

How important is it that Congress and the President trust each other? Fulbright Investigates the Vietnam War



Supporting Questions

1. Why did Senator Fulbright's understanding of the Gulf of Tonkin incident change over time?
2. What did Senator Fulbright's hearings reveal to the nation?

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How important is it that Congress and the President trust each other?

Content Standards

MI USHG – 8.1.2 Foreign Policy During the Cold War – compare the causes and consequences of the American policy of containment including:

- the development and growth of a U.S. national security establishment and intelligence community.
- the direct and/or armed conflicts with Communism (for example, but not limited to: Berlin, Korea, Cuba).
- U.S. involvement in Vietnam, and the foreign and domestic consequences of the war.
- indirect (or proxy) confrontations within specific world regions.
- the arms race and its implications on science, technology, and education.

MI Civics – 3.3.3 Explain the concept of public opinion, factors that shape it, and contrasting views on the role it should and does play in public policy.

MI Civics – 3.3.6 Explain functions and possible influence of various news and other media sources in political communication.

MI Civics – 3.3.7 Analyze the credibility and validity of various forms of political communication.

Staging the Question

Using [Google Forms](#), give students the prompt: “Rank the following factors from most to least important when it comes to deciding whether to trust someone or something.” Have students discuss and rank the options.

Supporting Question 1

Why did Senator Fulbright's understanding of the Gulf of Tonkin incident change over time?

Formative Performance Task

Students use a modified Claim-Evidence-Reasoning chart to compare the information provided at the time of passage of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution with information that Senator Fulbright and his committee learned after it was passed.

Featured Sources

Source 1A: Tonkin Gulf Incident Map (1964)
Source 1B: [President Johnson's Vietnam Address, 8/4/64](#) video
Source 1C: Tonkin Gulf Resolution (1964)
Source 1D: Evidence Strips

- Anonymous letter received by Senator Fulbright (Jan. 2, 1968)
- Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara to Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Aug. 6, 1964)

Supporting Question 2

What did Senator Fulbright's hearings reveal to the nation?

Formative Performance Task

Students will work in teams to create newspaper-style headlines in response to the information exposed by the Fulbright Committee's hearings.

Featured Sources

Source 2A: “Who was J. William Fulbright?” reading
Source 2B: Video clips of [testimony of General Taylor before the Fulbright Committee](#) (1966)
Source 2C: Video clip of [testimony of George Kennan before the Fulbright Committee](#) (1966)
Source 2D: Video clips of [testimony of Secretary of State Dean Rusk before the Fulbright Committee](#) (1966)
Source 2E: Video clip of [testimony of John Kerry before the Fulbright Committee](#) (1971)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senator Frank Lausche of Ohio on the floor of the Senate (Aug. 5, 1964) • Secretary of State Dean Rusk to Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Aug. 6, 1964) • Staff memorandum written for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee SUBJECT: The 1964 incidents in the Gulf of Tonkin (Jan. 17, 1968) • Washington Post (Aug. 16, 1964) • Washington Post (Sept. 24, 1964) • Washington Post (Jun. 3, 1966) • Anonymous letter received by Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Jan. 24, 1968) • Top secret paper prepared by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (McNaughton)
Assessment	In teams, students will draft a congressional resolution that acts as an alternative reaction to the incidents in the Tonkin Gulf. Then, each student will individually reflect on how their new resolution differs from the original and answer the compelling question.
Extension/Taking Informed Action	Students read a recent article about the authorization of military force which was used to authorize military action in Iraq and Afghanistan and answer the accompanying questions.

Required Supplies/Materials:

Day 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student devices • Fulbright Inquiry – Trust Factors Ranking Google form • Source 1A: Tonkin Gulf Incident Map (one per small group) • Source 1C: Tonkin Gulf Resolution (optional) • Source 1D: Evidence Strips - cut into strips and placed in envelope (one per small group) • Supporting question 1 worksheet
Day 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Who was J. William Fulbright?” handout • “Who was J. William Fulbright?” comprehension questions
Day 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting question 2 worksheet • Revised Tonkin Gulf Resolution graphic organizer • Revised Tonkin Gulf Resolution template • Student devices (one per small group)
Day 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sticky dots or markers for hot dots • Two sheets of paper per team: one labeled “Hot Dots” and one labeled “Feedback” • Compelling question worksheet

