

Chapter Summary

Section 1: Origins of the Vietnam War

American involvement in Vietnam began with President Truman's support of the French colonial governments in Southeast Asia. Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy continued that support.

Section 2: U.S. Involvement Grows

After Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, President Johnson sent more troops to South Vietnam. This escalation began to weaken the economy and divide the American people.



Chapter Summary (continued)

Section 3: The War Divides America

More and more troops were sent to Vietnam, as casualties increased and victory remained elusive. America divided into hawks, who supported Johnson's policies, and doves, who opposed the Vietnam War.

Section 4: The War's End and Impact

Presidential candidate Nixon promised peace with honor. As President, Nixon secretly ordered air strikes on Cambodia and eventually withdrew U.S. troops from Vietnam. But the war's impact on America endured.

Chapter Summary (continued)

Section 5: Nixon and the Cold War

Nixon developed a new approach to the Cold War. He established diplomatic relations with China and signed the first U.S.–Soviet Union agreement that limited the nuclear arms race.

Objectives

- Describe the reasons that the United States helped the French fight the Vietnamese.
- Identify ways in which the United States opposed communism in Southeast Asia.
- Analyze how the United States increased its involvement in Vietnam.



Terms and People

- **Ho Chi Minh** – a Vietnamese leader who demanded Vietnam's independence from France
- **domino theory** – the idea that if Vietnam fell to communism, its closest neighbors would follow
- **Dien Bien Phu** – a French military base besieged by Vietminh troops until the French surrendered

Terms and People (continued)

- **SEATO** – the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, organized to stop the spread of communism in Southeast Asia
- **Vietcong** – National Liberation Front (NLF), South Vietnamese guerrilla fighters supported by communists in North Vietnam
- **Gulf of Tonkin Resolution** – passed in 1964, it gave President Johnson tremendous war powers



Why did the United States become involved in Vietnam?

Presidents Kennedy and Johnson shared a vision that the United States would emerge victorious from the Cold War.

As part of this battle, the United States established a new line of defense in Vietnam.

The United States became involved in Vietnam for several reasons.



- The U.S. wanted France as an ally in the Cold War.
- The U.S. also wanted to support any government that was fighting communism.

French colonial governments had ruled most of Indochina since the 1800s.

The French exploited Indochina's wealth by owning plantations, claiming mineral rights, and imposing high taxes.



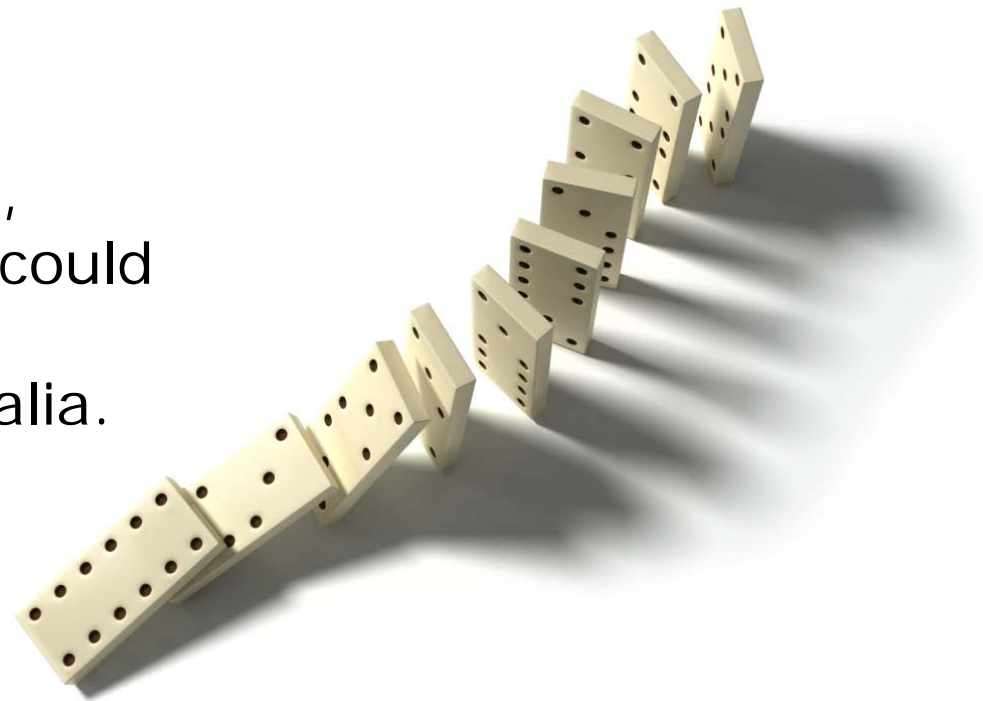
Vietnamese leader **Ho Chi Minh** worked to free Vietnam from colonial rule.

Unable to get support from western nations, he embraced communism and received support from the communists.



In 1954, **President Eisenhower** introduced the **domino theory**, which said that if Vietnam became communist, its closest neighbors would follow.

