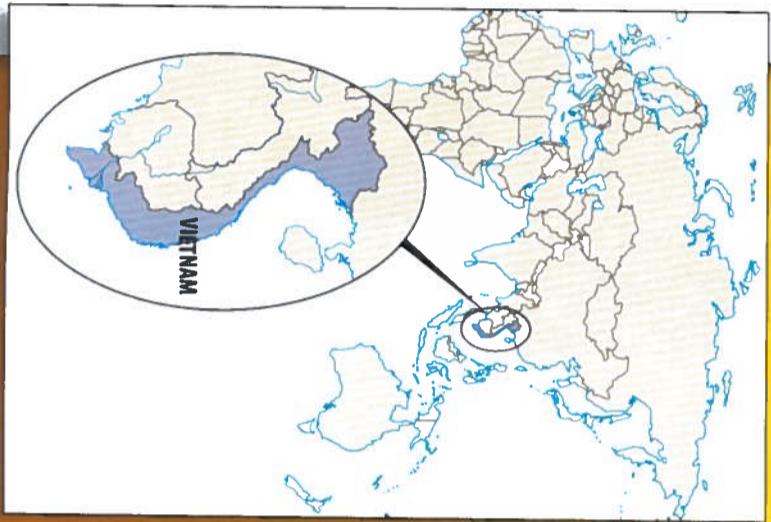
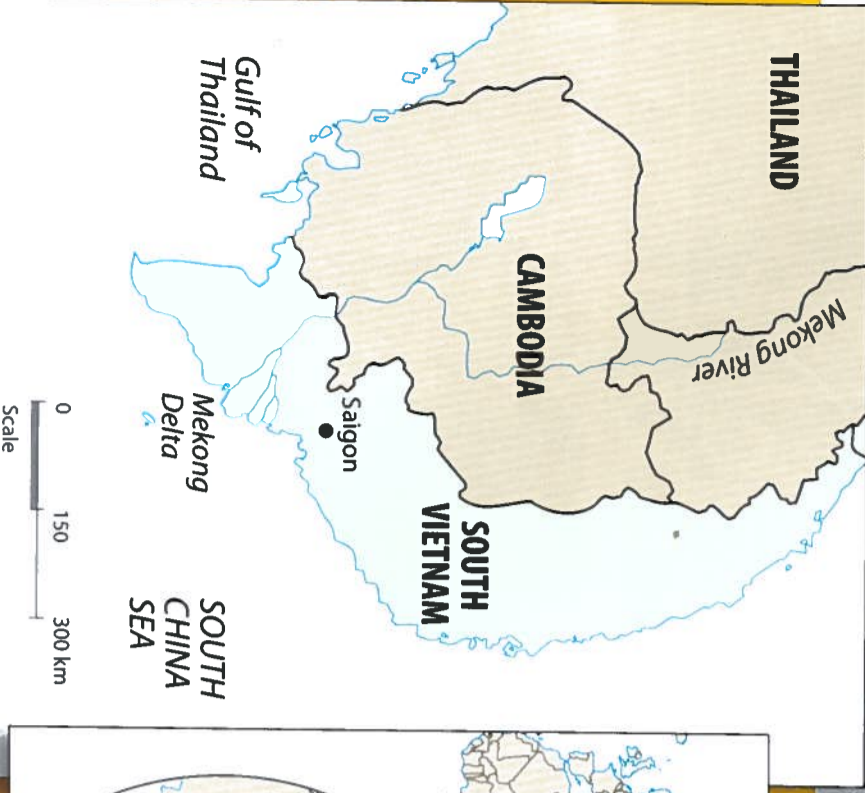
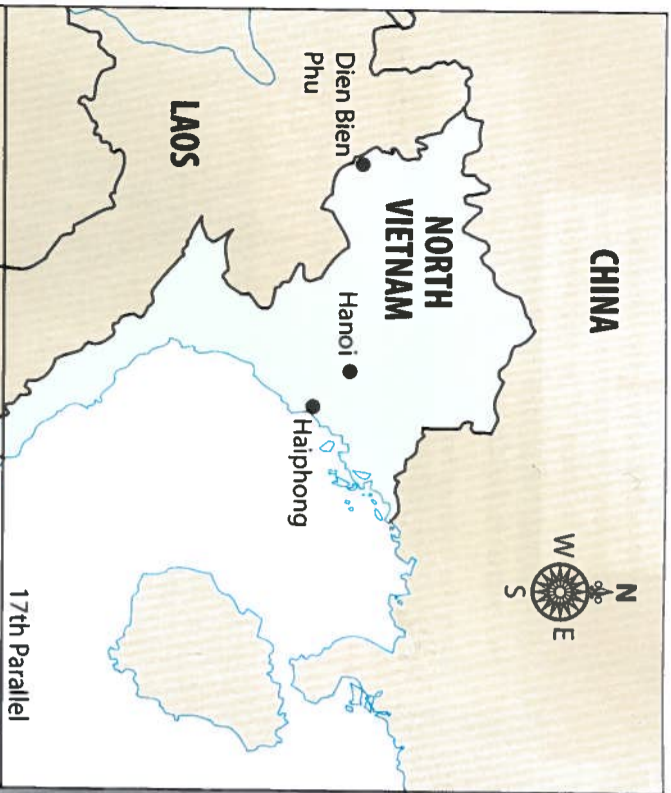


