

Chapter 29

Section 3 and 4

“The War Divides America”

Section 3 Objectives

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

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

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

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

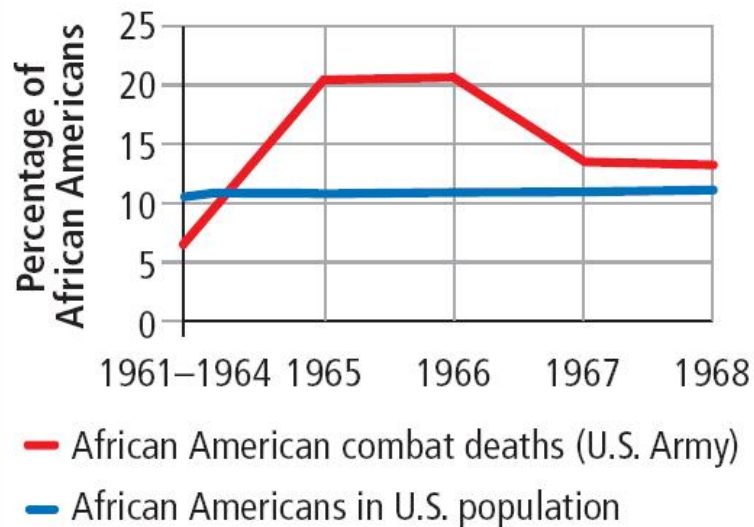
As more troops died and no clear victory emerged, increasing numbers of Americans opposed the Vietnam War.

Many people opposed the policies of the draft.

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

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

African Americans and the Vietnam War



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

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

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

Students' opposition to the war grew.

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

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

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

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

The Tet Offensive: Turning point in the war in South Vietnam

In October 1967, the first stage of the offensive began with a series of small attacks in remote and border areas designed to draw the ARVN and United States forces away from the cities. The DMZ area was expected to bear the brunt of the attack, so U.S. troops were sent to northern border posts, and the security of the Saigon area was transferred to ARVN forces. Even though there were warnings of an attack, more than one-half of the **ARVN forces were on leave because of the approaching TET (Lunar New Year) holiday.**

On January 31, 1968, the full-scale offensive began, with simultaneous attacks by the communists on five major cities, thirty-six provincial capitals, sixty-four district capitals, and numerous villages. In Saigon, suicide squads attacked the Independence Palace (the residence of the president), the radio station, the ARVN's joint General Staff Compound, Tan Son Nhut airfield, and the United States embassy, causing considerable damage and throwing the city into turmoil.

The U.S. was able to attack the communist forces effectively throughout the country through bombing and artillery attacks, which extensively damaged the urban areas. Hue, which had been seized by an estimated 12,000 Communist troops who had previously infiltrated the city, remained in communist hands until late February. A reported 2,000 to 3,000 officials, police, and others were executed in Hue during that time as counterrevolutionaries.



Tet Offensive

- This event is widely viewed as a **turning point in the war** because up until that point Americans were told that the communists were losing the war. **Americans questioned how a “defeated” army could launch such a large-scale and effective attack.**

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

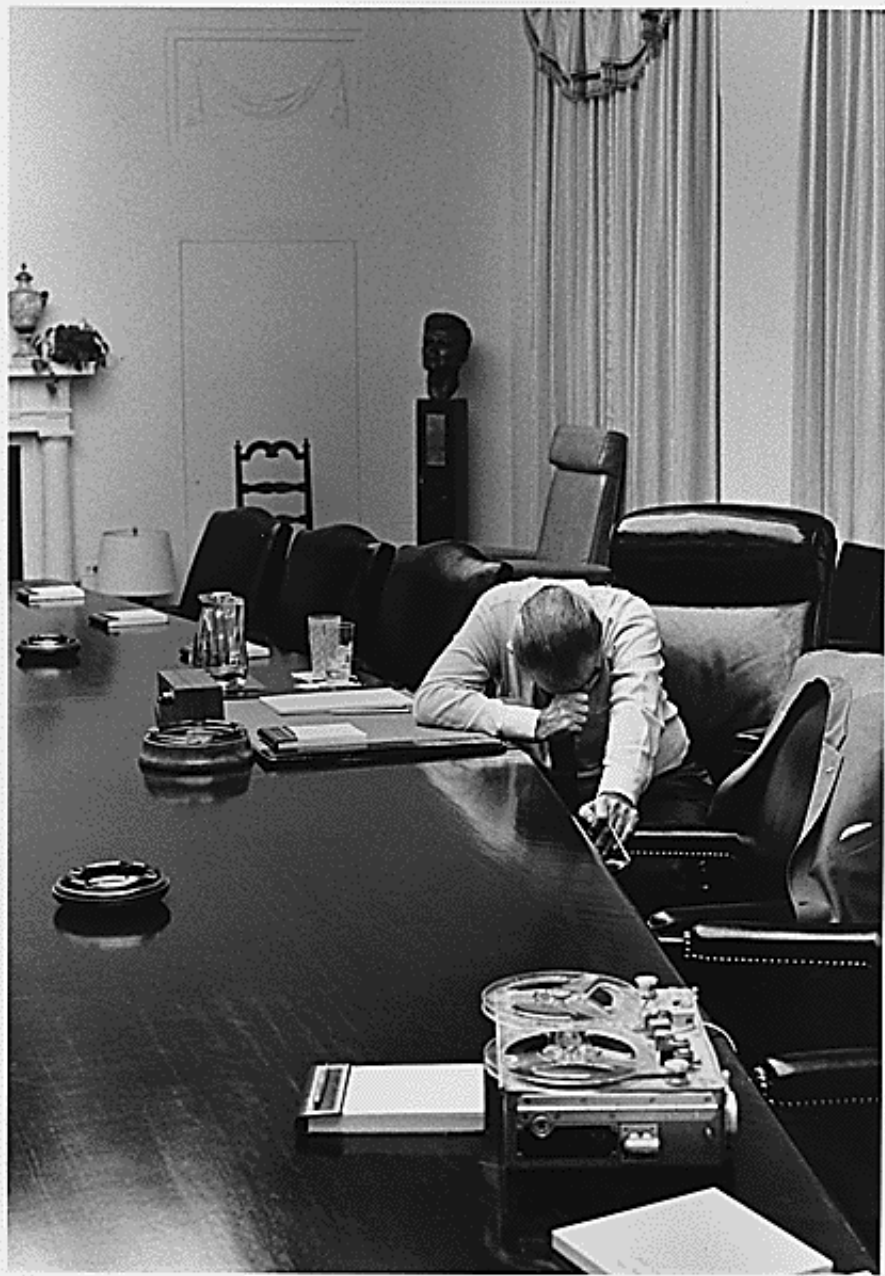
The fighting was fierce, but American and South Vietnamese forces eventually drove back the offensive.



