

**HANDOUT**



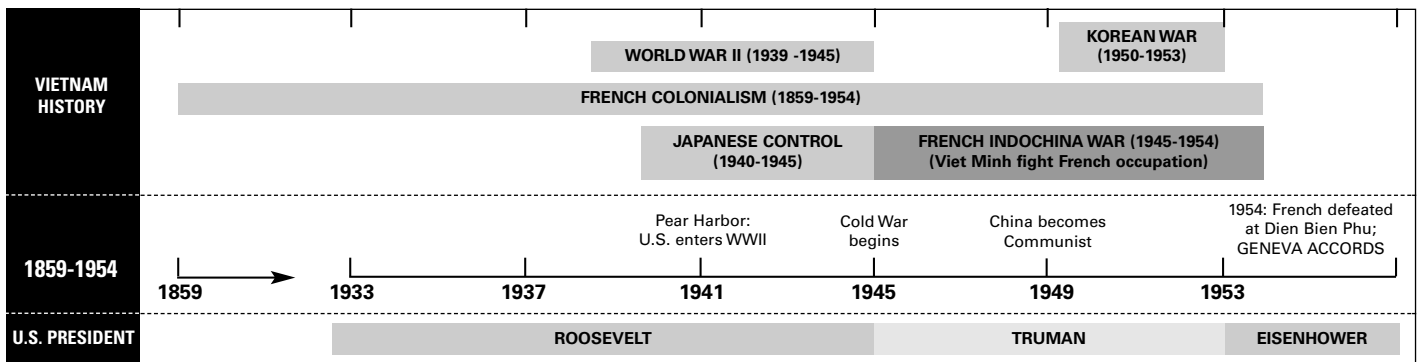
# A SHORT HISTORY OF THE VIETNAM WAR

## FRENCH OCCUPATION AND INDEPENDENCE

The history of Vietnam stretches back more than 1,000 years. The United States first became involved in Vietnam after World War II when the **Viet Minh** waged a war of independence against the French. France had colonized Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia in the 1800s, calling the entire area **French Indochina**. In 1954 the Vietnamese, under the leadership of **Ho Chi Minh**, defeated the French at the battle of Dien Bien Phu. A peace agreement, known as the **Geneva Accords**, was signed by the French and Vietnamese that recognized an independent Vietnam in the north under Ho Chi Minh but called for elections in 1956 to unify the country. It seemed likely that Ho Chi Minh would win the election and Vietnam would be united under his leadership. But Ho Chi Minh believed that **communism** was the best system for Vietnam. Because of this, the U.S. government fought against the unification of north and south Vietnam.

## COMMUNISM AND CONTAINMENT

The U.S. was opposed to Ho Chi Minh because of the **Cold War**. After World War II the communist **Soviet Union** had taken control of **Eastern Europe** and in 1949 the Chinese Communists under **Mao Tse Tung** had taken control of **China**, the world's most populous nation. American leaders were afraid that communism would continue to spread throughout the world. In the early 1950s the U.S. fought the **Korean War** to oppose the spread of communism from North to South Korea. The administration of President **Harry Truman** had a policy of "containing" communism. The **Truman Doctrine** of containment was continued under Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson. Once the French pulled out of Vietnam, the U.S. feared that Ho Chi Minh would spread communism to all of Vietnam. Many believed that if Vietnam "fell" to the communists, then other governments in South East Asia would be next. This was



Indochina circa 1967



*The Pentagon Papers*—a secret military history of the war leaked to the press in 1971— “South Vietnam was essentially a creation of the United States.”<sup>1</sup> Communist and Nationalist forces in the south, known as the **Viet Cong**, began a **guerilla war** against the U.S.-supported government of South Vietnam and the U.S. sent military advisors to help fight the communists. Under the presidency of **Lyndon Johnson**, the U.S. sent ground troops to Vietnam in 1964, and by 1965 the U.S. was involved in a full-scale war against the Viet Cong and **North Vietnam (Democratic Republic of Vietnam)**. Johnson and his generals believed they could easily defeat the poorly equipped Viet Cong with the overwhelming military superiority of the United States, but the Viet Cong waged a successful guerilla war against the Americans and their South Vietnamese allies. *The Pentagon Papers* state: “Only the Viet Cong had any real support and influence on a broad base in the countryside.”<sup>2</sup>

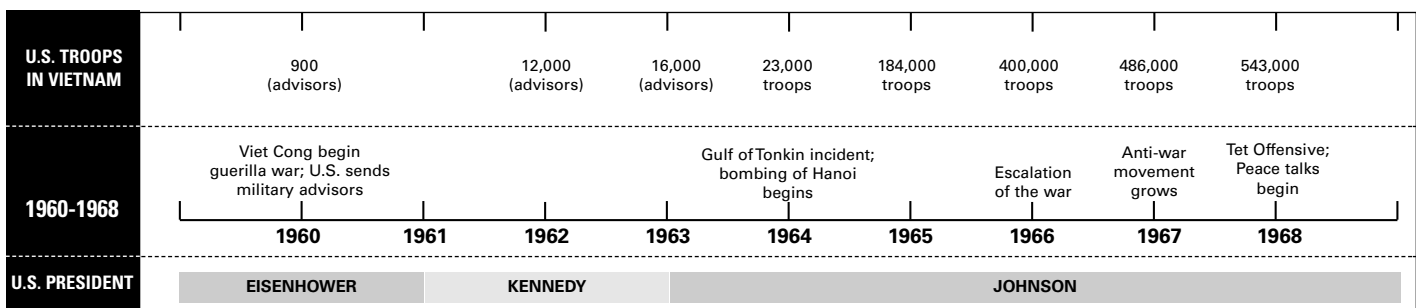
known as the “**domino theory**” and was the leading reason for U.S. military involvement in Vietnam.

### BEGINNING OF THE VIETNAM WAR AND U.S. INVOLVEMENT

After the French withdrew from Vietnam in 1954, the United States helped to establish a government of **South Vietnam (Republic of Vietnam)** and worked to undermine the proposed elections to unify the nation. According to

### U.S. OPPOSITION TO THE WAR AND THE FALL OF SAIGON

As hopes for a quick end to hostilities faded, the American public began to question the war. Daily media images of death and destruction flooded into U.S. homes in what became America’s first televised war. By 1967 an **anti-war movement** had spread across the nation and President Johnson, who had tried to pay for both domestic programs and the escalating war, decided not to run for reelection. **Richard Nixon** won the presidency in 1968 with a promise to withdraw U.S. troops from



<sup>1</sup> United States, Congress, House Committee on Armed Services, *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967: Study Prepared by The Department of Defense*, vol. 2 of 12, IV. B. 1, (Washington: GPO, 1971) p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 3 of 12, IV. B. 5, p. v.

