



**History In-Service Team, Supporting
Leaving Certificate History. www.hist.ie**

Later Modern, Europe and the Wider World

Topic 6: The United States and the World, 1945-89

Documents for Case Study

Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam, 1963-1968

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Introduction to the Series of Documents

The USA topic (Later Modern Europe, Topic 6, *The United States and the world, 1949-1989*) is nominated as the prescribed topic for documents-based study, for examination in June 2008 and June 2009. The case studies are:

- The Montgomery bus boycott, 1956.
- Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam, 1963-1968.
- The Moon landing, 1969.

The History In-Service Team [HIST] prepared an in-service day [autumn 2006] focusing on teachers' needs in relation to this topic, with a variety of appropriate methodological approaches considered with reference to the syllabus aims, objectives and learning outcomes. Suitable sources of different types were also presented at this in-service session.

The suite of documents prepared for each of the three case studies features documents of different types and enables the student to look at the case study from different points of view. They also root the case study in the context of the topic as a whole, with associated elements, concepts and key personalities also featuring.

Each set of documents is accompanied by a general introduction, a series of biographical notes of people mentioned in the documents, and an extensive glossary of key terms that arise from the case studies.

Teachers need not feel that they must deal with every document that is presented, nor indeed with whole documents. Although designed to constitute a logical, sequential, evidence-based investigation of each case study, the material can just as readily be used selectively by teachers as their needs require, with specific documents or parts of documents chosen as the teacher deems suitable.

These documents are presented in such an order that, if followed, enables students to develop awareness of the issues and events relating to the case study on an incremental basis, with each document introduced and glossed as appropriate and accompanied by a series of questions to assist in their interrogation.

Teachers may see some similarity between this material and that prepared by the National Library of Ireland and the NCCA in relation to the topics prescribed for documents-based study in the examination years 2006 and 2007. This material, available on www.nli.ie and www.hist.ie, as well as on the 2006 HIST CD, has met with a very positive reaction from teachers to date. It is to be hoped that this latest support project will be equally well-received.

The research and writing of the materials was carried out by Ms Jane Finucane (TCD). Document 12 was inserted by the HIST team. The materials were edited for publication by the HIST Team [Pat Callan, National Coordinator, John Dredge, Linda Neary, Gerard O'Sullivan, Regional Development Officers]. I would like to express my thanks to Dr Ciaran Brady (TCD) for his encouragement in initiating the project.

Teachers are encouraged to contact the HIST team with any comments or suggestions on the use of this material.

Pat Callan,
National Coordinator,
Leaving Certificate History,
November 2006.

Introduction to documents relating to the case study, “Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam, 1963-1968”

When John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, Lyndon Johnson inherited (Document 2, Document 3, Document 5) the Vietnam problem: a divided country, with a communist state to the North, and communist activity against American-sponsored government in the South. America was not officially at war in Vietnam, but was providing support and personnel. While Johnson considered victory in South Vietnam vital in stopping the spread of communism (Document 2, Document 5), he was unsure about the extent of American involvement necessary (Document 2, Document 3), and aware that public feeling would not stand all-out war (Document 1, Document 4). It was only late in 1964 that he gained authority to wage war (Document 4), using ground troops and aerial bombings (Document 6, Document 7, Document 10, Document 11), and attracting a range of responses: patriotic support (Document 7), widespread protest (Document 6, Document 8), and accusations of incompetence (Document 11). While the number of Americans drafted to fight in Vietnam increased (Document 5), it became clear in 1968 that American victory was not at hand (Document 9, Document 12). The Vietnam War came to colour all of Lyndon Johnson’s projects as president (Document 6, Document 8, Document 11), despite efforts to connect it with benefits for American and foreigners alike (Document 5). Johnson claimed publicly that he did not run in a second Presidential election because the war required his full attention (Document 10), but public opinion and media coverage of the war (Document 6, Document 9, Document 11, Document 12) had damaged his image enough to make victory in the election unlikely.

In the Leaving Certificate syllabus, a significant aspect of the Vietnam War - “Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam, 1963-1968” - is treated as a case study for the “Politics and administration” perspective. For this reason, the documents chosen focus on American rather than Vietnamese decisions, experiences and responses. The documents chosen are relevant to the elements on Vietnam and U.S. Foreign Policy. They also cast light on other elements, including the Presidency (Document 1, Document 3, Document 4, Document 10); domestic factors in U.S. foreign policy (Document 6, Document 8, Document 11); the anti-war movement (Document 6, Document 8); and the structures and tensions of U.S. politics (Document 3, Document 4). Where possible, references have been made to “key personalities”: Lyndon Johnson, Martin Luther King (Document 8), and Norman Mailer (Document 7).

The introduction to each document is kept to a minimum. Contextual information, along with explanations of words, can be found in the sections on biographical notes and glossary. Words which are underlined are included in these sections: generally a word is underlined only in its first appearance in a document. Where first names are not included in the document, they are given in square brackets []. Anything in square brackets is not in the original text.

Teachers can access relevant web sites on this case study using the resource finder on www.scoilnet.ie

Biographical Notes

Stokely Carmichael

Leader from 1964 of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). He turned away from the doctrine of non-violence, coined the term “black power”, and opposed the war in Vietnam, calling it “white people sending black people to make war on yellow people in order to defend the land they stole from red people.”

Cassius Clay – Muhammad Ali

Clay changed his name to Muhammad Ali in 1964, immediately after becoming world heavyweight champion, and announced his conversion to the Nation of Islam ([Black Muslims](#)). When [drafted](#) for service in Vietnam, he applied to be excused on religious grounds. One public statement became famous: "I ain't got no quarrel with them Vietcong, anyway. They never called me nigger." In 1967, he was convicted of draft evasion, sentenced to five years in prison and fined \$10,000. He won an appeal at the Supreme Court in 1970, and was able to return to boxing and win back his title.

Walter Cronkite

Anchor and managing editor of the [CBS](#) evening news, 1962-81. He presented a confident front about the Vietnam war, following the military line, but claims to have had private doubts from 1965. Leaving the news desk, he covered the aftermath of the [Tet Offensive](#) from Vietnam, and returned to report “a stalemate”. [Lyndon Johnson](#) observed: "If I have lost Walter Cronkite, I have lost Mr. Average Citizen."

Ngo Dinh Diem

Vietnamese Nationalist and anti-communist, President of the Republic of Vietnam ([South Vietnam](#)) from 1954 to 1963. The U.S. found him an uncooperative partner in war, criticizing his failure to approve reforms and his oppression of the opposition, which made it difficult to unite the Vietnamese against communism. The coup in which he was killed took place with U.S. approval.

John Foster Dulles

Republican, Senator from New York. Secretary of State under Eisenhower, 1953-1959. Dulles was strongly anti-communist, and was keen to expand American involvement in South East Asia, encouraging Eisenhower to take over from France as the opponent of communist rebels in the area. He agreed to the partition of Vietnam in 1954 with reluctance, and, from that date, supported American intervention in South Vietnam.

William Fulbright

Democrat, Senator from Arkansas. Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 1959-74. He helped win the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, but his support for American policy in Vietnam declined. The Foreign Relations Committee held public hearings in 1967 and 1968, and heard many criticisms of the war. Fulbright became one of the highest-profile opponents of the war and began to call for the withdrawal of American forces.

Barry Goldwater

U.S. senator from Arizona (1953–64, 1969–87) and Republican presidential candidate in 1964. He called for a stronger line against Soviet Russia, and an all-out war in Vietnam: this led to him being viewed as a risky candidate for the presidency, and [Johnson](#) won by a landslide.

Lyndon Johnson

Democrat, President 1963-1969, Vice-President to [Kennedy](#), 1961-3. Johnson ran for election in 1964 as a candidate who would safeguard world peace. Nonetheless, the Vietnam war escalated under his administration: After the [Gulf of Tonkin](#) Incident, he was granted powers by [Congress](#) to take any necessary military measures in response. This gave him the power to escalate U.S. military activity in Vietnam without declaring war, and to commit troops without going back to congress for permission. He authorized bombing of [North Vietnam](#) on this

basis. By early 1968, the U.S had 500,000 soldiers in Vietnam, but the [Tet Offensive](#) of January 1968, proved that this might not be sufficient. The cost and unpopularity of the war damaged Johnson's prestige and his ability to achieve his domestic aims. He announced in March 1968 that he would not run for a second full term as President.

John F. Kennedy

Democrat, President 1961-1963. Kennedy approached Vietnam carefully, simultaneously seeking a way out and slowly escalating the U.S. commitment by sending aid and U.S. forces described as military advisors (16 000 by the end of his presidency). He gave private consent to the coup which toppled [Ngo Dinh Diem](#).

Sherman Kent

Assistant director and chairman, Board of National [Estimates](#), [Central Intelligence Agency](#), 1950-67.

