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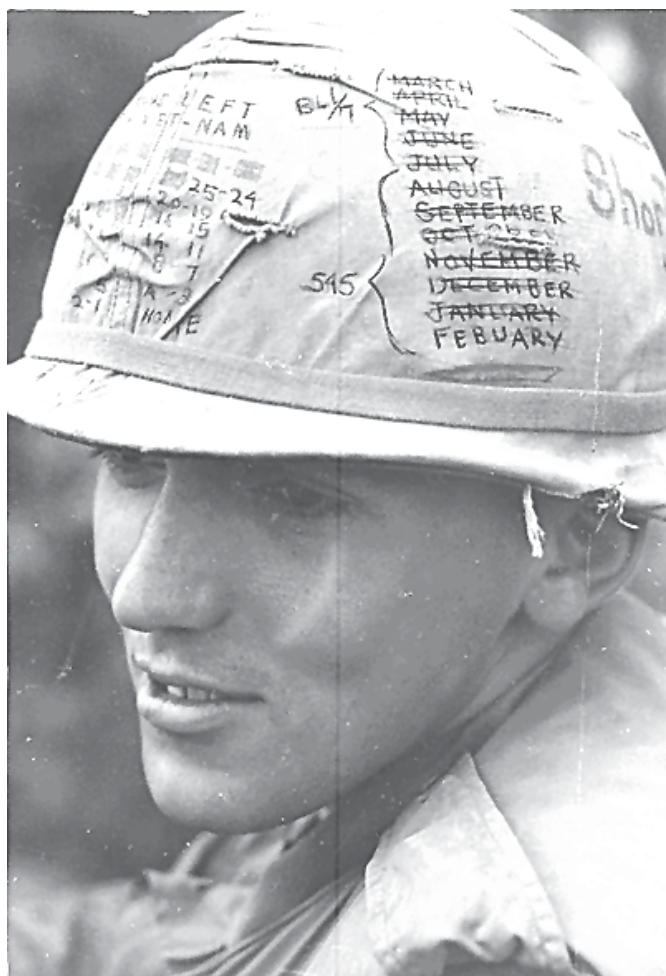
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The Vietnam War: A National Dilemma

A Unit of Study for Grades 10–12

D. ANTONIO CANTU

SANDY CANTU



Organization of American Historians
and the
National Center for History in the Schools, UCLA

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This publication is the result of a collaborative effort between the National Center for History in the Schools (NCHS) at the University of California Los Angeles and the Organization of American Historians (OAH) to develop teaching units based on primary documents for United States History education at the pre-collegiate level.

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INTRODUCTION

I. Approach and Rationale

This teaching unit, *The Vietnam War: A National Dilemma*, is one of several such units co-published by the Organization of American Historians (OAH) and the National Center for History in the Schools (NCHS). The fruits of collaboration between history professors and experienced teachers of American history, the units represent specific issues and dramatic episodes in history from which you and your students can pause to delve into the deeper meanings of these selected landmark events and explore their wider context in the great historical narrative. By studying a crucial turning point in history the student becomes aware that choices had to be made by real human beings, that those decisions were the result of specific factors, and that they set in motion a series of historical consequences. We have selected issues and dramatic episodes that bring alive that decision-making process. We hope that through this approach, your students will realize that history is an ongoing, open-ended process, and that the decisions they make today create the conditions of tomorrow's history.

Our teaching units are based on primary sources, taken from government documents, artifacts, magazines, newspapers, films, private correspondence, literature, contemporary photographs, and paintings from the period under study. What we hope you achieve using primary source documents in these lessons is to have your students connect more intimately with the past. In this way we hope to recreate for your students a sense of being there, a sense of seeing history through the eyes of the very people who were making decisions. This will help your students develop historical empathy, to realize that history is not an impersonal process divorced from real people like themselves. At the same time, by analyzing primary sources, students will actually practice the historian's craft, discovering for themselves how to analyze evidence, establish a valid interpretation and construct a coherent narrative in which all the relevant factors play a part.

II. Content and Organization

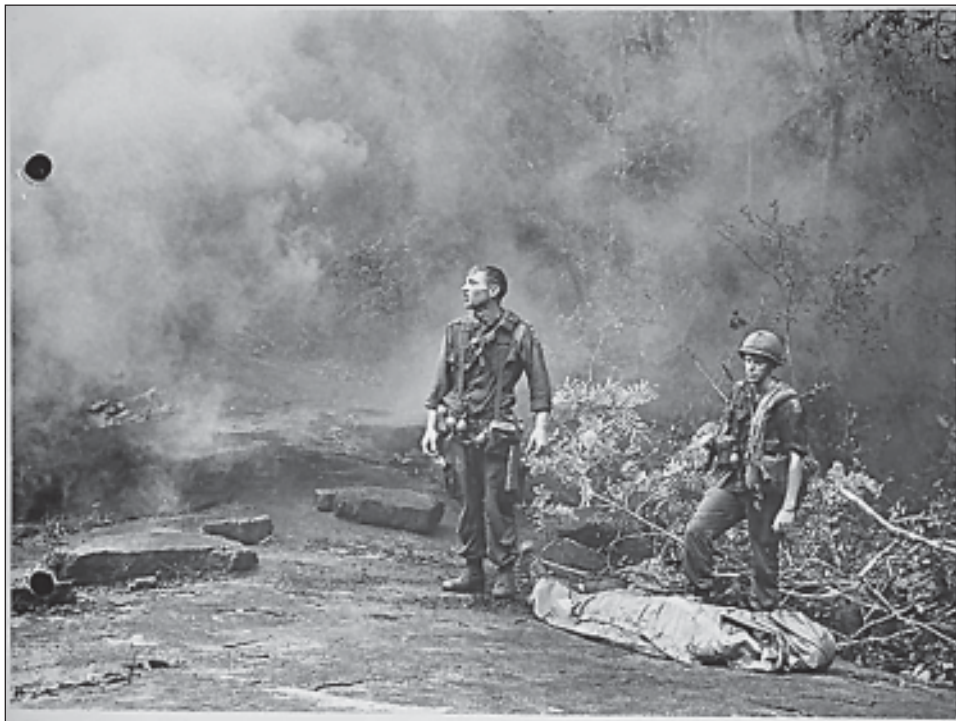
Within this unit, you will find: Teaching Background Materials, including Unit Overview, Unit Context, Correlation to the National Standards for History, Unit Objectives, and Historical Background; a Dramatic Moment; and Lesson Plans with Documents. This unit, as we have said above, focuses on certain key moments in time and should be used as a supplement to your customary course materials. Although these lessons are recommended for grades 10–12, they can be adapted for other grade levels.

The Historical Background section should provide you with a good overview of the entire unit and with the historical information and context necessary to link the specific Dramatic Moment to the larger historical narrative. You may consult it for your own use, and you may choose to share it with students if they are of a sufficient grade level to understand the materials.

The Lesson Plans include a variety of ideas and approaches for the teacher, which can be elaborated upon or cut as you see the need. These lesson plans contain student resources that accompany each lesson. The resources consist of primary source documents, any handouts or student background materials, and a bibliography.

In our series of teaching units, each unit can be taught in several ways. You can teach all of the lessons offered on any given topic, or you can select and adapt the ones that best support your

particular course needs. We have not attempted to be comprehensive or prescriptive in our offerings, but rather to give you an array of enticing possibilities for in-depth study, at varying grade levels. We hope that you will find the lesson plans exciting and stimulating for your classes. We also hope that your students will never again see history as a boring sweep of facts and meaningless dates but rather as an endless treasure of real life stories, and an exercise in analysis and reconstruction.



Source: PFC Paul Epley, photographer, “Soldiers from 4th Battalion, 503rd Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade, Await Helicopter to Evacuate the Body of a Slain Comrade” (College Park, MD: Still Picture Branch, National Archives at College Park, 1966).

TEACHER BACKGROUND MATERIALS

I. Unit Overview

This teaching unit, *The Vietnam War: A National Dilemma*, introduces students to the key individuals and events, through the use of primary source documents, that played a role in America's entry into, escalation of, and final withdrawal from the war in Vietnam. Using the presidencies of Harry S. Truman through Gerald R. Ford as its historical and conceptual framework, the unit attempts to impress upon students the continuous and escalating investment each of these chief executives made in Vietnam, the aggregate of which resulted in the death of over 58,000 Americans, as well as the physical and emotional wounding of hundreds of thousands more. The history of American involvement in Vietnam is traced through the following five lesson plans, each of which not only examine the individuals and events germane to each of these specific presidencies, but also illustrate one of five different lesson plan frameworks representing both brain-based and sequential curricular models.

Lesson One traces the roots of French colonialism in Indochina, illustrates the mistreatment of the Vietnamese people at the hands of the French, and examines the role this played in the rise of the nationalist movement, Communist party, and Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam. The reaction of President Harry S. Truman to developments in Vietnam and the rise of Ho Chi Minh is examined as well. This lesson is designed using Robert Sternberg's theory of triarchic intelligence as its conceptual framework.

Lesson Two examines President Dwight D. Eisenhower's role in laying the political groundwork for American involvement in Vietnam, in particular his support for Ngo Dinh Diem and promulgation of the "Domino Theory." Madeline Hunter's mastery learning model provides the foundation for the lesson's curricular design.

Lesson Three analyzes the role President John F. Kennedy played in laying the military groundwork for American involvement in Vietnam. The subject of analysis also includes the shifting current of both public opinion and JFK regarding American involvement in Vietnam as well as support for the Diem government. The curricular framework for this lesson is based on Benjamin Bloom's mastery learning model.

Lesson Four explores the escalation of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam under the presidential watch of Lyndon B. Johnson, from the passage of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution in 1964 to LBJ's withdrawal from the presidential race in 1968. The 5-E instructional approach provides the basis for the design of this lesson plan.

Lesson Five examines the events and developments, including implementation of the Vietnamization policy, signing of the Paris Accords, and fall of Saigon, that led to America's withdrawal from and eventual end of the war in Vietnam, all of which took place during the presidency of Richard M. Nixon and, upon his resignation, Gerald R. Ford. Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences serves as the guiding curricular force in the design of this lesson.

II. Unit Context

The Vietnam War: A National Dilemma may be placed in the United States history curriculum in a number of logical places within the existing scope and sequence, ranging from the post-World War II or "Origins of the Cold War" period to the 1960s and 1970s. Regardless of where this unit is placed in the curriculum, a review of late nineteenth-century imperialism

as well as the key events and lessons learned from the Korean War are both strongly recommended to assist in the study and understanding of the Vietnam War. In its entirety, this unit is designed for a two to three week period of time. However, it can be adapted to focus student attention on a specific document or set of documents, allowing teachers to integrate individual lessons or activities into the existing curriculum with little modification. Another option available to teachers, to conserve class time, is to assign individual activities to different groups, who are then responsible for examining the primary documents and reporting their findings to the entire class.

III. Correlation to National History Standards

The Vietnam War: A National Dilemma provides documentary materials and learning activities relating to the *National Standards for History, Basic Edition* (National Center for History in the Schools, 1996), **Era 9, Standard 2C: *The student understands the foreign and domestic consequences of U.S. involvement in Vietnam***, to include each of the following elaborated standards: Assess the Vietnam policy of the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations and the shifts of public opinion about the war; Explain the composition of the American forces recruited to fight the war; Evaluate how Vietnamese and Americans experienced the war and how the war continued to affect postwar politics and culture; Explain the provisions of the Paris Accord of 1973 and evaluate the role of the Nixon administration; and Analyze the constitutional issues involved in the war and explore the legacy of the Vietnam war. In addition, the unit also addresses each of the five Historical Thinking Standards outlined in Part 1, Chapter 2 of the *National Standards for History, Basic Edition*. Each lesson provides primary source materials that challenge students to think chronologically, comprehend a variety of historical sources, engage in historical analysis and interpretation, conduct historical research, and engage in historical issues-analysis and decision-making.

IV. Unit Objectives

1. To examine primary documents that trace French colonial involvement in Indochina from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century, to help understand the political and military situation that existed in Vietnam.
2. To identify the role and contribution of Ho Chi Minh in achieving independence for Vietnam through analysis of his writings.
3. To compare, contrast, and evaluate the role the following presidents played in America's involvement in Vietnam: Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard M. Nixon, and Gerald R. Ford.
4. To identify, examine, and evaluate the events, issues, policies, and decisions, revealed through a variety of historical sources, that led to the escalation of American involvement in Vietnam.
5. To trace the evolution of public support for American involvement in Vietnam and determine those factors that played a role in shaping it.
6. To identify, examine, and evaluate the events, issues, policies, and decisions, revealed through a variety of historical sources, that led to America's withdrawal from, and eventual end of, the war in Vietnam.

V. Historical Background

Vietnam traces its origins to the clans of Viet peoples who dwelled in the region extending from present-day Shanghai down the Red River Delta to the Mekong River Delta. The history of the Vietnamese people traces back over 2,200 years, with the first record of the Viet people found in the writings of Chinese historians. It is not until 1858, however, that France, which was exploring new trade routes to China, laid claim to Indochina. Within a short period of time, Vietnam became one of France's most profitable colonies of the late nineteenth century. French economic success in Indochina, however, came at a large cost to the Vietnamese people who were subjected to harsh and exploitive treatment at the hands of their French rulers. It is in this setting that the national independence movement took hold in Vietnam, in particular with the rise of Ho Chi Minh.

Ho Chi Minh, born Nguyen Tat Thanh in 1890 and later known as Nguyen Ai Quoc, quickly became one of the leading Vietnamese nationalist figures of the early twentieth century. After joining the French Communist Party in Paris in 1920, Ho Chi Minh organized the Indochinese Communist Party a decade later. This was followed in 1941 with the founding of the Vietnam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi, or Vietnamese Independence League (Viet Minh).

During World War II, Ho and the Viet Minh gained invaluable military and political support for their campaign to oust Japanese and Vichy French forces who had assumed control of Vietnam. They were so successful in their efforts that by the time of the Japanese surrender in August 1945, the Viet Minh represented the strongest political force in Vietnam. The next month, Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam's independence, establishing the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. France, however, was not about to relinquish its nearly century long colonial hold on Vietnam, and within a year a war between French and Viet Minh forces ensued. The First Indochina War, as it became known, would last for eight years. It came to a rather abrupt end in 1954 following the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu, a remote outpost in northwest Vietnam, and the signing of the Geneva Peace Accords later that summer.

By 1954, the United States was assuming 75 percent of the French cost for the First Indochina War in Vietnam. Therefore, when delegates from nine nations, to include Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, France, Laos, the People's Republic of China, the State of Vietnam, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom, and the United States, met in Geneva during the summer of 1954 to discuss ending the conflict in Indochina, Americans were deeply vested in the outcome.

An awkward peace treaty at best, the Geneva Peace Accords called for the temporary partition of Vietnam at the 17th parallel. In addition, national elections were to be held two years later, for the purpose of reunification. Beginning in 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower pledged his support to Ngo Dinh Diem, Prime Minister (and later President) of the Republic of Vietnam, who had a fragile power base consisting of Catholics, French-trained urban elites, and landlords. From the beginning, Diem proved to be a controversial figure. A Catholic leader of a Buddhist country, Diem found his authority challenged from the start. He faced serious opposition not only from various religious sects within South Vietnam, but also from the Binh Xuyen, which controlled Saigon's crime syndicate. In addition, many within the military, especially among the officers' corps, also posed a threat to the stability of the new Diem government. Diem paid little attention to the countryside. He became more and more isolated from the people and preferred to rely on his family as his closest advisors. As a result, this discontent in the countryside was organized first by remnants of the Viet Minh, then in December 1960 by a new revolutionary organization, the National Liberation Front or Viet Cong.

Despite these potential obstacles, Diem continued to secure his power base in South Vietnam, first by winning a controversial election for President in 1955, and then by establishing the Republic of Vietnam as an independent nation that same year. The following year, with the support of the United States, Diem refused to hold nationwide elections in Vietnam as called for in the Geneva Accords. Instead, Diem continued to build upon his political base of power while at the same time increasing his attacks on political opponents, including the Viet Minh.

Through it all, President Eisenhower, the architect of the “Domino Theory,” remained supportive of Diem, pouring nearly \$200 million in military aid into South Vietnam during his tenure in office. By the end of his term, Eisenhower had solidly laid the political groundwork for American involvement in Vietnam.

John F. Kennedy’s election in 1960 represented yet another shift in twentieth-century American foreign policy. Perhaps the most critical pendulum swing in regard to U.S. policy in Vietnam was the amount and type of support Washington provided to Ngo Dinh Diem. As part of JFK’s “flexible response” approach to confronting international crises, the president quickly sought to increase military and economic aid to South Vietnam. Included in the young president’s plan was a marked increase in the number of American advisors being sent to South Vietnam. These advisors included U.S. Army troops who became involved in both conventional and unconventional operations. The most elite of these military forces was the Green Berets, an Army Special Forces unit that was commissioned by the president to provide both military and medical assistance to the people of South Vietnam.

Despite President Kennedy’s efforts to bolster Diem’s position in South Vietnam, the situation deteriorated. Diem’s government had increasingly become a family-based, authoritarian regime without any legitimacy in the countryside, which represented 80 percent of the total population. By 1963, Diem and his brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, had become controversial figures, having raided South Vietnamese Buddhist pagodas and used military troops to suppress demonstrators in Saigon. As a result, Americans witnessed on the evening news a number of Buddhist riots and self-immolations. The sight of a monk engulfed in flames was a symbol for the corruptness and inefficacy that became synonymous with the Diem regime. Although his advisors were deeply divided over the issue, it became clear to Kennedy that serious changes were in order; in particular, the overthrow of the Diem government began to emerge as the only option available to achieve their objectives in South Vietnam.

Therefore, President Kennedy pledged that while the United States would not take an active role in any coup, it would do nothing to prevent such an event from taking place. As a result, on November 1, 1963, a group of South Vietnamese military leaders successfully overthrew the Diem government, assassinating both Diem and his brother Nhu. Three weeks later, Kennedy would face an assassin’s bullet as well, but not before the shift in America’s Vietnam strategy had been solidified. By the time JFK’s fate was sealed in Dallas, there were a total of sixteen thousand American military advisors stationed in the jungles of Vietnam.

Following the assassination of President Kennedy, Lyndon Baines Johnson continued to increase America’s commitment in Vietnam. The political situation in South Vietnam, however, required serious modification of the strategy Johnson had inherited from JFK. It became clear that the generals who succeeded Diem were even less effective than he in ruling the nation. In addition, the Viet Cong—with North Vietnamese assistance—was becoming so powerful that Johnson either had to send in ground combat troops or pull out of Vietnam. Without American intervention, the Viet Cong would have won the war by early 1966. The catalyst, therefore, that allowed LBJ to redefine America’s foreign policy in Vietnam occurred in early August

1964, when the American vessel USS *Maddox*, on patrol in international waters in the Gulf of Tonkin, was attacked by North Vietnamese torpedo boats. This was followed by another highly disputed report of a subsequent attack days later against the *Maddox* and its escort ship, the *C. Turner Joy*. In response, President Johnson successfully petitioned Congress to pass what has become known as the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which bestowed upon the President expansive war powers.

Shortly thereafter, Johnson ordered the sustained bombing of North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troop targets, following an assault against two U.S. military installations in South Vietnam in which eight U.S. troops died. This 1965 bombing campaign became known as Operation Rolling Thunder and even included military targets within North Vietnam. Coupled with the intense bombing campaign was the introduction of the first U.S. combat troops in Vietnam, sent to Da Nang on March 7, 1965. Within three months, the government confirmed that U.S. troops were engaged in combat missions of their own, not of a supporting or advisory nature.

At the same time, LBJ was still attempting to win the support of the Vietnamese people by initiating yet another pacification campaign reportedly designed to rebuild the rural economy of South Vietnam while also undercutting the political strength of the Viet Cong in the countryside. In 1965, President Johnson was also busily attempting to initiate peace talks with North Vietnam, with an offer of economic aid to both North and South Vietnam. Although his initial attempts would prove unsuccessful, Johnson did open the dialogue with North Vietnam that would years later lead to the Paris peace talks.

However, President Johnson's "prolonged limited war" in Vietnam continued on. Opting for a middle ground approach, LBJ began the gradual escalation of the war in Vietnam in 1965 by authorizing an increase in U.S. troop strength in South Vietnam by an unprecedented 100,000. The increase in troop levels would continue throughout the remainder of Johnson's presidency, so that by the end of his tenure in office over a half a million American troops were serving in South Vietnam.

Despite President Johnson's planning and calculating, the events of 1968 could not have been anticipated. In January, North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces launched an offensive during Tet, the Lunar New Year, in which over 80,000 troops attacked nearly all major cities in South Vietnam. Even the U.S. embassy in Saigon came under attack. Although it was a major military defeat for the Communist forces, which lost half of their attacking force and greatly weakened the Viet Cong's insurgent base, the Tet Offensive ironically was a great psychological victory. Within days, America public support for involvement in Vietnam—which was already waning—plummeted even further; while at the same time the anti-war movement and public criticism of the government reached new levels. It is in this climate that President Johnson, after declining General Westmoreland's request for 200,000 additional troops, finally succeeded in initiating peace talks between the United States and North Vietnam, which commenced on May 3, 1968. Perhaps the greatest surprise event of 1968 was LBJ's announcement that he would not seek re-election, instead committing himself to bringing about an end to the war in Vietnam.

In addition to handing over a war in Vietnam that had escalated to unprecedented levels, President Lyndon Baines Johnson also provided his successor, Richard M. Nixon, with two key elements that Nixon would use to bring about an end to America's longest war. First, Johnson had initiated secret peace talks with North Vietnam in Paris during the spring of 1968. In June of that year, LBJ and Nguyen Van Thieu, South Vietnam's President, also implemented the initial stages of a new program that would mobilize more South Vietnamese troops to assume a greater combat role in the war.

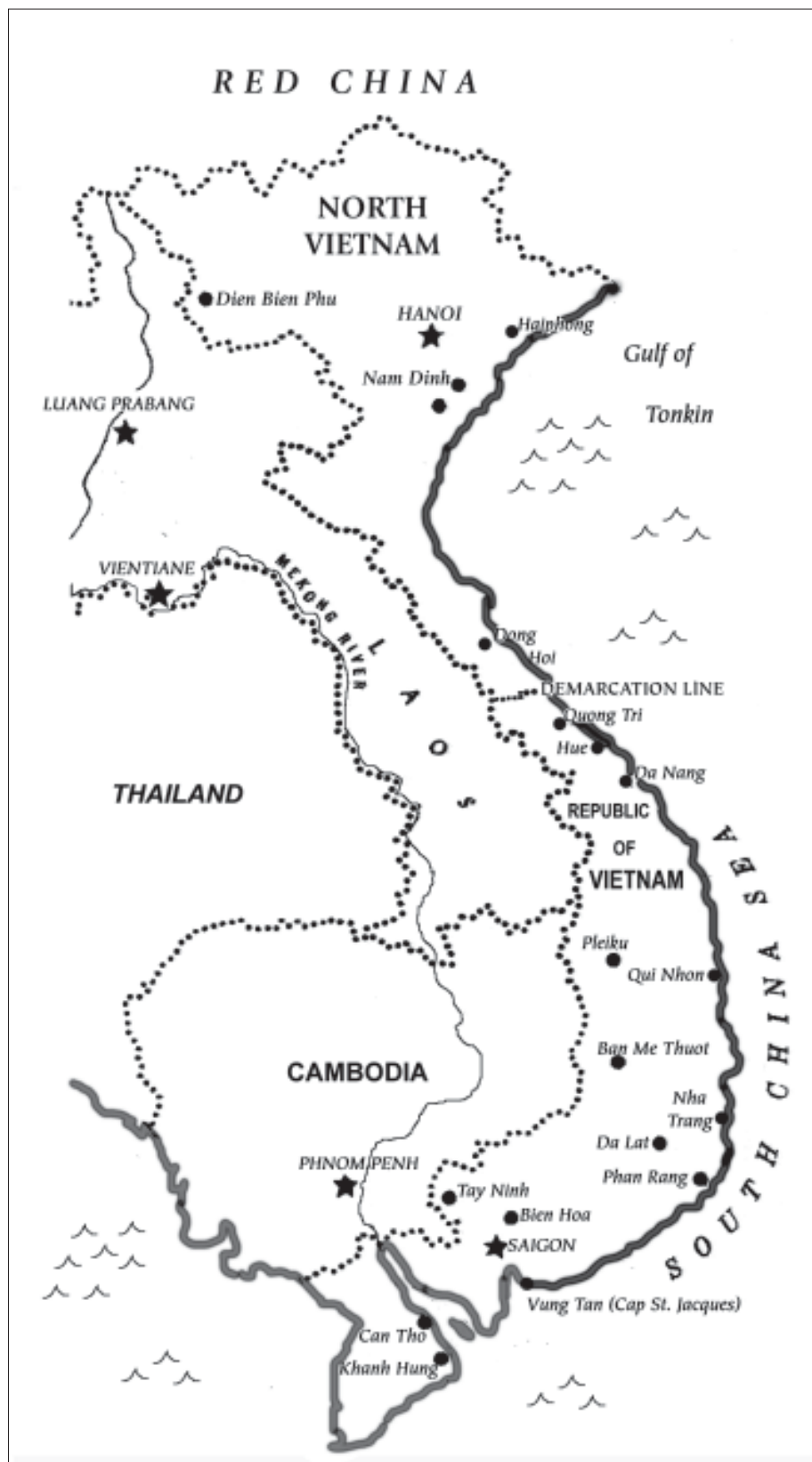
Nixon would bring both of these developments to fruition. He embarked on this mission by authorizing the first troop withdrawal, twenty five thousand total, in the history of the Vietnam War, following a meeting at Midway with President Thieu in June 1969. Troop reductions would continue throughout Nixon's presidency, with former American bases and military equipment being transferred to South Vietnamese control. Although he implemented the program months earlier, in November 1969 Nixon publicly unveiled the specifics of his new strategy in Vietnam, which he referred to as "Vietnamization." Nixon expedited the transfer of combat operations from American to South Vietnamese troops that was initiated under LBJ, with overall American troop levels in Vietnam dropping from over half a million in 1969 to 156,000 just two years later. The equipment turned over was vast, including one million M-16 rifles and five hundred aircraft, making the Republic of Vietnam's air force the fourth largest in the world.

The transition, however, was plagued by problems and controversies. First, the U.S. Army was confronted with a series of problems, including racial tensions, drug abuse, low troop morale, and a growing anxiety on the part of many troops not to be the last soldier killed in Vietnam, known as the "last-casualty" syndrome. In addition, many questioned the purpose of certain battles, such as "Hamburger Hill" in May of 1969, in which the U.S. military suffered a number of casualties in its victory over a North Vietnamese Regiment that previously occupied the hill, only to abandon it shortly thereafter. The military missions conducted by American and South Vietnamese troops in Cambodia in April of 1970 in order to disrupt Communist supply routes into South Vietnam and buy time for Vietnamization, however, became the most controversial event of Nixon's first term. Public protest over this military excursion eventually led to a confrontation between student protesters and National Guard troops at Kent State University in Ohio, in which four students were killed on May 4, 1970. United States military involvement in Cambodia also led Congress to repeal the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution as well as to bar any further military operation in Cambodia.

Renewed bombings of North Vietnam as well as the mining of Haiphong Harbor marked the beginning of 1972 followed by a North Vietnamese assault, known as the "Easter Offensive," in March. By fall of that year, however, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and North Vietnamese representatives Xuan Thuy and Le Duc Tho were hurriedly finishing the preliminary draft of a peace treaty. When negotiations broke down, Nixon ordered the bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong, raids which became known as the "Christmas Bombings," as a means of bringing Hanoi back to the negotiating table.

Finally, eight years after the first combat troops were sent to Da Nang, the United States and North Vietnam signed the Paris Peace Agreement on January 27, 1973. Although the Paris Accords did not end the conflict in Vietnam, it did result in the withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Vietnam as well as the return of American prisoners of war by April of that year. Despite the continued funneling of money to the Thieu government (\$7 billion was sent between 1973 and 1975) the South Vietnamese military suffered from too many military mistakes and setbacks as well as from critical shortages of fuel, spare parts to repair military equipment, and ammunition. Many South Vietnamese believed they had been abandoned by the United States. At the same time, the North Vietnamese military also increased the intensity of their offensive. The end came with the resignation of President Thieu on April 21, 1975, followed by the evacuation of U.S. personnel from South Vietnam, and the fall of Saigon to Communist troops on April 30, 1975, officially ending the Second Indochina War.

Map of Vietnam 1966



DRAMATIC MOMENT

A Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, John Kerry became a leading spokesperson for the organization known as the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). The following testimony Kerry provided to a Senate committee on 22 April 1971 serves to illustrate the swing of the pendulum that was taking place in the United States regarding public support for American involvement in Vietnam. Kerry's non-militant and articulate testimony had a much greater impact on the antiwar movement than did the more confrontational demonstrations Americans viewed on television, helping to swing the pendulum with even greater velocity.

John Kerry's Testimony Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 1971

Thank you very much, Senator Fulbright, Senator Javits, Senator Symington, Senator Pell. I would like to say for the record, and also for the men behind me who are also wearing the uniform and their medals, that my sitting here is really symbolic. I am not here as John Kerry. I am here as one member of the group of 1,000 which is a small representation of a very much larger group of veterans.

In 1970 at West Point Vice President Agnew said "some glamorize the criminal misfits of society while our best men die in Asian rice paddies to preserve the freedom which most of those misfits abuse," and this was used as a rallying point for our efforts in Vietnam.

But for us, as boys in Asia whom the country was supposed to support, his statement is a terrible distortion from which we can only draw a very deep sense of revulsion, and hence the anger of some of the men who are here in Washington today. It is a distortion because we in no way consider ourselves the best men of this country; because those he calls misfits were standing up for us in a way that nobody else in this country dared to; because so many who have died would have returned to this country to join the misfits in their efforts to ask for an immediate withdrawal from South Vietnam; because so many of those best have returned as quadriplegics and amputees—and they lie forgotten in Veterans Administration Hospitals in this country which fly the flag which so many have chosen as their own personal symbol—and we cannot consider ourselves America's best men when we are ashamed of and hated for what we were called on to do in Southeast Asia.

In our opinion, and from our experience, there is nothing in South Vietnam which could happen that realistically threatens the United States of America. And to attempt to justify the loss of one American life in Vietnam, Cambodia or Laos by linking such loss to the preservation of freedom, which those misfits supposedly abuse, is to us the height of criminal hypocrisy, and it is that kind of hypocrisy which we feel has torn this country apart. . . .

We are also here to ask, and we are here to ask vehemently, where are the leaders of our country? Where is the leadership? We are here to ask where are McNamara, Rostow, Bundy, Gilpatric and so many others? Where are they now that we, the men whom they sent off to war, have returned? These are commanders who have deserted their troops, and there is no more serious crime in the laws of war. The Army says they never leave their wounded. The Marines say they never leave their dead. These men have left all the casualties and retreated behind a pious shield of public rectitude. They have left the real stuff of their reputations bleaching behind them in the sun in this country.

Finally, this administration has done us the ultimate dishonor. They have attempted to disown us and the sacrifices we made for this country. In their blindness and fear they have tried to deny that we are

veterans or that we served in Nam. We do not need their testimony. Our own scars and stumps of limbs are witness enough for others and for ourselves.

We wish that a merciful God could wipe away our own memories of that service as easily as this administration has wiped away their memories of us. But all that they have done and all that they can do by this denial is to make more clear than ever our own determination to undertake one last mission—to search out and destroy the last vestige of this barbaric war, to pacify our own hearts, to conquer the hate and fear that have driven this country these last ten years and more, so when thirty years from now our brothers go down the street without a leg, without an arm, or a face, and small boys ask why, we will be able to say “Vietnam” and not mean a desert, not a filthy obscene memory, but mean instead the place where America finally turned and where soldiers like us helped in the turning.

Thank you.

Source: John Kerry, “Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee,” April 22, 1971, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 117:57.



Members of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War leaving the Statue of Liberty, which they had occupied for two days.

Source: Photograph Collection of the American Museum of Immigration, Liberty Island
U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service (December 28, 1971)

LESSON ONE

COLONIZATION: FRENCH INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM

A. Objectives

- ◆ To identify the role nineteenth- and twentieth-century French imperialism in Indochina played in providing the foundation for the events that would transpire during the Vietnam War.
- ◆ To compare and contrast the Vietnamese attempt for independence with that of the United States.
- ◆ To outline and discuss the goals and objectives of Ho Chi Minh during the 1940s and 1950s and evaluate President Truman's response to events in Vietnam during this period.

B. Background Information

The written history of Vietnam, in particular the Viet people, dates back over 2,200 years to the writings of Chinese historians. Twentieth-century Vietnam history, however, would be shaped by events that occurred in the mid-nineteenth century, in particular French colonization of Indochina, which began in 1858. As a result of French exploitation of Vietnam, a national independence movement took hold in Vietnam during the early twentieth century and experienced unprecedented growth under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh. Among his accomplishments, Ho Chi Minh organized the Indochinese Communist Party in 1930, and, a little over a decade later, founded the Vietnamese Independence League, or Viet Minh. Following Japanese and Vichy French occupation of Vietnam during World War II, Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam's independence and established the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Unwilling to passively watch its former colony slip from its clutches, France took up arms against Viet Minh forces in what became known as the First Indochina War, a bloody conflict that would go on for the next eight years.

C. Lesson Activities

Sternberg's Triarchic Intelligence

Analytical

Begin by having the students brainstorm about Vietnam, using a concept map to list what they already know about Vietnam. The following major categories/items should be listed on the first level or tier of the concept map: historical, political, environmental, economic, and social; while specific examples of each should be identified on the next level or tier.

Distribute copies of Nguyen Thuong Hien's 1914 account of French colonial rule and mistreatment (**Document 1**). Have students read the excerpt and answer each of the analytical questions. After the students have finished, have them read Ho Chi Minh's 1941 account of the impact French imperialism has had on Vietnam and the Vietnamese people (**Document 2**), answering the questions that follow.

Then have the students complete a concept map for the concept of colonialism. Use the maps and conflicting viewpoints expressed in the two documents as the basis for a classroom discussion that examines the impact French colonialism had on Vietnam in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

Practical

Following the analytical steps in this lesson, distribute copies of “Vietnamese Declaration of Independence” (**Document 3**) and have students refer to the text of the United States of America Declaration of Independence included in their history textbook. Have students respond to the questions that following the document. Then facilitate a classroom discussion comparing and contrasting these two documents, using a large Venn diagram drawn on the chalkboard or white board to outline similarities and differences to organize student responses.

Creative

Assign students the role of President Harry S. Truman’s personal secretary. Have students write a draft response to Ho Chi Minh’s 1946 telegram to the President (**Document 4**). Then have students respond to the questions at the end of the document.

Next, have students read the excerpt from the minutes of the 1951 meeting between President Truman and French Prime Minister Plevin (**Document 5**) concerning the current status of events in Indochina. Have students assume the role of a foreign policy advisor for President Truman. Students should prepare an official response to the situation presented by Prime Minister Plevin. Students should conclude the activity by completing the questions that follow this document.

D. Extension Activities

1. Develop a timeline tracing the events that led to French colonial rule in Indochina during the nineteenth century and another one outlining those events that led to the emergence of Ho Chi Minh as a political voice for the Vietnamese people during the 1940s.
2. Compare the late nineteenth-century era map of Indochina (p. 15) with a current map of Southeast Asia in order to identify and discuss the political changes that have occurred in that region over the past century.
3. Research other nations official declarations of independence from those colonial powers that once staked a claim to their land/country. Compare and contrast the principles and ideals posited in those documents with those found in the “Vietnamese Declaration of Independence” (**Document 3**). Discuss how the background and experiences of the authors of those documents differed from those of Ho Chi Minh.
4. Research the writings and official statements of Franklin D. Roosevelt on French rule in Indochina and compare and contrast his position with that of his successor, Harry S. Truman.

Map of Indochina
1886



Source: Based on: *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 1856. Reprinted by University of Texas Library Online, Perry-Castañeda Map Collection, <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/indo_china_1886.jpg>.

**Vietnamese Account of Mistreatment
at the Hands of French Colonial Officials, 1914**
Nguyen Thuong Hien

The mistreatment of Vietnamese at the hands of the French is vividly captured in this 1914 account by Vietnamese poet Nguyen Thuong Hien of the fate of villagers who pleaded with French colonial officials for lower taxes. This represents but one of many similar accounts by Vietnamese of the mistreatment and indignities they endured during French colonial rule.

In Quang Nam, a province south of our capital, the inhabitants were so heavily taxed that they came to the Resident's Headquarters to ask him to exempt them from the new tax increase. The Resident did not listen to them, but instead ordered his soldiers to charge against them. Among those driven back into the river, three drowned.

The inhabitants' anger was aroused, so they brought the three corpses before the Resident's Headquarters, and for a whole week several thousand people dressed in mourning garments sat on the ground surrounding the three corpses, shouting and wailing continuously.

The Resident reported the matter to the Resident General, who came and inquired of the inhabitants: "Why are you people rebelling?" The inhabitants replied: "We do not have a single stick of iron in our hands, why do you say that we are rebelling? It is only because the taxes are too high and we are not able to pay them that we must voice our opinion together."

The Resident General then said: "If you people are so poor that you cannot pay taxes to the government, then you might as well all be dead." When he finished saying this, the Resident General ordered his French soldiers to fire into the crowd. Only after several hundred persons had been killed, shedding their blood in puddles, did the crowd disperse.

