ERNEST GRUENING, WAYNE MORSE AND THE SENATE DEBATE OVER UNITED STATES PARTICIPATION IN VIETNAM 1965-1969 AND ITS AFFECT ON U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

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On 2 August 1964, while patrolling in the Gulf of Tonkin, the U.S.S. Maddox was attacked by the North Vietnamese Navy. Then on 4 August both the U.S.S. Maddox and the U.S.S. C. Turner Joy were also allegedly attacked. These events were used by President Johnson to secure authority from the United States Senate, by a vote of 88-2, to take actions he deemed necessary to protect United States military personnel, national security interests, and United States allies. In this thesis, the Gulf of Tonkin incidents will be summarized and the ensuing Senate debates analyzed with a specific focus on the dissenting position of Senators Ernest Gruening (Democrat-Alaska) and Wayne Morse (Democrat-Oregon), the only members of Congress to vote against the resolution. There has been much written about the Gulf of Tonkin incident and the Congressional debate; however, there has been little focus on the continued arguments of these two senators from 1964-1968. This continuing debate over Vietnam deeply divided the Senate into three main groups who each held distinct opinions on the support they should give Johnson in relation to the issue. One group compromised of Hawks believed that the president should be given full support in taking whatever action he deemed necessary, even if it led to war. A strong response after all would discourage other enemies from attacking the United States. A second group believed that the president needed to be supported at this time, especially since the United States had been attacked. They also held the view that the United States foreign policy needed to be re-evaluated once the conflict was resolved. How far could the United States extend itself before it became spread too thin and thus ineffective? The third group did not believe that the United States should be involved in Vietnam at all. While the
Senate finally ruled to support the president's request for the resolution and continued to fund the war once it had become Americanized, it was those who opposed the resolution and were overruled who made the most valid argument.
Dedication

This work is dedicated to a very special man in my life. My father Reverend Alvin Beggs. I am the first member of my immediate family to attain a degree beyond the high school level. When I made the announcement in the spring of 1982 that I desired the go to college to prepare for the ministry my father was ecstatic. The entire time I was in school my father sacrificed his own desires to see that I had insurance and gasoline for my car. He also made sure that I had any textbook that I needed as well as making sure that I had spending money in my pocket. Pop, as I call him, also made a few trips to see the business manager of the college and worked out deals to keep me in school. Beyond providing for me materially, my father gave me the precious gift of his unconditional love and support. On many occasions my dad would say to me “I believe in you, you can make it.” Pop also reminded me many times that he loved me and he was proud of me for who I was, not what I was able to achieve. If it had not been for my father I would not have been able to pursue a bachelor’s degree nor would I have had the opportunity to work toward obtaining a history degree from Bowling Green State University. I am now 40 years old and my Pop still whispers in my ear, "You can do it, son". I love you, pop, and dedicate this work to you.
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Although this particular project has not been as involved as either a dissertation or a book, for me personally it has been an enormous undertaking that I would not have been able to complete on my own. Therefore I wish to express my gratitude to the many people who have assisted me as I worked on this project. I first want to express my thanks to Dr. Gary Hess who has both inspired me to be the best historian I can be and who served as the chairman of my thesis committee. I also want to thank Dr. Walter Grunden who challenged me (and continues to challenge me) to become the best writer that I possibly could become and who made Asian studies both enlightening and enjoyable. In addition to these gentlemen I would like to extend my thanks to Carol Singer, historical research librarian, at the Jerome library on the campus of Bowling Green State University. She has been invaluable as we searched the stacks and the internet for needed material. Tina Amos and Dee Dee Wentland the secretaries of the history department have provided much encouragement and support. I really have appreciated them and look forward to working with them in the future. Finally, I want to thank my wonderful family; my wife, Susan, and my children, Brent and Brigette Ann. They have all sacrificed time with me as I spent many hours reading over Congressional records and other relevant material. Susan read every page of my thesis and served as both proof reader and critic. I owe them all so much.
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INTRODUCTION

Beginning almost immediately after the conclusion of World War II, the Cold War held
the United States and the Soviet Union in its grip. This Cold War was not a literal battle, but was
a tension that existed between the two countries which developed into an intense competition
because each country believed the goal of the other was to consume and take over the other
country. During 1950-60, the civil war taking place in Vietnam became a pawn of the Cold War
because the United States did not want to see Communism, hence the Soviet Union and China,
advanced through the acquisition of Vietnam and subsequently all of Southeast Asia. At the
same time, the United States did not want to provoke the Communist forces of either the Soviet
Union or China into starting a hot war.

On the home front, Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy were concerned about American
sentiment regarding Vietnam because of the earlier loss of China to Communism. Many
Americans, especially conservative Republicans, believed that this loss had occurred because of
President Truman’s apathy in responding to China’s displaced president, Chiang Kai-Shek’s,
plea for military assistance. As a result America became involved in Vietnam by providing
economic aid first to the French and then to the South Vietnamese government. Eventually
becoming more deeply involved, the United States provided the South Vietnamese with military
advisors. All this was done to prevent the spread of Communism into South Vietnam and the
rest of Southeast Asia.

American presidents from Eisenhower through Johnson, as well as their administrations,
were never able to grasp that what was taking place in Vietnam was a revolution and not the
beginning of Communist expansion throughout Southeast Asia. The Viet Minh and the North
Vietnamese were fighting for their freedom and independence. Since early in the first century
the Vietnamese people had been subjected to sporadic periods of colonialism. In the nineteenth
and twentieth centuries, they had come under the heavy hand of Western Imperialism. Ho Chi
Minh, the leader of the Vietnamese Communists, and those who followed him were determined
not to become puppets of the Communists, as the Americans feared. They wanted to rule their
country and would fight to the death in order to have that opportunity. Although the United
States claimed that all countries should have the right of self determination and that
decolonization should take place around the world, it did not seem to be interested in
decolonization for Vietnam. The desire of America to keep the Soviet Union in check and hold
on to Vietnam led to armed conflict between the Americans and the Viet Cong and North
Vietnamese.

The Vietnam War became substantially Americanized when President Johnson presented
misleading information to Congress implying that while in the Gulf of Tonkin, the United States
Navy had been attacked by the North Vietnamese without provocation. Upon receiving this
information, Congress overwhelmingly approved the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution authorizing the
president to use force in order to protect the United States military and any member or protocol
country of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization. This resolution would be used by Johnson to
escalate American involvement into full scale war. The vast majority of the print media
supported the position taken by the government while other print media chose to question the
Gulf of Tonkin incident and the government’s subsequent reaction to it.

This thesis will summarize the Gulf of Tonkin incidents and analyze the ensuing
Congressional debate, focusing on the dissenting position of Senators Ernest Gruening
(Democrat-Alaska) and Wayne Morse (Democrat-Oregon), the only members of Congress to
to vote against the resolution. Throughout this thesis it will also be argued that the position of these
two senators was the correct one. Gruening and Morse opposed the resolution for the following reasons. First, they believed the actions of the United States provoked the attack that occurred in the Gulf of Tonkin. These senators argued that if the United States had not been present and had not been giving assistance to the South Vietnamese Navy, particularly on the night of 1 August, 1964 when Ho Me was attacked, the altercation would have never occurred. Going further, they indicated that they believed the attack by the North Vietnamese was made in self defense.

Second, in their minds the attack was not a premeditated act of war as members of the United States armed forces believed, but rather, a spontaneous action. The North Vietnamese were not seeking to discredit the United States in the world community, to defeat United States or to become engaged in a war with United States. Third, both Gruening and Morse believed that the damage inflicted on the North Vietnamese Navy, during the actual attacks, was sufficient. After all, if the reports filed by the United States Navy were correct, two North Vietnamese PT boats had been disabled and at least three sunk while the United States vessels had sustained only one hole which was created by a 14.5 mm gun. Fourth, Gruening and Morse believed that what was taking place in Vietnam was a civil war which had to be resolved by the Vietnamese themselves. Vietnamese people from both the North and the South were fighting for the country to be unified under Communist rule. They were also fighting to rid themselves of colonial rulers, in this case the Americans, and to have the right of self rule. The South Vietnamese government was fighting to retain its power and to keep the country divided. There were no outside forces besides the United States seeking to impose their will upon the Vietnamese people. Therefore, Gruening and Morse argued that what was taking place in Vietnam was an internal matter that needed to be taken care of by the Vietnamese people themselves. Fifth, Gruening and Morse believed that United States involvement in Vietnam went against the principle of self
determination. According to this principle, which was a concept dear to the heart of many American leaders, the Vietnamese should have the right to determine how they would be governed, even if the United States did not like their choice. Sixth, Gruening and Morse argued that by taking military action in Vietnam, the United States was going against the Geneva Armistice and agreements. In 1954 the major powers United Nations had helped bring about an end to the hostilities between the French and the Viet Minh through the establishment of a peace agreement that divided the country at the seventeenth parallel for two years. During that time the North and South Vietnamese governments would each control their respective areas. In 1956 reunification elections were to be held. Knowing that the Communist leader, Ho Chi Minh, would win the elections, the United States disregarded the in order to support Ngo Dien Diem who refused to conform to the edicts of the treaty. Gruening and Morse argued that if the United States allowed the treaty to stand there would have been no conflict in Vietnam. Finally, they believed that proper procedures had not been followed for getting the United States involved in Vietnam. America was at war, but Congress, the body responsible for declaring war, had not made that declaration. Gruening and Morse believed that Johnson could not rely on a resolution to wage war, but rather, he needed to get a declaration to wage war.

Gruening’s and Morse’s opposition to what was taking place in Vietnam was not initially embraced by many of their colleagues in the Senate or by many American citizens. However, as they continued to speak out against the Vietnam War and as the war continued to drag on, their views came to be embraced by other members of the Senate and American citizens. Anti-war groups consisting of college students, distressed parents and concerned Americans formed and migrated toward Gruening and Morse. It is interesting to note that in spite of their age, Gruening and Morse were able to relate to the college crowd. This may have occurred because they
lobbied to keep young Americans from being sent overseas to die. The relationship may have blossomed because they called for the draft to be ended, which would keep young Americans from being sent overseas. Ultimately, they may have been a favorite with college students because they called for peace which was seemingly important to this group during the mid and late sixties. Gruening and Morse were popular with the distressed parents because they were seeking to bring an end to the war. It is possible that these parents rallied to Gruening and Morse because they believed that these two politicians genuinely cared about the things that bothered them and were taking action to address their concerns. The distressed parents would also rally to these men because they were working to bring the troops, their children, home. Parents who already lost children in the war would rally around them because they did not want to see anybody else experience the pain they had endured. Gruening and Morse may have related to the average American citizen who was against the war because of their argument that innocent Vietnamese people and American soldiers were needlessly dying, and that peace needed to be achieved. Whatever the reason, both Gruening and Morse became heavily involved with various peace groups and spoke at peace rallies that were held across the country. Gruening in particular became a favorite of many rally organizers, and as a result was asked to speak often.

Another platform for Gruening and Morse was the print media. Each man wrote anti-war articles that appeared in either local newspapers or in the national periodicals. By contributing articles Gruening and Morse could reach an even larger audience than they could when speaking at peace rallies; as a result, this would strengthen support for their position. Had Gruening and Morse not voiced their dissent, the Senate may have still turned against the war in Vietnam and these groups may have still formed. However, because of their dissent the subject remained
before the Senate almost daily, which forced the senators to think about the war in Vietnam. In addition, it served as both an encouragement and a rallying point for the anti-war demonstrators.

Since the cease fire much has been written about the Vietnam War. These scholarly works have dealt with the causes of the Vietnam War of which Stanley Karnow’s work, *Vietnam: A History*, is a good example. Many works have focused on military tactics, maneuvers and the battles that took place during the war. David Kaiser’s book, *American Tragedy*, would be one such example of this genre. There have been several works written on the social and political impact of the Vietnam War on both the United States and Vietnam. George Herring’s *America’s Longest War* and Gary Hess’ *Vietnam and the United States: The Origins and Legacy of War*, are good illustrations of this material. Scholarly works have been written about the Gulf of Tonkin incident, of which Edwin Moise’s book, *The Gulf of Tonkin and the Escalation of the Vietnam War*, is certainly the most outstanding. Many books have been written that deal with the Congressional debate over American involvement in Vietnam. In this category would be a book edited by Randall Woods entitled *The Politics of Dissent*. However, there has been little focus on the continuity of the argumentation used by Senators Gruening and Morse from 1964-1968, which will be the primary focus of this study. This continuing debate over Vietnam that was sparked by Gruening and Morse deeply divided both the Senate and the country. In this thesis it will be demonstrated that even though the Senate did rule to support the president’s request for the resolution and it continued to fund the war once it had been Americanized, it was Gruening and Morse who opposed the resolution and were overruled who made the most valid argument about the situation. It is this seldom mentioned topic, in the broader range of Vietnam War research, to which this study will be devoted.
BACKGROUND TO 1964 CRISIS

The American crisis in Vietnam beginning with the Gulf of Tonkin incident of August 1964 reflected the two major trends of the post-World War II international relations: the Cold War and decolonization. Vietnam, as part of French Indo-China since the late nineteenth century, had become by the 1950’s an important issue in the rivalry between the United States and the major communist powers.

From 1882 until 1940, Indo-China was France’s richest and most important colonial possession providing the French with coal, gold, rice and rubber. In 1940 France lost this profitable asset due to the crushing defeats that it experienced during World War II. The first defeat came in June of 1940 when the Germans forced an armistice on France after having overwhelmed the French army. This loss diminished France’s ability to defend their colonial possession and depleted their military resources.

The second defeat came when the Japanese occupied French Indo-China; Japan wanted to possess Indo-China for its natural resources, manual labor and its strategic position. Initially the Japanese did not formally take Indo-China from the French, but rather left the French administration in place to run the country. The French colonial regime thus collaborated with Japan, just as the Vichy government collaborated with Germany. The French colonial regime, however, was merely a puppet of the Japanese military. While occupying Indo-China, the Japanese took an abundance of the country’s rice supply while leaving very little for the Vietnamese. This not only left many

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Vietnamese hungry but it also accentuated Vietnamese nationalism. Japanese suppression of the French also brought hope to the Vietnamese people. Like the defeat of the Russians by the Japanese in 1905, this defeat proved that Asians could defeat white European colonial rulers. Prior to these events the Asians felt that they were inferior to and incapable of driving off white, colonial rulers.\(^5\) When the Japanese surrendered at the conclusion of World War II, the Vietnamese people were poised to push out any country that tried to suppress them and to take control of their own affairs.\(^6\)

“Once France was liberated in 1944, its new government, under the leadership of Charles de Gaulle, sought to reassert France as a major power, which included its retention of empire.”\(^7\) In the minds of the French leaders, re-access to the rich natural resources contained in Vietnam could help their country stabilize and strengthen its economic position after the devastation experienced by the war. Reassertion of power in Vietnam could also help the French regain a sense of dignity after it was humiliated by both the Germans and the Japanese during World War II.

French plans were not met with overwhelming support from all allies. Franklin Delano Roosevelt in particular had concerns about France returning to Indo-China. Roosevelt believed that France had lost its status as a great power and had left Indo-China in a worse condition than it had been prior to their occupation.\(^8\) Unlike Rudyard Kipling, Roosevelt did not completely support the notion of the “white man’s burden” but rather believed that each nation should be given the opportunity for self rule.\(^9\) In the Philippines the United States had worked to foster an environment where the Filipino

\(^6\) Ibid. 18.
\(^7\) Ibid. 29.
\(^8\) Karnow, 136.
\(^9\) Woods, 35.
people could take over the governance of their own country and Roosevelt believed that the same thing should happen in Vietnam. If France were to follow this course of action, “allowing for the establishment of an international trusteeship to be convened, with the purpose of overseeing Vietnam being brought to the point that the Vietnamese people could run their own country, then Roosevelt was agreeable with allowing the French to re-enter Indo-China.”

French leaders warned the United States that trying to stop France from reasserting control in Vietnam would “alienate the French people, strengthen the Communist party in France and quite conceivably drive the French into the arms of the Soviets.”

Ho Chi Minh, the leader of the Vietnamese Communist party who had given the United States assistance during World War II when the Japanese occupied Vietnam, asked the United States to stop France from coming back as colonial rulers.

The Vietnamese trusteeship idea died with Roosevelt. Afterward, because “Vietnam was a distant and seemingly unimportant country and France was a major partner to the United States in the new world order that emerged from World War II, United States leaders” from Truman to Johnson made the decision to support France.

Opposite of Roosevelt was Winston Churchill and the British who supported the return of the French to Indo-China. British support seemed to be tied to their desire to retain their own colonial interests in India as well as other places. Subsequently, in 1946 Britain returned the southern portion of Vietnam to French control while China, who also supported France at this time, returned the northern part of the country to the

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11 Ibid. 28.
14 Cohen, 149ff.
French. This support from Britain and China propelled the French back into Vietnam and allowed them the opportunity to re-establish their colonial presence.

Reassertion of French rule in Vietnam met with resistance from the Viet Minh. This group, seeking to follow the direction established by Ho Chi Minh, made the determination to never again be a colonial possession. Although this group did have Communist leadership; it was more of a resistance movement fighting against the oppression of colonial rule rather than anything else.

The Vietnamese people had been dominated for significant periods of time. In 111 BCE (Before Common Era) China’s Han dynasty invaded Vietnam and organized Chinese provinces. It was not until 939 CE (Common Era) that the people of Indo Vietnam were able to establish an independent state. In 1075-1077 CE the Vietnamese people had to defend themselves from an invasion of the Song (Sung) dynasty. During the thirteenth century the Vietnamese people again had to defend themselves, this time from the Mongols who attacked them on three separate occasions. Even when not under the direct control of an outside force, Vietnam had been attacked by countries intending to make it their possession. In 1407 China’s Ming dynasty occupied Vietnam and retained control until its expulsion in 1428. Vietnam became the target of both missionaries and traders from 1614 until the French claimed it as a territorial possession in 1850. There were times when Vietnam was not under the control of a colonial power, however, the country did not enjoy any lasting peace nor was it free to practice self determination. Under colonial rule the Vietnamese had received little financial benefit

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17 Ibid. 340ff.
18 http://www.askasia.org/image/maps/t000005.htm
which left many of them poor, bitter and desirous of their freedom.\textsuperscript{19} In order to help the Vietnamese people obtain their freedom, Ho Chi Minh sought to foster a sense of patriotism, primarily among the peasants, that would give them motivation, strength and courage to stand up to superior adversaries.\textsuperscript{20}

Prior to going to the Communists for help or instigating revolution on his own in Indo China, Ho Chi Minh sought assistance from the U.S. in achieving a peaceful liberation from France. His quest for United States assistance began long before WWII when he approached Allied leaders after World War I. Woodrow Wilson had unknowingly given Ho Chi Minh hope that the United States would be of assistance to the Vietnam by his promise of “self determination of all peoples”. The essence of Wilson’s message, in his fourteen point peace proposal, was that all peoples and nations should be given the opportunity to determine how they would be governed.\textsuperscript{21} Regardless of his rhetoric, Wilson and other Allied leaders did not respond to Ho Chi Minh’s plea for help. Unwilling to give up, in 1944 Ho Chi Minh again appealed to a United States president for help in bringing colonial rule to an end in Vietnam. Although Roosevelt held some reservations about the French retaining control of Vietnam, he took no action to keep it from taking place. Harry Truman, Roosevelt’s successor, followed the pattern established by his predecessors and did nothing to help the Vietnamese obtain their freedom.

