannons. They also manufactured their own bombs and set booby traps.

Helicopters like this one, nicknamed “Huey” for their early “HU-1” designation, were used to transport soldiers to and from war zones and airlift the wounded in Vietnam. Hueys carried U.S. troops to South Vietnam’s Ia Drang Valley in November 1965, where the American soldiers engaged in the first major battle of the war with North Vietnamese forces.

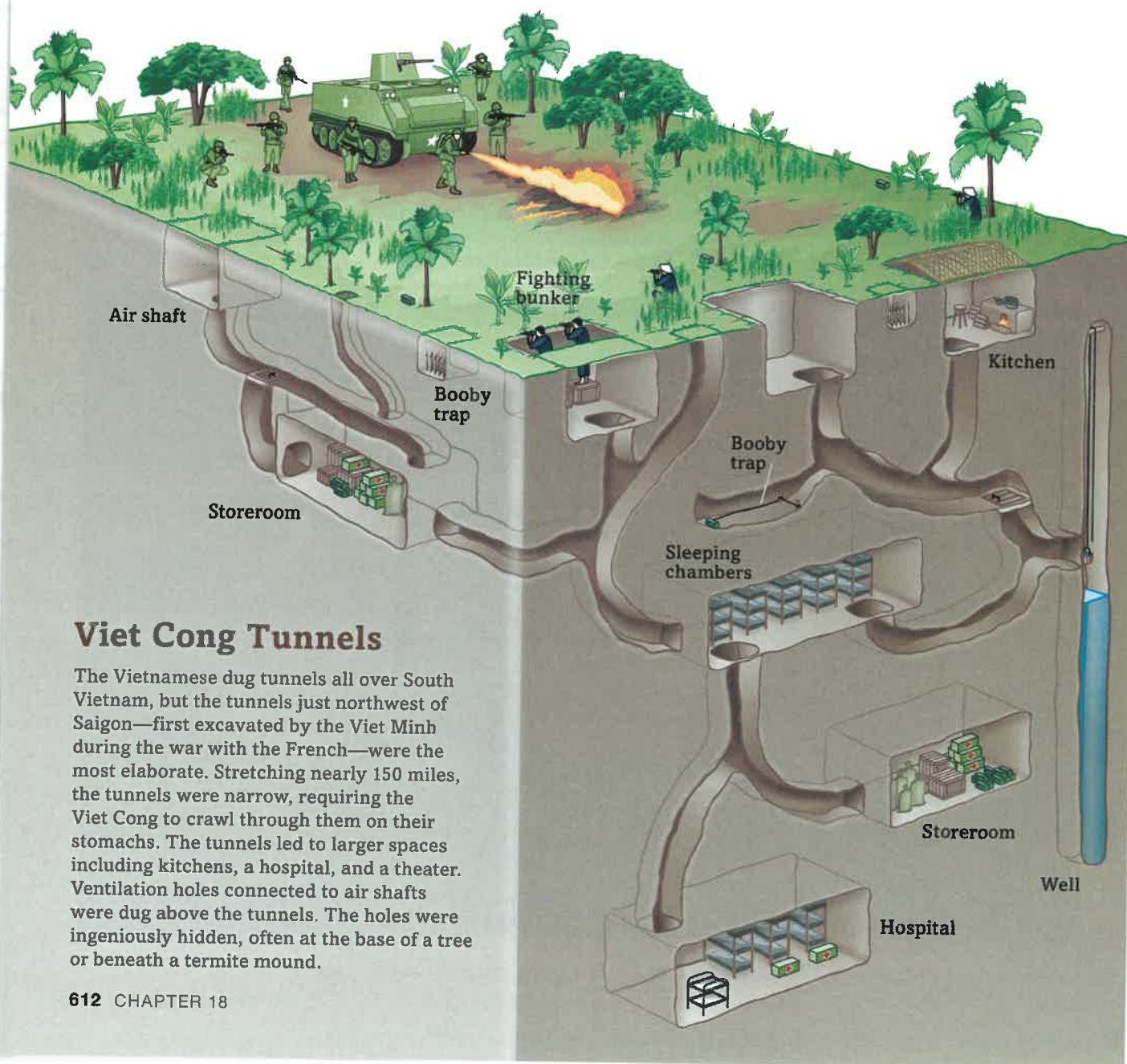


The war in Vietnam did not have official fronts and battles like conventional wars. More often, the Viet Cong launched ambushes and carried out hit-and-run attacks against the U.S. troops and the ARVN, taking off before they could be captured. And American soldiers couldn't always tell enemies apart from friends. The Vietnamese villagers who smiled in welcome when the soldiers arrived were sometimes hiding hand grenades ready to be tossed.

Fighting often took place in jungle terrain, where the dense foliage made it easy for the Viet Cong to camouflage both themselves and their bases. Often soldiers on both sides had to slog through swamps, submerged up to their waists in the mosquito-infested waters. In areas closer to Saigon, where the terrain provided less cover, the Viet Cong traveled through an extensive system of underground tunnels. Local villagers had helped build the tunnels, which

stretched for thousands of miles and served not only as shelters where soldiers could retreat, but also as bases of operation.

As they launched their surprise attacks—sometimes firing from concealed bunkers within the tunnels—the Viet Cong entered and exited through well-hidden entryways. The tunnels contained chambers where the Viet Cong stored their weapons, water, and food, and even housed sleeping chambers and kitchens, enabling the soldiers to live in the tunnels for weeks at a time. American and South Vietnamese troops known as “tunnel rats” crawled through the narrow passages, searching for Viet Cong and setting off explosives in an attempt to collapse the tunnels. In the process, however, they had to be careful not to trigger any of the booby traps planted by the Viet Cong, such as bamboo spikes or trip wires that set off grenades.



Viet Cong Tunnels

The Vietnamese dug tunnels all over South Vietnam, but the tunnels just northwest of Saigon—first excavated by the Viet Minh during the war with the French—were the most elaborate. Stretching nearly 150 miles, the tunnels were narrow, requiring the Viet Cong to crawl through them on their stomachs. The tunnels led to larger spaces including kitchens, a hospital, and a theater. Ventilation holes connected to air shafts were dug above the tunnels. The holes were ingeniously hidden, often at the base of a tree or beneath a termite mound.

SEARCH-AND-DESTROY MISSIONS

To combat the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army, General Westmoreland used search-and-destroy missions in villages and along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. First, low-flying helicopters sprayed an area with gunfire, and then ground troops moved in to search out enemies, destroy them, and get away quickly. Though these missions often resulted in the eradication of Viet Cong bases and the confiscation of their arms and supplies, such attacks could also devastate entire villages and kill hundreds of civilians.

To deal with the thick growth in the jungles that so effectively concealed the Viet Cong, the U.S. Air Force began spraying **Agent Orange**, a potent herbicide, or chemical substance used to kill vegetation. Agent Orange destroyed foliage, but doctors discovered later that the herbicide caused serious health issues, for both the Vietnamese and U.S. soldiers. American troops also frequently used napalm, a flammable jellied gasoline that, like Agent Orange, helped clear foliage and undergrowth. When it came into contact with skin, however, napalm caused severe burns, leaving some people with long-lasting injuries. Together, the search-and-destroy missions and use of chemical agents did little to win the hearts and minds of the South Vietnamese or turn them against the communists. The chemicals harmed many South Vietnamese civilians and burned their villages and farms.

The American cause wasn't helped by the rise to power of **Nguyen Cao Ky** (NWIHN KOW KAY), who became prime minister of South Vietnam following a military coup in 1965. The Vietnamese people viewed Ky, who prohibited criticism of his government and imprisoned his opponents, as an autocrat similar to Diem. The United States supported Ky, even though his corrupt regime was anything but democratic.