If communism spread throughout the region, Eisenhower feared, it could threaten Japan, the Philippines, and Australia.



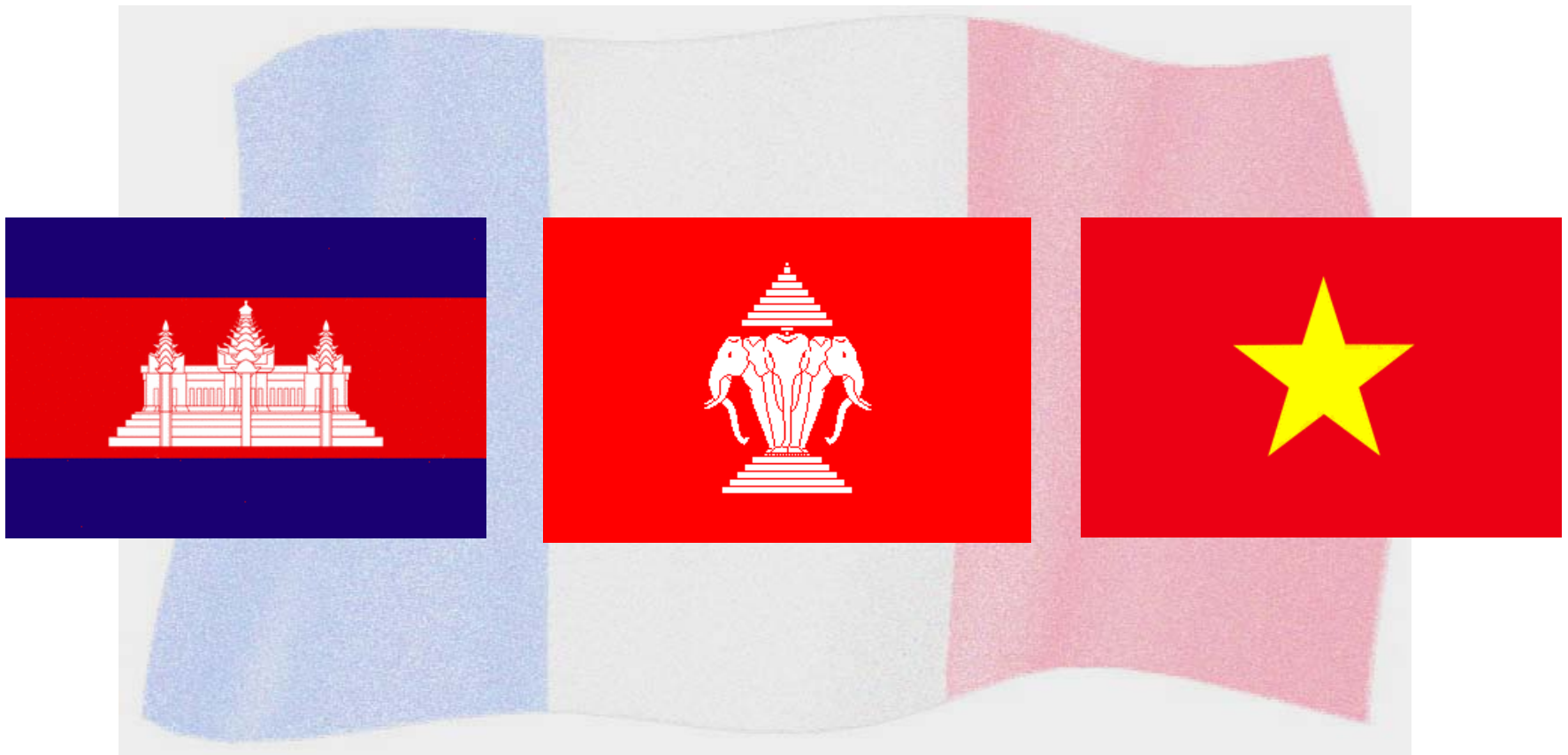
Despite U.S. financial support, the French were defeated by Vietminh forces at **Dien Bien Phu**.

The Vietminh hammered at French forces and laid siege to the base for 55 days.

After suffering more than 15,000 casualties, the French surrendered on May 7, 1954.



In the peace accord that followed, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam gained independence from France.



Vietnam was divided into two countries.

Ho Chi Minh's communist government ruled North Vietnam.

An anticommunist government, supported by the U.S., ruled South Vietnam.

Division of Vietnam, 1954–1957



KEY

- Communist government
- Non-Communist government

South Vietnam's president, Ngo Dinh Diem, was not a popular leader.



A group of rebel guerilla fighters formed the National Liberation Front (NLF) to oppose the Diem government and unite Vietnam under communist rule. (NLF flag above.)

The United States supported South Vietnam in several ways.

- formed the **Southeast Asia Treaty Organization**, which opposed communism
- gave economic and military aid
- sent Special Forces soldiers to “advise” South Vietnamese troops

President Kennedy sent **Special Forces** troops to help fight the **Vietcong**, the guerilla fighters of the National Liberation Front.