When the Viet Minh took control after Japan’s defeat in Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam’s independence, which in turn led to the eruption of a colonial war that

\textsuperscript{19} Karnow, 117-118.
\textsuperscript{20} Hess, \textit{Vietnam and the United States}, 17.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid. 15-16.
lasted from 1946 until 1954 when the French were defeated at Dien Bien Phu.\textsuperscript{22} Ho Chi Minh’s strategy in waging this war was comprised of three components. First he encouraged insurgents to use hit-and-run tactics against the French. This would be done either by individuals or small groups, who would make surprise attacks on French citizens or forces, inflict damage or causalities and then disappear into the countryside. After this guerrilla warfare damaged the resolve of French citizens and the French military had been weakened by the surprise attacks, the Vietnamese forces would use larger groups and a more coordinated effort to further weaken the French. Like the first group, these forces would suddenly appear, attack, and then retreat into the countryside before they could be fully engaged in battle. Once this had been accomplished, the Vietnamese would revert to large scale, conventional battle.\textsuperscript{23} Regardless of how the Viet Minh chose to attack the French, Ho Chi Minh believed that because of their nationalistic fervor, his forces could afford a bloody war, unlike the French, and that the French would eventually give up and go home.\textsuperscript{24}

The war between the colonial French power and the Viet Minh forced the French to spend half of their military budget, 500 million dollars a year, to hold onto their colonial possession; Ho Chi Minh had predicted that outcome when speaking to a French reporter early in the war.\textsuperscript{25} In 1950 the Chinese, along with the Russians, formally recognized Ho Chi Minh’s regime and supplied his military with finances and military goods in an effort to counteract the French.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{22} Woods, Fulbright: A Biography, 340ff.
\textsuperscript{23} Karnow, 182.
\textsuperscript{24} Cohen, 149ff.
\textsuperscript{25} Karnow, 176.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid. 193.
Although the French tried to maintain their hold on Vietnam, they were unsuccessful. French leaders were unable to find a Vietnamese leader who could combat Ho Chi Minh and rally the people to support French colonial rule. Bao Dai, put in place by the French to rally and govern the people, was not respected because he had first bowed down to the French, then to the Japanese, and then to the French once more. He was looked upon with distain because the Vietnamese people did not believe that he had their interests at heart. This opinion of Bao Dai, along with the gains in military strength and supplies received from China, helped Ho Chi Minh’s forces defeat the French at Dien Bien Phu. The loss at Dien Bien Phu was not a crushing military defeat; however, it dealt a serious blow to the general morale of the French, led to the governmental structure put in place at the Geneva Convention which brought a cease fire, separated the country at the seventeenth parallel, called for a general election to take place in 1956, and led to France’s withdrawal from Vietnam.\(^\text{27}\)

After World War II United States leaders became concerned about Vietnam due to the surging power of the Soviet Communists. Ho Chi Minh tried to alleviate the concern over his Communist propensity by indicating that he was not going to be a puppet of Moscow and that his objective was the independence of Vietnam. The United States determined however, that this was not a nationalist revolution, but rather the aggressive act of the Communists to take Vietnam and gain a foot hold in Southeast Asia. American leaders felt they could not let this happen for several reasons. The psychological impact of the fall of Vietnam was one of the primary reasons. According to State Department officials in 1951, “the fall of Vietnam would be taken as a sign that the force of Communism is irresistible and would lead to an attitude of defeatism in

\(^{27}\)Ibid. 194ff.
Southeast Asia.”

Rich natural resources located in the area were another concern because once these raw materials were in the hands of the Communists, other Asian countries such as Japan would have to depend on the Communists and would then be susceptible to becoming Communist themselves. Once the Communists had fully acquired Vietnam, they would set their sights on the other countries of Asia and, like dominoes, each country would fall in succession to Communism.

In the minds of Presidents Truman and Eisenhower and other United States leaders, Vietnam was now a critical location requiring United States support of the French to maintain colonial rule. In 1950 the United States recognized the French supported States of Vietnam and began military assistance to the French.

The United States continued to provide support up to the time of the French defeat. Regardless of his concern over the potential fall of Vietnam and his concern over the accusations that could be made by conservatives that, like Truman, he had lost an Asian country to the Communists, Eisenhower would not permit the use of air power to save the French at Dien Bien Phu. He feared that United States troops would also be required. “Eisenhower believed that the jungles of Vietnam would swallow up division after division of United States troops, who, unaccustomed to this type of warfare, would sustain heavy causalities without any success.” In addition, involvement in Vietnam was not “compatible with the over-all strategic priorities” of the United States and the United States could not reach an agreement with the French regarding what role they

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30 Ibid. 361.
32 Ibid. 358ff.
33 Ambrose, 359ff.
would play if they became involved in Vietnam. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles also believed that Congressional and British support were essential, but he found that Congressional leaders opposed intervention and the British did not accept United States’ assessments of Vietnam’s importance. Hence, Eisenhower determined to limit United States support in Indo China, or Vietnam as it was also known, which served as an encouragement for the agreements reached at Geneva. The “temporary division” made it possible for a South Vietnamese government to be developed in 1954. “At the conclusion of the conference the participants were asked to give their “oral assent” to the final declaration; France, Britain, the Soviet Union, China and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam did so, however, the United States and the State of South Vietnam refused.”

Although it was determined at Geneva that the United States would remain neutral in Vietnam, and a shaky verbal agreement was made by the United States in this regard, the level of commitment extended to South Vietnam by the United States would change under the Kennedy administration as it became more certain in the minds of United States leaders that the Communists would take over Vietnam if the United States did not intervene.

When John F. Kennedy assumed the office of President, there were several major crises brewing in both the United States and the international community: the struggle for Berlin, the Cuban conflict, the Laos situation, and the insurgency that was taking place in Vietnam. These international crises, coupled with the past crisis of the Communist take over of China, were believed by Kennedy and his advisors to have the ability to greatly impact the stature of the United States in the international community and to open the

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United States to Communist oppression and even domination if they were not handled in an appropriate manner.\(^\text{36}\) Because of this perception, Kennedy and his advisors believed these particular crises deserved significant attention and needed to be handled in such a way that the result would strengthen the United States. Kennedy and his advisors were not successful in handling all of the initial crises they inherited and thus felt it was imperative to achieve success in at least one of the crises that continued to escalate during Kennedy’s term in office.

China’s embrace of Communism was a problem for Kennedy and his administration because many Americans, especially conservative Republicans, believed that Democratic president Harry S. Truman had let down an ally, thus making the United States directly responsible for China becoming Communist.\(^\text{37}\) Kennedy and his advisors were concerned that the Republicans blamed the Democrats for giving Communism an opportunity for global expansion. While locked in a bitter revolutionary war with the Chinese Communists led by Mao Tse-Tung, Chiang Kai-shek, leader of the Chinese Nationalists, asked the United States for assistance but received little, making it impossible for him to retain power in China.\(^\text{38}\) Members of the Republican Party believed that had Chiang been given enough financial assistance and supplied with armaments by the United States, he might have been able to maintain his hold on the country.\(^\text{39}\) While most observers and scholars shared the rationale of the Truman administration that Chiang was responsible for his own failure and that United States aid


\(^{37}\) Ibid. 206ff.

\(^{38}\) Stanley Karnow, 171.

\(^{39}\) Sorensen, 585.
could not have saved his regime, the episode made Democrats especially determined not to be seen as weak in the area of national security.

In the struggle for Berlin, Nikita Khrushchev, the Russian Premier, delivered the Soviet Union’s “Berlin Ultimatum” to Eisenhower on 27 November 1958. This ultimatum demanded that the western allies remove their troops from West Berlin and that West Berlin become a free city within six months.40 On 17 February 1959 Khrushchev went a step further and threatened to settle a separate peace treaty with the German Democratic Republic.41 Doing this would make it theoretically impossible for the western allies to remain in West Berlin or Germany, thus opening up the possibility for the Communists to completely take over Germany. During a meeting between Kennedy and Khrushchev on 3-4 June 1961, the threat to negotiate a separate treaty with the German Democratic Republic was again vocalized.42 Khrushchev’s continued threats in relation to Germany, coupled with his speech advocating “wars of national liberation” helped convince Kennedy and his advisors that the Communist had an agenda to swallow up as much of the globe for Communism as possible.43 Therefore, Kennedy and his advisors believed that if they gave into this threat, the balance of power in Europe would shift to favor the Soviets and it would only be a matter of time before other European countries came under Communist control, thus allowing the Soviets to obtain their goal.44 Kennedy believed that a Communist success in Europe would facilitate Communist infiltration into other nations and continents.

40 John Lewis Gaddis, 58ff.
42 Gaddis, 196,208,217,228,249.
43 Warren I. Cohen, 154
44 Ibid. 154ff.
In Cuba, Fidel Castro’s ascendency to power and his open association with Communism and with the Soviet Union created both concern and a dilemma for Kennedy and his advisors. The concern involved Cuba’s close proximity of just sixty miles off of the southern coast of Florida, which brought Communism within military striking distance of the United States. In addition, the Communist presence in Cuba brought Communism close to other North American countries. There was fear that this close proximity could give the Communists the opportunity to infiltrate these countries and bring them under Communist domination. This concern led to a dilemma for the United States in trying to overtly overthrow Castro without creating problems for the United States within the world community. Seeking to overthrow Castro’s regime by training and equipping Cuban exiles backfired on Kennedy in the Bay of Pigs fiasco, making the United States look weak because it had covertly assisted the Cuban rebels but was unable to help them defeat Castro’s forces. The incident also made the United States look like a bully seeking to impose its will on the smaller nation. As with China, Cuba’s association with the Communists was not only perceived as an addition to the Communist empire but also as a tipping of the balance of power toward the Communists.

The Laotian situation was another dilemma for Kennedy and his administration. It was caused by various political groups who were brought together to comprise the Laotian government and the political unrest that existed among these various groups. Although the United States believed that the Communists would topple the neutralist government of Prince Souvanna Phouma, it was a right wing military leader who brought

45 Cohen, 130-131.
46 Freedman, 129ff.
47 Ibid. 129ff.
down the Phouma regime. Thus the dilemma in Laos was somewhat complicated and involved conflict between the neutralist Souvanna Phouma, right wing Laotian general Phoumi Nosavan who had displaced the neutralist government of Prince Souvanna Phouma, and the Communist Pathet Lao. The North Vietnamese were helping to supply the Laotian Communists in their fight with the right wing government and were also coming south through Laos on what came to be known as the Ho Chi Minh trail, in order to supply insurgents in South Vietnam. Phoumi, with the help of the Central Intelligence Agency, C.I.A., took over the Laotian government from Prince Souvanna Phouma, the Prime Minister in 1959.49 The takeover partly occurred because Souvanna had incorporated a coalition of Laotian Communists into his army and government.50 There was fear on the part of United States leaders that this Communist contingent would take over.51 Hence, the United States encouraged and supported Phoumi.52 Phoumi did not oppress and abuse the Laotian people, yet he was unable to gain or maintain solid control in Laos. This was because of the opposition of the Pathet Lao, the Laotian Communist movement, who had a substantial following among the people.53 Continued political unrest and a coup attempt in 1960 opened up the possibility for the return of Souvanna to a position of joint power with Phoumi.54 When Souvanna’s attempt to merge and form a government with Phoumi failed, he turned to his half-brother, Prince Souphannouvong, who was involved with the Pathet Lao, looking for help in getting himself re-established in Laotian governmental leadership. This re-energized the concerns of the United States

49 Freedman, 294.
51 Ibid. 68ff.
52 Freedman, 294.
53 Sorensen, 640-642.
54 Ibid. 639-648.
who wanted to keep Souvanna out of leadership so the Communist party would not have easy access to gaining power and control in Laos. As a result of the United States position, Souvanna indicated that he would distance himself from his brother and the Pathet Lao; however, Phoumi, who was ready to seize complete power, rallied the Laotian Royal Army to his cause and took the capital of Vientiane. Once the capital was taken the Western governments quickly recognized Phoumi as the official leader of Laos. At the same time, Souvanna fled the country while still claiming that he was the rightful leader of Laos. The fact that Souvanna still had some influence and control in Laos led China, the Soviet Union and India to recognize his government as the official government of Laos. The inability of Phoumi and Souvanna to completely over throw each other led to a continued civil war and kept Laos from becoming stable.

Simultaneously the North Vietnamese Communists were using the political chaos taking place in Laos to their advantage by channeling supplies to the Pathet Lao in an attempt to propel them to uncontested power in Laos. They were also smuggling military supplies to the insurgents in South Vietnam by coming through Laotian territory during a time when they knew they would not be stopped and would thus be able to avoid contact with peace keepers located in Vietnam’s demilitarized zone.

North Vietnam’s behavior, coupled with the political instability in Laos, concerned Kennedy and his advisors who had been warned by Eisenhower, prior to taking office, of the importance of backing Phoumi and keeping Laos from being governed by the Communists. Kennedy wanted the political situation stabilized, the

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55 Freedman, 294.
56 Ibid. 294.
57 Sorensen, 639ff.
58 Freedman, 294ff.
Communists kept from completely dominating the Laotian government, and the North Vietnamese stopped from sending supplies to and through Laos. Realizing that Phoumi’s position was weak created a willingness among Kennedy and his advisors to negotiate with the Laotian Communist party, thus bringing a combination of Communist and pro-Western leaders together to run Laos. Once in place, it was hoped that this stabilized government would put an end to the North Vietnamese smuggling supplies to the Laotian Communists. The cessation of smuggling through Laos would also aid the South Vietnamese government, which had been the target of insurgents who had been using the smuggled contraband to wage their war. Willingness on the part of Kennedy to compromise did help facilitate a solution to the political dilemma; however, Laos remained a precarious government.

When Kennedy came to office in 1961 the crisis in Vietnam had been developing for over ten years. Vietnam took on special relevance in the context of Khrushchev’s call for “wars of national liberation” and in the sense that the United States was losing ground in the third world which grew out of the French loss of Indo China. After an unsuccessful war against the Communist led Viet Minh, the French made the determination to negotiate an armistice and pull out of Vietnam. In 1954, at the Geneva conference, it was determined that for two years the country would be separated at the seventeenth parallel. Ho Chi Minh and the Communists would run the northern half of the country while the remnants of the French regime, led by Boa Dai and subsequently

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60 Sorensen, 639ff.
Ngo Dinh Diem would retain control of the southern part of the country.\textsuperscript{62} At the end of two years, in 1956, general elections were to be held in Vietnam and the country reunified under the leadership of one individual. The fact that Ho Chi Minh and the Communists would agree to such terms was very interesting considering they had held the French at bay and held military control of the battlefield, but the major Communist powers insisted on this compromise and Ho realized that he would win the 1956 elections.\textsuperscript{63} As it came close to time for the general elections of 1956 to be held, Diem took actions to thwart them and declared that he would not relinquish his position as the President of South Vietnam. He did this because he realized that Ho Chi Minh was far more popular than he and that he would lose a general election to Ho Chi Minh.\textsuperscript{64} His action was supported by the United States; however, it greatly angered Ho Chi Minh and the Vietnamese people who longed for national sovereignty and independence. This ultimately led to the outbreak of civil war, with the Communist Viet Cong opposing Diem.

There were several reasons for Diem’s political problems and lack of support in South Vietnam. A primary reason was his poor relationship with the peasants. After Diem overthrew Bao Dai and took complete control of the South Vietnamese government, he rescinded land reforms that had been put in place by Ho Chi Minh and the Communist party south of the seventeenth parallel.\textsuperscript{65} Taking what little land that had been given to the peasants and returning it to the wealthy landlords who would exploit the peasants not only made the lives of the peasants difficult again, it also filled them

\textsuperscript{62} Freedman, 305.
\textsuperscript{64} Kolko, 84.
\textsuperscript{65} Hess, \textit{Vietnam and the United States}, 63.
with disdain toward Diem. Diem was unable to maintain control in South Vietnam because of this lack of contact with the peasants, his aloofness from them when he was in their presence, his strong support for the Catholic Church, his oppression of the Buddhists, especially the monks, his blind support for corrupt family members and personal friends he placed in governmental leadership positions, and his unwillingness or inability to implement needed reforms in his government. Starting in 1956, Ho Chi Minh’s followers, taking the name Viet Cong, began insurgent activities in South Vietnam which would escalate into all out war. By the early 1960’s, the Viet Cong was gaining strength and the Diem regime was under increased military and political pressure.

Actions taken by Kennedy and his advisors in Vietnam clearly demonstrate that it was in this small, Southeast Asian country they chose to put a stop to the spread of Communism. Kennedy and his advisors cited both publicly and privately numerous reasons for the United States’ need to maintain at least a minimal level of military commitment in Vietnam. A primary reason given for United States involvement was known as the “Domino Theory.” President Eisenhower used this phrase to graphically describe what would happen to all of Southeast Asia if Vietnam fell to Communism. Kennedy played on Eisenhower’s word picture by reminding the American public that, as dominoes will topple in succession when the first one is pushed over, all of Southeast Asia would fall in succession to Communism once Vietnam became Communist. An illustration used to prove this point was Japan. After World War II Japan, under American influence, had become dependent on Southeast Asia for much needed raw

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66 Ibid. 63.
68 Karnow, 43ff.
69 Freedman, 376.
materials. If Vietnam became Communist, then either the United States would need to ship the needed raw materials to Japan, which would be very costly, or Japan would have to look to Communist Vietnam to obtain them.

Another rationale used by Kennedy and his advisors for giving aid to South Vietnam involved the South East Asian Treaty Organization, or SEATO. SEATO had been formed in 1954 by the United States, Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Pakistan, and the Philippines. The purpose of this organization was to provide a guarantee against external aggression, especially for South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. In the case of an attack by a hostile force the SEATO signatories were to join together and come to the defense of the Southeast Asian country under attack. Because of involvement in SEATO, the United States had a responsibility to provide assistance to South Vietnam because it was being attacked by a hostile force. It was argued by Kennedy’s advisors that if the United States did not honor its commitment here, the other members of SEATO would not trust any commitment made by the United States. Therefore, the United States had to give assistance to South Vietnam in order to protect America’s integrity.

Perception of allies toward the United States was another rationale used by Kennedy and his advisors for justifying United States commitment in Vietnam. Prior to Kennedy’s term in office Eisenhower had committed the United State to help the South Vietnamese. In this instance Kennedy and his advisors argued that the United States had to assist the South Vietnamese because a United States president had given his word that South Vietnam would be given help. If the United States pulled out, United States allies

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70 Freedman, 294ff, 311.
71 Karnow, 219.
would never trust a commitment made by the United States. Additionally, if the United States withheld assistance from South Vietnam, the United States would look both weak and afraid of the Communists. This would cause allies to either develop doubts about the United States or to become alienated from the United States. Tarnishing the United States’ reputation in this manner was seen as unacceptable by Kennedy and his advisors.

One final consideration of Kennedy and his advisors dealt with his re-election bid. They believed that if South Vietnam were allowed to fall to Communism, which they felt would happen if the United States did not provide assistance, then Kennedy’s ability to win the presidency in 1964 would be greatly hindered.\textsuperscript{72} Hence, in order to keep his re-election chances high, maintain a strong United States reputation in the world community, and ensure a positive American self-attitude, Kennedy decided to substantially increase assistance to Diem and South Vietnam.

Kennedy’s options for helping Diem and the South Vietnamese were basically twofold. The first option was political. Kennedy could either require Diem to make needed changes to his government so the people of South Vietnam would rally to his leadership, helping him stabilize the country, or the United States could replace him altogether. Throughout 1962 there were many talks between Kennedy and his advisors pertaining to this option. Attempts were made to force Diem to make necessary changes by threatening to withhold needed military supplies, advisors and finances until he conformed. Unfortunately this did not work. Diem may not have believed the United States would truly cease their support, or he may have been unwilling to lose his independence and come under the control of the United States. Whatever the case, he would not yield to the threats of Kennedy and his advisors. The option of replacing Diem

\textsuperscript{72} Sorensen, 639.
was not seriously considered for a long time because United States personnel located in Vietnam did not believe there were any other South Vietnamese leaders who could do any better than Diem.\textsuperscript{73}

A second option was of a military nature. Kennedy and his advisors toyed with maintaining the minimal military commitment; however, they knew that if they chose this option, South Vietnam would be lost to the Communists. Another idea along this line was to escalate United States involvement to a small degree. They also discussed the idea of pulling out and letting whatever would happen take place. Because of the ramifications this would have on United States allies and the psyche of the American people, pulling out was not given serious consideration. One other military consideration involved the United States completely taking over the war effort from the South Vietnamese. Even though this option may have been tempting for Kennedy’s military advisors, it was not a realistic option early on because of the ramifications and the turmoil that it could cause for the United States\textsuperscript{74}

Of the options available, it appeared as though Kennedy and his advisors would maintain the minimal military commitment, which totaled forty two million dollars in loans and supplies by 1961. However, in 1962 he increased the number of United States military advisors in Vietnam to over nine thousand men.\textsuperscript{75} They would also allow the United States military advisors to become progressively involved in covert military operations. This involvement would set the United States up for an even deeper commitment in Vietnam, which from the beginning, would not be endorsed by all

\textsuperscript{73} Freedman, 306ff.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid. 306ff.
\textsuperscript{75} Robert David Johnson, \textit{Ernest Gruening and the American Dissenting Tradition} (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 236-238.
members of the United States Senate. At least two senators, Wayne Morse (Democrat-Oregon) and Ernest Gruening (Democrat-Alaska) had concerns over United States involvement in Vietnam and would argue vehemently against United States intervention in Vietnam throughout the duration of the war.
THE DISSENTERS: ERNEST GRUENING AND WAYNE MORSE

As United States involvement continued to escalate in Vietnam, the vast majority of both Democrat and Republican politicians supported the war effort. This support was manifest in Senate votes granting appropriations for the military budget. These additional funds, given over and above the fiscal military budget, were meant to help the South Vietnamese government pay their military personnel and buy needed military supplies as well as to cover unexpected United States military costs incurred in the fighting in Vietnam.\(^1\) The high point of Congressional support came in August of 1964 when the United States House of Representatives voted unanimously and the United States Senate voted eighty eight to two in support of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. By voting to support this resolution, the legislative branch gave President Lyndon Johnson the authority to openly wage war against the North Vietnamese. Continued involvement in Vietnam led many questions to surface among senators, primarily about the legitimacy and viability of the United States military action taking place in that Southeast Asian country. In turn, these questions led many senators to have doubts about the truthfulness of what they had been told by both the president and military leaders regarding the over-all military situation in Vietnam. It would take approximately three years from the time the Tonkin Gulf Resolution passed, before the questioning and doubts would escalate to the point where a majority of senators would be willing to repeal the resolution and presumably remove the ability of the president to wage war in Vietnam.