Nguyen Khanh

One of the leaders of the coup which toppled [Ngo Dinh Diem](#), and organizer of the coup which eliminated Diem's successor, Duong Van Minh. He ruled South Vietnam from January to October 1964, and was shortly afterwards exiled to the U.S.

Martin Luther King

Baptist Minister and Civil Rights leader, declared *TIME* man of the year in 1964. His campaigns had started with challenges to segregation in the southern states, and developed to include protests at discrimination in the northern states. In 1967, he openly condemned U.S. participation in the Vietnam War, arguing that draft regulations which exempted university students were discriminatory, that black casualties among U.S. troops were higher than white, and that the war could be seen worldwide as an attack by a white army on non-white people. [Lyndon Johnson](#) condemned these claims as irresponsible.

Alexei Kosygin

Premier of the Soviet Union (1964–80). He continued Khrushchev's policy of providing weapons and economic support to [North Vietnam](#).

Henry Cabot Lodge

Republican, U.S. ambassador to Republic of Vietnam 1963-4, 1965-7. He encouraged plots against [Ngo Dinh Diem](#), and gained U.S. support for the coup in which Diem was killed.

Norman Mailer

Journalist and novelist, the country's leading literary figure in the 1960s. He was happy to take a controversial stance on political issues. During [Vietnam Day](#), radio broadcasts were stopped during his speech because of the language he used to describe the administration. In 1967, he wrote a novel, *Why are we in Vietnam?*, which combined criticism of the war with a guide to life.

Michael Joseph Mansfield

Democrat, Senator from Montana, majority leader in the Senate 1961-70. He turned down the offer to run with Johnson for Vice-President. He visited Vietnam several times in the 1960s, and saw little hope for the U.S. there. In 1965, he publicly disagreed with Johnson on the bombing of [North Vietnam](#) and on increased American involvement in Vietnam.

John McCormack

Democrat, Representative from Massachusetts. Speaker of the House [of Representatives], 1961-70. The Speaker is elected by the House, appoints a number of the members to subcommittees, and would succeed to the presidency if both President and Vice-President were removed. Speakers and their deputies act as chair in House debates.

Robert McNamara

U.S. Secretary of Defense, 1961-8. A supporter of increased involvement in Vietnam and President [Johnson's](#) main advisor on the war. He began in 1966 to doubt U.S. involvement and pushed publicly for peace negotiations from 1967. He left the administration in February 1968. An excellent documentary called "The Fog of War", featuring an extended interview with McNamara, can be found by entering the search term – "the fog of war" – on video.google.com.

Ho Chi Minh

Communist, leader of [North Vietnam](#) 1954-69. Born Nguyen Sinh Cung. He led the Vietnamese struggle against the French, and the campaign to unite North and South Vietnam. He was ruler of North Vietnam, 1954-69. His ultimate aim was to unite Indo-China under his Communist Party.

Elijah Muhammad

Head of the [Nation of Islam \(Black Muslims\)](#) from 1934. He believed that black people were chosen by Allah and should not associate with white people or take part in any American wars.

George Reedy

Press secretary for President Johnson from March 1964 to July 1965 and presidential assistant February 1968 to January 1969.

Lucius Mendel Rivers

Democrat, Member of the House of Representatives 1941-70. He represented South Carolina and was chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, which he described as the most powerful position in the U.S. [Congress](#), from 1965-70. His job was to judge and respond to requests for military funding, but in fact he gave almost everything that he was asked for, as well as fighting for higher military pay and benefits.

Dean David Rusk

Secretary of State 1961-8. He was in favour of escalation of the war, and pushed for the bombing of [North Vietnam](#) and the commitment of extra troops.

Leverett Saltonstall

Republican Senator from Massachusetts, 1945-67. He was one of the sponsors of the Tonkin resolution at the Senate: this gave President Johnson extended powers in Vietnam after the [Gulf of Tonkin](#) incident.

Mao Tse-Tung

Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, 1931-76. Under Mao, [China](#) rejected [Soviet](#) calls for a united effort in [North Vietnam](#). He argued that a communist revolution could not succeed with large-scale foreign intervention. Although China acquired nuclear weapons in 1964, Mao at this time turned his attention to domestic matters and the Cultural Revolution.

John Wayne

Film star and director, best known for his performances in John Ford's Westerns. He was vocal about politics and strongly anti-communist. He made a number of patriotic films, including [Green Berets](#) (released 1968) in which he starred as a colonel.

Glossary

American Forces Vietnam Network

Radio and TV for U.S. troops in Vietnam. The radio broadcast 24 hours a day, with music, news and weather. The television network had news, weather, and reruns of popular American programmes: mostly sitcoms, westerns, and adventure.

Berlin

Berlin in the 1960s was divided into East (Communist) and West Berlin. The defence of West Berlin as an area independent of the East German land that surrounded it was seen as a test case for American and Western European resistance to communism.

Black Muslims

Common name for the Nation of Islam, a black separatist movement founded in the 1930s. Members of the Nation of Islam adopted many Islamic beliefs, but also taught that white people were devilish, and would soon lose power, so that black people should associate with them as little as possible, and campaign for a separate state.

C.B.S.

Columbia Broadcasting System: During the 1960s, it was America's most watched television network.

Cambodia

Cambodia shared a border with [South Vietnam](#), stayed neutral in the Vietnam War until 1970, when an internal power struggle led to a pro-U.S. stance. The government was anti-communist until 1975, but North Vietnam had enough support to transport troops and supplies through Cambodia.

Capitol Hill

Area of Washington D.C. where [Congress](#) meets, and a nickname for Congress.

Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)

The main foreign intelligence agency of the U.S. The CIA sponsored anti-communist activities in [South Vietnam](#) before the war escalated. Once large numbers of American troops were in Vietnam, the U.S. military took control in this area. The CIA continued to provide intelligence reports on the war, some of which it later judged to be too optimistic about American success.

China

China was the largest supplier of arms to [North Vietnam](#). The U.S. feared that it would send soldiers into North Vietnam to support the North Vietnamese Army, but neither the Chinese nor the Vietnamese government favoured this option. From 1964, China focused on domestic policies and the Cultural Revolution.

Civil Rights

The Civil Rights movement in the U.S. was the struggle for equal rights for people of all races. Most civil rights leaders eventually came to condemn the Vietnam War.

Congress

The congress is the legislative (law-making) branch of the U.S. Government. It is made of the Senate (with two senators per state) and the House of Representatives (where each state is represented according to its population). Among its responsibilities are decisions on taxes, borrowing of money from abroad, and regulation of business.

Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)

A ten-mile-wide strip of land between North and South Vietnam, established by the Geneva Conference of 1954. The Geneva Conference placed the area off limits to the military forces of both North and South Vietnam. Guarding the DMZ was an essential part of the U.S. task in Vietnam.

Draft evasion

Avoiding selection for compulsory military duty, or ensuring that one failed the physical and intelligence tests required. Anti-war groups gave draft counselling to suggest methods. Middle-class Americans were most successful; grounds for exception or rejection included marriage (until 1966), attendance at university, teaching, drug use, disability (including mild conditions) and homosexuality. Conscientious objectors had to prove their beliefs were sincere and perform alternative service.

Draft

Selected for compulsory military service.

During the Vietnam war, two million men aged between the ages of 18-26 were drafted, out of 27 million in their age-group. Due to various exemptions (see [draft evasion](#)) the poor were disproportionately drafted. The draft was a focus for protesters, and was ended by President Richard Nixon in 1972.

Estimators/Estimations

National Intelligent Estimates are assessments of a situation and of its likely future development. The estimates are produced by the [CIA](#), based on all available data. They are often the basis for policy decisions and requests for funds. Estimates during the Vietnam War were at first positive for Americans, but had been altered within the agency from more negative initial reports. The CIA saw the [Viet Cong](#) as a formidable force, recommending in 1965 that only bombing of [North Vietnam](#) would undermine it. The Estimate on Viet Cong strength in 1967 was kept from the public to maintain the impression that American was succeeding in Vietnam .

G.I. Term

A term used to describe all American Soldiers. From “Government Issue” or “General Issue”, which was printed on their equipment and supplies?

Gooks

[G.I.](#) slang for Asian people, first used during the Korean War. In the Vietnam war, it was used for all inhabitants of Vietnam: South Vietnamese civilians and troops, North Vietnamese civilians and army, and [Viet Cong](#).

Grand Dragon

Usually Grand Wizard. A high-ranking member of the Ku-Klux-Klan

Great Society

President [Lyndon Johnson's](#) description of the reform programme which he promised to voters in the 1964 presidential elections. A large number of reforms were to be introduced by law, including federal support for education, expansion of Social Security, and measures to prevent states from depriving citizens of voting rights. Most of the laws which he proposed were passed by [congress](#). The Vietnam war diverted both funds and attention from the programme.