Meanwhile, by the end of 1965, great numbers of soldiers had deserted the ARVN, with many joining the North Vietnamese army. The Viet Cong had gained control, to some degree, of about 50 percent of the countryside in South Vietnam. As Westmoreland's war of attrition failed to discourage the communist forces in Vietnam, American casualties started to mount over the course of that first year of the war. Progress seemed elusive, and methods of calculating success were muddled and hard to measure. American troops fought bravely, but the stress of combat in Vietnam led many soldiers to suffer from low morale and depression. As the war dragged on, the conflict also became the subject of growing criticism at home.

In 1963, the Ca Mau Peninsula at the southern tip of South Vietnam was almost completely covered with forests. As a stronghold of the Viet Cong, this stretch of Ca Mau was heavily sprayed with Agent Orange and defoliated in 1968. This photo was taken four years later and, as you can see, the forests showed no signs of recovery.



HISTORICAL THINKING

1. **READING CHECK** How did the U.S. military hope to win the war in Vietnam?
2. **MAKE INFERENCES** Why do you think guerrilla warfare was so effective against American troops?
3. **ANALYZE ENVIRONMENTAL CONCEPTS** How did Agent Orange and napalm affect the natural systems and resources in the jungles of South Vietnam?
4. **DRAW CONCLUSIONS** How did the U.S. military strategy undermine the campaign to win the hearts and minds of the South Vietnamese?

GROWING OPPOSITION TO THE WAR

You're no doubt used to the 24/7 coverage of world events available on TV, the Internet, and social media. But in the 1960s, information wasn't so easily accessed. So when reports on the Vietnam War filled the television airwaves, people watched—and thought about what they saw.

THE TELEVISION WAR

The Vietnam War became the first in the nation's history to be broadcast regularly on television. Journalists and photographers covered the war from the jungles and battlefields of Vietnam and brought it into people's homes, night after night. As a result, the Vietnam War became known as the "television war" or "living-room war." Recording their accounts in the haze of war, American journalists reported on television what urban warfare and guerrilla fighting

entailed. Film clips of fighting, bombings, and dead or wounded soldiers appeared on nightly newscasts. The public's daily exposure to the horrors of war kept people informed about events. In time, it would also begin to influence their opinion of the war.

However, despite what television reports revealed about casualties and conditions in Vietnam, government and military officials made announcements about the war's progress. The Johnson administration launched a "success



An American television news crew interviews U.S. soldiers in South Vietnam in 1967. The Vietnam War was a dangerous assignment. During the course of the war, nine television personnel were killed, and many more were wounded.

offensive,” a campaign to convince the public that the United States was defeating the communists in Vietnam.

In 1967, General Westmoreland made three trips to the United States to promote this idea, appearing before Congress to present his positive assessments of the war. But Westmoreland manipulated the numbers of enemy losses and claimed that U.S. forces had won every battle. He told Congress that “your continued strong support is vital to the success of our mission . . . over the communist aggressor!” In truth, neither the bombing campaign nor the ground war in Vietnam was having any measurable effect on the enemy.

Americans became increasingly aware of the difference between the optimistic reports they heard from the government and what they saw for themselves on television. This contrast resulted in a **credibility gap**, an increasing skepticism about what the government told them about the war. In this context, Americans eventually started to call into question the principles upon which the war was being fought. Why, many wondered, was the United States involved in Vietnam at all?

Some members of Congress also began to take issue with the U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Senator George McGovern of South Dakota expressed his opposition in 1963. In 1966, Arkansas senator J. William Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, also voiced his opposition to the bombing of North Vietnam. That same year, Fulbright published a book called *The Arrogance of Power* in which he criticized the government’s goal in Vietnam. He wrote, “We are trying to remake Vietnamese society, a task which certainly cannot be accomplished by force and which probably cannot be accomplished by any means available to outsiders. The objective may be desirable, but it is not feasible [practical].”



AMERICAN WOMEN IN VIETNAM

Women could not serve in combat during the conflict, but thousands of female members of the military took on other roles in Vietnam. The vast majority worked as nurses. The number and severity of war casualties—and the rate at which the wounded arrived to be treated—meant that the nurses had to make quick decisions about whom to treat first. They also had to determine the treatment on their own, without much advice from doctors, who were often busy with their own patients. Thousands of civilian women also worked in Vietnam, many of them serving with the American Red Cross or working as journalists, like the woman in this photo.

CONTROVERSY OVER THE DRAFT

While some people voiced their objection to the war, many others opposed the idea of conscription, commonly known as the draft. With the escalation of the war, more young men were needed to fight it. Hundreds of thousands of American men volunteered for or were drafted to serve in the war, which government and military leaders portrayed as an extension of broader Cold War struggles. The Selective Service System, a federal agency, administered the draft. On turning 18 years old, all young men were required to register with their local draft board, but some could be granted

a **deferment**, or official permission to delay conscription. For example, men enrolled full-time in college could claim a student deferment for as long as they remained in school.

However, the agency did not always act fairly in its selection process. Draft board members could show favoritism to friends, family members, and others by granting their sons special deferments. Many of the men who received deferments also came from wealthy and educated families. As a result, most of the draftees came from poor and working-class families. A substantial percentage of these men belonged to minority groups. In the first few years of the war, once it became clear that American minorities were fighting and dying in numbers that were disproportionate to their representation in the country, many activist rights groups loudly protested the war. They objected to the war on the grounds that, to them, it represented one more form of oppression—oppression for minorities at home and abroad.

More moderate voices also spoke out against the war, including civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., who called it “a white man’s war, a black man’s fight.” Most famously, in a 1967 speech, King criticized the war both for its expense and for the large number of poor men of all races who were fighting it. He pointed out that the money the government spent on the war could have been used to fight poverty in the United States. He also objected to the devastation the war was bringing to the Vietnamese people and their land. The response to King’s speech was largely negative. Newspaper editorials attacked him for his stance on the war. And even the NAACP criticized King for linking what the organization considered two separate issues: civil rights and the Vietnam War. However, King did not back down and continued to speak out against the war and the draft.

INCREASING PROTESTS

In 1964, other civil rights advocates began the **Free Speech Movement** in response to a ban on distributing political flyers at the University of California at Berkeley campus. When police arrested a student for handing out civil rights pamphlets and put him in their patrol car, other students sat down around the car to prevent it from being driven away. A young man named Mario Savio jumped on top of the car and addressed the crowd. Savio emerged as the movement’s leader, and the students sitting around the police car passed around a hat to collect money to repair the vehicle. They wanted to show

that they were good citizens. The protest continued for more than 30 hours until authorities dropped the charges, and the student was released.

Then, on December 1, 1964, Savio and other movement leaders led a rally, exhorting students to take part in a sit-in at Sproul Hall, Berkeley’s administration building. As a result, thousands of students occupied the building and remained there for many hours. Finally, the police moved in and arrested about 800 people. As the police ushered them away, some of the officers physically assaulted the students. Eventually, the university lifted its ban of on-campus political activity, and the Free Speech Movement declared victory.

The Free Speech Movement soon turned its focus on the Vietnam War. Students at Berkeley and other college campuses throughout the country organized protests against the war. These antiwar protests, provoked by the expansion of the war in Vietnam, reflected and contributed to a deep rift within American society and culture. Americans became divided into **hawks**, who supported the war, and **doves**, who opposed it.

Another movement, called the **New Left**, arose out of student activism. One New Left group, the **Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)**, originated at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in the early 1960s and soon spread to other colleges. The SDS promoted socialist principles and denounced racism, militarism, and in time, U.S. involvement in Vietnam. In April 1965, the SDS sponsored the first major antiwar rally in Washington, D.C.

PRIMARY SOURCE

Just before the 1964 sit-in, Mario Savio delivered a speech on the steps of Berkeley’s Sproul Hall. In this excerpt from the speech, Savio refers to the university as a “machine” that may need to be actively stopped.

There’s a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious [hateful]—makes you so sick at heart—that you can’t take part. You can’t even passively take part. And you’ve got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus, and you’ve got to make it stop. And you’ve got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it that unless you’re free, the machine will be prevented from working at all.