The two senators who voted against this resolution and who were vehemently against United States involvement in Vietnam from the very beginning were Ernest

Gruening (Democrat-Alaska) and Wayne Morse (Democrat-Oregon). Both of these senators spoke openly on the Senate floor seeking to sway their colleagues to take a stand against United States actions in Vietnam. They both wrote articles expressing their concern about United States involvement in Vietnam. Gruening’s writing appeared primarily in periodicals, such as the liberal journal, The Nation, denouncing United States involvement in the Vietnam War. In addition, they spoke to various citizens’ groups who sponsored rallies and protests against the Vietnam War. Gruening’s and Morse’s efforts were an attempt to motivate United States citizens to assist them in their campaign to bring United States military personnel home and end United States involvement in Vietnam. Despite their best efforts, the United States commitment in Vietnam heightened as the United States assumed principle responsibility for protecting South Vietnam from the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese. This came to be known as Americanization of the war.

Thirty years after the end of the Vietnam War, when looking back at the various events and key personnel, history seems to vindicate these two senators and points to the fact that they were right in their assertions about the Vietnam War. Consideration of their accurate assessment about the war in Vietnam and their dogged persistence in seeking to remove the United States from Southeast Asia leads to several key questions about these two senators. Who were these obstinate senators? Why were they so opposed to the war? Did their stance on Vietnam affect their fellow senators? What was the outcome for them as a result of holding and promoting their anti war position?

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Ernest Gruening will be examined first. Gruening was born and raised in New York along with his four sisters Rose, from his father Emil’s first marriage, Clara, Marie and Martha from Emil’s second marriage to Phebe. His father was Jewish and his mother was of the Christian faith. Regardless of the theological difference that existed between Ernest’s parents, the Gruening children were raised in the Christian faith, having the moral values of honesty and integrity instilled in them at a very early age.\(^3\) Being a well trained and highly educated doctor, Ernest’s father was able to establish a successful medical practice and was thus in a position to provide well for his family. Growing up in an upper middle class family afforded Ernest the opportunity to attend private schools where he excelled academically. In the fall of 1903, at the age of 16, he entered Harvard University and by 1907 had earned a Bachelor of Science degree.\(^4\) That fall Gruening entered Harvard Medical School and obtained his medical degree by 1912.\(^5\) While working on his medical degree Gruening developed an interest and passion for journalism. Once graduated from medical school, he never practiced medicine but rather became a journalist.\(^6\) During his career as a journalist Gruening worked for the Boston American, Boston Herald, Boston Evening Herald, Boston Journal, the Boston Traveler, and the New York Morning Sun.\(^7\)

During World War I while Gruening worked for the New York Morning Sun, he was offered the opportunity to help organize the Bureau of Imports of the War Trade Board. This was the beginning of Gruening’s career in government service, which with

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\(^3\) Ibid. 1.
\(^5\) Johnson, 10-12.
\(^6\) Naske, 3ff.
\(^7\) Ibid. 3ff.
little interruption, would span fifty years. After the Bureau of Imports was well organized and running smoothly, Gruening was offered a commission with the Sanitary Corps. The offer had been extended to him due to his medical knowledge and skills. Preferring combat, Gruening opted instead to voluntarily attend a newly formed field artillery officers’ camp located near Louisville, Kentucky. Gruening’s involvement with the United States military was interrupted when he was offered the position of managing editor of the New York Tribune. Moving from the Tribune, Gruening became the business manager for La Prensa, a Spanish-language daily in New York, and then on to The Nation as managing editor When serving as editor for The Nation Gruening further developed an interest in Latin America and in December of 1922 resigned his position and traveled to Mexico. During his time in Mexico he met many political leaders, government officials, businessmen, writers, reporters and peasants. His experiences there inspired him to write a book on Latin America. As he worked on his book he once again spent time as the managing editor for various publicans, including The Nation. It was while serving as editing manager from 1927 forward that Gruening became increasingly involved in political issues. This included his conflict with Samuel E. Insull, American Public Utilities Financier, over the measure introduced in the “legislature giving power companies the right of unlimited eminent domain to string power lines.” Gruening did not believe that the power companies had the right to take land from people or to get it for free from the government. This compelled him to write negative editorials

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8 Ibid. 3ff.
9 Ibid. 3ff.
11 Johnson, p. 45ff, 208ff.
12 Ibid. 71, 180.
about the power bill. He also lobbied for the United States government to discontinue its
intervention in Latin American countries.

Shortly after Franklin D. Roosevelt assumed office as president on March 4th, 1933, Gruening began visiting the nation’s capital on a regular basis to check on the new administration’s progress and write editorials for The Nation. It was at this time that F.D.R. took notice of Gruening and called him to his office in the White House for a visit. After both men shared superficial pleasantries with one another, Roosevelt got to the point and asked Gruening’s opinion of the political unrest and subsequent events taking place in Cuba. Roosevelt was seeking Gruening’s counsel on this matter because he had been told by Felix Frankfurter, a Supreme Court justice, that Gruening had become quite educated about Cuba. Gruening’s knowledge of Cuba came as a direct result of his study of Mexico and various other Latin American countries including Haiti, Santo Domingo, Nicaragua and Cuba. Because of Gruening’s continued studies of the Latin American countries and his extensive insight into their culture and values, F.D.R. had Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, offer Gruening the directorship of the office of Territories and Island Possessions. Gruening’s responsibilities included oversight of Alaska, Hawaii, the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. Out of these four areas Gruening had spent only one day in Puerto Rico at a training conference and no time in any of the other locations. As a direct result he felt inadequate to do the assignment given him by F.D.R. but was determined to give his best effort.

13 Naske, 8ff.
14 Johnson, 100ff.
15 Ibid. 13ff.
16 Ibid. 13ff.
17 Ibid. 13ff.
Tension between Gruening and Harold Ickes began shortly after Gruening assumed his position, however, and it escalated beyond the point of reconciliation when Gruening informed F.D.R that he did not have the authority to adequately deal with Puerto Rico’s economic and reconstruction problems. Made aware of this fact, F.D.R. increased Gruening’s power by giving him sole control of the Puerto Rican Reconstruction Administration which empowered Gruening to have ultimate authority in both financial and political decisions directly effecting Puerto Rico. Ickes was unhappy with F.D.R’s decision, and Gruening in particular, for many reasons. The most significant reason was Ickes’ belief that Gruening sought to gain more power for himself and that he had gone around Ickes to obtain it. Ickes was the Secretary of the Interior and as a result he should have been the one to determine the appointment of a position such as head of the Puerto Rican Reconstruction Administration.

Ickes looked for reasons to have Gruening removed from his position. In November 1936 Ickes was finally able to convince F.D.R. to relieve Gruening of his duties in Puerto Rico because the economic situation had deteriorated even further under Gruening’s leadership. Greuning did, however, retain his position as director of Islands and Territories. Still not satisfied, Ickes sent Gruening a memo in June of 1937 demanding his resignation from the directorship of that office. When Gruening did not response to Ickes’ demand, Ickes informed Gruening that he would be relieved of his duties if he did not resign. This was a hollow threat because Ickes did not have the authority to relieve Gruening. Ickes never would be able to have Gruening removed from employment with the federal government. F.D.R., who for some reason liked Gruening,

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18 Gruening, 180ff.
19 Ibid. 180ff.
20 Naske, 11-15.
indicated to Ickes that he would be willing to send Gruening to Alaska as a territorial governor. Although not pleased with this option, Ickes accepted it because he came to the conclusion that F.D.R. was not going to fire Gruening. Thus on September 2nd, 1939, Gruening was officially appointed as territorial governor of Alaska.

Gruening was not positively received by the people of Alaska when he first arrived in office. Like the territorial governors from the past twenty five years, Gruening was an outsider. He was not born in Alaska nor had he lived there prior to serving as governor. Because of the efforts of Gruening on behalf of the Alaskans, their attitude toward him would change over time. Some of these efforts included strengthening the economic base of Alaska, enhancing Alaska’s educational system, pursuit of federal help in developing highways, airports and defense systems against outside aggressors, and ultimately in gaining statehood for Alaska.

Alaska’s economic development was not easy for Gruening to handle because he had to contend with wealthy, powerful fishing, lumber and mining companies in order to enhance Alaska’s economic base. These companies, whose headquarters were located for the most part in Seattle, Washington, were harvesting large quantities of fish off Alaska’s coast, taking lumber from Alaska’s rich forest land and mining valuable minerals while paying minimal taxes to Alaska. Additionally, no portion of the profits made from these enterprises was reinvested in Alaska. Gruening saw many financial needs in Alaska that he believed could be taken care of if only these companies were required to pay their fair share of state taxes. When Gruening initially suggested to the

21 Naske, 11-15.
22 Gruening, 382ff.
23 Gruening, 382ff.
24 Naske, 26, 55, 79.
territorial legislature that increased taxes be levied against these businesses, he met stiff resistance. Lobbyists for the companies launched campaigns to scare the native Alaskans, telling them that if taxes were raised the companies would pull out of Alaska and they would lose their jobs. In addition to the lobbyists there were members of the territorial legislature who had financial interests in the various companies. Finally, after many battles, Gruening was able to get tax laws passed in 1949 that increased these companies’ taxes.

Once the tax revenue was raised Gruening was able to take actions to enhance the public education system in Alaska. Because the budget had been limited for so long there were several elementary and secondary school buildings in need of repair. There was also a need to build additional buildings and give the teachers pay increases. Inability to pay teachers well hindered Alaska’s ability to draw new teachers and had created a short fall in the Alaskan school system. Gruening not only targeted K-12th grade, he also sought to give needed financial help to the University of Alaska. Like the primary and secondary school system, the university had buildings that needed to be repaired. The university also needed to erect new buildings, develop new programs, and give pay increases to teachers who were being grossly underpaid. A majority of these needs were met as a result of the tax levy fought for and won by Gruening.

Prior to winning the tax levy battle and extending well beyond it, Gruening fought the federal government over maintaining and bolstering Alaska’s defenses against enemy invasions. During the pre-World War II tensions in Asia, Gruening became concerned

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26 Ibid. 114-116.
27 Ibid. 115ff.
28 Ibid. 115ff.
that if the United States were drawn into war North American would be invaded through Alaska. His concern was based in part on the fact that Alaska had a very small home guard. Lack of ability to quickly transport troops from one part of Alaska to another or from the continental United States to Alaska if an attack took place was another concern for Gruening. After Pearl Harbor the federal government began extending the help the governor had been calling for and established a strong military position in Alaska.

Arguably, the greatest contribution that Gruening made to the people of Alaska was helping their territory became a state. Accomplishing this was not easy for Gruening. He spent many hours battling not only federal officials who did not want the federal government becoming responsible for Alaska, but also members of Alaska’s legislature who did not want the federal government to become involved in the affairs of Alaska. This statehood achievement allowed the Alaskans to enjoy all of the benefits provided by the federal government just as the other states of the union enjoyed. These benefits included the development and maintenance of United States highways, federal dollars for education, and representation in the decision making process of the federal government. Alaskan’s rewarded Gruening’s hard work by electing him to be one of their first senators and would re-elect him to a second term four years later. While serving in the Senate, Gruening would deal with many issues affecting the state of Alaska and the United States, but the most significant issue involved the Vietnam War.

When considering the upbringing and training of Ernest Gruening it should come as no surprise that he was adamantly against American participation in the Vietnam War. Having been brought up in a religious home, Gruening would have certainly had values, morals and ethics deeply instilled into him. These traits would have created within him a

29 Gruening, 422ff.
respect for human life, the desire to see humans prosper and not hurt, a sense of right and wrong, a passion to be honest, a desire to treat others the way that he would want to be treated, a desire to help those who did not necessarily deserve to be helped and, most definitely, a disdain for murder or killing for any reason. Gruening’s medical training bears testimony to the respect that he placed on human life and the difficulty he would have with ending someone’s life.

This being the case, for Gruening the war in Vietnam was immoral because innocent people who were not a threat to the United States were being killed by the American military. In his mind this was simply murder. Gruening’s medical training would have instilled in him a passion to do every thing possible to save lives, not take them, as he believed was happening in Vietnam. Before engaging in war he felt America needed to investigate options and exhaust every avenue in an attempt to see what might be done to bring a peaceful solution to the problem. An honest assessment of what would happen in Southeast Asia if it fell to Communism and the impact that it would have on the United States was an important first step according to Gruening. If it were determined that Communist domination would be detrimental to the national security interests of the United States, then options to protect America would need to be explored. This did not mean that war was the only or best solution; other options would need to be developed and given a chance before military action was taken. Gruening did not believe that the United States had followed this procedure and had not examined all of the possibilities. This would lead him to advocate, as he had from 1964 onward, that the United States should not be in Vietnam because it had not sought better alternatives for
handling the situation in Vietnam. All of this led him to oppose the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and openly oppose continued American involvement in Vietnam.

Wayne Morse will be examined next. Wayne Morse was born and raised on a farm in the state of Wisconsin. Wayne’s father, Wilber, graduated from high school and spent the remainder of his days on a farm in Wisconsin planting crops and raising livestock. Jesse White Morse, Wayne’s mother, attended Downer College in Milwaukee before becoming an eighteen year old bride. Wayne had two brothers, Grant and Harry, both of whom would remain and work on the farm for the remainder of their lives. While growing up Wayne learned to argue and participate in lively debate. Concern that her boys be intellectually stimulated as much as possible led Jesse Morse to initiate conversations on deep topics each night as the family gathered for dinner. During these conversations, the Morse boys were not expected to simply soak in everything Jesse would say to them, but rather challenge her point of view and argue with her if they disagreed with what she was propagating. It was during these meal times that the young Wayne learned to challenge what he was being told and to argue his case. This ingrained characteristic would be a trait that would follow Morse throughout his career in both the field of education and in the Senate.

Jesse encouraged her sons to attend college. Her strong desire in this regard may have come as the result of her inability to complete her own college training. Regardless of her motive, she helped Morse gain entrance into the University of Wisconsin where he pursued courses in political science and oratory and eventually took a Master of Arts.

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31 Ibid. 85ff.
32 Ibid. 85ff.
degree in speech. After completing his work at Wisconsin, Morse attended the University of Minnesota where he worked on a law degree and then moved to Columbia University where he earned his doctorate in law. After he obtained his Jurist Doctorate he took a position at the University of Oregon where he became Dean of the Law School in 1929. Demonstrating the fiery disposition instilled in him by his mother, Morse stood up to both Jasper Kerr, who became the president of Oregon State University, and Roscoe C. Nelson, who became the head of the State Board of Higher Education. These two men wanted to merge the University of Oregon and Oregon State to make one school. Feeling this was not a good idea and that the two were not being fair or honest with the public about the state of higher education at the University of Oregon led Morse to oppose them by speaking out publicly against their proposed action. Although abrasive, Morse was an honest man who had gained a reputation with the people of Oregon as being a man of integrity. This helped him defeat the proposal and gain a following in the state of Oregon that would help him in the future.

While serving as Dean at the University of Oregon, Morse was appointed as the Pacific Coast arbitrator of Maritime Disputes by Labor Secretary Frances Perkins. In 1938, while handling one particularly difficult negotiation between the longshoremen and the steamship lines, Morse was able to bring resolve to the situation by encouraging Harry Bridges, the representative of the longshoremen, to negotiate reasonably and not demand his way on every term in the labor contract. Morse’s success in this dispute gained the attention of President Franklin D. Roosevelt who asked him to serve on the

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33 Ibid. 23.
34 Ibid. 23.
35 Drukman, p. 59.
36 Ibid. 89ff.
newly created War Labor Board. While serving in this capacity, Morse held his ground at times, especially in relation to a steel workers strike in the early 1940’s when the government threatened to freeze worker’s wages, and voted no on decisions that had to be made regarding labor negotiations, even when all of his colleagues voted yes and sought to cajole him into changing his mind.\textsuperscript{37} The position that Morse took in many of these early negotiations endeared him to organized labor and would be a catalyst propelling him into the United States Senate in 1944.

While serving as a Republican senator from Oregon, Morse took actions he believed were important but that adversely affected his political career. One such action involved his accusation that President Eisenhower had been dishonest with the American people over whether South Korea was considered to be within the United States defense perimeter. Producing a document from the Defense Department, Morse demonstrated that although Eisenhower said Korea was important, he did not plan to maintain a strong military presence in that part of Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{38} The American people had a right to know what Eisenhower was planning. His calling Eisenhower a liar did not win Morse friends within the administration, within the Republican Party or among the many American who saw Eisenhower as a hero. Another move that hurt him was the change in 1956 from affiliation with the Republican Party to his declaration of being Independent. In giving his rationale for this he stated that he could no longer support the position of the Republican Party because, in his opinion, they no longer had the interests of the common man in mind, but rather the interests of big business and the wealthy. Additionally, he believed that the Republicans were pushing an agenda to make the federal government

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid. 103-116.
\textsuperscript{38} Smith, 150ff.
too big and controlling. This hurt Morse with the Republican Party and cost him his seats on the Labor and Armed Services subcommittees. A third act that hurt him was his move from being an Independent to declaring himself a Democrat later in 1956. Morse had started out opposed to F.D.R.’s New Deal and the precepts of the Democratic Party, then he left the ranks of the Republicans and moved into the very camp that he had spoken so harshly about just a few years earlier. His opponents would use this to question if Morse really knew what he believed and if he really stood for something or just said what needed to be said to get elected. Morse’s behavior demonstrated his maverick spirit, a spirit that would be present throughout his career, especially when he dealt with issues that he disagreed with and felt very passionately about fighting. In actuality, Gruening and Morse both had this maverick spirit which came out as they struggled with United States involvement in Vietnam.

As was the case with Gruening, given Morse’s upbringing it should be no surprise that he opposed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and subsequently American involvement in Vietnam. Like Gruening, Morse had been brought up in a Christian home. During his formative years his mother had instilled in him a strong sense of values, morals and ethics. This in turn created within him a perception of what he believed to be right and wrong which were based on these principles. He operated in the realm of absolutes. Killing and murder were wrong. Treating other people with dignity and respect were of paramount importance. Turning the other check was a must as was telling the truth. It is interesting to note that Morse embraced these traits and certainly expected others to adhere to them; however, he did not always obey them himself when dealing with other people. Growing up on a farm where livestock was raised had exposed Morse to both life

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39 Smith, 179ff.
and death and had further ingrained in his mind the value of all life. An animal should never be abused nor should it be killed with out good reason. The same was certainly true, if not even more so, for human beings. Human life should be treated with the up most respected. Killing should only take place if it were absolutely necessary. In the mind of Morse, the killing that was taking place in Vietnam was not necessary. A fear of Communism led the United States to send forces to North Vietnam to eradicate the Communist. In the process many Vietnamese people were being killed. To Morse this was both immoral and senseless.

Morse had also been taught by his mother from a very early age, to never take anything at face value, to question and challenge authority when he believed it to be wrong, and too also engage those around him in debate. While in grammar school and college Morse excelled in debate. These were traits that Morse would carry with him the rest of his life. Given his background, when told by the President that the United States navy had been attacked and that the America needed to respond with force Morse reacted has he had been taught by challenging what he was being told by the president. Unlike the other senators who were willing to give the President a blank check he would not settle for accepting that the United States had been attacked unprovoked. Nor would he readily embrace the notion that the United States needed to punish the North Vietnamese. Instead, he wanted to know why the American ships had been located in the Gulf of Tonkin in the first place and what led the North Vietnamese to attack them in the manner in which they did. When he did not receive answers that satisfied him he became even more obstinate which was another characteristic instilled in him during childhood and that further developed in him as he grew older. When considering the background and
life experiences of Morse, one can see why he would oppose the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and openly oppose continued American involvement in Vietnam.