Green Berets

Nickname for the Special Forces, a military unit established in 1952 to fight behind enemy lines. They were in Vietnam from 1957-71, and as well as training and combat, worked on medical and educational programmes. They were the heroes of [John Wayne's](#) film, “The Green Berets” (released 1968), which showed the [Viet Cong](#) as savages. The film ended with a U.S. colonel reassuring a Vietnamese orphan that “you're what this war is all about”.

Guerillas

Soldiers, often without uniforms, who carry out a war in small, mobile groups (cells). Guerilla warfare often gives an advantage to the natives of a country, as having local connections and knowledge helps them to conceal themselves and surprise the enemy. The [Viet Cong](#) was an extremely effective guerilla force in South Vietnam until 1968.

Gulf of Tonkin Incident

Alleged ambush on the destroyers *U.S.S. Maddox* and *USS C. Turner Joy*, which were patrolling off [North Vietnam](#). The ships attacked Vietnam gunboats in the belief that an attack was imminent, but later concluded that their fears had been groundless. By this time, [Johnson](#) had addressed the nation on television, announcing an attack “on the high seas against the United States of America”, but promising a measured response. [Congress](#) approved the Tonkin Resolution, allowing Johnson to “take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the armed forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression”. He started to bomb North Vietnam, and drew up plans to commit regular troops to the war in Vietnam. The resolution allowed him to direct the U.S. military effort without reference to Congress.

GVN

Government of Vietnam. This was the U.S. term for the government of [South Vietnam](#), which was based in [Saigon](#).

Hanoi

Capital of [North Vietnam](#), mostly untouched by bombing until 1972.

Harlem

Area of New York city which in the 1960s had an almost exclusively black population.

Johns Hopkins University

An elite private university in Baltimore, Maryland, close to Washington D.C.

Khesanh or Khe Sanh

Isolated [Marine](#) base which was besieged by the North Vietnamese army between February and April 1968. The siege was not successful; 3000 soldiers of the North Vietnamese Army were killed, while 200 of the 6000 Marines at the base were casualties.

Laos

Laos bordered on Vietnam, and was officially neutral in the war, but was in a state of civil war, with the communist military [Pathet Lao](#) controlling the border with [North Vietnam](#). North Vietnamese troops were able to use the region as a corridor to South Vietnam. America aimed to undermine Laotian communism with assassinations and a bombing campaign between 1964 and 1973, but failed to prevent a communist takeover.

Marines

Members of the U.S. Marine Corps. In 1965 3 000 U.S. Marines landed in Vietnam, the first U.S. ground troops to be put into action. Almost 15 000 of them were killed in Vietnam.

Military Revolutionary Council

Twelve generals, led by Duong Van Minh, who deposed [Ngo Dinh Diem](#), dissolved the Vietnamese National Assembly, and created a new, anti-Communist, pro-Western government.

My Hope for America

A collection of [Lyndon Johnson's](#) speeches, dealing mostly with the [Great Society](#), published in 1964.

Napalm

Napalm (Naphthenic-Palmitic Acid Napalm) was used in World War II and in the Korean War, but became a focus of U.S. protests about the Vietnam War, who called it “Johnson’s Baby Powder”. An air-dropped napalm container would shatter and ignite, spreading burning contents which would stick to victims. Napalm burned at such high temperatures that it suffocated many in the area, so that civilian deaths were common. Photographs of child victims helped to stir American feeling against the use of Napalm.

Negro/ Nigra

Negro was the standard description for black people from the sixteenth century until the nineteenth-century, and was still common and inoffensive until the 1960s, and used by black and white [civil rights](#) campaigners.. The black power movement of the mid-sixties first protested against the use, and it is now considered inappropriate or offensive.

Nigra was a common southern pronunciation, very rarely written, with about the same impact. [Lyndon Johnson](#) famously used it in one of the most successful speeches of his 1964 election campaign, when he argued that white southerners were manipulated through their fear of civil rights progress: "Poor old Mississippi, they haven't heard a Democratic speech in thirty years. All they ever hear at election time is 'nigra, nigra, nigra!'"

North Vietnam

(The Democratic Republic of Vietnam) The Communist state founded by [Ho Chi Minh](#) in 1950, which defeated French colonists in 1954. Its communism was nationalist, so that uniting Vietnam in a Socialist Republic, through elections or revolution, was a priority. The state received financial support from both the [Soviet Union](#) and China, and the North Vietnamese Army had 125 000 troops in 1964 and 600 000 by 1974. Many of the [Viet Cong's](#) activities were directed from the North. American bombing 1965-8 weakened North Vietnam, but it was able to recover enough to continue with the war and to invade South Vietnam and unite the territories in 1975, after American withdrawal.

Pathet Lao

The military branch of the communist movement in [Laos](#), the Lao liberation front. It cooperated with the North Vietnamese Army, and the U.S. mounted secret attacks on it in Laos between 1964 and 1973.

Popular Forces

South Vietnamese local defence forces used to protect their villages from the Viet Cong.

Rednecks

Usually derogatory term for the white rural labouring class of the Southern States of America.

Saigon

The capital of South Vietnam, location of the U.S. embassy, and headquarters in Vietnam of U.S. operations. It was one of the targets of the [Tet Offensive](#) in 1968. It was renamed Ho Chi Minh City after the fall of South Vietnam in 1975.

Sedition

Behaviour or language which amounts to or encourages disobedience to government.

Segregation

The separation of people by race, based not only on discrimination but on legal requirements. Segregation by race in public facilities was common until the 1960s in the Southern states of America, but also existed in the North, and in federal institutions like the army (where it had almost been eliminated by 1953).

South Vietnam

The usual name for the Republic of Vietnam, created in 1954. It had a population of over 12 million in 1960.

Soviet Union

The U.S.S.R. had agreed to the partition of Vietnam in 1954. It increased its military and economic aid to [North Vietnam](#) as America's aid to [South Vietnam](#) grew, and was its largest donor of economic aid. The U.S. argued occasionally that the Soviet Union was controlling the North Vietnamese government, and [Lyndon Johnson](#) called on Soviet leaders to persuade North Vietnam to negotiate, but North Vietnam worked hard to remain independent.

Tet Offensive

The Tet (New Year) Offensive was a massive attack by the North Vietnamese Army and the [Viet Cong](#) on major South Vietnamese cities, begun on January 31 1968. U.S. intelligence had expected an attack on rural outposts and had scattered its soldiers to meet and destroy Viet Cong forces. The attack was intended to provoke a revolution among the South Vietnamese. It failed to do this, and 70 000 Viet Cong were killed. While the Viet Cong never made a complete military recovery, the intelligence errors and the bloodshed on the Tet Offensive damaged the U.S. administration, which had in late 1967 promised that the war in Vietnam would soon end in victory for the U.S. [Lyndon Johnson](#) cited media coverage of the Tet offensive as the decisive element in turning the public against the war.

TIME Magazine

Major American weekly, published in New York. It has had the largest circulation of any news magazine since 1927. It covered the Montgomery bus boycott, and ran a cover story on [Martin Luther King](#) in February 1957. It named him “man of the year” in 1964.

United Nations

The United Nations questioned certain aspects of U.S. action in Vietnam, but it did not become involved in the war, as neither the U.S. nor its opponents could secure the necessary two thirds majority. The U.S. until 1966 did not invite U.N. involvement. [Lyndon Johnson](#) asked for help in settling the war in 1966, but the proposal which it produced was rejected by [China](#) and [North Vietnam](#).

University of California, Berkeley

Part of the state university of California. The centre for the Free Speech Movement from 1964. Berkeley students protested that their constitutional rights were being violated when they were forbidden to raise money for off-campus causes, such as civil rights groups. Their campaign for a voice in university policy expanded to take in anti-war demonstrations, such as [Vietnam Day](#).

Viet Cong

The name given to the National Liberation Front in Vietnam by its enemies. It was the irregular force of Vietnamese communists, mostly from the South, committed to overthrowing the government in Saigon. It had Russian and Chinese backing, and was to a large extent directed from [North Vietnam](#). Its guerilla warfare was extremely effective until the [Tet Offensive](#), when 70, 000 Viet Cong were killed, so that the war afterwards was mostly between South Vietnam and the U.S on one side, and the North Vietnamese Army on the other.

Vietnam Day

Teach-in in Berkeley University on May 21-22, 1965 against the Vietnam War, permitted by the university authorities so that the right to freedom of speech would not be violated. Up to 30 000 were present for some of the event, which featured music, celebrity speeches, and [draft-burning](#).