—from a speech in Berkeley, by Mario Savio, 1964

During the March on the Pentagon, this young woman offered a flower to the soldiers guarding the building with bayoneted M-14 rifles. At one point, a group of demonstrators tried to levitate, or lift, the Pentagon and used spells to drive “the evil war spirits” out of the Defense Department headquarters.



About two weeks earlier, President Johnson had pledged to continue military operations in Vietnam. The event drew tens of thousands of people calling for U.S. withdrawal from South Vietnam. Protesters picketed the White House and carried signs saying “No more war.” At the Capitol, people delivered speeches, and performers such as activist and folk-singer Joan Baez (BY-ehz) led the crowd in song.

While the 1965 protest rally was largely peaceful, the March on the Pentagon, which took place in the capital in October 1967, was far more confrontational. The demonstration, organized by the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam—a coalition of antiwar groups—sought to shut down the Pentagon. By this point in the war, about 13,000 Americans had died in Vietnam, and more than half of the population disapproved of the president’s handling of the war. An estimated 100,000 people rallied first at the Lincoln Memorial and then marched to the Pentagon. When the protesters arrived, they found about 2,500 troops and U.S. marshals guarding the Pentagon. Some of the protesters placed flowers in the barrels of the soldiers’ rifles,

but a small group of demonstrators managed to gain access to the building. Soldiers and marshals used tear gas and force to clear them out. In the end, nearly 700 people were arrested.

Despite the protests at home, the war in Vietnam continued. But in 1968, a military campaign launched by North Vietnam and the Viet Cong would mark a turning point in the war and the beginning of American withdrawal from the conflict.

HISTORICAL THINKING

- 1. READING CHECK** Why was the Vietnam War called the “television war”?
- 2. DRAW CONCLUSIONS** How did the war in Vietnam affect the larger trend toward equality at home?
- 3. MAKE INFERENCES** Why did Mario Savio compare the University of California at Berkeley to a machine?
- 4. FORM AND SUPPORT OPINIONS** Do you think peaceful antiwar protests in the 1960s were more effective than more confrontational protests? Why or why not?

THE TET OFFENSIVE

The element of surprise can be key in a battle. An attack by communist forces in South Vietnam surprised the U.S. military and stunned the American people, who began to cry “Enough!” in ever greater numbers.

A SURPRISE ATTACK

It all began on Tet, the celebration of the Lunar New Year and the most important holiday in Vietnam. In other years, hostilities on both sides of the war had been suspended during the holiday. But early on the morning of January 31, 1968, about 80,000 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces initiated a coordinated and unexpected attack on dozens of locations throughout South Vietnam. The sites of the **Tet Offensive** included cities and towns, military bases, General Westmoreland’s headquarters, and even the U.S. embassy in Saigon. In launching their attack, communist forces hoped to provoke a popular uprising against U.S. and ARVN troops and persuade the United States to pull out of Vietnam.

A few months before the Tet Offensive, the communists had begun a campaign to distract the Americans and ARVN from the real targets. First, the communists attacked a couple of towns in South Vietnam, and then a U.S. Marine base located in the northwest corner of the country. Johnson and Westmoreland sent 50,000 troops to protect the besieged Marine base as well as other bases in the country. Once the troops had been diverted and the communists’ true targets stood nearly undefended, the Tet Offensive began.

Initially, the communist forces scored a few successes, including invading the embassy grounds in Saigon, but the U.S. and ARVN troops soon defeated the communists there and managed to retake most of the other targeted locations. However, fighting in the city of Hue raged on for nearly a month. As you may remember, Hue was the site of a major Buddhist protest against Diem in 1963. Hue was also once the capital of Vietnam and the



home of its emperor. It was a symbolic target for the communists and poorly defended. On the morning of the Tet Offensive, communist forces quickly seized control of the city. The U.S. and ARVN troops fought fiercely, going from house to house in the city to root out the communist occupiers before finally winning the Battle of Hue.

It would be one of the longest and bloodiest battles of the war. After taking control of the city, the Americans discovered mass graves filled



Journalist Walter Cronkite, popularly called “the most trusted man in America” for the integrity of his reporting, went to Vietnam to cover the aftermath of the Tet Offensive. For two weeks, he reported from battle sites, and his commentary influenced public opinion.

with thousands of Hue civilians murdered by the communists. Before the battle, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong had executed those they believed were sympathetic to the American cause. The Battle of Hue also resulted in heavy losses, with about 5,000 dead on the communist side and around 500 on the American and South Vietnamese side. Thousands more died or were wounded in other battles of the Tet Offensive. The communists were defeated militarily, and they didn’t win more South Vietnamese to their side, but they did score a strategic victory. Television crews had captured scenes of the fighting. To many viewers, it didn’t look as though the United States was about to win the war, as the government had led them to believe.

DISILLUSIONMENT WITH THE WAR

After the Tet Offensive, an overwhelming number of Americans called for an end to the war. Few now really believed the United States was winning the

conflict. From Saigon, American broadcast journalist Walter Cronkite reported that the Tet Offensive made “more certain than ever that the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a **stalemate**.” In other words, Cronkite believed neither side would be able to claim a clear victory.

In February 1968, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara resigned from his position. He, too, had become disillusioned with the war and realized he had misjudged the resolve of the North Vietnamese. Like McNamara, the American public had grown weary of the war. They no longer believed the government’s positive assessment of it or Westmoreland’s optimistic claim after the Tet Offensive that there was now “light at the end of the tunnel.”

Just a few weeks after Tet, General Westmoreland requested an additional 206,000 troops in Vietnam. About 550,000 American troops were already stationed there. Clark Clifford, who replaced McNamara as secretary of defense, advised Johnson to deny the request. He also recommended that the United States reduce its bombing raids over North Vietnam and take steps to end the war.

Johnson took Clifford’s advice and refused to send Westmoreland all the troops he’d requested, approving only an additional 13,500 soldiers. The president also informed the South Vietnamese leadership that its army would have to assume a greater role in the fight. But to many Americans, Johnson’s actions were too little, too late. After the Tet Offensive, his approval ratings dropped by more than 10 percentage points. The unpopular war had taken a severe toll on Johnson’s presidency.

HISTORICAL THINKING

- 1. READING CHECK** How did the communists devise and carry out their surprise attack?
- 2. ANALYZE CAUSE AND EFFECT** What does the Tet Offensive—which North Vietnam lost—suggest about the complexity of historical causes and effects?
- 3. DRAW CONCLUSIONS** Why was the Tet Offensive a major turning point in the war?

1968: VIOLENCE AND DIVISION

When Walter Cronkite said after the Tet Offensive that the war was mired in stalemate, Johnson reportedly said, “If I’ve lost Cronkite, I’ve lost Middle America.” Soon, Johnson would make a decision that would rock the nation.

A DIVIDED DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Johnson’s unpopularity among Middle America, or average middle-class Americans, weakened his chances in the 1968 presidential race. At the end of November 1967, Senator **Eugene McCarthy** of Minnesota announced he would seek the nomination of the Democratic Party. McCarthy opposed the Vietnam War and won strong support for his position, especially among young people. He also performed surprisingly well against Johnson in the first Democratic primary election in New Hampshire

in March 1968. Johnson won the primary with 49 percent of the vote—but McCarthy was a close runner-up. He captured 42 percent of the vote. As you may know, in a primary election, voters in a particular state choose the candidate they’d like to see on the ballot in the general election.

Just a few days after the primary, John Kennedy’s brother and former attorney general, Senator Robert Kennedy of New York, also joined the race. Kennedy had stated before that he would not run, but McCarthy’s success in New Hampshire made

A protester in Chicago bends to pick up a tear gas canister and throw it back at the police during the Democratic National Convention. Nearly 600 people were arrested in the riots, and more than 200 were injured, including both police and protesters.



him change his mind. Like McCarthy, Kennedy ran as an antiwar candidate. Kennedy's decision to run upset some voters because they believed his candidacy might undermine McCarthy's campaign. Others, however, acknowledged that Kennedy, with his money and connections, had a better prospect of winning the Democratic nomination.