The Vietnam War: Impact on Canadian–American Relations



WORDS TO KNOW

- flashpoint
- partition
- neutrality
- deserters
- ordnance
- hegemony
- influence peddlers

1. Think/Pair/Share: On your own, think about the question: What do you believe the Canadian government's position should be with regard to international conflicts? Pair: Discuss this question with a neighbour. Share: As a class, discuss your opinions.
2. Sending military personnel is one way to help resolve an armed conflict. With a partner, brainstorm other ways in which a country or its citizens can help in a conflict without sending troops.

BEFORE READING

Evidence 6.40

In 1963, Lester Pearson and the Liberals won the federal election, replacing John Diefenbaker and the Conservatives. One of Pearson's first goals was to try to restore the good relationship Canada had with the United States before Diefenbaker's administration. It soon became evident that repairing the damage would be challenging. Domestically, the issue of US domination of Canada's culture and economy re-emerged. Internationally, the growing involvement of the United States in the Vietnam War became a flashpoint in Canadian–American relations.

Background

After the Second World War, France attempted to regain its hold over its colonies of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam in Indochina. It had little difficulty establishing control in Laos and Cambodia, but met strong resistance from the communist party in the north part of Vietnam. In 1954, after nearly a decade of struggle, the French suffered a major defeat at Dien Bien Phu in northwestern Vietnam. An international conference in Geneva agreed that the Vietnam fighting should be concluded by a ceasefire between France and the communist forces in North Vietnam. France agreed to withdraw from its former Indochinese colonies.

In the agreement, Vietnam was divided into two parts at the 17th parallel, with a communist party in charge in the North and an anti-communist party in charge in the South. The partition was meant to be temporary until free elections could be held to reunite North and South. Elections were never held.

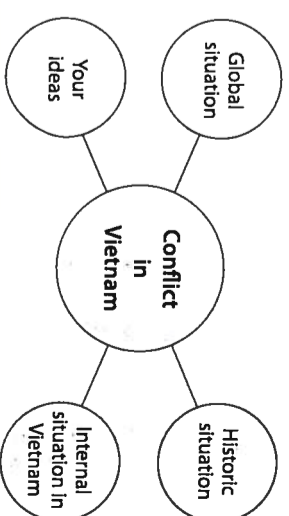
In the 1950s and 1960s, Western countries were afraid of growing communist strength around the world. Leaders of many countries believed in what was called the “domino theory”: once one country in a region fell to communism, all neighbouring countries were in danger of falling as well. This belief was a major reason for US involvement in Vietnam.

By the early 1960s, the United States was actively propping up the South Vietnamese regime, whose capital was Saigon, in its struggle against the South Vietnamese communist forces (the National Liberation Front for South Vietnam), who were supported by the North Vietnamese government in Hanoi. US assistance at first took the form of economic aid and provision of military advisers. However, by 1964, an increasing number of American combat troops were being sent to fight in South Vietnam. In February 1965, US President Lyndon Johnson initiated large-scale bombing of North Vietnam. By 1968, there were almost 500 000 US troops in South Vietnam. As the United States increased its support of the South, China and the Soviet Union sent more supplies to the North.

1. As you examine the evidence in Section Four, consider Canada's position on the conflict in Southeast Asia and the options its government had, given its close economic and political ties with the United States. To keep track of your ideas, construct an Impact Organizer like the one below and record key points in each column.

	Official government policy	Secret or unstated government policy/attitude	Private enterprise (business, industry)	Public opinion
Evidence collected from sources				
Motivations for policy				
Short-term consequences				
Long-term consequences				
Your reactions				
Conclusions about Canada–US relations				

2. As you read the background (left) on the Vietnam conflict, organize your ideas using an ideas map like the one here to show all the background events that had an impact on the conflict. Be sure to connect sub-ideas.



The Canadian Government and the Vietnam War

The Canadian Government and the Vietnam War

Evidence 6.41

How would such “non-neutrality” affect Canadian–American relations? Other countries’ opinions of Canadian government policy? Be sure to add this information to the organizer you created at the start of Section Four.

Gerald Clark, associate editor of the *Montreal Star*, wrote

... They [Canadian ICG members] are passing on [to the US] their first-hand observations of North Viet Nam of the effectiveness of US bombing attacks and on other matters of military significance. A harsher way of putting it is that they are functioning as spies when they are supposed to be serving as international civil servants.

DURING READING

1. Describe Canada's original role in the Vietnamese conflict.
2. How might such a role become difficult, given Canada's relationship with the United States? (Consider such factors as military, geographic, and economic ties, as well as views on the Cold War and other issues.)
3. Why might the Canadian government feel torn between its loyalty to its American ally and its commitment to the International Control Commission? Considering the world situation in 1965, what approach might the Canadian government have taken?

What does the inset map suggest about the strategic importance of Vietnam to the United States and other countries in the West?