Documents included in Case Study

- Document 1** page 13
“Daisy Girl”. Ad for Lyndon Johnson’s Presidential Campaign
- Document 2** page 15
National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) on U.S. policy on Vietnam, March 17 1964.
- Document 3** page 17
Telephone conversation between Lyndon B. Johnson and Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, June 9, 1964.
- Document 4** page 19
Lyndon B. Johnson: telephone conversation with Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense, regarding the Gulf of Tonkin Incident involving the Destroyer U.S.S. Maddox, August 3, 1964
- Document 5** page 21
Lyndon B. Johnson, "Address at Johns Hopkins University -- We Have Promises to Keep," April 7, 1965.
- Document 6** page 23
Norman Mailer: A speech at Berkeley on Vietnam Day, May 21-22, 1965.
- Document 7** page 25
Letter from John Wayne to Lyndon Johnson, concerning a film, “Green Berets”, which was released in 1968. December 23, 1965.
- Document 8** page 27
“Dr. King says, Would You Please Move To The Back of the Bus?” cartoon; Cartoonist, Eugene G. Payne; *The Charlotte Observer*, April 6, 1967
- Document 9** page 28
Walter Cronkite reports on the Tet Offensive, CBS News, February 27 1968.
- Document 10** page 30
President Lyndon B. Johnson’s Address to the Nation, announcing Steps to Limit the War in Vietnam and Reporting His Decision Not to Seek Reelection, March 31, 1968
- Document 11** page 32
Letters from soldiers serving in Vietnam
- Document 12** page 35
“Suspended here in Asia ...” cartoon; cartoonist, Hugh Haynie; *Courier-Journal* [Louisville, Kentucky] February 27, 1968

Document 1

Images from “Daisy Girl”. Advertisement for [Lyndon Johnson’s](#) Presidential Campaign

This aired once only, on September 7, 1964, during NBC’s “Monday Night at the Movies”. Republicans campaigned successfully to have it taken off the air.



GIRL: One, two, three...



...four, five, seven, six, six, eight, nine, nine



MAN: TEN, NINE, EIGHT, SEVEN, SIX, FIVE, FOUR, THREE, TWO, ONE, ZERO!

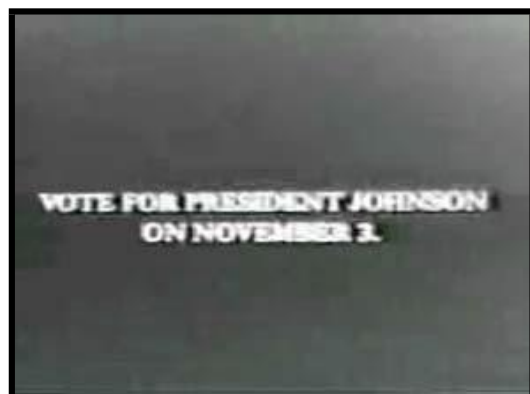


[Sounds of exploding bomb.]



JOHNSON: These are the stakes: To make a world in which all of God’s children can live, or to go into the darkness. We must either love each other, or we must die.

Images © 1964 Democratic Party, USA



ANNOUNCER: Vote for President Johnson on November 3rd. The stakes are too high for you to stay home.

Exploring the Evidence

1. What does this advertisement aim to achieve?
2. What choice does the advertisement offer to viewers?
3. What is the purpose of the first half of the advertisement?
4. What assumptions does the advertisement make about the role of America in the world?
5. Johnson's opponent, Barry Goldwater, is not mentioned in this advertisement. Why might that be?
6. What expectations of Lyndon Johnson's presidency does this advertisement create?

Lyndon Johnson's 1964, Presidential campaign spots

<http://www.pbs.org/30secondcandidate/timeline/years/1964b.html>

This PBS site hosts video footage of five television advertisements (including “Daisy Girl”) and one radio advertisement from Johnson's 1964 presidential campaign.

It is part of a website dealing with a television programme called “The 30-Second Candidate”. This traces the history of the political television advertisement in the USA, from its beginning during the 1952 presidential campaign of Dwight D. Eisenhower through the presidential campaign of 1996. Clicking on the *Historical Timeline* gives access to video of the 1948 Truman presidential campaign, and political television advertisements, 1948 to 1988.

Document 2

National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) on U.S. policy on Vietnam, 17 March 1964.

NSAMs were issued by Johnson or his national security advisors to federal agencies. This was issued during Johnson's Presidential election campaign of 1964.

SECRET...

[The United States' policy is] to prepare immediately to be in a position on 72 hours' notice to initiate the full range of [Laotian](#) and [Cambodian](#) "Border Control actions"...and the "Retaliatory Actions" against North Vietnam, and to be in a position on 30 days' notice to initiate the program of "Graduated Overt Military Pressure" against [North Vietnam](#)....

We seek an independent non-Communist South Vietnam. We do not require that it serve as a Western base or as a member of a Western Alliance. South Vietnam must be free, however, to accept outside assistance as required to maintain its security. This assistance should be able to take the form not only of economic and social measures but also police and military help to root out and control insurgent elements.

Unless we can achieve this objective in South Vietnam, almost all of South-east Asia will probably fall under Communist dominance (all of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia), accommodate to Communism so as to remove effective U.S. and anti-Communist influence (Burma), or fall under the dominion of forces not now explicitly Communist but likely then to become so (Indonesia taking over Malaysia). Thailand might hold on for a period without help, but would be under grave pressure. Even the Philippines would become shaky, and the threat to India on the West, Australia and New Zealand to the South, and Taiwan, Korea, and Japan to the North and East would be greatly increased.

All of these consequences would probably have been true even if the U.S. had not since 1954, and especially since 1961, become so heavily engaged in South Vietnam. However, that fact accentuates the impact of a Communist South Vietnam not only in Asia but in the rest of the world, where the South Vietnam conflict is regarded as a test case of U.S. capacity to help a nation to meet the Communist "war of liberation."

Thus, purely in terms of foreign policy, the stakes are high....

We are now trying to help South Vietnam defeat the [Viet Cong](#), supported from the North, by means short of unqualified use of U.S. combat forces. We are not acting against North Vietnam except by a modest "covert" program operated by South Vietnamese (and a few Chinese Nationalists)—a program so limited that it is unlikely to have any significant effect....

There were and are some sound reasons for the limits imposed by the present policy—the South Vietnamese must win their own fight; U.S. intervention on a larger scale, and/or [GVN](#) actions against the North, would disturb key allies and other nations; etc. In any case, it is vital that we continue to take every reasonable measure to assure success in South Vietnam. The policy choice is not an "either/or" between this course of action and possible pressure against the North: the former is essential and without regard to our decision with respect to the latter.

The latter can, at best, only reinforce the former....

Many of the actions described in the succeeding paragraphs fit right into the framework of the [pacification] plan announced by [\[Nguyen\] Khanh](#). Wherever possible, we should tie our urgings of such actions to Khanh's own formulation of them, so that he will be carrying out a Vietnamese plan and not one imposed by the United States....

...the judgment of all senior people in [Saigon](#), with which we concur, was that the possible military advantages of such action would be far outweighed by adverse psychological impact. It would cut across the whole basic picture of the Vietnamese winning their own war and lay us wide open to hostile propaganda both within South Vietnam and outside.

Source: Neil Sheehan, Hedrick Smith, E. W. Kenworthy, and Fox Butterfield (editors), *The Pentagon Papers* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), 283-85.

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Exploring the Evidence

1. Why, according to Johnson, is success in Vietnam essential to U.S. Foreign Policy?
2. What does Johnson hope to achieve against North Vietnam?
3. How does Johnson want to develop a plan for peace?
4. What is Johnson's attitude to the South Vietnamese state?
5. How does Johnson analyse the efforts of the U.S. in Vietnam to this date?
6. How does Johnson seem to have understood the scale of the Vietnam War in 1964?
7. Is this statement of policy compatible with Johnson's message in his 'Daisy Girl' advertisement (Document 1)?

Document 3

Telephone conversation between [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) and Defense Secretary [Robert McNamara](#), June 9, 1964.

(White House telephone conversations were routinely recorded.)

--- Represents a break, pause, or inaudible section

... Represents material omitted from the extract

President Lyndon B. Johnson: Hello?

Secretary Robert McNamara: Yes, Mr. President?

President Johnson: How did you get along --- the Congress today?

Secretary McNamara: .. [\[Leverett\] Saltonstall](#) is concerned uh as to where we're going. He doesn't think that the American people know why we're in Vietnam. He wasn't particularly concerned about the reconnaissance flights...

President Johnson: What do you answer Saltonstall? Why don't you tell him that [\[John Foster\] Dulles](#) got us in there?

Secretary McNamara: Well, Saltonstall says that he knows why we got in. And he's generally in favor of being there, but he doesn't think the people understand. And uh they ask him questions indicating that they don't understand. What he says is we ought to tell the American people why we're there and explain to them why Southeast Asia is important to us as many of his constituents think it is not.