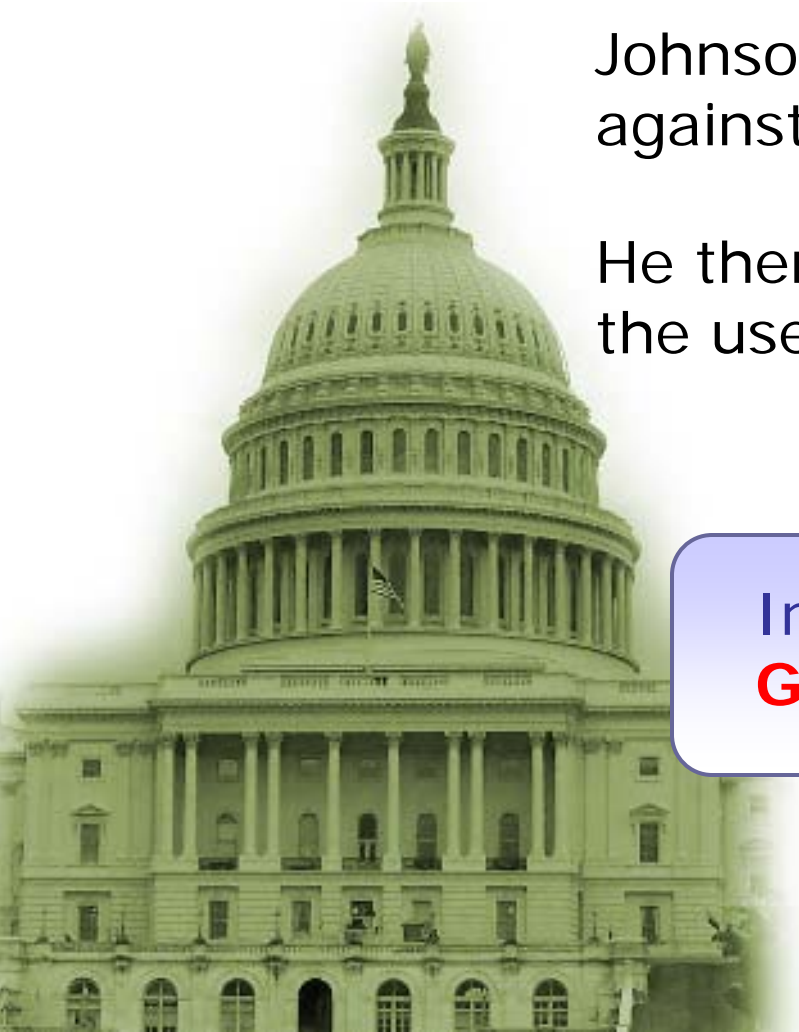
The Diem government remained unpopular, however, and the **Kennedy** administration worked behind the scenes to remove Diem from power.



President Johnson faced a crisis after he took office.

North Vietnam attacked
a U.S. destroyer in the
Gulf of Tonkin.