Suggested Pacing: Four 60-minute class periods

Lesson Sequence

Period 1

1. Have students open the [Fulbright Inquiry – Trust Factors Ranking](#) Google form. Give students two minutes to discuss with a partner and complete the poll. When all students have responded, display the results for the whole class, and take one or two share-outs as to the reasoning behind rankings. Explain that all these reasons to trust or distrust someone apply in the relationship between Congress and the President. Tell students that they will be exploring a time when the Senate made a very big decision based on information given to them by the President and his aides, whom they trusted, which later came into question. **(10 min)**
2. Divide students into teams of 3-4. They will remain in these groups for the entire lesson. Tell students that they are going to be introduced to the situation by an address from the President, and that they should look at their map to help them better understand what Johnson is talking about. Pass out the Tonkin Gulf Incident Map (Source 1A, one per small group) and the supporting question 1 worksheet (one per student). Have students watch the video of [President Johnson's Vietnam Address, 8/4/64](#) (Source 1B). After the video, have students take 5 minutes to answer question 1 on the worksheet. Take one or two share-outs. **(10 min)**
3. Next, pass out the source strips (Source 1D), cut up and placed into one envelope per team. Explain to students that the sources they are about to look at are different examples of information available to Congress over time. Tell students to put the sources in chronological order to see how this information changed over time. Have students work in their teams to use the sources to complete the supporting question 1 worksheet. While they may work together as a team, each student must complete their own worksheet. **(35 min)**

Period 2

1. Begin with students returning to their groups and supporting question 1 worksheet. Give students time to individually answer supporting question 1. **(10 min)**
2. Invite a few students to share their answers to supporting question 1 and have a discussion around the responses. **(10 min)**
3. Explain to students that they will now learn about J. William Fulbright, a powerful U.S. Senator who originally argued in favor of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. Pass out “Who was J. William Fulbright?” (Source 2A) and its corresponding comprehension questions. Give students time to read the document and answer the questions. **(15 min)**
4. Tell students that Senator Fulbright and his committee saw much of the same evidence that they have seen over the last two periods. However, the statements by the President and his advisors did not provide enough information. Accordingly, Fulbright decided to continue investigating and digging for facts. He launched a series of hearings which he hoped would educate both himself, his Senate colleagues, and the public.
5. Pass out the supporting question 2 worksheet. Tell students that over the next two days, they are going to watch some of the Fulbright hearings. Following each video, students should talk in their teams for a few minutes, and then each student should create a newspaper headline that captures the essence of what they just watched. **(25 min)**
 - [1966 Fulbright Vietnam Hearings, Retired General and Ambassador Maxwell Taylor](#)



- Play from 00:31:33-00:39:20 (7:47 min)
- [1966 Vietnam Hearings Preview – Senior US Diplomat George Kennan](#)
 - Play entire video (2:23 min)