President Johnson: Um-hmm

Secretary McNamara: Uh, I think that he's, he's right, in a sense. We are going to have to do more work on making it clear to the American people why this is important to us. No question in my mind about it.

President Johnson: I do too, I do too

...

President Johnson: Uh-huh. I've been trying to evaluate this thing. We haven't taken any serious losses, and we can't put our finger on anything that's uh, really justifies this acceleration of and escalation of public sentiment that it's going to hell in a hack since you were out there in March... Have we fed that? Where did it come from that we're losing?

Secretary McNamara: No, I think it's uh, I think it's the appraisal. If you, if you went to

President Johnson: You take this country now. It's all concerned that that we've lost Southeast Asia. And that we're in a hell of a shape. Now where did that come from?

Secretary McNamara: All right, well, I think that it came from two things. Uh, if you went to [Sherman Kent](#) and the [estimators](#) in the [CIA](#) and said, how's the situation today in [South Vietnam](#) versus three months ago or four months ago, I think they'd say it's worse. And, and therefore

President Johnson: That's not what [\[Henry\] Lodge](#) and [Nguyen Khanh](#) think, is it? They think it's a little better, don't they?

Secretary McNamara: Well, uh, I don't think they really believe that, Mr. President. No, sir. I, I think they both would indicate that it is a very weak situation. I think they think it's better in the sense that if it's better to have Khanh there than it was four or five months ago to have that Committee [the [Military Revolutionary Council](#)] running it. But I think Lodge is personally very much concerned about it. The very fact that he's constantly pushing for pressure on the North, military pressure on the North; and of course, that letter that he sent in today, that we read at lunch was, the primary purpose of that was to tell you that he thinks you ought to go ahead and apply military pressure on the North. What he was saying is don't be scared away

from my plan to apply military pressure on the North by the thought of putting in seven divisions. We should never think of putting in seven divisions. It isn't necessary. You ought to apply military pressure anyway. And this is Lodge's way of saying things are in pretty bad shape. Now my point is that the CIA estimators, Lodge, many of the rest of us in private, would say that things are not good, they've gotten worse. And you see it in the desertion rate, you see it in the morale, you see it in the difficulty to recruit people, you see it in the gradual loss of population control. Now, while we say this in private and not in public, there are facts available in the public domain over there that find their way in the press. And I think that this is one way that uh our people get this feeling of, of uh, the fact that we're not moving ahead. The second way is the clear the case of Laos where the [Pathet Lao](#) just advanced on the ground within the last three weeks and have kept their gains. And I think it's these two events that lead the people to feel a sense of pessimism about Southern Asia.

...

Secretary McNamara .. If we're going to stay in there, we're going to go strictly up the escalating chain, we're going to have to educate the people, Mr. President. We haven't done so yet. I am not sure now is exactly the right time.

President Johnson: No, and I think if you start doing it they are going to be hollering, 'you're a warmonger'.

Secretary McNamara: That's right; I completely agree with you.

President Johnson: I think that's the horn the Republicans would like to get us on. Now, if we could do something in the way of uh social work, in the way of our hospitals, in the way of our province program and the way of our fertilizer and the way of remaking that area out there and given them some hope and something to fight for, and put some of our own people into their units and do a little better job of fighting without material escalation, for the next few months, that is what we ought to do.

Source: John Prados (editor): *The White House Tapes. Eavesdropping on the President.* New York/London, 2003, 171-5

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Exploring the Evidence:

1. What concerns Senator Saltonstall, and how do McNamara and Johnson respond?
2. What is Johnson's solution to being considered 'a warmonger'?
3. What military strategy does Johnson suggest in this conversation?
4. Why does McNamara argue that the war may be going worse than Johnson thinks?
5. Who is providing information in this conversation, and who is making decisions?
6. What dangers does Johnson want to avoid?
7. Should this conversation be taken as evidence that Johnson was not well-informed on Vietnam in 1964?
8. Does this conversation indicate any problems with Johnson's memo on the war in March 1964 (Document 2)?

Document 4

Lyndon B. Johnson: telephone conversation with **Robert McNamara**, Secretary of Defense, regarding the **Gulf of Tonkin Incident** involving the Destroyer U.S.S. Maddox, August 3, 1964

President Lyndon B. Johnson: I wonder if you don't think it'd be wise for you and [\[Dean Rusk\]](#) to get Mac, uh, the Speaker [\[John McCormack\]](#) and [\[Michael Mansfield\]](#) to call a group of fifteen to twenty people together eh from the Armed Services and Foreign Relations to tell them what happened. A good many of them are saying to me

Secretary Robert McNamara: Right. I've been thinking about this myself, and I thought that uh

President Johnson: They're going to start an investigation

Secretary McNamara: Yeah

President Johnson: If you don't

Secretary McNamara: Yeah

...

Secretary McNamara: Well, I, I was, I was thinking doing this myself in personal visits. But I think your thought is better. We'll get the group together. You want us to do it at the White House or would you rather do it at State or Defense?

President Johnson: I believe it'd be better to do it uh up on the [\[Capitol Hill\]](#)

Secretary McNamara: All right.

President Johnson: I believe it'd be better if you say to Mansfield, 'You call'

Secretary McNamara: Yup

President Johnson: Foreign Relations

Secretary McNamara: Yup, OK.

President Johnson: Armed Services

Secretary McNamara: OK. OK.

...

President Johnson: Now I wish that uh you'd give me some guidance on what we ought to say. I want to leave an impression that on the background in the people we talk to over here that we're gonna be firm as hell without saying something that's dangerous. Now what do you think? Uh, uh, the people that are calling me up, I just talked to a New York banker, I just talked to a fellow in Texas, they all feel that the Navy responded wonderfully and that's good. But they want to be damned sure I don't pull 'em out and run, and they want to be damned sure that we're firm. That's what all the country wants because [Goldwater's](#) raising so much hell about how he's gonna blow 'em off the moon, and they say that we oughten to do anything that the national interest doesn't require. But we sure oughta always leave the impression that if you shoot at us, you're going to get hit.

Secretary McNamara: Well, I think you would want to instruct [George Reedy](#) this morning at his news conference to say that you personally have ordered the, the Navy to carry on the routine patrols uh off the coast of [North Vietnam](#), uh to add an additional destroyer to the one that has been carrying on the patrols, to provide an air cap, and to issue instructions to the commanders to destroy any uh force that attacks our force in international waters.

Source: John Prados (editor): *The White House Tapes. Eavesdropping on the President.* New York/London, 2003, pp 184-7

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Exploring the Evidence

1. How do Johnson and McNamara decide to relay information on the Gulf of Tonkin incident?
2. What two messages does Johnson want to communicate to the public about his administration's strategy in Vietnam?
3. How eager are Johnson and McNamara to discuss the incident with concerned parties in federal administration?
4. How well do McNamara's recommendations for a press conference fit Johnson's description of the message he wants to convey to the public?
5. What is the tone of Johnson's requests and suggestions to McNamara?
6. Use this document and Document 1 to analyse the effect of Goldwater's campaign on Johnson's public image.
7. What are the advantages and disadvantages of a telephone call transcript as a historical source?

Document 5

[Lyndon B. Johnson](#),

"Address at [Johns Hopkins University](#) -- We Have Promises to Keep," April 7, 1965.

. . . 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.

To dishonor that pledge, to abandon this small and brave nation to its enemies, and to the terror that must follow, would be an unforgivable wrong.

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 say in Southeast Asia -- as we did in Europe -- in the words of the Bible: "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further."

There are those who say that all our effort there will be futile -- that [China](#)'s power is such that it is bound to dominate all Southeast Asia. But there is no end to that argument until all of the nations of Asia are swallowed up.

There are those who wonder why we have a responsibility there. Well, we have it there for the same reason that we have a responsibility for the defense of Europe. World War II was fought in both Europe and Asia, and when it ended we found ourselves with continued responsibility for the defense of freedom.

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 what we believe that purpose requires.

We do this in order to slow down aggression.

We do this to increase the confidence of the brave people of South Viet-Nam who have bravely borne this brutal battle for so many years with so many casualties.

And we do this to convince the leaders of [North Viet-Nam](#) -- and all who seek to share their conquest -- of a simple fact:

We will not be defeated.

We will not grow tired.

We will not withdraw, either openly or under the cloak of a meaningless agreement.

We know that air attacks alone will not accomplish all of these purposes. But it is our best and prayerful judgment that they are a necessary part of the surest road to peace. . . .

This war, like most wars, is filled with terrible irony. For what do the people of North Viet-

Nam want? They want what their neighbors also desire -- food for their hunger, health for their bodies, a chance to learn, progress for their country, and an end to the bondage of material misery. And they would find all these things far more readily in peaceful association with others than in the endless course of battle.