On March 31, faced with the likelihood of losing the primary in Wisconsin, Johnson dropped a bombshell by announcing that he would not seek a second term as president. During his televised address, Johnson also revealed his intentions to scale back the bombings in North Vietnam and engage in peace talks with the North Vietnamese. A few weeks later, Johnson's vice president, Hubert Humphrey, joined the race for president. Humphrey, who received Johnson's endorsement, decided not to campaign or run in the state primaries against McCarthy and Kennedy. Instead, he hoped to receive enough votes from **delegates**, or people representing their states, to win the nomination at the Democratic National Convention.

Meanwhile, peace talks began with the North Vietnamese in Paris, but negotiations were short-lived. The North Vietnamese demanded that Johnson scale back the bombing everywhere, not just in North Vietnam, but Johnson resisted. With the talks at an **impasse**, or standstill, heavy combat continued in South Vietnam throughout the spring of 1968. And American troops continued to fight and die in Southeast Asia.

VIOLENCE AND CHAOS

Less than a week after Johnson's startling announcement, Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. His violent death touched off a series of riots in more than 100 cities across the country, including Washington, D.C., Baltimore, San Francisco, and Chicago. Rioters set fires and looted stores. In some cities, officials called in the military to establish order. The police made thousands of arrests across the country, and dozens of people died. And the violence was just beginning. In fact, 1968 would become one of the most chaotic years in American history.

Throughout the turbulent spring, McCarthy and Kennedy continued battling in the primaries. Kennedy drew greater support from African Americans and Latinos, while McCarthy had more success with white college students. But on June 5, the contest between the two came to an abrupt and horrifying

end. Only moments after Kennedy delivered a victory speech in Los Angeles celebrating his California primary win, an assassin shot him. Kennedy died the following day. For the second time in just two months, the nation was shocked and heartbroken over the death of a major national leader.

McCarthy remained in the race after Kennedy's assassination, but Hubert Humphrey was the strong favorite going into the Democratic National Convention, which was held in Chicago during the last week of August. Chicago mayor Richard J. Daley had prepared for the internal divisions among delegates inside the convention hall. He was also ready for any confrontations that might take place outside the hall. Daley had turned the convention center into a fortress, bulletproofing its doors and surrounding it with fencing and barbed wire. Police patrolled the area inside the fence, poised for the worst. And that's just what happened.

As many as 15,000 antiwar protesters flooded the city, intent on making their voices heard. The plan was for their protest to be peaceful but loud. Instead, violence erupted when protesters refused to leave a nearby park. The mayor sent about 27,000 police officers and members of the National Guard into the park to confront the crowds. There, the officers lobbed tear gas at the protesters and beat them with clubs. Clashes continued as protesters tried to approach the convention site. Innocent bystanders, including doctors and reporters, got caught in the mayhem. And once again, America watched the violence on television.

In the end, the delegates nominated Humphrey, who was backed by moderates in the Democratic Party. The young people who supported McCarthy felt betrayed. And they saw Humphrey's candidacy as a continuation of Johnson's pro-war policies. Disillusioned with American values, some young people would simply withdraw from traditional society and adopt an unconventional lifestyle.

HISTORICAL THINKING

- 1. READING CHECK** What divided the Democratic Party in 1968?
- 2. EVALUATE** How did the protests against the Vietnam War affect domestic issues and policies?
- 3. MAKE INFERENCES** Given the social and political climate of 1968, how do you think Americans reacted to the images of the Democratic National Convention they saw on television?

THE COUNTERCULTURE

“Power to the people.” “Don’t trust anyone over 30.” “Flower power.” These are just a few of the slogans adopted by groups of young people who rejected middle-class values, the war, and what came to be called “the establishment.”

ANTIESTABLISHMENT

From within the antiwar and rights protest movements of the New Left, a **counterculture** emerged, promoting a way of life that was in opposition with American society’s established rules and behavior. Those who participated in the counterculture, often called “hippies,” were frustrated with the war, politics, and discrimination in America. They believed that true equality and peace could only be realized through a revolution of cultural values.

Thus, hippies decided to “check out” from mainstream society as a way of rebelling against middle-class American values and seeking true happiness. They embraced pacifism and demonstrated against the conflict in Vietnam, declaring that waging war anywhere in the world was wrong. “Make love, not war” and “Give peace a chance” were popular hippie slogans. These members of the counterculture rebelled by calling into question Cold War values and even long-standing American principles.

The counterculture had its own distinctive style of music, dress, language, and films, all of which influenced mainstream social and cultural sensibilities. Both men and women in the counterculture typically let their hair grow long, dressed in tie-dyed shirts and bell-bottom pants, and adorned themselves with strings of beads.

They also had liberated attitudes toward sexuality and the use of psychedelic drugs, which produced hallucinations and an altered state of consciousness. In 1960, Harvard psychologist and researcher Timothy Leary had begun studying the effects of psychedelic drugs and became a folk hero of the counterculture. Leary promoted the use of such drugs with his slogan “Tune in, Turn On, Drop Out.” Counterculture music used electronically distorted

sounds to try to reproduce the experience of using these drugs. And films about the counterculture, such as *Easy Rider* and *Wild in the Streets*, were shown in theaters across the country.

To create a sense of family, some hippies formed communes, where they shared living arrangements, food, and possessions. Communes were often founded in rural areas where members longed to get “back to the land.” They rejected the consumerism of modern life, grew their own food, and reconnected with nature. Many other members of the counterculture settled in urban areas, such as San Francisco’s Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, where they lived in the company of like-minded hippies. More than 75,000 young people migrated to the neighborhood in 1967 alone.

WOODSTOCK NATION

Perhaps the high point of the counterculture came in August 1969 when the Woodstock Music Festival took place on a farm in Bethel, New York. Billed as “Three Days of Peace and Music,” Woodstock drew a crowd of about 400,000 people—twice the number expected. They came to see some of the biggest musical acts of the day, including Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, the Grateful Dead, and the Who. Many of these singers performed songs that were critical of the Vietnam War—to the delight of their audience.

The organizers of the festival had planned to use the profits from it to build a recording studio, but they were unprepared for the masses that thronged the festival. Unable to handle the crowds, the organizers let everyone in for free. Though plagued by rain, mud, and inadequate facilities for the audience, Woodstock was a great success and, remarkably, largely peaceful. Only two deaths occurred at the festival: one from an accident involving a tractor



In this photo, audience members at the Woodstock festival stand and perch on top of cars and buses to watch the show. The enormous crowds created a food shortage. When people in the area heard about the situation, they donated food, including 10,000 sandwiches. Others served rice, vegetables, and granola, which came to be associated with hippies. In an effort to feed everyone, thousands of cups of granola were passed through the audience.

and the other from a drug overdose. The term “Woodstock Nation” would be used to describe the youth counterculture of the 1960s.

By the end of the decade, however, the hippies’ hopes for a world filled with peace and love were fading. The rampant drug use was taking its toll. Some of the musicians who had performed at the Woodstock festival had died from drug overdoses. Partly in response to the counterculture’s drug abuse, the federal government declared a “war on drugs” in the early 1970s. Agencies were created to provide treatment for drug abusers and to establish federal and local task forces to fight the drug trade.

Meanwhile, many mainstream Americans, who had been scandalized by the counterculture and troubled by the protests, longed for an end to the unrest. They saw the counterculture’s emphasis on “free love” and rejection of consumerism as a threat to the American

way of life. They feared that the drug culture was increasing crime in their communities. They wanted the nation to return to the way it was in the years of social conformity that followed World War II. They wanted a leader who could re-establish order and end the war in Vietnam. They believed they had found such a leader in former vice president Richard Nixon.