As the United States became more immersed in Vietnam, these two senators found themselves increasingly opposed to United States involvement. There were four basic reasons that they opposed the war. First, they believed the conflict taking place in Vietnam was a civil war and not an invasion from an outside source.\(^{40}\) They both stated this argument before the Senate when seeking to keep the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution from passing in August of 1964. A second reason involved a lack of belief on the part of these senators that the loss of Vietnam to Communism would be detrimental to the national security of the United States\(^{41}\) Vietnam was not located close to the United States; in fact it was thousands of miles away. To maintain global hegemony the United States did not have to do business with Vietnam or dominate that country. Because they held this opinion, these senators did not believe that one American boy should lose his life or be wounded fighting a war in Vietnam. They felt the cost was too high for the net gain that would be achieved by helping the South Vietnamese maintain control of their part of the country, if it was even possible for them to maintain a hold on South Vietnam. This argument would also be articulated by both men in front of the Senate. They did agree with the notion that Vietnam would become Communist if the North Vietnamese gained control of the entire country.\(^{42}\) These two believed that if Ho Chi Minh succeeded in reunifying Vietnam he would not serve as a puppet for the Soviets, China or any other country that sought to dominate Vietnam. They believed he would seek to establish an independent Vietnamese government that would run the country according to the cultural

\(^{40}\) Gruening, 465ff. Drukman, 405-436.

\(^{41}\) Ibid. 465ff. Drukman, 405-436.

\(^{42}\) Ibid. 465ff. Drukman, p. 405-436.
standards of the Vietnamese people. Finally, they did not embrace the domino theory. In their minds all of the countries of Southeast Asia: Laos, Cambodia and Thailand, would not fall one after another to Communism just because Vietnam had fallen to Communism.\(^{43}\) Because they held these beliefs, they did not feel the United States should be participating in the war in Vietnam and as a result sought to be an influence with top United States officials in an attempt to bring United States involvement to a conclusion.

Even when looking through the lens of time it is hard to determine exactly what effect each of these senators had on either Kennedy or Johnson and their ability to wage war in Vietnam. It is also difficult to grasp what influence these senators had on their colleagues who did eventually embrace their position. It is clear that each man, in his own unique way, sought to influence the president and his colleagues to end United States participation in the Vietnam War. Gruening sought to be an influence by giving impassioned speeches from the Senate floor imploring his colleagues to call for the removal of the United States military from Vietnam.\(^{44}\) Although his colleagues did not readily accept his position, many of them were present in the Senate chamber when he gave his speeches and they listened to what he said.\(^{45}\) One reason the senators may have been receptive to Gruening dealt with his over-all demeanor and the way that he treated his colleagues on a daily basis. Gruening’s demeanor showed him as a very intense man who exuded great passion, especially over situations that he believed important to the health and welfare of Americans.\(^{46}\) He was also an affable, friendly man who sought to make his case before the Senate without personally attacking the integrity and character

\(^{43}\) Ibid. 465ff. Drukman, p. 405-436.
\(^{44}\) Naske, 249.
\(^{45}\) Ibid. 249.
\(^{46}\) Ibid. 249ff.
of those opposed to his point of view. His sense of respect and tolerance of different view points however, did not keep him from openly challenging the ideas of others or from arguing with them over the validity of their ideas. Additionally, Gruening’s colleagues may have been willing to listen to him because he was a highly intelligent and articulate man who could state his case and make a strong argument without taking excessive time or trying to cover too many topics at one time. In spite of Gruening’s common courtesy, his diplomatic handling of others and his sharp intellect, he was unable to initially influence the Senate to vote to discontinue United States involvement in Vietnam. Gruening also sought to be an influence by speaking at peace movement rallies held in Washington and around the country. Although he was popular with these groups it is uncertain whether he was able to have any effect on either the president or Senate by merely speaking at their rallies.

Wayne Morse shared many similarities with Gruening, yet he was also very different from the Alaskan senator. One of the key similarities Morse shared with Gruening was the intensity and passion he exuded when dealing with Senate business that could have a great effect on Oregonians and the American people. Like Gruening, Morse sought to influence his colleagues through speeches given on the Senate floor and by speaking at peace movement rallies throughout the country. Although Morse was also popular with the peace groups, it is hard to tell what impact his speeches at peace rallies had on the ability of the United States to wage war in Vietnam. This is where the similarities between the two men come to an end. Morse’s approach sought to convince his colleagues by giving very long detailed speeches from the Senate floor. His approach

47 Ibid. 249ff.
48 Ibid. 249ff.
49 Smith, p. 3ff.
tended to be more like browbeating his colleagues. When he made his initial argument against United States involvement in Vietnam he spoke for over two hours saying what some observers felt could have been said in one fourth the time. Although he may have been very articulate and had a well reasoned argument, such a long speech caused Morse to lose the attention of many of the senators. Several senators left the Senate floor while he was speaking. His verbosity also diminished from the points he tried to make and hindered his ability to gain the support he desired because many of the senators did not take him seriously.

The most striking difference between the two, the difference that hindered Morse most when he sought to sway his colleagues, was the biting criticism he used against them when they opposed his ideas. Prior to the debate that took place on the Senate floor regarding Vietnam, Morse had verbally attacked many of his colleagues and had referred to some of them as “dense and ignorant.” He did not settle for dealing just with issues, but would at times attack the character and the integrity of his opponents by questioning their morals or integrity. Creating a number of enemies in the Senate made it difficult for Morse to get any of his legislative initiatives enacted into law. It also hindered his ability to initially sway his colleagues to vote against United States involvement in Vietnam.

The United States Senate did eventually take action to discontinue United States’ involvement in Vietnam. Gruening’s and Morse’s continual call for the United States to leave Vietnam was likely a catalyst that directly aided in a majority of the Senate moving from a pro-war to an anti-war position. Regardless of whether they were responsible for

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50 Drukman, 405ff.
51 Ibid. 405ff.
52 Smith, 150ff.
getting the United States out of Vietnam, Gruening’s and Morse’s stand against the Vietnam War cost each his seat in the Senate during the 1968 election. Gruening lost his Senate seat for three distinct reasons, two of which were directly tied to his stand on the Vietnam War. First, Gruening lost because Alaska had become a strong United States military outpost and the people disagreed with his position on Southeast Asia. A majority of the voters in Alaska were either military personnel, family members of military personnel or civilians who made a living working for the United States military.\textsuperscript{53} Prior to Gruening helping Alaska become the 50th state the federal government had taken steps, with his strong encouragement, to strengthen the United States military presence in Alaska. Gruening called for this military strengthening and the federal government acquiesced as a means of discouraging the Soviet Union or any other hostile enemy from seeking to attack the United States by coming through Alaska. Runways capable of handling large military planes were constructed in the early 1940’s and a large contingent of personnel was sent to Alaska to both fly and maintain the planes. In addition, in the early 1940’s the Alaskan home guard was enhanced and some army personnel from the contiguous states were sent to Alaska to train and support this new military unit and to aid in building a military base.\textsuperscript{54} After World War II a strong military contingent was left in place in Alaska. By the time of the Vietnam War, Alaska’s population had increased tremendously and many of the people had a connection to the military. They saw Gruening’s anti-war position as problematic because it was hurting the economy and possibly costing jobs.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{53} Gruening, 294ff.  
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid. 249ff.  
\textsuperscript{55} Naske, 248ff.
Gruening also lost his Senate seat because the people of Alaska felt he had lost his focus. There was a feeling among some in Alaska, which was propagated by the Republican Party, that Gruening had become so focused on what was going on in Vietnam that he was no longer looking out for the needs of the Alaskans. Many of the voters were swayed to believe that Gruening was not the same man who had earlier fought against the large corporations who were taking advantage of Alaskans and Alaska’s natural resources. He was not the same man who had fought so hard to increase the standard of living and education in Alaska, nor was he the same man who had worked so hard to bring Alaska into the United States. Alaskans were encouraged to believe that Gruening was not looking after the needs of Alaska and that Alaska was missing out on many federal benefits as a result. In the minds of the people the proof of this was found in Gruening’s Senate attendance record. During his last two years in office, he was absent for over fifty percent of the votes that took place in the Senate. Many of these absences were due to Gruening’s participation in peace and anti-war rallies. Although it was not true that Gruening became so focused on what was going on in Vietnam that he did not look out for the Alaskan interests, the perception encouraged by the Republicans convinced the people and ended his political career.

The third reason cited for him losing was his age. By the time of the 1968 election Gruening was over 70 years old. Several of the other senators his age had decided not to run for re-election. His age was used by his adversary to convince the people that Gruening was done, that his ideas were old and stale, and that Alaska needed

56 Ibid. 248ff.
57 Ibid. 267-268.
58 Ibid. 266-268.
a fresh, new voice in Washington. His opponent also questioned whether Gruening would live for another six years and be able to serve out his term. This last reason did have some impact, however, it was Gruening’s position on Vietnam that ultimately cost him his seat in the Senate.

Wayne Morse also lost his seat primarily because of his advocacy against the Vietnam War and specifically because he carried his anti-war sentiments so far that he publicly endorsed Bobby Kennedy as the Democratic nominee for president in the 1968 elections. During Johnson’s presidency, and even prior when Johnson served as the Senate Majority Leader, he and Morse had many disagreements that led to hard feelings. Throughout that time Morse had questioned Johnson’s personal behavior and integrity. Morse had also berated Johnson without letup over the way that Johnson had been handling the Vietnam War. He talked about calling for Johnson to be impeached, attacked Johnson for short changing the education of America’s youth to fund the war in Vietnam, called for the military budget to be cut, he demanded that the Great Society program be moved ahead, and in general treated Johnson with contempt both publicly and privately. After the 1964 election Morse publicly stated that he thought it would have been better if Goldwater had won the presidency.

Johnson could live with all the insults and problems caused by Morse until Morse made his public declaration supporting Bobby Kennedy for president. In Mason Drukman’s biography of Wayne Morse entitled *Wayne Morse: A Political Biography*, he indicates that this was all of Morse that Johnson could tolerate. When hearing that Morse had openly supported Kennedy, Johnson referred to Morse as a “smart assed,

59 Ibid. 266-268.
60 Drukman, 434.
61 Ibid. 433ff.
Harvardized, back bay Irishman, whose family for three years treated him like dirt.”

Johnson then removed what party line support he had been willing to give Morse in the past. Johnson not only pulled his support, but being a vindictive man he also determined to make Morse pay for his endorsement of Kennedy. He did this by involving him in a labor negotiation he knew would turn organized labor against Morse. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, a friend of Johnson’s, recounted for Drukman exactly how Johnson went about exacting his revenge. Douglas stated that Johnson “drafted” Morse for the railway labor negotiations. Performing the role of an arbitrator was not new to Morse. Morse had been looked to by President Roosevelt during the early stages of World War II to negotiate with the United Steel workers and to help avert a strike that could have been damaging to the United States war effort. During Johnson’s presidency Morse had been asked to help resolve a labor dispute with the airline industry that could have hindered the ability of Americans to move about the country and could have hurt the nation’s economy. In both cases Morse was successful in bringing resolve to the situations. The problem for Morse, however, involved the settlements that came as a result of his efforts, which were not as favorable toward the labor unions as the labor leaders believed they should have been. This being the case some tension existed between Morse and organized labor. Johnson was well aware of this fact and used it, according to Douglas, to bring Morse down.

Douglas states that after telling Morse he had been “drafted” to handle the railway dispute, Johnson “buttered up” Morse by stating that Morse taught him everything he knew about labor law, that he had been Johnson’s teacher, and that he was the only one

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62 Ibid. 433ff.
63 Ibid. 433ff.
64 Ibid. 433ff.
who could handle this situation. Johnson knew that Morse being a vain man would not be able to resist the request when presented in this manner. He was also aware that the decisions needing to be made would not favor the labor unions. When Johnson made the public announcement that Morse would be handling the negotiations, he told Morse that he had just been handed the “black bean.” Morse asked Johnson what he meant by this statement and Johnson in reply shared the following story with Morse. During the 19th century there was a Texas military expedition sent into Mexico. While on their trek the Texan soldiers were taken prisoner by the Mexicans. Because there was not enough jail space to hold all of the prisoners the Mexicans held a sort of lottery, having each Texan soldier close his eyes and choose a bean from a plate. Those who chose a white bean went to a jail cell, while those who had picked a black bean were executed. Morse would eventually understand what Johnson meant by the “black bean.” Through the negotiations Morse was able to arrange for a percentage increase in compensation that was closer to what was desired by the railroad workers; however, he had taken actions to bust a strike and for this he earned the animosity of the organized union. Further agitating and alienating organized labor in this way hurt Morse’s re-election bid in 1968.

Organized labor campaigned against Morse in Oregon and he lost his Senate seat to Robert Packwood. Although there is some debate as to whether Johnson really set Morse up, the facts seem to indicate that Johnson was guilty. Had Morse not turned his back on Johnson and given his support to Robert Kennedy, who Morse believed would

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65 Ibid. 433ff.
66 Ibid. 434.
67 Ibid. 433ff.
68 Ibid. 434ff.
69 Ibid. 437ff.
get the United States out of Vietnam if elected, Johnson may not have deliberately put him in a position to lose the 1968 elections. The fact remains that Morse, in his desire to see the United States pulled from Vietnam, spoke out against the incumbent and he lost his seat in the United States Senate.

It is interesting to note that neither Gruening nor Morse knew much about what was going on in Vietnam prior to 1964. In his autobiography *Many Battles*, Gruening states that he knew there were some United States military advisors in Vietnam. He also knew the United States was sending financial assistance to Vietnam because he had voted on appropriation bills placed before the Senate calling for the United States to give more money than had been budgeted to South Vietnam. Beyond this he claimed that he really did not know how deeply involved the United States had become in Vietnam. Morse also indicated that he was somewhat blind to the true nature of American involvement in Vietnam. Like Gruening, he knew there were some United States military advisors in Vietnam and he knew the United States was sending both finances and military equipment to Vietnam. Both of these senators took the conflict occurring in Vietnam seriously and began to educate themselves about the true role of the United States in Vietnam as a direct result of the Gulf of Tonkin incident. This subsequently compelled them to call for the United States to discontinue involvement in Vietnam in late August and early September of 1964.
GRUENING AND MORSE CHALLENGE THE GULF OF TONKIN RESOLUTION

In August, 1964 while the United States Navy was patrolling in the Gulf of Tonkin a combined military force of South Vietnamese and Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.) operatives was carrying out covert operations along the North Vietnamese coast. Prior to 1961 American aid was limited to only supplying equipment and offering the service of military advisors, which numbered fewer than 700 men. On 11 May 1961 however, President Kennedy approved National Security Memorandum (NSAM) 52 which directed that there be an increase in the covert paramilitary operations against North Vietnam, and an expansion in the United States forces available to participate in such operations. This order came as the result of an increase in the role of United States in supporting the South Vietnamese military. Thus from 1961 until 1963, the C.I.A. helped to plan out attacks, train South Vietnamese military personnel, supply equipment and assign American military specialists to go on missions with the South Vietnamese into North Vietnam. Most of these missions were unsuccessful with many of the South Vietnamese personnel involved being killed or captured. As a result, William Colby who was in charge of the C.I.A. in the Far East became discouraged with the operations and wanted to see them ended.

The White House, civilian leadership and the United States military all came to the conclusion that operations in Vietnam should be turned over to the United States Armed Forces. The United States military was ready for this assignment. In 1963 the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent a team of high ranking officers headed by Earle Wheeler into Vietnam to survey the situation. The consensus of this team was that North Vietnam should feel the effects of the war in a more

2 Moise, 2ff.
profound manner, and thus OPLAN 34-A was born. Directed by the United States military, OPLAN 34-A would consist of a series of attacks along the North Vietnamese coast that would be carried out by United States trained and led South Vietnamese military personnel. Military camps were set up in places such as Danang where special South Vietnamese units were brought for training in scuba diving, demolition, and guerilla warfare. In addition to these units was the South Vietnamese Navy who transported the special units north and shelled areas on the North Vietnamese coastline. During one particular raid the South Vietnamese Navy bombed the island of Hon Me. While these attacks were taking place, a United States Naval intelligence vessel was patrolling the Gulf of Tonkin in an effort to make the United States presence known, while at the same time monitoring North Vietnamese and Chinese actions in the area. Although the North Vietnamese claimed that international waters began twelve miles from their coast, these American patrols came as close as three miles from the shore.

While carrying out one of these reconnaissance missions, the U.S.S. Maddox was attacked by three North Vietnamese P.T. boats. It was quite possible that North Vietnamese officials suspected that the Maddox had been involved in the attack on Hon Me on August 1 and as a result dispatched the P.T. boats to retaliate. The commander and crew of the Maddox had been alerted of the coming attack. This alert came from COMVAN who had intercepted a North Vietnamese attack order directed toward a ship located in the gulf, which had to be the U.S.S. Maddox, the only ship present at the time. Although the U.S.S. Maddox was not specifically named and the location given by the North Vietnamese was not the same as the actual location of

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3 Ibid. 5-22.
5 Ibid. 347-348.
6 Moise, 50ff.
8 Moise, 52ff.
the Maddox, it was clear to the United States Naval leaders that the U.S.S. Maddox was the target of the pending attack.\(^9\)

Between 2:00 and 2:30 p.m. the U.S.S. Maddox radar picked up three torpedo boats coming toward it at about thirty knots. This discovery sent the crew of the U.S.S. Maddox to general quarters where all hands would man their battle stations. As the torpedo boats gained on the destroyer, Commander Ogier, after consulting with Captain Herrick, ordered that four warning shots be fired over the approaching P.T. boats. Ignoring the warning shots, one P.T. boat, T-333, tried to pass the destroyer so that it could attack from the beam. The other two P.T. boats, T-336 and T-339, headed in straight from the rear of the destroyer.\(^10\) The commander of T-336 was the first one to launch a torpedo even though his ship was not close enough for his shot to be effective. T-339’s commander held on to his torpedoes until he was closer to the destroyer, but he too fired well before he reached effective range because of the intense fire he was receiving from the Maddox. Once T-336 and T-339 had fired their torpedoes then T-333 turned toward the destroyer to launch its torpedoes at the Maddox.\(^11\) Of all the torpedoes launched by the North Vietnamese Navy, not one hit the Maddox. The only real damage that the Maddox sustained in the confrontation was a bullet hole made from a 14.5 mm machine gun fired by the crew of T-333.\(^12\)

During the battle the gun crews on the Maddox had some difficulty with their equipment, yet they were still able to fire with some effect on the approaching North Vietnamese P.T. boats. Although T-333 and T-336 had sustained some damage in the fighting they were able to turn and run from the destroyer. T-339 was also able to turn but it had sustained heavier damage and was

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\(^9\) Ibid. 52ff.
\(^10\) Moise, 73ff.
\(^11\) Ibid. 73ff.
\(^12\) Ibid. 73ff.
not able to get away as quickly as the other two boats. As the North Vietnamese P.T. boats made their way back to the mainland, the commander of the Maddox called in air support from the U.S.S. Ticonderoga. Upon encountering the North Vietnamese ships the United States pilots fired Zuni rockets and twenty millimeter cannons at each of the retreating vessels. The North Vietnamese sailors were short on armaments and ammunition, yet a radar man from T-333 did what he could by using an AK47 machine gun to discourage the pilots from continuing the engagement. The United States Navy believed that a serious blow had been dealt to the North Vietnamese Navy, yet the Americans had not inflicted as much damage on their enemy as they thought. Over the course of several weeks these same North Vietnamese vessels would be refitted and return to fight again.

The initial attack on 2 August did not keep the United States Navy out of the Gulf of Tonkin. On the night of 4 August two United States destroyers, the U.S.S. Maddox and the U.S.S. C. Turner Joy, were again located in the Gulf of Tonkin. As in the case of the first attack, there were covert raids planned on North Vietnam by the South Vietnamese and the United States. Although the captain of the U.S.S. Maddox had been ordered to steer clear of the areas that would be hit by the raiding parties, he claimed that he did not receive that order and subsequently took his ship close to where conflict would occur. Reports similar to those received prior to the first altercation were passed on to the U.S.S. Maddox indicating that they were going to be attacked again. It is now believed that this information was old and that it dealt with the first attack. Fearing another attack, the crew of the U.S.S. Maddox went to general quarters, but as an uneventful afternoon turned to evening the sailors on both the U.S.S. Maddox

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13 Karnow, 368.
14 Moise, 73.
15 Ibid. 86.
16 Kaiser, 333.
and the U.S.S. C. Turner Joy became less concerned about the possibility of an attack and became more relaxed. The American ships found themselves close to several small Vietnamese fishing boats and, being unsure of their motives, the two American ships turned and headed out further to sea. After the men had been released from general quarters the radar man of the U.S.S. Maddox picked up signals he believed to be enemy boats moving toward his position. Called back to general quarters the men once again manned their battle stations waiting for an attack. That night crew members from both United States ships believed that they had seen a large spotlight, heard gun fire, seen the wake of a torpedo close to their ship and heard sonar that indicated that an enemy ship was very near to them. Responding to what they thought they were hearing and seeing, the men began to fire at the locations given them by the radar men. Air support was called in but the pilots were not able to find or confirm the presence of enemy vessels in proximity to the two United States ships. Many shells were fired and when a blip disappeared from the radar screen it was believed by the Americans that they had sunk an enemy ship. The morning after the attack United States planes and ships investigated the coordinates where the enemy vessels had supposedly sunk but found no debris or sign that would indicate that a ship had sunk.