Period 3

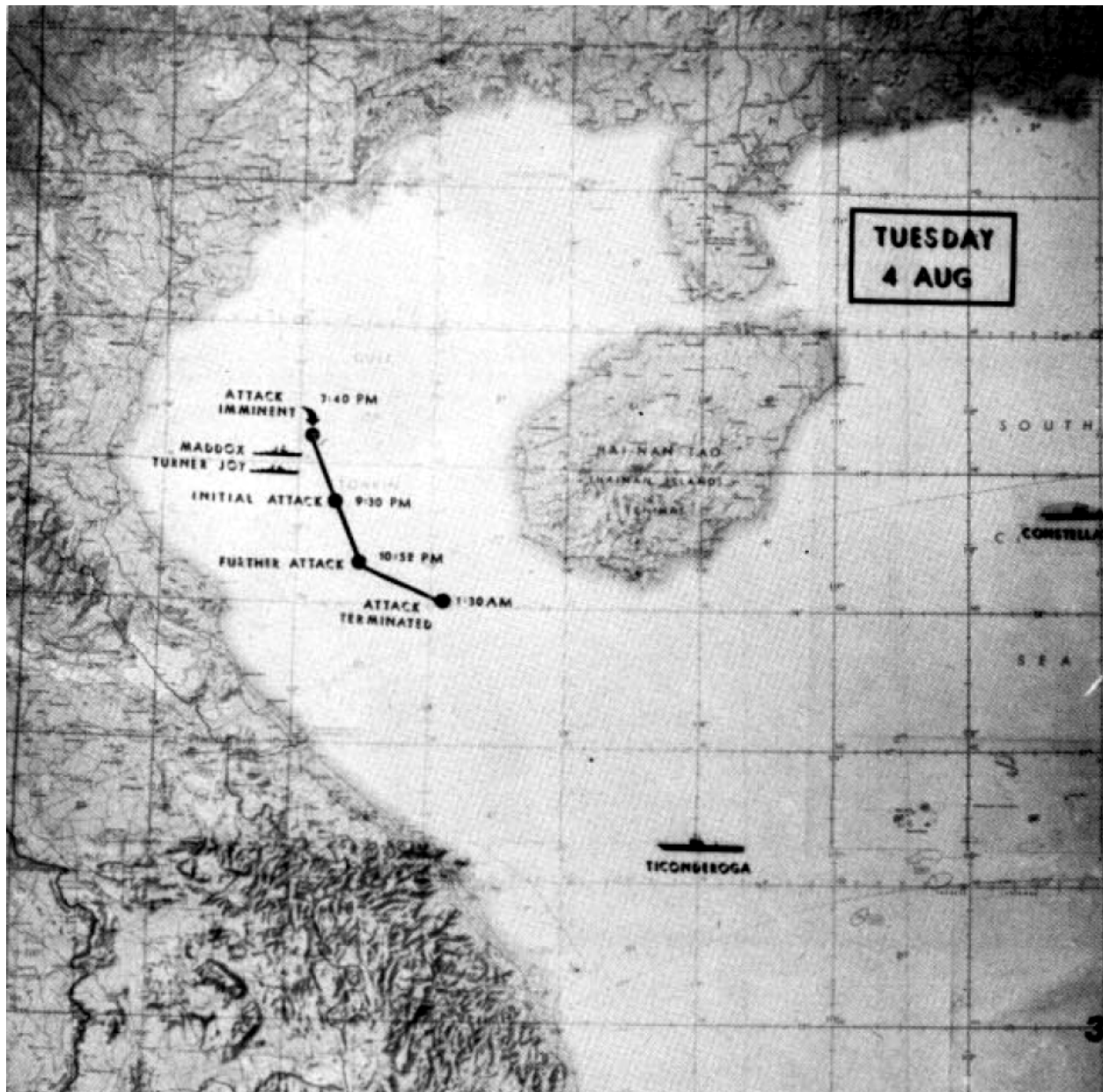
1. Bring students back together and finish watching the Fulbright hearings. After watching each video, have students finish their supporting question 2 worksheet. **(15 min)**
 - [1966 Fulbright Vietnam Hearings, Secretary of State Dean Rusk](#)
 - Play from 1:00:23-1:04:00 and 1:06:05-1:08:48 (6:20 min)
 - [Vietnam War Hearing 1971, Lt. John Kerry](#)
 - Play from 00:12:43-00:18:26 and 00:19:19-00:20:00 (6:22 min)
2. After students have watched the clips and written their headlines, they should take some time individually to answer supporting question 2. Take one or two share-outs. **(5 min)**
3. As the final activity, pass out the “Revised Tonkin Gulf Resolution Graphic Organizer.” Tell students that for the next 30 minutes, they will revisit the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. Fulbright was one of the original supporters of the resolution, and after his investigation, he regretted it. Each team will be able to do what Fulbright could not and write an alternative Tonkin Gulf Resolution based on the facts revealed by the Fulbright hearings. Once each team has completed the graphic organizer, they can write their revised resolution on the “Revised Resolution Template” (formatted to look like the original Tonkin Gulf Resolution). Each team will turn in one copy of their resolution. **(30 min)**

Period 4

1. Once each team has completed their revised resolution, ensure that resolutions are laid out so that students can do a gallery walk to read each one. Next to each resolution should be two blank pages, one labeled “Hot Dots” and one labeled “Feedback.” Students will then proceed to do a gallery walk of the various resolutions. They should use their sticky dots to vote on their favorite version while also leaving one piece of positive feedback for each of the teams. The resolution with the most hot dots will be considered “adopted” by the class. **(20 min)**
2. To conclude, students will complete the compelling question worksheet on their own and turn it in. **(10 min)**

Supporting question 1	Why did Senator Fulbright's understanding of the Gulf of Tonkin incident change over time?
Source 1A	Tonkin Gulf Incident Map
U.S. Navy. (2016, June 11). File: Tonkin Gulf incident map of alleged attacks on 4 August 1964.png. Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tonkin_Gulf_incident_map_of_alleged_attacks_on_4_August_1964.png	

Note: The Ticonderoga is located at roughly the 17th Parallel (the border between North and South Vietnam)



Supporting question 1	Why did Senator Fulbright’s understanding of the Gulf of Tonkin incident change over time?
Source 1B	President Johnson’s Vietnam Address
TheLBJLibrary. (2012, May 24). <i>President Johnson's Vietnam Address, 8/4/64. MP498</i> [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dc9gJvpV8xo	



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President Johnson's Vietnam Address, 8/4/64. MP498.