HISTORICAL THINKING

- 1. READING CHECK** What values set members of the counterculture apart from members of traditional American society?
- 2. MAKE INFERENCES** Why did the emergence of the counterculture coincide with the Vietnam War?
- 3. MAKE CONNECTIONS** What characteristics of the counterculture described in the lesson do you see around you today? Explain the similarities.

VIETNAMIZATION UNDER NIXON

Many Americans wanted peace in Vietnam and on their streets. They thought Republican Richard Nixon could deliver on both.

AN HONORABLE PEACE

Republican Richard Nixon narrowly beat Democrat Hubert Humphrey in the presidential election, winning the popular vote by less than one percent. You may remember that Nixon was involved in the campaign against communism when he was a congressman in the 1940s. He also served for eight years as Dwight Eisenhower's vice president. To sway voters, Nixon had appealed to more conservative Americans—those who conformed to social norms, unlike the members of the counterculture. The social unrest the country had experienced made many people long for law and order. Nixon would later refer to these Americans as “the silent majority.”

During his campaign, Nixon had promised he could bring about a quick victory in Vietnam, but he didn't provide any details. He also referred to seeking “an honorable peace.” A reporter called this vague promise Nixon's “secret plan.” Once Nixon assumed

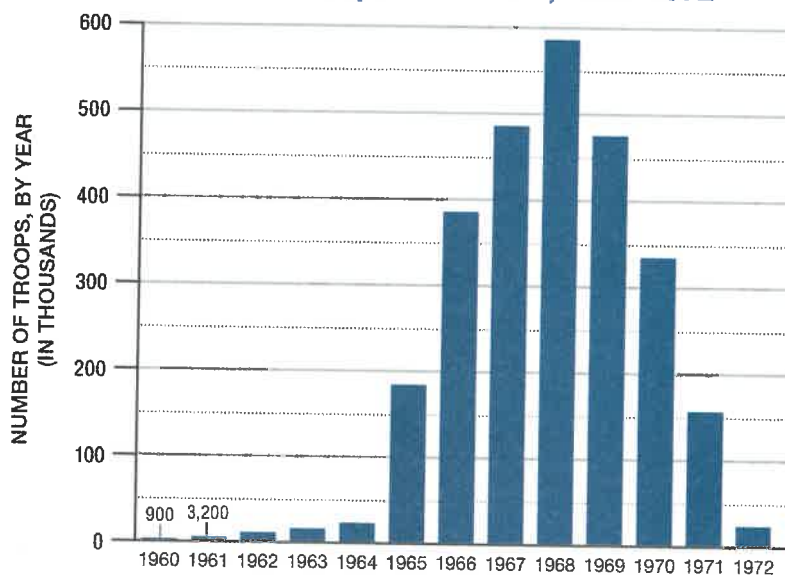
the presidency in January 1969, he and his National Security Advisor **Henry Kissinger** discussed what to do about Vietnam. They knew the United States could not win the war, but they didn't want to pull their forces out of South Vietnam, leaving it vulnerable to invasion from communist North Vietnam. And Nixon didn't want the war to destroy his presidency as it had Lyndon Johnson's. Soon he came up with a plan to end the war.

Nixon proposed a strategy called **Vietnamization**, which allowed for the gradual replacement of U.S. troops with ARVN troops. Under this plan, all American troops would be out of Vietnam by 1972. Nixon began the process of Vietnamization in June 1969 with the withdrawal of 25,000 U.S. troops. He announced more withdrawals that September. In April 1970, Nixon expressed his intention of pulling an additional 150,000 troops out of Vietnam within a year. General Creighton Abrams, who had

replaced General Westmoreland as commander in Vietnam, expressed concern about the American troops' ability to train additional ARVN troops in such a short time, but Nixon was determined to follow through with his Vietnamization plan.

Nixon also proposed a change to the conscription process. During the early years of the war, the Selective Service had drafted any eligible man between the ages of 18 and 26, with the oldest men drafted first. This system was replaced with a draft lottery, which had last been used in 1942. On December 1, 1969, the Selective Service placed 366 plastic capsules—one for every day of the year, including February 29—into a

U.S. Troops in Vietnam, 1960–1972



Source: U.S. Department of Defense



Some men, like these protesters in New York's Central Park in 1967, publicly burned their draft classification cards to protest the draft and the Vietnam War.

jar and drew them out by hand. The first capsule drawn was September 14. This meant that all men born between 1944 and 1950 on that date were assigned the number 1 and would be the first to be considered for the draft. The drawing continued until all the dates had been assigned numbers. The higher your number, the less likely you would be chosen for **induction**, or being drafted into the military.

COVERUPS AND SECRETS

In the midst of what appeared to be positive news about the war, Americans learned about an incident in South Vietnam that had occurred the year before. In March 1968, U.S. troops led by Lieutenant William Calley entered the tiny village of My Lai (MEE LYE) in search of Viet Cong. The troops didn't find any Viet Cong, but they rounded up the unarmed civilians—mostly women, children, and elderly men—and brutally murdered them. Approximately 500 people died in the **My Lai Massacre**, almost the entire population of the village.

The U.S. Army covered up the mass killing, but a soldier who had heard of the massacre eventually spoke to the press, which broke the story to the public in November 1969. Outraged people from around the world demanded justice. In the end, only

Calley was punished for the incident. He was put under house arrest and released within four years.

Nixon also tried to keep some secrets of his own. The United States had suspected Vietnam's neighbors, Cambodia and Laos, of sheltering Vietnamese communists. The government also knew that communists transported supplies along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, which passed through those countries. General Abrams suggested carrying out heavy bombing raids on Cambodia and Laos to root out the communist forces, and Nixon and Kissinger agreed to the plan. The United States had conducted air attacks over Cambodia and Laos for several years, but Nixon chose to "carpet bomb" the countries, or attack them with large numbers of missiles.

By showing the communists in Vietnam the lengths to which he was willing to go, Nixon hoped to force them into negotiations. The secret bombing of Cambodia and Laos began in March 1969—not even Congress knew about it. But in May 1969, the *New York Times* reported on the attacks. Furious with the newspaper's revelation, Nixon had the FBI discover the source of the leak in the name of national security. In spite of the leak, the president continued carpet bombing Cambodia and Laos until 1973.



TRAGEDY AT KENT STATE

After several days of student protest at Kent State, classes resumed on May 4. When students gathered for an unauthorized demonstration that day, the National Guard fired tear gas canisters into the crowd to disperse it. Some students picked up the canisters and other items and threw them back at the soldiers, who responded by firing their guns into the crowd. Two of the students killed were walking to class, including Jeffrey Miller, shown lying on the ground in this photo. The image, taken by photojournalism student John Filo, shows Mary Ann Vecchio kneeling by Miller, screaming in anguish. The photo won the Pulitzer Prize and became a symbol of the protest movement.

Then in April 1970, Nixon sent 20,000 U.S. and ARVN ground troops into Cambodia to find and destroy what he and the military thought were secret Viet Cong headquarters there. When the White House announced the Cambodian ground invasion, protests broke out. Some of the protests turned violent. On May 4, the National Guard shot into a crowd of student demonstrators at Kent State University in Ohio, killing four students and injuring several others. On May 15, at Jackson State, a predominantly black university in Mississippi, two African-American students were killed and 12 were injured following protests of U.S. policy in Cambodia and Vietnam and demonstrations against racial discrimination. Nixon pulled ground troops out of Cambodia in June.

The release in 1971 of what came to be known as the **Pentagon Papers** revealed more embarrassing secrets. In 1967, then Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara commissioned a study on U.S. activities and policies in Vietnam between 1947 and 1967. The 7,000-page work was never meant for the public eye. Daniel Ellsberg worked on the study and, at that time, was a strong supporter of the Vietnam War. As the war escalated, however, Ellsberg came to oppose it, and he turned the classified document over to the *New York Times*.

The Pentagon Papers revealed that U.S. involvement in Vietnam during the administrations of Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson had been far greater than the American public had been led to believe. Although Nixon wasn't mentioned in the study, he was enraged by its publication. He considered the Pentagon Papers an attack on his presidency and his handling of the war. Nixon unsuccessfully used both legal and illegal means to incriminate Ellsberg.

