

**Chapter 27****The Vietnam Era (1954-1976)****What You Will Learn**

The United States became involved in a civil war in Vietnam in order to stop the spread of communism. Americans were divided in their opinion of the war. After the United States withdrew, Vietnam was taken over by a Communist government. Richard Nixon's presidency, which occurred during the last years of the war, ended in scandal.

**Chapter 27 Focus Question**

As you read this chapter, keep this question in mind: What were the causes and effects of the Vietnam War?

**Section 1****The War Begins****Section 1 Focus Question**

How did Vietnam become a major battlefield in the war against communism? To begin answering this question,

- Learn how Vietnam became a focus of conflict after World War II.
- Find out why America was concerned about developments in Vietnam, and how U.S. involvement increased.

**Section 1 Summary**

The United States backed France in opposing Vietnamese independence. When the French were defeated, the United States feared the spread of communism and backed South Vietnam with military aid. (CONTAINMENT)

**Origins of the Conflict**

France had ruled Vietnam, a small country in Southeast Asia, since the 1800s as part of its Indochina colony. During World War II, Japan took over, but after the war, the French regained control. Ho Chi Minh, a Communist leader, fought for Vietnam's independence from France. He and his followers, known as the Vietminh, occupied Hanoi and proclaimed Vietnam's independence. France refused to recognize an independent Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh had asked the United States for help in his fight against France, but America distrusted Communists. Instead, the United States gave money and supplies to France. The fighting between the Vietminh and France lasted nearly eight years. During this war, Ho Chi Minh acquired more and more followers. In 1954, the Vietminh

★ The Vietnam War was fought by the U.S. to stop the spread of COMMUNISM

**Key Events**

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| 1961 | Kennedy sends military advisers to South Vietnam.                  |
| 1964 | Congress passes the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.                     |
| 1968 | Antiwar demonstrations disrupt the Democratic National Convention. |
| 1974 | Nixon resigns from office as a result of the Watergate scandal.    |

**Vocabulary Builder**

Use context clues to determine which of the following is a synonym for *acquired*.

- a. collected
- b. destroyed
- c. supported

## ✓ Checkpoint

Explain the U.S. role in the French-Vietnamese conflict.

North and South are divided at the 17th

North Vietnam (Communist)

- Ho Chi Minh

South Vietnam (non-Communist)

- Ngo Dinh Diem
  - corrupt

## ✓ Checkpoint

★ State the argument of the domino theory.

finally forced the French to surrender after a battle at Dien Bien Phu. After this major defeat, France agreed to negotiate an end to the war and its control of Vietnam. ✓

### The War Spreads

After World War II, the United States worried about the Soviet Union's policy of spreading communism. When China was taken over by a Communist government in 1949, these worries intensified. In 1950, the Korean War began after Communist North Korea attacked South Korea. As leaders in the United States watched the Communists' power grow, they worried that if Ho Chi Minh gained control of Vietnam, much of Southeast Asia would fall under Communist rule. This argument, called the domino theory, reasoned that if one country fell to Communists, neighboring countries would follow.

When the French gave up power in Vietnam, an international conference took place in Geneva, Switzerland. Here it was decided under the Geneva Accords that Vietnam would be divided. Ho Chi Minh's Communist government would rule North Vietnam from its capital of Hanoi, while Ngo Dinh Diem's non-Communist government would hold power in South Vietnam from its capital of Saigon. Under the Geneva Accords, elections would be held to unite the country within a few years, but Diem's government prevented these elections from taking place. In 1959, dissatisfied South Vietnamese organized to oppose Diem (Guerrillas) or fighters who carry out hit-and-run attacks, began strikes against Diem's government. Called the Vietcong, these guerrillas were supplied with weapons by the North Vietnamese.

During both Eisenhower's and Kennedy's administrations, the United States supported South Vietnam with aid and military advisers. As time went on, however, it became clear to the United States that Diem's government was tyrannical and corrupt. Diem's actions were causing the Vietcong to gain followers. Finally, in 1963, Kennedy pulled his support from Diem. The South Vietnamese military then took over the government and shot Diem. Soon after, Kennedy was assassinated in the United States, and Vice President **Lyndon Johnson** became President. ✓

### Check Your Progress

1. Why did Ho Chi Minh fight the French?

2. What happened to Vietnam as a result of the Geneva Accords?

**Section 2****American Involvement Grows****Key Events****1961**

Kennedy sends military advisers to South Vietnam.

**1964**

Congress passes the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.