When word of this alleged second attack reached President Johnson, he knew he had the information he needed to petition the United States Congress for a resolution supporting action to protect United States military personnel and allies from aggressive acts of Communist states. President Johnson’s request for support was called the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. The key clause in this resolution stated that:

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17 Moise, 106ff.
18 Kaiser, 334ff.
19 Moise, 109ff.
The Congress approves and supports the determination of the president, as Commander in Chief, to take all necessary measures to repeal any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.

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

Section 3. This resolution shall expire when the president shall determine that the peace and security of the area is reasonably assured by international conditions created by action of the United Nations or otherwise, except that it may be terminated earlier by concurrent resolution of the Congress.\textsuperscript{20}

This resolution passed through the House of Representatives with little discussion by a vote of 416 to 0.\textsuperscript{21} The resolution also passed through the Senate by a vote of eighty eight to two. However, it divided the Senate into three distinct groups that each held a different positions on what the United States should do, including one that was uncritically supportive, one that supported the resolution but called for United States foreign policy to be examined immediately after the conflict came to an end, and one that was negative and that would lead Senators Ernest Gruening (Democrat-Alaska) and Wayne Morse (Democrat-Oregon) to vote against the resolution.

The position held by Senators such as J. William Fulbright (Democrat-Arkansas) advocated that the resolution needed to be passed because they felt that as Commander in Chief, the president needed to be supported when the United States or an ally came under attack.

Throughout the initial debates that took place in the Senate, Fulbright, as the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, took command in addressing the questions raised by those who

\textsuperscript{20} http://www.luminet/~tgort/tonkin.htm.
opposed the resolution. A second position, which will be discussed in more detail later, held that United States foreign policy needed to be dealt with, especially in relation to how far the United States would go to assist other countries, but the time for that discussion was not right after the United States had been attacked. At the time it was imperative to show a unified front of support to the president.

Another position, held by Wayne Morse and Ernest Gruening, argued that the resolution should be voted down. They based their position on the following arguments: United States actions provoked the attack in the Gulf of Tonkin, the attack by the North Vietnamese was not a premeditated act of war, the United States inflicted enough damage on the North Vietnamese for attacking the American vessels, what was taking place in Vietnam was a civil war and the United States had no business getting involved in it, United States involvement in Vietnam went against the principle of self-determination, a concept dear to the United States, by getting involved in Vietnam the United States was going against the United Nations and proper procedures had not been followed in getting the United States involved in Vietnam.

They initially argued that the United States had taken actions that provoked both attacks on the United States Naval vessels. Morse believed that the United States naval patrol taking place in the Gulf of Tonkin, which was happening during South Vietnamese military operations, could have led the North Vietnamese to think the United States Navy was directly involved in the military action with the South Vietnamese or that they were present to give direct aid to the South Vietnamese Navy in their attack or retreat. Whatever the case, Morse believed that the American presence in the gulf provoked the attack. Seeking to help his fellow senators understand how the North Vietnamese might have felt, he shared the following analogy. What if

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22 Congressional Record, 88th Congress, 2nd Session, August 4-12th 1964. Volume 110, Part 14, 18442, 18714,
23 Ibid. 18442ff.
the Cubans were attacking Florida and the Russians were patrolling just off of our coast?
Understanding that the Cubans and Russians were allies, would we not feel anger, see the
Russian presence as a direct threat to our national security, and have a strong desire to remove
them even though they may be patrolling in international waters? Morse rightly argued that the
United States would see the actions of the Soviets as a direct threat and that the United States
would take swift action if necessary to remove them.

Those who supported the resolution asked questions and held differing opinions about the
attack that took place and how America should respond. Some of these senators, including Allen
J. Ellender (Democrat-Louisiana) sought to learn if America had provoked the attack. Ellender
went on to ask whether our navy had stopped any North Vietnamese ships that were transporting
troops or supplies to the insurgents in the south. Actions such as those would have generated
the attacks that took place. When Fulbright indicated that the ships were in international waters
and that the United States Navy had not provoked the attack, Ellender stated that he could vote in
favor of the resolution. It is interesting to note that Fulbright did not give a direct or detailed
answer to Ellender. He did not confirm or deny that the United States had stopped or hassled
North Vietnamese naval vessels, he simply stated that to the best of his knowledge the United
States was located in international waters and had taken no action to provoke the attack. Al Gore
Jr. (Democrat-Tennessee) supported the resolution simply because United States naval ships had
been attacked and, as a result, some form of military response was appropriate to keep the United
States from losing prestige in the world community. Although Mike Mansfield (Democrat-
Montana) would support the resolution, he believed what took place in the Gulf was an isolated

25 Ibid. 20936.
26 Congressional Record, Volume 110, Part 14, 18403.
act of terror that should be taken to the United Nations. Mansfield would go on to say, however, that he would vote for the resolution as a way to demonstrate unity and resolve among Americans and to the other nations of the world.28

Several members of the Senate disagreed with Morse and Gruening. Senators Fulbright, Frank J. Lausche (Democrat-Ohio) and J. Glenn Beall (Republican-Maryland) argued that the United States ships were well within international waters and that in spite of the fact that the North Vietnamese were being attacked by the South Vietnamese, they had no right to come after the United States naval vessels.29 The North Vietnamese, however, did not recognize the three mile international boundary, but rather a twelve mile boundary, and thus felt there was just cause for the United States to be attacked. The senators believed that a twelve mile boundary would limit where the United States Navy could travel and they were not going to allow North Vietnam, China or any other Communist state to restrict the movement of the United States Navy.30 Senator Carl T. Hayden (Democrat-Arizona) commented that if the Communists were able to limit where the United States Navy could freely travel they would effectively limit the strike capability of the United States. Lausche pointed out that the United States Navy’s ability to protect American interests was dependant on free navigation of the open seas, as defined by United States leaders.31

Additionally, in arguing against the resolution, Morse and Gruening did not believe that the second attack on the two United States naval vessels was premeditated, but rather that it was a spontaneous reaction to events that had taken place earlier. It would have been impossible for the North Vietnamese to have known the location of the United States Naval vessels present in

28 Ibid. 209-211.
29 Ibid. 209-211.
30 Congressional Record, Volume 110, Part 14, 18404.
31 Ibid. 18404.
the Gulf of Tonkin. This assertion was verified by the fact that when the North Vietnamese
made the attack on 2 August, their P.T. boats were given wrong coordinates for the location of
the United States’ ship.\textsuperscript{32} The North Vietnamese did not know the ships’ locations, and the
United States naval vessels’ pattern of patrol was inconsistent and sporadic so, Morse argued, the
North Vietnamese could not have predetermined the August 4\textsuperscript{th} attack.\textsuperscript{33} Additionally, Morse
argued that if the attack had been preplanned, the element of surprise would have been greater, or
ships that could compete with destroyers would have been sent out to face the United States’
ships. In the minds of Gruening and Morse, there could be no way that the attack was
premeditated and thus was not a valid reason for escalating American involvement.

Those who supported the resolution argued that the North Vietnamese had pre-planned
the attack and that they were seeking to inflict damage on the United States Navy while at the
same time tarnishing the standing of the United States in the world community. These senators
conceded that the North Vietnamese may not have had a specific plan for attacking the United
States Navy on 4 August, but launching an attack demonstrated premeditation. Given the right
opportunity to either gain valuable information or challenge United States hegemony, China and
the North Vietnamese would strike at United States forces.\textsuperscript{34} It was feared that China would
indirectly use the North Vietnamese to see how far the United States could be pushed before it
would strike back, to see if America was indeed a “paper tiger.”\textsuperscript{35} During the Korean War,
America had encountered the Chinese and in the end where careful about how they handled
fighting them because American officials were concerned that China would be hard if not
impossible to defeat. Senator Thomas Dodd (Democrat-Connecticut) believed that letting this

\textsuperscript{32} Moise, 106ff.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid. 106ff.
\textsuperscript{34} Congressional Record, Volume 110, Part 14, 18403ff.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid. 18403ff.
incident go could cause the United States to lose status with their allies as well as strengthen the perception of enemies like China that America was a weak nation.

Gruening and Morse also opposed the resolution on the grounds that the United States did not need to retaliate for the attacks. In the case of the first attack the United States Navy had not only repelled the attack while receiving just one bullet hole from a 14.5mm gun, it had also inflicted heavy damage on the North Vietnamese ships.\textsuperscript{36} During the second attack the United States ships did not take any direct hits but reported they hit and sunk at least three South Vietnamese vessels.\textsuperscript{37} The senators believed that the North Vietnamese Navy had been sufficiently punished and no further military action was necessary. They also believed that after this strong showing by the United States Navy, any other country would think twice before it would dare to attack the United States Navy.\textsuperscript{38} United States honor did not need to be defended any further, it had already been vindicated.

Even though it was believed by Morse and Gruening that the United States Navy had clearly defeated the North Vietnamese in battle, some senators such as Strom Thurmond (Democrat-South Carolina) and George Smathers (Democrat-Florida), who supported the resolution, felt that more action was necessary.\textsuperscript{39} The fact that the United States had repelled the attack of an aggressive force and soundly defeated them was not enough. A formal military response was needed. Further retaliation would make the North Vietnamese pay for challenging the United States and cause them to think twice about future attacks. Retaliation would also set a clear precedent about United States response to any enemy attacks. It was imperative for the

\textsuperscript{36} Moise, 86.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid. 129ff.
\textsuperscript{38} Congressional Record, Volume 110, Part 14, 18403ff.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid. 18420.
world to see how the American people would rally around their president and handle military challenges.

Gruening and Morse also opposed the resolution because they felt that the United States had violated the Geneva Accords of 1954. At Geneva it had been determined that Vietnam would be temporarily separated into North Vietnam and South Vietnam at the seventeenth parallel.\(^40\) The North would be ruled by Ho Chi Minh and the Vietcong while the South would be led by a democratic government under the direction of Bo Dai.\(^41\) In 1956 the country was to be reunified and elections held to determine who would lead the entire country. President Eisenhower and United States leaders recognized that Ho Chi Minh and the Communist party would win the elections.\(^42\) At Geneva, the United States stated that it would honor the accords as long as no hostile action was taken in Vietnam or anywhere in Southeast Asia that could be a threat to the United States or any of its allies. Thus American leaders did not feel responsible to allow the elections to take place and instead gave financial and military support to Diem so he could retain his power in South Vietnam.

Senators Morse and Gruening asserted that the United States had no business interfering in Vietnam because it violated a key principle of American foreign policy: that of self-determination for all people.\(^43\) If the Vietnamese people overwhelmingly wanted to become Communist, it was not the place of the United States to tell them otherwise. Both of these senators believed that if the United States had adhered to the Geneva Accords, its ships would not have been attacked and that ultimately there would be no war in Vietnam.\(^44\)

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\(^{41}\) Soon after coming to power Bao Dai was overthrown by Ngo Dien Diem who had been given a position of power by Bao Dai.
\(^{42}\) Cohen, 147.
\(^{43}\) Congressional Record, Volume 110, Part 14, 18133ff.
\(^{44}\) Ibid. 18133ff.
the fact that the United States had not followed the Geneva Accords, it was wrong to have any involvement in Vietnam and thus the resolution could not be approved.

Senators who were supportive of the resolution glossed over the fact that the United States had violated the Geneva Accords. Their argument focused on the fact that the United States had not signed the accords and that Communism had to be stopped in Southeast Asia. They felt that allowing the elections to take place would have surely ushered Communism into the entire country. If Vietnam became a Communist state, then, like dominoes, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and the remainder of Southeast Asia would fall to Communism.\textsuperscript{45} If this happened, allies like Japan would not be able to secure needed resources from Southeast Asia and could subsequently become vulnerable to falling under Communist rule. To prevent this eventuality, the United States would need to provide substantial support to Japan which could eventually over burden the United States.

According to Gruening and Morse, the United States had also violated the United Nations’ Charter. The United Nation Charter states in article two, section four; that “All members shall refrain in their international relations from the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.”\textsuperscript{46} Further, in article thirty seven of the charter it states that “Should the parties to a dispute of the nature referred to in article thirty three fail to settle it by the means indicated in the article, they shall refer it to the security council.”\textsuperscript{47} During the debate of 5 August, Morse pointed out that the United States had not formally sought to handle its grievance with North Vietnam through negotiations, mediation, arbitration or any other

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid. 1839ff.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid. 18133ff.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid. 18136ff.
conciliatory manner required of members of the United Nations. Morse went on to point out that the United States had also failed to go before the United Nations Security Council which was the step required before a member nation was to allow conflict to escalate into war. By failing to follow these procedures, the United States had indeed violated the United Nations Charter Agreement. Gruening and Morse also believed that the resolution preempted the proper procedure to follow if America were to become involved in a war. Citing President Roosevelt’s handling of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Morse stated that the president needed to go before Congress and give a reasoned argument for why United States Armed Forces would need to take action. After the attack by the Japanese, Roosevelt did not ask for a resolution to support retaliatory strikes with a clause included that would enable him to take further action against the Japanese if he deemed it necessary. Roosevelt simply went before Congress and asked that it declare war on Japan. These senators believed that the resolution Johnson proposed removed the Congress from the process and gave too much power to the office of the president. Johnson’s own statement to some of his advisors about the resolution seems to support this particular argument of the senators. He said that the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was like grandma’s nightshirt, it covered everything. The basic meaning was clear; in Johnson’s mind this resolution gave him free reign in waging war.

Many of the senators who supported the resolution did not agree that the president was pushing aside the proper process for taking the United States to war. Johnson was asking Congress for its support in his decision to authorize retaliatory strikes against the North Vietnamese. Also, he was asking the Senate to support him if he felt as though he had no choice

48 Ibid. 18135-18139.
49 Ibid. 18445.
50 Ibid. 18445.
but to escalate America’s involvement in this war. Although some of the senators believed that it gave the president a blank check, these senators, including Fulbright, Jack Miller (Republican-Iowa) and Spessard Holland (Democrat-Florida), did not seem to think that the president would use it to unjustly increase United States involvement in Vietnam. Senator George Aiken (Republican-Vermont) stated that if the president used the resolution to expand the war, responsibility for doing so would rest squarely on the shoulders of the president. These senators believed that with this resolution Johnson would only retaliate and not take the conflict to the next level.

Morse and Gruening would further dissent on this vote because they believed that the United States was being drawn into a conflict in which it had no business in becoming involved. Vietnam had not been attacked by some outside force such as Russia or China. What was taking place in Vietnam was an internal revolution that was supported by a large segment of the people living in both North and South Vietnam. Having experienced oppression at the hands of the Chinese, Japanese, and the French, the Vietnamese were demonstrating that they wanted self rule, which was what Ho Chi Minh and the Vietcong were fighting to obtain. If the people in South Vietnam did not want to come under the control of Ho Chi Minh and the Vietcong, then they needed to fight their own battle and not depend on the United States to do it for them. Likewise, Gruening and Morse believed that the United States needed to curtail its support of the South Vietnamese government under General Khanh. These senators saw him as a dictatorial puppet of the United States government and not as an individual whom the South Vietnamese people wanted as a leader. Lack of enthusiasm and lack of tenacity on the part of both the South Vietnamese military and people led these senators to believe they were not greatly

51 Ibid. 18399, 18403ff.
52 Ibid. 18133-18139.
53 Ibid. 18133-18139.
opposed to being governed by Ho Chi Minh. Those in the countryside and villages of South Vietnam were, in fact, supportive of him.\textsuperscript{54} It was mainly politicians and the elite who stood to lose prestige or finances who were opposed to Ho Chi Minh and wanted the war to be fought. Morse and Gruening believed that while the United States may not like the choice of the Vietnamese people, the United States needed to allow them to make their own decision and settle their own dispute.

Morse used an example from the American Civil War to further make his case. He stated that Abraham Lincoln and many of the North’s leaders were concerned about Britain giving aid to the South. Morse went on to point out that these Northern leaders would not have been happy if the British had actually meddled in the internal affairs of the United States and given the South assistance during the civil war. The conflict taking place in America was internal. Thus in the minds of these leaders, the British had no business becoming involved in the events taking place in America. In the end the British did not support the Confederacy. Likewise, what was going on in Vietnam was an internal conflict in which the United States needed to avoid involvement.

Most senators did not agree with this view of Morse and Gruening. They argued that the Vietnamese people were not really free to make their own choices because they were under the heavy influence of the Communist States. In the minds of these senators, what looked like heavy support for Ho Chi Minh was actually a façade. The Vietnamese people had to demonstrate before the world their love and support for him or they would be tortured and possibly even killed for their lack of support when no one was looking. In addition, many of the senators who would vote to support the resolution believed that Ho Chi Minh was actually not in charge but that the Chinese were dictating events. They felt that because the Vietnamese were not truly free to make their own decisions, it was up to the United States to help them. It was believed that the

\textsuperscript{54} Karnow, 153ff.
global cost of Vietnam not having freedom would outweigh the cost of helping this Southeast Asian country obtain its liberation.\footnote{Ibid. 18475ff.}

Gruening and Morse also dissented on the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution because they believed it could be used as a way to validate military involvement in other areas in Southeast Asia. Under the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization agreement, it could be argued that the United States was responsible to look after other member nations if their security was threatened.\footnote{Ibid. 18419ff.} Gruening, Morse and a few other senators believed that the United States had an obligation to any of the SEATO members and states under its defensive umbrella only if the attack was a direct threat to a member state and/or America or American interests.\footnote{Ibid. 18419ff.} This was an interesting, if not self serving, interpretation of the SEATO agreement. These senators believed that the resolution would give the president the authority to step in and assist any of the other members of the SEATO alliance whether or not there was consensus among United States leaders that American interests were in jeopardy, an ally was in danger or a majority of Americans agreed with the action. After all, the resolution stated that the president could take action to protect the American military or any ally that was facing a military threat.\footnote{Ibid. 18419ff.} They felt that if at all possible, the United States needed to avoid further entanglements and if involvement was necessary, then it should be Congress making the decision to get the country involved.\footnote{Ibid. 18419ff.}

Certain senators, such as Senator Jacob Javits (Republican-New York), who would vote for the resolution, also had concerns over the SEATO treaty and its implications for America. He asked if the resolution being voted on would make it possible for President Johnson to involve United States military personnel in other areas of Southeast Asia. Javits also asked if the
other members of the SEATO alliance had been consulted and their thoughts and feelings about the situation taken into consideration. Regardless of the concerns held by many senators like Javits, they would give their support to the president and vote in favor of the resolution because they believed that the global community needed to see America both united and supporting the president.

Finally, Morse and Gruening argued against the resolution because they believed that military action was inappropriate in Vietnam and, moreover, doomed to fail. Morse and Gruening pointed out the lack of willingness that existed on the part of the South Vietnamese people to fight for their own independence. The South Vietnamese had become increasingly dependent on the United States military for assistance and protection while at the same time less dependent on their own forces. If the South Vietnamese would not rally and remain committed to their own cause there was no way that the war could end positively for either the South Vietnamese or the United States. Furthermore, continued involvement in Vietnam would cost the lives of United States servicemen and would cost the United States more tax dollars than the country could afford to spend. Considering the overall situation at home, there was a need to support President Johnson’s “Great Society” plan, which was meant to address burgeoning social needs. The purchase of military equipment and supplies would only divert funds away from where they were needed the most. Over the course of a ten year period, France had spent significant amounts of money on the war in Vietnam and had sacrificed over two hundred thousand lives and still lost their hold on the country. Morse and Gruening believed that the United States needed to pursue the option of negotiation.