THE END OF THE WAR

By 1972, only about 24,000 American troops remained in Vietnam as Nixon continued his gradual withdrawal plan. However, that spring, North Vietnam launched attacks on South Vietnam, prompting Nixon to bomb North Vietnam. Once again, he was trying to force North Vietnam to negotiate a peace agreement. The bombing continued into the next presidential election, which Nixon won in a landslide. In December, one month after Nixon's re-election, the United States dropped more bombs on the North Vietnamese cities of Hanoi and Haiphong than they had dropped in the previous two years. The bombing devastated North Vietnam, destroying harbors, railway lines, and factories.

PRIMARY SOURCE

On January 23, 1973, Nixon addressed the nation on television and radio, announcing an agreement to bring an end to the war in Vietnam. In this excerpt from his address, Nixon echoes the "honorable peace" he'd promised.

Your steadfastness in supporting our insistence on peace with honor has made peace with honor possible. Now that we have achieved an honorable agreement, let us be proud that America did not settle for a peace that would have betrayed our allies, that would have abandoned our prisoners of war, or that would have ended the war for us but would have continued the war for the 50 million people of Indochina. Let us be proud of . . . those who sacrificed, who gave their lives so that the people of South Vietnam might live in freedom and so that the world might live in peace.

—from an address by President Nixon, 1973

On January 27, 1973, North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and the United States negotiated an agreement calling for U.S. troop withdrawal from South Vietnam in exchange for the release of prisoners of war. But Nixon declared the United States would attack North Vietnam again if it committed acts of aggression against South Vietnam. About two months after the signing, the last American troops departed South Vietnam: U.S. involvement in the war was over.

In direct violation of the agreement they signed, the communists began planning their attack on South Vietnam in October 1974. North Vietnamese troops moved into the nation in March 1975. Congress denied requests to send emergency aid to South Vietnam. In late April, Saigon fell to the communists. With the communist victory, the Vietnam War was finally over, but its memory and legacy would haunt the United States for years to come.

HISTORICAL THINKING

- 1. READING CHECK** What was Vietnamization?
- 2. ANALYZE CAUSE AND EFFECT** What social and political developments occurred as a result of the Cambodian ground invasion?
- 3. DRAW CONCLUSIONS** In his 1973 address, what did Nixon mean by "peace with honor"?
- 4. FORM AND SUPPORT OPINIONS** Do you think the U.S. involvement in Vietnam was justified? Explain why or why not.

LEGACY OF THE WAR

Many American veterans came home to a country they hardly recognized and where they seemed to be regarded as living symbols of an unpopular war. It would be difficult for everyone to adjust to the post-war world.

CASUALTIES OF WAR

Before 2010, the Vietnam War was the longest conflict in U.S. history. It claimed the lives of almost 60,000 Americans and about 2 million Vietnamese. As agreed, about two weeks after they signed the January 1973 peace agreement, the North Vietnamese began releasing American prisoners of war, or POWs. The POW camps freed 120 prisoners every two weeks, with the sick and injured leaving first, followed by those who had been imprisoned the longest. Some soldiers had been prisoners for more than 8 years, during which time many endured torture and isolation. Prisoners referred to one of the worst prison camps as the “Hanoi Hilton,” a sarcastic reference to a famous hotel chain. At this camp in North Vietnam’s capital, American soldiers were tortured and interrogated for information. It took about two months for all of the nearly 600 POWs to return home.

In 1973, about 2,500 American troops remained missing in action, or MIA. The Vietnamese landscape, with its thick jungles and swamps, made it difficult to locate the soldiers’ remains. The military could not search the area for missing or dead soldiers because the United States never occupied North Vietnam. Though some of those who were MIA later returned to the United States and others were discovered to have died in POW camps, 1,600 men were still designated MIA in 2015.

Once veterans returned from Vietnam, they faced a new set of problems. Unlike soldiers of other wars, Vietnam veterans were not given a hero’s welcome when they came home. No parades or celebrations awaited them. The country was still deeply divided over the war. For the most part, Americans didn’t

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Washington, D.C.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial consists of three parts: The Three Soldiers statue, the Vietnam Women’s Memorial, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall, which lists the names of all the servicemen and women who died in the war. Men and women who served in Vietnam sometimes leave mementos of their war experience in front of the three memorials—especially boots. The National Park Service collects these items and stores them. Many are put on display at the Smithsonian Museum of American History.



want to hear about the veterans' experiences in the war. At best, the returning soldiers were ignored; at worst, they were despised. While most veterans made a successful return to civilian life, some struggled with physical injuries, mental health problems, and drug addictions that had begun while they were in Vietnam.

Some of the physical problems veterans suffered from were due to exposure to Agent Orange. The herbicide contained dioxin, a toxic compound that could cause a host of problems, such as cancer and birth defects. The government was slow to acknowledge the relationship between exposure to Agent Orange and the various health problems soldiers reported.

Other veterans experienced **post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**, a condition brought on by injury or psychological trauma. Symptoms of PTSD can include flashbacks—vivid, realistic memories of horrific events—sleeping disorders, and sudden, often irrational bursts of anger. When they didn't receive adequate support or treatment for their physical and emotional problems, many veterans turned to substance abuse, and some committed suicide. Long after the troops had returned home, the effects of their time in Vietnam lingered, sometimes for many years.

LESSONS OF WAR

Attitudes at home about the war often reflected peoples' political viewpoints. Conservatives fumed because the United States had lost the war, while liberals thought the country should never have waged the war. As one veteran said, "The left hated us for killing, and the right hated us for not killing enough." Over time, though, conservatives learned that Vietnam veterans had fought valiantly under very challenging circumstances, and liberals learned that the veterans, too, were victims of the war.

The American public also collectively realized that forcing democracy on an unstable country such as Vietnam was a recipe for disaster. As a result of the war, Americans became more critical of their government. In fact, the escalation of the Vietnam War and the secret bombings of Laos and Cambodia proved to be the culmination, or conclusion, of Cold War strategies. Ultimately, Vietnam caused Americans to question the underlying assumptions of the Cold War era and protest against their government's policies abroad.

In the 1990s, the United States began to normalize relations with Vietnam. In 1994, President William Clinton lifted a trade embargo that the United States had imposed on North Vietnam in 1964 and on the newly reunited Vietnam in 1975. Veterans' groups



After Saigon fell to North Vietnam in April 1975, the United States evacuated Americans and many South Vietnamese by helicopter. In this photo, U.S. Marines help a long line of South Vietnamese board a helicopter on a lawn near the U.S. Embassy, seen in the background at the left. The helicopters made many trips, but not all those desperate to leave could be evacuated.

initially opposed this decision. However, Clinton lifted the embargo largely due to Vietnam's cooperation in tracking down and supplying information about American MIAs. Finally, in 1995, Clinton re-established diplomatic relations with Vietnam. In 1997, he named Douglas Peterson, a former American POW who had been imprisoned in Vietnam for six years, as the country's ambassador from the United States. Today, Vietnam is still a communist nation, but it has also embraced elements of capitalism and has a growing economy.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE