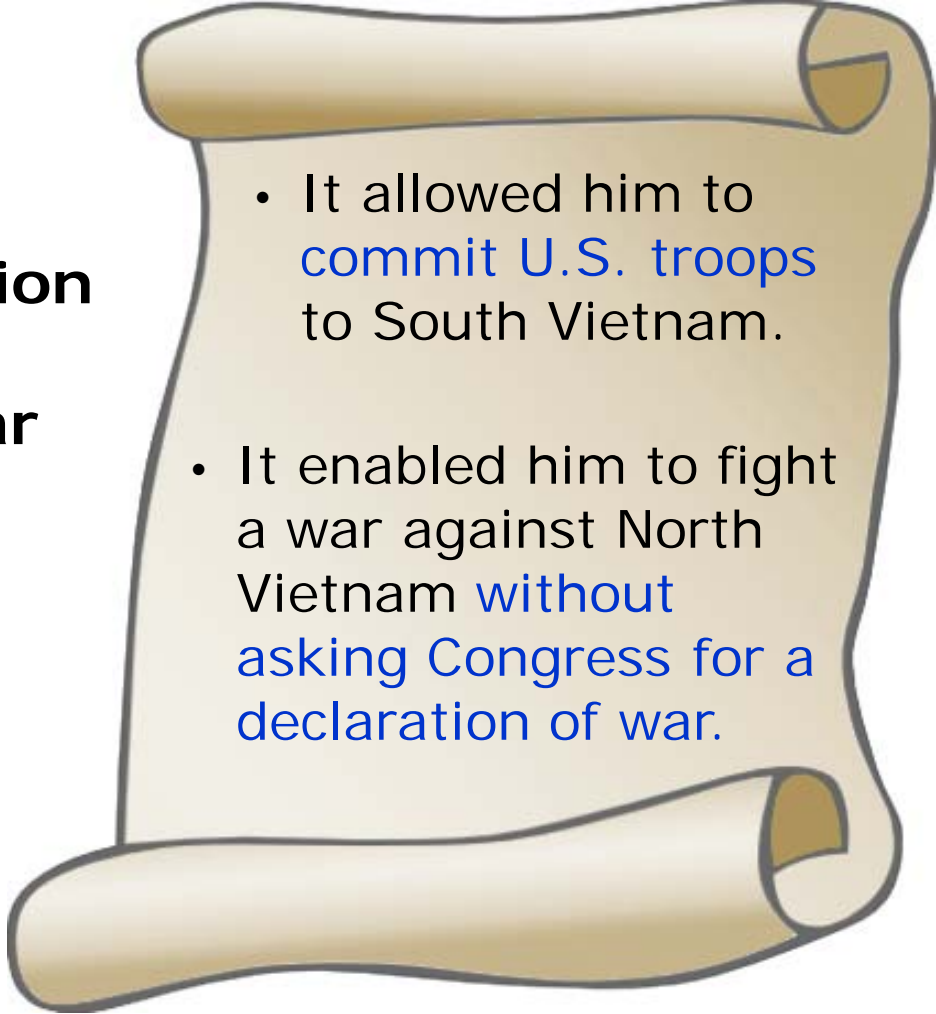


Johnson ordered an airstrike against North Vietnam.

He then asked Congress to authorize the use of force to defend U.S. troops.

In response, Congress passed the **Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.**

**The Gulf of
Tonkin Resolution
gave Johnson
tremendous war
powers.**

- 
- It allowed him to **commit U.S. troops** to South Vietnam.
 - It enabled him to fight a war against North Vietnam **without asking Congress for a declaration of war.**

Objectives

- Identify the factors that caused President Johnson to increase American troop strength in Vietnam.
- Assess the nature of the war in Vietnam and the difficulties faced by both sides.
- Evaluate the effects of low morale on American troops and on the home front.



Terms and People

- **William Westmoreland** – the American military commander in South Vietnam
- **napalm** – jellied gasoline that was dropped in canisters and exploded on impact, setting fire to large areas
- **hawk** – a supporter of Johnson's war policies
- **dove** – an opponent Johnson's war policies





What were the causes and effects of America's growing involvement in the Vietnam War?

As the war escalated, America's leaders and soldiers found themselves in a quagmire.

Eventually the war weakened the American economy, divided the people, and eroded the nation's morale.





**In 1965,
Johnson
escalated air
strikes against
North Vietnam
and increased
the number of
ground troops.**



The U.S. plan, called Operation Rolling Thunder, was to Americanize the war effort.

The U.S. would use its superior war technology to win the conflict quickly.

Johnson's advisers, including **William Westmoreland**, the American commander in Vietnam, supported the increased military presence.