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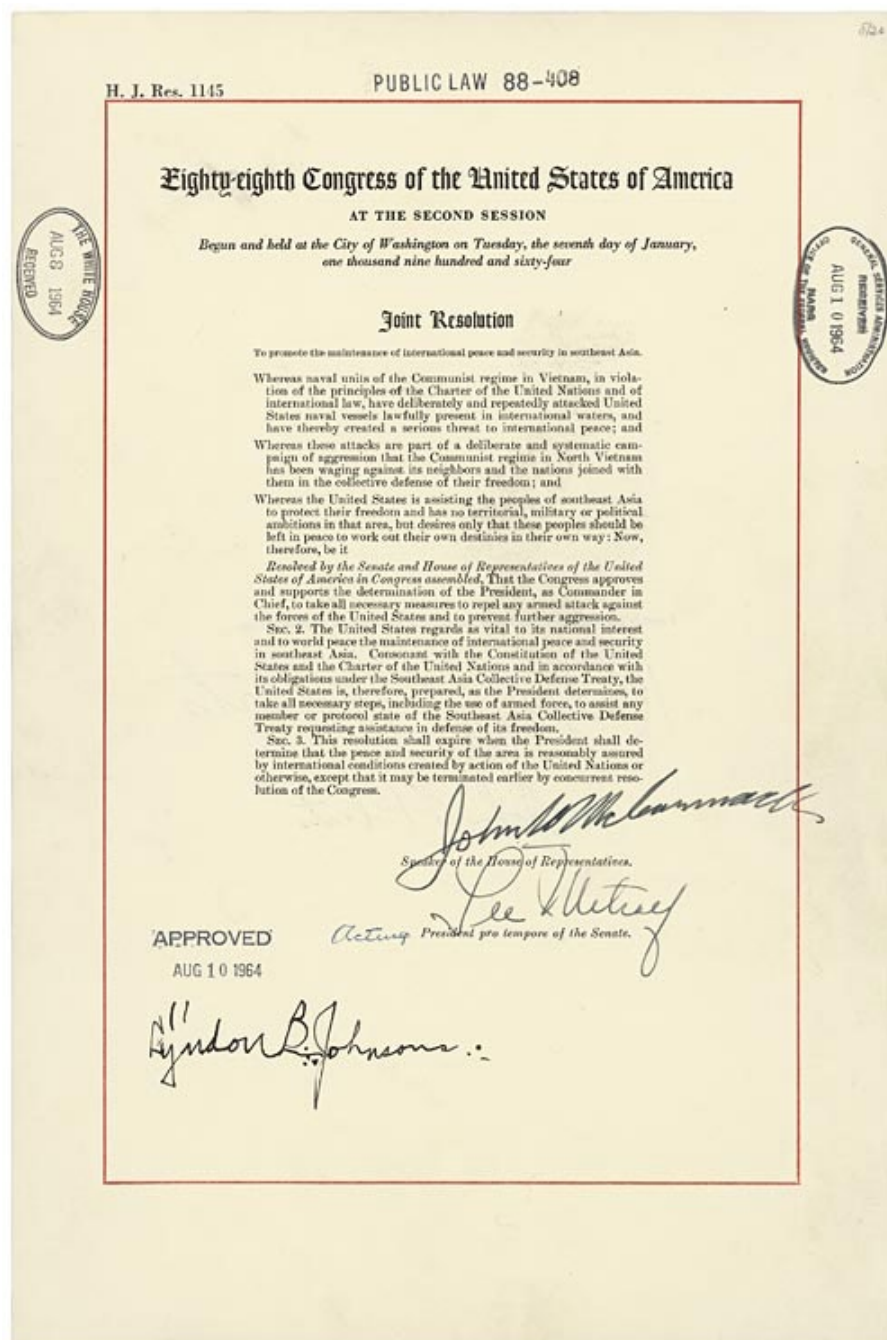
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Supporting question 1	Why did Senator Fulbright's understanding of the Gulf of Tonkin incident change over time?
Source 1C	The Tonkin Gulf Resolution

Tonkin Gulf Resolution; Public Law 88-408, 88th Congress, August 7, 1964; General Records of the United States Government; Record Group 11; National Archives. Tonkin Gulf Resolution, Senate roll call tally sheet, 08/07/1964; SEN 88A-M1, Misc Roll Calls, 88th Congress, 2nd Session; Record Group 46, Records of the U. S. Senate; National Archives.