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60 Ibid. 18457.
61 Ibid. 18417.
Senator George McGovern (Democrat-South Dakota), as well as others who would vote for the resolution, also believed that the societal needs of the country needed to be addressed. They too had some concern that continued involvement in Vietnam would slow down the ability of the government to meet those needs. Health care, education and poverty were just a few of the needs that McGovern believed needed attention. He understood, however, that President Johnson needed to address the situation in Vietnam. If Johnson looked weak and unresponsive to the American people in relation to what was taking place in Vietnam, the door could be opened for Barry Goldwater (Republican-Arizona) to win the fall elections and become the new president. McGovern realized that if Goldwater won the presidency, American involvement in Vietnam would become even greater in terms of manpower, equipment and financial resources, further reducing the likelihood of social programs being implemented at home. By supporting Johnson, McGovern hoped that America’s focus in Vietnam could be limited and attention to the needs at home increased.

A third position held by a few senators focused on the re-evaluation and reworking of America’s overall foreign policy. Senators who held this position, such as Kenneth Keating (Republican-New York), believed that President Johnson needed to be supported at this time and that the world needed to see that Americans were united behind him. Some senators, including J. Glenn Beall, insisted that the attack in the Gulf of Tonkin had come because the Chinese perceived America as being vulnerable during election campaigns. According to these senators the Chinese believed that an American president would not retaliate or become involved in a war close to an election for fear that the American people would vote him out of office. Therefore,

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62 Woods, 104.
63 Ibid. 104.
64 Ibid. 104.
65 Congressional Record, Volume 110, Part 14, p. 18129.
66 Ibid. 18129.
like the senators who unreservedly supported the resolution, these individuals did not think that it would be best for America to appear weak or lacking in unity and so the resolution needed to be passed. They also believed that America would not be in this position if it had a better ordered foreign policy, specifically as it related to Southeast Asia. Issues relating to how important the countries in Southeast Asia really were to America, as well as how far the United States should go in helping out these countries were issues that needed to be considered. It was the desire of these senators to see America’s foreign policy overhauled, but not until after the immediate crisis had passed.

Debate and disagreement over what happened in the Gulf of Tonkin and how the United States should response was not limited to the Senate, but also became prevalent in the print media. Encouragement for the print media to become involved came from reporters who were actually in Vietnam seeing the conflict differently than the government had been reporting it. The print media also received encouragement from the dissenting Senators Gruening and Morse to write about the situation in Vietnam. Although not all of the periodicals embraced the views of these two senators, it is obvious from the articles they printed during the mid 1960’s through the early 1970’s that they had been affected by the thoughts of these men. Involvement of the print media brought the events in Vietnam closer to home and aided the dissenting senators in keeping the issues surrounding the conflict in front of the American people and the debate alive.

Periodicals such as the conservative National Review, reflecting the views of Senators Gruening and Morse, indicated that the Gulf of Tonkin incident was used by President Johnson and other individuals like General Khanh to achieve ulterior motives. In the case of President Johnson, these writers believed that he used the events in the Gulf of Tonkin as a way to rally the American people around his leadership, which in turn would result in strengthening his chances
for election in 1964. To these writers it seemed that the retaliation for the threat to American lives was less of a motive for Johnson than was the favorable positioning of himself with the American people. In his Ph.D dissertation, Andrew Laurance Johns wrote that for Johnson, election was indeed a very high priority and that he would take any action necessary, including continued involvement in the war, if he felt it bettered his chances of election. Johns goes on to point out that by getting this resolution passed by a virtually unanimous vote, including the overwhelming support of both Democrats and Republicans, Johnson would be able to demonstrate to the American people that he had things under control in the global community, that the government was unified, that he had the authority necessary to handle the events in Vietnam, that he was a wise leader, and that putting Goldwater in office as the president could be detrimental to United States interests. Goldwater would not settle for calmly handling the Vietnam situation; he would send in large amounts of American troops and create a mess. These writers also believed that President Johnson would use this event as a way to escalate America’s participation in the war. One particular writer quoted by Johns stated that Johnson’s actions would not stimulate World War III, as many believed it would, because America was already in the middle of it. Although this may have been an over dramatization, it was true that America was already heavily involved in the Vietnam War. Staff writers believed that General Khanh had used his military to execute raids in the north hoping that somehow he could draw the United States more fully into the war. Khanh believed that he needed to draw the United States deeper into the conflict because he did not think the South Vietnamese had the material resources, the will power, or the ability to handle the North Vietnamese on their own.

70 Ibid, 709.
As for the military action itself, staff writers for the *National Review*, reflecting the arguments of Gruening and Morse, made it clear that had the United States not been involved in Vietnam the United States Navy would not have been attacked by the North Vietnamese. The North Vietnamese were not out to pick a fight with the United States, for North Vietnamese military leaders were aware that the United States military was far more powerful than their army. Regardless of this realization, they did attack. The North Vietnamese could have attacked the United States for two basic reasons. First, they could have attacked in an effort to see how far the United States would go to protect the South Vietnamese. If the North Vietnamese sank a United States destroyer would the United States have escalated their involvement and continued to come to the defense of the South Vietnamese, or would the resolve of the American people have been broken for a war that was so insignificant to the United States, after experiencing such a significant loss? Second, the North Vietnamese may have attacked the United States ships because the United States Navy had been participating in raids against North Vietnam.\(^7^1\)

Although the United States was only supposed to be serving in an advisory capacity in South Vietnam, the writers for *The Nation*, again reflecting the sentiments of Gruening and Morse, stated they believed United States forces had been heavily engaged in Vietnam for quite some time and that the attack was merely pay back.

By September of 1964 the *National Review* writers, being influenced even more by Gruening and Morse, questioned more intently what really happened in the Gulf of Tonkin. They sought to know if the incident had happened as reported by the United States government or whether the description of the attack had been either inflated or even fabricated. The basis for these questions where founded on comments made by Gruening and Morse and observations made by the various staff writers about the incident itself. As an example, although not military

\(^{71}\) *National Review*, September 22\(^{nd}\), 1964. 799.
tacticians, these writers wanted to know why the P.T. boats came after the United States destroyers in such a bold manner. It did not appear as though they tried to spring a sneak attack on the United States, which would be the only way they felt that P.T. boats could inflict injury on the United States Naval destroyers. Also, the North Vietnamese boats did not seem to have enough ammunition to successfully complete their job, nor did they have air support for returning home. The notion that the United States Naval vessels experienced an unprovoked attack did not seem logical to the journalist who contributed to the *National Review*. These writers also questioned why there had not been more noticeable and immediate consequences for the North Vietnamese if America had been as maliciously attacked as President Johnson reported. Why didn’t the United States bomb North Vietnamese Naval stations immediately after the first attack in the Gulf of Tonkin? Why was only a stern warning given to the North Vietnamese?

The *Nation* magazine, which was left of center, was another periodical that echoed the feelings of Gruening and Morse when dealing with the Gulf of Tonkin incident. Writers for this magazine indicated that Johnson’s actions would escalate the Vietnam War. First, America would not sign the Geneva Accord and then when the time for the elections came the United States stood in opposition to the reunification elections that were supposed to take place. From the content of the articles contained in this periodical it is clear that the writers did not support the position or the actions taken by the United States government. In fact, these writers focused on any inconsistencies they could find in what the government said about the incident, on new details that would come to light, and how stories changed with the passing of time. In an

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73 Ibid. 799.
74 *Nation*, August, 24th, 1964. 61.
75 *Nation*, October 5th, 1964. 177.
article from the 24 August, 1964, magazine the writer dealt with “myths” about Vietnam. Some of what the writer believed to be “myths” included the concept that Communism could really be contained, that military action would be an acceptable substitute for political and social actions, and that all of Southeast Asia would fall to Communism if Vietnam fell. In dealing with these “myths,” the writer sought to remove any rationale the United States government might have for continued action in Vietnam. On the whole, although for different reasons, the *National Review* and *Nation Magazine* seemed to be antagonistic toward the federal government, its response to the Gulf of Tonkin incident, and its execution of the Vietnam War.

Other periodicals were far more supportive of the president in relation to the steps he was taking in response to the Gulf of Tonkin incident and the escalation of United States involvement in the Vietnam War. Writers for the liberal *New Republic*, taking the opposite position of Gruening and Morse, stated that the events that took place in the Gulf of Tonkin demonstrated that America had superior naval power, that the United States Navy should not suffer an unprovoked attacked without the aggressor paying some consequence, and that America could win the Vietnam War if it truly desired. Furthermore, it was stated in this magazine that America had demonstrated to the Chinese, through the actions taken in the Gulf of Tonkin, that it was not a “paper tiger.” After losing ground to the Chinese in the Korean War it was believed by some that China saw America as weak and ineffective. In the minds of these writers and some Americans, standing up to the North Vietnamese Navy in the Gulf of Tonkin was likened to standing up to the Chinese. Approving the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and responding militarily would further demonstrate the strength and the resolve of the United States. However, even while making an attempt to point out some of the positive aspects of the Gulf of Tonkin

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76 *New Republic*, August 22nd, 1964. 3.
incident, writers for the New Republic did point out that in the end violence does breed violence and that peace should be the ultimate goal.\textsuperscript{77}

Along with the New Republic magazine, the New York Times contained many articles relating to the Gulf of Tonkin incident that articulated views different from those of Gruening and Morse and that were favorable to the Johnson administration. In these articles the writers pointed out that the Chinese were behind that attack and they needed to understand that even in an election year, the people of the United States would stand unified and face any aggressor that posed a threat to the country’s national security.\textsuperscript{78} The paper also praised Johnson for his swift action and willingness to stand up to the aggressive behavior of a Communist state. The Philadelphia Inquirer called for the American people to stand behind the president. In an August 6\textsuperscript{th}, 1964 article the writer stated that America’s earnest desire for peace could not be misconstrued as weakness and that the attacks had to be sternly answered.\textsuperscript{79} On August 6\textsuperscript{th}, 1964 the Washington Post stated that America had to smash the paper tiger myth and that the North Vietnamese needed to be shown the ignorance of their action so that they would be less inclined to try anything like it again.\textsuperscript{80} The New York Herald contained an article that demonstrated support for the action that the president had taken. In this paper, the writer stated that if the Soviet Union or China was behind the attack they could rest assured that America would resist aggression and that America had the ability to do so.\textsuperscript{81} These newspapers did not initially embrace or propagate the views of Gruening or Morse.

Although the Senate passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution by a vote of 88-2, the debate was not over. The continued coverage in the print media of what was taking place in Vietnam

\textsuperscript{77} New Republic, August 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 1964. 3.
\textsuperscript{78} Congressional Record, Volume 110, Part 14, 18475ff.
\textsuperscript{79} Philadelphia Inquirer, August 6, 1964.
\textsuperscript{80} The Washington Post, August 6, 1964.
\textsuperscript{81} New York Harold Tribune, August 10, 1964.
because of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, coupled with coverage by the major television networks caused several senators to question the wisdom of both the resolution and United States involvement in Vietnam. Additionally, continued calls from Gruening and Morse for the resolution to be overturned kept it in the center of attention in American and led to its debate again on the floor of the Senate.
In 1965 tensions between the Viet Minh and Americans continued to escalate. On 7 February, Viet Minh forces staged attacks against American installations including the airfield at Danang and Pleiku. President Johnson responded by authorizing operation Flaming Dart, American air raids against North Vietnamese installations. On 24 February, Johnson further retaliated by ordering a more intense bombing campaign against targets in both North and South Vietnam. This operation was code named Operation Rolling Thunder. Throughout the year the United States Air Force would fly twenty five thousand sorties. Then, on 8 March, two United States Marine Corps battalions were sent to defend the Danang airfield. Seeking to reach some type of peace agreement, President Johnson, in a speech given at Johns Hopkins University, offered Ho Chi Minh the opportunity to participate in a Southeast Asian development plan that would benefit the North Vietnamese economically. Ho Chi Minh rejected the offer as a trick on the part of Johnson to get the Viet Minh/North Vietnamese to quit fighting for their independence. By 8 July, Johnson sent more American troops to Vietnam making a total strength of eighteen combat battalions in the country. Twenty days later General Westmoreland, commander of American forces, requested and received an additional forty-four combat battalions. American forces faced their first conventional clash with the North Vietnamese army in the Ia Drang Valley and defeated them; however, the cost

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3 Herring, America’s Longest War, 146.
4 Ibid. 131.
5 Hess, Vietnam, 95.
in American lives was substantial.⁶ President Johnson ordered a bombing halt on 25 December in an attempt to urge the Communists to negotiate a peace treaty.⁷ As 1965 came to a close almost two hundred thousand American troops were present in Vietnam.

Support for the president’s actions in Vietnam although still solid, would not remain as strong during 1965 as it had in 1964. Gruening and Morse, the lone advocates in 1964 who were calling for the United States to get out of Vietnam, found that during 1965 some Americans, major newspapers and other Senators were beginning to embrace their position. White House mail ran heavily against the bombing raids taking place in Vietnam. A few newspapers including the New York Times warned that the cost in lost lives, split blood and finances that were expended in fighting a jungle war seven thousand miles from home was not worth what would be gained.⁸ Prominent senators such as Frank Church (Democrat-Idaho), Mike Mansfield (Democrat-Montana) and George McGovern (Democrat-South Dakota), all doves, called upon the president to reach a negotiated settlement with the Viet Minh/North Vietnamese.⁹ It is interesting to note that not all doves called for America to get out of Vietnam as abruptly as Gruening and Morse. At this point many of the doves, for example those previously mentioned, believed that the United States needed to remain in Vietnam until a mutually beneficial settlement could be reached. Criticism over United States intervention in Vietnam was not limited to Americans. Widespread criticism also came from abroad as the United

⁶ Ibid. 96-97.
⁸ Herring, America’s Longest War, 133.
⁹ Ibid. 133.
Nations General Secretary U. Thant denounced American bombing taking place in Vietnam. ¹⁰

Involvement of the United States in Vietnam became a topic of discussion early in the 88th Congress of the United States and would be an issue taking up a considerable amount of the Senate’s time, as well as filling hundreds of pages of the Congressional Record of 1965. Senators Ernest Gruening and Wayne Morris continued to call for America to withdraw from Vietnam. As early as 6 January, 1965 Gruening and Morse voiced their feelings of displeasure over the way President Johnson was increasing American involvement in Vietnam and were the point men calling for open debate in the Senate regarding whether the American military, still as advisors not combat troops, should remain or disengage and come home.¹¹ In the minds of Gruening and Morse the rationale for calling for a debate was both simple and logical. They did not believe American involvement in Vietnam had been adequately thought through or discussed. In August 1964, Gruening and Morse expressed their personal concerns over the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. A few senators such as Jacob K. Javits (Republican-New York) asked pointed questions of Senator J. William Fulbright (Democrat-Arkansas) who was shepherding the resolution through the Senate; but in the minds of Gruening and Morse, there had been inadequate discussion on the resolution before the vote was taken. Both Gruening and Morse believed that the eighty eight to two Senate vote supporting the resolution was based primarily on the emotion of the moment.¹² In 1965 they argued that the resolution was not passed on careful consideration of the facts or on what the implications of American involvement in a war would be, but on a desire to strike back at

¹⁰ Ibid. 133.
¹² Ibid. 331-341, 914-918.
the North Vietnamese. These senators believed that American involvement should now be discussed again in more detail.

Gruening’s and Morse’s goal was to bring President Johnson’s ability to wage war in Vietnam to an end. They believed that once a calm, rational discussion took place their colleagues would draw the same conclusions that they had: what was happening in Vietnam was a civil war, not an attack on South Vietnam by an aggressive external force, America had no business becoming involved in Vietnam’s internal affairs, not one American soldier should die to prevent the Communists from taking over Vietnam because the cost was higher than what it was worth, all of Southeast Asia would not necessarily fall to Communism if a reunited Vietnam became a Communist state, and finally, America could not win a war in Vietnam.

Gruening and Morse were joined in their call for debate by other senators including Frank Church and George McGovern. These senators believed that if handled properly, a debate could help the president gain an understanding of how Americans felt about the country participating in the war. Gruening and Morse were certainly voicing dissent and claimed that many Americans felt the way they did, wanting the United States military brought back home. They pointed out that there were even a few prominent Americans beginning to actively question American involvement in Vietnam. President Johnson, on the other hand, contended that the American people overwhelmingly supported the direction he was taking in Vietnam. According to Church and McGovern,

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15 Ibid. 8284-8295, 8432-8445, 8433-8441.
each senator was to keep in touch with the thoughts and feelings of his constituents was to voice the concerns and represent the interests of the people from their respective districts. Debate, which allowed the senators to share the thoughts of those they represent, could be a venue to reveal who held the correct view, Gruening and Morse or President Johnson. Church and McGovern also believed that if it became evident that Gruening and Morse were right and a majority of Americans in fact did not support the actions of the president in Vietnam, the president would know that he needed to take a different direction. Likewise, if President Johnson was right that a majority of Americans supported his actions, then he could continue on with full confidence that he had the backing of the American people.

The call for debate on the Vietnam issue did not meet with unanimous support in the Senate. Leverett Saltonstall (Republican-Massachusetts) voiced concern over the Senate debating United States involvement in Vietnam and gave multiple reasons why he believed a debate should not take place. One, he was concerned about the message that would be sent to the enemy, in this case the Viet Minh and North Vietnamese, if a debate took place. He believed it could be interpreted as a lack of unity or lack of resolve, or both, which would encourage the Viet Minh by signaling that the United States did not have the support or the will to continue the fight over the long haul. It would send a signal to the Viet Minh that it would be possible to outlast the Americans and win if they remained steadfast and were patient. Saltonstall also believed that debate would weaken

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21 Ibid. 915.
the position of the United States if peace negotiations were to take place. There was no need for the Viet Minh to negotiate with an adversary who was not committed to remaining engaged in the fight for its duration. Additionally, Saltonstall was concerned how American allies would interpret the Senate debate. Some allies may see it as a good thing; however, Saltonstall was concerned that it may cause other allies to wonder if the United States would remain true to commitments it had made to their governments, if the United States was considering breaking a commitment that had been made to the South Vietnamese. Third, he voiced concern over what a debate in the Senate could do to the American people. Formal debate in the Senate could either draw battle lines that had not previously existed between Americans who supported the war and Americans who opposed it, or it could make existing divisions even worse. Saltonstall saw this as detrimental to the country. He felt this was a time when Americans needed to be unified and work together rather than fight with one another. If the focus shifted and Americans began fighting one another, then South Vietnam would surely fall to Communism and the enemy would win.

Even though this call for open debate was not immediately embraced in the winter of 1965, it was continually called for by Gruening, Morse and several other senators. It took place indirectly from January 1965 until the fall of 1968 as discussion on American involvement in Vietnam dominated the business of the Senate. As various senators kept the topic of Vietnam before the Senate, discussion on the rationale for the United States to be involved in Vietnam came up and would be a constant source of heated debate. 

Senators who supported the involvement of the United States in Vietnam continued to

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22 Ibid. 915.
23 Ibid. 915.
24 Ibid. 915.
argue that South Vietnam, an independent and freestanding country, had been and was continuing to be attacked by an outside Communist force and needed the assistance of the United States so that it would not be swallowed up by Communism. In addition, the South Vietnamese people were being terrorized and abused by the Viet Minh forces and needed to be protected. These senators compared what was taking place in South Vietnam to Korea in 1950, when the North Koreans overran South Korea in an attempt to take control of South Korea. A second argument which had also been used from the time of the Gulf of Tonkin incident surrounded the attacks on the United States Naval vessels. The United States had been attacked, unprovoked, by an aggressive force that needed to be dealt with so that all foes of the United States would be forced to think twice before attacking the United States military. The fact that three presidents of the United States had given their word that the United States would assist the South Vietnamese was a third rationale used to argue that American forces needed to remain in Vietnam.25

Gruening and Morse, along with those beginning to embrace their point of view, opposed American military personnel assisting the South Vietnamese government. These senators systematically denounced the rationale used by those who called for and supported American involvement in Vietnam. Just as Gruening and Morse had done early in the debate on Vietnam, they argued that South Vietnam had not been attacked by an outside force. Vietnam was experiencing a civil war.26 They also argued that the damage inflicted on the North Vietnamese Navy had been sufficient and the word of the president did not require the United States to remain involved in an illogical conflict that could not be won. The United States had the right to alter course as deemed necessary.

In addition, they argued that America was doing the very thing in Vietnam it was trying to prevent, by pushing the South Vietnamese people into the arms of the Communists.\(^27\) Since the United States had become involved in South Vietnam, it had supported an oppressive dictator who had made the lives of the Vietnamese people miserable. The United States had encouraged and financially supported the removal of villagers from their homes and had them placed in strategic hamlets which were less than ideal places to live.\(^28\) In addition the United States used defoliants to destroy both the forests and vegetation in Vietnam which reduced the crop output and caused the spread of hunger throughout the land. While engaged in combat operations, the United States Air Force used bombs containing napalm to kill North Vietnamese military personnel. Napalm was a gel like substance which upon contact with the skin would burn its victim.