**1968**

Antiwar demonstrations disrupt the Democratic National Convention.

**1974**

Nixon resigns from office as a result of the Watergate scandal.

**✓ Checkpoint**

Name the act that gave President Johnson the authority to step up American involvement in Vietnam.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Vietcong: Communist living in the South.  
(South Vietnam)

**Section 2 Focus Question**

How did the demands of greater involvement in Vietnam divide the nation? To begin answering this question,

- Learn how President Johnson increased American involvement in the war.
- Read about how the United States tried to win this unconventional war.
- Discover how hawks and doves in the United States reacted to the war.

**Section 2 Summary**

Determined not to lose Vietnam to communism, President Johnson sent hundreds of thousands of American troops to the war. In response to this escalation, some Americans protested for an end to American involvement, while others supported an even greater military response.

The War Escalates ↑↑↑↑

**A Wider War**

During President Johnson's early days in office, South Vietnam was in turmoil. One military government overthrew another, and no leader seemed strong enough to keep power for very long. The Vietcong supported by the Soviet Union and China, were gaining strength. Johnson believed that saving South Vietnam from communism was vital, so he sent more money and military advisers there.

In August 1964, reports said that American destroyers were attacked twice by North Vietnamese torpedo boats in the Gulf of Tonkin. Although it was later revealed that the second attack may not have taken place, Johnson was determined to stage air strikes against North Vietnam. He asked Congress to pass a resolution that would permit the United States to respond to aggression. The act, called the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, enabled Johnson to escalate, or step up, involvement in Vietnam. ✓

**An Unconventional War**

President Johnson successfully ran for reelection in 1964, indicating that he would not send American troops to Vietnam. When the Vietcong attacked an American base in South Vietnam and killed eight soldiers, Johnson responded with more air strikes against North Vietnam. After it became clear that air strikes alone would not be enough to stop North Vietnam, Johnson decided to send American soldiers to Vietnam. At first, American troops were sent there to defend the American base. Soon, however, they were directed to take part in attacks. By 1968, half a million American troops were in Vietnam.

In the meantime, South Vietnam grew more stable. Nguyen Cao Ky, a military leader, took over in 1965 and dealt harshly with his opponents. Because he seemed firmly in control, South Vietnam could focus more on the war. Americans used new weapons, such as bombs with **napalm**, a jellylike substance that burst into flames, sticking to people's bodies. Another weapon was **Agent Orange**, an herbicide that killed a vast amount of plant life to destroy enemy hiding places. Some claim that Agent Orange caused health troubles for Vietnamese and U.S. troops.

None of this stopped the Vietcong. They had the advantages of knowing the countryside and of being able to recognize their enemy. In contrast, it was hard for American troops to be sure who was a member of the Vietcong and who was not. Americans tried new strategies, including search and destroy missions. - Helicopters Instead of trying to gain territory, they tried to kill as many Vietcong as they could.

On January 31, 1968, the war took a surprising turn. That day was Tet, the Vietnamese New Year holiday. During the celebrations, the North Vietnamese and Vietcong launched massive attacks on every major city in South Vietnam. By the end of February, American and South Vietnamese forces had retaken the cities. However, the magnitude of the Tet offensive undermined American support for the war because people were no longer sure that the United States could win. ✓

### ★ A Nation Divided ★ → this caused many problems

As more troops were sent to Vietnam, the U.S. reaction was divided. **Hawks** supported the war, and some even wanted to increase U.S. military involvement. **Doves** believed the Vietnam War could not be won and was morally wrong. They wanted the United States to withdraw its troops. Doves engaged in huge protests against the war. Sometimes they came into conflict with police.

During this time, some young men resisted being drafted into the military by burning their draft cards. Others claimed to be conscientious objectors or people who oppose war based on religious or philosophical beliefs. (About 100,000 people went to live in Canada to avoid military service in Vietnam) Throughout the war, television brought horrible images of war into people's homes. ✓

### Check Your Progress

1. Why did President Johnson escalate American involvement in Vietnam?

2. How did young Americans avoid going to war?

### New weapons

- napalm
- Agent Orange

[cancer]

### Vocabulary Builder

The word *magnitude* has different meanings depending on its context. Which definition below is closest to its usage in the underlined sentence?

- volume of sound
- greatness of size or extent

### ✓ Checkpoint

List two effects of the Tet offensive.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

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### ✓ Checkpoint

Name the two "sides" at home that conflicted over the war.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



**Section 3****The War Ends**

Who won?