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Eighty-eighth Congress of the United States of America

AT THE SECOND SESSION

Begun and held at the City of Washington on Tuesday, the seventh day of January, one thousand nine hundred and sixty-four

Joint Resolution

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

[endorsements]

A. Anonymous letter received by Senator Fulbright, January 2, 1968



Received January 2, 1968

SENATOR J. WILLIAM FULBRIGHT,
SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE,
*Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.*

Dear SENATOR: Keep up the good work on your investigation into the *alleged* second Tonkin Gulf incident. You certainly have us here in DOD scurrying around trying to cover up the incident and inundate you with facts to circumvent the main point. That is, that the so-called second attack of 4 August never took place.

United States. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. (2010). *Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Historical Series), S. Prt. 111-23, Volume 20, 90-2, 1968, Made Public 2010, **. [Place of publication not identified]: [publisher not identified].

B. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to Senate Foreign Relations Committee regarding the second Gulf of Tonkin incident. August 6, 1964



I reported on Monday in my briefings to the Congress that I believed this to be an isolated incident, perhaps a miscalculation or misunderstanding by the North Vietnamese, and we did not anticipate it would be repeated.

Contrary to my estimate it was repeated on August 4 at which time between three and six North Vietnamese patrol boats attacked the *Maddox* and the *Turner Joy* which had been sent to accompany it on its patrol course.

At this time the vessels were about 60 miles off the coast of North Vietnam. The attack occurred at night. It appeared to be a deliberate attack in the nature of an ambush.

Torpedoes were launched, automatic weapons fire was directed against the vessels. They returned the fire. Aircraft from the *Ticonderoga* and by this time the *Constellation* which had been brought down [deleted] to support the *Ticonderoga*, were sent over the vessels and returned the patrol boat's fire.

We believe that two of the patrol boats were destroyed as a result of the fire. Engagement was broken off after 2 to 3 hours of fire. The meetings in Washington you are familiar with, the following day.

The President decided that this deliberate attack, and it was clearly a deliberate attack, a preplanned attack, required a military response. We, therefore, launched in the daylight hours about noon-

United States Senate, Committee On Foreign Relations, & Committee on Armed Services. (1966). *Southeast Asia Resolution: Joint hearing before the committee on foreign relations and the committee on armed services United States Senate Eighty-Eighth Congress Second Session on A joint resolution to promote the maintenance of international peace and security on southeast Asia. U.S. Government Printing Office.*

C. Washington Post September 24, 1964

Critics See Phantom in Tonkin Incident

By Warren Unna
Staff Reporter

News Analysis

ships did not fire at the while Hanoi first told the resent enemy craft with

By Warren Unna, S. R. (1964, Sep 24). Critics See Phantom in Tonkin Incident: News Analysis. The Washington Post, Times Herald (1959-1973)

<https://proxy.lib.wayne.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/critics-see-phantom-tonkin-incident/docview/142160719/se-2>



D. Senator Frank Lausche of Ohio on the floor of the Senate, Aug. 5, 1964

Mr. LAUSCHE. Mr. President, I desire to speak briefly concerning the grave problem facing us in southeast Asia.

The course adopted by the President is not of his choosing, but has been forced upon him and our Nation by the offenses committed by the Communists of North Vietnam. Our ship that was attacked was in international waters, where it had a right to be free from attacks by North Vietnam or any other nation. Neither in the interests of the security of our country nor in the proper maintenance of our honor can we afford a course of action other than the one adopted.

Southeast Asia is our first line of defense; when an enemy attacks us there, he is, in principle, attacking us on our native land. To pull out of southeast Asia would be to surrender that entire area to the Communists. Not only would it mean the capture of South Vietnam and the other lands that once were French Indochina, but it also would definitely endanger all of the lands occupied by friends of the West, including the Philippines and Australia. The stakes are

United States Senate, Committee On Foreign Relations, & Committee on Armed Services. (1966). Southeast Asia Resolution: Joint hearing before the committee on foreign relations and the committee on armed services United States Senate Eighty-Eighth Congress Second Session on A joint resolution to promote the maintenance of international peace and security on southeast Asia. U.S. Government Printing Office.