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 wrest existence from the soil. They are often wracked by disease, plagued by hunger, and death comes at the early age of 40. Stability and peace do not come easily in such a land. Neither independence nor human dignity will ever be won, though, by arms alone. It also requires the works of peace. The American people have helped generously in times past in these works, and now there must be a much more massive effort to improve the life of man in that conflict-torn corner of our world.

The first step is for the countries of Southeast Asia to associate themselves in a greatly expanded cooperative effort for development. We would hope that North Viet-Nam would take its place in the common effort just as soon as peaceful cooperation is possible.

The [United Nations](#) is already actively engaged in development in this area, and as far back as 1961 I conferred with our authorities in Viet-Nam in connection with their work there. And I would hope tonight that the Secretary General of the United Nations could use the prestige of his great office and his deep knowledge of Asia to initiate, as soon as possible, with the countries of that area, a plan for cooperation in increased development.

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. And I would hope that all other industrialized countries, including the [Soviet Union](#), will join in this effort to replace despair with hope and terror with progress.

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.

The vast Mekong River can provide food and water and power on a scale to dwarf even our own TVA [Tennessee Valley Authority, power company and planning agency]. The wonders of modern medicine can be spread through villages where thousands die every year from lack of care. Schools can be established to train people in the skills that are needed to manage the process of development. And these objectives, and more, are within the reach of a cooperative and determined effort.

I also intend to expand and speed up a program to make available our farm surpluses to assist in feeding and clothing the needy in Asia. We should not allow people to go hungry and wear rags while our own warehouses overflow with an abundance of wheat and corn, rice and cotton.

Source: *Department of State Bulletin* 52, no. 1348 (April 26, 1965), pp. 607-609.

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Exploring the Evidence

1. Why, according to Johnson, is the U.S. obliged to fight in Vietnam?
2. How does Johnson suggest that material aid can be given to the Vietnamese?
3. How does Johnson explain the need for air-strikes?
4. What strategies does Johnson use in this speech to suggest that the Vietnamese people should not be considered irrelevant to Americans?
5. Does Johnson present the Vietnam war as a simple cold war struggle of communism against capitalism?
6. To what extent does Johnson take personal responsibility for the development of the war in this speech?
7. Can you explain why Johnson has chosen his conditions on U.S. aid and the form which it should take?

Document 6

Norman Mailer: A speech at Berkeley on Vietnam Day, May 21-2, 1965.

(The speech was edited for the print version)

It was obvious [My Hope for America](#) was part of the expanding horror of American life. It would be used to brainwash high-school kids. Like all horror, it stayed in the memory. For it offered a surrealistic clue to [Lyndon Johnson's](#) real secret vision of a [Great Society](#): jobs for all, everybody with an interesting job, the farmers taken care of – their subsidy checks written by computers – every industrial worker with his own psychoanalyst, every student who was able to pass the aptitude tests able to stay in school forever, Medicare, antibiotics in every glass of drinking water, tranquilizers added to the television dinners, birth-control pills in the booze...

The colleges would look like factories, the housing projects would keep looking like prisons, the corporation office buildings would be indistinguishable from the colleges, and not even an airline hostess would know where the airport ended and the motel bedroom began...

Well, the President contemplating this perspective could not be altogether happy. 'The Great Society is a dud', was his lament. 'I don't even have an issue with which to slow down the [Nigras \[Negroes\]](#) and their Rights.'

The President believed very much in image. He believed the history which made the headlines each day was more real to the people than the events themselves. It was not the Negro movement that possessed the real importance, it was the Movement's ability to get space in the papers. That ability was equalled only by the President's ability to attach himself to the image of [civil rights](#). But his ability to control the image, even put it down where necessary, was hampered by one fact. In the Great Society there was no movement, program, plan or ideal which was even remotely as dramatic as the civil-rights movement. So the civil-rights movement was going to crowd everything else out of the newspapers. There was going to be no way to control the Negro Movement, and no way to convince the Negro movement that their victory was due to his particular attentions. You can never convince a movement of your power unless you can send them back after you have called them forth. So the President needed another issue. Then it came to the President.

Hot damn. Vietnam.

Vietnam, that little old country which had been under his nose all these years. Things were getting too quiet in Vietnam. If there was one thing hotter than [Harlem](#) in the summer, it was air-raids on rice paddies and [napalm](#) on red [gooks](#). Now he had a game. When the war got too good, and everybody was giving too much space to that, he could always tell the Nigras it was good time to be marching on the White House; when they got too serious he could bring back Vietnam. He could even make all those [Barry Goldwater rednecks](#) and state troops happy – that was a happy nation, when everybody had something going for them. The Nigras had their civil rights and the rednecks could be killing gooks. Yes, thought the President, his friends and associates were correct in their estimation of him as a genius. Hot damn. Vietnam...

Let us then insist on this... let us say that if we are going to have a war with the [Viet Cong](#), let it be a war of foot soldier against foot soldier. If we wish to take a strange country away from strangers, let us at least be strong enough and brave enough to defeat them on the ground.

Our Marines, some would say, are the best soldiers in the world. The counter-argument is that native guerillas can defeat any force of a major power, man to man.

Let us, then, fight on fair grounds. Let us say to Lyndon Johnson, to [Monstrous \[Robert\] McNamara](#), and to the generals on the scene – fight like men, go in man to man against the Viet Cong. But first, call off the Air Force. They prove nothing except that America is conterminous with the Mafia. Let us win man to man, or lose, man to man, but let us cease pulverising people whose faces we have never seen...

Only listen, Lyndon Johnson, you have gone too far this time. You are a bully with an Air Force, and since you will not call off your Air force, there are young people who will persecute you back. It is a little thing, but it will hound you into nightmares and endless corridors of night without sleep, it will hound you.

Source: Norman Mailer: *The idol and the octopus; political writings, on the Kennedy and Johnson administrations*. New York, 1968, pp 253-73.

© 1968, Norman Mailer

Exploring the Evidence

1. What, according to Mailer, is Johnson's main problem with the 'Great Society'?
2. How does Mailer claim that Johnson can use Vietnam?
3. Under what circumstances does Mailer feel that combat in Vietnam should continue?
4. What is Mailer's attitude to America?
5. If one accepts Mailer's arguments about Lyndon Johnson, what would be the benefits of man-to-man combat in Vietnam?
6. What techniques does Mailer use to convince his audience?
7. By comparing this document with other sources (e.g. Documents 2, 4 and 5), consider whether Mailer's analysis of Johnson is plausible.
8. What would have been the attitude of Mailer's audience to the Vietnam War? How may this have affected his speech?

Document 7

Letter from [John Wayne](#) to [Lyndon Johnson](#), concerning a film, "[Green Berets](#)", which was released in 1968. December 23, 1965.

Dear Mr. President,

When I was a little boy my father always told me that if you want to get anything done see the top man .. so I am addressing this letter to you.

We are fighting a war in Vietnam. Though I personally support the Administration's policy there, I know it is not a popular war, and I think it is extremely important that not only the people of the United States but those all over the world should know why it is necessary for us to be there.

The most effective way to accomplish this is through the motion picture medium. Some day soon a motion picture will be made about Vietnam. Let's make sure it is the kind of picture that will help our cause throughout the world. I believe my organization can do just that and still accomplish our purpose for being in existence... making money. We want to tell the story of our fighting men in Vietnam with reason, emotion, characterization and action. We want to do it in a manner that will inspire a patriotic attitude on the part of fellow-Americans... a feeling which we have always had in this country in the past during times of stress and trouble. I feel my organization can make a vehicle which will accomplish this. We want to do it though the use of the point of view of our [Special Forces \[Green berets\]](#). In order to properly put it on the screen we are going to need the help and cooperation of the Defense Department.

My record in this field I feel is a worthy one. Thirty-seven years a star, I must have some small spot in more than a few million people's lives. You cannot stay up there that long without having identification with a great number of people. It has been my good fortune to be associated with some motion pictures which portrayed the integrity and dignity of our military, and imbued our people with pride. In films such as "The Longest Day", "The Sands Of Iwo Jima", and "The Fighting Seabees" we worked closely with the branches of the military involved, and the pictures turned out to be something of which everyone could be proud.

Perhaps you remember the scene from the film "The Alamo", when one of Davy Crockett's Tennesseans said "What are we doing here in Texas fighting – it ain't our ox that's getting gored." Crockett replied: "Talkin' about whose ox gets gored, figure this: a fella gets in the habit of goring oxes, it whets his appetite. May gore yours next. Unquote. And we don't want people like [Alexei Kosygin](#), [Mao Tse-Tung](#), or the like, "gorin' our oxes"

Perhaps it is presumptuous on my part to write direct to your Office for guidance, but I feel this picture can be extremely helpful to the Administration. Your assistance in getting us Defense Department cooperation will certainly expedite our project, as we are anxious to move ahead on it immediately. Therefore, we would appreciate hearing from your Office concerning your reactions.