Source: Ngo Vinh Long, *Before the Revolution: The Vietnamese Peasants Under the French*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp. 71-72.

Understanding the Document

1. What factors led to the initial confrontation between the Vietnamese peasants at Quang Nam and French colonial officer—the Resident?
2. How did the Resident respond to the concerns of the Vietnamese peasants?
3. What did the peasants do in response to the actions taken by the Resident?
4. In the end, why does the Resident General elect to use violence to resolve the situation that had developed in Quang Nam? Evaluate whether the actions taken by the French at Quang Nam appear to be common practice or not.

Call for the Revolutionary League for the Independence of Vietnam (Viet Minh) 1941 *Ho Chi Minh*

In response to Japanese occupation of French Indochina and establishment of a puppet French government in Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh, founder of the Vietnamese Communist Party in 1930, issued the following call to fellow Vietnamese to join his new organization, the Vietnam Independence League, or Viet Minh.

Elders! Prominent personalities! Intellectuals, peasants, workers, traders, and soldiers! Dear compatriots!

Since the French were defeated by the Germans, their forces have been completely disintegrated. However, with regard to our people, they continue to plunder us pitilessly, suck all our blood, and carry out a barbarous policy of all-out terrorism and massacre. Concerning their foreign policy, they bow their heads and kneel down, shamelessly cutting our land for Siam; without a single word of protest, they heartlessly offer our interests to Japan. As a result, our people suffer under a double yoke: they serve not only as buffaloes and horses to the French invaders but also as slaves to the Japanese plunderers. Alas! What sin have our people committed to be doomed to such a wretched plight!

Now, the opportunity has come for our liberation. France itself is unable to dominate our country. As to the Japanese, on the one hand they are bogged in China, on the other, they are hamstrung by the British and American forces, and certainly cannot use all their forces to contend with us. If our entire people are united and single-minded, we are certainly able to smash the picked French and Japanese armies.

Some hundreds of years ago, when our country was endangered by the Mongolian invasion, our elders under the Tran dynasty rose up indignantly and called on their sons and daughters throughout the country to rise as one in order to kill the enemy. Finally they saved their people from danger, and their good name will be carried into posterity for all time. The elders and prominent personalities of our country should follow the example set by our forefathers in the glorious task of national salvation.

Rich people, soldiers, workers, peasants, intellectuals, employees, traders, youth and women who warmly love your country! At the present time national liberation is the most important problem. Let us unite together! As one mind and strength we shall overthrow the Japanese and the French and their jackals in order to save people from the situation between boiling water and burning heat.

Dear compatriots! National salvation is the common cause to the whole of our people. Every Vietnamese must take part in it. He who has money will contribute his money, he who has strength will contribute his strength, he who has talent will contribute his talent. I pledge to use all my modest abilities to follow you, and am ready for the last sacrifice.

Revolutionary fighters! The hour has struck! Raise aloft the insurrectionary banner and guide the people throughout the country to overthrow the Japanese and French. The sacred call of the fatherland is resounding in your ears; the blood of our heroic predecessors who sacrificed their lives is stirring in your hearts! The fighting spirit of the people is displayed everywhere before you! Let us rise up quickly! Compatriots throughout the country, rise up quickly! Unite with each other, unify your action to overthrow the Japanese and the French. Victory to Vietnam's Revolution! Victory to the World's Revolution!

Source: Ho Chi Minh, "Call for the Revolutionary League for the Independence of Vietnam," *Ho Chi Minh: Selected Works* (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1960), pp. 151–54.

Understanding the Document

1. According to Ho Chi Minh, what is the “double yoke” which the Vietnamese “suffer under”?
2. What events or circumstances cause Ho Chi Minh to claim that the opportunity for liberation had now arrived?
3. How does Ho Chi Minh use history to support his call for liberation? How effective is this strategy? Explain.
4. Why does Ho Chi Minh, in his call for liberation, include such an extensive list of individuals from various walks of life (e.g., intellectuals, peasants, workers, traders, rich people, youth, women, soldiers)?



Ho Chi Minh, accompanied by Pham Van Dong, arriving in Paris, 1946
New York Times Collection, Paris; National Archives

Vietnamese Declaration of Independence

1945

Ho Chi Minh

Following the defeat of Japan in 1945, France attempted to reclaim its former colonies in Indochina. But France faced opposition, which it had been able to suppress prior to the war, from a nationalist political party. Believing he would win the support of the United States and other Western leaders due to the efforts of his Viet Minh forces, who fought a guerilla war against the Japanese and the Vichy French forces, Ho Chi Minh proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Vietnam on 2 September 1945. On that date, Ho Chi Minh unveiled the following document, which borrowed heavily from America's Declaration of Independence. The document was first released at a public gathering of thousands in Hanoi.

"All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

This immortal statement was made in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. In a broader sense, this means: All the peoples on the earth are equal from birth, all the peoples have a right to live, to be happy and free.

The Declaration of the French Revolution made in 1791 on the Rights of Man and the Citizen also states: "All men are born free and with equal rights, and must always remain free and have equal rights."

Those are undeniable truths.

Nevertheless, for more than eighty years, the French imperialists, abusing the standard of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, have violated our Fatherland and oppressed our fellow citizens. They have acted contrary to the ideals of humanity and justice.

In the field of politics, they have deprived our people of every democratic liberty.

They have enforced inhuman laws; they have set up three distinct political regimes in the North, the Center, and the South of Vietnam in order to wreck our national unity and prevent our people from being united.

They have built more prisons than schools. They have mercilessly slain our patriots; they have drowned our uprisings in rivers of blood.

They have fettered public opinion; they have practiced obscurantism against our people.

To weaken our race they have forced us to use opium and alcohol.

In the field of economics, they have fleeced us to the backbone, impoverished our people, and devastated our land.

They have robbed us of our rice fields, our mines, our forests, and our raw materials. They have monopolized the issuing of bank-notes and the export trade.

They have invented numerous unjustifiable taxes and reduced our people, especially our peasantry, to a state of extreme poverty.

They have hampered the prospering of our national bourgeoisie; they have mercilessly exploited our workers.

In the autumn of 1940, when the Japanese Fascists violated Indochina's territory to establish new bases in their fight against the Allies, the French imperialists went down on their bended knees and handed over our country to them.

Thus, from that date, our people were subjected to the double yoke of the French and the Japanese. Their sufferings and miseries increased. The result was that from the end of last year to the beginning of this year, from Quang Tri province to the North of Vietnam, more than two million of our fellow citizens died from starvation. On March 9, the French troops were disarmed by the Japanese. The French colonialists either fled or surrendered showing that not only were they incapable of "protecting" us, but that, in the span of five years, they had twice sold our country to the Japanese.

On several occasions before March 9, the Vietminh League urged the French to ally themselves with it against the Japanese. Instead of agreeing to this proposal, the French colonialists so intensified their terrorist activities against the Vietminh members that before fleeing they massacred a great number of our political prisoners detained at Yen Bay and Caobang.

Notwithstanding all this, our fellow-citizens have always manifested toward the French a tolerant and humane attitude. Even after the Japanese putsch of March 1945, the Vietminh League helped many Frenchmen to cross the frontier, rescued some of them from Japanese jails, and protected French lives and property.

From the autumn of 1940, our country had in fact ceased to be a French colony and had become a Japanese possession.

After the Japanese had surrendered to the Allies, our whole people rose to regain our national sovereignty and to found the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

The truth is that we have wrested our independence from the Japanese and not from the French.

The French have fled, the Japanese have capitulated, Emperor Bao Dai has abdicated.

Our people have broken the chains which for nearly a century have fettered them and have won independence for the Fatherland. Our people at the same time have overthrown the monarchic regime that has reigned supreme for dozens of centuries. In its place has been established the present Democratic Republic.

For these reasons, we, members of the Provisional Government, representing the whole Vietnamese people, declare that from now on we break off all relations of a colonial character with France; we repeal all the international obligation that France has so far subscribed to on behalf of Vietnam and we abolish all the special rights the French have unlawfully acquired in our Fatherland.

The whole Vietnamese people, animated by a common purpose, are determined to fight to the bitter end against any attempt by the French colonialists to reconquer their country.

We are convinced that the Allied nations, which at Tehran and San Francisco have acknowledged the principles of self-determination and equality of nations, will not refuse to acknowledge the independence of Vietnam.

A people who have courageously opposed French domination for more than eight years, a people who have fought side by side with the Allies against the Fascists during these last years, such a people must be free and independent.

For these reasons, we, members of the Provisional Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, solemnly declare to the world that Vietnam has the right to be a free and independent country—and in fact is so already. The entire Vietnamese people are determined to mobilize all their physical and mental strength, to sacrifice their lives and property in order to safeguard their independence and liberty.

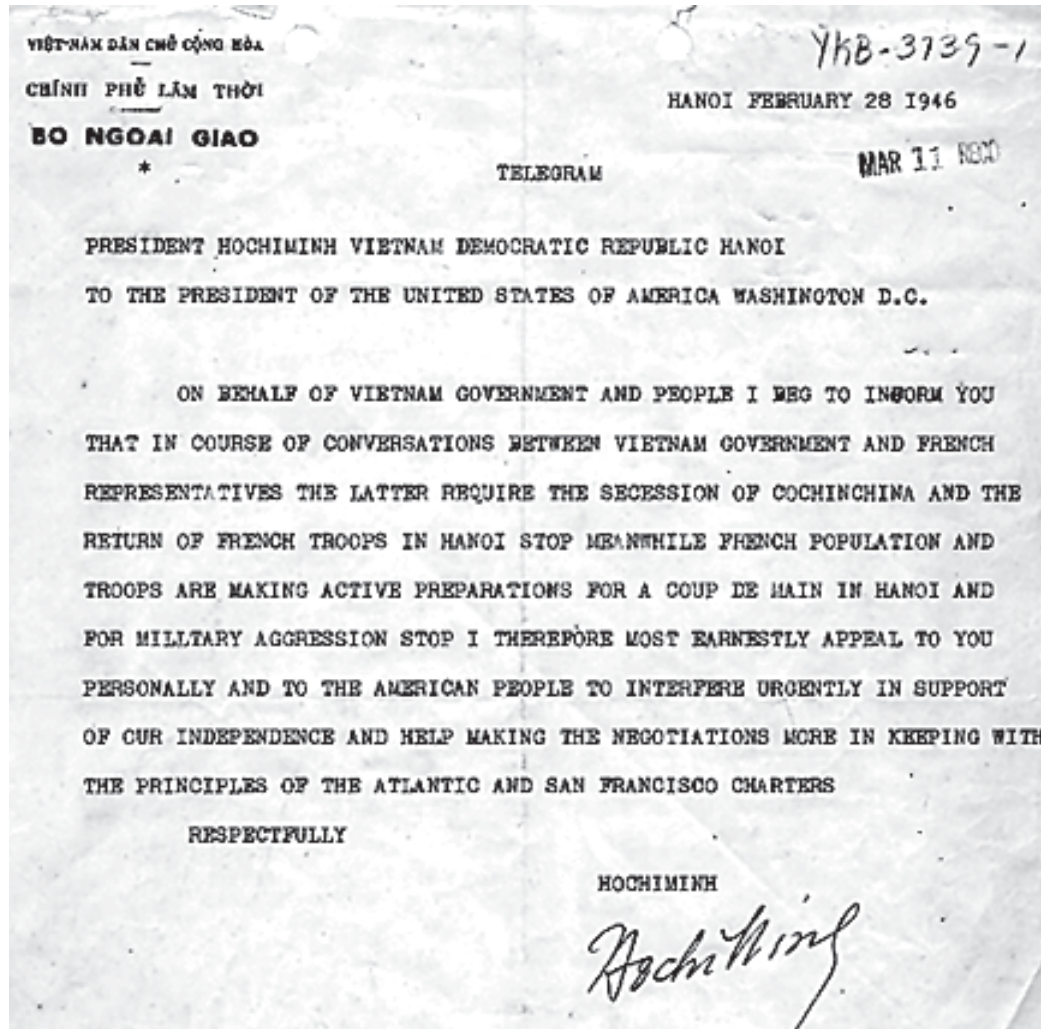
Source: Ho Chi Minh, “Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, September 2, 1945” in *Breaking Our Chains: Documents on the Vietnamese Revolution of August 1945* (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1960), pp. 94–97, and in *Selected Writings* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1977), pp. 53–56.

Understanding the Document

1. Why do you believe Ho Chi Minh prefaces the Vietnamese Declaration of Independence with a reference to the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America?
2. Identify and evaluate the specific grievances Ho Chi Minh lodges against the French in the Vietnamese Declaration of Independence.
3. What was the French response to the Vietminh League’s offer to ally with them against the Japanese invaders during World War II? Why do you believe the French responded in this manner?
4. Why does Ho Chi Minh claim that the Vietnamese people have “wrested our independence from the Japanese and not from the French”?
5. In the United States Declaration of Independence it is stated that governments must derive “their just powers from the consent of the governed.” Did the French ever have the consent of the Vietnamese people to establish local governing bodies? Explain.
6. Identify the grievances lodged against the British in the United States Declaration of Independence. Compare and contrast this list of grievances with that found in the Vietnamese Declaration of Independence.
7. Discuss how relevant the following attack against the British, outlined in the United States Declaration of Independence, is to the 1945 situation in Vietnam that served as the backdrop for Ho Chi Minh’s penning of the Vietnamese Declaration of Independence: “They have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.”
8. Did the Vietnamese people have the same “full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do” as the United States claimed in its Declaration of Independence? Explain.

Telegram from Ho Chi Minh to President Harry S. Truman

The following is a telegram from Ho Chi Minh to President Harry S. Truman, dated February 28, 1946, requesting U.S. support for Vietnamese independence.



Source: Office of Strategic Services, "Letter from Ho Chi Minh to President Harry S. Truman" (College Park, MD: National Archives Modern Military Records, February 28, 1946).

Understanding the Document

1. Why does Ho Chi Minh appeal to President Harry S. Truman in this 1946 telegram?
2. What is the nature of the problem in Vietnam as defined by Ho Chi Minh in this telegram?
3. Ho Chi Minh calls on the American people to "interfere urgently" in support of Vietnamese independence. What was the probability that United States government officials would respond favorably? Explain. What could the United States have done, had they wanted to intervene?
4. What is meant by Ho Chi Minh's reference to the Atlantic and San Francisco Charters? Evaluate how well these Charters support Ho Chi Minh's appeal to President Truman.

Minutes of the First Meeting Between President Truman and Prime Minister Plevin 1951

The following is an excerpt from the minutes of the first meeting between President Truman and French Prime Minister René Plevin, in the Cabinet Room of the White House, January 28, 1951, 2:30–5:00 p.m., in which the issue of Indochina served as the major focus for discussion.

The Prime Minister then reviewed briefly recent French history in Indochina. He said that the French had been there for 100 years but that during the past five years they had been having a very difficult time. He pointed out that the French had adopted a policy of complete emancipation of the three Indochinese countries and that this policy had been adopted without any mental reservations. They had been transferring power to local Indochinese authorities as fast as they could. This transfer could have been accomplished peacefully had it not been for the communist-directed revolutionary movement which had been fighting the French since 1946. He made it clear that this war was inspired by the men who now rule in China and Russia. He stressed the fact that the financial cost of this war was great and was constantly increasing. There were 162,000 soldiers in regular formations fighting in Indochina. Of this number, sixty thousand men were from France and the balance largely from North Africa and Indochina. He stressed the high casualty rate in this fighting, citing as an example the recent loss of eight thousand men and officers. He pointed out that the war in Indochina was a real war against communist forces supplied with arms by China rather than military action against guerrillas. France had put at the service of the United Command in Korea fewer troops than it would have liked to have sent there because it was so heavily committed in Indochina. . . .

[Prime Minister Plevin] said that the present situation was an improvement over that of a few months ago. He cited both moral and physical successes and noted that losses in men were large and were very difficult to replace. One way to do this would be to send more troops from France, more equipment, especially planes and to create additional Vietnamese troops. As regards arms, he said that French supplies were inadequate to meet either the needs of French troops in Indochina or the needs of the Vietnamese troops. The financial cost was very heavy and one-third of the present French military budget is now spent in the effort in Indochina. He said that France will be unable to pay for the maintenance of the Vietnamese troops. The question arises, he continued, as to whether additional troops should be sent from metropolitan France if, in five or six months from now, the French position in Indochina would still be about the same. The alternative would be to use these forces and funds to build up the French military position at home. . . .

The Prime Minister pointed out that there was a parallel between Korea and Indochina. The French did not wish to abandon the Indochinese just as we did not wish to abandon the Koreans. He noted that the Vietnamese troops fight ably and well against the Viet Minh troops. . . . He said that like the United States, France did not want to stretch its forces so thin as to create a danger to the military situation in Europe. The only chance to defeat the Viet Minh is to build up the active Indochinese forces.

Source: U.S. Congress, House, *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, 1951*, 82nd Congress, 2nd session, House Document No. 570, Vol. IV (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1985), pp. 304–313.

Understanding the Document

1. Evaluate Prime Minister Pleven's claim that France had adopted a policy of complete emancipation of Indochina.
2. According to Prime Minister Pleven, what has been the cost of French involvement in Indochina? What does he identify as the opportunity cost?
3. Why does Prime Minister Pleven claim "the present situation was an improvement over that of a few months ago"? How accurate is his assessment of the situation? Explain.
4. Discuss whether Prime Minister Pleven's comparison of the French situation in Vietnam to that the United States faced in Korea is valid.



President Truman in the Oval Office with the Prime Minister of France, René Pleven, as Secretary of State Dean Acheson and Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall look on. (01/29/1951)

National Archives, NLT-AVC-PHT-(73)3489

LESSON TWO

AMERICANIZATION: LAYING THE POLITICAL GROUNDWORK

A. Objectives

- ◆ To evaluate the role President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s “Domino Theory” played in deepening American involvement in Vietnam.
- ◆ To identify the terms of the Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference and discuss how various parties eventually compromised any potential success the agreement might have realized.
- ◆ To compare and contrast Presidential Eisenhower’s public and private positions concerning the situation in Vietnam.

B. Background Information

It did not take long for the United States to side with the French in their war against Ho Chi Minh and Viet Minh forces. Despite President Eisenhower’s substantial financial support for France’s war effort, the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu and the Geneva Peace Conference of 1954 would provide the basis for an expeditious French withdrawal from its former colony. The Geneva Peace Accords mandated both a temporary division of Vietnam at the 17th parallel as well as national elections to reunify Vietnam two years later.

In France’s absence, President Eisenhower made the fateful decision to fill the vacuum, pledging his support for the controversial leader of South Vietnam, Ngo Dinh Diem. Facing serious opposition, Diem attempted to stabilize his grip on power by first having himself elected President in the disputed election of 1955 and then proclaiming South Vietnam to be an independent nation, the Republic of Vietnam, that same year. In addition, fearing he would lose to Ho Chi Minh, Diem refused to hold nationwide elections the next year as called for in the Geneva Accords. Instead, Diem stepped up his attacks against his political and military foes.

Diem’s opposition, however, continued to gain momentum. In 1957, communist guerillas embarked upon a campaign of crossing the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) into the South to recruit supporters among the oppressed peasants in the countryside. Within three years, North Vietnam organized this nucleus of Diem opponents in the South into the National Liberation Front. Over time, Diem’s power base would only continue to deteriorate. President Eisenhower remained supportive of Diem throughout his presidency, however, largely due to a belief in his own “Domino Theory,” which predicted that if Vietnam fell under communist control, other nations in Southeast Asia would soon follow. By the end of his term, Eisenhower had laid the political groundwork for American involvement in Vietnam.

C. Lesson Activities

Hunter’s Mastery Learning

Anticipatory Set

Begin the lesson by having students read the “Address by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles” expressing the views of the United States on the eve on the Geneva Conference (**Document 6**).

Have students respond to the questions that follow this excerpt in their journals and then initiate a discussion highlighting the salient points he addressed.

State Objectives and Purpose

Write the objectives listed above on a transparency, PowerPoint slide, or on the chalkboard, and review them with the students to ensure they have an understanding of the major topics that will be addressed in the lesson.

Provide Input

Introduce President Dwight D. Eisenhower's foreign policy position concerning Indochina, which became known as the "Domino Theory" (**Document 7**). Facilitate a discussion of Eisenhower's position, using the questions that follow the document as a guide to delve further into the theory and its impact on future United States actions in Vietnam.

Model Ideal Behavior

Next, model the type of investigative skills you want to build in students by analyzing Eisenhower's letter to E.E. "Swede" Hazlett (**Document 8**). Identify the major positions put forth by Eisenhower and discuss the inconsistencies between the various statements posited by Eisenhower in this private letter with other public positions he had taken previously. Use the questions at the conclusion of the document to assist in the modeling activity and/or to allow students the opportunity to analyze the document.

Check for Comprehension

Hand out "Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference" (**Document 9**) and the accompanying questions. Have students analyze the document by answering the first two questions individually. Next, place the students in groups of four, assigning each student in the group one of the following roles as representative from: United States, France, Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and State of Vietnam (Republic of South Vietnam). Then have students discuss the remaining questions, first in their groups and then as a class.

Provide Guided Practice

Distribute copies of "President Eisenhower's Letter to Ngo Dinh Diem" (**Document 10**) and accompanying questions. Allow students an opportunity to practice their historical analysis skills by initially going over question number one and two as a class, then assigning the remaining questions to be completed in class with the teacher available to assist and answer questions.

Provide Independent Practice

Assign "Dwight D. Eisenhower's Letter to J. Lawton Collins" (**Document 11**) and the accompanying questions to the students as a homework assignment. Make sure the students do not have any questions concerning the assignment prior to going on to the final activity.

Closure

Conclude the lesson by either distributing copies of "President Eisenhower's Address at Gettysburg College" (**Document 12**) or projecting the text of the Address on an overhead transparency or PowerPoint slide. Then discuss the questions at the conclusion of the document, as time permits until the end of the hour, relating the major points of President Eisenhower's Address back to what was discussed previously in the lesson.

D. Extension Activities

1. Note that countless American political and military leaders throughout the Vietnam War would reference Eisenhower's "Domino Theory." Have groups of students conduct research to find out how much this belief dictated American foreign policy for the next two decades, identifying both the individuals and the context in which this theory was cited.
2. Have students conduct research to determine how well all sides upheld the terms of the Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference of 1954. Identify those actions taken by the various parties that were in direct violation of the agreement, then discuss the impact these infractions had on the course of events in Vietnam.



Source: Department of the Air Force, "President Dwight D. Eisenhower Greets President Ngo Dinh Diem" (College Park, MD: Still Pictures Branch, National Archives at College Park, May 8, 1957).

Address by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles

The following excerpt is taken from an address made by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to the Overseas Press Club in New York on 29 March 1954. Dulles expresses the views of the United States on Indochina on the eve of the Geneva Conference.

This provides a timely occasion for outlining the Administration's thinking about two related matters—Indochina and the Chinese Communist regime.

Indochina is important for many reasons. First—and always first are the human values. About thirty million people are seeking for themselves the dignity of self-government. Until a few years ago, they formed merely a French dependency. Now, their three political units—Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia—are exercising a considerable measure of independent political authority within the French Union. Each of the three is now recognized by the United States and by more than 30 other nations. They signed the Japanese Peace Treaty with us. Their independence is not yet complete. But the French Government last July declared its intention to complete that independence, and negotiations to consummate that pledge are actively under way.

The United States is watching this development with close attention and great sympathy. We do not forget that we were a colony that won its freedom. We have sponsored in the Philippines a conspicuously successful development of political independence. We feel a sense of kinship with those everywhere who yearn for freedom.

The Communists are attempting to prevent the orderly development of independence and to confuse the issue before the world. The Communists have, in these matters, a regular line which Stalin laid down in 1924.

The scheme is to whip up the spirit of nationalism so that it becomes violent. That is done by professional agitators. Then the violence is enlarged by Communist military and technical leadership and the provision of military supplies. In these ways, international Communism gets a strangle-hold on the people and it uses that power to “amalgamate” the peoples into the Soviet orbit.

“Amalgamation” is now being attempted in Indochina under the ostensible leadership of Ho Chi Minh. He was indoctrinated in Moscow. He became an associate of the Russian, Borodin, when the latter was organizing the Chinese Communist Party which was to bring China into the Soviet orbit. Then Ho transferred his activities to Indochina.

Those fighting under the banner of Ho Chi Minh have largely been trained and equipped in Communist China. They are supplied with artillery and ammunition through the Soviet-Chinese Communist bloc. Captured material shows that much of it was fabricated by the Skoda Munition Works in Czechoslovakia and transported across Russia and Siberia and then sent through China into Vietnam. Military supplies for the Communist armies have been pouring into Vietnam at a steadily increasing rate.

Military and technical guidance is supplied by an estimated two thousand Communist Chinese. They function with the forces of Ho Chi Minh in key positions—in staff sections of the High Command, at the division level and in specialized units such as signal, engineer, artillery and transportation.

In the present stage, the Communists in Indochina use nationalistic anti-French slogans to win local support. But if they achieved military or political success, it is certain that they would subject the People to a cruel Communist dictatorship taking its orders from Peiping and Moscow.

The tragedy would not stop there. If the Communist forces won uncontested control over Indochina or any substantial part thereof, they would surely resume the same pattern of aggression against other free peoples in the area.

Southeast Asia is the so-called “rice bowl” which helps to feed the densely populated region that extends

from India to Japan. It is rich in many raw materials, such as tin, oil, rubber and iron ore. It offers industrial Japan potentially important markets and sources of raw materials.

The area has great strategic value. Southeast Asia is astride the most direct and best developed sea and air routes between the Pacific and South Asia. It has major naval and air bases. Communist control of Southeast Asia would carry a grave threat to the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand, with whom we have treaties of mutual assistance. The entire Western Pacific area, including the so-called “offshore island chain,” would be strategically endangered.

President Eisenhower appraised the situation last Wednesday when he said that the area is of “transcendent importance”.

The United States has shown in many ways its sympathy for the gallant struggle being waged in Indochina by French forces and those of the Associated States. Congress has enabled us to provide material aid to the established governments and their peoples. Also, our diplomacy has sought to deter Communist China from open aggression in that area.

President Eisenhower, in his address of April 16, 1953, explained that a Korean armistice would be a fraud if it merely released aggressive armies for attack elsewhere. I said last September that if Red China sent its own army into Indochina, that would result in grave consequences which might not be confined to Indochina.

Recent statements have been designed to impress upon potential aggressors that aggression might lead to action at places and by means of free world choosing, so that aggression would cost more than it could gain.

The Chinese Communists have, in fact, avoided the direct use of their own Red armies in open aggression against Indochina. They have, however, largely stepped up their support of the aggression in that area. Indeed, they promote that aggression by all means short of open invasion.

Under the conditions of today, the imposition on Southeast Asia of the political system of Communist Russia and its Chinese Communist ally, by whatever means, would be a grave threat to the whole free community. The United States feels that that possibility should not be passively accepted, but should be met by united action. This might involve serious risks. But these risks are far less than those that will face us a few years from now, if we dare not be resolute today.

The free nations want peace. However, peace is not had merely by wanting it. Peace has to be worked for and planned for. Sometimes it is necessary to take risks to win peace just as it is necessary in war to take risks to win victory. The chances for peace are usually bettered by letting a potential aggressor know in advance where his aggression could lead him.

I hope that these statements which I make here tonight will serve the cause of peace.

Source: *Department of State Bulletin*, Apr. 12, 1954, pp. 539–542; *American Foreign Policy 1950–1955*, Basic Documents Volumes I and II, Department of State Publication 6446, General Foreign Policy Series 117 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957).

Understanding the Document

1. Evaluate the Secretary of State’s comparison between the current situation in Vietnam and that which took place previously in the Philippines.
2. Define “amalgamation” and discuss whether it was “being attempted in Indochina,” as Secretary of State Dulles posited in his speech.
3. Describe why the Secretary of State deemed Southeast Asia as being of “great strategic value.”
4. What is the threat posed by Communism, as characterized by Dulles, to the people of Southeast Asia?

Domino Theory
1954
Dwight D. Eisenhower

By 1954, Ho Chi Minh's forces in North Vietnam had gained tremendous momentum in their war against the French army. In March, Vietminh forces at Dien Bien Phu encircled French forces. President Eisenhower declined French government requests for assistance in Vietnam, leaving France with little alternative but to surrender in May of that year. Although he didn't come to the aid of France, Eisenhower was still concerned that the French defeat in Vietnam would ultimately lead to a Communist triumph in Indochina, as indicated in his remarks below.

Q. Robert Richards, Copley Press: Mr. President, would you mind commenting on the strategic importance of Indochina for the free world? I think there has been, across the country, some lack of understanding on just what it means to us.

The President. You have, of course, both the specific and the general when you talk about such things. First of all, you have the specific value of a locality in its production of materials that the world needs. Then you have the possibility that many human beings pass under a dictatorship that is inimical to the free world.

Finally, you have broader considerations that might follow what you would call the "falling domino" principle. You have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly. So you could have a beginning of a disintegration that would have the most profound influences.

Now, with respect to the first one, two of the items from this particular area that the world uses are tin and tungsten. They are very important. There are others, of course, the rubber plantations and so on.

Then with respect to more people passing under this domination, Asia, after all, has already lost some 450 million of its peoples to the Communist dictatorship, and we simply can't afford greater losses.

But when we come to the possible sequence of events, the loss of Indochina, of Burma, of Thailand, of the Peninsula, and Indonesia following, now you begin to talk about areas that not only multiply the disadvantages that you would suffer through the loss of materials, sources of materials, but now you are talking about millions and millions of people.

Finally, the geographical position achieved thereby does many things. It turns the so-called island defensive chain of Japan, Formosa, of the Philippines and to the southward; it moves in to threaten Australia and New Zealand.

It takes away, in its economic aspects, that region that Japan must have as a trading area or Japan, in turn, will have only one place in the world to go—that is, toward the Communist areas in order to live.

So, the possible consequences of the loss are just incalculable to the free world.

Source: *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1958), pp. 381–90.

Understanding the Document

1. List and evaluate the three reasons why President Eisenhower believed Indochina was of strategic importance for the free world.
2. Define the “falling domino principle” posited by Eisenhower, and assess the role it would play in shaping American foreign and military policy in Vietnam.
3. Discuss how the Communist revolution in China, which occurred five years earlier during the Truman presidency, impacted Eisenhower’s foreign affairs policy.
4. Identify and evaluate the geographical and economic rationale provided by Eisenhower in defense of American involvement in Indochina.



Dwight D. Eisenhower
National Archives, NWDNS-111-SC-432602

President Dwight D. Eisenhower letter to E. E. "Swede" Hazlett 1954

In this excerpt of a 27 April 1954 letter to close family friend E. E. "Swede" Hazlett, President Dwight D. Eisenhower provides a candid assessment of France's involvement in Vietnam as well as an illuminating comparison between French colonialism and British involvement in the former thirteen colonies and resulting American Revolution.

April 27, 1954

Personal and Confidential

Dear Swede:

. . . In my last letter I remember that I mentioned Dien Bien Phu. It still holds out and while the situation looked particularly desperate during the past week, there now appears to be a slight improvement and the place may hold on for another week or ten days. The general situation in Southeast Asia, which is rather dramatically epitomized by the Dien Bien Phu battle, is a complicated one that has been a long time developing. It involves many talks on the international level and the frantic desire of the French to remain a world power, but at the same time defeating themselves through their deep divisions and consequent indecisiveness at home.

For more than three years I have been urging upon successive French governments the advisability of finding some way of "internationalizing" the war; such action would be proof to all the world and particularly to the Viet Nameese [sic] that France's purpose is not colonial in character but is to defeat Communism in the region and to give the natives their freedom. The reply has always been vague, containing references to national prestige, Constitutional limitations, inevitable effects upon the Moroccan and Tunisian peoples, and dissertations on plain political difficulties and battles within the French Parliament. The result has been that the French have failed entirely to produce any enthusiasm on the part of the Viet Nameese for participation in the war. (Incidentally, did you ever stop to think that if the British had, in our War of the Revolution, treated as equals the Americans who favored them -- whom the called Loyalists and we called Tories -- the job of Washington would have been much more difficult, if not impossible. I have read that when the entire colonial forces in the field numbered not more than twenty-five thousand, that there were fifty thousand Americans serving in some capacity with and for the British. Yet no really effective service was rendered by these people because the British persisted in treating them as "colonials and inferiors.")

In any event, any nation that intervenes in a civil war can scarcely expect to win unless the side in whose favor it intervenes possesses a high morale based upon a war purpose or cause in which it believes. The French have used weasel words in promising independence and through this one reason as much as anything else, have suffered reverses that have been really inexcusable.

The British are frightened, I think, by two things. First, they have a morbid obsession that any positive move on the part of the free world may bring upon us World War III. Secondly, they are desperately concerned about the safety of Hong Kong. For the moment the Chinese Communists are not molesting Hong Kong and the British are fearful that if they should be identified as opponents of the Communists in the Indo-China affair, they might suffer the loss of Hong Kong at any moment. All this is conjecture, but in respect to this particular point, my own view is in almost direct opposition. I personally feel that if the Communists would take a good smacking in Indo-China, they would be more likely to leave Hong Kong severely alone for a long time. Moreover, if a "concert of nations"

should undertake to protect Western interests in this critical section of the globe, it would appear that Hong Kong would almost automatically fall within the protected zone.

Just what the outcome will be, of course, is still largely a guess, but in any event I feel that the situation is a shade -- but only a shade -- brighter than it was a week or so ago.

The McCarthy-Army argument, and its reporting, are close to disgusting. It saddens me that I must feel ashamed for the United States Senate. Other than that, I doubt that I have any opinions on the subject that are greatly different from your own, so I will pass it up for the moment.

One of the features of service life that I miss in this job is an "Inspector General's" service. Visitors here -- usually meaning to be helpful -- are quite apt to leave with me a hint that something is wrong here or wrong there, and sometimes these allegations or charges are of a grave nature.

In the Army it was so simple to turn to a properly trained and dedicated group any inspection job ranging from suspected peculation to plain incompetence, and it never occurred to me that a similar or equivalent agency would not be available in the Federal government. But there is no readily available agency to look into hints of this character. Even when they are referred to the interested departments of government, they are very likely to be handled in a rather lackadaisical manner for the simple reason that people are not accustomed to the standards of administrative accounting and responsibility that prevailed in the armed services.

* *

I had two other subjects -- but I stop here in desperation.

* *

Love to the family,

As ever, . . .

Understanding the Document

1. Evaluate President Eisenhower's claim that the "the most effective vehicle" for promoting understanding and providing information to Americans and other nations abroad was the "publicity media." Compare and contrast Eisenhower's use of the media in promoting America's cause in Vietnam with that of other chief executives who would follow.
2. How did the battle of Dien Bien Phu, according to Eisenhower, epitomize the general situation in Southeast Asia?
3. In what ways did President Eisenhower believe successive French governments had failed in Vietnam? Discuss how well American political leaders succeeded in avoiding these same pitfalls years later.
4. Evaluate the validity of President Eisenhower's comparison of French involvement in Vietnam with that of the British during the American Revolution.

Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference 1954

From May to July of 1954, delegates from the following nine nations met in Geneva to discuss the problem of restoring peace in Indochina: Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, France, Laos, the People's Republic of China, the State of Viet-Nam (Republic of Vietnam), the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. The following are the key provisions of the Geneva Agreements, dated 21 July 1954.

1. The Conference takes note of the agreements ending hostilities in Cambodia, Laos, and Viet-Nam and organizing international control and the supervision of the execution of the provisions of these agreements.
2. The Conference expresses satisfaction at the ending of hostilities in Cambodia, Laos, and Viet-Nam. The Conference expresses its conviction that the execution of the provisions set out in the present declaration and in the agreements on the cessation of hostilities will permit Cambodia, Laos, and Viet-Nam henceforth to play their part, in full independence and sovereignty, in the peaceful community of nations.
3. The Conference takes note of the declarations made by the Governments of Cambodia and of Laos of their intention to adopt measures permitting all citizens to take their place in the national community, in particular by participating in the next general elections, which, in conformity with the constitution of each of these countries, shall take place in the course of the year 1955, by secret ballot and in conditions of respect for fundamental freedoms.
4. The Conference takes note of the clauses in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Viet-Nam prohibiting the introduction into Viet Nam of foreign troops and military personnel as well as of all kinds of arms and munitions. The Conference also takes note of the declarations made by the Governments of Cambodia and Laos of their resolution not to request foreign aid, whether in war material, in personnel, or in instructors except for the purpose of effective defense of their territory and, in the case of Laos, to the extent defined by the agreements on the cessation of hostilities in Laos.
5. The Conference takes note of the clauses in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Viet-Nam to the effect that no military base at the disposition of a foreign state may be established in the regrouping zones of the two parties, the latter having the obligation to see that the zones allotted to them shall not constitute part of any military alliance and shall not be utilized for the resumption of hostilities or in the service of an aggressive policy. The Conference also takes note of the declarations of the Governments of Cambodia and Laos to the effect that they will not join in any agreement with other states if this agreement includes the obligation to participate in a military alliance not in conformity with the principles of the charter of the United Nations or, in the case of Laos, with the principles of the agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Laos or, so long as their security is not threatened, the obligation to establish bases on Cambodian or Laotian territory for the military forces of foreign powers.
6. The Conference recognizes that the essential purpose of the agreement relating to Viet-Nam is to settle military questions with a view to ending hostilities and that the military

demarcation line should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary. The Conference expresses its conviction that the execution of the provisions set out in the present declaration and in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities creates the necessary basis for the achievement in the near future of a political settlement in Viet-Nam.