E. Secretary of State Dean Rusk to Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Aug. 6, 1964

Well now, the important aspect of this resolution is, I venture to suggest, not so much in the constitutional field as in the broad political field here and abroad. We have, since 1945, been engaged in an effort to bring about a peaceful world situation. The main thrust of that has necessarily been to bring to a halt the kind of armed aggression and subversion and infiltration which have come, both as a matter of doctrine and as a matter of practice, out of the Communist world.

United States Senate, Committee On Foreign Relations, & Committee on Armed Services. (1966). Southeast Asia Resolution: Joint hearing before the committee on foreign relations and the committee on armed services United States Senate Eighty-Eighth Congress Second Session on A joint resolution to promote the maintenance of international peace and security on southeast Asia. U.S. Government Printing Office.



F. Staff memorandum written for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee SUBJECT: The 1964 incidents in the Gulf of Tonkin January 17, 1968



**United States Senate
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS**
January 17, 1968

STAFF MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The 1964 Incidents in the Gulf of Tonkin

This memorandum concerns three alleged instances of North Vietnamese attacks on American destroyers in the summer and fall of 1964.

The *first* attack occurred on August 2, 1964. The United States and Hanoi agree this attack took place. The only questions raised are whether the North Vietnamese attack on the *Maddox* occurred while it was on a "routine patrol" on the high seas as the committee was told.

The *second* alleged attack was on August 4. The question here is "Did this attack occur?" This is important because *but for* this attack the United States would not have retaliated against North Vietnam and there would presumably have been no urgent request for the Tonkin Resolution.

The *third* alleged attack was on September 17/18. It is mentioned here because after a full investigation the Navy concluded that the attack did *not* occur.

*United States. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. (2010). Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Historical Series), S. Prt. 111-23, Volume 20, 90-2, 1968, Made Public 2010, *. [Place of publication not identified]: [publisher not identified].*

G. Staff memorandum written for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee SUBJECT: The 1964 incidents in the Gulf of Tonkin January 17, 1968



Mr. McNamara's contention that the *Maddox* was "engaged in a routine patrol in international waters of the Gulf of Tonkin" is not an accurate description of the *Maddox's* real mission during late July and early August of 1964. Moreover, in responding to Senator Morse's suggestion at the hearing on the resolution that the *Maddox* was somehow involved in a prior South Vietnamese attack on the North Vietnamese island of Hon Me, Mr. McNamara said:

Our Navy played absolutely no part in, was not associated with, was not aware of, any South Vietnam actions, if there were any. I want to make that very clear to you. The *Maddox* was operating in *international waters*, was carrying out a *routine patrol of the type we carry out all over the world at all times*. It was not informed of, was not aware of, had no evidence of, and so far as I know today has no knowledge of any South Vietnamese actions in connection with the two islands that Senator Morse referred to. (Hearings on the Southeast Asia Resolution, August 6, 1964, p.23)

The "routine patrol" description is not accurate. The Department of Defense materials reveal that the *Maddox* was engaged in an electronics spying mission along the North Vietnamese and Chinese coasts. The basic instruction for this mission (the code name

*United States. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. (2010). Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Historical Series), S. Prt. 111-23, Volume 20, 90-2, 1968, Made Public 2010, *. [Place of publication not identified]: [publisher not identified].*

H. Washington Post, August 16, 1964



The Tonkin Gulf Snafu

Anderson Says Maddox Didn't Know Saigonese Were Raiding

By Jack Anderson

NOW THAT all the facts are in regarding the recent Vietnamese crisis, diplomats are drawing one very definite conclusion: the White House is no place for a trigger-happy President.

There is even some quiet discussion among our NATO allies that the Johnson Administration was premature in retaliating so quickly against North Viet-Nam.

lected to inform the U.S. Seventh Fleet, which polices these waters.

THE DESTROYER Maddox, meanwhile, had entered Tonkin Gulf on a routine ELINT mission. This is the abbreviation for "electronic intelligence" and means that the Maddox carried super-sensitive electronic gear which could scout the North Vietnamese coast from outside the international boundaries

for three torpedo boats to attack.

The Maddox skipper, Cmdr. Herbert Ogier, sounded general quarters. For two hours, the crew waited at their battle stations while they tracked the approaching Soviet-made PT boats on the destroyer's radar screen.