Vietnam. Nixon pursued **peace talks** with North Vietnamese leaders while stepping up the military campaign with bombing in North Vietnam. To stop the shipment of arms and supplies from North Vietnam to the Viet Cong in South Vietnam via the Ho Chi Minh Trail (see map), Nixon ordered the **secret bombing of Laos and Cambodia** and in 1970 he ordered the invasion of Cambodia. In an attempt to stop anti-war protests, Nixon ended the **draft** and replaced American forces with South Vietnamese soldiers in a policy called **Vietnamization**. By the time Nixon resigned the presidency in 1974 over the **Watergate** scandal, the Americans and their South Vietnamese allies were in retreat. On **April 25, 1975** North Vietnamese troops entered **Saigon** and unified Vietnam under a communist government. Not long after, the destabilized governments of Laos and Cambodia were overthrown by communist insurgencies.

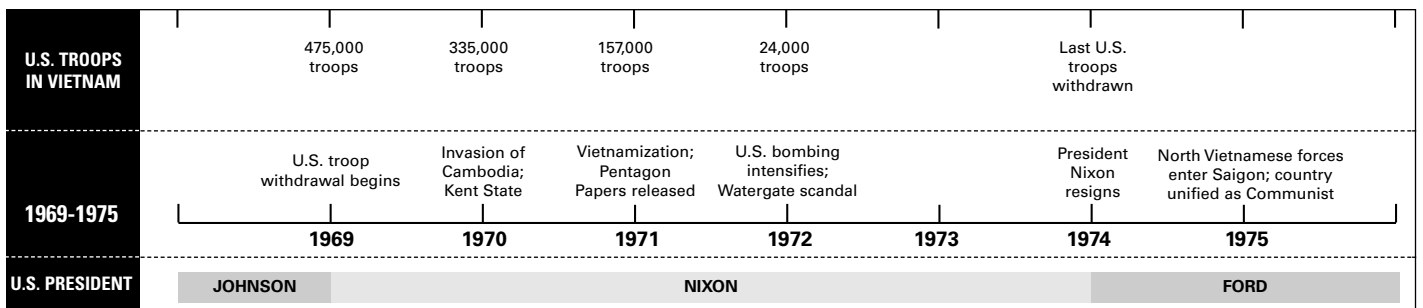
**LEGACY OF THE VIETNAM WAR**

It is estimated that approximately **58,000 Americans** and from **2 to 4 million Vietnamese** died in the war. The U.S. defeat threatened the power and prestige of the United States throughout the world. Cambodia and Laos also became communist and it appeared that the domino theory might prove to be true. At home the anti-war movement led a generation of young people to question its nation’s leaders as never before while many in the military felt betrayed by their government and people. Many Vietnam veterans

still suffer from **post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**, **Agent Orange**, and disturbing memories from the war. Some military leaders used the lessons from the Vietnam War to establish criteria for future U.S. wars including 1) clear and achievable military goals, 2) the use of overwhelming military force, 3) support from the public, and 4) an **exit strategy**.

**MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE VIETNAM WAR**

Television, newspapers, and magazines played a primary role in shaping American public opinion about the war in Vietnam. Today’s media play a similar role. As citizens and students of history it is essential to read news critically. We must recognize 1) that all media, including the news, are constructed to communicate messages and information; 2) that each news medium, such as newspapers, television or the Internet, uses a specific language and grammar; and 3) that each article and program has a bias or point of view. For our democracy to work, students must learn to read critically and analyze news images and text. This lesson, *Media Construction of War*, uses images from *Newsweek* to explore and compare how the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, and the War in Afghanistan were presented in the news. We will use in-class collective reading of these images and text to develop critical thinking and media literacy skills while learning about these historic events.





**SLIDE SCRIPT**



# THE VIETNAM WAR: 1965-1975

## Slides 3-16

This slide script provides teachers with historical information and probe questions linked to each of the *Newsweek* images. Teachers may move quickly through the images delivering key information, but we suggest a slower "collective reading" of the images. This will allow teachers to involve typically quiet students, teach visual literacy skills, cover more content, and engage the class in an interactive analysis and discussion of the issues raised by these historic documents.

**VOCABULARY AND KEY CONCEPTS** (listed by slide number)

<p><b>#3</b> Geneva Accords North Vietnam Ho Chi Minh Cold War domino theory communism South Vietnam Lyndon Johnson Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara Pentagon U.S. Constitution Commander in Chief Cabinet Joint Chiefs of Staff</p>	<p><b>#10</b> censoring (images) "another Vietnam" "bogged down" "quagmire"</p>
<p><b>#4</b> General Westmoreland half-a-million U.S. troops</p>	<p><b>#11</b> Richard Nixon</p>
<p><b>#5</b> Truman Doctrine containment of communism French Indochina War</p>	<p><b>#12</b> Vietnamization draft Uncle Sam</p>
<p><b>#6</b> anti-war movement</p>	<p><b>#13</b> Kent State National Guard</p>
<p><b>#7</b> The Great Society budget deficits tax hikes</p>	<p><b>#14</b> whistle-blower <i>The Pentagon Papers</i> Gulf of Tonkin secret bombing of Laos and Cambodia</p>
<p><b>#8</b> casualties</p>	<p><b>#15</b> Lieutenant William Calley My Lai Massacre</p>
<p><b>#9</b> Viet Cong Tet Offensive Saigon</p>	<p><b>#16</b> napalm refugee April 25, 1975 Ho Chi Minh City</p> <p><b>POSTSCRIPT</b> 58,000 American deaths 2 to 4 million Vietnamese deaths genocide post-traumatic stress disorder Agent Orange missing in action (MIA) exit strategy War Powers Act "ghosts of Vietnam"</p>

**NOTE**

Key concepts and vocabulary are in **bold** the first time they appear. Most are defined in the glossary.