7. The Conference declares that, so far as Viet-Nam is concerned, the settlement of political problems, effected on the basis of respect for the principles of independence, unity, and territorial integrity, shall permit the Vietnamese people to enjoy the fundamental freedoms, guaranteed by democratic institutions established as a result of free general elections by secret ballot. In order to insure that sufficient progress in the restoration of peace has been made, and that all the necessary conditions obtain for free expression of the national will, general elections shall be held in July 1956, under the supervision of an international commission composed of representatives of the member states of the International Supervisory Commission referred to in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities. Consultations will be held on this subject between the competent representative authorities of the two zones from April 20, 1955, onwards.
8. The provisions of the agreements on the cessation of hostilities intended to insure the protection of individuals and of property must be most strictly applied and must, in particular, allow every one in Viet-Nam to decide freely in which zone he wishes to live.
9. The competent representative authorities of the northern and southern zones of Viet-Nam, as well as the authorities of Laos and Cambodia, must not permit any individual or collective reprisals against persons who have collaborated in any way with one of the parties during the war, or again members of such persons' families.
10. The Conference takes note of the declaration of the French Government to the effect that it is ready to withdraw its troops from the territory of Cambodia, Laos, and Viet-Nam, at the request of the governments concerned and within a period which shall be fixed by agreement between the parties except in the cases where, by agreement between the two parties, a certain number of French troops shall remain at specified points and for a specified time.
11. The Conference takes note of the declaration of the French Government to the effect that for the settlement of all the problems connected with the reestablishment and consolidation of peace in Cambodia, Laos, and Viet-Nam, the French Government will proceed from the principle of respect for the independence and sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Cambodia, Laos, and Viet-Nam.
12. In their relations with Cambodia, Laos, and Viet-Nam, each member of the Geneva Conference undertakes to respect the sovereignty, the independence, the unity, and the territorial integrity of the above-mentioned states, and to refrain from any interference in their internal affairs.
13. The members of the Conference agree to consult one another on any question which may be referred to them by the International Supervisory Commission, in order to study such measures as may prove necessary to insure that the agreements on the cessation of hostilities in Cambodia, Laos, and Viet-Nam are respected.

Source: *The Department of State Bulletin*, XXXI, No. 788 (August 2, 1954), p. 164.

Understanding the Document

1. Given the history of foreign intervention in Vietnam, evaluate how realistic the provision was in the Geneva Agreement prohibiting “foreign troops and military personnel as well as of all kinds of arms and munitions.”
2. Explain what purpose the demarcation line, called for in the agreement, was to serve. Assess how effective this approach was in bringing about a resolution to the conflict in Vietnam.
3. Describe how members of the Geneva Conference proposed to settle the political problems that plagued Vietnam. How feasible was the plan for settlement of political problems outlined in the agreement? Explain.
4. Identify the clause in the Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference that you believe was the most flawed and discuss how it might have been revised so as to make the document more effective.

President Eisenhower's Letter to Ngo Dinh Diem 1954

The following is a letter from Dwight D. Eisenhower to Ngo Dinh Diem, Prime Minister of the State of Vietnam, dated October 23, 1954, in which President Eisenhower pledges support for the Diem government.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

I have been following with great interest the course of developments in Viet-Nam, particularly since the conclusion of the conference at Geneva. The implications of the agreement concerning Viet-Nam have caused grave concern regarding the future of a country temporarily divided by an artificial military grouping, weakened by a long and exhausting war and faced with enemies without and by their subversive collaborators within.

Your recent requests for aid to assist in the formidable project of the movement of several hundred thousand loyal Vietnamese citizens away from areas which are passing under a de facto rule and political ideology which they abhor, are being fulfilled. I am glad that the United States is able to assist in this humanitarian effort.

We have been exploring ways and means to permit our aid to Viet-Nam to be more effective and to make a greater contribution to the welfare and stability of the Government of Viet-Nam. I am, accordingly, instructing the American Ambassador to Viet-Nam to examine with you in your capacity as Chief of Government, how an intelligent program of American aid given directly to your Government can serve to assist Viet-Nam in its present hour of trial, provided that your Government is prepared to give assurances as to the standards of performance it would be able to maintain in the event such aid were supplied.

The purpose of this offer is to assist the Government of Viet-Nam in developing and maintaining a strong, viable state, capable of resisting attempted subversion or aggression through military means. The Government of the United States expects that this aid will be met by performance on the part of the Government of Viet-Nam in undertaking needed reforms. It hopes that such aid, combined with your own continuing efforts, will contribute effectively toward an independent Viet-Nam endowed with a strong government. Such a government would, I hope, be so responsive to the nationalist aspirations of its people, so enlightened in purpose and effective in performance, that it will be respected both at home and abroad and discourage any who might wish to impose a foreign ideology on your free people.

Sincerely,

Dwight D. Eisenhower

Source: *The Department of State Bulletin*, November 15, 1954, pp. 735–736.

Understanding the Document

1. Explain why President Eisenhower expressed “grave concern” to Ngo Dinh Diem in regard to the implications of the Geneva agreement, and discuss how valid those concerns were.
2. Identify the “humanitarian effort” Eisenhower mentions in his letter to Diem. Discuss how well the U.S. was able to balance its humanitarian and military support for South Vietnam.
3. What types of “standards of performance” did Eisenhower expect of the Diem government in exchange for continued U.S. aid?

Dwight D. Eisenhower's Letter to J. Lawton Collins 1954

In this 3 November 1954 letter, President Dwight D. Eisenhower designates Gen. J. Lawton Collins as Special United States Representative in Viet-Nam with the personal rank of Ambassador, outlines Collins' mission, and provides an assessment of the situation in Vietnam.

November 3, 1954

~~TOP SECRET~~



Dear General Collins:

The threat to the independence and security of Free Viet-Nam has reached such a critical stage that emergency measures are required to assist Free Viet-Nam to maintain itself, and to promote United States policies regarding Viet-Nam. Accordingly, I am designating you as Special United States Representative with personal rank of Ambassador to go to Saigon for a limited period to coordinate and direct United States activities in Viet-Nam in support of United States policy objectives. I am hereby instructing you to undertake this mission with broad authority to direct, utilize and control all the agencies and resources of the United States Government in Viet-Nam.

Your mission is undertaken on behalf of the United States Government and all its agencies will assist you as required in this difficult and essential task. I have complete confidence that your wide experience will enable you decisively to assist in dealing with the urgent problems which confront not only the Vietnamese Government but the free world in Viet-Nam. In your conversations and dealings with local French and Vietnamese authorities, you are authorized to speak with complete frankness and full authority on behalf of myself and the Government of the United States. You should keep the United States Government fully and currently informed of the progress of your mission through the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of Defense where appropriate regarding military matters.

For your guidance, the basic policies of the United States with respect to Viet-Nam are as follows:

1. To maintain and support a friendly and independent non-Communist government in Viet-Nam and to assist it in diminishing and ultimately eradicating Communist subversion and influence.

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By DJH Date 10/22/81

TOP SECRET



General J. Lawton Collins - 2.

2. To assist the Government of Viet-Nam to develop and maintain forces necessary for internal security and to foster economic conditions which will strengthen and promote the survival of a Free Viet-Nam.

3. To provide United States assistance directly to the Government of Viet-Nam and to coordinate information and exchange of views on such assistance with Vietnamese and French authorities.

4. To encourage expanding relationships between Free Viet-Nam and its non-Communist neighbors, and support for Free Viet-Nam by the free world.

The immediate and urgent requirement in carrying out these policies and in meeting the deteriorating situation in Viet-Nam is to assist in stabilizing and strengthening the legal government of Viet-Nam under the premiership of Ngo Dinh Diem. Accordingly, the principal task of your mission is to coordinate and direct a program in support of that government to enable it to: (a) promote internal security and political and economic stability, (b) establish and maintain control throughout the territory, and (c) effectively counteract Viet Minh infiltration and paramilitary activities south of the military demarcation line. As an initial framework for a concrete program of action you should (a) use the joint instructions which the Departments of State and Defense transmitted to the American Embassy in Saigon on October 22 and (b) take into consideration the latter's reply of October 27, 1954.

As this immediate program progresses, I will expect to receive your recommendations.

You will in these matters seek, and I hope obtain, the cooperation of the French authorities. Their cooperation will greatly facilitate the discharge of your mission.

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET

General J. Lawton Collins - 3.

You are of course advised of the United States position and policy with respect to the agreements of the Geneva Conference on Indochina and to the United States Declaration made there and in these matters you should conform to such position and policy.

I appreciate your undertaking this difficult and delicate mission which is of such great importance to the United States. This assignment and these instructions are convincing evidence of the firm intention of the Government of the United States to help the Vietnamese people preserve and promote their liberty and welfare.

With warm regard,

Sincerely,



**General J. Lawton Collins,
U. S. Representative, Military Committee, NATO,
Department of Defense.**

Source: Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Letter to J. Lawton Collins" (Abilene, KS: Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, November 3, 1954).

Understanding the Document

1. Why did President Eisenhower believe the situation in Vietnam had reached a "critical stage" by November 1954?
2. Identify the basic U.S. policies regarding Vietnam as outlined by Eisenhower in his letter.
3. How would you define the primary purpose of General Collins's mission in Vietnam? Explain how well equipped Collins was to fulfill his duties as identified by President Eisenhower.
4. Evaluate Eisenhower's assertion that Collins should "conform to" the "agreements of the Geneva Conference on Indochina." Discuss whether Eisenhower's instructions are in violation of the same agreement.

President Eisenhower Address at Gettysburg College 1959

In the following address by Dwight D. Eisenhower at Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on 4 April 1959, the President identifies the importance to the United States of the security and progress of Vietnam.

Let us consider briefly the country of Viet-Nam and the importance to us of the security and progress of that country. It is located, as you know, in the southeastern corner of Asia, exactly halfway round the world from Gettysburg College.

Viet-Nam is a country divided into two parts, like Korea and Germany. The southern half, with its twelve million people, is free but poor. It is an underdeveloped country; its economy is weak, average individual income being less than \$200 a year. The northern half has been turned over to communism. A line of demarcation running along the 17th parallel separates the two. To the north of this line stand several Communist divisions. These facts pose to south Viet-Nam two great tasks: self-defense and economic growth.

Understandably the people of Viet-Nam want to make their country a thriving, self-sufficient member of the family of nations. This means economic expansion.

For Viet-Nam's economic growth, the acquisition of capital is vitally necessary. Now, the nation could create the capital needed for growth by stealing from the already meager rice bowls of its people and regimenting them into work battalions. This enslavement is the commune system, adopted by the new overlords of Red China. It would mean, of course, the loss of freedom within the country without any hostile outside action whatsoever.

Another way for Viet-Nam to get the necessary capital is through private investments from the outside and through governmental loans and, where necessary, grants from other and more fortunately situated nations.

In either of these ways the economic problem of Viet-Nam could be solved. But only the second way can preserve freedom.

And there is still the other of Viet-Nam's great problem—how to support the military forces it needs without crushing its economy.

Because of the proximity of large Communist military formations in the north, Free Viet-Nam must maintain substantial numbers of men under arms. Moreover, while the Government has shown real progress in cleaning out Communist guerrillas, those remaining continue to be a disruptive influence in the nation's life.

Unassisted, Viet-Nam cannot at this time produce and support the military formations essential to it or, equally important, the morale—the hope, the confidence, the pride—necessary to meet the dual threat of aggression from without and subversion within its borders.

Still another fact! Strategically south Viet-Nam's capture by the Communists would bring their power several hundred miles into a hitherto free region. The remaining countries in Southeast Asia would be menaced by a great flanking movement. The freedom of twelve million people would be lost immediately and that of 150 million others in adjacent lands would be seriously endangered. The loss of south Viet-Nam would set in motion a crumbling process that could, as it progressed, have grave consequences for us and for freedom.

Viet-Nam must have a reasonable degree of safety now—both for her people and for her property. Because of these facts, military as well as economic help is currently needed in Viet-Nam.

We reach the inescapable conclusion that our own national interests demand some help from us in sustaining in Viet-Nam the morale, the economic progress, and the military strength necessary to its continued existence in freedom.

Source: U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, 90th Congress, 1st Session, Background Information Relating to Southeast Asia and Vietnam (3rd Revised Edition) (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, July 1967), pp. 96–97.

Understanding the Document

1. Identify the two options President Eisenhower proposed to the people of Vietnam to acquire the capital necessary to achieve economic growth. Evaluate Eisenhower's characterization of the economic situation in Vietnam as well as the solution he recommends.
2. According to Eisenhower, what is the economic-military dilemma that currently confronts the leaders of South Vietnam? What course of action does Eisenhower put forth to resolve this dilemma?
3. Describe the series of events Eisenhower suggests would be set in motion should South Vietnam fall to the Communists. In retrospect, assess the accuracy of Eisenhower's scenario of world events that would follow the loss of South Vietnam.
4. Evaluate Eisenhower's "inescapable conclusion" that helping Vietnam, economically and militarily, was in "our national interests."

LESSON THREE

AMERICANIZATION: LAYING THE MILITARY GROUNDWORK

A. Objectives

- ◆ To describe how John F. Kennedy's statements and actions concerning American involvement in Vietnam evolved from his tenure in the U.S. Senate throughout his presidency.
- ◆ To identify how American public opinion concerning the situation in Vietnam began to shift during the Kennedy presidency, and determine the impact this change in public opinion had on American foreign policy.
- ◆ To evaluate the role the United States played in the coup in Vietnam that overthrew the Diem regime.

B. Background Information

If Dwight D. Eisenhower laid the political groundwork for American involvement in Vietnam, then it was John F. Kennedy who set in motion those events that would provide the military groundwork for continued American intervention in Southeast Asia, increasing both military and economic aid to South Vietnam. JFK was instrumental in increasing the number of American advisors who were sent to South Vietnam to engage in a variety of conventional as well as unconventional operations. The most noted of these advisors was the new Army Special Forces unit known as the Green Berets. Although these efforts were meant to bolster President Ngo Dinh Diem's power in South Vietnam, the situation soon deteriorated. By 1963, Diem and his brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, had lost most of the fragile power base they once held and had become too great of a political liability, due in part to the countless stories of corruption and images of demonstrators and protests that were being sent back to America via the various news media now reporting from Vietnam. President Kennedy and his advisors decided to "cut their losses" by pledging not to intervene should South Vietnamese military leaders act to overthrow the Diem government. Such a coup did take place on November 1, 1963, resulting in the assassination of both Diem and his brother Nhu. Although Kennedy would also fall to an assassin's bullet three weeks later, it was not before he had successfully shifted America's Vietnam strategy, which now included sixteen thousand American military advisors stationed in South Vietnam. Ironically, Kennedy's build up of American military presence in Vietnam was going on at the same time he was consulting with key advisors and members of Congress behind the scenes, including Senate Majority leader Mike Mansfield, about initiating a withdrawal. Fearing such a foreign policy decision would negatively impact his re-election bid, however, Kennedy decided to wait until 1965 to implement his withdrawal plans. At that point, Kennedy remarked, "... I'll become one of the most unpopular presidents in history. I'll be damned everywhere as a Communist appeaser. But I don't care. If I tried to pull out completely now from Vietnam, we would have another Joe McCarthy Red Scare on our hands, but I can do it after I'm reelected. So we had better make damned sure that I am reelected."

C. Lesson Activities

Bloom's Mastery Learning

Knowledge

Introduce the lesson by distributing to students copies of “John F. Kennedy’s Remarks at the Conference on America’s Stake in Vietnam,” (**Document 13**). Identify and examine, as a class, the four key points posited by then Senator Kennedy in support of American involvement in Vietnam. Then have students work individually to complete the questions at the conclusion of the document. Next, have students read the account by Vo Nguyen Giap, “The Vietminh People’s War Strategy Against France” (**Document 14**), a Vietnamese soldier that took part in the rebellion against French colonial rule. Students should then respond to the questions at the end of the document. Finally, have students compare and contrast the characterization of the situation in Vietnam as presented by Senator Kennedy and Vo Nguyen Giap.

Comprehension

Place students in groups of five. Then assign each group the following individual roles: Secretary Mc Namara, Undersecretary Ball, Ambassador Nolting, Undersecretary Harriman, and Special Assistant Bundy. Have students read the “Sanitized Memorandum of Conference with the President” (**Document 15**) in order to develop an understanding for their assigned individual’s position concerning the situation in Vietnam. Then have each group discuss and vote on which position or option they would recommend to President Kennedy. Complete the activity by having each group identify to the class which option they would recommend as well as their rationale for choosing that position. Students should then use the remaining time to answer the questions at the conclusion of the document.

Application

Have students read and discuss the various currents of American public opinion on continued U.S. involvement in Vietnam (**Document 16**). Provide an opportunity during the discussion for students to apply their knowledge and understanding of the options advocated by key members of President Kennedy’s cabinet, from the previous activity, to those positions identified in this summary of American public opinion. Conclude the activity by having students answer the questions at the end of the document either individually or as a class.

Analysis

Distribute copies of the three letters concerning the death of Army Specialist James McAndrew in Vietnam (**Documents 17–19**). Have students analyze these letters by responding to the questions at the conclusion of these documents. Compare and contrast the letter President Kennedy wrote to McAndrew’s parents with the one he composed for McAndrew’s sister. Discuss the issues outlined by Bobbie Lou Pendergrass in her letter and evaluate how well Kennedy addressed them in his reply.

Synthesis

Have students read the “Memorandum of Conference with President Kennedy” (**Document 20**) and answer the accompanying questions. Next, have the students, working individually or in groups, assume the role of President Kennedy’s closest personal advisor, who has been given the charge of deciding what course of action the U.S. should take in regard to a potential coup in Vietnam. Provide the students with ten to fifteen minutes to prepare their report, in which

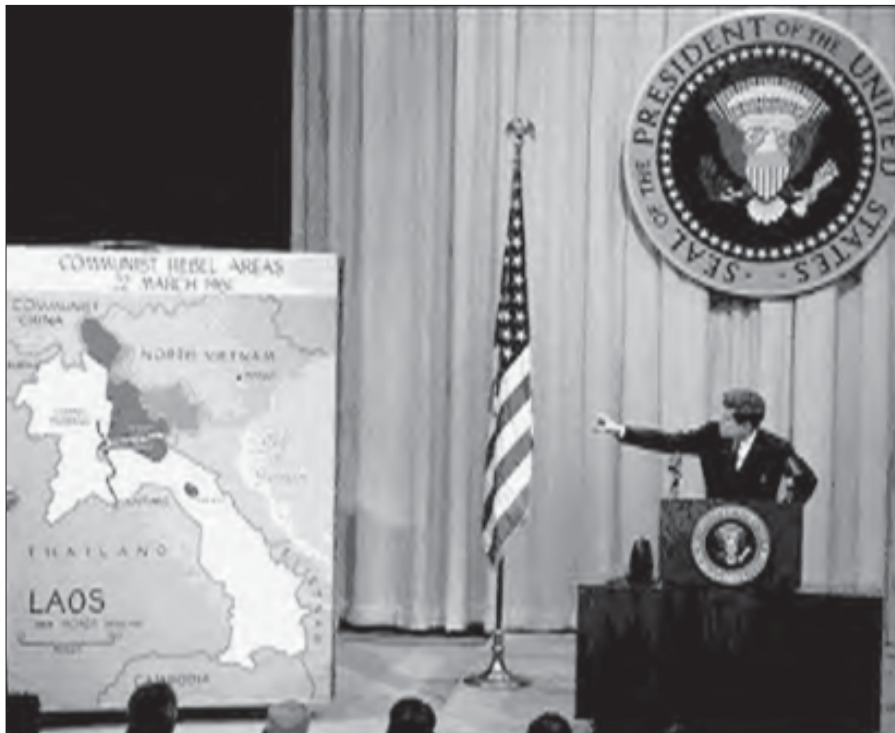
they will identify what they believe to be the best course of action, as well as their rationale. If time permits, allow students to share their decisions with the class as if they were briefing the president.

Evaluation

Distribute copies of “Central Intelligence Agency Memorandum on the Situation in South Vietnam” (**Document 21**) and “Draft Circular Telegram on Interim Guidance on Change of Regimes in South Vietnam” (**Document 22**). Students should first complete the accompanying questions for each document. Then have students evaluate the role the United States played in the coup that overthrew the Diem regime in Vietnam. Discuss why the government felt it necessary to classify these two documents and what would have been the reaction of Americans at the time had the information included in these documents been made public.

D. Extension Activities

1. Compare and contrast Senator Kennedy’s 1956 appraisal of the situation in Vietnam and proposed course of action with the classified status reports he received from Vietnam and actions he took later as president.
2. Identify the key advisors to John F. Kennedy and further research the positions held by each concerning the situation in Vietnam and continued American involvement. Evaluate each advisor’s position and prioritize them according to which individual provided the most sound or reasonable advice.
3. Research popular newspapers and periodicals from the period of the JFK presidency, 1961–1963, and trace the evolution of American public opinion regarding the situation in Vietnam. Identify those events that played a role in shaping public opinion during this period.



Source: “President Kennedy Press Conference on Vietnam” (Boston, MA: John F. Kennedy Library (NLK), Columbia Point [National Archives], March 22, 1961).

John F. Kennedy Remarks at the Conference on America's Stake in Vietnam 1956

Senator John F. Kennedy provided a detailed examination of the situation in Vietnam as well as a comprehensive analysis of America's stake in that country in this 1 June 1956 address to the American Friends of Vietnam.

American Friends of Vietnam
62 West 45th Street
New York 36, New York

FOR RELEASE 1 P.M., FRIDAY, June 1st.

Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy (Dem.-Mass.) at the Conference on "America's Stake in Vietnam" sponsored by the American Friends of Vietnam, Willard Hotel, Washington, D.C., June first.

It is a genuine pleasure to be here today at this vital Conference on the future of Vietnam, and America's stake in that new nation, sponsored by the American Friends of Vietnam, an organization of which I am proud to be a member. Your meeting today at a time when political events concerning Vietnam are approaching a climax, both in that country and in our own Congress, is most timely. Your topic and deliberations, which emphasize the promise of the future more than the failures of the past, are most constructive. . . .

No one contends that we should now rush all our fire-fighting equipment to Vietnam, ignoring the Middle East or any other part of the world. But neither should we conclude that the cessations of hostilities in Indo-China removed that area from the list of important areas of United States foreign policy. Let us briefly consider exactly what is "America's Stake in Vietnam":

(1) First, Vietnam represents the cornerstone of the Free World in Southeast Asia, the keystone to the arch, the finger in the dike. Burma, Thailand, India, Japan, the Philippines and obviously Laos and Cambodia are among those whose security would be threatened if the Red Tide of Communism overflowed into Vietnam. In the past, our policy-makers have sometimes issued contradictory statements on this point—but the long history of Chinese invasions of Southeast Asia being stopped by Vietnamese warriors should have removed all doubt on this subject. . . .

(2) Secondly, Vietnam represents a proving ground of democracy in Asia. However we may choose to ignore it or deprecate it, the rising prestige and influence of Communist China in Asia are unchallengeable facts. Vietnam represents the alternative to Communist dictatorship. If this democratic experiment fails, if some one million refugees have fled the totalitarianism of the North only to find neither freedom nor security in the South, then weakness, not strength, will characterize the meaning of democracy in the minds of still more Asians. The United States is directly responsible for this experiment—it is playing an important role in the laboratory where it is being conducted. We cannot afford to permit that experiment to fail.

(3) Third and in somewhat similar fashion, Vietnam represents a test of American responsibility and determination in Asia. If we are not the parents of little Vietnam, then surely we are the godparents. We presided at its birth, we gave assistance to its life, we have helped to shape its future. As French influence in the political, economic and military spheres has declined in Vietnam, American influence has steadily grown. This is our offspring—we cannot abandon it, we cannot ignore its needs. And if it falls

victim to any of the perils that threaten its existence—Communism, political anarchy, poverty and the rest—then the United States, with some justification, will be held responsible; and our prestige in Asia will sink to a new low.

(4) Fourth and finally, America's stake in Vietnam, in her strength and in her security, is a very selfish one—for it can be measured, in the last analysis, in terms of American lives and American dollars. It is now well known that we were at one time on the brink of war in Indo-China—a war which could well have been more costly, more exhausting and less conclusive than any war we have ever known. The threat of such war is not now altogether removed from the horizon. Military weakness, political instability or economic failure in the new state of Vietnam could change almost overnight the apparent security which has increasingly characterized that area under the leadership of Premier Diem. And the key position of Vietnam in Southeast Asia, as already discussed, makes inevitable the involvement of this nation's security in any new outbreak of trouble. . . .

I shall not attempt to set forth the details of the type of aid program this nation should offer the Vietnamese—for it is not the details of that program that are as important as the spirit with which it is offered and the objectives it seeks to accomplish. We should not attempt to buy the friendship of the Vietnamese. Nor can we win their hearts by making them dependent upon our handouts. What we must offer them is a revolution—a political, economic and social revolution far superior to anything the Communists can offer—far more peaceful, far more democratic and far more locally controlled. Such a Revolution will require much from the United States and much from Vietnam. We must supply capital to replace that drained by the centuries of colonial exploitation; technicians to train those handicapped by deliberate policies of illiteracy; guidance to assist a nation taking those first feeble steps toward the complexities of a republican form of government. We must assist the inspiring growth of Vietnamese democracy and economy, including the complete integration of those refugees who gave up their homes and their belongings to seek freedom. We must provide military assistance to rebuild the new Vietnamese Army, which every day faces the growing peril of Vietminh Armies across the border. . . .

Source: John F. Kennedy, "Address to the American Friends of Vietnam" (Boston, MA: John F. Kennedy Library (NLK), Columbia Point [National Archives], June 1, 1956).

Understanding the Document

1. Explain why Senator John F. Kennedy believed Vietnam represented "the cornerstone of the Free World in Southeast Asia"?
2. Why did Kennedy claim Vietnam was a "proving ground of democracy in Asia"? What did Kennedy purport would occur if the "democratic experiment" in Vietnam failed?
3. Evaluate Kennedy's assertion that the U.S. was "if...not the parents of little Vietnam, then surely . . . the godparents."
4. Describe the type of "revolution" Kennedy suggested should be offered to the people of Vietnam.

The Vietminh People's War Strategy Against France 1961 *Vo Nguyen Giap*

The following excerpt illustrates the strategy employed by the Vietminh in their fight against France. The reflective essay by Vo Nguyen Giap, a Vietnamese soldier that took part in the rebellion against French colonial rule, prophetically outlines the same strategy that would be successfully used against the American military over the course of the next decade.

The Vietnamese people's war of liberation [against France] was a just war, aiming to win back the independence and unity of the country, to bring land to our peasants and guarantee them the right to it, and to defend the achievements of the August Revolution. That is why it was first and foremost a people's war. To educate, mobilize, organize and arm the whole people in order that they might take part in the Resistance was a crucial question. . . .

From the point of view of directing operations, our *strategy and tactics had to be those of a people's war and of a long-term resistance*.

Our strategy was, as we have stressed, to wage a long-lasting battle. A war of this nature in general entails several phases; in principle, starting from a stage of contention, it goes through a period of equilibrium before arriving at a general counter-offensive. In effect, the way in which it is carried on can be more subtle and more complex, depending on the particular conditions obtaining on both sides during the course of operations. Only long-term war could enable us to utilize to the maximum our political trump cards, to overcome our material handicap and to transform our weakness into strength. To maintain and increase our forces, was the principle to which we adhered, contenting ourselves with attacking when success was certain, refusing to give battle likely to incur losses to us or to engage in hazardous actions. We had to apply the slogan: to build up our strength during the actual course of fighting. . . .

From the military point of view, the Vietnamese people's war of liberation proved that an insufficiently equipped people's army, but an army fighting for a just cause, can, with appropriate strategy and tactics, combine the conditions needed to conquer a modern army of aggressive imperialism.

Source: Vo Nguyen Giap, *People's War: People's Army* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), pp. 29–30.

Understanding the Document

1. According to Vo Nguyen Giap, what was the goal of the Vietnamese people's war against France? Why does he label this a "people's war"?
2. What type of strategy does Vo Nguyen Giap suggest proved successful in the Vietnamese people's war against France and alludes would also serve to conquer any other "modern army of aggressive imperialism"?

Sanitized Memorandum of Conference with President John F. Kennedy, 1963

This sanitized memorandum details the proceedings of an 28 August 1963 conference with President John F. Kennedy regarding the internal situation in Vietnam.

SANITIZED COPY

~~TOP SECRET~~

MEMORANDUM OF CONFERENCE WITH THE PRESIDENT
August 28, 1963, 12:00 Noon -- Subject: Vietnam

Others present: Vice President (later), Secretary McNamara, Under Secretary Ball, Secretary Dillon, Attorney General, General Carter, General Taylor, Deputy Secretary Gilpatrick, Under Secretary Harriman, Ambassador Nolting, General Krulak, Director Murrow, Mr. Helms, Assistant Secretary Hilsman, Mr. Colby (CIA), Mr. Bundy, General Clifton, Mr. Forrestal, Mr. Bromley Smith

The meeting began with a briefing by Mr. Colby who read an extract from the situation report cabled from Saigon by the CIA staff chief. Mr. Colby said we had tried to clear up the confusion caused by a telegram sent commercially from an unknown person in Laguna Beach, California, to Ambassador Lodge in Saigon urging him to try to overthrow Diem. Reports had reached Washington to the effect that Diem thought this message was an instruction from the President to Lodge.

General Taylor reported on the U.S. forces in the area available to evacuate Americans in Vietnam, if required. He said 3000 to 4000 evacuees could be airlifted by U.S. forces now in Vietnam. Other U.S. forces are being moved closer to Saigon so that they can respond more quickly and move a larger number of people. Ambassador Lodge has expressed his concern that the airlift capability is inadequate. Admiral Felt is engaged now in figuring out ways of increasing the number of Americans who could be removed from dangerous areas promptly in an emergency. The airlift in Vietnam outside of Saigon is substantial. In response to a question, General Taylor said there were over 4000 Americans in Saigon, excluding the military.

General Taylor said that Vietnamese forces loyal to Diem in the Saigon area outnumbered two to one the forces we believed would follow rebel generals in the event of a coup. Outside of Saigon, the forces controlled by generals who might rebel outnumbered Diem's forces. He concluded that in the long run the forces controlled by rebel generals would outnumber forces which would remain loyal to Diem. He cautioned that a head count of troops was not all-important because a small number of tough units could control the situation even though outnumbered by less well-trained forces.

Additional material has been released as a result of this review.

SANITIZED
PUBLISHED IN FRUS 1961-63
VOL. IV DOC # 1
By SWB, NARA, Date 7/30/93

- 2 -

Mr. Hilsman said that General Dinh is the key to the situation. -----

Ambassador Nolting said that, as he pointed out yesterday, he believed that Diem and Nhu knew of our activity with the generals.

Mr. Ball reported that Ambassador Lodge and General Harkins had suggested that we or they leak to the press the movement of the 7th Fleet to a position off Saigon. The President doubted this suggestion should be approved because our fleet movement would appear to be such obvious evidence of an intention of the U.S. to intervene militarily in Vietnam.

Secretary McNamara stated that he believed we should decide first whether we are backing the Vietnamese generals in their effort to overthrow Diem. If we are, then we should plan how to induce doubtful generals to defect. In his view, events have almost pulled us along in the last twenty-four hours.

Mr. Ball said that it would be difficult if not impossible for us to live with a situation in which Nhu was ascendant in Vietnam. He believed we had no option but to back a coup. We are already beyond the point of no return. The question is how do we make this coup effort successful.

Mr. McNamara said he believed that we should not proceed as if we were being pushed. If we decided to back a coup we should go in to win. The cables he had read from Saigon raised doubt in his mind that the coup generals could overthrow Diem. At least initially, forces loyal to Diem can overpower forces opposing him.

The President noted that both Ambassador Lodge and General Harkins had recommended that we go ahead. He did not believe we should take the position that we have to go ahead because we have gone so far already. If a coup is not in the cards, we could unload. The generals talking about a coup did not appear to be very enthusiastic.

Mr. Bundy commented on the consequences of backing off vs. the consequences of going forward. He believed we should decide today what we should do to defect the generals. Every time we act to help the rebel generals we reduce our freedom to choose between going ahead or breaking off efforts to overthrow Diem.

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Mr. Ball said that one major change which we could make would be to instruct our military officers to talk to the generals. Up to this point, we had had no contact with the coup generals except through CIA officials. Until our military officers contact the generals, several generals who we now consider doubtful would not shift to supporting the group planning to overthrow Diem.

The President commented that we had asked General Harkins twice if he approved of our going ahead in support of a coup. Both Ambassador Lodge and General Harkins say we should support the rebel generals.

In response to the President's question, Ambassador Nolting said he was surprised when he learned that General Harkins favored our supporting a coup. Further encouragement to the generals opposing Diem runs counter to our agreement on continuing economic assistance which we reached with Diem some time ago. Diem foresaw at that time a disagreement with the U.S. about how they were running the internal affairs of Vietnam. Nolting said he had grave reservations about proceeding against Diem. The good faith of the U.S. is involved. In addition, he had given personal commitments to Diem which were based on instructions sent to him from Washington when he was Ambassador. We should not support a coup in the expectation that we can get another government which we can deal with and a base on which we can win the war against the Viet Cong. Supporting a coup is bad in principle and sets a bad precedent. The alternatives he saw are three:

1. To decide to support the coup generals and help them line up a preponderance of force so that there would be a quick takeover.
2. Back off from contacts already made with dissident generals, which he admitted would be difficult to do.
3. Leave the dissident generals alone and, if they have the guts to attempt a coup, support them at that time.

Mr. Bundy called attention to the difference between gaining operational control of a coup and the present situation in which we are merely telling the generals that we understand how they feel about Diem and that we can't live with the Nhus.

Mr. Hilsman said there were some things we could do in which the U.S. hand would not show.

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Mr. Ball, commenting on Ambassador Nolting's statement, said Diem had broken promises he had made to us. The actions they are taking are in violation of good faith. He was not sympathetic to the allegation that we were breaking commitments. He cited reports which indicate that Diem and his followers are taking anti-American actions. He saw the situation as follows:

1. We can't win the war against the Communists with Diem in control. The U.S. position in the eyes of the world is being badly damaged. Hence, we can't back off from our all-out opposition to Diem and Nhu.
2. If we merely let the generals proceed and then, if they fail to overthrow Diem, we have lost as well. This outcome is half-baked and no good.
3. We decide to do the job right. There is no other acceptable alternative. We must decide now to go through to a successful overthrow of Diem.

Mr. Harriman stated his agreement with the position expressed by Mr. Ball.

Secretary Dillon commented that if anything starts it will be labeled as a U.S. show from the very beginning. If we decide to back the rebel generals we must do whatever is required to be certain they succeed in overthrowing Diem.

The President said we should decide what we can do here or suggest things that can be done in the field which would maximize the chances of the rebel generals. We should ask Ambassador Lodge and General Harkins how we can build up military forces which would carry out a coup. At present, it does not look as if the coup forces could defeat Diem.

Secretary Dillon interrupted to say, "Then don't go."

The President asked the Defense Department to come up with ways of building up the anti-Diem forces in Saigon.

Mr. Hillsman said that Ambassador Lodge was asking standby authority:

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1. To suspend all economic aid to the Diem government, but continue aid by giving it directly to the generals.
2. To suspend all U.S. operations in Vietnam,
3. To assist the coup generals by making U.S. military equipment available to them.
4. To make a public announcement that the U.S. was supporting the forces trying to overthrow Diem.

Secretary McNamara thought we should tell Ambassador Lodge and General Harkins:

1. Don't let a coup start if they think it can't win because we can't live with Diem if a coup attempt is made and the coup fails. He questions whether, on the basis of the forces now available to the rebel generals, a coup can succeed.
2. We need a list of actions which would be of help to the coup generals, such as ways of gaining support from now doubtful generals and the movement of U.S. fleet units.

Mr. Bundy commented that most generals favor a coup and pointed out that the U.S. controls all military assistance being given to Diem.

Mr. Harriman said that we have lost Vietnam if the coup fails. He believes we cannot win the war with the Nhus. We have lost the fight in Vietnam and must withdraw if a coup does not take place. We put Diem in power and he has doublecrossed us. Diem and his followers have betrayed us. He favored removing Nhu and felt that it was a mistake that we had not acted a long time ago. We had made a mistake in working with Nhu on the strategic hamlet plan.

Mr. Hileman said that we can't stop the generals now and that they must go forward or die. He agreed that we cannot win the war unless Diem is removed.

In response to the President's question, Mr. Harriman said we had been winning the war with Diem because the generals were with him. The generals are defecting now because of the recent actions which Diem had taken against the Buddhists. In the present situation, the opposition to Diem can be rallied.

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The President thought we should go back to Ambassador Lodge and General Harkins again, telling them that counting up the forces favoring Diem and the forces opposing Diem, it was clear that Diem held the balance of power.

Mr. Bundy said our request of Ambassador Lodge and General Harkins should be specific in that we should ask them how they evaluate the pro-Diem and anti-Diem forces. He noted that both Ambassador Lodge and General Harkins counted heavily on the caliber of the various troops.