COMMANDER Ogier kept the destroyer's stern turned toward the approaching boats in order to present as

By J. A. (1964, Aug 16). *The Tonkin Gulf Snafu: Anderson Says Maddox Didn't Know Saigonese Were Raiding*. *The Washington Post, Times Herald* (1959-1973)

<https://proxy.lib.wayne.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/tonkin-gulf-snafu/docview/142176364/se-2>

I. Top Secret Paper Prepared by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (McNaughton)

Note: this was given to Fulbright in 1971 by a whistleblower named Daniel Ellsberg



Washington, March 10, 1965.

ACTION FOR SOUTH VIETNAM

1. US aims:

70%—To avoid a humiliating US defeat (to our reputation as a guarantor).

20%—To keep SVN (and then adjacent) territory from Chinese hands.

10%—To permit the people of SVN to enjoy a better, freer way of life.

Also—To emerge from crisis without unacceptable taint from methods used.

Not—To "help a friend," although it would be hard to stay if asked out.

Department of State, Vietnam Negotiating Files: Lot 69 D 412, Project Mayflower. Top Secret; Sensitive. Copies were sent to McGeorge Bundy, Unger, McNamara, and Vance.

J. President Johnson's Video Address to the nation, August 4, 1964



TheLBJLibrary. (2012). *President Johnson's Vietnam Address, 8/4/64*. MP498. [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dc9qJvpV8xo>

K. Washington Post, June 3, 1966



Simpson Demands Fulbright Explain Remark on Tonkin

By Bryce Nelson

Washington Post Staff Writer

Sen. Milward L. Simpson (R-Wyo.) demanded yesterday that Foreign Relations Committee Chairman J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.) explain his characterization of the 1964 Tonkin Gulf naval battle as "very questionable."

Fulbright made his statement about the character of the North Vietnamese attack on U.S. ships in the Tonkin Gulf in August, 1964, in his questioning of Secretary of State Dean Rusk in a committee hearing on May 9.

In a Senate speech, Simpson said that he was "inclined to accept the White House version of Tonkin Gulf" although "I will certainly acknowledge that utter candor is not a hallmark of this Administration."

By Bryce Nelson Washington Post, Staff Writer. (1966, Jun 03). *Simpson Demands Fulbright Explain Remark on Tonkin*. *The Washington Post, Times Herald* (1959-1973) <https://proxy.lib.wayne.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/simpson-demands-fulbright-explain-remark-on/docview/142671864/se-2>

Name: _____

Supporting question 1: Why did Senator Fulbright’s understanding of the Gulf of Tonkin incident change over time?

Congress passed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution based on President Johnson’s word and Senator Fulbright’s endorsement. Later, Senator Fulbright felt misled by the Johnson administration.

Directions: Watch President Johnson’s Vietnam address from 8/4/64. Refer to your Tonkin Gulf incident map (Source 1A) as you watch.

What are your initial reactions to what President Johnson just said?

With your team, lay out the primary source evidence from your envelope in chronological order and list the order below.

Source Letter	Date Published
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
11.	

Next, match each piece of evidence with the claim it best fits. All evidence will be used only once but some claims may have multiple pieces of evidence. As you work, think about whether the evidence suggests the claim in the chart is true, or whether it suggests the claim is misleading. When your group has finished discussing, write the evidence letter in the chart.

Claim (Source 1C: Excerpts from The Tonkin Gulf Resolution, passed by Congress August 7, 1964)	Evidence Letter	
	Suggests claim is true	Suggests claim is misleading
“To promote the maintenance of international peace and security in southeast Asia.”		
“Whereas naval units of the Communist regime in Vietnam, have deliberately and repeatedly attacked United States naval vessels lawfully present in international waters, and have thereby created a serious threat to international peace”		
“Whereas these attackers are part of deliberate and systematic campaign of aggression that the Communist regime in North Vietnam has been waging against its neighbors and the nations joined with them in the collective defense of their freedom”		
“Whereas the United States is assisting the peoples of southeast Asia to protest (sic) their freedom and has no territorial, military or political ambitions in that area, but desires only that these people should be left in peace to work out their destinies in their own way”		

What do you notice about how the evidence seems to change over time?

Use these excerpts from the rest of the resolution to answer the following questions.

“The United States regards as vital to its national interest and to world peace the maintenance of international peace and security in southeast Asia. Consonant with the Constitution of the United States and the Charter of the United Nations and in accordance with its obligations under the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty...”