A problem with dropping bombs, such as the United States began doing in February 1965, was they did not always hit the intended target and sometimes they would hit innocent bystanders. Elderly men, women and children were burned as a result of being hit by napalm bombs.\(^29\) United States medical personnel did tend to the wounds of some of the civilians who had been inadvertently hit during bombing runs, yet the Vietnamese knew who was responsible for their pain and suffering.\(^30\) Bombs used by the Americans also destroyed many of the huts and homes of the Vietnamese people. Losing their homes, most or all of their possessions, and being forced to live on the street did not endear the Vietnamese people to the Americans.\(^31\) Gruening and Morse argued that

\(^{27}\) Congressional Record, 89\(^{th}\) Congress, 1\(^{st}\) Session, 1965, Volume 111, Part 6, 8285-8294, 8433-8445, Volume 111, Part 7, 9109-9113,
\(^{28}\) Ibid. 8433-8445.
\(^{29}\) Ibid. 8433-8445.
\(^{30}\) Ibid. 8433-8445.
participating in these activities did more harm than good because the United States was inflicting injury on the very people they were trying to save.

Inability on the part of Gruening, Morse and those who supported their position to extricate the United States military from Vietnam did not stop them from continuing their campaign to end United States involvement in Vietnam, nor did it end debate within the Senate. It merely led these senators to make the accusation that the actions of the United States in Vietnam were illegal. In Gruening’s and Morse’s opinion, waging war in Vietnam was illegal for a variety of reasons. The United States had violated the Geneva accords and had not followed proper procedures as far as both the South East Asia Treat Organization (SEATO) and United Nations charter was concerned. Senators such as Stuart Symington (Democrat-Missouri) who supported American intervention were quick to point out, as had been pointed out in 1964, that the United States had not signed the Geneva agreement and thus was not bound to it. It should be pointed out that when the final documents were drawn up at Geneva no country signed them.

Gruening and Morse also contended that American involvement in Vietnam was unconstitutional because American participation in Vietnam required a formal declaration of war which had not been issued by the United States Senate. Thus the United States military should not be engaged in war in Vietnam on an ongoing basis. Realizing that President Johnson was relying on the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution to keep America involved in Vietnam led them to point out that the resolution only allowed the president to take actions to protect American citizens or American interests if attacked. Carrying on a sustained war in Vietnam was not protecting American citizens or American

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33 Ibid. 331-341.
34 Ibid. 331-341.
interests, at least not in their opinion. The United States was the aggressor in this war. If
the United States really needed to continue protecting South Vietnam and remain at war
with North Vietnam, then the Congress, the body charged with the responsibility in the
Constitution for declaring war, needed to be approached.\textsuperscript{35} Again, they would fall short
of winning their point and getting American forces out of Vietnam because the wording
in the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was so nebulous that it left room for Johnson to keep
the American military engaged in Vietnam. Senators who supported American
involvement in Vietnam indicated that as Commander in Chief, Johnson had the right to
take action deemed necessary to protect the United States and that was what he was doing
in Vietnam.

Bringing American involvement in Vietnam to an end through a negotiated
settlement was one area many members of the Senate agreed on. In the minds of Morse
and Gruening a negotiated settlement meant the United States would meet with North
Vietnamese leaders, determine when the United States would depart from Vietnam and
that the North Vietnamese would not attack the departing United States forces either
while they awaited their departure or when they were actually in the act of leaving the
country.\textsuperscript{36}

To J. William Fulbright (Democrat-Arkansas), an increasingly strong critic of the
war, a negotiated settlement meant that a compromise would be reached which would
allow the South Vietnamese to maintain some level of autonomy or that the country of
Vietnam would be re-unified in such a way that would allow all the people freedom of

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid. 331-341.
\textsuperscript{36} Congressional Record, 89th Congress, 1st Session, 1965, Volume 111, Part 6, 8435.
choice and keep them from being oppressed. Johnson was making some attempt at reaching a negotiated settlement in 1966. To Fulbright, the president was doing well by seeking to open dialogue with the North Vietnamese. His effort, however, was not enough to please Gruening, Morse and the other senators who embraced their view. They would continue to call on Johnson to negotiate and get the United States out of Vietnam.

During 1966 American involvement in Vietnam continued to intensify. Starting on 28 January United States forces embarked upon a large scale search and destroy mission which came to be known as Operation Masher. President Johnson, concerned over the perception that could be caused both at home and abroad by the code name, asked that it be given a new title; thus the operation became known as White Wing. On 31 January Johnson ordered the resumption of bombing in both North and South Vietnam after the cease fire begun on 25 December, 1965 failed to produce serious peace negotiations. Once the bombing campaign resumed, American aircraft bombed oil depots near Hanoi and Haiphang harbor. Thereafter, the list of sanctioned targets increased to include areas in the North that had been previously off limits. On 9 March the United States military revealed that twenty thousand acres of food crops had been destroyed by members of an elite air corps referred to as Operation Ranch Hand. These crops were located in suspected Viet Cong villages and were targeted in an attempt to discourage the Viet Cong from continuing to wage war. On 15 July operation Hastings was launched by United States Marines and South Vietnamese troops against ten thousand North Vietnamese troops in Quang Tri province. Two months later operation

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39 Hess, Vietnam, 94-137.
Attleboro took place, involving twenty thousand American and South Vietnamese soldiers in a search and destroy mission fifty miles north of Saigon near the Cambodia border. While engaged in combat the American forces lost four hundred and ninety four who were killed and wounded and the North Vietnamese lost one thousand one hundred and ninety six who were either killed or wounded.\(^{41}\) It is interesting to note that the strategy of search and destroy invoked by the United States military leaders did not work. If the North Vietnamese did not like the odds or the terrain of the battle field they would make an escape leaving the Americans unsure of where they had gone. By the end of the year American troop levels reached almost four hundred thousand. American forces had experienced 5008 deaths and had over 30,093 soldiers wounded.

Support that Johnson enjoyed in 1964 had been steadily waning. Some Americans were calling for Johnson to pull the troops out of Vietnam. On March 26\(^{th}\) anti-war protests were held in New York, Washington D.C., Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston and San Francisco.\(^{42}\) Early in June a three page anti-war advertisement appeared in the *New York Times*. The advertisement had been signed by over 6400 teachers and college professors.\(^{43}\) Robert McNamara experienced the discontent that was growing in America when he was confronted by a hostile crowd at Harvard University.\(^{44}\) The growing concern over the war was not limited to just citizens. Members of the Senate were becoming concerned as well. Some senators were distancing themselves from Johnson and his position on Vietnam. This paved the way for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to hold hearings on American involvement in Vietnam. These

\(^{42}\) Herring, *America’s Longest War*, p. 171-173.
initial hearings, which were chaired by J. William Fulbright, were televised during prime day time hours. Dean Rusk, Secretary of State, was the first to appear before the committee as they discussed the appropriations bill that would be going before Congress. There would be additional hearings on American involvement in Vietnam in 1967. This marked the first time the Senate held hearings on a war while the United States was actually participating in it. It was also a direct challenge to the White House. Regardless of the negative opinion that was growing, Johnson still had the support of many Americans and continued to wage war in Vietnam.

When the 89th Congress opened in January of 1966, American involvement in Vietnam once again dominated much of the Senate’s time. Although discussion over American participation during the first and second session of the Senate was wide spread, three issues in particular stood out. These included the continued call for debate on the issue of American involvement in Vietnam, a debate over the continuation of the America military fighting in Vietnam and a debate over the need for more intentional negotiations to take place regarding bringing the conflict in Vietnam to an end.

As in 1965, Morse and Gruening called for debate to take place on the Senate floor regarding American involvement in Vietnam. They believed that if the Senate were to formally debate American involvement it could come up with substantial recommendations that the president would need to give serious consideration to and maybe even implement if he wanted to retain the support of the Senate and the American people. As a result of this belief Gruening and Morse called for the president to make a formal request and chided him when he ignored their calls. There where other senators

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who desired that the Senate engage in a formal debate; however, they believed that
President Johnson needed to be the one instructing the Senate to debate American
involvement in Vietnam. This belief led these senators to block any motion offered by
Gruening and Morse calling for formal debate. Regardless of the fact that a formal
debate would not be officially called for, many senators expressed a desire for the issue to
be debated in the senate. These senators included Senators Robert Kennedy (Democrat-
New York), Frank Church (Democrat-Idaho), Jacob Javits (Republican-New York).
Javits, although making it clear he still supported the actions taken by the president in
Vietnam, called for debate because he did not believe the military should not have a
monopoly on determining actions taken by the United States around the world.\textsuperscript{47}
Javits believed the only input the president was receiving on Vietnam was coming from the
military. It was Javits contention that the military was comprised of all hawks who
would advocate war in any situation. Thus he did not believe the military had the best
answers for the dilemma that the United States was currently facing in Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{48}
Debating the issue in the Senate would allow both the hawks and the doves to express
their opinions and a reasonable, balanced solution to the situation obtained.

In spite of the call for debate and the attitude that seemed to be growing that the
United States needed to get out of South Vietnam, there were some senators who argued
for continued United States intervention in Vietnam. Symington and Everett Dirksen
(Republican-Illinois) believed that the United States could win the war taking place in
Vietnam. In a speech on March 9\textsuperscript{th} 1966, Dirksen stated that the United States as a free
country had an obligation to give aid to another country whose freedom was being taken

\textsuperscript{47} Congressional Record, 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Session, 1966, Volume 112, Part 1, p. 1602-1603, 2037-2041.
\textsuperscript{48} Congressional Record, 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Session, 1966, Volume 112, Part 5, p. 5399-5400.
from them. He went on to say that “freedom calls for determination not withdrawal and aggression calls for fortitude not retreat.”

Dirksen went further to liken what was happening in Vietnam to what had happened in the United States in 1776 when America was being attacked by the British. Like the South Vietnamese the Americans faced overwhelming odds and it looked as if there was no way the Americans could gain independence; however, with determination and fortitude they were able to secure their freedom. Even though the position of the South Vietnamese looked bad, they too could gain ultimate victory if they held steadfast and the United States gave them assistance.

Symington went further by listing what he believed needed to be done in order for the South Vietnamese and Americans to be victorious over the Communists. He indicated that the Haiphong harbor needed to be mined and that a blockade needed to be placed on North Vietnam. Going even further, Symington indicated he believed that important targets such as power plants, oil supply depots, and docks needed to be bombed in an attempt to diminish North Vietnam’s ability to supply the Viet Minh and hinder the enemy’s ability to wage war.

In an effort to gain support from the House of Representatives to support senators who were calling for an increase in military operations, Congressman William Hull (Democrat-Missouri) quoted Senator Symington and then shared an example that did not fit the situation or make sense. Hull called his fellow Congressmen’s attention to the remarks made by Symington about the quarantine, and then likened it to the one imposed by President Kennedy on Cuba during the missile crisis. He stated the quarantine worked because the missiles were removed. This was an oversimplification of what took place during the Cuban missile crisis. He was really

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50 Congressional Record, 89th Congress, 2nd Session, Volume 112, Part 4, p. 4841.
calling for the United States to starve the North Vietnamese into submission which was not a goal of the Cuban missile crisis. Going one step further, Symington indicated that the Ho Chi Minh Trail also needed to be shut down so that North Vietnam would not be able to get supplies to the insurgents in South Vietnam. On March 3rd, 1966 Symington made it clear he believed the United States needed to either take serious action in Vietnam or get out, and that his preference was for action.\(^{52}\) This met vehement opposition from Gruening and Morse because they saw it as an act that would likely expand the war in Southeast Asia. The United States had become engrossed in Vietnam. Shutting down the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos could lead to war with the Laotian people if the United States was not careful.

Senators Gruening, Morse and Church disagreed with the position taken by these hawkish senators. They believed that mining the Haiphong Harbor would be dangerous because a Russian or Chinese ship could hit a mine, which would provoke a major crisis. A natural response to this would be retaliation on the part of the Russians and the Chinese and the United States would find itself at war with Russia, China or both. Thus these senators continued to argue that the United States needed to get out of Vietnam. Seeking to strengthen their case for the discontinuation of United States assistance to South Vietnam led Church to ask how far the United States could realistically extend itself.\(^{53}\) Church followed his own question by giving what he believed to be an appropriate answer. He stated that the United States could not serve as the world policeman and become involved in fights all over the globe. It was Church’s contention that the United States did not have the equipment, manpower, finances or the will power to serve in this

\(^{52}\) Congressional Record, 89 Congress, 2\(^{nd}\) Session, Volume 112, Part 4, p. 4841.
capacity. Church went on to argue that the United States needed to select an island
boundary in both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, become involved with those islands if
not already, and to throw all of its weight into protecting them if they were attacked by a
hostile force.\textsuperscript{54} The United States needed to limit their involvement to this boundary.

Senator Fulbright who was struggling with whether to continue supporting the
position of the president, asked some questions very similar to those of Senator Church.
His primary question asked if it was possible for a great power to overextend itself. To
answer his own question he pointed out that the Roman Empire had become spread too
thin and as a result fell to its enemies. Giving more examples, Fulbright pointed out that
Napoleon had extended the French empire too far and it imploded on itself and that
Adolph Hitler sought to extend German control too far and as a result lost all of his
dominion.\textsuperscript{55} An example from within United States history involved Robert E. Lee and
the Confederate army. Throughout the Civil War Lee’s army was smaller than the Union
forces and suffered from lack of armaments and supplies. In spite of these disparities, by
the time the Confederates had reached Gettysburg in July of 1863, they had compiled a
long list of victories and, for the most part, enjoyed great success against the Army of the
Potomac. This would all change on July 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 1863 when Lee ordered General
Longstreet’s corps to march one mile over open ground and attack the center of the
Union line. As the Confederates made their way across the field they came under intense
fire from the Union artillery which had over 230 well positioned guns pointed in their
direction. Once the Confederates came within one hundred yards of the Union line they
came under rifle fire from over 5000 men you were concealed behind a stone wall.

\textsuperscript{54} Congressional Record, 89th Congress, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Session, 1966, Volume 112, Part 3, p. 3561-3580.
\textsuperscript{55} Congressional Record, 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Session, 1966, Volume 112, Part 7, p. 9920-9921.
Within thirty minutes the men from Longstreet’s corps who were still alive and not captured began to make their way back to their own lines. Greeting the men as they returned, Lee proclaimed that the failed charge was his fault. He had wrongly come to believe there was no force on earth that could defeat his army.

According to Fulbright, each of these losses occurred due to the arrogance of power. These leaders came to believe that their armies were invincible. Fulbright went on to point out that the United States needed to be careful not to become intoxicated with its power and thus become over committed as each of these leaders had done.56 In seeking to further solidify his case, he drew a comparison between the acceptance and arrogance of power. According to Fulbright, acceptance of power entailed a predetermined understanding of capabilities, a preordained list of areas to be defended if they were attacked by an aggressor, and a willingness to let countries fall to oppressors if they were outside the parameters of the predetermined plan.57

As these senators continued to deal with the issue of supporting or withdrawing from Vietnam, the position of those senators calling for a negotiated settlement gained strength. Gruening and Morse no longer advocated that negotiation simply include the United States getting out of Vietnam. They did, however, continue to differ with many senators, including Fulbright, on what should happen during negotiations. The main difference between Gruening, and Morse and Fulbright was active combat. Gruening and Morse believed that a cease fire should be called prior to negotiations and that while engaged in dialogue, the United States should refrain from attacking the Viet Minh. In their minds, the United States should lay their weapons down as an act of good faith.

While Fulbright was increasingly coming to the point of believing that the United States should seek to bring an end to the conflict through negotiations, he differed with Gruening and Morse in relation to fighting. Fulbright indicated that he believed it would be a most egregious error to discontinue hostilities prior to and during negotiations. This would diminish the desire of the enemy to compromise and reach a settlement beneficial to all parties.

Much to the dismay of Gruening and Morse, American involvement in Vietnam continued to deepen in 1967. Operation Bolo, which occurred on January 2nd, was the first American action of the year. Twenty eight Air Force F-14 Phantoms engaged North Vietnamese MiG-21 interceptors. While fighting, 7 of the MiG’s were shot down leaving only 9 MiG-21’s in the North Vietnamese arsenal.\(^{58}\) A week later, on January 8th, Operation Cedar Falls began. 16,000 Americans and 14,000 South Vietnamese joined forces to clear out the Viet Cong from the iron triangle 25 miles northwest of Saigon.\(^{59}\) The Viet Cong chose not to fight and instead melted into the jungle. In an effort to defend continued American involvement in Vietnam Johnson announced on February 2nd that the North Vietnamese were the ones pushing the fight and were the ones unwilling to negotiate. In a diplomatic maneuver to get the North Vietnamese to negotiate, Johnson called a halt to the bombing in early 1967. Having come to the conclusion that the North Vietnamese would not negotiate, Johnson ordered the bombing to begin again on February 13th.\(^{60}\) Nine days later, the longest military offensive of the war took place. Operation Junction City involved twenty-two American battalions and four South

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\(^{59}\) Karnow, p. 439ff.

The goal of this offensive was to destroy the North Vietnamese Central Office. It was estimated that during the battle 2728 Viet Cong were either killed or wounded and American causalities totaled 282 killed and 1576 wounded. As a result of the offensive the North Vietnamese moved their central office to Cambodia were it would be safer. In order to keep the Army supplied and able to fight the war during 1967, the Senate authorized a 4.5 million dollar military appropriation bill on March 8th. Realizing that he did not currently have the manpower to win the war in Vietnam led General Westmoreland to make a request in July for an additional 200,000 troops. There were already 475,000 troop scheduled to be in Vietnam. If granted, this request would bring the total number of American troops serving in Vietnam to 675,000. President Johnson only agreed to authorize another 45,000 soldiers, leaving Westmoreland drastically short of his perceived need. By the year’s end American troop levels would reach 463,000. Combat deaths totaled 16,000.

American support for the war effort continued to decline in 1967. On February 8-10th American religious groups, including a strong contingent of Catholics, staged a national fast for peace. This was followed on April 15th by anti-war demonstrations in New York and San Francisco involving nearly 200,000 people. Martin Luther King Jr., speaking at one of the rallies, stated that the war was undermining Johnson’s Great Society Program and that participation in the war needed to stop so that the needs of the people at home could be met. Bertrand Russell organized a mock war crimes tribunal

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63 Herring, America’s Longest War, p. 136-139.
in Stockholm in which the United States was found guilty and subsequently condemned for committing crimes against humanity. This clearly demonstrated the increasing disagreement that existed between the United States and other countries of the world in relation to American involvement in Vietnam. Not all American were against the war in Vietnam. On May 13th, 7,000 people marched through the streets of New York to demonstrate their support for Johnson and American participation in Vietnam. In spite of those who supported the American war effort, public opinion was still moving down a negative path. A public opinion survey taken in October indicated that 46% of those polled believed American involvement in Vietnam was a mistake. The survey further indicated that America should either fight to win or get out. Within days of the survey, 55,000 protestors marched to the Pentagon in an attempt to get the attention of the president and the military. On December 4th, four days of protesting began in New York City; during this time 585 persons were arrested. The number of Senators beginning to doubt the wisdom of continued involvement in Vietnam also grew in 1967. Fulbright, who had been having doubts for quite some time, wrote a book entitled the Arrogance of Power which was published in 1967. This book criticized the United States for its Vietnam War policy. The book inspired Johnson to refer to Fulbright and the other critics of his war policy as “Nervous Nellies” and “Sunshine Patriots.” Finally, in August, the Senate Arms Services Committee began closed door hearings on the involvement of civilian advisors in making war plans for Vietnam. Although the
number of those opposed to the war was not significant, when considering the total population of the United States to the number of protestors, the fact remains that the number of those opposed to American involvement in the war continued to grow.