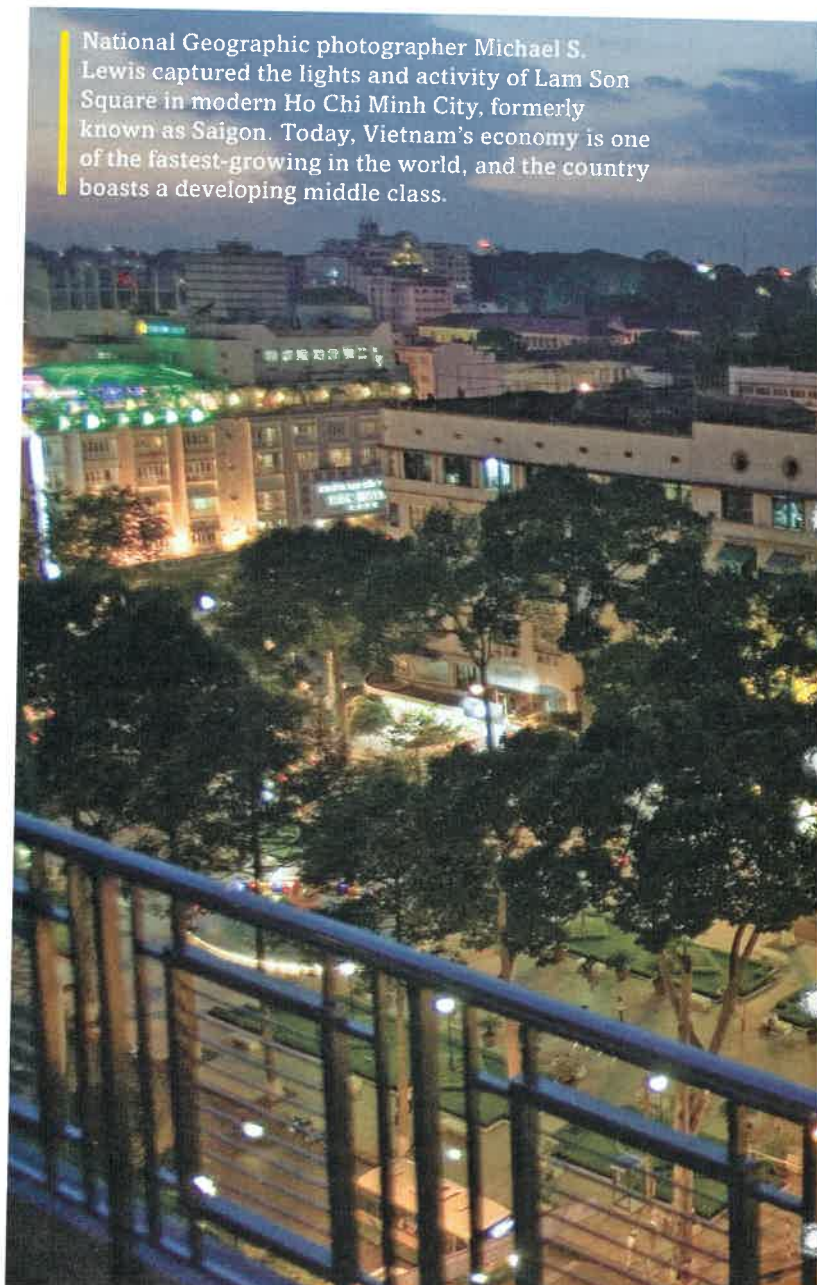
The impact of the Vietnam War extended to the U.S. Constitution. The document mandated that citizens had to be 21 years old to vote. But during the war, some people began to support lowering the voting age to 18. Arguing in favor of the age reduction in 1970, Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts pointed out that about one-third of the troops fighting in Vietnam—and about one-half of those who died—were under the age of 21. Kennedy said, "At the very least, the opportunity to vote should be granted in recognition of the risks an 18-year-old is obliged to assume when he is sent off to fight and perhaps die for his country." Senator Kennedy also pointed out that many other countries, including South Vietnam, gave 18-year-olds suffrage. The **26th Amendment**, which reduced the voting age to 18, was ratified in 1971.

Another important political change took place a couple of years later. In 1973, Congress passed the War Powers Resolution, also known as the War

Powers Act. The act required the president to notify Congress about any American troops sent overseas within 48 hours of their deployment. After 60 days, the president had to obtain congressional approval for the troops to remain in a state of armed conflict or make a formal declaration of war. Legislators intended the act as a check on the president's power to send troops into battle without the consent of Congress. Many believed the act was also passed to avoid future Vietnams.

The reunification of Vietnam brought about social change to the United States in the form of a significant influx of Southeast Asian immigrants. When Saigon fell to the North Vietnamese in April 1975, crowds of South Vietnamese fled to the U.S. Embassy and other buildings in the city, hoping to escape the communist invasion. Though U.S. pilots managed to evacuate 7,000 South Vietnamese in less than 24 hours—making the effort the largest

National Geographic photographer Michael S. Lewis captured the lights and activity of Lam Son Square in modern Ho Chi Minh City, formerly known as Saigon. Today, Vietnam's economy is one of the fastest-growing in the world, and the country boasts a developing middle class.



PRIMARY SOURCE

In 1975, John Tenhula began interviewing refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos who immigrated to the United States. In this excerpt from an interview, Heng Mui, a South Vietnamese woman, talks about becoming an American citizen.

I became a citizen last year; I am now an American. I do not especially feel like an American, but I don't know if there is any special way I should feel. For some refugees, becoming an American is not an easy thing to do. It means you give up that final thing that is yours, your nationality. But after it happened, I never thought about it. There is something exciting about holding my new blue passport and knowing that I will vote next year for the president.

—from *Voices from Southeast Asia*, by John Tenhula, 1991

helicopter airlift in history—hundreds more were left behind in the embassy. About one month before the fall of Saigon, however, the U.S. government had ordered Operation Babylift. The government airlifted about 3,000 Vietnamese orphans from Saigon to the United States throughout April and placed them with adoptive parents.

Many Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian refugees would arrive as immigrants to the United States in

the coming decades, however. The greatest numbers of immigrants arrived between 1980 and 2000.

Though the immigrant flow has since decreased, the Vietnamese still made up the sixth largest immigrant population in the United States as of 2014. Most settled in California, Texas, Washington, and Florida. Like other groups that have immigrated to the United States, the Vietnamese have become part of the country's rich diversity, and they now embrace their own American identities.

