Chapter 29: War Abroad & at Home: The Vietnam Era 1961-1975
Chapter 29 Learning Objectives

• Upon completion of Chapter 29 students will be able to answer the following questions:

• How and why did America enter the war in Vietnam? What was the relationship between American domestic affairs and the conduct of the Vietnam War?

• Discuss & analyze the origins, methods, and ambitions of the student movement of the 1960s, & assess its effect on American political, intellectual, & social institutions.

• Why did racial & civil unrest turn violent during the late 1960s?

• What did the election of Richard Nixon & the end of the Vietnam War signal about the nature of American politics in the early 1970s?
Section 1: Into the Quagmire 1945-1968

- Why did the U.S. get involved in the Vietnam War? How was America’s involvement tied to the Cold War?
- Why did President Lyndon B. Johnson escalate U.S. involvement in Vietnam? Was LBJ justified in this?
- What was the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution? How did the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution change the manner in which the U.S. has initiated military operations from the Vietnam era to the present?
- Describe the ‘Americanization’ of the war? What operation began this phase?
- Explain how Defense Secretary Robert McNamara & LBJ felt the U.S. would win a war of attrition over B. Vietnam and the Vietcong. Why did this strategy fail?
- Why was the draft system during the Vietnam Era a cause for both social and racial tension?
THE VIETNAM WAR
1954 - 1975

MS. SUSAN M. POJER
HORACE GREELEY H. S., CHAPPAQUA, NY
Background to the War

- France controlled “Indochina” since the late 19th century
- Japan took control during World War II
- With U.S. aid, France attempted re-colonization in the postwar period
Background to the War

The French lost control to Ho Chi Minh’s Viet Minh forces in 1954 at Dien Bien Phu.

President Eisenhower declined to intervene on behalf of France.
Background to the War

International Conference at Geneva

Vietnam was divided at 17th parallel

- Ho Chi Minh’s nationalist forces controlled the North
- Ngo Dinh Diem, a French-educated, Roman Catholic claimed control of the South
Background to the War

- A date was set for democratic elections to reunify Vietnam
- Diem backed out of the elections, leading to military conflict between North and South
U.S. Military Involvement Begins

- Repressive dictatorial rule by Diem
  - Diem’s family holds all power
  - Wealth is hoarded by the elite
  - Buddhist majority persecuted
  - Torture, lack of political freedom prevail

- The U.S. aided Diem’s government
  - Ike sent financial and military aid
Early Protests of Diem’s Government

Self-Emolation by a Buddhist Monk
U.S. Military Involvement Begins

- Kennedy elected 1960
- Increases military “advisors” to 16,000
- 1963: JFK supports a Vietnamese military coup d'état - Diem and his brother are murdered (Nov. 2)
- Kennedy was assassinated just weeks later (Nov. 22)
Johnson Sends Ground Forces

- Remembers Truman’s “loss” of China → Domino Theory revived

*I’m not going to be the president who saw Southeast Asia go the way China went.*
Johnson Sends Ground Forces

- Advised to rout the communists by Secretary of State, Robert S. McNamara
- Tonkin Gulf Incident → 1964 (acc. to Johnson, the attacks were unprovoked)
- Tonkin Gulf Resolution
  - “The Blank Check” *
The Ground War
1965-1968

- No territorial goals
- Body counts on TV every night (first "living room" war)

- Viet Cong
  - Ho Chi Minh Trail
The Air War
1965-1968

- 1965: Sustained bombing of North Vietnam
- **Operation Rolling Thunder** (March 2, 1965)

- 1966-68: Ongoing bombing of Hanoi nonstop for 3 years! Esp. targets the Ho Chi Minh Trail.
- Downed Pilots: P.O.W.s
- Carpet Bombing - napalm
The Air War: A Napalm Attack
Who Is the Enemy?

**Vietcong:**
- Farmers by day; guerillas at night.
- Very patient people willing to accept many casualties.
- The US grossly underestimated their resolve and their resourcefulness.