The Attorney General expressed his concern as to whether we knew what we would do if Diem acted to destroy the coup before the generals were ready to pull it off. He noted that some people thought Diem knew already of the coup plans. Diem would know that if the coup were successful he would be finished, and, therefore, he would obviously try to break up a coup by arresting the generals before they were ready. He thought we should figure out how we could offset any action of Diem to destroy the forces opposing him.

Ambassador Nolting asked what condition Vietnam would be in if a coup is successful. He was not clear whether the resulting government would bring about stable leadership or whether the rebelling generals would be unable to agree on who should be the leader.

Mr. Hillsman said the generals could put the Vice President of Vietnam in power and govern the country the way the generals have in Korea. He acknowledged that we have little information about how the generals plan to run the country if they are successful. He expressed his strong view that Diem and Nhu would have to be exiled.

Ambassador Nolting said that only Diem can hold this fragmented country together. Possibly Diem could get Nhu and his wife to leave, but he doubted this would be possible. We should try once again to persuade Diem to remove Nhu and Madame Nhu. Ambassador Lodge had chosen not to try to do this for fear of exposing the coup generals to a sudden reaction by Diem if Diem refused to remove the Nhuses.

Governor Harriman stated his disagreement. The political situation in Vietnam will blow up sometime. We have in Vietnam a situation similar to that which existed in Korea under Syngman Rhee. The political forces in Vietnam will rally quickly against Diem.

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Source: Bromley Smith, "Memorandum of Conference with the President" (Boston, MA: John F. Kennedy Library (NLK), Columbia Point [National Archives], August 28, 1963).

Understanding the Document

1. Summarize General Taylor's assessment of the situation in Vietnam and discuss the role his report played in the deliberations concerning support for a possible coup in Vietnam.
2. Identify and evaluate the three alternative courses of action regarding support for a possible coup in Vietnam as proposed by Ambassador Nolting.
3. Provide an overview of Under Secretary Ball's appraisal of the Diem government and evaluate the accuracy of his assessment of the situation.
4. Why did Under Secretary Harriman proclaim "we have lost Vietnam if the coup fails"?
5. Describe the role the Nhus played in the Diem government and explain why Ambassador Nolting recommended that Diem remove them.

State Department American Opinion Summary 1963

American Opinion Summary, a State Department release, describes the varying currents of American opinion regarding continued U.S. involvement in Vietnam, dated 10 September 1963.



September 10, 1963

American policy is "in a box" insofar as South Viet-Nam is concerned, current opinion concludes. There is some disposition to draw a parallel with American Policy in China of nearly 20 years ago, as President Kennedy did in his NBC-TV interview last evening. "As then, we again support a military movement of an ally while simultaneously denouncing that ally as corruptly 'dictatorial,'" said William S. White (also, *Des Moines Register*, Robert Hewett in *Minneapolis Tribune*).

A representative summing up of the problem, as observers see it, comes from the *Denver Post*: "If we continue to support the Diem government with money, technical and military assistance, we'll be damned for propping up a repressive regime; if we attempt to engineer its overthrow we will be damned for interfering in the domestic affairs of a sovereign nation; if we cut our economic aid we will be damned for weakening a nation that is seriously jeopardized by the Communists; if we just pull out altogether we will be damned for not living up to our promises, for leaving the Vietnamese at the mercy of Diem and Nhu and for leaving a vital part of the free world to be overrun by the Communists."

U.S. "Floundering" The impression conveyed by commentators at this time is that (1) American policymakers, having been "outmaneuvered" by the Diem government, are now "flailing about in search of a policy", and (2) the experiment in "diplomacy by TV" has been proven a "lamentable failure" (*Time*; similarly, *Newsweek*, *New Republic*, *U.S. News & World Report*, Frank Conniff in *N.Y. Journal-American*).

It is time for a return to traditional, quiet diplomacy, a number stress (*Newsweek*, *Wall St. Journal*, *N.Y. News*, *N.Y. Herald Tribune*, *U.S. News & World Report*, Arthur Krock). A number seem prepared to accept the fact that "we are in for a period of making the best of a bad situation" (*Newark News*).

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No Withdrawal Despite the widespread criticism which has been focused on U.S. policy and the actions of the Diem government, a large body of opinion agrees with President Kennedy that "we should not withdraw" from South Viet-Nam. "We must hang on," many contend. "The consequences of a collapse would be appalling. The war is not only a Vietnamese war but our war--a war from which we cannot retreat and dare not lose" (*New York Times*; also, *Christian*

Science Monitor, Newark News, Memphis Commercial Appeal, St. Louis Globe-Democrat, Kenneth Crawford in Newsweek and others).

Alternatives There continues to be a division of opinion as to the next moves open to the U.S. in Viet-Nam. For the present, a large number of observers stress, we have no alternative but to “string along with the Diem regime” while using our influence as effectively as possible to achieve reforms (*Kansas City Star, Detroit News, Hartford Courant, Oakland Tribune, Houston Post, New York Times, Miami Herald, Scripps-Howard press, Richard Starnes, Joseph Kraft*). This suits Diem’s supporters who contend the stakes are too high for the U.S. to “pull the rug out from under Diem”—especially when the war is slowly but inevitably being won (Frank Conniff in Hearst press, *N.Y. Mirror, Wash. Star, St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, Maj. Gen. Thomas Lane in *Cincinnati Enquirer*). “We should forget about world opinion,” said the *Washington Star*. “We are not engaged in a world popularity contest, but are trying to win a nasty, dirty war.”

A sizable group, however, continues to hold that Diem “must go” (*Portland Oregonian, Memphis Commercial Appeal, Louisville Courier-Journal, Commonweal*). “The time has come for the U.S. to face the fact that the whole ruling family must go—Diem, his brother and all the rest,” said the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. “These people are not interested in Viet-Nam. They are engaged in a cynical effort to retain power at the expense of their country, to force the U.S. to pay the bill, and perhaps even to perpetuate themselves in office by letting the war drag on inconclusively.” Igor Oganessoff reports from Saigon that “few Westerners nowadays retain any illusions about the motives of the Diem family. No profound sympathy with democratic ideals moves them against the Communists. This, to this autocratic family, is a power struggle, pure and simple” (in *Wall St. Journal*).

If the defense of Viet-Nam is militarily vital to us, the *Detroit Free Press* asserts, “we should win. If this means ousting the Ngo regime and setting up a military government, so be it. It might mean finding a puppet to take over civilian operations, or even putting the country under an American pro-consul. We cannot

- 3 -

go on the way we have been going.” For the *Chicago Sun-Times*, the answer is to “concentrate only on the prosecution of the war and get completely out of South Viet-Nam politics, or be prepared to remove the present government and supervise the honest election of a popular government.”

Cut Off Aid? President Kennedy’s NBC-TV statements (9/9), expressing reluctance to reduce aid at this time, have been interpreted as “leaving room for future reduction of U.S. aid to South Viet-Nam” (Warren Unna in *Wash. Post, Baltimore Sun*).

Prior to these statements, some spokesmen in Congress and the press had argued that the situation can change only if President Kennedy is ready to back up an ultimatum to President Diem by cutting off economic and military aid. It is acknowledged that while this might jar the anti-Diem elements in the armed forces into action, it also might provide the vacuum into which the Communists seek to move. Here opinion splits, and the larger number at present share the President’s view that the risks of cutting off aid are too great.

But the *Christian Science Monitor* argues that “if the repression drags on” in South Viet-Nam, Mr. Kennedy should adopt the next step—“cutting U.S. aid to the Diem regime unless there is an improbably reform of the Ngo family. There is no acceptable alternative” (somewhat similarly, *Denver Post, Balt. Sun*). Some members of Congress also appear to be thinking along these lines (e.g. Sens. Church, D-Ida., Carlson, R-Kan.). Sen. Morse is more confident than his colleagues in predicting that “if the U.S. withdrew its support from Diem, the anti-Communist forces in South Viet-Nam would

throw him out within 90 days, and hundreds of the anti-Communist Paris exiles would return to South Viet-Nam. Then there would be some chance of establishing a moderate regime,” in his opinion.

Reunification? President de Gaulle’s suggestion that the best solution for Viet-Nam might be a reunified and neutral country continues to prompt discussion, but little support. Those commenting have many misgivings about “another experiment in neutrality” along the lines of Laos, which is deemed a failure (*Newseek*, Eric Sevareid, Richard Starnes in *Scripps-Howard press*). The proposal “is just plain silly,” the *Detroit Free Press* stated.

The basic objection is that de Gaulle’s proposal “overlaps the all-important intermediate stages to a united, independent Viet-Nam. These are: replacement of Diem, reestablishment of peace with a constructive program, free elections, possibly under the UN, and a joint meeting of north and south Viet-Nam to determine needs and step by step moves toward unity” (Joseph Berry in *N.Y. Post*).

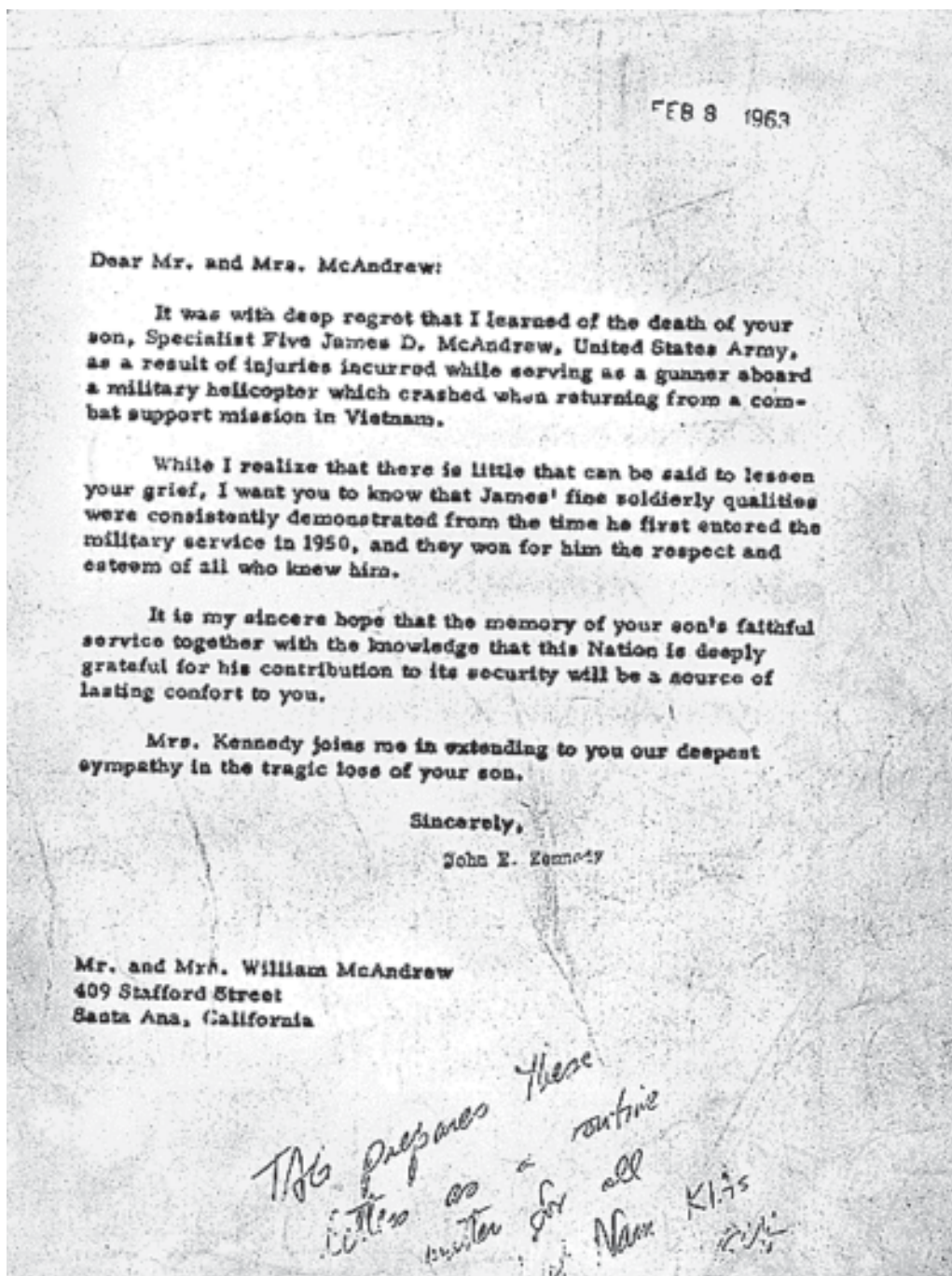
Source: Department of State, “American Opinion Summary” (Boston, MA: John F. Kennedy Library (NLK), Columbia Point [National Archives], September 10, 1963).

Understanding the Document

1. Explain why the State Department’s *American Opinion Summary* refers to American policy in South Vietnam as “in a box.”
2. Evaluate President John F. Kennedy’s comparison of the current policy in Vietnam with that of American policy in China two decades earlier.
3. Describe the “Catch-22” situation in Vietnam as summarized by the *Denver Post*.
4. Define the concept of “diplomacy by TV” and discuss why many in the news media believed that it had been proven to be a failed approach.
5. Identify and evaluate the alternative approaches to dealing with the Diem government as posited by the media.
6. Discuss the feasibility of President de Gaulle’s recommendation and describe why so many objected to his proposition.

President John F. Kennedy Condolence Letter to Soldier's Parents 1963

In the following 8 February 1963 letter, President John F. Kennedy expresses his condolences to Mr. and Mrs. William McAndrew on the death of their son, Army Specialist James McAndrew, in Vietnam.



Source: John F. Kennedy, "Condolence Letter to Mr. and Mrs. William McAndrew" (Boston, MA: John F. Kennedy Library (NLK), Columbia Point [National Archives], February 8, 1963).

Bobbie Lou Pendergrass Letter to President Kennedy 1963

In this 18 February 1963 letter, Mrs. Bobbie Lou Pendergrass discusses her concerns over the death of her brother, Army Specialist James McAndrew, in Vietnam to President John F. Kennedy.

9/10 7/10 February 18, 1963

Dear President Kennedy,

My brother, Specialist James Delmas McAndrew, was one of the seven crew members killed on January 11 in a Viet Nam helicopter crash.

The Army reports at first said that communist gunfire was suspected. Later, it said that the helicopter tragedy was due to malfunction of aircraft controls. I wonder if the "malfunction of aircraft controls" wasn't due to "communist gunfire." However, that's neither important now, nor do I even care to know.

My two older brothers entered the Navy and the Marine Corps in 1941 immediately after the war started - they served all during the war and in some very important battles - then Jim went into the Marines as soon as he was old enough and was overseas for a long time. During those war years and even all during the Korean conflict we worried about all of them - but that was all very different. They were wars that our country were fighting, and everyone here knew that our sons and brothers were giving their lives for their country.

I can't help but feel that giving one's life for one's country is one thing, but being sent to a country where half our country never even heard of and being shot at without even a chance to shoot back is another thing altogether!

Please, I'm only a housewife who doesn't even claim to know all about the international situation - but we have felt so bitter over this - can the small number of our boys over in Viet Nam possibly be doing enough good to justify the awful number of casualties? It seems to me that if we are going to have our boys over there, that we should send enough to have a chance - or else stay home. Those fellows are just sitting ducks in those darn helicopters. If a war is worth fighting - isn't it worth fighting to win?

Please answer this and help me and my family to reconcile ourselves to our loss and to feel that even though Jim died in Viet Nam - and it isn't our war - it wasn't in vain.

I am a good Democrat - and I'm not criticizing. I think you are doing a wonderful job - and God Bless You -

Very sincerely,

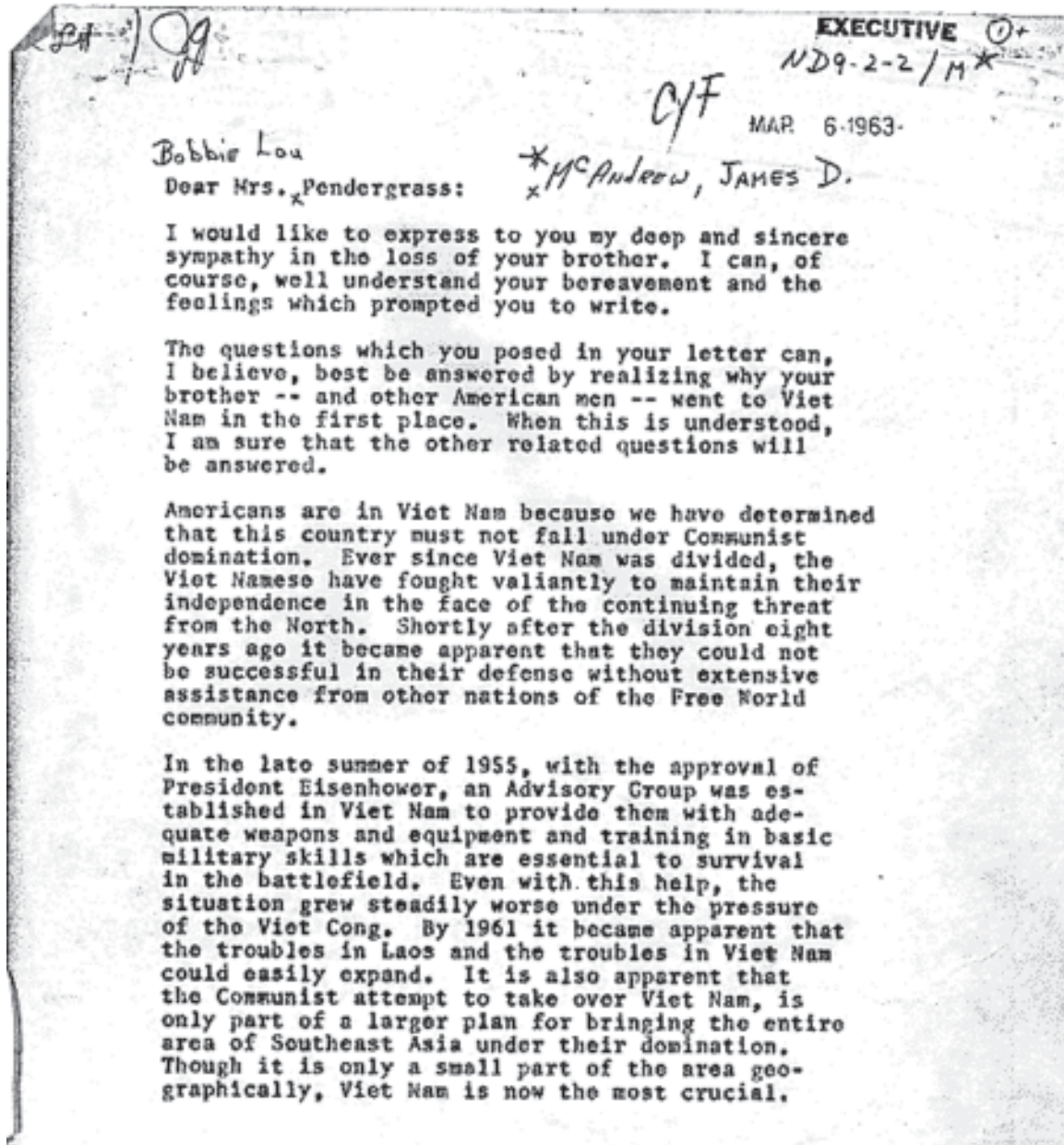
Bobbie Lou Pendergrass
1615 French Street
Santa Ana
California

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MILITARY AIDE
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THE
MILITARY AIDE

Source: Bobbie Lou Pendergrass, "Letter to President Kennedy" (Boston, MA: John F. Kennedy Library (NLK), Columbia Point [National Archives], February 18, 1963).

President John F. Kennedy Condolence Letter to Soldier's Sister 1963

In this 6 March 1963 reply to Mrs. Bobbie Lou Pendergrass's letter from a month earlier, President John F. Kennedy expresses his condolences to Pendergrass on the death of her brother, Army Specialist James McAndrew in Vietnam, and attempts to answer some of the questions posed in her original letter.



If Viet Nam should fall, it will indicate to the people of Southeast Asia that complete Communist domination of their part of the world is almost inevitable. Your brother was in Viet Nam because the threat to the Viet Namese people is, in the long run, a threat to the Free World community, and ultimately a threat to us also. For when freedom is destroyed in one country, it is threatened throughout the world.

I have written to you at length because I know that it is important to you to understand why we are in Viet Nam. James McAndrews must have foreseen that his service could take him into a war like this; a war in which he took part not as a combatant but as an advisor. I am sure that he understood the necessity of such a situation, and I know that as a soldier, he knew full scale war in Viet Nam is at the moment unthinkable.

I believe if you can see this as he must have seen it, you will believe as he must have believed, that he did not die in vain. Forty-five American soldiers, including your brother, have given their lives in Viet Nam. In their sacrifice, they have earned the eternal gratitude of this Nation and other free men throughout the world.

Again, I would like to express to you and the members of your family my deepest personal sympathy.

Sincerely,

John F. Kennedy

Mrs. Bobbie Lou Pendergrass
1615 French Street
Santa Ana, California

Source: John F. Kennedy, "Condolence Letter to Mrs. Bobbie Lou Pendergrass" (Boston, MA: John F. Kennedy Library (NLK), Columbia Point [National Archives], March 6, 1963).

Understanding the Document (Document 17)

1. Why is President Kennedy's letter so vague concerning the circumstances surrounding the death of Specialist McAndrew?
2. Evaluate President Kennedy's assertion that Specialist McAndrew died while protecting the "security" of "this Nation."
3. Discuss the significance of Kennedy's handwritten note to his secretary at the bottom of the page: "Prepare these letters as a routine for all Viet Nam KIAs."

Understanding the Document (Document 18)

1. Why do you believe Mrs. Pendergrass included the speculation about "communist gunfire" being responsible for her brother's death instead of "malfunction of aircraft controls"?
2. What distinction does Mrs. Pendergrass make between her brother's service in World War II and Korea with that of service in Vietnam?
3. Describe Mrs. Pendergrass's assessment of the situation in Vietnam and discuss whether her position was in the majority or minority at the time.
4. Discuss the significance the following statement made by Mrs. Pendergrass in her letter: "If a war is worth fighting—isn't it worth fighting to win"?

Understanding the Document (Document 19)

1. What rationale does President Kennedy provide to Mrs. Pendergrass for American involvement in Vietnam?
2. Discuss why you believe Kennedy traces American involvement in Vietnam back to 1955 and the Eisenhower Administration in his reply to Mrs. Pendergrass. Why did he go into such detail?
3. Why does Kennedy state in his letter "full scale war in Viet Nam is at the moment unthinkable"?
4. Evaluate how well Kennedy did in responding to the various points made by Mrs. Pendergrass in her original letter.
5. In his letter to the parents of James McAndrew, President Kennedy stated that their son, a gunner on a helicopter, died in a "combat support mission." In his letter to the sister of McAndrew, President Kennedy states that her brother "took part not as a combatant but as an advisor." Was President Kennedy contradicting himself in the second letter? Explain.

Memorandum of Conference with President Kennedy 1963

This sanitized memorandum details the proceedings of a 29 October conference with President John F. Kennedy in which he discusses with his advisors concerns about a post-coup Vietnam.

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MEMORANDUM OF CONFERENCE WITH THE PRESIDENT
October 29, 1963, 4:20 PM, Subject: Vietnam

Others present: Vice President, Secretary Rusk, Secretary McNamara, Attorney General, Director McCone, General Taylor, General Krulak, Under Secretary Harriman, Mr. Alexis Johnson, Mr. William Bundy, Mr. Helms, Mr. Mendenhall (State), Mr. Colby (CIA), Mr. Bundy, Mr. Forrestal, Mr. Bromley Smith

Mr. Colby of CIA gave the current status of coup forces. He estimated that the pro-Diem and anti-Diem forces were about even, approximately 9800 on each side, with 18,000 listed as neutral. The briefing was illustrated with a CIA order of battle map.

The President asked what Diem had learned from the attempted coup in 1960. Mr. Colby replied that Diem now had much better communications with military forces deployed outside Saigon. He could thus call into Saigon rapidly loyal forces to oppose rebel forces in the city. The 1960 coup was frustrated when forces outside Saigon remained loyal, moved into Saigon, and defeated the forces which had surrounded the palace.

Mr. McGeorge Bundy suggested that the assessment just given the group be sent to Saigon to see if our officials there agreed with it. He asked whether Ambassador Lodge should return to Washington now and mentioned that some of those present felt he should stay in Saigon.

Secretary Rusk said we must assume that Diem and Nhu have heard rumors about a coup. The question for us is whether we think there is enough prospect of a successful coup to make the decision to keep silent. Should we let the coup generals know that a protracted civil war must not be the result of their efforts to overthrow Diem? Should we tell them we would support them only if the coup is short and bloodless? If fighting between the two sides takes place, each will ask for our help. If we support Diem, then we will disrupt the war effort because we will be acting against those generals who are now fighting the war against the Viet Cong. If we support the rebel generals, then we will have to guarantee that they are successful in overthrowing the Diem government.

Additional material has been released as a result of this review.

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VOL IV DOC # 234
By DWNS, NARA, Date 7/3/94

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Ambassador Lodge was asked by General Don to stick to his departure plan so Lodge should go as he had planned. We now have little information. We need 48, not 4, hours advance notice of any coup. We should put our faith in no one, including General Don. We should caution the generals that they must have the situation in hand before they launch a coup. We should tell them we have no interest whatsoever in a long civil war in South Vietnam.

The President agreed that Ambassador Lodge should leave Saigon for Washington as he had planned. He thought the rebel generals should talk to General Harkins. He said the odds were against a coup. He suggested that General Harkins be put in charge of our mission in Saigon when Ambassador Lodge leaves. If Ambassador Lodge delays his departure, Diem will know we are aware of coup plans. It would be good to have Ambassador Lodge out of the country when a coup takes place.

Regarding the estimate that the pro- and anti-Diem forces are evenly balanced, the President commented that it always looks this way until the coup actually begins. Then support for the coup is forthcoming, as was apparent, for example, in Korea.

General Taylor cautioned against looking at the Vietnam situation as if it were a football game. He said a few key people are crucial to the success of a coup and are more important than total numbers,

The President asked that we try to find out who these key people are.

Secretary McNamara asked who of our officials in Saigon are in charge of the coup planning. He suggested that the Deputy Chief of Mission, Truehart, the Acting Chief of CIA, -----, and General Harkins form a group which would (a) jointly decide on what our agent Conein would say and do and (b) hear all of Conein's reports. If any of the three disagree, a report would be sent back to Washington at once. General Harkins may not know what the Embassy and CIA are now doing. Truehart should head the Vietnamese country team until the coup was initiated. At that time, General Harkins would take over with Truehart becoming his political adviser.

Director McCone did not agree that a troika should be set up in Saigon. He said it would be better for the CIA officer to take direction rather than participate in a decision-making group.

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- 3 -

The Attorney General, acknowledging that he had not seen all of the reports, said that in his opinion the present situation makes no sense to him on the face of it. The situation in Vietnam is not comparable to that in Iraq or in a South American country where a coup could be brought off promptly. The situation now is no different than that of four months ago when the generals were not able to organize a coup. To support a coup would be putting the future of Vietnam and in fact all of Southeast Asia in the hands of one man not now known to us. Diem will not run from a fight or quit under pressure. A failure of a coup risks so much. The reports we have are very thin and the information about the assets which the rebel generals have at their command is limited. We have a right to know what the rebel generals are planning. We can't go half way. If the coup fails, Diem will throw us out. If we send out the draft cable as it stands, it will appear that we are in favor of a coup and only want more information. "My view is the minority view."

Secretary Rusk replied that if we say we are not for a coup, then the coup-minded military leaders will turn against us and the war effort will drop off rapidly.

General Taylor said he agreed with the Attorney General. When pressed by the President, General Taylor said that even a successful coup would slow down the war effort because the new central government would be inexperienced. In addition, all of the province chiefs appointed by Diem would probably be replaced by a new government.

Director McCone said he agreed with General Taylor. The failure of a coup would be a disaster and a successful coup would have a harmful effect on the war effort.

The President asked General Taylor why all the province chiefs would be replaced. He replied that as Diem appointees they would be loyal to Diem, and, therefore, not trusted by the rebel generals who had overthrown Diem.

Secretary Rusk said the important question was whether the rebel generals could achieve quick success. He felt that in the long run, if the Diem government continued, the war effort would go down hill.

Mr. Harriman said it was clear that in Vietnam there was less and less enthusiasm for Diem. We cannot predict that the rebel generals

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can overthrow the Diem government, but Diem cannot carry the country to victory over the Viet Cong. With the passage of time, our objectives in Vietnam will become more and more difficult to achieve with Diem in control.

The President said it appears that the pro- and anti-Diem military forces are about equal. If this is so, any attempt to engineer a coup is silly. If Lodge agrees with this point of view, then we should instruct him to discourage a coup.

Mr. McGeorge Bundy said the most unfortunate development would be a three-day civil war in Saigon. The time remaining for us to instruct Lodge is very short. If a military plane were sent to pick up Lodge, the Ambassador could stay longer in Vietnam during the uncertain days immediately ahead.

Secretary McNamara thought that we ought to leave it up to Ambassador Lodge when he would leave Saigon for Washington. In commenting on the draft cable, he said he thought Lodge would read it as a change of signals. Lodge now believes that he is not to thwart a coup. The draft instructs him to call in General Harkins, which would be difficult to do in view of the fact that Lodge is not now keeping General Harkins informed of developments. The Ambassador should be given an option to delay his return if he wishes.

The President asked what were Lodge's existing instructions. In reply, Secretary Rusk read a paragraph from the October 5 telegram.

The President agreed to ask Lodge what he thought he ought to do about returning to Washington. Mr. McGeorge Bundy said the working group would rewrite the draft cable.

Bromley Smith

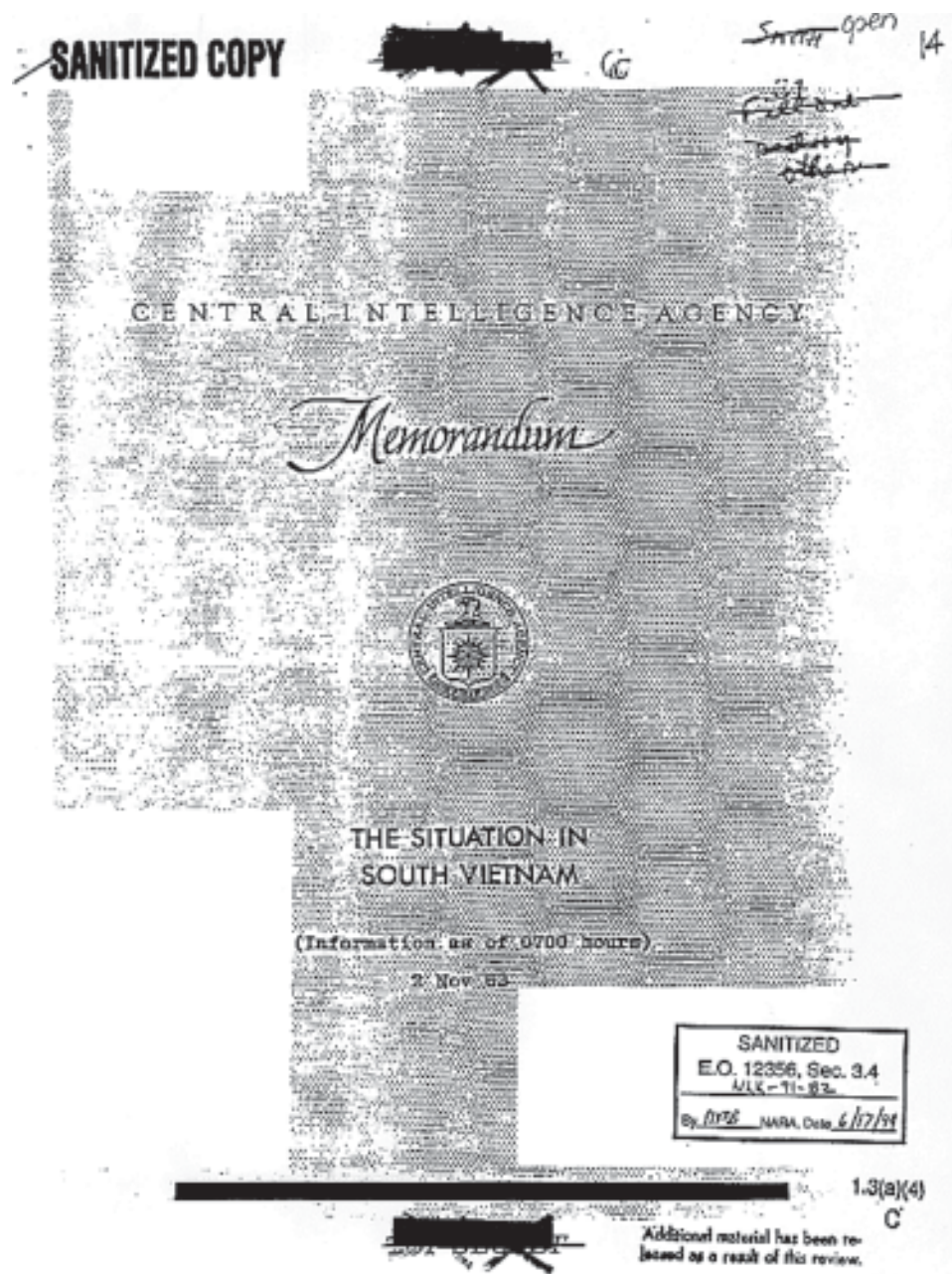
Source: Bromley Smith, "Memorandum of Conference with President Kennedy" (Boston, MA: John F. Kennedy Library (NLK), Columbia Point [National Archives], October 29, 1963).

Understanding the Document

1. How did Secretary Rusk characterize the dilemma the U.S. faced in Vietnam, regarding support for a potential coup?
2. Discuss the relevance of the following comparison made by President Kennedy with respect to a potential coup in Vietnam: “Then support for the coup is forthcoming, as was apparent, for example, in Korea.”
3. Define “troika” and explain why CIA Director McCone was opposed to establishing one in South Vietnam.
4. Why did the Attorney General purport that the “situation in Vietnam is not comparable to that in Iraq or in a South American country”?
5. Evaluate Under Secretary Harriman’s appraisal of the situation in Vietnam under the Diem government.

Central Intelligence Agency Memorandum on the Situation in Vietnam 1963

The following 2 November 1963 sanitized Central Intelligence Agency memorandum assesses the situation in Vietnam following a successful coup in Saigon.



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2 November 1963

THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM
(Information as of 0700 EST)

1. Saigon is celebrating the success of the coup, with some retaliatory outbreaks against installations close to the Diem regime. Organized resistance has ended, and there are conflicting reports of the fate of Diem and Nhu after their reported surrender at Gia Long palace just before 0700 Saigon time (1800 EST 1 November in Washington.)

2. Diem telephoned General Don at the Joint General Staff at 0620, according to a reliable source at JGS, and offered to surrender "with honor." General "Big" Minh accepted, and was trying to arrange a ceasefire. Coup forces were even then reported to have entered Gia Long. Half an hour later, according to the source, Diem again called Don to surrender "unconditionally," and added that he had given the ceasefire order.

3. The coup generals had planned to bring Diem and Nhu to JGS headquarters and offer to fly them to the country of their choice. Saigon Radio announced at 1045, however, that Diem and Nhu had committed suicide while being taken to JGS. One source reported Vietnamese photographers had taken pictures of the bodies at JGS headquarters. Other rumors contend that they have escaped and are in hiding.

4. We have still detected no reaction--other than propaganda--from the Communists. Hanoi has labeled the coup a US move to substitute "one puppet for another."

5. The General's Council has announced a six-point program for the new regime: to fight the Communists, permit free function of political parties, release all non-Communist political prisoners, grant freedom of religion, permit a free press, and resume diplomatic relations with neighboring countries (i.e., Cambodia.) For the time being, however, martial law continues with censorship and curfews.

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6. It still appears that the generals will not be able to create an all-civilian government as rapidly as they had hoped. Vice President Tho is to head a new cabinet as Prime Minister, but at least four of the key posts will be filled by military officers. Pledges of support are coming in from Vietnamese organizations, including the Republican Youth, a mass organization which was one of Nhu's vehicles. One of the principal labor leaders visited an American friend in jubilant mood.

7. A roundup is under way seeking some police officers and other officials of the former regime still at large. Early Saturday morning small arms fire was still heard occasionally, but some of this could be ammunition exploding in fires at the palace.

8. Troops are in only loose control over the celebrating population of Saigon. The headquarters of Madame Nhu's Women's Solidarity Movement and homes of several former government members have been burned. The police station at the central market and the offices of two pro-Diem newspapers, including the Times of Vietnam, have been sacked. The statue of the Trung Sisters, Madame Nhu's favorite symbol, has been pulled down.

9. There have been no reports of US casualties. There appear to have been up to a total of 100 casualties among coup troops and those defending Diem in the palace.