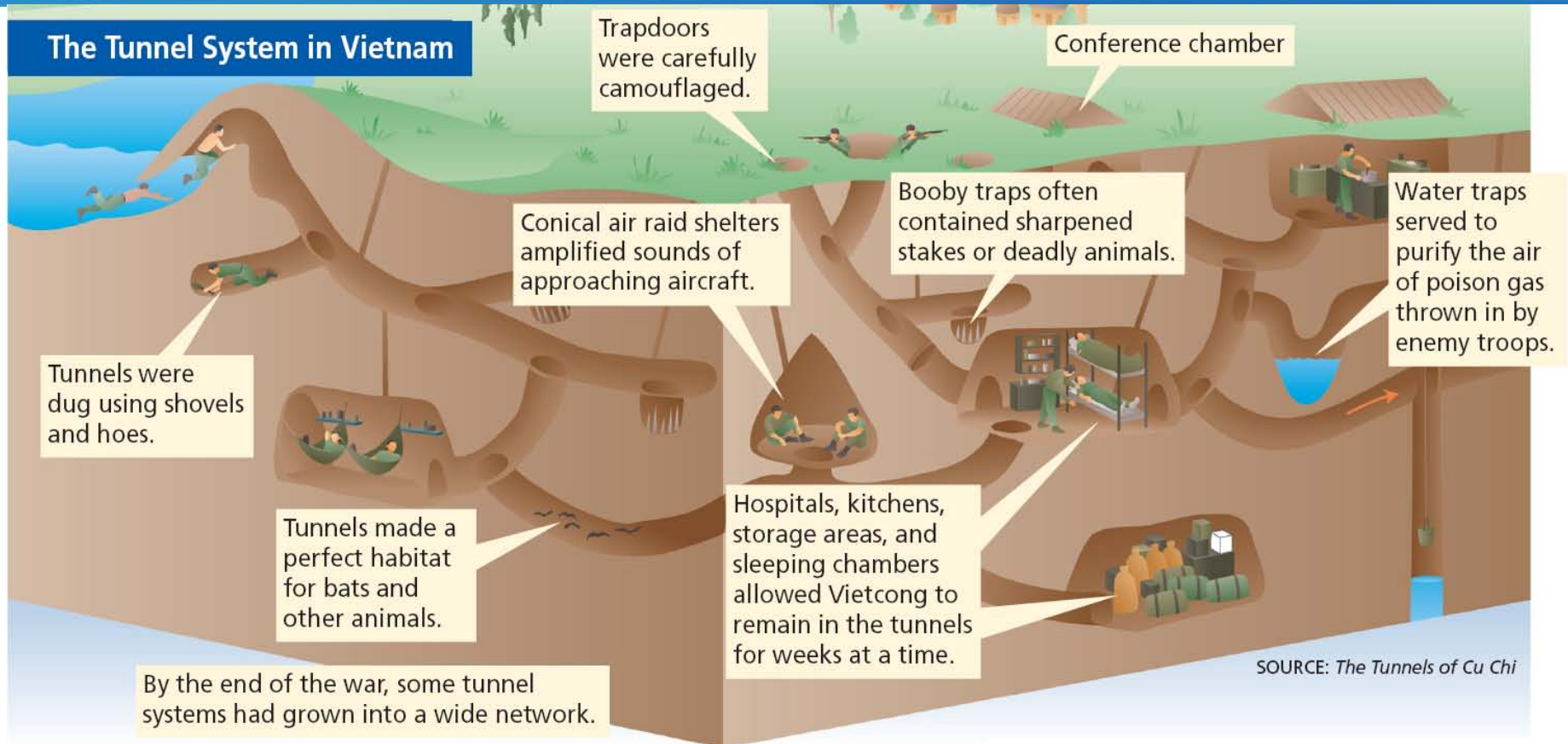


The North Vietnamese and Vietcong fighters proved a difficult enemy.

Ho Chi Minh's military strategy was to **fight only when victory was certain.**

He exhorted his troops to be like a tiger fighting an elephant — the tiger keeps moving and takes bites out of the elephant.





The Vietcong and North Vietnamese dug a complex series of tunnels, from which they mounted surprise attacks. The U.S. dropped **napalm** to burn these jungle hideouts.



The Vietcong and North Vietnamese soldiers:



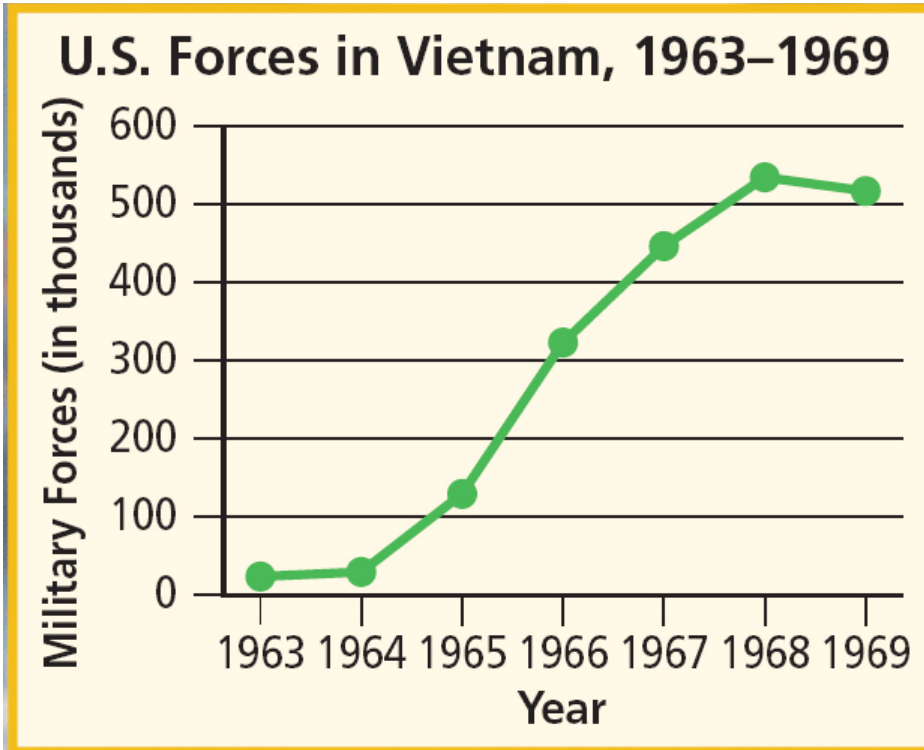
- traveled quickly and quietly with little gear
- attacked suddenly and then faded into the jungle
- set booby traps around U.S. encampments



The war grew increasingly difficult and frustrating.

- Many American soldiers had been drafted and did not see how the war helped U.S. interests.
- The **lack of progress toward victory** in Vietnam increased doubt about the war.
- The **war strained America's economy**.





Source: U.S. Department of Defense,
Military Personnel Historical Reports

By 1968, there were more than half a million U.S. troops in Vietnam, and 30,000 had died.

Doves

questioned the war. They included liberal politicians and students who saw the conflict as a localized civil war.



Hawks supported Johnson's war policies. They were mostly conservatives who believed the war was crucial to a U.S. Cold War victory.



Objectives

- Describe the divisions within American society over the Vietnam War.
- Analyze the Tet Offensive and the American reaction to it.
- Summarize the factors that influenced the outcome of the 1968 presidential election.