Students should read the accompanying "Short History of the Vietnam War" before beginning the slides. This will provide key background information that will be reinforced during the slide analysis.

**SLIDE #3**



**DECEMBER 6, 1965**  
 "The Power in the Pentagon"

**SEE INFO BOX A** →

**QUESTION** What messages about the war are communicated in this 1965 *Newsweek* cover? How are those messages communicated?

**ANSWER** The U.S. military is in control of planning the war.

**EVIDENCE** angle of shot = power, generals with medals and uniforms = authority, maps = global reach

**QUESTION** Which man is the boss? Who is he? What is your evidence?

**ANSWER** Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, in the center.

**EVIDENCE** McNamara is standing at the center of the image, talking, framed by generals; only one wearing a suit

**SEE INFO BOX B** →

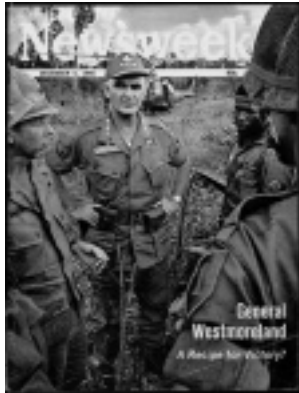
**INFO A**

The **Geneva Accords** of 1954 created an independent **North Vietnam** that was led by the Communist and Nationalist leader **Ho Chi Minh**. The Geneva Accords called for free elections in 1956 to unify the country. But this was during the **Cold War** when many Americans believed in the **domino theory** (if Vietnam "fell" to **communism**, then other nations in South East Asia would follow). U.S. Presidents Dwight Eisenhower and then John Kennedy, fearing the spread of communism in Asia, helped to create an anti-communist government of **South Vietnam**. When **Lyndon Johnson** took over the U.S. presidency in 1964 after the assassination of John Kennedy, he escalated the U.S. military presence in Vietnam. Johnson's **Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara**, and the military leaders in the **Pentagon**, planned to use American military power to defeat the Communist and Nationalist forces that were fighting to unify Vietnam.

**INFO B**

The **U.S. Constitution** states that the president is **Commander in Chief** of the armed forces. The president appoints a Secretary of Defense as a member of the **Cabinet** of advisors. The Secretary of Defense oversees the **Joint Chiefs of Staff** (the heads of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines). In this way the president and the Cabinet, not military generals, set policy about war and peace. This is why the "boss" in this picture (McNamara) is in a suit while the generals are in military uniforms.

**SLIDE #4**



**DECEMBER 5, 1966**  
 “General Westmoreland:  
 A Recipe for Victory?”

**SEE INFO BOX A** →

**QUESTION** What messages about the war are communicated in this 1966 *Newsweek* cover? How are those messages communicated?

**ANSWER** It is not clear that Westmoreland can bring the U.S. victory.

**EVIDENCE** question mark after “A Recipe for Victory?,” informality and scattered attention of the soldiers—at least one is looking away, downward angle of the shot, puzzled expression on Westmoreland’s face = insecurity, the surrounding jungle = foreign place

**QUESTION** The photo is taken from whose point of view? What is your evidence?

**ANSWER** A soldier’s point of view.

**EVIDENCE** angle and composition of the shot—the camera is “one of the men” among the group of soldiers looking at the general

**SEE INFO BOX B** →

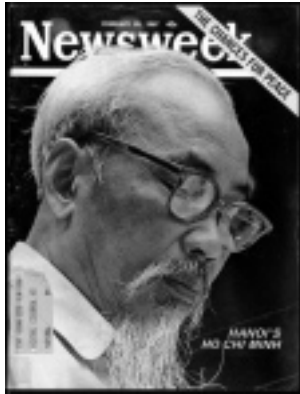
**INFO A**

In 1964 **General William Westmoreland** took command of nearly 150,000 U.S. troops in Vietnam. By 1968 Westmoreland oversaw more than **half-a-million U.S. troops** in Vietnam.

**INFO B**

Westmoreland believed that with enough support he could win a military victory in Vietnam. President Johnson rejected Westmoreland's 1968 plea for 200,000 more troops because of growing public opposition to the war.

**SLIDE #5**



**FEBRUARY 20, 1967**  
 "Hanoi's Ho Chi Minh"

**SEE INFO BOX** →

**QUESTION** What messages about the enemy leader Ho Chi Minh are communicated in this 1967 *Newsweek* cover? What is your evidence?

**ANSWER** Ho Chi Minh is a peaceful leader.

**EVIDENCE** text above photo

**ANSWER** He is thoughtful and non-threatening.

**EVIDENCE** pensive look, silent, eyes closed, glasses, looking down

**ANSWER** He is powerful.

**EVIDENCE** angle of photo, filling the frame

**QUESTION** Would you call this a positive or negative depiction of Ho Chi Minh?

**ANSWER** A positive depiction.

**EVIDENCE** same reasons as above

**INFO**

Ho Chi Minh led the Vietnamese to victory against the French in the Indochina War of 1946-1954. He was President of North Vietnam from 1945 until his death in 1969. In 1945 he wrote U.S. President Truman a series of letters in which he praised American democracy as a model for Vietnam and appealed for U.S. support for Vietnamese independence. But Ho Chi Minh also believed that communism was the best system for his developing nation. In 1947, President Truman declared his famous **Truman Doctrine**, which called for the **containment of communism** as a key goal of American foreign policy. Succeeding Presidents (Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson) supported the Truman Doctrine and saw South Vietnam as a "bulwark" or barrier against communist expansion in Asia. The Geneva Accords of 1954, which ended the **French Indochina War**, called for nation-wide elections throughout Vietnam in 1956. The United States opposed elections because intelligence showed that Ho Chi Minh would have won.

**SLIDE #6**



**JULY 10, 1967**  
 "A Nation at Odds"

QUESTION **What messages about the war are communicated? What is your evidence?**

ANSWER The country is divided in its opinions about the war.

EVIDENCE juxtaposed images and contrasting messages, text: "A Nation at Odds"

ANSWER Each side has a different, but legitimate, opinion about the war.

EVIDENCE pro-war protesters are all male, formal, suited and carrying the flag while anti-war protesters are more diverse in age, gender and dress; have less formal clothing, the crowd seems more chaotic

ANSWER Both sides are equally legitimate.