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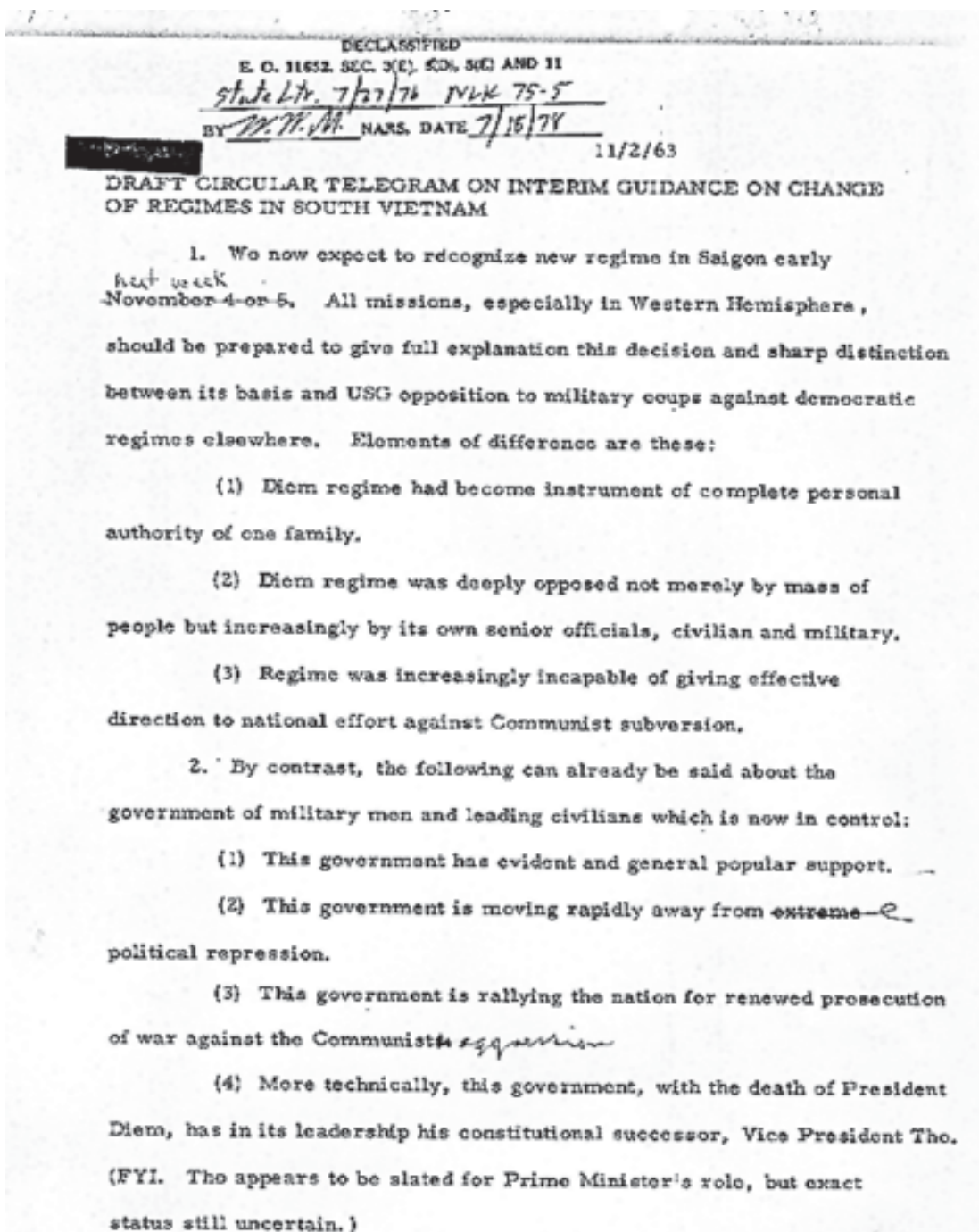
Source: CIA, "Central Intelligence Agency Memorandum: The Situation in South Vietnam" (Boston, MA: John F. Kennedy Library (NLK), Columbia Point [National Archives], November 2, 1963).

Understanding the Document

1. Explain the meaning of North Vietnam's characterization of the Diem coup as the substitution of "one puppet for another."
2. Outline and evaluate the major components of the six-point program announced by the new regime in Vietnam in the aftermath of the Diem coup.
3. Discuss why leaders of the Diem coup were concerned with establishing an "all-civilian government."

Draft Circular Telegram on Interim Guidance of Regimes in South Vietnam 1963

The following 2 November 1963 draft circular telegram on interim guidance on change of regimes in South Vietnam announces the expected recognition of the new regime in Saigon and provides a detailed list of contrasting elements between the old and new regimes.



Source: McGeorge Bundy, "Draft Circular Telegram on Changes of Regime in South Vietnam" (Boston, MA: John F. Kennedy Library (NLK), Columbia Point [National Archives], November 2, 1963).

Understanding the Document

1. How did members of Kennedy's cabinet propose to justify a military coup against what they had been characterizing as a "democratic regime"? What distinctions do they make between the Diem government and other democratic regimes?
2. Discuss and evaluate the characterization of the new regime in South Vietnam that was to be promulgated by members of the Kennedy Administration.
3. What is the significance of the decision to retain and publicize the continued services of Vice President Tho in the new regime?

LESSON FOUR

ESCALATION: INCREASED U.S. INVOLVEMENT

A. Objectives

- ◆ To evaluate the events that occurred in the Gulf of Tonkin in August 1964 and assess the role the Johnson Administration played in manipulating the incident to achieve their military and political objectives in Vietnam.
- ◆ To examine the role the Tonkin Gulf Resolution played in escalating American involvement in Vietnam.
- ◆ To compare and contrast the differing public perspectives and interpretations regarding America's role in, and status of, the war in Vietnam.
- ◆ To evaluate the rationale posited by the Johnson Administration to support continued American involvement in Vietnam, as well as the formal and informal means used to disseminate that message.

B. Background Information

Upon the assassination of President Kennedy, the situation in Vietnam became one of Lyndon Baines Johnson's top priorities. American involvement in that country would escalate to unprecedented levels under the new president shortly following seminal events that occurred in August 1964. On 1 August, the North Vietnamese attacked an American ship, the USS *Maddox*, on patrol in international waters in the Gulf of Tonkin. Following a government report of a subsequent attack three days later against the *Maddox* and its escort ship, the *C. Turner Joy* (which evidence indicates never took place), Johnson petitioned Congress to pass a resolution that would increase his war powers. Shortly after passage of what became known as the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, Johnson ordered the bombing of North Vietnamese and Viet Cong targets. In addition, LBJ also sent the first U.S. combat troops to Vietnam the following year, changing America's strategy in Vietnam from that of an advisory and supportive capacity to a sustained combat mission. Although he would make repeated attempts to bring North Vietnam to the negotiations table, LBJ would also continue to escalate American military involvement in the conflict in Vietnam, so that by the end of his term in office over a half a million American troops were serving in South Vietnam. Events of 1968, however, would change forever the face of the war in Vietnam. In January, North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces launched the Tet Offensive which, although a major military defeat, succeeded in seriously deflating American public support for the war. In the aftermath of the Tet Offensive, however, Johnson shocked nearly everyone by refusing to honor the military's request for 200,000 additional troops in Vietnam. In addition, he was also successful in getting North Vietnam to agree to commence peace talks. Perhaps Johnson's greatest surprise was his last move, in which he withdrew from the Democratic primaries and announced he would not be a candidate for re-election, instead choosing to focus solely on bringing about an end to the war in Vietnam that had so consumed his presidency.

C. Lesson Activities

5-E Format

Engagement

Introduce the lesson by having students analyze one of the seminal events of the Vietnam War—passage of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. Begin by having students examine “President Lyndon B. Johnson’s Message to Congress” (**Document 23**), by responding to the questions that follow the document. In particular, students should evaluate LBJ’s description of what became known as the Gulf of Tonkin incident, as well as his rationale for increasing U.S. military involvement in the conflict. Then have students examine excerpts from “U.S. Senate Debates on the Tonkin Gulf Resolution” (**Document 24**) as well as the text of the Resolution (**Document 25**), answering the accompanying questions.

Exploration

Provide students with copies of President Johnson’s “Johns Hopkins University Speech” (**Document 26**), Senator Robert F. Kennedy’s Statement on the Vietnam War (**Document 27**), and a 1965 antiwar rally speech by Students for a Democratic Society President Paul Potter (**Document 28**). Allow students to explore all three documents, using the questions at the end of the documents to guide their investigation. Then, compare and contrast President Johnson, Senator Kennedy, and Paul Potter’s appraisal of the situation in Vietnam, rationale for American involvement, and proposed course of action.

Explanation

Divide the class into two groups. Provide members of the first group with a copy of LBJ’s letter to Ho Chi Minh (**Document 29**). Assign each member of group one the task of writing a reply for Ho Chi Minh to President Johnson’s letter. Then give each student in group two a copy of Ho Chi Minh’s letter to LBJ (**Document 30**). Have each member of the second group draft a reply for President Johnson to that letter. After allowing an opportunity for students to share their responses with the class, have members of both groups exchange the letter/document they originally received and then answer the corresponding questions.

Elaboration

To elaborate on Lyndon B. Johnson’s position and rationale for American involvement in Vietnam, provide students with an opportunity to analyze documents that illustrate both formal and informal tactics that were used by himself and members of his administration. First, hand out copies of President Johnson’s daily diary for 18 February 1968 (**Document 31**). Have students read the entries regarding the President’s visit aboard the USS *Constellation*, and answer the accompanying questions. Then, discuss how LBJ attempted to confront the issue of dissent in his conversation with the sailors.

Next, distribute copies of various types of American propaganda leaflets that were used to urge Viet Cong defection as well as to maintain American public support (**Document 32**). In addition, hand out copies of excerpts from the diary of a North Vietnamese soldier, originally from South Vietnam, who discusses his experiences and reasons for taking up arms (**Document 33**). After completing the questions that follow this set of documents, have students discuss and assess the effectiveness of the formal and informal ways in which the government attempted to build and maintain public support for the war effort both at home and abroad, including their attempt to urge Viet Cong and North Vietnamese soldiers to defect.

D. Evaluation

Conclude the lesson as it began, with an examination and evaluation of another seminal event of the Vietnam War—President Johnson’s decision to withdraw from the 1968 Democratic primary elections and therefore not seek another term in office. Provide students with a copy of President Johnson’s daily diary for 31 March 1968 (**Document 34**) as well as a copy of the “Withdrawal Speech” he delivered that evening to a television audience (**Document 35**). Have students respond to the accompanying questions for both documents, then facilitate a discussion which evaluates not only LBJ’s decision to withdraw from the presidential race, but also the role U.S. involvement in Vietnam should play in assessing the LBJ presidency.

E. Extension Activities

1. Research other armed conflicts the United States was involved in during the twentieth century to learn what events led to such involvement. Compare and contrast the circumstances that led to American involvement in Vietnam with those of other twentieth century wars.
2. Develop a timeline identifying the major events of the Vietnam War that occurred during the LBJ presidency, November of 1963 to January of 1969.
3. Research anti-war movement propaganda that was produced during the Vietnam War. Compare and contrast the themes and techniques used by the various anti-war groups with those used by the government to build and maintain support for American involvement in Vietnam.
4. Research the event known as the “My Lai Massacre,” which occurred on March 16, 1968 in the Vietnam village of My Lai, resulting in the death of 450 villagers. In addition, trace the events that commenced shortly thereafter, to include the reports, investigations, and eventual trial of members of Charlie Company who had been there at My Lai on that fateful day. Discuss the results of the trial, in particular the court martial and sentencing of Lieutenant William L. Calley, and legacy of the My Lai massacre.



Source: “President Lyndon B. Johnson Greets American Troops in Vietnam” (Austin, TX: Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum [National Archives], 1966).

President Lyndon B. Johnson's Message to Congress 1964

In the following message delivered to Congress on 5 August 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson provides a description of events involving an alleged unprovoked attack days earlier by a North Vietnamese gunboat on the United States destroyer *Maddox*, which was reportedly on patrol in international waters in the Gulf of Tonkin, approximately thirty miles off the coast of North Vietnam.

To the Congress of the United States:

Last night I announced to the American people that the North Vietnamese regime had conducted further deliberate attacks against U.S. naval vessels operating in international waters, and therefore directed air action against gunboats and supporting facilities used in these hostile operations. This air action has now been carried out with substantial damage to the boats and facilities. Two U.S. aircraft were lost in the action.

After consultation with the leaders of both parties in the Congress, I further announced a decision to ask the Congress for a resolution expressing the unity and determination of the United States in supporting freedom and in protecting peace in southeast Asia.

These latest actions of the North Vietnamese regime have given a new and grave turn to the already serious situation in southeast Asia. Our commitments in that area are well known to the Congress. They were first made in 1954 by President Eisenhower. They were further defined in the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty approved by the Senate in February 1955.

This treaty with its accompanying protocol obligates the United States and other members to act in accordance with their constitutional processes to meet Communist aggression against any of the parties or protocol states.

Our policy in southeast Asia has been consistent and unchanged since 1954. I summarized it on June 2 in four simple propositions:

1. America keeps her word. Here as elsewhere, we must and shall honor our commitments.
2. The issue is the future of southeast Asia as a whole. A threat to any nation in that region is a threat to all, and a threat to us.
3. Our purpose is peace. We have no military, political, or territorial ambitions in the area.
4. This is not just a jungle war, but a struggle for freedom on every front of human activity. Our military and economic assistance to South Vietnam and Laos in particular has the purpose of helping these countries to repel aggression and strengthen their independence.

The threat to the three nations of southeast Asia has long been clear. The North Vietnamese regime has constantly sought to take over South Vietnam and Laos. This Communist regime has violated the Geneva accords for Vietnam. It has systematically conducted a campaign of subversion, which includes the direction, training, and supply of personnel and arms for the conduct of guerrilla warfare in South Vietnamese territory. In Laos, the North Vietnamese regime has maintained military forces, used Laotian territory for infiltration into South Vietnam, and most recently carried out combat operations—all in direct violation of the Geneva agreements of 1962.

In recent months, the actions of the North Vietnamese regime have become steadily more threatening. In May, following new acts of Communist aggression in Laos, the United States undertook reconnaissance flights over Laotian territory, at the request of the Government of Laos. These flights had the essential mission of determining the situation in territory where Communist forces were preventing inspection by

the International Control Commission. When the Communists attacked these aircraft, I responded by furnishing escort fighters with instructions to fire when fired upon. Thus, these latest North Vietnamese attacks on our naval vessels are not the first direct attack on armed forces of the United States.

As President of the United States I have concluded that I should now ask the Congress on its part, to join in affirming the national determination that all such attacks will be met, and that the United States will continue in its basic policy of assisting the free nations of the area to defend their freedom.

As I have repeatedly made clear, the United States intends no rashness, and seeks no wider war. We must make it clear to all that the United States is united in its determination to bring about the end of Communist subversion and aggression in the area. We seek the full and effective restoration of the international agreements signed in Geneva in 1954, with respect to South Vietnam, and again in Geneva in 1962, with respect to Laos.

I recommend a resolution expressing the support of the Congress for all necessary action to protect our Armed Forces and to assist nations covered by the SEATO Treaty. At the same time, I assure the Congress that we shall continue readily to explore any avenues of political solution that will effectively guarantee the removal of Communist subversion and the preservation of the independence of the nations of the area.

The resolution could well be based upon similar resolutions enacted by the Congress in the past—to meet the threat to Formosa in 1955, to meet the threat to the Middle East in 1957, and to meet the threat in Cuba in 1962. It could state in the simplest terms the resolve and support of the Congress for action to deal appropriately with attacks against our Armed Forces and to defend freedom and preserve peace in southeast Asia in accordance with the obligations of the United States under the Southeast Asia Treaty. I urge the Congress to enact such a resolution promptly and thus to give convincing evidence to the aggressive Communist nations, and to the world as a whole, that our policy in southeast Asia will be carried forward—and that the peace and security of the area will be preserved.

The events of this week would in any event have made the passage of a congressional resolution essential. But there is an additional reason for doing so at a time when we are entering on three months of political campaigning. Hostile nations must understand that in such a period the United States will continue to protect its national interests, and that in these matters there is no division among us.

Source: U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, 90th Congress, 1st Session, Background Information Relating to Southeast Asia and Vietnam (3rd Revised Edition) (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, July 1967), pp. 120–22.

Understanding the Document

1. What events prompted President Lyndon B. Johnson to deliver his August 5, 1964 Message to Congress?
2. Discuss how far back Johnson traces the roots of America's commitments in Vietnam. What is the significance of Johnson's historical references?
3. Identify and evaluate the four propositions concerning Southeast Asia President Johnson outlines in his Message to Congress.
4. How does Johnson define the threat in Southeast Asia and what solutions does he propose?
5. What previous congressional resolutions does Johnson cite in support of the one he is currently asking Congress to enact? How relevant are those previous situations cited by Johnson to the situation in Vietnam? Explain.

U.S. Senate Debates on the Tonkin Gulf Resolution 1964

The following are excerpts from the U.S. Senate debates regarding what became known as the “Tonkin Gulf” Resolution. The debates took place on 6–7 August 1964. In the end, only two senators, Wayne Morse of Oregon and Ernest Gruening of Alaska, would vote against the resolution.

MR. NELSON:

[Gaylord Nelson, Democrat-Wisconsin] . . . Am I to understand that it is the sense of Congress that we are saying to the executive branch: “If it becomes necessary to prevent further aggression, we agree now, in advance, that you may land as many divisions as deemed necessary, and engage in a direct military assault on North Vietnam if it becomes the judgment of the Executive, the Commander in Chief, that this is the only way to prevent further aggression”?

MR. FULBRIGHT:

[William Fulbright, Democrat-Arkansas] As I stated, section I is intended to deal primarily with aggression against our forces. . . . I do not know what the limits are. I do not think this resolution can be determinative of that fact. I think it would indicate that he [the President] would take reasonable means first to prevent any further aggression, or repel further aggression against our own forces. . . . I do not know how to answer the Senator’s question and give him an absolute assurance that large numbers of troops would not be put ashore. I would deplore it. . . .

MR. NELSON:

. . . My concern is that we in Congress could give the impression to the public that we are prepared at this time to change our mission and substantially expand our commitment. If that is what the sense of Congress is, I am opposed to the resolution. I therefore ask the distinguished Senator from Arkansas if he would consent to accept an amendment [that explicitly says Congress wants no extension of the present military conflict and no direct U.S. military involvement].

MR. FULBRIGHT:

. . . The Senator has put into his amendment a statement of policy that is unobjectionable. However, I cannot accept the amendment under the circumstances. I do not believe it is contrary to the joint resolution, but it is an enlargement. I am informed that the House is now voting on this resolution. The House joint resolution is about to be presented to us. I cannot accept the amendment and go to conference with it, and thus take responsibility for delaying matters.

MR. GRUENING:

[Ernest Gruening, Democrat-Alaska] . . . Regrettably, I find myself in disagreement with the President’s Southeast Asian policy. . . . The serious events of the past few days, the attack by North Vietnamese vessels on American warships and our reprisal, strikes me as the inevitable and foreseeable concomitant and consequence of U.S. unilateral military aggressive policy in Southeast Asia. . . . We now are about to authorize the President if he sees fit to move our Armed Forces . . . not only into South Vietnam, but also into North Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and of course the authorization includes all the rest of the SEATO nations. That means sending our American boys into combat in a war in which we have no business, which is not our war, into which we have been misguidedly drawn, which is steadily being escalated. This resolution is a further authorization for escalation unlimited. I am opposed to sacrificing a single American boy in this venture. We have lost far too many already. . . .

MR. MORSE:

[Wayne Morse, Democrat-Oregon] . . . I believe that history will record that we have made a great mistake in subverting and circumventing the Constitution of the United States. . . I believe this resolution to be a historic mistake. I believe that within the next century, future generations will look with dismay and great disappointment upon a Congress which is now about to make such a historic mistake.

Source: U.S. Congress, Senate, “To Promote the Maintenance of Peace and Security in Southeast Asia,” 88th Congress, 2nd Session, *Congressional Record* (August 6–August 7, 1964), pp. 18132–33, 18406–7, 18458–59, 18470–71.

Understanding the Document

1. Identify Senator Gaylord Nelson’s reservations about the Tonkin Gulf Resolution and discuss how well Senator William Fulbright addresses Nelson’s concerns.
2. Explain what Senator Ernest Gruening meant by the following statement, “The serious events of the past few days, the attack by North Vietnamese vessels on American warships and our reprisal, strikes me as the inevitable and foreseeable concomitant and consequence of U.S. unilateral military aggressive policy in Southeast Asia....” How accurate was Senator Gruening’s appraisal of the situation? Explain.
3. Evaluate Senator Wayne Morse’s prediction of what would occur if the Tonkin Gulf Resolution was passed.

Tonkin Gulf Resolution 1964

The following August 1964 joint resolution of the U.S. Congress [Public Law 88–408], popularly known as the “Tonkin Gulf Resolution,” provided President Lyndon B. Johnson with the legal basis for escalating the war in Vietnam.

To promote the maintenance of international peace and security in southeast Asia.

Whereas naval units of the Communist regime in Vietnam, in violation of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law, have deliberately and repeatedly attacked United States naval vessels lawfully present in international waters, and have thereby created a serious threat to international peace; and

Whereas these attacks are part of a deliberate and systematic campaign of aggression that the Communist regime in North Vietnam has been waging against its neighbors and the nations joined with them in the collective defense of their freedom; and

Whereas the United States is assisting the peoples of southeast Asia to protect their freedom and has no territorial, military or political ambitions in that area, but desires only that these peoples should be left in peace to work out their own destinies in their own way: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Congress approves and supports the determination of the President, as Commander in Chief, to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.

Sec. 2. The United States regards as vital to its national interest and to world peace the maintenance of international peace and security in southeast Asia. Consonant with the Constitution of the United States and the Charter of the United Nations and in accordance with its obligations under the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, the United States is, therefore, prepared, as the President determines, to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom.

Sec. 3. This resolution shall expire when the President shall determine that the peace and security of the area is reasonably assured by international conditions created by action of the United Nations or otherwise, except that it may be terminated earlier by concurrent resolution of the Congress.

Source: U.S. Congress, Senate, “To Promote the Maintenance of Peace and Security in Southeast Asia,” 88th Congress, 2nd Session, *Congressional Record*, Vol. 110, part 14 (August 4–August 12, 1964), p. 18132.

Understanding the Document

1. Evaluate the congressional claim made in the resolution that the Gulf of Tonkin attack represented a “serious threat to international peace.”
2. How accurate is the following premise made by Congress in the resolution: “the United States...has no territorial, military, or political ambitions in that area [Vietnam]”? Explain.
3. Of what relevance are the references to the Constitution of the United States and United Nations Charter to the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution?
4. Who will make the determination when the time comes for this resolution to expire? Under what circumstances will the terms of the resolution expire?

President Lyndon B. Johnson's "Johns Hopkins University Speech"

The following excerpts from a speech given by President Lyndon B. Johnson at Johns Hopkins University on 7 April 1965 provide a rationale for American involvement in Vietnam.

Viet-Nam is far away from this quiet campus. We have no territory there, nor do we seek any. The war is dirty and brutal and difficult. And some 400 young men, born into an America that is bursting with opportunity and promise, have ended their lives, on Viet-Nam's steaming soil.

Why must we take this painful road?

Why must this Nation hazard its ease, and its interest, and its power for the sake of a people so far away?

We fight because we must fight if we are to live in a world where every country can shape its own destiny. And only in such a world will our own freedom be finally secure. . . .

The first reality is that North Viet-Nam has attacked the independent nation of South Viet-Nam. Its object is total conquest.

Of course, some of the people of South Viet-Nam are participating in attack on their own government. But trained men and supplies, orders and arms, flow in a constant stream from north to south. . . .

Over this war and all Asia is another reality: the deepening shadow of Communist China. The rulers in Hanoi are urged on by Peking. This is a regime which has destroyed freedom in Tibet, which has attacked India, and has been condemned by the United Nations for aggression in Korea. . . .

Why are these realities our concern? Why are we in South Viet-Nam?

We are there because we have a promise to keep. Since 1954 every American President has offered support to the people of South Viet-Nam. We have helped to build, and we have helped to defend. Thus, over many years, we have made a national pledge to help South Viet-Nam defend its independence. And I intend to keep that promise. . . .

We are also there to strengthen world order. Around the globe, from Berlin to Thailand, are people whose well being rests, in part, on the belief that they can count on us if they are attacked. To leave Viet-Nam to its fate would shake the confidence of all these people in the value of an American commitment and in the value of America's word. The result would be increased unrest and instability, and even wider war.

We are also there because there are great stakes in the balance. Let no one think for a moment that retreat from Viet-Nam would bring an end to conflict. The battle would be renewed in one country and then another. The central lesson of our time is that the appetite of aggression is never satisfied. To withdraw from one battlefield means only to prepare for the next. We must stay in Southeast Asia as we did in Europe in the words of the Bible: "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further. . . ."

Our objective is the independence of South Viet-Nam, and its freedom from attack. We want nothing for ourselves only that the people of South Viet-Nam be allowed to guide their own country in their own way. We will do everything necessary to reach that objective. And we will do only what is absolutely necessary.

In recent months attacks on South Viet-Nam were stepped up. Thus, it became necessary for us to increase our response and to make attacks by air. This is not a change of purpose. It is a change in which we believe that purpose requires. . . .

These countries of southeast Asia are homes for millions of impoverished people. Each day these people rise at dawn and struggle through until the night to wrestle existence from the soil. They are often wracked by disease, plagued by hunger, and death comes at the early age of forty.

For our part I will ask the Congress to join in a billion dollar American investment in this effort as soon as it is underway.

The task is nothing less than to enrich the hopes and the existence of more than a hundred million people. And there is much to be done.

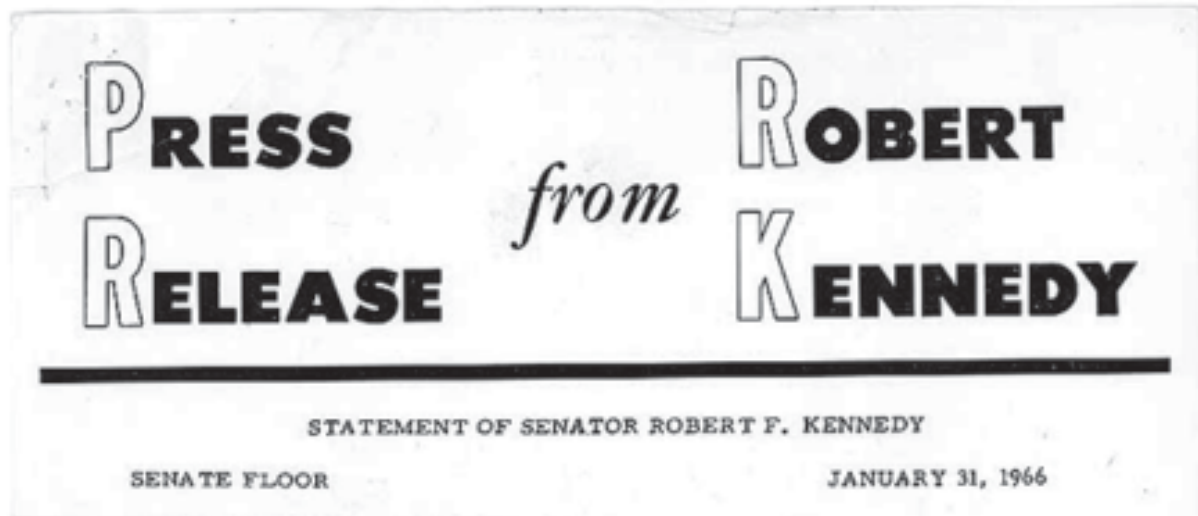
Source: Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1966), pp. 394–397.

Understanding the Document

1. How does President Johnson define the “deepening shadow of Communist China”?
2. What “promise” does Johnson pledge to keep in Vietnam?
3. Identify and evaluate the reasons Johnson provides to justify American involvement in Vietnam.
4. How does Johnson enlist the use of President Eisenhower’s “Domino Theory” in defense of American intervention in Vietnam?

Statement by Robert F. Kennedy on the Vietnam War 1966

Statements made by Senator Robert F. Kennedy on the floor of the United States Senate regarding the war in Vietnam constitute the focus of this 31 January 1966 press release.



The President has made his decision. In this time of crisis, he will have the support of Americans as he seeks and end to the tragic war in Vietnam. I welcome especially his announcement of new initiatives in the United Nations.

obviously

But the resumption of bombing in the North is not a policy. And we should not delude ourselves that it offers a painless method of winning the war.

Our objectives in Vietnam can be gained only by what we do in the South -- by what we do to show the people of that unhappy land that there is a difference -- that this is their war -- that the defeat of the Viet Cong will lead to a better life for themselves and for their children.

And there are many indications that we have not yet even begun to develop a program to make these objectives a reality. Just as an example, the *Washington Star* reported, on January 24, that:

In Long An, one of Vietnam's most fertile provinces, more than 85 percent of the peasant population are tenants. This land-ownership pattern may help explain why, despite a tremendous cost in lives and material, the war in Long An is no closer to being won that it was several years ago.

... (Yet) the rice-rich heartland of the Saigon region and the upper Mekong Delta, linked together by Long An, remains the prize for which the war is being fought. Here, in less than 14 provinces, live almost two-thirds of the 15 million South Vietnamese ... American military and civilian advisers agree there are more Viet Cong than a year ago.

"Most important in Long An, however, government and the mass of peasantry still seem to be on opposing sides.

"... Land is of such paramount importance here that the Viet Cong allow only the landless or very poor farmers to command guerilla units or qualify as party members. The

provincial government's social order is the exact reverse. Most of the military officers, civil servants and community leaders come from the land-owning gentry.

"In the delta, out of 1.2 million farms, only 260,000 are owner-operated. . . . Some 3,000 rich Saigon families still are the big landowners."

And the day before, the *Washington Post* told us:

"The village chief, a 36-year old former Army officer named Do Hun Minh. . . explained through an interpreter that only four village youngsters since the year 1950 have been in high school. No youngster in the village has ever attended college. 'The Vietnamese government continues to support an exclusive educational system in a revolutionary war,' says (Richard) Burnham (The U.S. aid mission province representative). 'All this is preservation of privilege. It is madness and until it is changed most of our efforts will be marginal.' Those other efforts. . . are considerable. USOM pumps about half a million dollars a year into Bienhoa (province), arranging for medical teams and technical assistance, and building dams, school rooms, a potable water system, an orphanage, three fish markets, two electricity systems. But knowledgeable Americans here say that the Vietcong still offer the only outlet for a bright boy from the villages. The static nature of Sondong assures that there is no legitimate route out of the rice paddy. The rural children cannot be officers, administrators or district chiefs."

To such conditions, military action in the South or in the North is no answer. Military action is needed to allow social reform to take place. But if American soldiers are to fight and die to buy time for the government of South Vietnam, that time must be used.

It is absolutely urgent that we now act to institute new programs of education, land reform, public health, political participation -- and that we act to ensure honest administration. In my judgment the development and implementation of such a program would offer far more promise of achieving our aims in Viet Nam than any other steps we could take -- including the bombing of the North.

As I have emphasized repeatedly, and I state again, our military effort will mean nothing if it is not followed by a successful pacification effort which inspires the people of South Vietnam.

But we have not yet made the effort necessary.

We are spending far more on military efforts than on all the education, land reform, and welfare programs which might convince a young South Vietnamese that his future is not best served by the Communists.

And the best talent and brains in our government are focused far more on military action than they are on programs which might help the people of South Viet Nam -- and in the long run, help our effort as well.

This imbalance must change.

For if we regards bombing as the answer in Viet Nam we are headed straight for disaster. In the past, bombing has not proved a decisive weapon against a rural economy -- or against a guerilla army.

And the temptation will now be to argue that if limited bombing does not produce a solution, that further bombing, more extended military action, is the answer. The danger is that the decision to resume may become the first in a series of steps on a road from which there is no turning back -- a road which leads to catastrophe for all mankind. That cannot be permitted to happen.

As we move into this new phase of the war, the President will need the support and encouragement of the American people. To be effective, however, both the Congress and the citizens of this country will have to be kept fully informed about the actions of the United States and the developments in Viet Nam.

I believe he will have this support even where there might be some differences of emphasis or policy. This should be clearly understood in both Hanoi and Doking.

Source: Robert F. Kennedy, “Statement on Vietnam War” (Boston, MA: John F. Kennedy Library (NLK), Columbia Point [National Archives], January 31, 1966).

Understanding the Document

1. What lessons, according to the *Washington Star*, are to be learned from the situation in Long An province in Vietnam?
2. Why does Richard Burnham, a U.S. aid mission province representative, believe “most of our efforts [in Vietnam] will be marginal”?
3. Discuss the appeal of the Vietcong, according to Senator Robert Kennedy, for many of South Vietnam’s youth.
4. Describe and evaluate the type of program Senator Kennedy proposes should be implemented in Vietnam.
5. What type of “imbalance” does Senator Kennedy suggest exists in America’s current policy in Vietnam?

Speech by Paul Potter, President of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) 1965

The following is an excerpt from a speech by Paul Potter, President of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), at an antiwar rally held in Washington, DC on 17 April 1965. Nearly twenty five thousand people participated in the march on Washington and rally that day, and were in the audience as Potter delivered his speech in front of the Washington Monument.

Most of us grew up thinking that the United States was a strong but humble nation, that involved itself in world affairs only reluctantly, that respected the integrity of other nations and other systems, and that engaged in wars only as a last resort. This was a nation with no large standing army, with no design for external conquest, that sought primarily the opportunity to develop its own resources and its own mode of living. If at some point we began to hear vague and disturbing things about what this country had done in Latin America, China, Spain and other places, we somehow remained confident about the basic integrity of this nation's foreign policy. The Cold War with all of its neat categories and black and white descriptions did much to assure us that what we had been taught to believe was true.

But in recent years, the withdrawal from the hysteria of the Cold War era and the development of a more aggressive, activist foreign policy have done much to force many of us to rethink attitudes that were deep and basic sentiments about our country. The incredible war in Vietnam has provided the razor, the terrifying sharp cutting edge that has finally severed the last vestige of illusion that morality and democracy are the guiding principles of American foreign policy. . . .

The President says that we are defending freedom in Vietnam. Whose freedom? Not the freedom of the Vietnamese. The first act of the first dictator, Diem, the United States installed in Vietnam, was to systematically begin the persecution of all political opposition, non-Communist as well as Communist. The first American military supplies were not used to fight Communist insurgents; they were used to control, imprison, or kill any who sought something better for Vietnam than the personal aggrandizement, political corruption and the profiteering of the Diem regime. The elite of the forces that we have trained and equipped are still used to control political unrest in Saigon and defend the latest dictator from the people. . . .

What is left to the people of Viet-nam after twenty years of war? What part of themselves and their own lives will those who survive be able to salvage from the wreckage of their country or build on the "peace" and "security" our Great Society offers them in reward for their allegiance? How can anyone be surprised that people who have had total war waged on themselves and their culture rebel in increasing numbers against that tyranny? What other course is available? And still our only response to rebellion is more vigorous repression, more merciless opposition to the social and cultural institutions which sustain dignity and the will to resist.

How do you stop a war then? If the war has its roots deep in the institutions of American society, how do you stop it? Do you march to Washington? Is that enough? Who will hear us? How can you make the decision makers hear us, insulated as they are, if they cannot hear the screams of a little girl burnt by napalm?

There is no simple plan, no scheme or gimmick that can be proposed here. There is no simple way to attack something that is deeply rooted in the society. If the people of this country are to end the war in Vietnam, and to change the institutions which create it, then the people of this country must create a massive social movement and if that can be built around the issue of Vietnam then that is what we must do.

By a social movement I mean more than petitions or letters of protest, or tacit support of dissident Congressmen; I mean people who are willing to change their lives, who are willing to challenge the system, to take the problem of change seriously. By a social movement I mean an effort that is powerful enough to make the country understand that our problems are not in Vietnam, or China or Brazil or outer space or at the bottom of the ocean, but are here in the United States. What we must do is begin to build a democratic and humane society in which Vietnams are unthinkable, in which human life and initiative are precious.... The reason the war and the system it represents will be stopped, if it is stopped before it destroys all of us, will be because the movement has become strong enough to exact change in the society. . . .

To build a movement rather than a protest or some series of protests, to break out of our insulations and accept the consequences of our decisions, in effect to change our lives, means that we can open ourselves to the reactions of a society that believes that it is moral and just, that we open ourselves to libeling and persecution, that we dare to be really seen as wrong in a society that doesn't tolerate fundamental challenges. . . .

But that means that we build a movement that works not simply in Washington but in communities and with the problems that face people throughout the society. . . .

For in a strange way the people of Vietnam and the people on this demonstration are united in much more than a common concern that the war be ended. In both countries there are people struggling to build a movement that has the power to change their condition. The system that frustrates these movements is the same. All our lives, our destinies, our very hopes to live, depend on our ability to overcome that system.

Source: Paul Potter, "Speech on Bringing an End to the War in Vietnam," Delivered at the March on Washington and Antiwar Rally [Organized by the Students for a Democratic Society], Washington, DC, April 17, 1965.

Understanding the Document

1. According to Paul Potter, how did Americans view this nation and world affairs during the Cold War? What event does Potter say brought about a change or shift in this view of America and its foreign policy? Explain why.
2. How does Potter characterize American involvement in Vietnam?
3. What does Potter suggest is the best course of action for bringing about an end to the war in Vietnam?
4. What is the distinction, according to Potter, between a social movement, which he advocates, and protest?

President Lyndon B. Johnson Letter to President Ho Chi Minh 1967

President Lyndon B. Johnson expresses his hopes for an end to the conflict in Vietnam in this 8 February 1967 letter to Ho Chi Minh, President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to you in the hope that the conflict in Viet-Nam can be brought to an end. That conflict has already taken a heavy toll—in lives lost, in wounds inflicted, in property destroyed, and in simple human misery. If we fail to find a just and peaceful solution, history will judge us harshly.