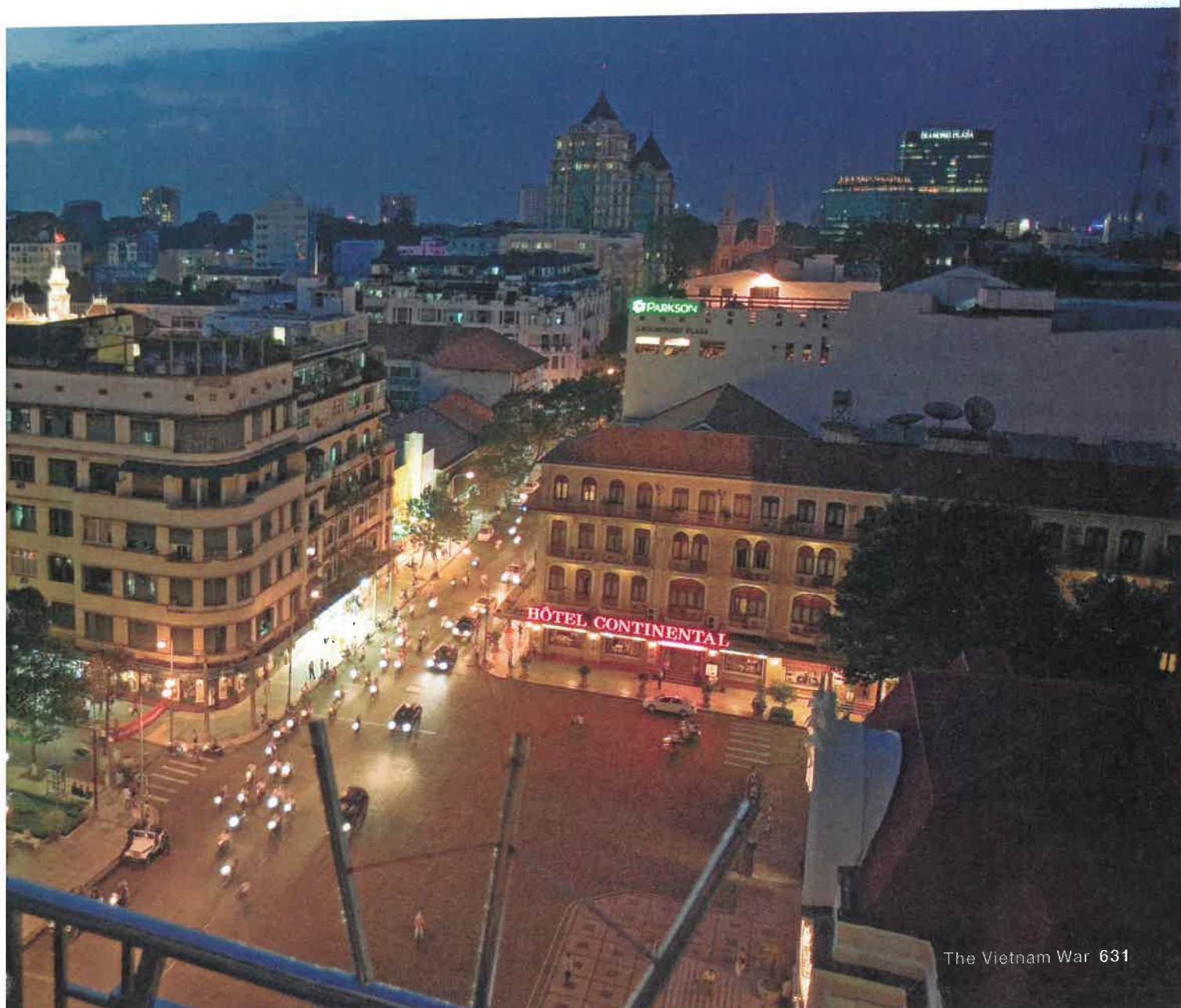
HISTORICAL THINKING

1. READING CHECK What problems did Vietnam veterans face when they returned home from the war?

2. FORM AND SUPPORT OPINIONS What do you think is the most important legacy of the Vietnam War? Support your opinion with evidence from the text.

3. IDENTIFY What domestic policies changed as a result of the Vietnam War?

4. MAKE INFERENCES Explain the meaning behind the Vietnam veteran's statement, "The left hated us for killing, and the right hated us for not killing enough," and describe how people's viewpoints toward Vietnam veterans could be so different.



18 REVIEW

VOCABULARY

Use each of the following vocabulary words in a sentence that shows an understanding of the term's meaning.

- stalemate**
The two sides were at a stalemate, with neither side able to claim victory.
- hawk**
- post-traumatic stress disorder**
- coup**
- induction**
- escalation**
- deferment**
- counterculture**

READING STRATEGY

FORM AND SUPPORT OPINIONS

When you form an opinion, you determine and assess the importance and significance of something. Your opinion is your personal judgment, not a fact, so you should support your opinion with examples and facts. Use a chart like this one to form and support an opinion about protesters during the Vietnam War. Then answer the question.

Role of Protesters		
Example/Fact	Example/Fact	Example/Fact
Opinion		

- Do you think Vietnam War protesters played a positive or a negative role in the conflict?

MAIN IDEAS

Answer the following questions. Support your answers with evidence from the chapter.

- Who were the Viet Cong? **LESSON 1.1**
- Why was President Johnson initially opposed to sending American ground troops to Vietnam? **LESSON 1.2**
- What was the purpose of General Westmoreland's war of attrition? **LESSON 2.1**
- How did hawks and doves differ in their views of the war in Vietnam? **LESSON 2.2**
- Why did the communists choose to begin their offensive on Tet? **LESSON 3.1**
- Why did Johnson choose not to run for a second term as president? **LESSON 3.2**
- What happened at My Lai? **LESSON 4.1**
- What right did the 26th Amendment guarantee? **LESSON 4.2**

HISTORICAL THINKING

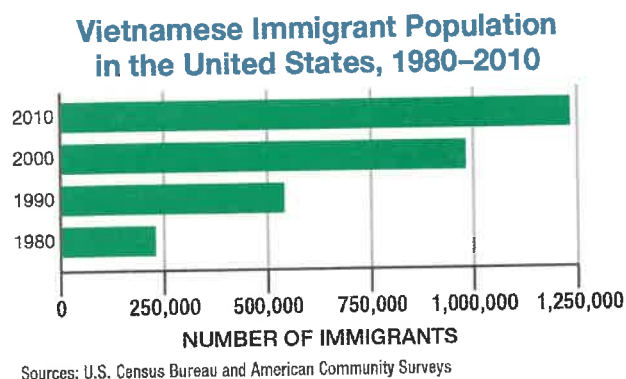
Answer the following questions. Support your answers with evidence from the chapter.

- ANALYZE CAUSE AND EFFECT** How did American journalists affect the war in Vietnam?
- EVALUATE** What did Martin Luther King, Jr., mean when he called the Vietnam War "a white man's war, a black man's fight"?
- MAKE INFERENCES** Why did the U.S. government present positive assessments of the war, even when it was going badly?
- DRAW CONCLUSIONS** How was the Tet Offensive a strategic victory for the communists in Vietnam?

- 22. COMPARE AND CONTRAST** How was the war in Vietnam similar to and different from other Cold War struggles?
- 23. ANALYZE CAUSE AND EFFECT** How did the Vietnam War cause Americans to question the assumptions behind Cold War policy?
- 24. SUMMARIZE** What turned American public opinion against U.S. involvement in Vietnam?
- 25. FORM AND SUPPORT OPINIONS** How do you think American society changed as a result of the Vietnam War?
- 26. SYNTHESIZE** What combination of factors caused the United States to end its involvement in the Vietnam War?
- 27. MAKE CONNECTIONS** What similarities do you detect between the Vietnam War and more recent conflicts in Southwest Asia?

INTERPRET GRAPHS

Study the graph below, which shows the Vietnamese immigrant populations in the United States between 1980 and 2010. Then answer the questions that follow.



- 28.** Why do you think the number of Vietnamese immigrants more than quadrupled between 1980 and 2000?
- 29.** How might Vietnam's growing economy explain why the number of immigrants coming to the United States had tapered off by 2010?

ANALYZE SOURCES

Tim O'Brien wrote about his experiences as a soldier in the Vietnam War. In this excerpt from his 1973 autobiographical story "If I Die in a Combat Zone," which appears in *The Vietnam Reader*, O'Brien discusses the summer he was drafted.

The summer of 1968, the summer I turned into a soldier, was a good time for talking about war and peace. Eugene McCarthy was bringing quiet thought to the subject. Lyndon Johnson was almost forgotten. Robert Kennedy was dead but not quite forgotten; Richard Nixon looked like a loser. With all the tragedy and change that summer, it was fine weather for discussion. And, with all of this, there was an induction notice tucked into a corner of my billfold.

- 30.** What details in the excerpt convey O'Brien's bias toward the politicians he names?

CONNECT TO YOUR LIFE

- 31. ARGUMENT** Service in the armed forces today is voluntary. Do you think the draft should be reinstated? If so, do you think it should apply to both men and women? Write a paragraph in which you make an argument for or against the draft.

TIPS

- State your position on the draft.
- List arguments for and against the draft.
- Explain why you think either voluntary or required military service is more fair or just.
- Use information from the chapter to help support your ideas.
- Address the counterarguments you listed.
- Conclude your argument with a sentence summarizing your position.

CHANGES IN SOCIETY

1960–1975

HISTORICAL THINKING How did new calls for equality and the space race impact American society?

**AMERICAN
STORIES****One Giant Leap****SECTION 1** Latinos Organize**SECTION 2** Native Americans and Asian Americans**SECTION 3** Movements for Equality**SECTION 4** From Earth to the Moon**AMERICAN GALLERY
ONLINE****The Women's Movement**

Taking a cue from Susan B. Anthony and the suffragists as well as the civil rights movement, women of the 1960s and 1970s used nonviolent resistance and marched for equal treatment. In the 21st century, women once more took to the streets for equality. More than 400,000 people joined the 2017 Women's March on Washington, D.C., declaring, "women's rights are human rights."