Terms and People

- **draftee** – a young man who was drafted into military service
- **SDS** – Students for a Democratic Society, founded to fight racism but which later campaigned against the Vietnam War
- **“credibility gap”** – the difference between what the Johnson administration said about the war and what journalists in Vietnam saw and reported



Terms and People (continued)

- **Tet Offensive** – a coordinated assault, in January 1968, by the Vietcong and North Vietnamese on South Vietnamese cities and bases
- **Eugene McCarthy** – the antiwar candidate for the Democratic Party presidential nomination in 1968
- **Robert Kennedy** – New York's Democratic senator and a candidate for the Democratic Party presidential nomination in 1968





How did the American war effort in Vietnam lead to rising protests and social divisions back home?

President Johnson sent more troops to Vietnam, and in the United States more people questioned the war.

The Vietnam War divided Americans more deeply than any conflict since the Civil War.



As more troops died and no clear victory emerged, increasing numbers of Americans opposed the Vietnam War.

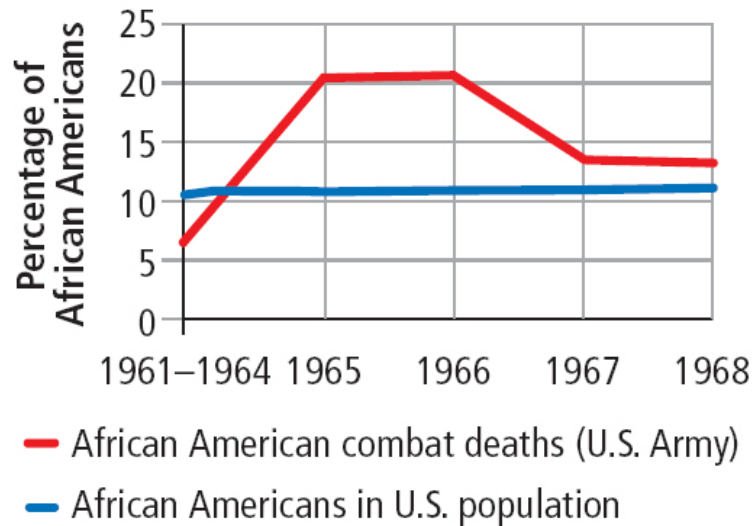
Many people opposed the policies of the draft.

- More than 1.5 million young men were drafted during the Vietnam War.
- Many argued the draft unfairly gave deferments to students.
- Most of the **draftees** came from a poor or working-class background.



The number of African Americans fighting in Vietnam was disproportionately high.

African Americans and the Vietnam War



SOURCES: Department of Defense; *Historical Statistics of the United States*

African Americans were less likely than whites to become commissioned officers.

They were more likely to serve, and die, in combat positions.





Inequalities in the draft led to widespread resistance against the war.

In 1969, the draft was restructured to introduce a lottery system.



Students' opposition to the war grew.

- Colleges and universities became centers of antiwar activism.
- Most upper middle-class students opposed the war; working-class students generally supported the war.
- **Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)** campaigned to end the war in Vietnam.



Beyond college campuses, more and more Americans also opposed the war.



TV news showed the war's horrors.

The difference between government reports and news stories created a **credibility gap**.



In November 1967, General Westmoreland addressed the nation's concerns about the war.

He claimed the Vietcong had weakened and could no longer mount a major attack.

In early 1968, the Vietcong and North Vietnamese launched the **Tet Offensive.**



The Tet Offensive attacked major cities and bases in South Vietnam, including the U.S. Embassy in Saigon.

The fighting was fierce, but American and South Vietnamese forces eventually drove back the offensive.



After the Tet Offensive, U.S. military leaders became less certain that the war could end quickly.

The new Secretary of Defense, Clark Clifford, recommended that President Johnson **pursue peace, rather than victory**, in Vietnam.

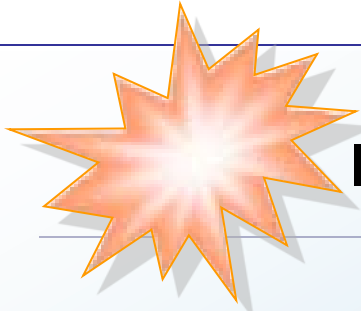


Johnson announced he would not run for another term as president.

Democratic Senator **Eugene McCarthy**, who **opposed the war**, made a strong showing in the New Hampshire primary.

Robert Kennedy, a Democratic Senator from New York, also announced his candidacy.



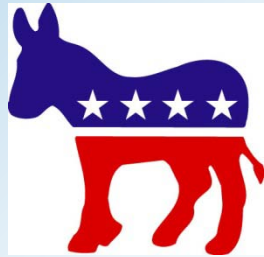


In 1968 violence stunned the nation.

- In April, Rev. **Martin Luther King, Jr.** was **assassinated** in Memphis.
- Senator **Robert Kennedy** was **assassinated** in June, just after he'd won the California Democratic primary.
- Police used rough tactics to **break up** student protests outside the Democratic Convention in Chicago.