EVIDENCE equal-sized photos on each side

**SEE INFO BOX** →

**INFO**

As the U.S. war in Vietnam escalated, so did public opposition at home. By 1967 the **anti-war movement** staged the largest peace rallies in U.S. history. Many Americans were losing faith in a military solution to the conflict in Vietnam. The anti-war movement helped fuel the growing counter-culture that aimed to change American society. Television coverage of violent clashes between protesters and the police at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago brought "the war at home" into the living rooms of millions of Americans. It was a time of great social upheaval.

**SLIDE #7**

**AUGUST 14, 1967**  
Cover cartoon of Lyndon Johnson

**QUESTION** | **What statement were *Newsweek* and the cartoonist making about Johnson's policies in this 1967 cover? What is your evidence?**

**ANSWER** | Johnson can't pay for both social programs and the war in Vietnam without raising taxes.

**EVIDENCE** | he's bent over because he's trying to carry too heavy a load and he's holding out a beggar's cup with the words "Tax Hike" on it

**SEE INFO BOX** →

**INFO**

Lyndon Johnson came into office with the goal of creating **The Great Society**. He was going to use the affluence of the 1960s to pay for government programs to address poverty, health care, and the needs of inner cities. But then there was Vietnam. Johnson's attempts to pay for both the war and his Great Society programs led to **budget deficits** and **tax hikes**.

**SLIDE #8**



**JANUARY 1, 1968**  
 "How Goes the War?"

**QUESTION** What messages about the war are communicated? What is your evidence?

**ANSWER** The war is a disaster for the Americans.

**EVIDENCE** chaotic lines, wounded and dirty soldiers surrounded by dense jungle

**ANSWER** Americans should question the war.

**EVIDENCE** text: "How Goes the War?"

**QUESTION** How does the angle at which this photo was taken affect the image?

**ANSWER** The close-up low angle perspective suggests the point of view of a fallen soldier.

**QUESTION** Is there a pro-war or anti-war bias to this cover? What is your evidence?

**ANSWER** This is an anti-war cover.

**EVIDENCE** rhetorical question clearly answered by unambiguous image communicating that the war is going badly for the U.S.

**SEE INFO BOX** →

**INFO**

During the Vietnam War photojournalists were often on hand to photograph bloody battle scenes. As American **casualties** mounted, so did television, newspaper, and magazine images that showed the horrors of war.

**SLIDE #9**



**FEBRUARY 19, 1968**  
 "Toll," "Night Light,"  
 "Bewilderment,"  
 "Casualty," and  
 "Two Made It"

QUESTION **What messages about the war are communicated? What is your evidence?**

ANSWER The war is bloody.

EVIDENCE bloodstained soldier, text: "Casualty"

ANSWER The war has innocent victims.

EVIDENCE women and children as refugees, text: "Bewilderment"

ANSWER The war is filled with death.

EVIDENCE bodies of Viet Cong, text: "Toll," American soldier being killed in lower left

QUESTION **What role does color play in this 2-page spread?**

ANSWER The dominant red image in the upper left communicates fire/violence/blood, and is balanced by the red bloody bandages in the lower right image.

QUESTION **Is there a pro-war or anti-war bias to this photo montage? What is your evidence?**

ANSWER This is an anti-war montage.

EVIDENCE highlights the worst aspects of war and the impact on innocent lives

**SEE INFO BOX** →

**INFO**

Although U.S. military leaders had been promising "light at the end of the tunnel" early in 1968 the **Viet Cong** launched the **Tet Offensive**. They stormed U.S. strongholds throughout South Vietnam, even occupying the U.S. embassy in the capital city of **Saigon** for a brief period. This was a clear sign to the American people that the war was far from won. After the Tet Offensive of 1968, U.S. public opinion turned decidedly against the war.

**SLIDE # 10**



**MARCH 18, 1968**  
 "Doomed Patrol"

QUESTION **What messages about the war are communicated? What is your evidence?**

ANSWER The U.S. is losing the war.

EVIDENCE sequence and text tells story of "doomed patrol," scenes of bloody injury and anguished faces, angle of shot looking down on soldiers reinforces their vulnerability

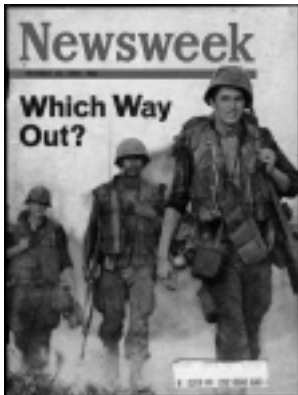
QUESTION **How does the angle at which the photos were taken influence their meaning?**

ANSWER In each of the photos the photographer is looking down on the soldiers. This angle typically implies weakness or vulnerability.

**SEE FOCUS ON THE MEDIA BOX** →

**FOCUS ON THE MEDIA**

Throughout the Vietnam War the American public saw many scenes like this series titled "Doomed Patrol" that showed Americans who were bloodied and defeated. The U.S. government and military learned from the Vietnam War that images like this can undermine public support for a war. In the 1991 Gulf War and the 2001 War in Afghanistan, the government managed press coverage by limiting access to battle zones, setting up positive photo opportunities, and **censoring** images in order to avoid impressions of **"another Vietnam."** The government and military have also been careful to avoid getting **"bogged down"** in another **"quagmire"** like Vietnam.

**SLIDE # 11**

**OCTOBER 20, 1969**  
 "Which Way Out?"

**QUESTION** What messages about the war are communicated? What is your evidence?

**ANSWER** The U.S. must get out of Vietnam.

**EVIDENCE** exhausted soldiers marching out of the smoke, text asks "Which Way Out?" not if we should get out

**QUESTION** How likely is it that *Newsweek* would have printed this cover in the earliest years of the war? Why or why not?

**ANSWER** Given that *Newsweek* is a mainstream publication that targets a large and politically diverse audience, it is unlikely that the magazine would have risked running this anti-war cover in the early 1960s when most Americans supported the war. By 1968 public opinion had changed and most Americans supported a U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam.