When the 90th Congress of the United States convened in January 1967, American involvement in Vietnam was an increasingly contentious issue. Gruening and Morse switched tactics, no longer calling for debate on the involvement of the United States in Vietnam, but rather encouraging an honorable peace agreement to be reached by the South Vietnamese government, the National Liberation Front, and the United States. When this did not work, they sought to have the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution repealed. On January 30th, in an attempt to push the president toward reaching an honorable peace agreement in Vietnam, Gruening asked that both the Senate and president consider the proposal for peace put forth by Fulbright in his book Arrogance of Power. Gruening indicated that if the president was being honest with the American people, this proposal would be welcomed because it would give him the basis for reaching a peaceful settlement with the North Vietnamese. Gruening also pointed out that the president should be willing to seriously consider Fulbright’s plan because he had stated several times he needed an honorable way to extricate the United States from Vietnam and that he would be willing to talk to anyone, anytime and anywhere to make this happen.73

After extending the challenge for the Senate and president to consider Fulbright’s plan, Gruening reiterated its eight main points. Point one, the South Vietnamese themselves should seek peace negotiations with the National Liberation Front-the Communist group present in South Vietnam. Fulbright pointed out that the South Vietnamese government could not rely on the United States to make this happen; they

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had to take the initiative and do it themselves. They knew the terms and conditions they could live with and thus could agree to accept. Second, once the South Vietnamese and the National Liberation Front entered into formal dialogue, the United States and the South Vietnamese military should put forth a proposal for negotiations on a cease fire agreement. This would demonstrate the sincerity and good faith of the South Vietnamese and the United States. There was a good chance that it could inspire the North Vietnamese allies, namely the Chinese and Soviet Union, to encourage the Viet Minh/ North Vietnamese to embrace terms they might not otherwise have accepted. Third, the United States should terminate its bombing of North Vietnam and add no additional personnel to the area, reducing the scale of United States involvement while at the same time ensuring the safety of the American personnel located in Vietnam. Fourth, the United States should pledge that it would remove all of its forces once a negotiated settlement was reached. Fifth, negotiations should focus primarily on a cease fire agreement and on South Vietnam having the ability to determine its own direction and its own future. Six, an international conference should be convened to select a committee whose purpose would be to guarantee that the arrangements made by the belligerents were adhered to and that Vietnam’s reunification progressed smoothly. Seven, the international committee would be charged with the assignment of working toward neutralizing Vietnam and all of Southeast Asia. Eight, if for any reason an agreement could not be reached on ending the Vietnam War, then the United States forces need to be consolidated into strong defensive positions and left in South Vietnam indefinitely.\textsuperscript{74} Gruening argued that by accepting and seeking to implement Senator Fulbright’s proposal and by proclaiming it to be the direction the administration was going to take,\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{74} Congressional Record, 90\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 1\textsuperscript{st} Session, 1967, Volume 113, Part 1, p. 1929-1931.
Johnson would able to bring an end to the senseless and brutal killing of both young American men and tens of thousands of Vietnamese, including men, women and children.

In spite of the fact the call for negotiating an honorable settlement was gaining momentum in the Senate, there was still a number of senators who strongly advocated that the United States needed to remain in Vietnam. These senators continued to disagree with the position taken by Gruening, Morse, Fulbright and other senators who were joining their ranks. Senator Gillis William Long (Democrat-Louisiana) was one such senator. He indicated that what was taking place in South Vietnam was more than just a struggle over a small, distant, insignificant country; it was about the globalization of Communism.\footnote{Congressional Record, 90\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 1\textsuperscript{st} Session, 1967, Volume 113, Part 20, p. 26720-26723.} In seeking to make his case he pointed out that the events taking place in Vietnam over the past several years were really a part of a “struggle that involved Greece, Turkey, Berlin, all of Western Europe, the Near East, Korea, Formosa, the part of India where Chinese troops invaded some years ago, Malaysia, and perhaps even the Philippines, where Communists troops might be in control now, were it not for the strong stand taken by the United States.”\footnote{Congressional Record, 90\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 1\textsuperscript{st} Session, 1967, Volume 113, Part 20, p. 26720-26723.} If the United States did not stand firm, as it had in past instances, Southeast Asia would be lost to Communism. The ultimate winners in his opinion would be the Communist conspirators who intend to overthrow every free government in the world by instigating “wars of national liberation” and who would subtly assist the side that embraced their point of view once the conflict started. The United States would make this especially easy for the Communists if it determined not to get involved in these types of wars.
Senator Long argued against the view of Gruening and Morse that called for the United States to pull out of Vietnam because he believed it would be detrimental to United States security. In his assessment the United States was winning the war in Vietnam. He indicated to his colleagues on September 26\textsuperscript{th}, 1967 that when the North Vietnamese put more troops in the field, they were matched by the United States military.\textsuperscript{77} Additionally, when the North Vietnamese escalated acts of aggression against the South Vietnamese or the Americans, the United States had been matching their activity act for act. Long further pointed out that;

“…in their endeavor to win a military victory over the United States in the kind of war that is taking place in Southeast Asia, North Vietnam and the Viet Minh’s greatest and only hope is through default on the part of the United States. Their greatest hope is that Americans will continue to make divisive speeches, fight among ourselves, and quarrel about the situation that exists rather than recognizing we are in a fight and working together to achieve victory.”\textsuperscript{78}

In his opinion America was in control of the situation in Vietnam. The only thing that would keep the United States from obtaining total victory in Vietnam would be America.

On September 26\textsuperscript{th}, 1967 Senator Frank Lausche (Democrat-Ohio) effectively muddied the waters when carrying on a conversation with Senator Clifford Case (Republican-New Jersey) about the action the United States should take in Vietnam. He did this by sharing a conversation he had with diplomatic scholar, George Kennan, the economist diplomat, John Kenneth Galbraith, and General Maxwell Taylor, United States Army, during a Foreign Relations Committee hearing. Senator Lausche indicated he asked these three gentlemen if they were advocates of the United States pulling out of Vietnam and not one indicated he was in favor of that direction. He then made this

\textsuperscript{77} Congressional Record, 90\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 1\textsuperscript{st} Session, 1967, Volume 113, Part 20, p. 26720-26723.
\textsuperscript{78} Congressional Record, 90\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 1\textsuperscript{st} Session, 1967, Volume 113, Part 20, p. 26721.
statement and followed it up by asking the following question, “…assuming we pull out of Vietnam, will that be the end of our troubles in Southeast Asia or with the Communists…?” Continuing to sharing this conversation with his fellow senators, he indicated that not one of the three being questioned believed pulling out of Vietnam would end American troubles in Southeast Asia or with the Communists. Once he repeated these questions he directly asked Senator Case what the United States should do in Vietnam. Should the United States pull out and go back on her word to the South Vietnamese government, abandoning them during their greatest hour of need, while at the same time opening up the possibility that all Southeast Asia could fall to Communism, or stay and have our fighting men be mercilessly shot?

Reading this conversation leads one to believe that both Case and Lausche were against following the course of action being called for by Gruening and Morse, and yet neither seemed to have an answer for what the next step should be for the United States in relation to Vietnam. It needs to be mentioned that during 1967 Case and Lausche both made statements that indicated they were against American involvement in Vietnam and at other times during the year made statements that could lead people to believe they supported American involvement in Vietnam. This demonstrates the struggle that many senators had with the issue of American involvement and how senators could take a position one day and hold the exact opposite view the very next day. In spite of the struggles of Case, Lausche and any others in determining how they felt about Vietnam, in 1967 there were still senators who believed that America needed to remain involved.

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During 1967 Gruening and Morse each made motions calling for the re-evaluation of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. One of these calls occurred on August 7th, 1967 when Gruening asked the Senate to reconsider, revise and if necessary repeal the resolution. Attempting to make his case Gruening pointed out that three years earlier, in 1964, the United States had been allegedly attacked by the North Vietnamese. Gruening went on to indicate the resolution and initial response may have served a needed purpose in 1964, although he personally doubted so, but now the resolution was being misused by the president. In a speech given before the Senate, Gruening articulated this sentiment by stating that “in the three years that have passed since the resolution was adopted, it had been used to engage the United States in a major war, steadily widening and increasingly bloody, increasingly costly with consequences disastrous to the United States.”

Gruening believed that the resolution needed to be re-examined quickly, before the lives of more innocent boys were needlessly expended in Vietnam. By re-examining the resolution, the Senate could make a couple of determinations: first, did the resolution really extend the power to the president that he was exercising and second, did the Senate desire for the president to have the freedom to take the military actions he deemed necessary in Southeast Asia without any form of accountability?

Morse called for a re-evaluation at the same time that he challenged one of many military appropriation bills. This particular bill came before the Senate on August 22nd, 1967. Morse argued that passing these appropriation bills, as the Senate had done with other appropriation bills, sent a message that the Senate supported the president’s actions in Vietnam. Believing this was a wrong message to send to the American people and to the president and believing that continued involvement in Vietnam should be re-

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evaluated led Morse to urge his colleagues to vote down the appropriations bill, or at least amend it significantly, and take some time to reconsider the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. Like Gruening, Morse firmly believed that this resolution had been used to deeply immerse the United States in Vietnam. He still argued that it had given the president too much power, that the balance of power created by the founding fathers had been subverted, and that equilibrium needed to be restored to the American political system. Evaluating the resolution would allow the Senate to come to terms with whether he and Gruening were right. It would also allow them to determine once and for all if the president had used the resolution to involve the United States more deeply in Vietnam than the Senate had desired and would give them an opportunity to either amend or repeal the resolution. Sending a warning to the president and the Senate, Morse indicated that he was going to move that the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution be repealed if action were not taken to adjust it.

Senator Milton Young (Republican-North Dakota), responding to the call of Gruening and Morse for the resolution to be revisited, revised and possibly repealed, argued that although it was unfortunate that the United States had to police the world alone, in this instance, it was something that the United States needed to do. Lack of involvement of the United Nations was not a legitimate reason for the United States to allow the Communists to consume a country under the guise of “wars of national liberation.” Voting against appropriations such as Gruening and Morse were suggesting and discontinuing the fight in Vietnam was not acceptable. Young argued that the military needed the full support of the Senate and that everything possible needed to be

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done to aid the cause of victory in Vietnam for both the United States military personnel fighting there and the South Vietnamese government. Communism needed to be arrested and Vietnam was the place it needed to happen. Joining Senator Young were John Stennis (Democrat-Mississippi), Symington and Margaret Chase Smith (Republican-Maine), all of whom agreed there was a need at this time for the military to be present in Vietnam and that it should have full support while engaged in conflict in Vietnam.\footnote{Congressional Records, 90\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 1\textsuperscript{st} Session, Volume 113, Part 18, p. 23462-23471.}

Now was not the time to re-evaluate, revise or repeal the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. These senators did not believe the United States military should be asked to perform a task but not given the necessary equipment to successfully complete it. Voting the appropriation down or even adjusting it, while spending time re-evaluating the resolution would indeed bring about such a result and hinder the military operations.

American involvement in Vietnam would not be much different in 1968 than it had been during the previous three years. The first battle of the year occurred on January 21\textsuperscript{st} when 20,000 North Vietnamese troops, under the command of General Giap attacked the air base at Khe Sanh. Over the course of 77 days 5000 United States Marines were isolated and surrounded. This battle quickly became likened to the battle of Dien Bien Phu by Johnson. Nervous that the outcome would be the same, Johnson responded by stating that he did not want another “damn Dinbinpoo”.\footnote{http://www.historyplace.com/u.s./vietnam/index-1965.html.}

To keep that from happening he had supplies dropped to the marines and also had B-52’s bomb the attackers every ninety minutes for several days. A real turning point in the war occurred on January 31\textsuperscript{st} when 84,000 Viet Cong guerillas and North Vietnamese soldiers launched simultaneous attacks on 100 cites and towns in South Vietnam. American forces were able to regain
control and President Johnson declared the TET offensive a victory for the United States and the South Vietnamese. Walter Cronkite, however, saw it differently and reported that the war would end in a stalemate. Cronkite’s assessment made a significant impact on many Americans. On March 16th over 300 Vietnamese were killed in My Lai which would be an incident that was covered up by the American military and government for many years. In the month of October, Operation Sea Lord, comprised of United States and South Vietnamese gun boats targeted North Vietnamese supply depots extending from Cambodia to the Mekong Delta. Although the supply centers were disrupted, they were not completely shut down. President Johnson brought Operation Rolling Thunder to a final end on October 31st, 1968. During the air campaign the United States dropped a million ton of bombs, which was the equivalent of 800 tons a day and was responsible for the death of 52,000 civilians. It is important to note that under President Richard Nixon, the United States would resume bombing North Vietnam. At the end of the year the United States troop levels reached 495,000, with a total loss of 30,000 American lives since the United States had become involved in Vietnam.

By 1968 support among the American people for Johnson and his Vietnam policy had diminished greatly. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee held hearings which aired on television that dealt with General Westmoreland’s request for 200,000 additional troops and the overall effectiveness of Johnson’s Vietnam War strategy. Clearly, key members of the Senate were challenging the position of the president. Many people from New Hampshire demonstrated their displeasure with Johnson by casting their votes in the

89 Herring, LBJ And Vietnam, p. 96-102.  
democratic primary for the anti-war conservative Eugene McCarthy. As a result, Johnson narrowly won the election. The occurrence in New Hampshire was really no surprise considering that in a public opinion poll taken shortly after the TET offensive Johnson’s approval rating had dropped to 36% and approval of his Vietnam policy had slipped to 26%. Further discontent with Johnson was demonstrated at the Democratic National Convention held in Chicago, Illinois. Here, 10,000 anti-war protestors gathered outside the convention center where they were met by 26,000 police and National Guardsmen. The conflict ended with 800 demonstrators being injured and was carried on network television. On April 23rd and 27th anti-war activists seized five buildings at Columbia University and 200,000 students in New York refused to attend class as a way to protest the war. Again the number of dissenters in the Senate and the number of protestors was not overwhelming in comparison to the overall population of the United States, but they were increasing which demonstrated that many Americans were coming to agree with Gruening and Morse on the Vietnam War.

In 1968 during the 91st Congress, there was more discussion in the Senate as various members tried to determine what to do with the albatross around their neck: American participation in the conflict in Vietnam. Senator Abraham Ribicoff (Democrat-Connecticut) who had traveled to Vietnam in late 1967 and early 1968 indicated that he believed the United States should take a different approach in Vietnam. He called for the United States to discontinue offensive military operations, to take a strictly defensive posture and to focus concentrated attention on the physical needs of the Vietnamese

91 Hess, Presidential Decisions, p. 144.
93 Herring, America’s Longest War, p. 215-216.
people. Meeting the needs of the South Vietnamese people would require not only a change in American tactics, but also a change in the South Vietnamese government.\(^95\) Ribicoff pointed out that the prime argument used by the Viet Minh and North Vietnamese to turn the South Vietnamese people against the government was the corruption that existed in their government. Corrupt government officials had either siphoned or diverted funds meant for needed housing projects, hunger relief and other social enhancement programs, and placed them in their own pockets.\(^96\) They had also extended favors to those who could afford it, while making it difficult on the ones who were not in a position to afford to pay a bribe. Corrupt governments are not responsive to the needs of their people and it was no secret that corruption was prevalent in the South Vietnamese government. In addition to ending corruption, Ribicoff believed that repression needed to be brought to an end because it was another tool used by the Communist to turn the people against the government.\(^97\) The North Vietnamese and the Viet Minh were accused of being oppressive, yet they were able to make a case they were not the ones really oppressing the South Vietnamese. It was not the Viet Minh or the North Vietnamese who were forcing many of the peasants to leave their homes and move into secure hamlets, which offered substandard housing and inadequate supplies; it was the South Vietnamese. In addition, the Viet Minh and the North Vietnamese were not favoring the Catholic minority and suppressing the Buddhists; it was the South Vietnamese that allowed this to occur, primarily under Ngo Dien Diem. Finally, the Viet Minh and the North Vietnamese were quick to point out they were not the ones dropping bombs on the homes of the South Vietnamese and destroying what little the people had; it

was the Americans who were doing it on behalf of the South Vietnamese government. Because of this Ribicoff lobbied that the United States needed to use all the leverage it possessed to assure that the South Vietnamese government took the appropriate steps to curb corruption. Once this took place, it would be possible for the South Vietnamese government to gain a favorable standing with the people. He urged that steps should also be taken in relation to land reform, education and poverty and that the United States needed to discontinue the bombing of Vietnam. Although Ribicoff did not exactly articulate the objectives of Ernest Gruening and Wayne Morse, it was encouraging that he was calling for an end to military operations.

One of the Senate’s most respected members, Mike Mansfield (Democrat-Montana), articulated thoughts that Gruening and Morse had been expressing since 1965, challenging America to get out of Vietnam and take care of the social difficulties that existed at home. Each year that the United States remained in Vietnam, billions of dollars were allocated to the defense budget. There were even times when appropriation bills were presented to the Senate mid-year requesting additional funds for the military because the amount originally allocated in the budget was not sufficient to meet the needs that existed in Vietnam. Mansfield pointed out that even before the United States became heavily involved in Vietnam with its military, the United States still spent a considerable amount of money in Vietnam while the French were seeking to reassert their control there. These funds primarily provided the French government with money to supplement the pay of their military and to purchase needed military equipment and ammunition. After the United States military became fully engaged, these funds also paid United

States personnel salaries and purchased jeeps, tanks, trucks, guns, ammunition, medical supplies, food, uniforms and transportation for military personnel going to and from the United States. While diverting funds to take care of war expenses, the social needs in the United States were going unmet. The American education system was in need of assistance. Gruening stated that Alaskan schools, just like schools all across country, were in need of financial help with updated text books, equipment and funds to supplement their budgets, and were suffering because the government did not have the resources to help them. Federal money needed to be diverted from the war and invested in the education of American youth.

After calling for the United States to take a different approach in Vietnam, Senator Mansfield indicated that he was not happy with the increased military involvement of the United States in Vietnam. He had reservations about the United States getting involved in 1964 when the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was passed. Now, in 1968, after all that had transpired in Vietnam, he fully embraced the position of Gruening and Morse, believing that the United States needed to get out of Vietnam. Senator Mansfield would not be alone in migrating toward the position held by Gruening and Morse. By 1968 several senators, including J. William Fulbright who helped to pass the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in the Senate, would abandon his support for the president and endorse the position of Gruening and Morse.

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CONCLUSION

Isolating a specific event within the Vietnam War makes it difficult to gain a comprehensive understanding of how all of the interrelated events of the war impacted that one singular event. However, in this thesis an isolated examination is made of the Gulf of Tonkin incident and the Senate debate that followed from 1964-1968, and from this examination it seems as though America became involved in a situation where it did not belong and from which it was unable to remove itself. During the days that the United States Senate debated the approval of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and throughout American involvement in Vietnam many dynamics came into play as each senator sought to determine how he or she should vote.

Senators Gruening and Morse were adamant dissenters of American involvement in Vietnam. They felt that Vietnam was a worthless war, unworthy of the life of even one American soldier. Gruening and Morse believed that America provoked the attack in the Gulf of Tonkin, violated both the Geneva Accords and the United Nations Charter agreement, became involved in a civil war, and violated the principle of self determination. From 1964-1968, these senators openly chastised the administration’s involvement in Vietnam, challenged the Senate to remove the American military from Vietnam and encouraged the American public to call for this removal to occur. This was accomplished through impassioned speeches given on the Senate floor. Their call to the American public also came through newspaper editorials and articles in national periodicals, and speeches given to peace groups across the United States. It was also done through involvement with the anti war movement. Their early opposition to the war and renown as the only votes against the resolution made Gruening and Morse popular speakers who were embraced by a wide spectrum of anti-war groups including the radical protestor’s right down to the groups who were more conservative in their approach. It should be mentioned that
Gruening and Morse although willing to speak before any group willing to listen to their anti-war rhetoric, were most interested in addressing the more controlled protestors. Neither Gruening nor Morse really wanted to be associated with groups that used violence or nudity to make their point. They were interested in supporting groups who made their position known and who were willing to stand up to the federal government.

A second group of Senators believed that the United States needed to be involved in Vietnam. They felt that the United States Navy had been attacked without provocation in the Gulf of Tonkin and that the aggressors needed to be punished. Furthermore, it needed to be demonstrated to the world how the United States would react in similar situations. The rationale of these Senators for continued involvement was that South Vietnam had been attacked by a ruthless outside force and needed United States support to remove the aggressors and re-establish order in their country. It was feared that the fall of Vietnam would allow Communism to spread throughout the world.

Other Senators openly supported the president, but privately questioned United States’ involvement in Vietnam, doubting the importance of Vietnam to the national security of the United States. However, they believed that during this time of crisis, the president should be supported, to show the world the unified strength of the United States. This group felt that after this crisis had passed, the Senate should re-evaluate United States foreign policy as it related to Southeast Asia. This needed to be done to determine exactly who the United States should support in Southeast Asia and how much support should be given.

With the perfect vision of hindsight, it is easy for historians who evaluate this particular incident and the subsequent events relating to the Vietnam War to state what should have been the response of the United States Senate. Looking back at the arguments made by those both for
and against the resolution, it is evident that Senators Gruening and Morse, who argued against the resolution, made the stronger case. It may never be known whether voting down the resolution would have made any difference to the outcome of America’s involvement in the war. However, it is a fact that even though America was unable to win the war and keep Communism out of Vietnam, all of Southeast Asia did not topple to Communism. The greatest fears of the supporters of the resolution and the Vietnam War were never realized, in spite of American involvement and great loss.
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