Eventually the Democrats chose Hubert Humphrey, Johnson's Vice President as their presidential candidate.



Republicans held a more peaceful convention, choosing **Richard M. Nixon** as their presidential candidate.



Nixon won the 1968 election.

- He called for peace with honor in Vietnam.
- He appealed to the “silent majority” — people who were not protesting.
- He benefited because Democrats were split between Humphrey and George Wallace, a third-party candidate from the South.



Objectives

- Assess Nixon's new approach to the war, and explain why protests continued.
- Explain what led to the Paris Peace Accords and why South Vietnam eventually fell to the communists.
- Evaluate the impact of the Vietnam War on the United States.



Terms and People

- **Vietnamization** – Nixon's plan for U.S. forces to withdraw and South Vietnam forces to assume more combat duties
- **Kent State University** – site of a confrontation between students and National Guardsmen, during which four students were killed
- **My Lai** – a village in South Vietnam where U.S. soldiers killed unarmed civilians

Terms and People (continued)

- **Pentagon Papers** – classified government history of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, published by *The New York Times* in 1971
- **Paris Peace Accords** – a 1973 agreement between the United States, South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and the Vietcong for a cease-fire and U.S. troop withdrawal from South Vietnam
- **War Powers Act** – passed in 1973, this act restricted the President's war-making powers



How did the Vietnam War end, and what were its lasting effects?

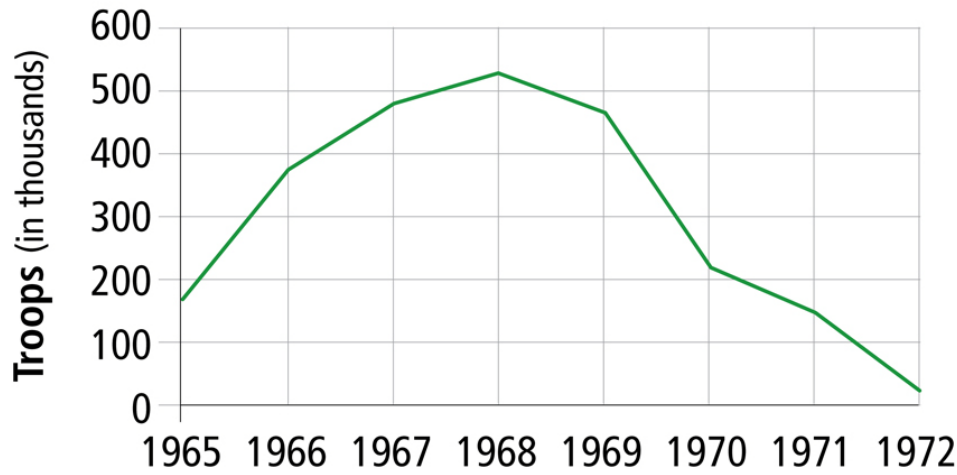
Nixon withdrew American troops from South Vietnam, but the impact of the war endured.

Americans reexamined the power of the presidency, the struggle against communism, and America's overall role in the world.

President Nixon inherited an unpopular war and increasing troubles on the home front.



U.S. Military Personnel in Vietnam



SOURCE: National Archives and Records Administration

Publicly,
Nixon advocated

- the **Vietnamization** of the war, which would transfer front-line fighting to the South Vietnamese
- “peace with honor”: U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam on honorable terms

Secretly, Nixon

- ordered the bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Cambodia to reduce the flow of supplies to the Vietcong
- extended the war with a ground attack by U.S. soldiers on North Vietnamese bases in Cambodia



At home, protests escalated.



- At **Kent State University** in Ohio, four students were shot by National Guardsmen.
- A similar confrontation at Jackson State University in Mississippi left **two students dead**.
- Counterprotests were held by those supporting Nixon and the war efforts.

In 1971, Americans were stunned to learn about the **My Lai** massacre.



Four years earlier, U.S. soldiers searching for Vietcong in the village of My Lai had killed hundreds of unarmed civilians.

The publication of the **Pentagon Papers** further shocked the nation.

The report revealed that American leaders had lied to Congress and failed to inform the public fully about the American involvement in Vietnam.

Nixon tried to stop publication of the Pentagon Papers, but *The New York Times* published the report in 1971.

In January 1973, the war finally ended with the signing of the **Paris Peace Accords.**

- The United States, South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and the Vietcong would **stop fighting**.
- **U.S. troops would withdraw** from South Vietnam.
- **North Vietnamese troops would remain** in South Vietnam.
- **South Vietnam's noncommunist government would remain in power.**

For the United States, the war was over, but fighting continued in Vietnam despite the peace agreement.

In the spring of 1975, North Vietnam invaded Saigon and won the war.



The Vietnam War had a lasting effect on American life.

- More than 58,000 Americans died in Vietnam.
- It would be years before Vietnam veterans were acknowledged for their sacrifices.
- The war undermined Americans' trust in their leaders.
- Americans became reluctant to intervene in other nations' affairs.