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

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





LBJ announced he would not run for president again in 1968



There were several types of protests ranging from **“teach-ins”** on college campuses to marches and civil disobedience.



Early teach-in and anti-war street protests



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

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

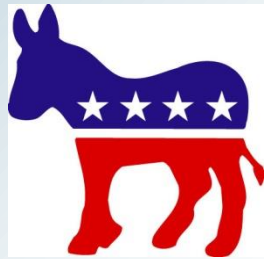
Robert Kennedy, a Democratic Senator from New York, also announced his candidacy.



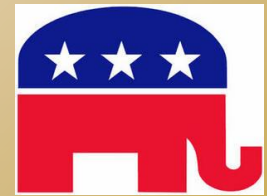
In 1968 violence stunned the nation.

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

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



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





Nixon won the 1968 election.

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

“War’s End & Impact”

Section 4 Objectives

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

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

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

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

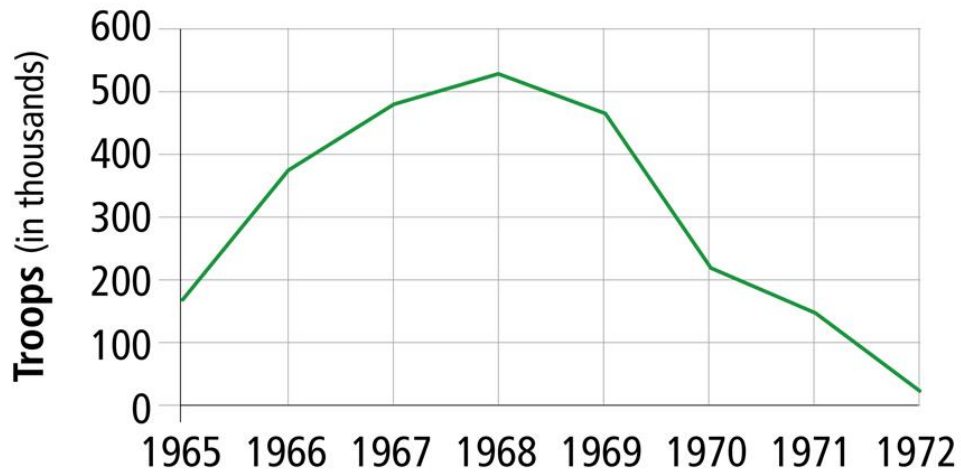
President Nixon inherited an unpopular war and increasing troubles on the home front.



1969 saw some of the bloodiest fighting of the war. This led to massive anti-war demonstrations and the announcement of a new policy.



U.S. Military Personnel in Vietnam



SOURCE: National Archives and Records Administration

Publicly,
Nixon advocated

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

Secretly, Nixon

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



At home, protests escalated.



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

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



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

My Lai Massacre March 16, 1968



Army First Lieutenant William Calley, Jr

My Lai was in an area of South Vietnam that was entrenched with communists. On March 16, 1968 the Charlie Company, 11th Brigade, **under the command of Lieutenant William Calley**, entered the Vietnamese village of My Lai. Numerous members of Charlie Company had been maimed or killed in the area during the preceding weeks.