Therefore, I believe that we both have a heavy obligation to seek earnestly the path to peace. It is in response to that obligation that I am writing directly to you.

We have tried over the past several years, in a variety of ways and through a number of channels, to convey to you and your colleagues our desire to achieve a peaceful settlement. For whatever reasons, these efforts have not achieved any results. . . .

In the past two weeks, I have noted public statements by representatives of your government suggesting that you would be prepared to enter into direct bilateral talks with representatives of the U.S. Government, provided that we ceased “unconditionally” and permanently our bombing operations against your country and all military actions against it. In the last day, serious and responsible parties have assured us indirectly that this is in fact your proposal.

Let me frankly state that I see two great difficulties with this proposal. In view of your public position, such action on our part would inevitably produce worldwide speculation that discussions were under way and would impair the privacy and secrecy of those discussions. Secondly, there would inevitably be grave concern on our part whether your government would make use of such action by us to improve its military position.

With these problems in mind, I am prepared to move even further towards an ending of hostilities than your Government has proposed in either public statements or through private diplomatic channels. I am prepared to order a cessation of bombing against your country and the stopping of further augmentation of U.S. forces in South Viet-Nam as soon as I am assured that infiltration into South Viet-Nam by land and by sea has stopped. These acts of restraint on both sides would, I believe, make it possible for us to conduct serious and private discussions leading toward an early peace.

I make this proposal to you now with a specific sense of urgency arising from the imminent New Year holidays in Viet-Nam. If you are able to accept this proposal I see no reason why it could not take effect at the end of the New Year, or Tet, holidays. The proposal I have made would be greatly strengthened if your military authorities and those of the Government of South Viet-Nam could promptly negotiate an extension of the Tet truce.

As to the site of the bilateral discussions I propose, there are several possibilities. We could, for example, have our representatives meet in Moscow where contacts have already occurred. They could meet in some other country such as Burma. You may have other arrangements or sites in mind, and I would try to meet your suggestions.

The important thing is to end a conflict that has brought burdens to both our peoples, and above all to the people of South Viet-Nam. If you have any thoughts about the actions I propose, it would be most important that I receive them as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Lyndon B. Johnson

Source: *Department of State Bulletin*, LVI, No. 1450 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, April 10, 1967), pp. 595–597.

Understanding the Document

1. President Johnson mentions in his letter a concern for how “history will judge” both Ho Chi Minh and himself. How has history judged both of these presidential leaders?
2. What attempts did the Johnson Administration make to “achieve a peaceful settlement” in Vietnam?
3. Why did Johnson rebuff attempts by North Vietnamese representatives to enter into bilateral talks? What did Johnson propose instead?
4. Discuss the significance of Johnson’s offer to have U.S. and North Vietnamese representatives meet in Moscow.

President Ho Chi Minh Letter to President Lyndon B. Johnson 1967

In this 15 February 1967 reply to President Lyndon B. Johnson's letter of a week earlier, Ho Chi Minh, President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, responds to Johnson's offer to initiate bilateral peace talks.

Excellency, on February 10, 1967, I received your message. Here is my response.

Viet-Nam is situated thousands of miles from the United States. The Vietnamese people have never done any harm to the United States. But, contrary to the commitments made by its representative at the Geneva Conference of 1954, the United States Government has constantly intervened in Viet-Nam, it has launched and intensified the war of aggression in South Viet-Nam for the purpose of prolonging the division of Viet-Nam and of transforming South Viet-Nam into an American neo-colony and an American military base. For more than two years now, the American Government, with its military aviation and its navy, has been waging war against the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, an independent and sovereign country.

The United States Government has committed war crimes, crimes against peace and against humanity. In South Viet-Nam a half-million American soldiers and soldiers from the satellite countries have resorted to the most inhumane arms and the most barbarous methods of warfare, such as napalm, chemicals, and poison gases in order to massacre our fellow countrymen, destroy the crops, and wipe out the villages. In North Viet-Nam thousands of American planes have rained down hundreds of thousands of tons of bombs, destroying cities, villages, mills, roads, bridges, dikes, dams and even churches, pagodas, hospitals, and schools. In your message you appear to deplore the suffering and the destruction in Viet-Nam. Permit me to ask you: Who perpetrated these monstrous crimes? It was the American soldiers and the soldiers of the satellite countries. The United States Government is entirely responsible for the extremely grave situation in Viet-Nam.

The American war of aggression against the Vietnamese people constitutes a challenge to the countries of the socialist camp, a threat to the peoples' independent movement, and a grave danger to peace in Asia and in the world.

The Vietnamese people deeply love independence, liberty, and peace. But in the face of the American aggression they have risen up as one man, without fearing the sacrifices and the privations. They are determined to continue their resistance until they have won real independence and liberty and true peace. Our just cause enjoys the approval and the powerful support of peoples throughout the world and of large segments of the American people.

The United States Government provoked the war of aggression in Viet-Nam. It must cease that aggression, it is the only road leading to the re-establishment of peace. The United States Government must halt definitively and unconditionally the bombings and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, withdraw from South Viet-Nam all American troops and all troops from the satellite countries, recognize the National Front of the Liberation of South Viet-Nam and let the Vietnamese people settle their problems themselves. Such is the basic content of the four-point position of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, such is the statement of the essential principles and essential arrangements of the Geneva agreements of 1954 on Viet-Nam. It is the basis for a correct political solution of the Vietnamese problem. In your message you suggested direct talks

between the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam and the United States. If the United States Government really wants talks, it must first halt unconditionally the bombings and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam. It is only after the unconditional halting of the American bombings and of all other American acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam that the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam and the United States could begin talks and discuss questions affecting the two parties.

The Vietnamese people will never give way to force, it will never accept conversation under the clear threat of bombs.

Our cause is absolutely just. It is desirable that the Government of the United States act in conformity to reason.

Sincerely,

Ho Chi Minh

Source: *Department of State Bulletin*, LVI, No. 1450 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, April 10, 1967), pp. 595–597.

Understanding the Document

1. Identify the violations of the 1954 Geneva Conference agreement Ho Chi Minh charges the United States has committed.
2. Evaluate Ho Chi Minh's claim that the "United States Government is entirely responsible for the extremely grave situation in Viet-Nam."
3. Discuss the major features of Ho Chi Minh's "four-point position." How do you believe President Johnson would react to these demands?

President Lyndon B. Johnson's Daily Diary 1968

President Johnson's Sunday morning activities aboard the aircraft carrier USS Constellation, where he had spent the night, are chronicled in this excerpt from his 18 February 1968 presidential diary.

MR. LYNDON B. JOHNSON
PRESIDENTIAL RECORD

THE WHITE HOUSE
PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON
DAILY DIARY
The President began his day at (Place) **USS. CONSTELLATION**

Date **February 18, 1968**
Day **Sunday**
~~SATURDAY~~

Entry No.	Time		Telephone		Activity (include visited by)	Expenditure Code
	In	Out	Lo	LD		
	8:00a				President was up and dressed and had breakfast with 20 of the boys on USS. Constellation. (See Attached list of names) <i>page 1a</i>	
					The President talked to them and had each of them stand up and give their names, rank and home town. Then the members of the Presidents staff that were present stood up and did the same. The President invited them to ask questions. They were a little hesitant at first so he asked them questions such as: "Is the moral higher at some times than at others? The answer was Yes and he asked why? The boys said that it depended on the amount of mail they received from home, what they read about in the newspapers, that they missed their girls or wives. This discussion brought up the point of the Hippies and the flower children, the groups that were against the war. One young man said that he couldn't understand why they had to go to war and these peace - niks got away from the draft by rebelling and having demonstrations. The President answered that in every war there are dissenters and this is not something that has happened just in the Viet Nam war and this is not something that happens just about wars. There are always people who are against what is going on in the world. Take, for example, how people are against short skirts. (Here he was referring to how relevant things are - the amount of anger towards the war is really no different than the amount of discussion about some more trivial things - it is all relevant.) The President said, back in my grandmother's day, she used to tell my sister that her skirts were too short - a fact which annoyed the President's sister - then the President said, if she were alive (meaning his grandmother) today and saw the length of Phyllis' skirts - why I don't know what she'd say. (Laughter).	

SEE TRAVEL RECORD
FOR TRAVEL ACTIVITY

Page No. **1**

Date **February 18, 1968**

The White House
 PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON
 DAILY DIARY
 The President began his day at (Place):

Sunday
 Day

Entry No.	Time		Telephone		Activity (include dates by)	Expenditure Code
	In	Out	In	Out		
					The President then talked about how proud he was of these boys and how proud the Nation is. He said the Nobody wants to go to war and nobody wants to die - but people must and he was proud of the way these boys met their responsibility. If you make it - that's what we want and pray for every day - and if you don't then the good Lord knows that you went down swinging and fighting hard for your country. A young man got up and said that one of the best things he had read lately was a statement saying that the boys in VN were fighting for the right to allow people to dissent - and this is what makes America. Which brought the discussion back to dissenters and the President summed it all up by saying that it is boys like you that makes America a free country. <i>Many Marines make BDT</i>	
	8:47p				The brief Breakfast ended and President went up to the deck to go to church. We had to go down in an elevator from the deck to the hangar deck where the service was held.	
	9:00a	9:30			Church Service - see folder Captain Flanagan read Scriptures Chaplain Keen led the service. Right after the ceremony started a testing device came on throughout the ship and was interrupting the service - the Captain jumped up and ran out to stop it and the Minister suggested that we all stand up and sing a hymn to drown the noise out and that is what we did.	
	9:35a				President returned to his quarters w/ Easton Jim Jones George Christian	

SEE TRAVEL RECORD
FOR TRAVEL ACTIVITY

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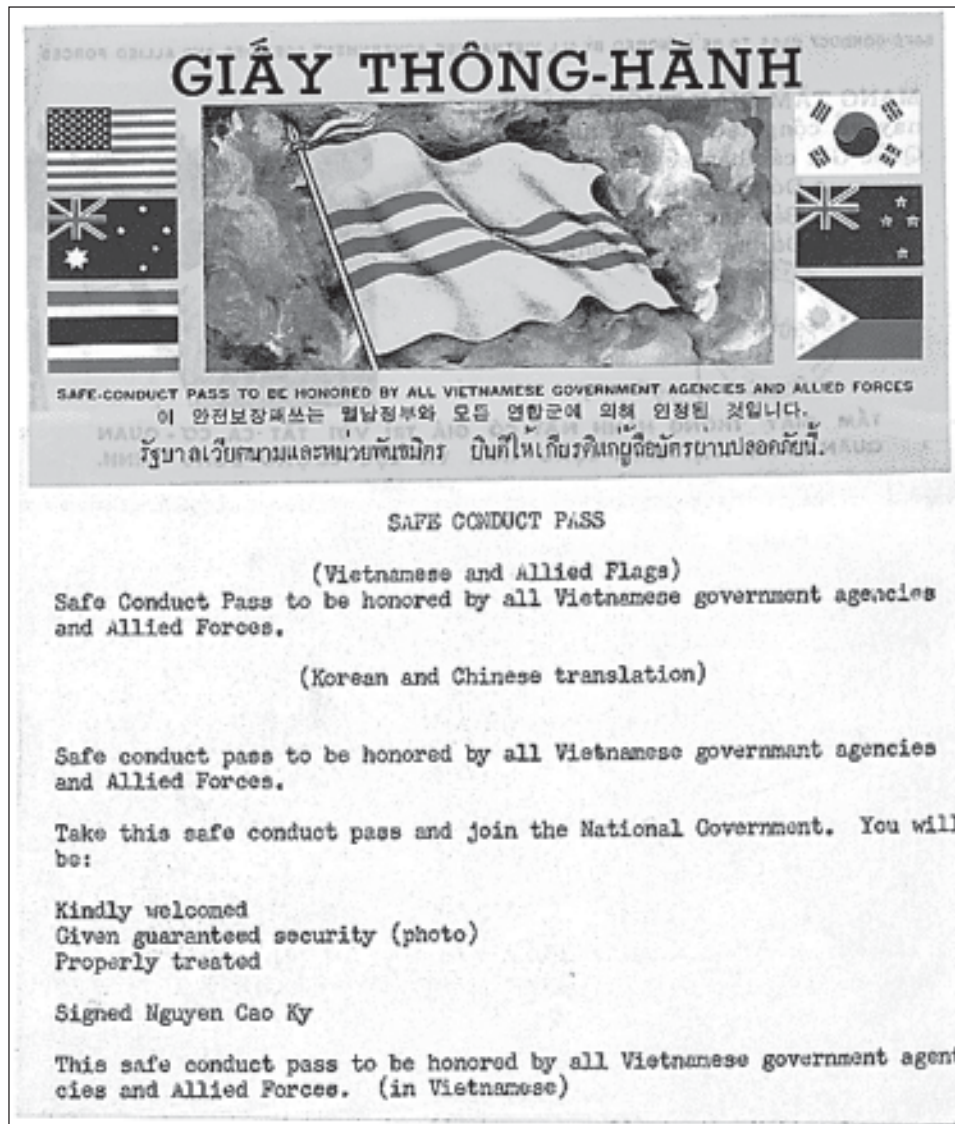
Source: Lyndon B. Johnson, "President's Daily Diary, February 18, 1968" (Austin, TX: Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum [National Archives], 1968).

Understanding the Document

1. Why did President Johnson ask the Marines aboard the USS *Constellation* the following question: "Is the morale [sic] higher at some times than at others?"
2. Discuss why the Marines were concerned with the activities of the hippies and flower children. Evaluate Johnson's reply to their questions concerning dissenters.
3. Explain why Johnson used the example of his sister's short skirts in his reply to a Marine's question. What does this reveal about Johnson?
4. How does Johnson address the issue of war and death? Evaluate how effective his speech to the Marines was regarding this topic.

American Propaganda Leaflets Used to Urge VC Defection and U.S. Support

The following propaganda leaflets were developed in an attempt to achieve a variety of goals, including urging the defection of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese soldiers to the side of the Government of Vietnam as well as to win domestic and foreign support for American intervention in Vietnam.

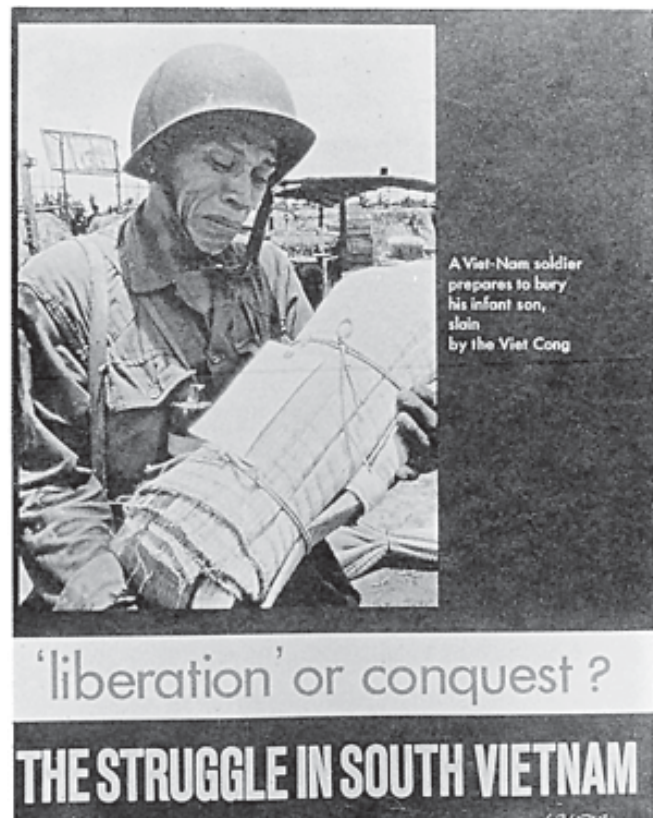


Source: Military Assistance Command Vietnam, "Propaganda Leaflet Urging Defection of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Soldiers" (College Park, MD: Modern Military Records, National Archives at College Park, 1970).



Source: Military Assistance Command Vietnam, "Propaganda Leaflet Urging Defection of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Soldiers" (College Park, MD: Modern Military Records, National Archives at College Park, 1970).

Source: Office of the Chief Signal Officer, "Pamphlet Cover: Vietnam" (College Park, MD: Still Picture Branch, National Archives at College Park, 1966).



Understanding the Document

1. Explain the purpose of the “Safe Conduct Pass.” How effective do you believe the Psychological Operations tactic of issuing “Safe Conduct Passes” was in achieving its objective? Explain.
2. Identify the purpose of the “Viet-Cong” leaflet and describe the message it is attempting to convey. How effective do you believe this leaflet was in achieving its intended goal? Explain.
3. Who is the intended audience for “The Struggle in South Vietnam” pamphlet? What message is the pamphlet trying to convey and how effective do you believe it was in achieving its purpose? What is the significance of the statement “‘liberation’ or conquest”?
4. Evaluate each of the three forms of propaganda used during the Vietnam War and discuss which you believe was most effective and why.

North Vietnamese Soldier's Diary 1961

The following excerpts are from the diary of a North Vietnamese soldier (originally from South Vietnam) who was accompanying a Viet Cong unit on a series of missions.

May 4, 1961

Leaving temporarily the beloved North to return to my native South to liberate my compatriots from the yoke of misery imposed by the US—Diem. This has been my ideal for a long time.

August 6, 1961

A few lines to remind me of this remote place! Not enough rice; meals tasteless because there is not enough salt; clothing is not warm enough for this very high peak.

Nevertheless, in his determined heart, the fighter for liberation of the South remains faithful to the Party, to the people of the South, and he remains faithful to his only love.

August 14, 1961

One afternoon which is turning into evening. I am sitting on the peak of a high mountain. This is a famous scenic place. This is the highest peak of the whole chain of mountains, and it is covered with mist. All this scenery arouses nostalgia in my heart! I try to recall my life since I was a young boy.

I answered the call of the Party when I was very young, and what did I do for the people of my village? I devoted myself to the people. I took part in propaganda and aroused the people to carry out the policy of the Party and the Government and helped organize village defense and fighting forces. On March 25, 1954, I began my fighting career and I contributed my part in fighting the French Expeditionary Force. With the army of Interzone 5, I saw the end of the war on July 20, 1954, and then on April 26, 1955, I left my native place and all the ties with my family and friends to go North as a victorious fighter.

Since that day, my spirit has matured together with that of the regular army. We have built up a beautiful and prosperous and strong North; the construction sites and factories spring up quickly everywhere under a bright sky and under the superior socialist regime. Close to me there was a unique source of consolation in my life. My life was beautiful, my happiness immeasurable. Enough to eat; warm clothing in my daily life; earning a living was fairly easy. . . .

December 15, 1961

On the call of the Party, I returned to my beloved Fatherland! My life returned to normal. I enjoyed again the peaceful atmosphere and my happiness. I continued training daily for the defense of the territory of the North and for the continuation of the liberation of the South. But I was back with my only love. Hurrah! How happy and how sweet. But my life could not continue that way!

For the third time my life turned to war again. For the liberation of our compatriots in the South, a situation of boiling oil and burning fire is necessary! A situation in which husband is separated from wife, father from son, brother from brother is necessary. I joined the ranks of the liberation army in answer to the call of the Front for Liberation of the South.

Now my life is full of hardship—not enough rice to eat nor enough salt to give a taste to my tongue, not enough clothing to keep myself warm! But in my heart I keep loyal to the Party and to the people. I am proud and happy.

I am writing down this story for my sons and my grandsons of the future to know of my life and activities during the Revolution when the best medicine available was the root of the wild banana tree and the best bandage was the leaf of rau lui, when there was not salt to give taste to our meals, when there was no such food as meat or fish as we enjoy in a time of peace and happiness such as I have known and left behind.

Source: United States Department of State, *A Threat to the Peace: North Vietnam's Efforts to Conquer South Vietnam* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), pp. 64–67.

Understanding the Document

1. To what does the North Vietnamese soldier pledge his allegiance?
2. Why, as a young man, did the author of the diary become a soldier?
3. How does he characterize life in North Vietnam?
4. According to this soldier, why has he now taken up arms for a third time in his life? What are the hardships he is enduring as a soldier?

President Lyndon B. Johnson's Daily Diary 1968

The following excerpts from Lyndon B. Johnson's presidential diary provide insight into the events of Sunday, March 31, 1968, a seminal date in the history of the Vietnam War, in which President Johnson spent most of the day working on a speech he would deliver that night, informing the American people that he would not seek another term in office.

Date **March 31, 1968**

The White House

President Lyndon B. Johnson

DAILY DIARY

The President began his day at (Place) **the White House** Day **Sunday**

Entry No.	Time		Telephone Calls		Activity (include visited by)	Remarks, Any Code
	In	Out	In	Out		
	12:00n				The President returned to the mansion, accompanied by Nagenta and JRT	
2	12:09p			1	Mr. Joseph (Doc) Mashman of Bell Helicopter Corporation - Ft. Worth, Tex	
	12:41p			1	Walt Boston - returning Boston's 11:30a call	
	1:43p			1	Charlie Maguire	
	2:06p				mf to the second floor. Sgt. Gaddis was sitting at the table in the Center Hall, and no one seemed to be around. she asked the Sgt where the President was, and he replied, "in the Treaty Room."	
					The President was sitting the Treaty Room at a small oval marble-topped table, reading a handwritten draft (Busby's first draft of the ending for tonight's speech). Horace Busby was the only other person in the room. The President read the draft aloud, making changes, patting his foot a good bit, showing the words to mf, clarifying Busby's handwriting, and doing some editing of his own. President then told mf to type the draft quickly, cover the words and show it to no one and return it to him with several copies. As he walked to the West Hall with mf, he took the draft from her hands, and asked her to wait... he then called Mrs. Johnson to join him along with the Krims in the West Hall... and Pat and Luci... and read the draft aloud to them. There was no comment.	

SEE TRAVEL RECORD FOR TRAVEL ACTIVITY

Page No.:

The White House
President Lyndon B. Johnson
BAGG EARLY

The President began his day at (Place) _____ Date _____
Day _____

Entry No.	Time		Telephone		Activity (include visited by)	Expenditure Code
	In	Out	To	LD		
					Luci fought back tears. Mrs. Johnson seemed engrossed in writing something on a 5x7 White House pad.	
1	2:15p				LUNCH w/ Mrs. Johnson Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Nugent Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Krim Morris Bishop	
	2:40	2:59p			Charles Maguire on second floor	
	2:42p	2:45p			w/ to second floor w/ typewritten copy of Bush's first draft The President was at the lunch table, and took the first copy and began reading it to those at the table.	

SEE TRAVEL RECORD FOR TRAVEL ACTIVITY

Page No. 1

The White House
President Lyndon B. Johnson
BAGG EARLY

The President began his day at (Place) _____ Date **March 31, 1968**
Day **Sunday**

Entry No.	Time		Telephone		Activity (include visited by)	Expenditure Code
	In	Out	To	LD		
	2:55p				To the Oval Office -	
	2:56p				Christian - pl	
	2:57p	3:02p			Watson	
		3:37p			Fleming	
		3:03p			Christian	
	3:06p	3:01p			Liz Carpenter	
	3:07p	3:36p			George Christian	
					During this time, the President read his speech for tonight using teleprompter and before the cameras.	
					After he finished, he went to the tickers as the teleprompter was removed.	
	3:30p				Walt Rostow - returning his call (Mr. Rostow had called from his home while the President was reading his speech and left word)	

SEE TRAVEL RECORD FOR TRAVEL ACTIVITY

Page No. 1

The White House		Date	March 31, 1968
Prescott Lusk & Johnson		Day	Sunday
The President began his day at (Place)		By	
Entry No.	Time	Telephone (or)	Expend- iture Code
	Time	Loc.	LD
6	3:38p		
			George Christian in
	3:43p	f	
			Walt Rostow (President took this call in major's room)
	3:47p		
			To the mansion -- and to his bedroom -- for NAP -- after stopping in major's room to ask for "President's Truman's withdrawal remarks in 1952 -- in March." This was Truman's speech to a JF Dinner -- pertinent excerpts were taken, typed and sent to the mansion
	3:50p	t	
			Jones - pl
	3:54p	t	
			Jones - pl
	4:11p	t	
			Jones - pl
	4:15p		
	4:54p	t	
			Secy Clifford (b)
	5:06p	t	
			McPherson - pl
	5:12p	t	
			Tom Johnson - pl
	5:18p	t	
			McPherson - pl- Jones - pl

USE TRAVEL RECORD
FOR TRAVEL ACTIVITY

Page No.

The White House President Lyndon B. Johnson DAILY DIARY						Date:	March 31, 1968
						the White House	
						Sunday	
						Day _____	
Entry No.	Time		Telephone Calls		Remarks	Express Mail Code	
	In	Out	To	From			
	5:52p		t		Jones & pl		
	5:55	6:25p			Hon. Walt Rostow, Hon. Averell Harriman, Amb at Large Hon. Anatoly F. Dobrynin, Ambassador of the USSR off record		
	6:01p		t		Christian's pl		
	6:30p		t		Jones & pl		
	6:32p		f		Jones		
	6:35p				Bushy called mf from the Treaty Room saying, "I need some help. I have another draft to be typed."		
					mf went to the Treaty Room, and Bushy explained his draft and insert. The President joined soon after, walking in w/ hands in pockets, and saying, "Russ, we're going down to the line, it's time, let's see what you have." The President made changes and edited the draft. There are indications on the drafts.....		
					He then sat down and started to write his own words on withdrawal, using mf's stone notebook, but did not finish, for Bushy helped him with several words, and they were added in the President's hand on the yellow page draft.		

Page Nos:

The White House
PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON
DAILY DIARY
The President began his day at (Place) _____ Date _____

Entry No.	Time		Telephone Calls		Activity (Include visits by)	Expenditure Code
	In	Out	In	Out		
	6:50p				Down the elevator w/ Mrs. Johnson and Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Krim and Jim Jones who had come to escort the President to the office. On the elevator, the President said that he was going to practice one more time and that he should get hold of Terry Sanford. Jim explained that Sanford was on an airplane, and could not be reached.	
	6:55p				Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Krim to office mf typing second draft -- finished it and took it to Buzz in the Treaty Room	
	7:00p				After Buzz had read it and was assured that this was his last draft -- it was at this point that the figure 64 64 months was changed to 52. Buzz realized that he had miscounted.	
	7:05p				mf then started for the office... for the President had already said the first two pages could go to the teleprompter people... but met the President at the elevator as	
	7:27p				and the President stopped at the desk where the Sergeant usually sits in the Center Hall, and looked at this final draft. Once more, he made changes. He asked mf to get Buzz who was in the Treaty Room -- he joined. People were milling about. Pat walked through the Hall... Mrs. Johnson went to her room... Mr. and Mrs. Krim were sitting at a card table in the West Hall... The President then told mf to go ahead with the changes. mf asked if she could now give the first two pages to the teleprompter people, and the President replied in the affirmative.	

SEE TRAVEL RECORD FOR TRAVEL ACTIVITY Page No. _____

The White House
PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON
DAILY DIARY
The President began his day at (Place) _____ Date March 31, 1968

Entry No.	Time		Telephone Calls		Activity (Include visits by)	Expenditure Code
	In	Out	In	Out		
					mf to office -- gave Steve last two pages to the teleprompter people, Mr. and Mrs. Steve Martin to the second floor -- waited for a bit	
	7:43p				Marvin Watson to second floor	
	7:55p				Walt Rostow	
	8:05p				General Earle Wheeler	
	8:07p				JRT took the last page of the draft which mf had been holding to the mansion and asked the President if he was ready for it to go to the teleprompter people. He replied in the affirmative, and Jim took it to the teleprompter people.	
	8:10p				mf then went to the press office to type the ending to the speech on soft white bond. After finishing, she made one xerox -- for the President had sent instructions that he wanted 30 copies available for quick press handout after the speech.	
	8:15p				Final pages of the President's speech were put in the President's speech book at 8:55p	
	8:25p				Seny and Mrs. Clark Clifford to the second floor	
	8:33p				Mr. and Mrs. Walt Rostow to second floor	
	8:42p				The President to the Oval Office w/ Marvin Watson, Walt Rostow, and Jim Jones	

SEE TRAVEL RECORD FOR TRAVEL ACTIVITY Page No. _____

See When Hosted						Date
Personnel Involved & Location						
Early Start						
The President begins his day at (Place)						Day
Entry No.	Time		Telephone		Activity (include visited by)	Expenditure Code
	In	Out	In	LD		
8:45p					Lynn and Pat to the West Wing - and to the Oval Office	
8:52p					Mrs. Johnson to the Oval Office	
8:52p					Sally Clifford and Horace Busby to the West Wing -- Sally Clifford watched the first 20 minutes of the speech in major's room w/ mf	
8:56p					Lynda to Oval Office	
9:00p					Walt Rostow to second floor	
9:01p					REMARKS to the Nation (live television) The President's family was with him in the Oval Office	
9:10p						
9:15p						
9:20p					After his speech, the President and his family, walked out the door of his office, down the colonnade. Stopped to invite mf to dinner and saw that she was watching television. He got interested and came to the office and said, "What are they saying?" and then decided to go into his little room to watch all three networks, followed by Mrs. Johnson, Lynn and Pat and Lynda.	
9:40p					Mayor Richard Daley - Chicago The President took the call from the lounge, and the Mayor said, "We're going to draft you. You dropped the biggest bombshell by announcing that you will not	

March 31, 1968
Date March 31, 1968

The White House
The President began his day at (Place) _____ Day Sunday

Diary No.	Time		Telephone Calls		Activity (include visited by)	Expense Day Card
	In	Out	To	LD		
					The President watched the televised news and analyses of his announcement... and then watched Ray Scherer as he broadcast remarks on what happened in the Yellow Oval Room.	
3	11:29a				Governor Nelson Rockefeller - NYC - (P) returning his call (took this call in the Bedroom)	
	11:59p				C. P. Little called the President - talked to Willie Ray Taylor	
	12:10a				Back to West Hall, ... Greeted Warren Lynd Smith -- laughing, "I thought you were off getting Married... what happened to that Davidson fellow?"	
	12:12a				Cliffords out The President jokingly joked with Mr. Krim -- knew I may have to learn to drive that helicopter now.	
					The President chuckled and said that "Now Nelson Rockefeller is reassessing things." Talking about his announcement he said, "I never was any error of any decision I ever made in my life, and I never made any more unselfish one. I have 525,000 men whose very lives depend on what I do, and I can't worry about the primaries. Now I will be working full time for those men out there, I don't need to worry, and the only guys that won't be back here by the time my term ends are the guys that I left in the last day or two. I think the boys there will be glad that I'm working for them."	
					Lynda told her Daddy that she thought that some of the boys might get	

THE WHITE HOUSE
President Lyndon B. Johnson
DAILY DIARY

The President began his day at (Place) _____ Date: 3/31/68

Entry No.	Time		Telephone		Remarks	Special- for Code
	In	Out	In	LD		
					discouraged when they heard the announcement, and the President took care of her fears by saying again that he thought they would be glad to know he was working full time for them. "Don't worry about the boys," he said, "they'll do better than most of us."	
	12:15p				Tom Johnson out	
	12:45p				Jim Jones, George Christian, Marie Scherer and Marjorie Roberts out	
	3:00a				retired	
					HOUSEGUESTS:	
					Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Krim	
					Mr. Sam Houston Johnson	
					Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Nugent and Lynn	
					Mrs. Lynda Robb	

SEE TRAVEL RECORD FOR TRAVEL ACTIVITY

Page No. 1

Source: Lyndon B. Johnson, "President's Daily Diary, March 31, 1968" (Austin, TX: Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum [National Archives], 1968).

Understanding the Document

1. Why did President Johnson go through so many drafts of his speech for that night? Was there a need for so much secrecy? Explain.
2. What was Johnson's motivation for wanting to review President Truman's 1952 withdrawal speech?
3. What does the diary reveal about both the importance of the speech and the manner in which Johnson conducted himself in private?
4. Explain why Johnson believed his withdrawal to be both an "unselfish" act as well as a decision he was more "surer of" than any other.
5. Discuss the significance of Johnson's final reply to his daughter regarding what the soldiers in Vietnam would think of his decision.

President Lyndon B. Johnson's "Withdrawal Speech" 1968

In the following televised address to the nation, on March 31, 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson announces new steps toward limiting the war in Vietnam as well as his surprising withdrawal from the presidential race.

For thirty-seven years in the service of our Nation, first as a Congressman, as a Senator, and as Vice President, and now as your President, I have put the unity of the people first. I have put it ahead of any divisive partisanship.

And in these times as in times before, it is true that a house divided against itself by the spirit of faction, of party, of region, of religion, of race, is a house that cannot stand.

There is division in the American house now. There is divisiveness among us all tonight. And holding the trust that is mine, as President of all the people, I cannot disregard the peril to the progress of the American people and the hope and the prospect of peace for all peoples.

So, I would ask all Americans, whatever their personal interests or concern, to guard against divisiveness and all its ugly consequences.

Fifty-two months and ten days ago, in a moment of tragedy and trauma, the duties of this office fell upon me. I asked then for your help and God's, that we might continue America on its course, binding up our wounds, healing our history, moving forward in new unity, to clear the American agenda and to keep the American commitment for all of our people.

United we have kept that commitment. United we have enlarged that commitment.

Through all time to come, I think America will be a stronger nation, a more just society, and a land of greater opportunity and fulfillment because of what we have all done together in these years of unparalleled achievement.

Our reward will come in the life of freedom, peace, and hope that our children will enjoy through ages ahead.

What we won when all of our people united just must not now be lost in suspicion, distrust, selfishness, and politics among any of our people.

Believing this as I do, I have concluded that I should not permit the Presidency to become involved in the partisan divisions that are developing in this political year.

With America's sons in the fields far away, with America's future under challenge right here at home, with our hopes and the world's hopes for peace in the balance every day, I do not believe that I should devote an hour or a day of my time to any personal partisan causes or to any duties other than the awesome duties of this office—the Presidency of your country.

Accordingly, I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President.

But let men everywhere know, however, that a strong, a confident, and a vigilant America stands ready tonight to seek an honorable peace—and stands ready tonight to defend an honored cause—whatever the price, whatever the burden, whatever the sacrifice that duty may require.

Thank you for listening.

Good night and God bless all of you.

Source: Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1968-1969, Book I (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1970), p. 475–476.

Understanding the Document

1. Evaluate the appropriateness of President Johnson's use of the Abraham Lincoln "house divided" metaphor.
2. Discuss why you believe Johnson devotes so much time in his speech to highlighting the "commitment" and "agenda" he inherited from John F. Kennedy upon his death.
3. Identify what "challenges at home" Johnson was referring to in his speech, and explain why he declared "the world's hopes for peace [are] in the balance every day."

LESSON FIVE

VIETNAMIZATION: PARADIGM SHIFT AND THE END

A. Objectives

- ◆ To define Vietnamization and discuss the role this foreign policy initiative played in bringing about an end to American military involvement in Vietnam.
- ◆ To identify the terms of the 1973 Paris Accords and determine whether this truly represented, as posited by President Richard Nixon, “peace with honor.”
- ◆ To describe the role President Gerald Ford played in the final years of the conflict in Vietnam and evaluate how well the United States dealt with the issues surrounding the final days of the war and evacuation of Saigon.
- ◆ To trace the role played by American public opinion in the nation’s involvement in Vietnam and then in its withdrawal from the war.

B. Background Information

The final chapter of the Vietnam War had separate endings that took place while two different presidents were at the helm. To begin with, President Richard M. Nixon inherited a war in Vietnam that had escalated to unprecedented levels. Former President Johnson, however, had planted the seeds of peace by initiating secret peace talks as well as implementing a new program that turned over more responsibility for the war to the South Vietnamese. President Nixon, though, would bring both of these developments to fruition. During his first year in office, Nixon implemented the first stages of his “Vietnamization” policy by authorizing the withdrawal of twenty five thousand troops. These same troop reductions would continue throughout his tenure in office. Although Nixon would work to reduce American troop strength in Vietnam, he had not given up on the war; instead he fully intended to pursue American objectives through his program of “Vietnamization.”

Nixon’s “Vietnamization” policy was quite popular; however there were other features of his Vietnam policy that came under fire by many Americans. In particular, Nixon’s decision to conduct military operations in Cambodia, in an effort to disrupt Communist supply lines into South Vietnam along the Ho Chi Minh trail, met with intense questioning by the media and public protest. Although protests would follow Nixon’s announcement of U.S. combat operations in Cambodia, the antiwar movement actually traces its roots back further. The first events to draw the attention of the American public were “teach-ins,” peaceful demonstrations on colleges, which began on 24 March 1965 at the University of Michigan. This was followed the next month by the first large-scale antiwar demonstration in Washington, DC that involved twenty five thousand protesters. The antiwar movement continued to attract more members and media attention following the October 1967 Pentagon demonstration that attracted 100,000 protesters. The movement would experience unprecedented growth and public attention in the aftermath of the January 1968 Tet Offensive. In April of that year, student protesters occupied the administration building at Columbia University. This was followed in August by a nationally televised brutal clash between police and protesters outside the Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

By 1969, the pendulum swing of American support for the war, particularly among middle-class students, housewives, and clergy, was in full motion. This was evidenced first in October, by a nationwide Vietnam Moratorium, in which two million Americans participated. The next month, as well, a second march on Washington was conducted, this time with over a quarter of a million participants, over ten times the number that took part in the 1965 march. This was followed the next year by the protests that resulted from Nixon's Cambodia announcement. This time, however, these protests would have unexpected results, including an incident on 4 May 1970 in which four students were killed by Ohio National Guardsmen during a student protest. A similar incident occurred that same year at Jackson State University in Mississippi when police and National Guardsmen responded to a student demonstration by firing into a dormitory, killing two students. Perhaps the greatest victory in the antiwar movement came the next year with the release of the *Pentagon Papers*. This blow was inflicted primarily by one man, Daniel Ellsberg. Ellsberg, a former Defense Department employee who had conducted a study in 1967 and 1968 for his then boss, Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, released a series of documents he had uncovered years earlier while conducting this study. These documents disclosed the true nature of American involvement in Vietnam—which included deceit, cover-ups, and assassinations—by revealing the decision-making that went on behind closed doors.