**SEE INFO BOX** →

**INFO**

In the spring of 1968 President Johnson, with his popularity ratings at an all time low due to the war in Vietnam, decided not to run for reelection. **Richard Nixon**, pledging to withdraw U.S. troops from Vietnam, won the presidential election in the fall of 1968. Nixon called for "Peace with Honor." He wanted a face-saving way out of the war to avoid the impression that the U.S. was defeated by a poor, third-world nation like Vietnam.

**SLIDE # 12**



**FEBRUARY 9, 1970**  
 "Vietnamization, Will Nixon's Plan Work?"

**SEE INFO BOX** →

- QUESTION **What does this *Newsweek* cover communicate about Nixon's policy?**
- ANSWER The U.S. government is looking to the South Vietnamese to fight the war.
- EVIDENCE **Uncle Sam** pointing his finger at a Vietnamese soldier
- ANSWER **The plan may not work.**
- EVIDENCE apprehension in soldier's eyes, smallness of soldier compared to his helmet, positioning below Uncle Sam, text: "Will Nixon's Plan Work?"

**INFO**

Nixon's plan was to "Vietnamize" the war by replacing American troops with troops from the Republic of South Vietnam. **Vietnamization** would allow Nixon to end the unpopular **draft** that was contributing to anti-war sentiment.

**SLIDE #13**

**MAY, 18 1970**  
 "Nixon's Home Front"

QUESTION **Does anyone recognize this photo?**

**SEE INFO BOX** →

QUESTION **What messages does this cover communicate about the war?**

ANSWER The student's outstretched arms and anguished expression seem to ask, "How could this have happened?"

The altered image and blue tones further sensationalize an already dramatic scene and make the image seem more abstract and metaphorical than real.

The text, "Nixon's Home Front," ties President Nixon to the killings and suggests that there is a war in the U.S. as well as in Vietnam.

**INFO**

This is a section from a famous photo taken at **Kent State** University in Ohio on May 4, 1970 when **National Guard** troops opened fire on a group of unarmed students who were protesting the U.S. invasion of Cambodia. Four students were killed and others injured. The killings shocked the nation, and students in hundreds of high schools, colleges, and universities throughout the nation went on strike.

**SLIDE # 14**



**FEBRUARY 15, 1971**  
 "Secret" "A Wider War?"

QUESTION **What does this cover suggest about the war in Vietnam? What is your evidence?**

ANSWER The government is keeping secrets about the war from the American people.

EVIDENCE text: "Secret" on the cover made to look like a red stamp, grainy negative-like style of the main photo

ANSWER The U.S. may be getting into a bigger war in South East Asia.

EVIDENCE text: "A Wider War?"

**SEE INFO BOX** →

**INFO**

Some of what we know about the Vietnam War came from secret government documents that were eventually revealed to the American people. In 1971 a government **whistle-blower**, Daniel Ellsberg, leaked secret government documents to the press. *The Pentagon Papers* were the military's own secret history of U.S. involvement in Vietnam from 1945-1967 and they revealed a pattern of government lies and deceptions. Among other things, they documented how the Johnson administration misled Congress and the American people about an incident in the **Gulf of Tonkin** in 1964. Inaccurate reports about an attack on U.S. forces by North Vietnam were used to win Congressional authorization for the use of unlimited force. This allowed Johnson to escalate the conflict in Vietnam without a declaration of war. Later President Richard Nixon deceived Congress and the nation by **secretly bombing both Laos and Cambodia**. In fact, Laos became the most heavily bombed country in history. Lies and deceptions by politicians during the Vietnam era, including the Watergate scandal, helped fuel public distrust of government and cynicism about the political system.

**SLIDE # 15**

**APRIL 12, 1971**  
 "The Calley Verdict: Who Else is Guilty?"

- QUESTION** What impression does this cover give you about the U.S. role in Vietnam?
- ANSWER** That the U.S. military is tied to the killing of Vietnamese civilians.
- EVIDENCE** U.S. officer in clean dress uniform pasted over a photo of dead Vietnamese women and children
- ANSWER** That the officer shown was found guilty but that others are also guilty.
- EVIDENCE** text: "The Calley Verdict" and "Who Else Is Guilty?"
- QUESTION** Is there a pro-war or anti-war bias to this cover? What is your evidence?
- ANSWER** This is an anti-war cover.
- EVIDENCE** shows an American officer as a perpetrator of war-time atrocities

**SEE INFO BOX** →

- QUESTION** How has this cover image been visually constructed or altered, and why?
- ANSWER** This photo of Lt. William Calley was cut out and pasted over a photo of dead Vietnamese civilians to illustrate Calley's relationship to the My Lai Massacre.
- Like all magazines, *Newsweek* frequently uses visual manipulation of photos on its covers in order to create dramatic and sensational visuals that will sell magazines. However, like other reputable periodicals, it does not alter photographs appearing within the magazine.

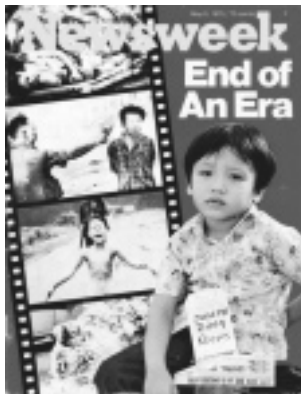
**SEE FOCUS ON THE MEDIA BOX** →**INFO**

On March 16, 1968 **Lieutenant William Calley** led a group of American soldiers into the small South Vietnamese village of My Lai and proceeded to execute hundreds of unarmed villagers, mostly women, children and old men. The army tried to cover up the massacre but stories and photos made it into the press. Lieutenant Calley was tried and found guilty of war crimes in 1971 although he served only three years of a life sentence. The **My Lai Massacre** horrified many Americans who had perceived the U.S. role in Vietnam as just and honorable. It also further undermined the morale of U.S. troops who were increasingly turning against the war.

**FOCUS ON THE MEDIA**

News photos are always manipulated in some ways. For example, the photographer chooses the camera angle, source of lighting, and framing of the subject. Editors and art directors make other decisions such as cropping of the image, size, and placement on the page. These types of visual construction are considered within the accepted bounds of credible news photography. However, magazine covers are essentially considered to be advertisements, and photos shown on them are often altered in more sensational and manipulative ways in order to sell more magazines. Sometimes these kinds of manipulations have caused public criticism – like when *National Geographic* digitally moved two pyramids closer together, or when *Time* darkened O.J. Simpson's skin color after he was found guilty in a civil trial. But mostly the obvious and dramatic manipulation of photographs on magazine covers is considered to be within ethical bounds.