The company engaged in a search and destroy mission, and over 300 apparently unarmed civilians, including women, children, and the elderly were massacred. Lieutenant Calley ordered his men to enter the village firing, though there had been no report of opposing fire. According to eyewitness reports offered after the event, several old men were bayoneted, praying women and children were shot in the back of the head, and at least one girl was raped and then killed. For his part, Calley was said to have rounded up a group of the villagers, ordered them into a ditch, and mowed them down in a fury of machine gun

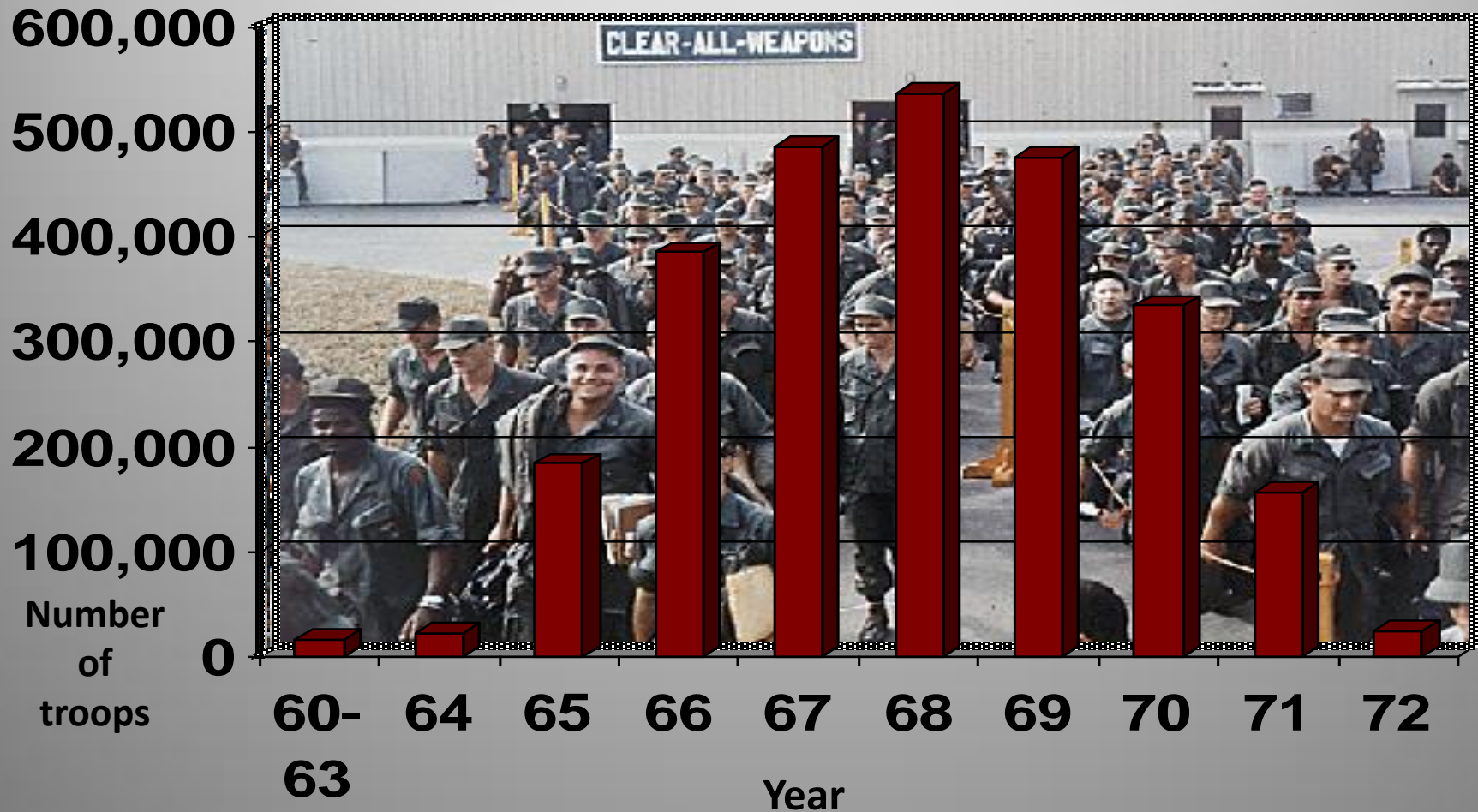
The publication of the **Pentagon Papers further shocked the nation.**

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

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

January 1, 1972

Two thirds of America's troops were removed in only two years. The ground war was then almost exclusively the responsibility of South Vietnam, which had over 1,000,000 men enlisted in its armed forces.



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

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

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

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



The end in Vietnam: 1972-1975

 Communists launched a massive offensive

 Paris Peace Talks

 Nixon increased bombing over North Vietnam

 Nixon cut troop levels

 1973 Cease fire signed

 All U.S. ground troops left Vietnam

 1974-75 North Vietnam launched massive attacks in South Vietnam

 April 30th 1975 South Vietnam falls to communism



The Vietnam War had a lasting effect on American life.

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



**Congress passed the
War Powers Act in 1973.**

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

Terms and People

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

Terms and People (continued)

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

Terms and People

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

Terms and People (continued)

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