The first installment of the *Pentagon Papers* was published in the *New York Times* on 13 June 1971. The shift was now complete; public opinion was overwhelmingly in support of ending American involvement in Vietnam. Although antiwar movements have been a part of the American landscape during all previous conflicts the nation had been involved in, this was the first time in American history such a movement proved so instrumental in helping to bring about a shift in public opinion, which in turn served to shape American foreign policy. There was no turning back now, and by fall of 1972, it appeared as though for the first time peace was finally within reach when it was announced that American and North Vietnamese representatives were in the final stages of drafting a preliminary peace treaty. Following some political and military maneuvering in the weeks that would follow this announcement, the Paris Peace Agreement was finally signed on 27 January 1973. Although the treaty marked an end to American combat involvement in Vietnam, it did not end the conflict. For the next two years, the United States would continue to fund the South Vietnamese government in their effort to sustain a war that America had been so involved in for the past eight years. Despite the efforts of President Thieu and his South Vietnamese military, there were simply too many problems, often of their own design, to be overcome. By 1975, it was obvious that South Vietnam was about to lose its war with the North. President Gerald R. Ford was then thrust into a position of having to decide when the United States was going to make its final exit. Shortly after the evacuation of all remaining U.S. personnel from South Vietnam and the resignation of President Thieu, Saigon fell to Communist troops on 30 April 1975, officially ending the Second Indochina War.

C. Lesson Activities

Gardner's Multiple Intelligences

Verbal/Linguistic

Provide students with a copy of “President Richard Nixon’s Vietnamization Speech, 1969” (**Document 36**) and have them read the text of the speech and answer the questions that follow. Then, assign students the role of newspaper reporters who are to analyze the speech and write an article based on it for the next day’s lead story. Students can then share their articles with the class for discussion and/or peer evaluation purposes.

Naturalistic

Distribute copies of the “Defoliation Target Clearance Report” materials (**Document 37**) to the students along with the corresponding questions. After the students have completed the questions, discuss the purpose of defoliation during the Vietnam War and the protocol that had to be followed. In addition, evaluate the military and environmental impact of defoliation in Vietnam.

Visual/Spatial

Provide students with a copy of “The New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam: Mass Meeting Announcement” (**Document 38**) and have them answer the questions that follow. Then, assign students the role of organizers of another anti-war demonstration and have them design their own advertisement poster for another proposed demonstration, which includes the following information: date, location, and purpose (to include the catalyst for the event).

Body/Kinesthetic

Distribute copies of “President Richard Nixon’s Peace With Honor Speech” (**Document 39**) and “Paris Accords” (**Document 40**). Allow students to read both documents and answer the accompanying questions for each. Next, place students in groups of four, assigning the following individual roles to each group: a recent high school graduate, an anti-war protester, a Vietnam War Veteran, and a sibling of a soldier who was killed in action in Vietnam. Have the students in each group discuss how they feel, first at the news of President Nixon’s “Peace With Honor” speech and then in reaction to the terms of the “Paris Accords.”

Interpersonal

Divide the class into two groups. Provide members of the first group with a copy of President Nguyen Van Thieu’s letter to President Gerald Ford (**Document 41**). Assign each member of group one the task of writing a reply for President Ford to President Thieu’s letter. Then distribute copies of President Ford’s letter to President Thieu (**Document 42**) to members of group two. Have each member of the second group draft a reply for President Thieu to President Ford’s letter. After providing an opportunity for both groups to complete their letters, pair the students with one member from each group and have them share and discuss their replies. Then have the student pairs work together to answer the questions that follow each document.

Logical/Mathematical

Hand out copies of “Memorandum from General Fred C. Weyand to President Gerald R. Ford” (**Document 43**). First, have students read the document and answer the questions at the end of each. Then facilitate a class discussion using the following questions as prompts: What

form of assistance/support should the United States provide to South Vietnam? What type of evacuation plan should be developed and when should it be implemented? How should the United States attend to the growing refugee problem?

Next, distribute copies of Van Tien Dung's "North Vietnamese Account of the Fall of Saigon" (**Document 44**). After students have read the document and responded to the questions that follow, have them discuss what the United States should have done differently in the closing weeks and months of the war in Vietnam, in light of the events that unfolded on April 30, 1975. How does Van Tien Dung and General Fred Weyand's assessment of the situation in Vietnam differ?

Intrapersonal

Distribute copies of the following two documents to students: Brent Scowcroft's "State Department Report on Life in South Vietnam" (**Document 45**); and the "Letter from Members of Congress to President Gerald R. Ford," requesting official U.S. recognition of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (**Document 46**). After reading both documents and responding to the accompanying questions, ask students to assume the role of President Gerald Ford and have them write, individually, a reply to the letter he received requesting official recognition of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Once the students have completed their reply letters, hand out copies of President Ford's reply (**Document 47**) and have them compare and contrast the letters they drafted with the actual reply penned by President Ford.

Musical/Rhythmic

Provide students with a copy of Leslie Gelb's *New York Times* article "Vietnam, Test of Presidents, Was Distant War and Battle at Home" (**Document 48**) and have them read the text of the article and answer the questions that follow. Then, as a class, discuss and evaluate the author's use of analogy and metaphor in the article. Finally, assign students the role of newspaper reporters who are to write a similar type of article, integrating the use of analogy and metaphor into their text, reflecting upon the end of the war in Vietnam and the lessons learned from American involvement in the conflict.

D. Extension Activities

1. Compare and contrast the terms of the Paris Accords of 1973 with those outlined in the Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference of 1954. In addition, compare the terms of this agreement that ended American involvement in the Vietnam War with those treaties that marked the end of other twentieth-century wars where the United States was involved.
2. Research the conditions and treatment American POWs had to endure in the various twentieth-century wars where the United States was involved. Compare and contrast the ordeal of American POWs in the Vietnam War with that of American POWs in other twentieth-century conflicts.
3. Research issues and concerns that grew out of the Vietnam War (e.g., Vietnamese refugees, Agent Orange health issues, Vietnam War "draft-dodgers," diplomatic recognition of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam). Discuss and evaluate the manner in which these problems were resolved by the U.S. government, identifying those "lessons learned" from the war.



Source: “President Richard M. Nixon Shaking Hands with Troops in Vietnam” (College Park, MD: Nixon Presidential Materials (NLNP) [National Archives], July 30, 1969).

President Richard Nixon's "Vietnamization" Speech 1969

In this 3 November 1969 address to the nation, President Richard M. Nixon outlines his new "Vietnamization" strategy, which had actually been initiated months earlier.

Good evening, my fellow Americans:

Tonight I want to talk to you on a subject of deep concern to all Americans and to many people in all parts of the world—the war in Vietnam.

I believe that one of the reasons for the deep division about Vietnam is that many Americans have lost confidence in what their Government has told them about our policy. The American people cannot and should not be asked to support a policy which involves the overriding issues of war and peace unless they know the truth about that policy.

Tonight, therefore, I would like to answer some of the questions that I know are on the minds of many of you listening to me. . . .

Now, let me begin by describing the situation I found when I was inaugurated on January 20.

- The war had been going on for 4 years.
- Thirty one thousand Americans had been killed in action.
- The training program for the South Vietnamese was behind schedule.
- 540,000 Americans were in Vietnam with no plans to reduce the number.
- No progress had been made at the negotiations in Paris and the United States had not put forth a comprehensive peace proposal.
- The war was causing deep division at home and criticism from many of our friends as well as our enemies abroad.

In view of these circumstances there were some who urged that I end the war at once by ordering the immediate withdrawal of all American forces.

From a political standpoint this would have been a popular and easy course to follow. After all, we became involved in the war while my predecessor was in office. I could blame the defeat which would be the result of my action on him and come out as the peacemaker. Some put it to me quite bluntly: This was the only way to avoid allowing Johnson's war to become Nixon's war.

But I had a greater obligation than to think only of the years of my administration and of the next election. I had to think of the effect of my decision on the next generation and on the future of peace and freedom in America and in the world.

Let us all understand that the question before us is not whether some Americans are for peace and some Americans are against peace. The question at issue is not whether Johnson's war becomes Nixon's war.

The great question is: How can we win America's peace?

Well, let us turn now to the fundamental issue. Why and how did the United States become involved in Vietnam in the first place?

Fifteen years ago North Vietnam, with the logistical support of Communist China and the Soviet Union, launched a campaign to impose a Communist government on South Vietnam by instigating and supporting a revolution.

In response to the request of the Government of South Vietnam, President Eisenhower sent economic aid and military equipment to assist the people of South Vietnam in their efforts to prevent a Communist takeover. Seven years ago, President Kennedy sent sixteen thousand military personnel to Vietnam as combat advisers. Four years ago, President Johnson sent American combat forces to South Vietnam.

Now, many believe that President Johnson's decision to send American combat forces to South Vietnam was wrong. And many others, I among them, have been strongly critical of the way the war has been conducted.

But the question facing us today is: Now that we are in the war, what is the best way to end it?

In January I could only conclude that the precipitate withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam would be a disaster not only for South Vietnam but for the United States and for the cause of peace.

For the South Vietnamese, our precipitate withdrawal would inevitably allow the Communists to repeat the massacres which followed their takeover in the North fifteen years before. . . .

For the United States, this first defeat in our Nation's history would result in a collapse of confidence in American leadership, not only in Asia but throughout the world.

Three American Presidents have recognized the great stakes involved in Vietnam and understood what had to be done.

In 1963, President Kennedy, with his characteristic eloquence and clarity, said: "... we want to see a stable government there, carrying on a struggle to maintain its national independence. We believe strongly in that. We are not going to withdraw from that effort. In my opinion, for us to withdraw from that effort would mean a collapse not only of South Vietnam, but Southeast Asia. So we are going to stay there."

President Eisenhower and President Johnson expressed the same conclusion during their terms of office.

For the future of peace, precipitate withdrawal would thus be a disaster of immense magnitude.

- A nation cannot remain great if it betrays its allies and lets down its friends.
- Our defeat and humiliation in South Vietnam without question would promote recklessness in the councils of those great powers who have not yet abandoned their goals of world conquest.
- This would spark violence wherever our commitments help maintain the peace in the Middle East, in Berlin, eventually even in the Western Hemisphere.

Ultimately, this would cost more lives.

It would not bring peace; it would bring more war.

For these reasons, I rejected the recommendation that I should end the war by immediately withdrawing all of our forces. I chose instead to change American policy on both the negotiating front and battlefield. . . .

We Americans are a do-it-yourself people. We are an impatient people.

Instead of teaching someone else to do a job, we like to do it ourselves. And this trait has been carried over into our foreign policy.

In Korea and again in Vietnam, the United States furnished most of the money, most of the arms, and most of the men to help the people of those countries defend their freedom against Communist aggression.

Before any American troops were committed to Vietnam, a leader of another Asian country expressed this opinion to me when I was traveling in Asia as a private citizen. He said: "When you are trying to assist another nation defend its freedom, U.S. policy should be to help them fight the war but not to fight the war for them. . . ."

Well, in accordance with this wise counsel, I laid down in Guam three principles as guidelines for future American policy toward Asia:

- First, the United States will keep all of its treaty commitments.
- Second, we shall provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation allied with us or of a nation whose survival we consider vital to our security.
- Third, in cases involving other types of aggression, we shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested in accordance with our treaty commitments. But we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense. . . .

The defense of freedom is everybody's business not just America's business. And it is particularly the responsibility of the people whose freedom is threatened. In the previous administration, we Americanized the war in Vietnam. In this administration, we are Vietnamizing the search for peace.

The policy of the previous administration not only resulted in our assuming the primary responsibility for fighting the war, but even more significantly did not adequately stress the goal of strengthening the South Vietnamese so that they could defend themselves when we left.

The Vietnamization plan was launched following Secretary Laird's visit to Vietnam in March. Under the plan, I ordered first a substantial increase in the training and equipment of South Vietnamese forces.

In July, on my visit to Vietnam, I changed General Abrams's orders so that they were consistent with the objectives of our new policies. Under the new orders, the primary mission of our troops is to enable the South Vietnamese forces to assume the full responsibility for the security of South Vietnam.

Our air operations have been reduced by over 20 percent.

And now we have begun to see the results of this long overdue change in American policy in Vietnam.

-After five years of Americans going into Vietnam, we are finally bringing men home. By December 15, over sixty thousand men will have been withdrawn from South Vietnam including 20 percent of all of our combat forces.

-The South Vietnamese have continued to gain in strength. As a result they have been able to take over combat responsibilities from our American troops.

Two other significant developments have occurred since this administration took office.

- Enemy infiltration, infiltration which is essential if they are to launch a major attack, over the last three months is less than 20 percent of what it was over the same period last year.

- Most important, United States casualties have declined during the last 2 months to the lowest point in three years.

Let me now turn to our program for the future.

We have adopted a plan which we have worked out in cooperation with the South Vietnamese for the complete withdrawal of all U.S. combat ground forces, and their replacement by South Vietnamese forces on an orderly scheduled timetable. This withdrawal will be made from strength and not from weakness. As South Vietnamese forces become stronger, the rate of American withdrawal can become greater.

I have not and do not intend to announce the timetable for our program. And there are obvious reasons for this decision which I am sure you will understand. As I have indicated on several occasions, the rate of withdrawal will depend on developments on three fronts.

One of these is the progress which can be or might be made in the Paris talks. An announcement of a fixed timetable for our withdrawal would completely remove any incentive for the enemy to negotiate an agreement. They would simply wait until our forces had withdrawn and then move in.

The other two factors on which we will base our withdrawal decisions are the level of enemy activity and the progress of the training programs of the South Vietnamese forces. And I am glad to be able to report tonight progress on both of these fronts has been greater than we anticipated when we started the program in June for withdrawal. As a result, our timetable for withdrawal is more optimistic now than when we made our first estimates in June. Now, this clearly demonstrates why it is not wise to be frozen in on a fixed timetable. . . .

My fellow Americans, I am sure you can recognize from what I have said that we really only have two choices open to us if we want to end this war.

- I can order an immediate, precipitate withdrawal of all Americans from Vietnam without regard to the effects of that action.
- Or we can persist in our search for a just peace through a negotiated settlement if possible, or through continued implementation of our plan for Vietnamization—if necessary a plan in which we will withdraw all our forces from Vietnam on a schedule in accordance with our program, as the South Vietnamese become strong enough to defend their own freedom. I have chosen this second course. . . .

It is a plan which will end the war and serve the cause of peace not just in Vietnam but in the Pacific and in the world. . . .

There are powerful personal reasons I want to end this war. This week I will have to sign eighty three letters to mothers, fathers, wives, and loved ones of men who have given their lives for America in Vietnam. It is very little satisfaction to me that this is only one-third as many letters as I signed the first week in office. There is nothing I want more than to see the day come when I do not have to write any of those letters.

- I want to end the war to save the lives of those brave young men in Vietnam.
- But I want to end it in a way which will increase the chance that their younger brothers and their sons will not have to fight in some future Vietnam someplace in the world.
- And I want to end the war for another reason. I want to end it so that the energy and dedication of you, our young people, now too often directed into bitter hatred against those responsible for the war, can be turned to the great challenges of peace, a better life for all

Americans, a better life for all people on this earth. I have chosen a plan for peace. I believe it will succeed. . . .

As President I hold the responsibility for choosing the best path to that goal and then leading the Nation along it. . . .

Thank you and goodnight.

Source: Richard Nixon, “Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam,” [November 3, 1969], in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1969* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1971), pp. 901–09.

Understanding the Document

1. How does President Richard Nixon account for the “deep division about Vietnam” that was manifest in America at the time?
2. Identify and evaluate the rationale Nixon provides for not ending the war in Vietnam by ordering an immediate withdrawal.
3. Identify the three principles Nixon referenced in his speech that would guide America’s policy toward Asia in the future. How do these principles illustrate the “lessons learned” from the Vietnam War?
4. Outline the major components of Nixon’s “Vietnamization” policy.
5. Explain under what circumstances Nixon would initiate the withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam.
6. What “personal reasons” does Nixon provide for wanting to end the war in Vietnam?

Defoliation Target Clearance Report #20-88 1966

The following documents are all part of Defoliation Target Clearance Report #20-88, Rung Sat Special Zone, which were required to receive approval for conducting defoliation operations in Vietnam that, in this case, took place between 9 July and 3 August 1966.

SECRET

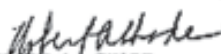
TARGET SUMMARY 20-88

1. (C) PURPOSE OF REQUEST: To expose, by chemical defoliation, VC movement and firing positions around Long Thanh Village, Rung Sat Special Sector.

2. (G) TARGET DESCRIPTION: The target consists of five square kilometers of mixed mangrove jungle located around Long Thanh Village, Rung Sat Special Sector (see map). The village of Ap Long, located in target center, is abandoned as well as the crop areas in the vicinity of this village. Located to the south and southwest of the target are several small crop plots, consisting primarily of rice. Damage to these crops should be minimal, and the aircraft will be cautioned to spray during light or southerly winds only. The Gia Dinh Province Chief has pledged compensation for any accidental crop damage.

3. (C) INTELLIGENCE ASPECTS: The VC G-53 platoon with a strength of approximately forty men armed with rifles and automatic weapons is active in the vicinity of Long Thanh. This platoon, reinforced by the C-445 and C-305 platoons, periodically conduct raids on the villages of Long Thanh and Dong Hoa. The VC interdict both ground and aerial supply into the villages. Defoliation will expose VC positions and activities and assist in the security of this area.

4. (U) PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS AND CIVIL AFFAIRS: The Rung Sat Paywar Team in coordination with the Paywar and Civil Affairs Team of Can Gio will conduct loudspeaker broadcasts and leaflet drops explaining the rationale for defoliation. The target being devoid of civilians, resettlement is not required or planned. Several recent (January through early March 1966) defoliation operations in the Rung Sat Special Sector have been successfully conducted with no adverse civilian repercussions.

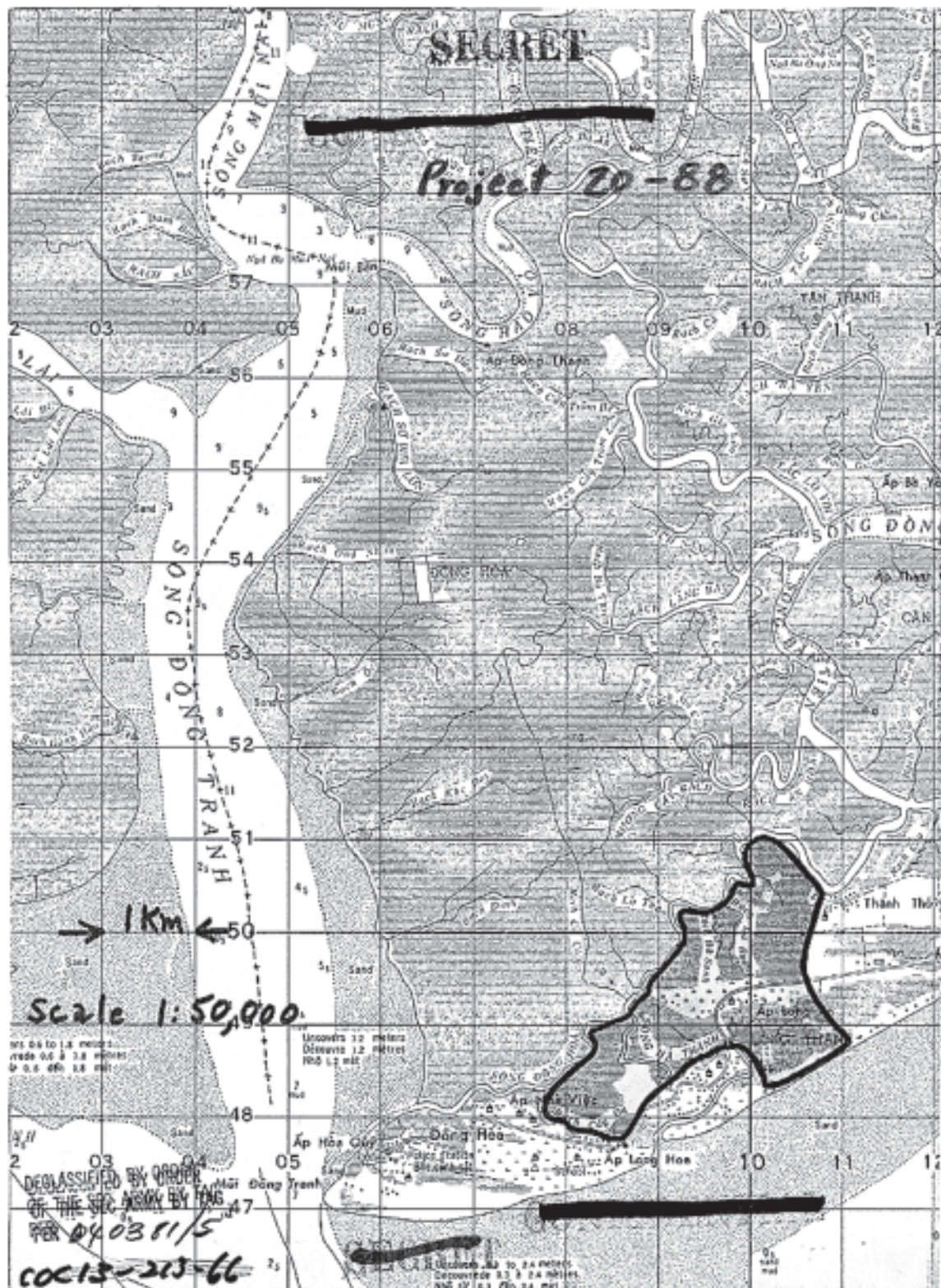

 ROBERT A. SHADE
 Lt Col, GS
 Chief, Cnl Ops Br

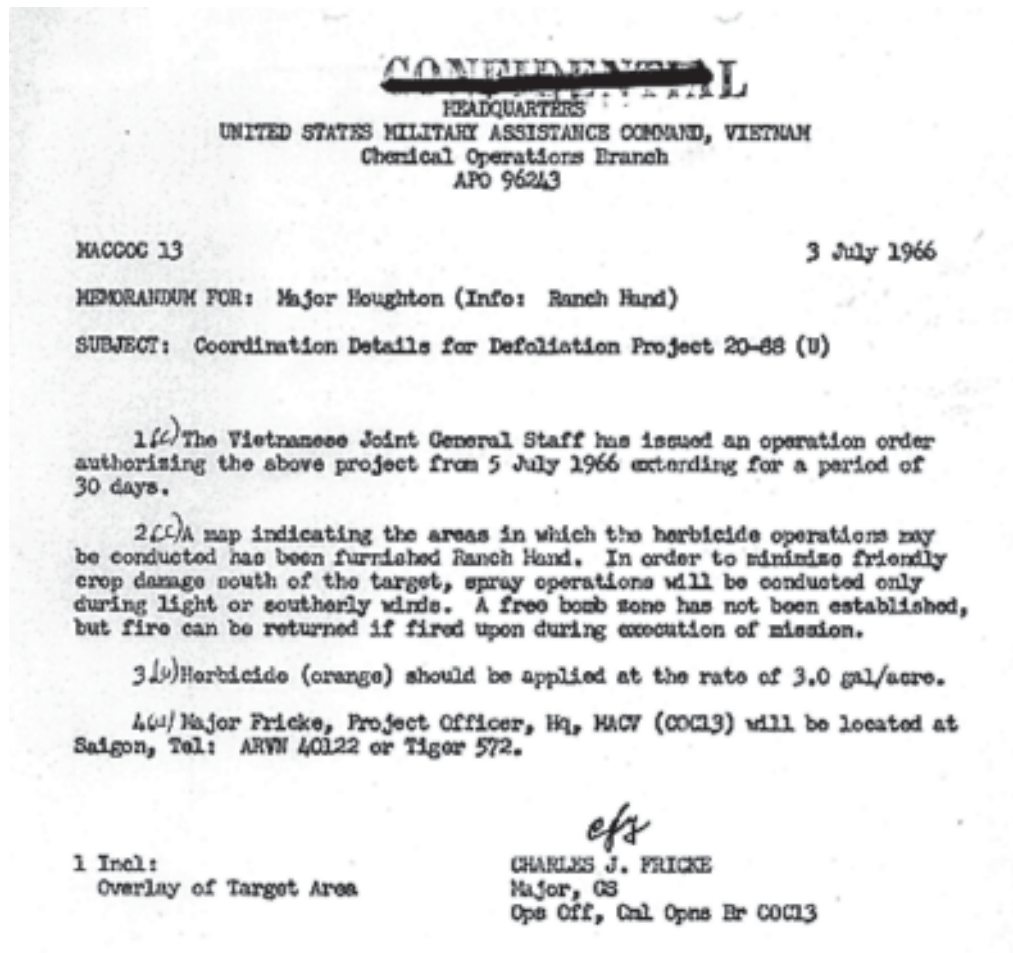
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Source: Military Assistance Command Vietnam, "Defoliation Target Clearance Report #20-88" (College Park, MD: Modern Military Records, National Archives at College Park, July 3, 1966).

Understanding the Document

1. Why does the U.S. Army propose to use chemical defoliation in the vicinity of Long Thanh Village?
2. What purpose do the loudspeaker broadcasts and leaflet drops serve in this process?
3. Examine the map outlining the region in which the chemical defoliation would be used. What is the military and environmental significance of the location?
4. Explain why the U.S. military developed such a complex protocol to gain approval for utilization of chemical defoliation.

New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam: Mass Meeting Announcement 1970

The following announcement from The National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam appeared in a number of newspapers in an attempt to solicit participants for the upcoming mass demonstration at the White House on 9 May 1970, in response to President Nixon's announcement the month before that the U.S. was conducting operations inside Cambodia.

THE WASHINGTON POST *Friday, May 1, 1970*

Nixon Sends GIs Into Cambodia

**NIXON DECLARES ALL-OUT WAR
ON SOUTHEAST ASIA**

THE PEOPLE MUST ACT NOW

In another attempt to stifle dissent, the Nixon administration has handed down regulations prohibiting demonstrations on federal park land without a 15 day advance notice. Public outrage at the invasion of Cambodia is so great we will go to the White House in spite of these regulations. We will assert our right to peacefully assemble. The police may block us. If they also decide to arrest us, we will maintain a militant non-violent discipline, and options will be provided for those not prepared for arrest. Meet us at the White House!

**MASS MEETING
at the WHITE HOUSE
at noon on saturday, may 9**

**DEMAND IMMEDIATE WITHDRAWAL OF ALL U.S. TROOPS
& SUPPLIES FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA**

The New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam - 1029 Vermont Av., N.W., Wash., D.C. 20005

Source: The New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, "Mass Meeting Announcement" (Washington, DC: The New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam [The Library of Congress Printed Ephemera Collection], 1970).

Understanding the Document

1. Why does The New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam claim that President Nixon had declared “all-out war on Southeast Asia”?
2. Explain what the map inset depicts and discuss its purpose.
3. Identify and evaluate the demonstration protocol organizers detail in their announcement.

President Richard Nixon's "Peace With Honor" Speech 1973

On 23 January 1973, President Richard Nixon delivered the following television and radio broadcast to the nation in which he announced that the United States had achieved "peace with honor," in reference to the initialing of the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam.

Good evening. I have asked for this radio and television time tonight for the purpose of announcing that we today have concluded an agreement to end the war and bring peace with honor in Vietnam and in Southeast Asia.

The following statement is being issued at this moment in Washington and Hanoi:

At 12:30 Paris time today [Tuesday], January 23, 1973, the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam was initialed by Dr. Henry Kissinger on behalf of the United States, and Special Adviser Le Duc Tho on behalf of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

The agreement will be formally signed by the parties participating in the Paris Conference on Vietnam on January 27, 1973, at the International Conference Center in Paris.

The cease-fire will take effect at 2400 Greenwich Mean Time, January 27, 1973. The United States and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam express the hope that this agreement will insure stable peace in Vietnam and contribute to the preservation of lasting peace in Indochina and Southeast Asia.

That concludes the formal statement.

Throughout the years of negotiations, we have insisted on peace with honor. In my addresses to the Nation from this room of January 25 and May 8 [1972], I set forth the goals that we considered essential for peace with honor.

In the settlement that has now been agreed to, all the conditions that I laid down then have been met. A cease-fire, internationally supervised, will begin at 7 p.m., this Saturday, January 27, Washington time. Within sixty days from this Saturday, all Americans held prisoners of war throughout Indochina will be released. There will be the fullest possible accounting for all of those who are missing in action.

During the same sixty-day period, all American forces will be withdrawn from South Vietnam.

The people of South Vietnam have been guaranteed the right to determine their own future, without outside interference.

By joint agreement, the full text of the agreement and the protocols to carry it out, will be issued tomorrow.

Throughout these negotiations we have been in the closest consultation with President Thieu and other representatives of the Republic of Vietnam. This settlement meets the goals and has the full support of President Thieu and the Government of the Republic of Vietnam, as well as that of our other allies who are affected.

The United States will continue to recognize the Government of the Republic of Vietnam as the sole legitimate government of South Vietnam.

We shall continue to aid South Vietnam within the terms of the agreement and we shall support efforts by the people of South Vietnam to settle their problems peacefully among themselves.

We must recognize that ending the war is only the first step toward building the peace. All parties must now see to it that this is a peace that lasts, and also a peace that heals, and a peace that not only ends the war in Southeast Asia, but contributes to the prospects of peace in the whole world.

This will mean that the terms of the agreement must be scrupulously adhered to. We shall do everything the agreement requires of us and we shall expect the other parties to do everything it requires of them. We shall also expect other interested nations to help insure that the agreement is carried out and peace is maintained.

As this long and very difficult war ends, I would like to address a few special words to each of those who have been parties in the conflict.

First, to the people and Government of South Vietnam: By your courage, by your sacrifice, you have won the precious right to determine your own future and you have developed the strength to defend that right. We look forward to working with you in the future, friends in peace as we have been allies in war.

To the leaders of North Vietnam: As we have ended the war through negotiations, let us now build a peace of reconciliation. For our part; we are prepared to make a major effort to help achieve that goal. But just as reciprocity was needed to end the war, so, too, will it be needed to build and strengthen the peace.

To the other major powers that have been involved even indirectly: Now is the time for mutual restraint so that the peace we have achieved can last.

And finally, to all of you who are listening, the American people: Your steadfastness in supporting our insistence on peace with honor has made peace with honor possible. I know that you would not have wanted that peace jeopardized. With our secret negotiations at the sensitive stage they were in during this recent period, for me to have discussed publicly our efforts to secure peace would not only have violated our understanding with North Vietnam, it would have seriously harmed and possibly destroyed the chances for peace. Therefore, I know that you now can understand why, during these past several weeks, I have not made any public statements about those efforts.

The important thing was not to talk about peace, but to get peace and to get the right kind of peace. This we have done.

Now that we have achieved an honorable agreement, let us be proud that America did not settle for a peace that would have betrayed our allies, that would have abandoned our prisoners of war, or that would have ended the war for us but would have continued the war for the fifty million people of Indochina. Let us be proud of the two and a half million young Americans who served in Vietnam, who served with honor and distinction in one of the most selfless enterprises in the history of nations. And let us be proud of those who sacrificed, who gave their lives so that the people of South Vietnam might live in freedom and so that the world might live in peace.

In particular, I would like to say a word to some of the bravest people I have ever met—the wives, the children, the families of our prisoners of war and the missing in action. When others called on us to settle on any terms, you had the courage to stand for the right kind of peace so that those who died and those who suffered would not have died and suffered in vain, and so that, where this generation knew war, the next generation would know peace. Nothing means more to me at this moment than the fact that your long vigil is coming to an end.

Just yesterday, a great American, who once occupied this office, died. In his life President [Lyndon B.] Johnson endured the vilification of those who sought to portray him as a man of war. But there was nothing he cared about more deeply than achieving a lasting peace in the world.

I remember the last time I talked with him. It was just the day after New Year's. He spoke then of his concern with bringing peace, with making it the right kind of peace, and I was grateful that he once again expressed his support for my efforts to gain such a peace. No one would have welcomed this peace more than he.

And I know he would join me in asking for those who died and for those who live, let us consecrate this moment by resolving together to make the peace we have achieved a peace that will last.

Thank you and good evening.

Source: Richard Nixon, "Address to the Nation, January 23, 1973," *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, LX (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1973), p. 43–45.

Understanding the Document

1. What "conditions," set forth by President Nixon, were met in January 1973, thereby making peace a reality?
2. Why does Nixon characterize the ending of the war in Vietnam as being "only the first step toward building the peace"?
3. Compare and contrast the four separate messages Nixon included in his speech for the people of South Vietnam, North Vietnam, America, and other major powers in the world.
4. According to Nixon, what was the "right kind of peace"? Evaluate whether he truly realized his goal of achieving "peace with honor."
5. How does Nixon remember LBJ? How do you believe history will remember LBJ and his Vietnam policy?

Paris Accords 1973

With the signing of the following document, the Paris Accords, by North Vietnam, South Vietnam, the United States, and the Provisional Revolutionary Government (the rival communist government in South Vietnam, which was organized by the National Liberation Front in 1969), the end of the Vietnam War for the United States was secured on 27 January 1973.

Article I

... The United States and all other countries respect the independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Viet-Nam as recognized by the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Viet-Nam. ...

Article 2

A cease fire shall be observed throughout South Viet-Nam as of 2400 hours G.M.T., on January 27, 1973. At the same hour, the United States will stop all its military activities against the territory of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam by ground, air and naval forces, wherever they may be based, and end the mining of the territorial waters, ports, harbors, and waterways of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam. The United States will remove, permanently deactivate or destroy all the mines in the territorial waters, ports, harbors, and waterways of North Viet-Nam as soon as this Agreement goes into effect. The complete cessation of hostilities mentioned in this Article shall be durable and without limit of time. ...

Article 4

The United States will not continue its military involvement or intervene in the internal affairs of South Viet-Nam.

Article 5

Within sixty days of the signing of this Agreement, there will be a total withdrawal from South Viet-Nam of troops, military advisers, and military personnel including technical military personnel and military personnel associated with the pacification program, armaments, munitions, and war material of the United States and those of the other foreign countries mentioned in Article 3(a). Advisers from the above-mentioned countries to all paramilitary organizations and the police force will also be withdrawn within the same period of time.

Article 6

The dismantlement of all military bases in South Viet-Nam of the United States and of the other foreign countries mentioned in Article 3(a) shall be completed within sixty days of the signing of this Agreement.

Article 7

From the enforcement of the cease-fire to the formation of the government provided for in Article 9(b) and 14 of this Agreement, the two South Vietnamese parties shall not accept the introduction of troops, military advisers, and military personnel including technical military personnel, armaments, munitions, and war material into South Viet-Nam. ...

Article 8

(a) The return of captured military personnel and foreign civilians of the parties shall be carried out simultaneously with and completed not later than the same day as the troop withdrawal mentioned in Article 5. The parties shall exchange complete lists of the above-mentioned captured military personnel and foreign civilians on the day of the signing of this Agreement.

(b) The Parties shall help each other to get information about those military personnel and foreign civilians of the parties missing in action, to determine the location and take care of the graves of the dead so as to facilitate the exhumation and repatriation of the remains, and to take any such other measures as may be required to get information about those still considered missing in action.

(c) The question of the return of Vietnamese civilian personnel captured and detained in South Vietnam will be resolved by the two South Vietnamese parties on the basis of the principles of Article 21(b) of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Viet-Nam of July 20, 1954. The two South Vietnamese parties will do so in a spirit of national reconciliation and concord, with a view to ending hatred and enmity, in order to ease suffering and to reunite families. The two South Vietnamese parties will do their utmost to resolve this question within ninety days after the cease-fire comes into effect. . . .

Article 11

Immediately after the cease-fire, the two South Vietnamese parties will:

- achieve national reconciliation and concord, end hatred and enmity, prohibit all acts of reprisal and discrimination against individuals or organizations that have collaborated with one side or the other;
- ensure the democratic liberties of the people: personal freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of meeting, freedom of organization, freedom of political activities, freedom of belief, freedom of movement, freedom of residence, freedom of work, right to property ownership, and right to free enterprise. . . .