**Section 3 Focus Question**

What were the causes and effects of American withdrawal from Vietnam? To begin answering this question,

- Learn about the 1968 presidential election.
- Read about how American involvement changed under Nixon.
- Find out how South Vietnam came under Communist control.
- Discover some of the lasting effects of the war for both the United States and Vietnam.

**Section 3 Summary**

Richard Nixon won the presidential election of 1968, promising to bring peace. Antiwar protests in the United States continued, especially when war spread to Cambodia. U.S. troops withdrew, and two years later, Communists took over South Vietnam.

**Election of 1968**

With American support for the Vietnam War weakening, Lyndon Johnson decided not to run for reelection in 1968. Instead, Vice President Hubert Humphrey, who supported Johnson's policies, ran for the Democrats. At the Democratic nominating convention in Chicago, antiwar protesters staged a massive demonstration. When police attacked the protesters, the nation watched televised reports of the turmoil. The Republican candidate was Richard Nixon, who promised to bring "peace with honor" in Vietnam. In a close race, Nixon beat Humphrey. ✓

**The War Winds Down**

With a policy called Vietnamization, Nixon reduced America's role in Vietnam by having South Vietnamese troops take on more fighting. Yet Nixon expanded the war into Cambodia, bombing Communist bases there that supplied the Vietcong. Although this had little impact on the enemy, it did result in major protests at home. During antiwar protests at Kent State, the Ohio National Guard killed four students. Other protests also ended tragically.

Peace talks in Paris between the United States and North Vietnam dragged on for three years. Henry Kissinger, the national security adviser, met secretly with a North Vietnamese leader in 1970. By then, the United States had begun withdrawing thousands of troops. As the 1972 presidential election drew near, Kissinger maintained that the two sides were close to an agreement. South Vietnam did not agree to Kissinger's plan, but an agreement was finally signed on January 27, 1973. By March, the last American troops in Vietnam had come home. ✓

**Key Events****1961**

Kennedy sends military advisers to South Vietnam.

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**✓ Checkpoint**

State Nixon's campaign promise.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Vocabulary Builder**

*Impact* means "having a strong effect." Why did Nixon think bombing Cambodian bases would impact the war?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**✓ Checkpoint**

Name Nixon's policy of giving South Vietnam responsibility of fighting the war.

\_\_\_\_\_

### ✓ Checkpoint

Explain what the Convoy of Tears was.

58,000

War Powers Act 1973?

26<sup>TH</sup> AMENDMENT

### ✓ Checkpoint

List U.S. losses in the Vietnam War.

### The Final Years of Conflict

After U.S. forces left Vietnam, conflict went on between the North and South Vietnamese governments. According to the Paris Peace Accords, the North Vietnamese could keep 150,000 troops in South Vietnam. Communists used these troops to take control of the country, attacking the South Vietnamese army and forcing them to retreat. This retreat, during which many South Vietnamese soldiers and civilians died, became known as the Convoy of Tears. When North Vietnamese troops got close to Saigon in April 1975, the United States sent helicopters to help 1,000 U.S. workers and 5,500 South Vietnamese supporters leave the country. U.S. ships rescued thousands of Vietnamese who fled on boats. The North Vietnamese gave Saigon a new name—Ho Chi Minh City. ✓

### Vietnam Balance Sheet

For America, the Vietnam War had lasting effects. Americans were defeated in a foreign war for the first time. The defeat came at a terrible price—more than 58,000 Americans died in battle, and another 300,000 were injured. The huge amount of money that the United States spent on the war hurt the American economy for years. Veterans, who lacked support when they got home, also suffered. America's faith in its government grew weaker. Secret government documents, known as the Pentagon Papers, were published in 1971. They detailed U.S. involvement in Vietnam and revealed that U.S. leaders had misled Americans about the war. ✓

To diminish presidential power, Congress passed the War Powers Act in 1973. This said that presidents needed the approval of Congress before sending U.S. troops into combat for longer than 60 days. The United States also passed the Twenty-sixth Amendment to the Constitution, lowering the legal voting age to 18.