Best wishes for the coming year

Respectfully yours,

[signed] John Wayne.

Source: Lawrence H. Suid: *Film and Propaganda in America: A Documentary History*. Volume IV, New York, 1991, pp 391-3 © 1991 J Wayne

Exploring the Evidence

1. What does John Wayne want to achieve?
2. What does he want Lyndon Johnson to contribute?
3. How does John Wayne argue that he is the best person for the job he proposes to do?
4. How does John Wayne present himself in this letter?
5. What tactics does Wayne use to try to persuade the President?
6. What is John Wayne's understanding of America's aims in Vietnam? Which of the previous sources do his views echo?
7. How does John Wayne feel that this war is different from earlier wars? Compare his analysis with Johnson's speech at John Hopkins University (Document 5)

Document 8

Cartoon: Eugene G. Payne: Dr. King says, Would You Please Move To The Back of the Bus?

"DR. KING SAYS, WOULD YOU PLEASE MOVE TO THE BACK OF THE BUS?"



The Charlotte Observer, April 6, 1967.

© Eugene Payne, used with permission of artist.

Exploring the Evidence

1. What incident in American history is represented here?
2. Who is being told to “give up his seat”?
3. What does this cartoon have to say about Vietnam?
4. What assumptions does this cartoon make about black Americans and their leaders?
5. What does the cartoon imply about Lyndon Johnson’s relationship to the non-violence movement?
6. What changes in American society are reflected in this cartoon?
7. How does this cartoon link with the Montgomery bus boycott?

Document 9

[Walter Cronkite](#) reports on the [Tet Offensive](#), CBS News, 27 February 1968.

CBS News, 27 February 1968

Tonight, back in more familiar surroundings in New York, we'd like to sum up our findings in Vietnam, an analysis that must be speculative, personal, subjective. Who won and who lost in the great Tet offensive against the cities? I'm not sure. The [Vietcong](#) did not win by a knockout, but neither did we. The referees of history may make it a draw. Another standoff may be coming in the big battles expected south of the [Demilitarized Zone](#). [Khesanh](#) could well fall, with a terrible loss in American lives, prestige and morale, and this is a tragedy of our stubbornness there; but the bastion no longer is a key to the rest of the northern regions, and it is doubtful that the American forces can be defeated across the breadth of the DMZ with any substantial loss of ground. Another standoff. On the political front, past performance gives no confidence that the Vietnamese government can cope with its problems, now compounded by the attack on the cities. It may not fall, it may hold on, but it probably won't show the dynamic qualities demanded of this young nation. Another standoff.

We have been too often disappointed by the optimism of the American leaders, both in Vietnam and Washington, to have faith any longer in the silver linings they find in the darkest clouds. They may be right, that [Hanoi's](#) winter-spring offensive has been forced by the Communist realization that they could not win the longer war of attrition, and that the Communists hope that any success in the offensive will improve their position for eventual negotiations. It would improve their position, and it would also require our realization, that we should have had all along, that any negotiations must be that - negotiations, not dictations of peace terms. For it seems now more certain than ever that the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a stalemate. This summer's almost certain standoff will either end in real give-and-take negotiations or terrible escalation; and for every means we have to escalate, the enemy can match us, and that applies to invasion of the North, the use of nuclear weapons, or the mere commitment of one hundred, or two hundred, or three hundred thousand more American troops to the battle. And with each escalation, the world comes closer to the brink of cosmic disaster.

To say that we are closer to victory today is to believe, in the face of the evidence, the optimists who have been wrong in the past. To suggest we are on the edge of defeat is to yield to unreasonable pessimism. To say that we are mired in stalemate seems the only realistic, yet unsatisfactory, conclusion. On the off chance that military and political analysts are right, in the next few months we must test the enemy's intentions, in case this is indeed his last big gasp before negotiations. But it is increasingly clear to this reporter that the only rational way out then will be to negotiate, not as victors, but as an honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy and did the best they could.

This is Walter Cronkite. Good night.

Source: Peter B. Levy (editor) *America in the Sixties--Right, Left, and Center A Documentary History* (Westport (Connecticut) 1998), p 165

© 1968, CBS news

<http://nam-vet.net/cronkite.htm> features the actual audio of Cronkite's broadcast, as well as a transcript.

Exploring the Evidence

1. What future does Cronkite see for the American forces in Vietnam?
2. What is the optimistic view of the future of the war, and why does Cronkite reject it?
3. What solution does Cronkite offer?
4. Cronkite hints at a worst-case scenario: what is this, and how would it develop?
5. What negative effects of the war does Cronkite mention in his conclusion? What does he omit?
6. Can Cronkite be described as an impartial reporter?
7. 'Cronkite was it': Johnson claimed that this appearance by Cronkite lost him any hope of re-election. Is this plausible?

Document 10

President [Lyndon B. Johnson's](#) Address to the Nation, announcing Steps To Limit the War in Vietnam and Reporting His Decision Not To Seek Reelection, March 31, 1968

Good evening, my fellow Americans:

Tonight I want to speak to you of peace in Vietnam and Southeast Asia.

No other question so preoccupies our people. No other dream so absorbs the 250 million human beings who live in that part of the world. No other goal motivates American policy in Southeast Asia.

For years, representatives of our Government and others have traveled the world--seeking to find a basis for peace talks.

Since last September, they have carried the offer that I made public at San Antonio. That offer was this:

That the United States would stop its bombardment of [North Vietnam](#) when that would lead promptly to productive discussions--and that we would assume that North Vietnam would not take military advantage of our restraint.

[Hanoi](#) denounced this offer, both privately and publicly. Even while the search for peace was going on, North Vietnam rushed their preparations for a savage assault on the people, the government, and the allies of South Vietnam.

Their attack--during the Tet holidays--failed to achieve its principal objectives.

It did not collapse the elected government of [South Vietnam](#) or shatter its army--as the Communists had hoped.

It did not produce a "general uprising" among the people of the cities as they had predicted.

The Communists were unable to maintain control of any of the more than 30 cities that they attacked. And they took very heavy casualties.

But they did compel the South Vietnamese and their allies to move certain forces from the countryside into the cities.

They caused widespread disruption and suffering. Their attacks, and the battles that followed, made refugees of half a million human beings.

The Communists may renew their attack any day.

They are, it appears, trying to make 1968 the year of decision in South Vietnam--the year that brings, if not final victory or defeat, at least a turning point in the struggle.

This much is clear:

If they do mount another round of heavy attacks, they will not succeed in destroying the fighting power of South Vietnam and its allies.

But tragically, this is also clear: Many men--on both sides of the struggle--will be lost. A nation that has already suffered 20 years of warfare will suffer once again. Armies on both sides will take new casualties. And the war will go on.

There is no need for this to be so.

There is no need to delay the talks that could bring an end to this long and this bloody war.

Tonight, I renew the offer I made last August--to stop the bombardment of North Vietnam.

We ask that talks begin promptly, that they be serious talks on the substance of peace. We assume that during those talks Hanoi will not take advantage of our restraint.

We are prepared to move immediately toward peace through negotiations.

So, tonight, in the hope that this action will lead to early talks, I am taking the first step to deescalate the conflict. We are reducing--substantially reducing--the present level of hostilities.

And we are doing so unilaterally, and at once.

Tonight, I have ordered our aircraft and our naval vessels to make no attacks on North

Vietnam, except in the area north of the demilitarized zone where the continuing enemy buildup directly threatens allied forward positions and where the movements of their troops and supplies are clearly related to that threat.

...

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: Presidential Library, Lyndon B. Johnson.

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Exploring the Evidence

1. Why, according to Johnson, can the Tet Offensive be described as a failure?
2. What action in Vietnam is Johnson announcing?
3. How does Johnson explain his decision to step down as President?
4. What does Johnson present as his main reason for deescalating the conflict?
5. Have the conditions for stopping the bombardment presented at San Antonio been met?
6. Compare Johnson's discussion of a peace settlement in this document with the hopes expressed in Document 2
7. To what extent can this speech be seen as an answer to Cronkite's presentation of the war (Document 9)?

Document 11

Letters from soldiers serving in Vietnam

Rodney Baldra wrote this letter to the Berkeley (California) Gazette. He had been in Vietnam for 42 days.

10 September '67

David,

... Here in Vietnam the war goes on. Morale is very high in spite of the fact that most men think the war is being run incorrectly. One of the staggering facts is that most men here believe we will not win the war. And yet they stick their necks out every day and carry on with their assigned tasks as if they were fighting for the continental security of the United States. Hard to believe but true.