Congress passed the
War Powers Act in 1973.

The act restricted the
President's ability to send the
nation to war.

Objectives

- Explain the thinking behind Richard Nixon's foreign policy.
- Define Nixon's foreign policy toward China and the Soviet Union.



Terms and People

- **Henry Kissinger** – President Nixon's leading advisor on national security and international affairs
- **realpolitik** – the belief that political goals should be defined by concrete national interests instead of abstract ideologies
- **Zhou Enlai** – Premier of China when Nixon made a state visit to China in 1972



Terms and People (continued)

- **Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty** – an agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union that froze the deployment of intercontinental ballistic missiles and limited antiballistic missiles
- **détente** – an easing of Cold War tensions between East and West





How did Richard Nixon change Cold War diplomacy during his presidency?

After the Vietnam War, President Nixon developed a new approach to the Cold War.

He redefined America's relations with the Soviet Union and China.



President Nixon redefined U.S. foreign policy.

- He did not **divide the world** into “us” (democratic countries) and “them” (communist countries).
- He practiced **realpolitik** — foreign policy based on concrete national interests rather than ideology.
- He concluded that there was **no united worldwide communist movement**.



Henry Kissinger was President's Nixon's leading adviser on national security and international affairs.

Together they altered America's Cold War policy, improving the country's relations with China and the Soviet Union.

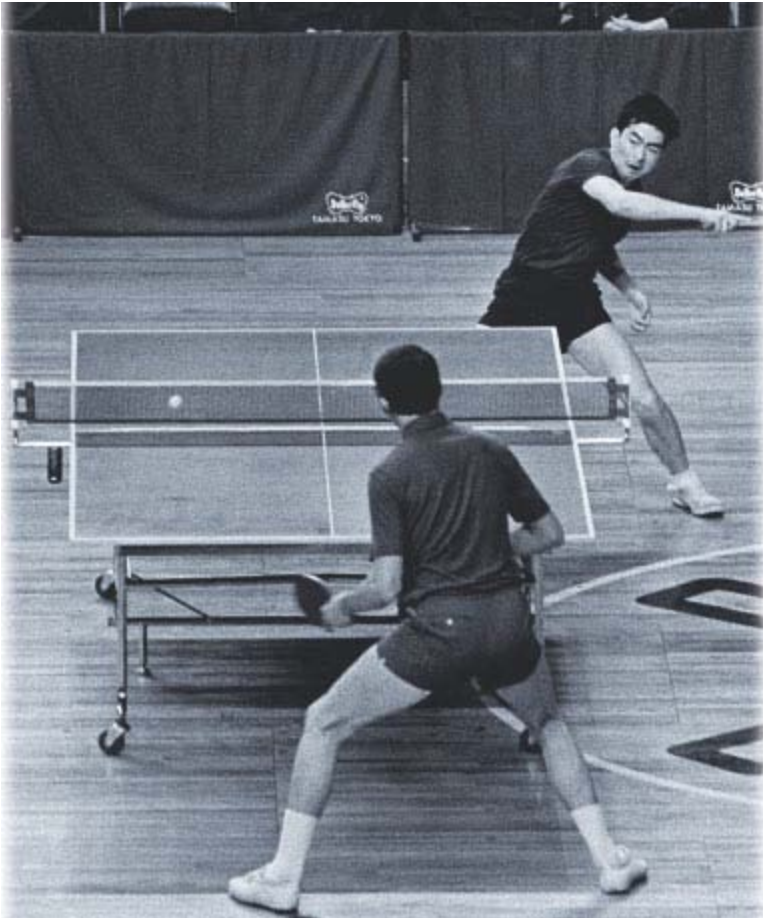


A political realist, Nixon wanted to establish diplomatic relations with China.

- Diplomatic relations with China would bring **economic opportunities** to the United States.
- An improved relationship with China would **weaken China's ties to the Soviet Union**.

The United States stood to gain much by recognizing China.





China invited a U.S. ping-pong team to play in a tournament.

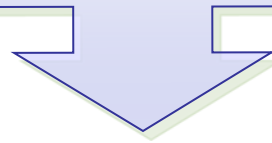
Kissinger used that opportunity to work behind the scenes, talking with Chinese leaders and ironing out sensitive issues.



In February 1972
President Nixon
visited China
and met with
Chinese Premier
Zhou Enlai.



Nixon's visit to China resulted in several benefits to the United States.



- Trade thrived between the U.S. and China.
- American tourists began to visit China.



Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev invited President Nixon to visit Moscow.



**In May 1972 Nixon met with Brezhnev
in Moscow.**

- They signed SALT 1, the **Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty**, a major step towards ending the nuclear arms race.
- The two leaders agreed to reduce pollution and undertake a joint U.S.–Soviet space mission.



Nixon's policy of **détente**, the easing of Cold War tensions, replaced the old policy based on suspicions and distrust.

His foreign-policy breakthroughs moved the world closer to the end of the Cold War.