*The guerilla wins if he does not lose, the conventional army loses if it does not win.*

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-- Mao Zedong
Who Is the Enemy?
The Ground War
1965-1968

General Westmoreland, late 1967:

We can see the "light at the end of the tunnel."
The Tet Offensive, January 1968

- N. Vietnamese Army + Viet Cong attack South simultaneously (67,000 attack 100 cities, bases, and the US embassy in Saigon)
- Take every major southern city
- U.S. + ARVN beat back the offensive
- Viet Cong destroyed
- N. Vietnamese army debilitated
- BUT...it's seen as an American defeat by the media
The Tet Offensive, January 1968
Impact of the Tet Offensive

**Domestic U.S. Reaction:** Disbelief, Anger, Distrust of Johnson Administration

*Hey, Hey LBJ! How many kids did you kill today?*
Johnson's popularity dropped in 1968 from 48% to 36%.
Impact of the Vietnam War

Johnson announces (March, 1968):

...I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President.
American Morale Begins to Dip

* Disproportionate representation of poor people and minorities.
* Severe racial problems.
* Major drug problems.
* Officers in combat 6 mo.; in rear 6 mo. Enlisted men in combat for 12 mo.
Are We Becoming the Enemy?

Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry

- Mylai Massacre, 1968
- 200-500 unarmed villagers

Lt. William Calley, Platoon Leader
Anti-War Demonstrations

Columbia University
1967
Hell no, we won’t go!
Anti-War Demonstrations

Democratic Convention in Chicago, 1968

Student Protestors at Univ. of CA in Berkeley, 1968
“Hanoi Jane”

Jane Fonda: Traitor?
Anti-War Demonstrations

May 4, 1970
- 4 students shot dead.
- 11 students wounded

May 10, 1970
- Jackson State University
- 2 dead; 12 wounded

Kent State University
Nixon on Vietnam

- Nixon’s 1968 Campaign promised an end to the war: *Peace with Honor*
  - Appealed to the great “Silent Majority”
- Vietnamization
- Expansion of the conflict → The “Secret War”
  - Cambodia
  - Laos
- Agent Orange (chemical defoliant)
"Pentagon Papers,"
1971

- Former defense analyst Daniel Ellsberg leaked govt. docs. regarding war efforts during Johnson’s administration to the New York Times.

  - Primary reason for fighting not to eliminate communism, but to avoid humiliating defeat.

The Ceasefire, 1973

- **Peace is at hand** → Kissinger, 1972
  - North Vietnam attacks South
  - Most Massive U.S. bombing commences

- 1973: Ceasefire signed between
  - U.S., South Vietnam, & North Vietnam

- **Peace with honor** (President Nixon)
Peace Negotiations

US & Vietnamese argue for 5 months over the size of the conference table!

Dr. Henry Kissinger & Le Duc Tho
The Ceasefire, 1973

**Conditions:**

1. U.S. to remove all troops
2. North Vietnam could leave troops already in S.V.
3. North Vietnam would resume war
4. No provision for POWs or MIAs

- Last American troops left South Vietnam on March 29, 1973
- 1975: North Vietnam defeats South Vietnam
- Saigon renamed Ho Chi Minh City
The Fall of Saigon

South Vietnamese Attempt to Flee the Country
The Fall of Saigon

America Abandons Its Embassy

April 30, 1975
The Fall of Saigon

North Vietnamese at the Presidential Palace
A United Vietnam

Formerly Saigon
The Costs

1. 3,000,000 Vietnamese killed
2. 58,000 Americans killed; 300,000 wounded
3. Under-funding of Great Society programs
4. $150,000,000,000 in U.S. spending
5. U.S. morale, self-confidence, trust of government, decimated
The Impact

26th Amendment: 18-year-olds vote

Nixon abolished the draft → all-volunteer army

War Powers Act, 1973 *

- President must notify Congress within 48 hours of deploying military force
- President must withdraw forces unless he gains Congressional approval within 90 days

Disregard for Veterans → seen as “baby killers”

POW/MIA issue lingered
Some American POWs Returned from the “Hanoi Hilton”

Senator John McCain (R-AZ)
2,583 American POWs / MIAs still unaccounted for today.
If we have to fight, we will fight. You will kill ten of our men and we will kill one of yours, and in the end it will be you who tires of it.

Ho Chi Minh:
Lessons for Future American Presidents

1. Wars must be of short duration.
2. Wars must yield few American casualties.
3. Restrict media access to battlefields.
4. Develop and maintain Congressional and public support.
5. Set clear, winnable goals.
6. Set deadline for troop withdrawals.
The Vietnam Memorial, Washington, D.C.
Memorial to US Servicemen in Vietnam
Memorial to US Nurses in Vietnam
58,000
President Clinton formally recognized Vietnam on July 11, 1995