The [Marines](#) are taking a fierce beating over here. They don't have enough men. We must have more men, at least twice as many, or we are going to get the piss kicked out of us this winter when the rains come. The Marines have been assigned a task too big for so few. We are fighting for our very lives in the north. In the last 15 weeks we've lost 47 % of all helicopters in Vietnam. One of the basic problems is that [\[President\] Johnson](#) is trying to fight this war the way he fights his domestic wars - he chooses an almost unattainable goal with a scope so large it is virtually undefinable, and he attacks this goal with poorly allocated funds, minimum manpower, limited time, and few new ideas. The magnitude of what he is trying to accomplish here can only be realized when you firmly establish in your own mind that Johnson is trying to take 5,000 villages living on a rice economy with a 2,000-year-old Asian tradition of chieftain rule warped by 100 years of ugly colonialism and build a nation with an industrial base and a democratic tradition in the midst of a 20-year-old war.

We should have never committed ourselves to this goal, but now that we have, what should we do? We must destroy the will of [Hanoi](#) quickly and stop doling out American lives in that penny-ante [low-investment] effort. Then reallocate our resources of money and material and, with two or three times the present manpower, crush the [guerrillas](#).

And how can we adopt this approach? By electing a president who will restate our objectives, restate our motives, and who will end this ill-thought-out approach to world peace; a man who rejects a status-quo world, who has the long view of history and nation-making, who does not overreact to the label communism, who can establish priorities whether they be at home or abroad, who can understand that a [Ho Chi Minh](#) Vietnam is better than a Vietnam of old men and women without the dedication and vision of its young men, and finally a man who will be content to influence history rather than make it...

Desmond Barry, Jr., served in Vietnam from March 1968 to April 1969.
3 April 68

Dear Mom and Dad,

Well, your eldest is now a combat leader. So far I haven't even fired a shot, nor have I been under any sort of fire. Our company is currently involved in an operation to prevent the local rice harvest from falling into [VC](#) hands. Our tactic is to remain in a company base during the day, since it is too hot for any long, arduous movement. At night each platoon sends out two or three squad-size ambush patrols.

Two days ago we went on a heliborne combat assault. Our mission was to cordon a village that was suspected of having a platoon of VC hidden in it. It was an extremely well-executed mission. We were airlifted out of our defensive position and then were dropped in around the village about 15 miles south. Once we were in position, a group of Vietnamese [Popular Forces](#) moved in through our lines searching the village. It was an all-day operation that netted one VC killed, six captured and three weapons captured. It is in operations like this that we hurt the VC most. As you know, the local VC are terribly underequipped. So when we capture two or three weapons, we put 10 or 15 enemy out of commission, at least for a while. At the end of the day we were again helilifted back to our company base. It was basically a simple school problem, but for me, since it was really the first operation I had been on, it was quite exciting.

The first night I spent in the field an ambush patrol from the first platoon had three men wounded when they set off a booby-trap grenade. This morning, the second platoon took 14 casualties, including one killed, when they set off two mines while on a road-clearing mission. So far, my platoon, the 3rd, hasn't had any trouble, but these booby traps are so well hidden that no matter how good you are, they'll get you....

I heard Johnson's speech on [AFVN](#) Radio last night and think it to be the best one of his career. I am heartened by his bombing reduction and pray, as does everyone else here, that [Hanoi](#) will respond. What do you make of it? Also, how about his not running for president? I was beginning to think that the only way for this war to end was to have Johnson reelected in November.

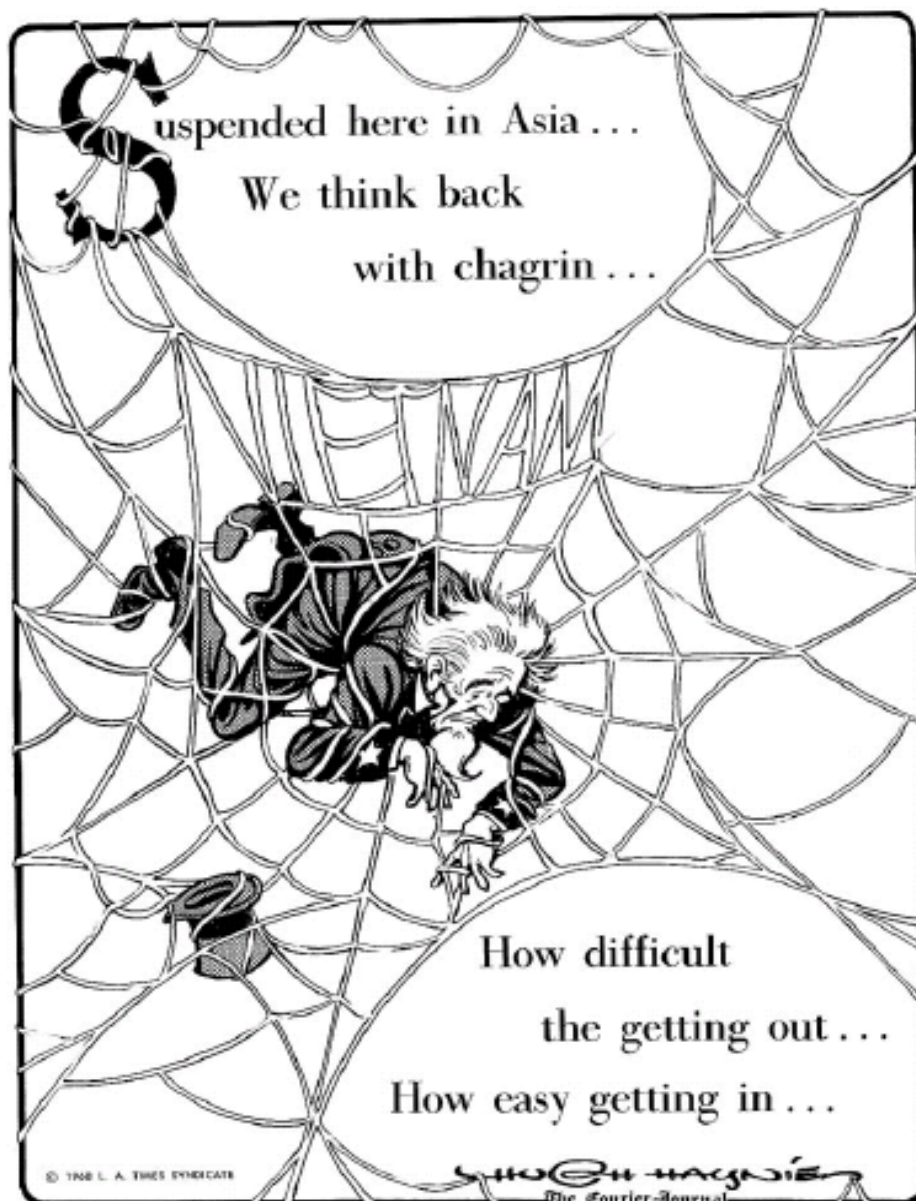
Things aren't all bad - I've got a really good company commander and a good platoon sergeant. In my job these are the most important people in the world to me. Also on the bright side, I'm getting the best suntan I've ever had.

Source: Bernard Edelman, editor, *Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam* (New York, 1985), pp 47-8
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Exploring the Evidence

1. According to Baldrige, what is wrong with Johnson's strategy?
2. What solution does Baldrige suggest?
3. What is Barry's view of Johnson?
4. How can one account for the differences in morale seen in these two letters?
5. To what extent are the differences in these two letters explained by the fact that one is a private letter home, and the other was written for publication in a newspaper?
6. Shortly after Johnson was replaced by Nixon as President, reports of atrocities such as 'My Lai' began to be published. What evidence is there in these letters of possible triggers for such events?
7. There are a number of compilations of soldiers' letters to friends and relatives. How would letters have been acquired for publication, and how useful would you expect them to be as historical sources?

Document 12 “Suspended here in
Asia ...” (1968)



Source: *Courier-Journal* [Louisville, Kentucky] 27 February 1968;

Cartoonist: Hugh Haynie.

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1. Who is the figure represented here, and what does he represent?
2. Why is the word ‘Vietnam’ featured as part of the web in this image?
3. What is the rhyme saying about US involvement in Vietnam?
4. How effective do you think this cartoon is in communicating its message?
5. How useful to historians are cartoons such as this as a means of interpreting the past?
6. How does the portrayal of America in this cartoon compare with Walter Cronkite’s conclusion about America’s achievements in the Vietnam conflict, as featured in Document 10?
7. In your view, how apt is this cartoon in depicting Lyndon Johnson’s role in Vietnam between 1963 and 1968?
8. In what circumstances did the US finally withdraw from Vietnam in 1973?