**SLIDE # 16**



**MAY 5, 1975**  
 "End of An Era"

**QUESTION** Do you recognize any of these individual photos? What do they communicate about the war?

- ANSWER**
1. The photo of injured on stretcher (least famous) speaks to the suffering of American soldiers throughout more than a decade of war.
  2. The roadside execution of a Viet Cong (VC) suspect by a South Vietnamese policeman speaks to the brutality of the government the U.S. supported.
  3. The young Vietnamese girl running into the camera after having been **napalmed** by U.S. forces is an indictment of certain U.S. practices during the Vietnam War.
  4. The 1963 self-immolation of Buddhist monk Quang Duc shocked the U.S. into recognizing the intensity of opposition within South Vietnam to the U.S.-supported Diem government.
  5. The sad boy with a nametag represents the millions of Vietnamese **refugees**.

**QUESTION** What messages about the war does this cover communicate?

**ANSWER** The war in Vietnam defined a violent and sad era for our nation.

**EVIDENCE** text and images as described above

**ANSWER** We know the era through the media.

**EVIDENCE** famous photos/images are made to look like film clips

**QUESTION** Why did *Newsweek* put out this cover on this date?

**ANSWER** The North Vietnamese army took Saigon and won the war on April 25, 1975, at the time this magazine was being produced.

**SEE INFO BOX** →

**SUGGESTED ACTIVITY**

The third video in the PBS series, *American Photography: A Century of Images*, includes a powerful five-minute segment about photographs from the Vietnam War (seven minutes from the beginning). The segment opens with a discussion of the power of the still image followed by brief stories about four influential photos: three of the ones pictured here and the photo of slain protesters at Kent State shown in slide #13. For more information on this video, see [Additional Activities](#).

**INFO**

By 1973 the U.S. had withdrawn nearly all of its troops from Vietnam. The South Vietnamese government continued to hold off the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese army for two more years. But on **April 25, 1975** the North Vietnamese army marched into Saigon (now called **Ho Chi Minh City**), unified Vietnam under a communist government, and ended the longest of America's wars.

## POSTSCRIPT

It is estimated that approximately **58,000 Americans** and from **2 to 4 million Vietnamese** died in the war. Communist insurgencies took control of Laos and Cambodia in 1975. In Cambodia a radical communist regime committed **genocide** against its own people until the government of Vietnam invaded and stopped the “killing fields” in 1979. War, poverty and opposition to communist governments led to a massive refugee crisis as millions of Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians fled their countries. Today Vietnam continues to rebuild from decades of war.

For Vietnam War veterans and their families the war often holds painful memories and legacies. Many still suffer from the wounds of war, including: **post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**, **Agent Orange**, and memories of fellow soldiers lost and **missing in action (MIA)**. Many military leaders vowed not to get involved in future wars unless 1) the military goals were clear and achievable, 2) the public was supportive, 3) the military would be allowed to use overwhelming force, and 4) an **exit strategy** was in place.

Vietnam also left political legacies for the country as a whole. In 1973 Congress passed the **War Powers Act** that required the President to seek authorization from Congress within 60 days of committing U.S. troops to war. The anti-war movement demonstrated the ability of public protest and dissent to influence policy. Government lies and secrets revealed during the Vietnam War helped to fuel a generation that was critical of authority. After Vietnam it was

harder for leaders to gain public support for U.S. military intervention abroad. American presidents would need to address the “**ghosts of Vietnam**” if they intended to send American troops into combat.

## MEDIA AND THE VIETNAM WAR

The Vietnam War demonstrated the power of media to influence public opinion. Newspapers like the *New York Times* had gone against the president to publish the secret Pentagon Papers. Television brought the horrors of war into American living rooms every night. Protest songs moved into the fabric of popular culture. And photographs both captured and defined the war for many who lived through it and for future generations. Government and military leaders recognized the power of the media to influence opinion. After Vietnam the U.S. government took a more active [and intentional] role in shaping how the media constructs our understanding of war. This too is one of the legacies of Vietnam.

**VIETNAM WAR GLOSSARY**

**Agent Orange:** the code name for an herbicide used as a chemical weapon by the U.S. military during the Vietnam War to clear areas of thick, tropical foliage and expose enemy forces; contains a disease-causing toxin called dioxin, which has caused serious health problems for many American and Vietnamese veterans of the Vietnam War

**bogged down:** to become impeded or sunken, as if in a bog; used to refer to the state of military action in Vietnam

**budget deficit:** the result of spending more than is earned

**Cabinet:** part of the executive branch of the United States government made up of the heads of all of the Federal Executive Departments, each of which is appointed by the president and serves as a presidential advisor; includes Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense

**Calley, Lt. William:** commander of American forces that perpetrated the My Lai Massacre of 1968; found guilty of war crimes and received a life sentence, but served only 3 years

**casualties:** those who disappear or are killed by or during a particular event, like a war or an accident

**censor:** to limit or edit information with the intent of suppressing anything considered objectionable

**Cold War:** the conflict between the United States and the former Communist USSR from the 1940s to the 1990s; the cause of many armed conflicts including wars in Korea, Vietnam, and Afghanistan

**Commander in Chief:** title used to describe the role of the president of the United States as the head of the armed forces particularly in times of war

**communism:** a political and economic system based on Marxist-Leninist principles that strives to equally distribute economic resources among all citizens and often includes strict government control of society and the economy through highly bureaucratic structures

**containment of communism:** see Truman Doctrine

**domino theory:** the theory that if one country became communist, the same would occur to other countries in the region; the idea that if South Vietnam were to become communist, the same would happen in Laos, Cambodia, and all of Southeast Asia

**draft:** the practice of requiring certain people to participate in the military

**Eisenhower, Dwight D.:** 34th President of the United States (1953-1961); provided financial and military support to the French during the French Indochina War

**exit strategy:** a plan that outlines how to escape, avoid or end involvement in an activity, like war

**French Indochina:** a former French colony consisting of modern-day Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia

**French Indochina War:** the war fought from 1945 to 1954 between the French and the Viet Minh that ended with the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu

**Geneva Accords:** a peace agreement signed in 1954 by France and the Viet Minh recognizing an independent Vietnam in the north under Ho Chi Minh; the Final Declaration, which called for elections in July of 1956 to unify the country, was never signed, and elections did not occur

**genocide:** the intentional and methodical elimination of a cultural, racial or political group; the Cambodian genocide by the Khmer Rouge led to the death of approximately 1.7 million Cambodians between 1975 and 1979

**The Great Society:** the term used by Lyndon Johnson to describe what he sought to create through government social programs like welfare, Medicaid, and the War on Poverty

**guerilla war:** a type of irregular warfare in which sabotage and/or harassment by fighters in small, independent groups is used to attack a large, often occupying, army

**Gulf of Tonkin Incident:** a series of events off the North Vietnamese coast in 1964 that led to congressional authorization for war in Vietnam; *The Pentagon Papers* demonstrated that the first attack on a U.S. naval ship by North Vietnam was provoked by U.S. spying and that the second attack never occurred

**Ho Chi Minh:** (1890-1969) founder of the Viet Minh forces that fought in the French Indochina War and the first president of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) from 1945 to 1969

**Ho Chi Minh City:** formerly Saigon, renamed in 1975 when North Vietnamese forces took control of the city

**Johnson, Lyndon B.:** 36th President of the United States (1963-1969); oversaw the escalation of the Vietnam War from 16,000 military advisors in 1963 to over 500,000 U.S. troops in 1968

**Joint Chiefs of Staff:** the advisory leadership group in the United States composed of the heads of the Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy

**Kennedy, John F.:** 35th President of the United States (1961-1963); provided support to the government of South Vietnam including 12,000 military advisors

**Kent State:** May 4, 1970 incident at Kent State University in which Ohio National Guardsmen shot into a group of retreating students who were protesting the U.S. invasion of Cambodia; four students were killed and others injured

**Korean War:** a war that spanned from 1950 to 1953 in which U.S. President Truman deployed U.S. forces to fight North Korean and Chinese communist forces and support the government of South Korea

**Mao Tse Tung:** leader of the Chinese Communist Party from 1935 and the first president of the People's Republic of China from 1949 until his death in 1976

**McNamara, Robert:** U.S. Secretary of Defense from 1961 to 1968 and one of the designers of U.S. military intervention in Vietnam

**missing in action (MIA):** a member of the armed forces who disappears during military action but who cannot be identified as dead; approximately 1,900 MIA have been declared from the Vietnam War

**My Lai Massacre:** an atrocity in which approximately 500 Vietnamese women, children, and elderly were killed by U.S. forces in the subhamlets of My Lai 4 and My Khe 4 in March of 1968; the incident was not disclosed until a year later and only one officer, Lieutenant William Calley, was punished

**napalm:** an incendiary weapon used by U.S. forces during the Vietnam War; made of a jellied gasoline mixture that kills victims by burning or asphyxiation

**National Guard:** armed forces organized by each U.S. state and economically supported by the federal government; managed by either the individual state government or the federal government

**Nixon, Richard M.:** 37th President of the United States (1969-1974); crafted the policy of Vietnamization that led to the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam, but also escalated the air war and invaded Cambodia

**North Vietnam:** commonly used name for the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), country created in 1954 by the Geneva Accords and whose president was Ho Chi Minh until his death in 1969; unified with the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) in 1976 to form the Socialist Republic of Vietnam after DRV forces took control of South Vietnam in 1975, now officially Viet Nam.

**Pentagon:** the leadership of the U.S. military; U.S. military headquarters that is a five-sided building in Washington D.C.

**Pentagon Papers:** the classified document compiled by the U.S. government detailing the secret history of U.S. involvement in Vietnam from 1945-1967, including the misleading of the American public about the Gulf of Tonkin incident; leaked to the press in 1971 by Daniel Ellsberg

**post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD):** a psychological disorder first identified among Vietnam veterans that is caused by traumatic events and that can lead to recurrent nightmares, flashbacks, anxiety, and depression

**quagmire:** marshy or boggy land; a situation that is difficult and has obstacles; used to refer to military difficulties encountered by the U.S. forces in Vietnam

**refugee:** a person who flees his/her country to escape political or military danger or persecution

**Saigon:** the capital city of South Vietnam before it was overtaken by North Vietnamese in 1975 and renamed Ho Chi Minh City

**Secretary of Defense:** the main presidential advisor on defense policy and a member of the Cabinet; responsible for developing and implementing the general national defense policy

**South Vietnam:** the Republic of Vietnam (1955-1975) that the U.S. government helped to create and then waged a war to support in order to stop the spread of communism

**Soviet Union:** formally the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR); the former communist union that spanned from Eastern Europe to Northern Asia and included 15 component republics; formed in 1917 and dissolved in 1991

**tax hike:** an increase in tax rates, used to bring in more money to a budget in order to cover spending costs

**Tet Offensive:** a series of attacks throughout South Vietnam by Viet Cong forces during Tet (the Vietnamese New Year celebration) in 1968; considered to be a turning point in the war after which U.S. public opinion turned against the war and the U.S. began its long withdrawal from Vietnam

**Truman Doctrine:** a policy developed by the Truman administration and continued throughout the Cold War that committed the U.S. to the containment of communism through economic and military support for nations and groups fighting the spread of communism

**Truman, Harry S.:** 33rd President of the United States (1945-1953); established the policy of containment of communism at the beginning of the Cold War

**Uncle Sam:** a drawn character used to represent the United States government; depicted as an old, thin man with a white goatee and star-spangled suit and hat

**Viet Cong (VC):** short for "Vietnamese Communist"; the term coined by American and South Vietnamese officials in reference to the National Liberation Front (NFL), a South Vietnamese guerilla group that fought against the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces

**Viet Minh:** created by the Indochinese Communist Party in 1941; sought to create an independent Vietnamese nation and fought French and Japanese forces who attempted to colonize Vietnam

**Vietnamization:** the term coined by the Nixon administration referring to the policy of replacing U.S. soldiers with South Vietnamese soldiers, allowing the U.S. to withdraw U.S. troops and end the draft

**War Powers Act:** a joint resolution passed by the U.S. Congress in 1973 in response to presidential decision-making during the Vietnam War; limited presidential power to engage U.S. forces in long-term combat without congressional approval

**Watergate:** the scandal that led to the resignation of President Nixon in 1974 and that derives its name from the Watergate complex where Democratic National Committee offices were burglarized by men working for the Committee to Reelect the President

**Westmoreland, Gen. William:** commander of the U.S. military forces in Vietnam from 1964-1968 and a primary strategist for U.S. military action in the war

**whistle-blower:** a person who releases hidden information; often a corporate or government employee who makes public secret information that is damaging to the employer

**NAME:****Date:**

Use your knowledge of history and the handout of *Newsweek* images of the Vietnam War to answer these questions.