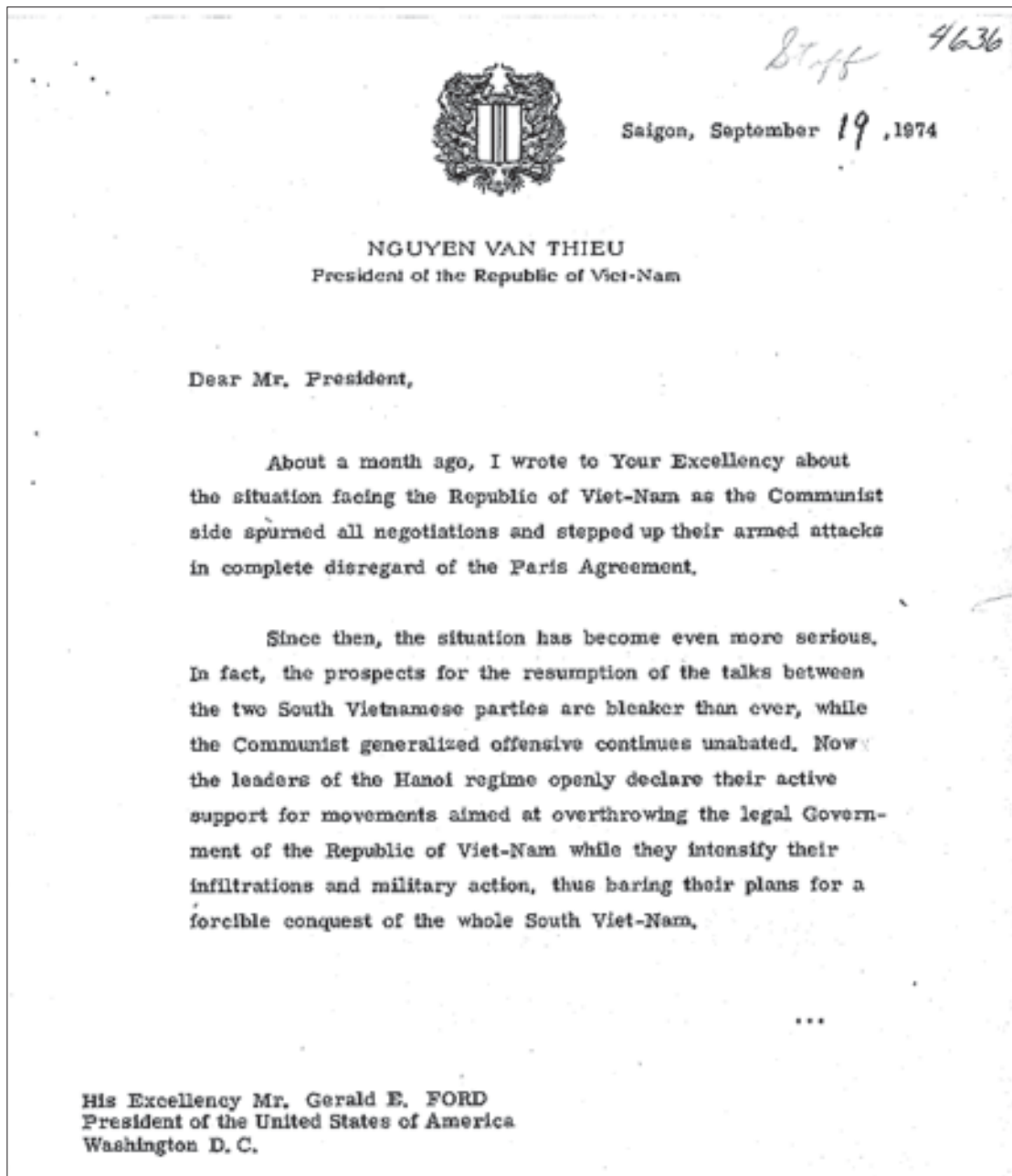
Source: U.S. Secretary of State, ed., *United States Treaties and Other International Agreements* (1 U.S.C. 112A), vol. 24, part 1, 1973 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1974), pp.1–225, *passim*.

Understanding the Document

1. Why do the Paris Accords begin with recognition of the 1954 Geneva Agreement?
2. Define “pacification” and explain why that U.S. program was targeted for removal from South Vietnam along with all its military operations.
3. Identify the “two South Vietnamese parties” and discuss how they were to “achieve national reconciliation and concord” as proposed in the Paris Accords.
4. Identify and evaluate the concessions made by both sides in the Paris Accords.

Letter from President Nguyen Van Thieu to President Gerald R. Ford

In this 19 September 1974 letter from Nguyen Van Thieu, President of the Republic of Vietnam, to President Gerald R. Ford, Thieu expresses his concerns over possible violations of the Paris Agreement.



- 2 -

I think that the main cause for the increasingly defiant and bellicose attitude of the Communists resides in their believing that the United States is now wavering in its dedication to our common goal, namely a South Viet-Nam capable of defending itself and of deciding its own future. The utterly inadequate amount of military and economic aid to the Republic of Viet-Nam which has been voted by the U.S. Congress might have induced the Communists to make such speculations.

This can in turn lead to very dangerous miscalculations on the part of the Communists, as they might be tempted to launch an all out offensive to complete their forcible conquest of South Viet-Nam.

Therefore, it is essential that the United States unmistakably demonstrates once again its attachment to a serious implementation of the Paris Agreement and its support for the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam, if peace is to be restored in South Viet-Nam and in South East Asia.

In this respect, I am most appreciative of your efforts made on September 12th to persuade leaders of Congress to restore the cuts in aid funds. I sincerely hope that Your Excellency will succeed in bringing the amounts of military and economic assistance up to the levels required by the new realities of the situation and the need for South Viet-Nam to achieve an economic takeoff.

...

- 3 -

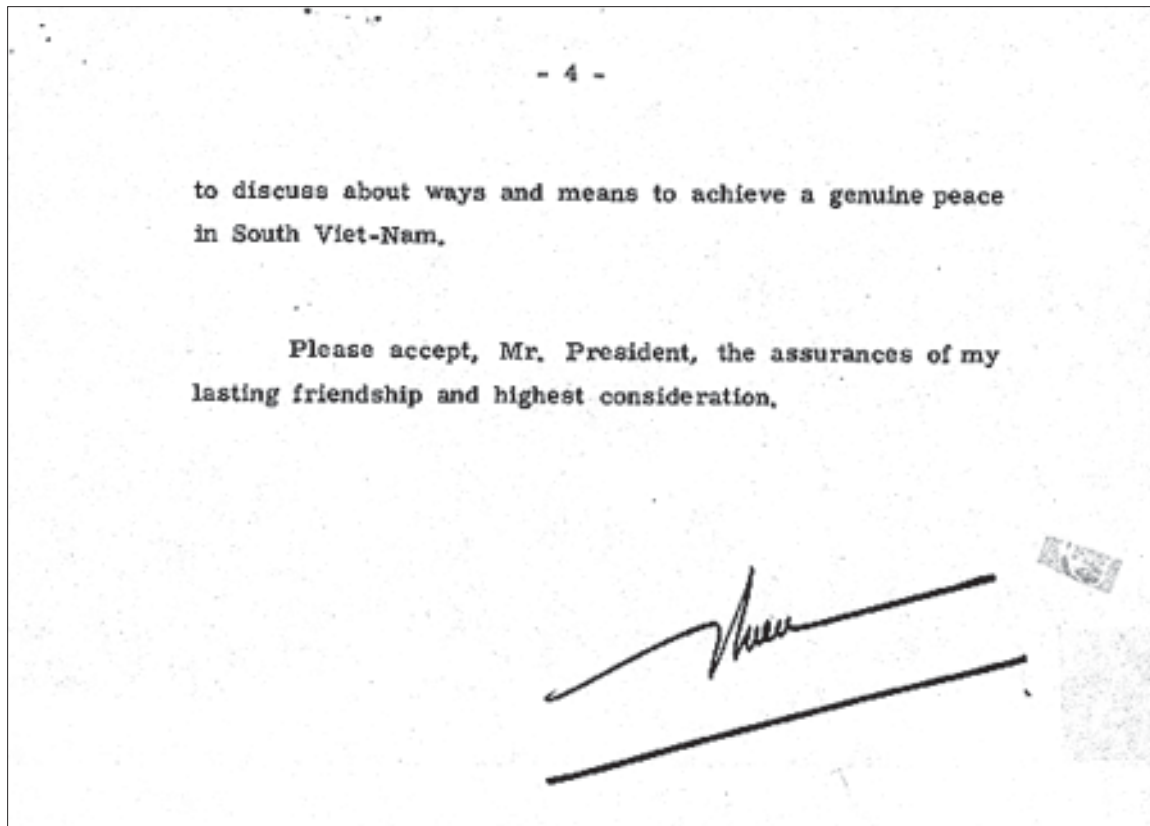
The Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam had signed the Paris Agreement in good faith, under the double assurance that, on the one hand, Russia and Red China will exercise a restraining influence upon Hanoi and that, on the other hand, all necessary military equipments and economic assistance will be provided by the United States to the Republic of Viet-Nam to maintain its capabilities of self defense and to develop its national economy.

The first assumption turned out to be an empty promise, as Russia and Red China continue to give North Viet-Nam all the ingredients to pursue an aggressive war in South Viet-Nam.

But I am convinced that thanks to your generous efforts, the second assumption will be borne out.

Our valiant soldiers by enduring daily sacrifices in the battlefields have proved beyond doubt our will to resist Communist aggression. It would be unfortunate indeed if sufficient means could not be supplied to them because of the lack of resolve and misconception on the part of our allies.

Beside providing us with an adequate amount of military and economic assistance, the United States can also show its support for the just cause of the Republic of Viet-Nam by solemnly restating our common goals. In this regard, I hope that some time in the near future, we can meet together



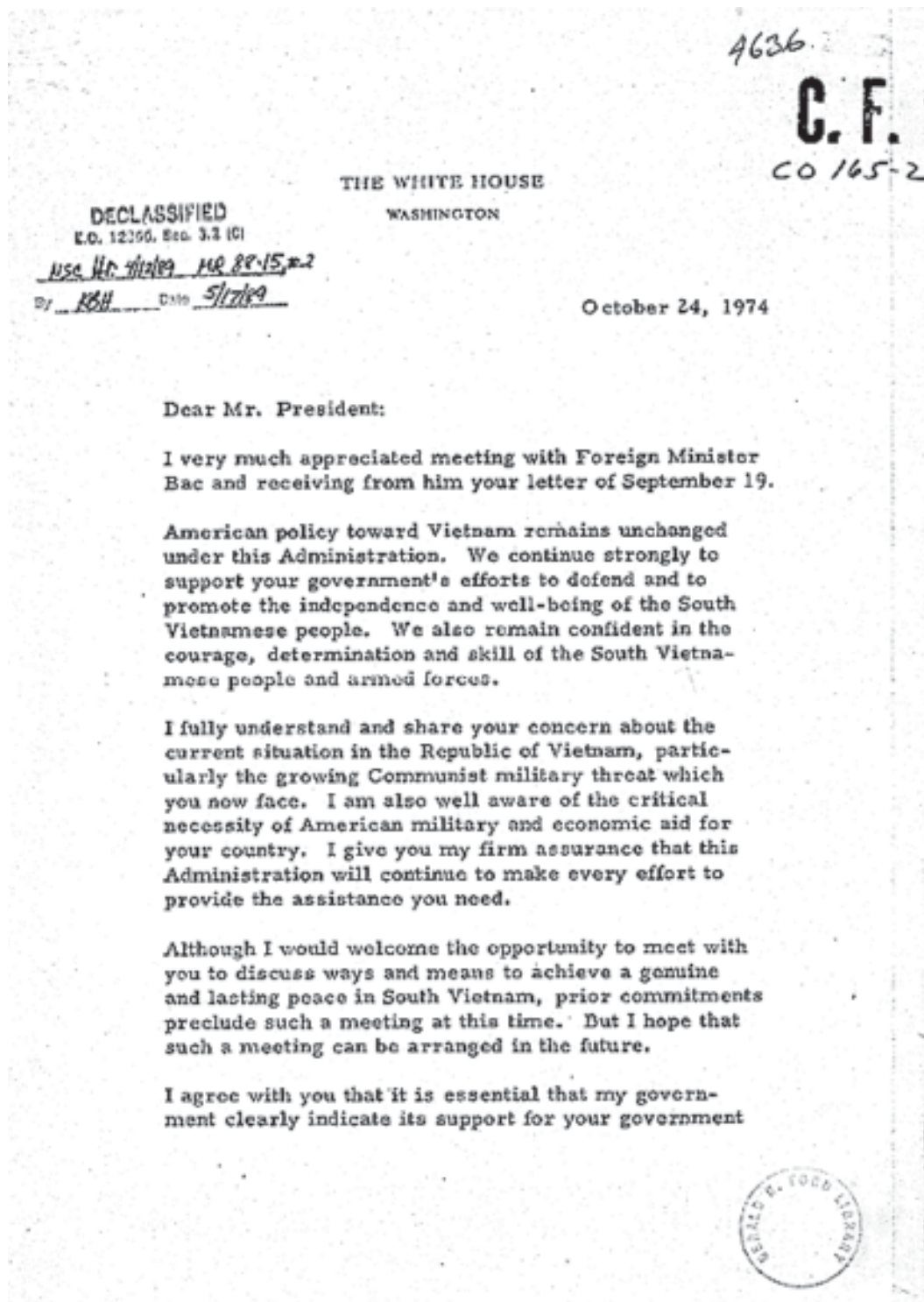
Source: Nguyen Van Thieu, "Letter to President Gerald R. Ford" (Ann Arbor, MI: Gerald R. Ford Library [National Archives], September 19, 1974).

Understanding the Document

1. What was the purpose of President Nguyen Van Thieu's letter to President Gerald R. Ford?
2. How did President Thieu characterize the situation in Vietnam in his letter? What did the President identify as the main cause of this situation?
3. Evaluate whether the actions President Thieu calls for President Ford to take are in accordance with the Paris Accords.
4. Define what the "double assurance" of the Paris Accords is, according to President Thieu. What role do Thieu's assumptions play in the status of events in South Vietnam as well as the overall tone of the letter he writes to President Ford?

Letter from President Gerald R. Ford to President Nguyen Van Thieu

In a 24 October 1974 reply to a letter he received a month earlier from President of the Republic of Vietnam Nguyen Van Thieu, President Gerald R. Ford discusses American policy toward Vietnam.



and for the full implementation of the Paris Agreements. I believe my public statement of October 9, my meeting with Foreign Minister Bac and Deputy Defense Secretary Clement's visit to Saigon all clearly demonstrate that we are standing firm in our commitments to you. We have also conveyed to other powers having an interest in Vietnam that we continue to support your government and that we favor a complete implementation of the Paris Agreements. I shall take advantage of other occasions to show my support for your government and for the peace that we achieved together.

Our countries have been through many difficult times together. It appears likely that we shall face other difficulties in the future. I am confident, however, that these problems can be overcome if we work together to meet them with strength and determination.

With best wishes for you and for the valiant people of the Republic of Vietnam.

Sincerely,

Gerald R. Ford



His Excellency
Nguyen Van Thieu
President of the Republic
of Vietnam
Saigon

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Source: Gerald R. Ford, "Letter to President Nguyen Van Thieu," (Ann Arbor, MI: Gerald R. Ford Library [National Archives], October 24, 1974).

Understanding the Document

1. Evaluate President Ford's claim that "American policy toward Vietnam remains unchanged" under his administration.
2. Explain how well President Ford addresses the concerns President Thieu outlined in his original the month before.
3. Identify and evaluate Ford's reply to Thieu's request to schedule a meeting for the two leaders to discuss the situation in South Vietnam.
4. Based on your knowledge of political issues of the day, what options did President Ford have available to address President Thieu's concerns?

Memorandum from General Fred C. Weyand to President Gerald R. Ford 1975

General Fred C. Weyand, Chief of Staff of the United States Army, provides an alarming assessment of the situation in Vietnam in this 4 April 1975 memorandum to President Gerald R. Ford.

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UNITED STATES ARMY
THE CHIEF OF STAFF

4 April 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Vietnam Assessment

In accordance with your instructions, I visited South Vietnam during the period 28 March - 4 April. I have completed my assessment of the current situation there, analyzed what the Government of the Republic of Vietnam intends to do to counter the aggression from the North, assured President Thieu of your steadfast support in this time of crisis, and examined the options and actions open to the United States to assist the South Vietnamese.

The current military situation is critical, and the probability of the survival of South Vietnam as a truncated nation in the southern provinces is marginal at best. The GVN is on the brink of a total military defeat. However, the South is planning to continue to defend with their available resources, and, if allowed respite, will rebuild their capabilities to the extent that United States support in materiel will permit. I believe that we owe them that support.

We went to Vietnam in the first place to assist the South Vietnamese people--not to defeat the North Vietnamese. We reached out our hand to the South Vietnamese people, and they took it. Now they need that helping hand more than ever. By every measure we have been able to apply 20,000,000 people have told the world they fear for their lives, they cherish values that are closely allied with those of non-communist systems, they desperately seek the opportunity to continue their development of a way of life different from those who now live under North Vietnamese rule.

The present level of U.S. support guarantees GVN defeat. Of the \$700 million provided for FY 1975, the remaining \$150 million can be used for a short time for a major supply operation; however, if there is to be any real chance of

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Authority NLF PR 80-18, Dec. 11
By DAB NLF Date 11/17/80

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success, an additional \$722 million is urgently needed to bring the South Vietnamese to a minimal defense posture to meet the Soviet and PRC supported invasion. Additional U.S. aid is within both the spirit and intent of the Paris Agreement, which remains the practical framework for a peaceful settlement in Vietnam.

The use of U.S. military airpower to reinforce Vietnamese capabilities to blunt the North Vietnamese invasion would offer both a material and psychological assist to GVN and provide a much needed battlefield pause. I recognize, however, the significant legal and political implications which would attend the exercise of this option.


Given the speed at which events are moving, there is one other matter you should consider. For reasons of prudence, the United States should plan now for a mass evacuation of some 6,000 U.S. citizens and tens of thousands of South Vietnamese and Third Country Nationals to whom we have incurred an obligation and owe protection. The lessons of Danang indicate that this evacuation would require as a minimum a U.S. task force of a reinforced division supported by tactical air to suppress North Vietnamese artillery and anti-aircraft, as required. At the appropriate time, a public statement of this policy should be made and the North Vietnamese clearly warned "of U.S. intention to use force to safely evacuate personnel". Authority should be obtained to authorize appropriate use of military sanctions against North Vietnam if there is interference with the evacuation.

United States credibility as an ally is at stake in Vietnam. To sustain that credibility we must make a maximum effort to support the South Vietnamese now.

A more detailed analysis is contained in the attached report.

Respectfully,

1 Incl
As stated


FRED C. WEYAND
General, United States Army
Chief of Staff

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I. THE CURRENT SITUATION

A. The Background

The Paris Agreement of 27 January 1973 marked not the beginning of peace in Vietnam, but instead the beginning of a Communist build-up of supplies and equipment for continued North Vietnamese military aggression in Vietnam. In the ensuing 26 months since the Agreement was signed, North Vietnam rebuilt the Ho Chi Minh Trail into a major all-weather supply artery. They built pipelines extending 330 miles into South Vietnam for movement of their POL. With this major supply system in full operation, they quadrupled their field artillery, greatly increased their anti-aircraft and sent six times as much armor into South Vietnam as they had in January 1973 (See Table A). At the same time, they increased their troop strength by almost 200,000 men. All of these actions were in direct violation of the Paris Agreement. The US, by contrast, did not fulfill its obligations to maintain South Vietnamese equipment and materiel levels as they were authorized to do under the Agreement. Ground ammunition declined by 30% from 179 thousand short tons at the cease fire to 126 thousand short tons when the current NVA offensive began. Shortages of POL and spare parts curtailed operations of the South Vietnamese Air Force by 50%.

The historical record outlined above set the stage for the current situation in South Vietnam. This situation is both fluid and fragile. It changed markedly during the month of March and has the potential for further rapid change in the weeks, or even days, immediately ahead.

Source: Fred C. Weyand, "Memorandum to President Gerald R. Ford" (Ann Arbor, MI: Gerald R. Ford Library [National Archives], April 4, 1975).

Understanding the Document

1. How does General Weyand assess the current situation in Vietnam, following his earlier visit to South Vietnam?
2. Identify and evaluate Weyand's recommendations to President Ford regarding South Vietnam.
3. What are the "legal and political implications," which Weyand alludes to, against using U.S. military airpower in South Vietnam?
4. Explain how the United States could simultaneously advocate both a "mass evacuation" plan as well as a "maximum effort to support the South Vietnamese."

North Vietnamese Account of the Fall of Saigon
1975
Van Tien Dung

On 30 April 1975 Saigon fell to Communist troops, marking the end of the Second Indochina War. The following is an account of that event as witnessed by a North Vietnamese soldier.

When “Code 2,” [U.S. Ambassador Graham] Martin’s code name, and “Lady 09,” the name of the helicopter carrying him, left the embassy for the East Sea, it signaled the shameful defeat of U.S. imperialism after thirty years of intervention and military adventures in Vietnam. At the height of the invasion of Vietnam, the U.S. had used 60 percent of their total infantry, 58 percent of their marines, 32 percent of their tactical air force, 50 percent of their strategic air force, fifteen of their eighteen aircraft carriers, 800,000 American troops (counting those stationed in satellite countries who were taking part in the Vietnam war), and more than one million Saigon troops. They mobilized as many as six million American soldiers in rotation, dropped over ten million tons of bombs, and spent over \$300 billion, but in the end the U.S. ambassador had to crawl up to the helicopter pad looking for a way to flee. Today, looking back on the gigantic force the enemy had mobilized, recalling the malicious designs they admitted, and thinking about the extreme difficulties and complexities which our revolutionary sampan had had to pass through, we were all the more aware how immeasurably great this campaign to liberate Saigon and liberate the South was. . . .

The will and competence of our soldiers were not achieved in a day, but were the result of a continuous process of carrying out the party’s ideological and organizational work in the armed forces. And throughout our thirty years of struggle, there had been no campaign in which Uncle Ho had not gone into the operation with our soldiers. Going out to battle this time, our whole army had been given singular, unprecedented strength because this strategically decisive battle bore his name: Ho Chi Minh, for every one of our cadres and fighters, was faith, strength, and life. Among the myriad troops in all the advancing wings, every one of our fighters carried toward Ho Chi Minh City [Saigon] the hopes of the nation and a love for our land. Today each fighter could see with his own eyes the resiliency which the Fatherland had built up during these many years, and given his own resiliency there was nothing, no enemy scheme that could stop him.

Source: Van Tien Dung, *Our Great Spring Victory: An Account of the Liberation of South Vietnam*, translated by John Spragens, Jr. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977).

Understanding the Document

1. According to Van Tien Dung, how heavily involved in Vietnam were American forces at the height of the conflict?
2. To what does Van Tien Dung attribute the success of North Vietnam?
3. What is the significance of the fact that Saigon was renamed Ho Chi Minh City?

State Department Report on Life in South Vietnam
Brent Scowcroft to President Gerald R. Ford
 1976

National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft reports to President Gerald R. Ford on the status of life in South Vietnam, in particular Saigon, in this 19 January 1976 State Department report.

B/S MEMORANDUM THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN....
 THE WHITE HOUSE 250 C.F.
 WASHINGTON CO 165-2

INFORMATION
 January 19, 1976

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MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT
 FROM: BRENT SCOWCROFT *BS*
 SUBJECT: State Department Report on Life in South Vietnam *RR*

Our Embassy in Bangkok has prepared an airgram on "Life in South Vietnam" (Tab A) which reports the observations of three non-Vietnamese who recently left Saigon -- a Korean, a Cambodian, and a New Zealander. They all speak Vietnamese fluently, had lived in Vietnam a long time, and had numerous contacts there. They departed between November 19 and December 5.

The key points which these three observers made to our Embassy officers in Bangkok are as follows:

- The mood in Saigon is one of despair, suspicion, and hardship. Many people have fallen into bitter self-recrimination for not having done something in time to prevent the Communist victory.
- The NVA are living interspersed among the civilian population. There are frequent nighttime block or precinct meetings that often turn into denunciation sessions, making each person suspicious of his neighbor. These meetings also have a people's court aspect in which a show of hands of those attending determines the punishment for a person accused of past or present misdeeds. The offender is then led away to an unknown destination.
- Unemployment remains high, with no prospects for change in sight.
- Prices are rising daily in Saigon, despite official, fixed prices that even the state stores do not respect. Cigarettes are ten times more expensive than on April 30. A person is limited to fifteen kilos of rice per month and to beef twice a month.

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-- There continues to be a migration into the countryside. People who have gone to farm in the new economic areas are discouraged by the government requirement that they turn over 50 percent of their rice production to the authorities.

-- The NVA in Saigon always seem to have money; they buy Seiko watches, radios, cameras, U.S. Army shoes, bicycles and Samsonite luggage.

-- Corruption is as bad now as under the GVN. One of the most popular forms is black marketeering. NVA soldiers purchase large quantities of items such as soap, sugar, and cigarettes and resell them on the black market. Another popular form of corruption is under-the-table transactions to facilitate bureaucratic processing or a favorable decision. Finally, there are the shake-downs to avoid arrest or re-education.

-- Resistance continues in several areas. In the central highlands resistance forces recently cut Highway 20 to Dalat, the principal source of vegetables for the Saigon area. Closer to Saigon, many people say the Communists have only daytime control of certain areas north of the city, and there are reports of elements who make forays along the coast. In the Mekong Delta, the Hoa Hao Buddhists continue to resist in provinces near the Cambodian border.

-- Travel within South Vietnam remains difficult, Saigonese are free to leave the city only to travel to a new economic area or their home villages.

-- All schools are now in the hands of the government. The new authorities use class time at some high schools to form the students into self-defense units. Some especially "revolutionary" students carry AK-47's and pistols with them at all times in school.

-- A high-ranking NVA official is inhabiting the Ambassador's residence.

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Source: Brent Scowcroft, "Memorandum to President Gerald R. Ford" (Ann Arbor, MI: Gerald R. Ford Library [National Archives], January 19, 1976).

Understanding the Document

1. Describe the general mood in Saigon only months following the Communist victory in Vietnam.
2. What, according to Brent Scowcroft, was the purpose of the "nighttime block or precinct meetings"?
3. Identify the status of the Saigon economy and evaluate the reasons provided by Scowcroft for these changes.

Letter from Members of Congress to President Gerald R. Ford

In the following 17 December 1975 letter, fifteen members of the U.S. House of Representatives (all of whom were Democrats; six from New York, six from California, two from Massachusetts, and one from Wisconsin) petition President Gerald R. Ford to extend official recognition to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, as well as establish normal diplomatic relations with that nation's government.

14
Pro Recognition
Regarding Vietnam

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

December 17, 1975

President Gerald R. Ford
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to urge that you announce recognition of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and establish normal diplomatic relations, including the exchange of diplomatic representatives, with that government.

Since the takeover of South Vietnam last spring, we have understood the reasons for and the motivations behind the "wait and see" attitude toward future relations with Vietnam. We believe now, however, that significant changes have taken place which merit recognition and normalization of relations.

One important change, of course, is the decision by the north and south to unite as one Vietnam. In addition, we note that the Vietnamese have taken initiatives which indicate an interest in relations: these include the release of nine missionaries who had been held since last March, their acceptance of a ship of some 1600 refugees who left Guam to return to Vietnam, and business representations to at least one U.S. corporation. Recent reports indicate that Premier Pham Van Dong might even be interested in visiting the United States.

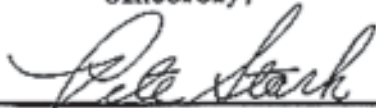
We have also noted that the three basic tenets our government usually requires for recognition have been met by the government of Vietnam. These include effective control over the territory and the population, organized governmental administration of that territory, and a capacity to act effectively to conduct foreign relations and fulfill international obligations.

Our Vietnam policy for many years has been an embarrassment. We think it's time for a change. Recognition would enable the U.S. to play a legitimate economic, cultural and political role in an area of the world ever growing in significance; it would permit Vietnamese-Americans a chance to renew ties with their loved ones still in Vietnam; it would enable us to make further gains in resolving the problems of missing


Americans in Vietnam; it would offer the Vietnamese people an alternative to total dependence on either the Soviet Union or China; it would offer commercial opportunities for American businesses. Perhaps most important it would prevent us from isolating ourselves against Vietnam as we did for so many years with China and Cuba without gaining any benefits.

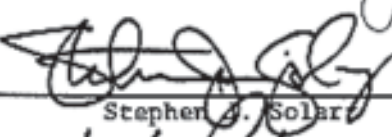
In light of all these considerations, we believe the time has come for the United States to take the initiative to extend formal recognition, as about 90 other nations have already done. We hope you will take action in this regard without delay.

Sincerely,


Fortney H. Stark, Jr.


Don Edwards

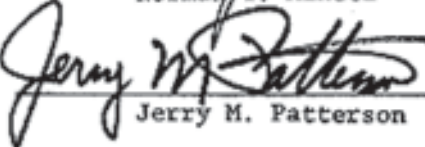

Bella S. Abzug


Stephen J. Solarz


Edward W. Patricson

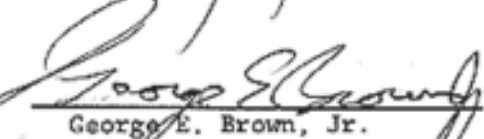

Ronald V. Dellums


Norman Y. Mineta


Jerry M. Patterson




Robert W. Kastenmeier

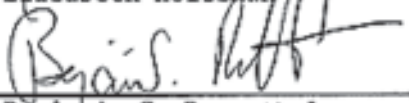

George E. Brown, Jr.


Michael Harrington


Robert F. Drinan


Frederick W. Richmond


Elizabeth Holtzman


Benjamin S. Rosenthal

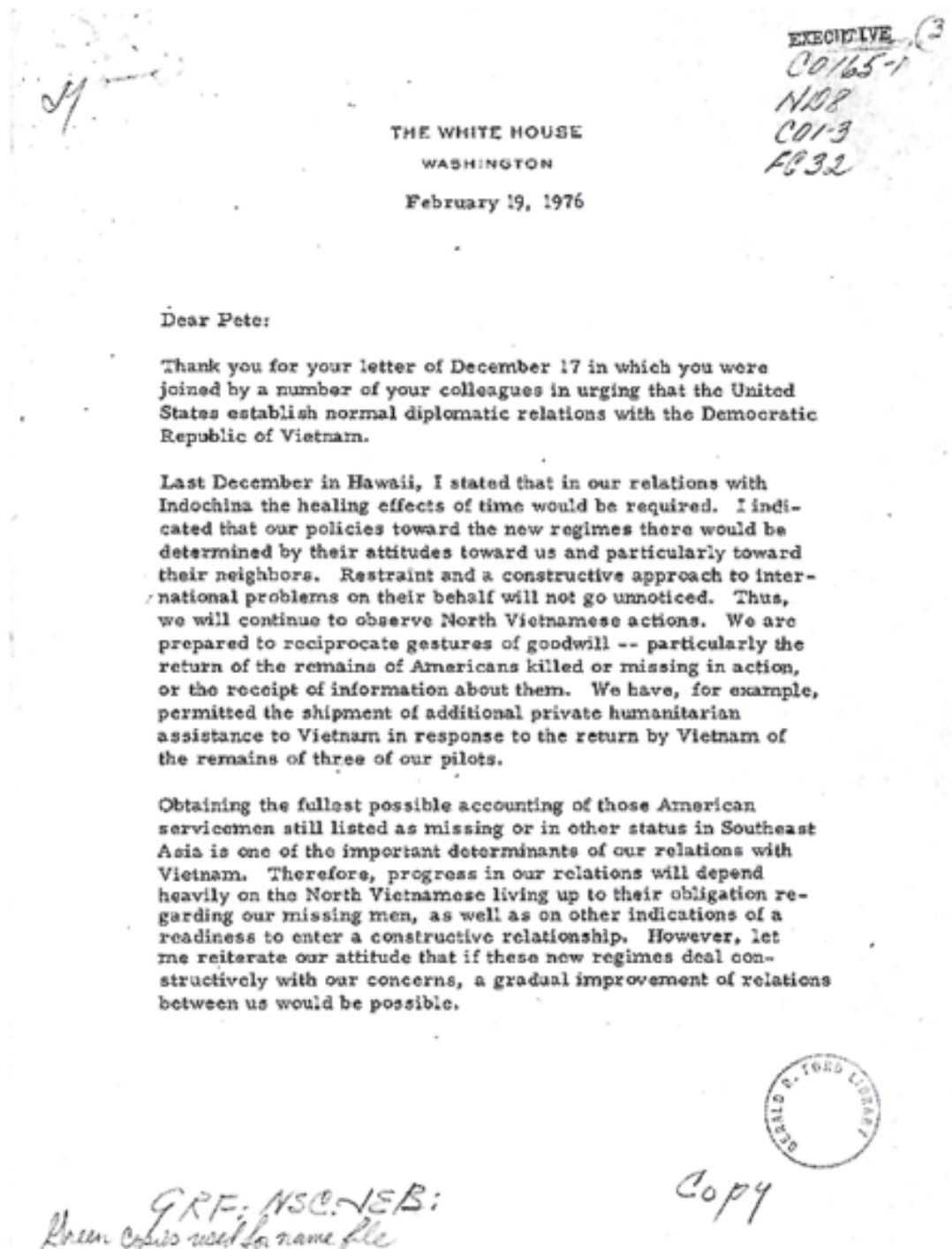
Source: Members of the U.S. House of Representatives, "Letter to President Gerald R. Ford" (Ann Arbor, MI: Gerald R. Ford Library [National Archives], December 17, 1975).

Understanding the Document

1. What changes had occurred in Vietnam, according to these congressional leaders, that now warranted official U.S. recognition and normalized relations with the new government?
2. Identify the three basic tenets these members of Congress claim had been met by the government of Vietnam.
3. Describe the benefits the U.S. would reap, according to these congressional petitioners, as a result of granting recognition to Vietnam.
4. Evaluate the accuracy of the claims made by these congressional leaders, in support of their position.

Letter from President Gerald R. Ford to Representative Fortney H. Stark, Jr.

In this 19 February 1976 reply to a letter received two months earlier and signed by fifteen members of the U.S. House of Representatives, President Gerald R. Ford discusses his concerns about opening diplomatic relations with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to Representative Fortney H. "Pete" Stark, Jr.



- 2 -

I share your desire to place behind us the history of antagonism and conflict in Indochina that has affected both our international relations and our domestic affairs. I am confident that we share the goals of a peaceful, stable and constructive relationship with all countries, including those of Indochina.

Sincerely,



The Honorable Fortney H. Stark, Jr.
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C. 20515

Source: Gerald R. Ford, "Letter to Representative Fortney H. 'Pete' Stark, Jr." (Ann Arbor, MI: Gerald R. Ford Library [National Archives], February 19, 1976).

Understanding the Document

1. Evaluate President Ford's response to the letter from certain members of Congress requesting U.S. recognition of Vietnam.
2. How accurate and popular was Ford's position that such a request be granted only after allowing for "the healing effects of time"?
3. Identify the types of reciprocal "gestures of goodwill" Ford alluded to in his letter.
4. Discuss the role these "gestures" would eventually play years later in bringing about the normalization of relations between the U.S. and Vietnam.
5. How long did it take for Americans, in the words of President Ford, "to place behind us the history of antagonism and conflict in Indochina"? Explain.

New York Times Article, May 1, 1975

On 30 April 1975, Saigon fell to Communist troops, officially ending the war in Vietnam. On this occasion, New York Times reporter Leslie H. Gelb provides a fitting summary of American involvement in Vietnam; focusing, in particular, on the toll the war had taken on the current and five previous occupants of the White House.

Vietnam, Test of Presidents, Was Distant War and Battle at Home

In Franz Kafka's *The Trial*, a priest sets out to explain the mysteries of life to a character called K. They discuss a parable of the law and disagree on its meaning.

"No," says the priest, "it is not necessary to accept everything as true, one must only accept it as necessary."

"A melancholy conclusion," K responds. "It turns lying into a universal principle."

From Truman to Ford, six Presidents felt that they had to do and say what was necessary to prevent a Communist takeover of Vietnam. For all, perhaps with the exception of Mr. Ford, Indochina was their initiation into American foreign policy. While other threats to peace came and went, Vietnam was always there—a cockpit of confrontation, a testing place.

And there were always two battle going on, for those twenty-five years: one out there and one back here.

There, it was the Promethean clash of colonialism, nationalism, Communism and Americanism. Here, it was the clash of imperatives not to "lose" a country to Communism and not to fight Asian land wars—how to walk the line between not winning and not getting out.

The battle would be endless in Vietnam until it finally was no longer viewed as necessary in Washington. . . .

Vietnam now will know a kind of peace. What will happen in the United States—whether the nation will tear itself apart in assessing guilt or adjust with compassion and develop a new sense of purpose—is another matter.

Source: Leslie H. Gelb, "Vietnam, Test of Presidents, Was Distant War and Battle at Home," *The New York Times* (May 1, 1975).

Understanding the Document

1. Explain why the author compares American involvement in Vietnam with Franz Kafka's *The Trial*. Assess the validity of Gelb's analogy.
2. Discuss what the author means by his statement that Vietnam was "a cockpit of confrontation, a testing place."
3. Evaluate Gelb's claim that the war in Vietnam was a "Promethean clash of colonialism, nationalism, Communism and Americanism."
4. How well did each of the six Presidents, from Truman to Ford, "walk the line between not winning and not getting out" of Vietnam?
5. Nearly thirty years after this article was published, which of the final scenarios Gelb posits—"the nation will tear itself apart in assessing guilt or adjust with compassion and develop a new sense of purpose"—came to fruition? Explain.

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