In Vietnam, the war had awful costs. More than 350,000 South Vietnamese died in combat, while between 500,000 and a million North Vietnamese died. Bombing tore apart North Vietnam. In South Vietnam, 10 million people lost their homes. When Communists took power in 1975, over a million people tried to leave Vietnam. Those who attempted to escape in small boats were called boat people, and some 200,000 died. Many Vietnamese refugees came to the United States and other countries. ✓

Vietnam turns RED

### Check Your Progress

1. What effects did bombing Cambodian bases have in the United States?

2. What happened after U.S. troops left Vietnam?

**Section 4****A Time of Uncertainty****Key Events**

**1961** Kennedy sends military advisers to South Vietnam.

**1964** Congress passes the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.

**1968** Antiwar demonstrations disrupt the Democratic National Convention.

**1974** Nixon resigns from office as a result of the Watergate scandal.

**Vocabulary Builder**

The word *priority* comes from the Latin word *prior*, meaning "first." Why do you think easing Cold War tensions might have been one of Nixon's first concerns?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**✓ Checkpoint**

State two of Nixon's successes.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 4 Focus Question**

What successes and failures marked Nixon's presidency? To begin answering this question,

- Learn about Nixon's foreign and domestic policies.
- Find out about the Watergate scandal.
- Read about President Gerald Ford.

**Section 4 Summary**

Richard Nixon had successes in foreign policy, including easing tensions with China and the Soviet Union. He fought inflation unsuccessfully at home, however. After the Watergate scandal broke, Nixon was forced to resign, leaving Vice President Gerald Ford to serve as President.

**Richard Nixon in Office**

When Richard Nixon won the presidency in 1968, the country was in turmoil as a result of the Vietnam War. A bright spot occurred on July 20, 1969 when American astronaut Neil Armstrong became the first person to walk on the moon. wow!!

Most Americans, however, were concerned with the war and with inflation, or a steady rise in prices, which was hurting the economy. High unemployment and a recession also hurt the economy. To help ease inflation, Nixon took an unusual step, especially for a Republican. He froze prices, wages, and rents, but unfortunately, the freeze did not curb inflation. The freeze was short lived.

Nixon had greater success with some of his foreign policy actions. He opened relations between the United States and Communist China, which had long been strained. In 1972, Nixon visited mainland China, even meeting with Chairman Mao Zedong. Easing tensions with the Soviet Union also was a priority. Nixon signed the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT), which limited how many and what kind of nuclear weapons the United States and the Soviet Union could build. ✓

**★ Watergate Scandal ★ WHY?**

Nixon was reelected in the 1972 presidential election. Within months, however, a political scandal erupted that distracted the nation and ended Nixon's presidency.

During the presidential campaign, Nixon's team tried to gather information about their opposition, the Democrats. Police arrested five men who broke into the Democratic Party offices, which were in the Watergate apartment complex in Washington, D.C. Later, White House officials tried to pay the burglars so that

**Nixon**

- domestic policy (-)
- foreign policy (+)

they would not tell the story of the break-in. However, the story became public.

Senate hearings on the Watergate scandal took place in May 1973, and the nation watched these proceedings on television. A former White House counsel, John Dean, testified that Nixon was involved in the attempt to cover up the burglary. Another witness revealed that Nixon had tapes of all of his presidential conversations. The Supreme Court ordered Nixon to give up the tapes, and they showed that Nixon was indeed involved in the coverup operation. In July 1974, Nixon faced impeachment proceedings by the House of Representatives. He knew that there were enough votes to remove him from office, so within a month, Nixon resigned. ✓

### The Ford Presidency

After Nixon resigned, Vice President **Gerald Ford** was sworn into office as President. He made the decision to pardon Richard Nixon, and that decision was unpopular. ~~xxxxxx~~

When Ford took office, the economy was still in trouble with high inflation. Ford tried to lower inflation through Whip Inflation Now, a program of voluntary wage and price controls that met with little success. As the country slipped into a recession, Ford pushed Congress to cut taxes to help spur the economy. It took the economy a long time to recover from the recession.

Ford continued Nixon's policies in China and the Soviet Union, working to ease Cold War tensions. Although American troops were out of Vietnam, when Communist troops got near Saigon, Ford arranged an airlift that helped more than 50,000 South Vietnamese to leave the country. Ford had other crises as well. When Cambodian Communists seized an American merchant ship, Ford sent U.S. marines to Cambodia to save the crew. In the 1976 presidential election, Ford ran as the Republican candidate. Democratic candidate **Jimmy Carter** won the race, however. ✓

### Check Your Progress

1. What led to Nixon's resignation?

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2. What prompted Ford to continue U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia?

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SALT : \_\_\_\_\_

WIN : \_\_\_\_\_

### ✓ Checkpoint

Name the activity that Nixon tried to cover up.

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pardon - excuse

WIN - Whip  
Inflation  
Now

### ✓ Checkpoint

Name Ford's program to beat inflation through voluntary price controls.

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