- 1. The Geneva Accords of 1954**
  - a) called for a permanent division of Vietnam into two nations
  - b) called for elections to unify Vietnam in 1956
  - c) created the government of South Vietnam
  - d) unified Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh
- 2. Which best reflects the primary goal of the Truman Doctrine?**
  - a) control of the media during wartime
  - b) the containment of communism
  - c) support for French colonialism in Indochina
  - d) the creation of a Great Society through government initiatives
- 3. Which best illustrates the domino theory?**
  - a) if Vietnam becomes communist, the rest of South East Asia will follow
  - b) the U.S. must not get bogged down in a ground war in Asia
  - c) if we "lose face" in Vietnam our influence in the world will suffer
  - d) diplomacy without force is like music without instruments
- 4. The Cold War was fought primarily between**
  - a) Russia and Eastern Europe
  - b) Vietnam and the U.S.
  - c) the U.S. and the Soviet Union
  - d) the third world and the first world
- 5. Which list of U.S. presidents is in the correct chronological order?**
  - a) Kennedy, Nixon, Johnson, Truman
  - b) Eisenhower, Nixon, Truman, Johnson
  - c) Truman, Kennedy, Nixon, Johnson
  - d) Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon
- 6. Which is the primary reason that the U.S. government opposed the unification of Vietnam in the 1950s?**
  - a) it wanted the French to continue to colonize Vietnam
  - b) it did not like the nationalist policies of Ho Chi Minh
  - c) it wanted to support the historic nation of South Vietnam
  - d) it did not want Vietnam to become communist
- 7. The Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964 resulted in**
  - a) authorization for Johnson to wage war in Vietnam
  - b) the release of *The Pentagon Papers*
  - c) the creation of South Vietnam
  - d) an exit strategy for withdrawal from Vietnam
- 8. Robert McNamara, pictured in a suit in slide #3, held which position in Lyndon Johnson's Cabinet?**
  - a) Four-star general
  - b) Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
  - c) Commander in Chief
  - d) Secretary of Defense
- 9. The men pictured around McNamara in slide #3 work for which organization?**
  - a) the Army
  - b) the Pentagon
  - c) the CIA
  - d) the Office of Homeland Security
- 10. Ho Chi Minh, pictured in slide #5, led an armed struggle against which of the following?**
  - a) the Viet Cong
  - b) the government of North Vietnam
  - c) the Viet Minh
  - d) French colonialism in Vietnam

**11. President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society initiatives and escalating war in Vietnam led to**

- a) the affluence of the 1960s
- b) a counter-culture movement opposed to civil rights
- c) budget deficits and tax increases
- d) his reelection in 1968

**12. The Tet Offensive in January of 1968 was**

- a) the secret bombing of Laos
- b) Nixon's invasion of Cambodia
- c) attacks by Viet Cong forces throughout South Vietnam
- d) a U.S. offensive against North Vietnamese troops

**13. Which cover best illustrates the idea that the U.S. became "bogged down" in a "quagmire" in Vietnam?**

- a) #3
- b) #5
- c) #7
- d) #8

**14. Nixon's policy of *Vietnamization*, depicted in slide #12, is best described as**

- a) the recruitment of Vietnamese troops into the army
- b) the end of the draft
- c) peace with honor for Uncle Sam
- d) South Vietnamese troops replacing American forces

**15. Which did not lead to the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam?**

- a) the killings at Kent State
- b) release of *The Pentagon Papers*
- c) the massacre at My Lai
- d) the domino theory

**16. The killings at Kent State in 1970 came about as a result of**

- a) violent clashes between local police and civil rights activists
- b) opposition to Nixon's invasion of Cambodia
- c) the My Lai Massacre
- d) the release of *The Pentagon Papers*

**17. Lieutenant William Calley, pictured on slide #15, was found guilty of**

- a) leaking secret documents about atrocities in Vietnam to the press
- b) piloting bombing missions that killed South Vietnamese civilians
- c) war crimes in Vietnam
- d) laying down his weapon and refusing to fight

**18. Which best describes the effect that news stories like those pictured on covers #13 through #16 had on U.S. public opinion?**

- a) encouraged cynicism and distrust of the government
- b) built patriotism and support for returning troops
- c) supported the conviction that the U.S. must make the world safe for democracy
- d) led to an escalation of the Vietnam War

**19. The War Powers Act requires**

- a) the president's Cabinet to agree with the war before troops are sent
- b) approval from the Joint Chiefs of Staff for any military commitment
- c) Congressional approval within 60 days of sending troops into a war
- d) a cap on tax hikes and budget deficits that result from a war

**20. Which is the best estimate of the total death toll in the Vietnam War?**

- a) About 10,000
- b) 58,000
- c) over 2 million
- d) 100 million

**ANSWER SHEET FOR MULTIPLE CHOICE TEST****THE VIETNAM WAR**

1. **b)** called for elections to unify Vietnam in 1956
2. **b)** the containment of communism
3. **a)** if Vietnam becomes communist, the rest of South East Asia will follow
4. **c)** the U.S. and the Soviet Union
5. **d)** Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon
6. **d)** it did not want Vietnam to become communist
7. **a)** authorization for Johnson to wage war in Vietnam
8. **d)** Secretary of Defense
9. **b)** the Pentagon
10. **d)** French colonialism in Vietnam
11. **c)** budget deficits and tax increases
12. **c)** attacks by Viet Cong forces throughout South Vietnam
13. **d)** #8
14. **d)** South Vietnamese troops replacing American forces
15. **d)** the domino theory
16. **b)** opposition to Nixon's invasion of Cambodia
17. **c)** war crimes in Vietnam
18. **a)** encouraged cynicism and distrust of the government
19. **c)** Congressional approval within 60 days of sending troops into a war
20. **c)** over 2 million