“... the United States is, therefore, prepared, as the President determines, to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom. 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.”

1. According to the section above, why is the United States involving itself in Southeast Asia at all?
2. Reread the second paragraph. Do you have any questions or concerns about the way that clause is worded?

Why did Senator Fulbright's understanding of the Gulf of Tonkin incident change over time? Use two quotes from the evidence strips to support your claim.

Name: _____

Supporting question 1: Why did Senator Fulbright’s understanding of the Gulf of Tonkin incident change over time? **ANSWER KEY**

Congress passed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution based on President Johnson’s word and Senator Fulbright’s endorsement. Later, Senator Fulbright felt misled by the Johnson administration.

Directions: Watch President Johnson’s Vietnam address from 8/4/64. Refer to your Tonkin Gulf incident map (Source 1A) as you watch.

What are your initial reactions to what President Johnson just said?

Answers will vary, but may include:

Johnson says we just got attacked for the second time by North Vietnam. We have to fight back. We can’t let them do that!

With your team, lay out the primary source evidence from your envelope in chronological order and list the order below.

Source Letter	Date Published
1. J	August 4, 1964
2. D	August 5, 1964
3. E/B	August 6, 1964
4. E/B	August 6, 1964
5. H	August 16, 1964
6. C	September 24, 1964
7. K	June 3, 1966
8. A	January 2, 1968
9. F/G	January 17, 1968
10. F/G	January 17, 1968
11. I	1971 (This source was written March 10, 1965, but was only published and made common knowledge in 1971)

Next, match each piece of evidence with the claim it best fits. All evidence will be used only once but some claims may have multiple pieces of evidence. As you work, think about whether the evidence suggests the claim in the chart is true, or whether it suggests the claim is misleading. When your group has finished discussing, write the evidence letter in the chart.

Claim (Source 1C: Excerpts from The Tonkin Gulf Resolution, passed by Congress August 7, 1964)	Evidence	
	Suggests claim is true	Suggests claim is misleading
“To promote the maintenance of international peace and security in southeast Asia.”	<i>E</i>	<i>H</i>
“Whereas naval units of the Communist regime in Vietnam, have deliberately and repeatedly attacked United States naval vessels lawfully present in international waters, and have thereby created a serious threat to international peace”	<i>B</i>	<i>A, F, C, K</i>
“Whereas these attackers are part of deliberate and systematic campaign of aggression that the Communist regime in North Vietnam has been waging against its neighbors and the nations joined with them in the collective defense of their freedom”	<i>D</i>	
“Whereas the United States is assisting the peoples of southeast Asia to protest (sic) their freedom and has no territorial, military or political ambitions in that area, but desires only that these people should be left in peace to work out their destinies in their own way”	<i>J</i>	<i>G, I</i>

What do you notice about how the evidence seems to change over time?

Answers will vary, but may include:

The earlier evidence seems to suggest there is no doubt at all that we were attacked. It also seems to come from mostly official administration sources. As time goes on though, the picture gets muddier, and the sources start to suggest we were wrong. They also start to come more and more from the media, the investigation, and the people that the investigation interviews.

Use these excerpts from the rest of the resolution to answer the following questions.

“The United States regards as vital to its national interest and to world peace the maintenance of international peace and security in southeast Asia. Consonant with the Constitution of the United States and the Charter of the United Nations and in accordance with its obligations under the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty...”

“... the United States is, therefore, prepared, as the President determines, to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom. 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.”

1. According to the section above, why is the United States involving itself in Southeast Asia at all?

Answers will vary, but may include:

We want peace, and we have a treaty that says we have to.

2. Reread the second paragraph. Do you have any questions or concerns about the way that clause is worded?

Answers will vary, but may include:

This section seems to give the president a whole lot of power with no real expiration date, and the President appears to be the only one who gets to decide when he has “finished.” Yeah, Congress could take it back, but you’d have to get the votes for that. Also...isn’t Congress supposed to declare war if we are fighting with another country? ARE they declaring war?

Why did Senator Fulbright's understanding of the Gulf of Tonkin incident change over time? Use two quotes from the evidence strips to support your claim.

Answers will vary, but may include:

Immediately after the supposed attack, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee heard testimony from Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, who stated unequivocally that the United States was attacked on August 4, 1964 by “between three and six North Vietnamese patrol boats.” This is in line with the information given to the nation by the President on August 4th. However, over time, an increasing number of sources start to indicate doubt as to the veracity of these claims. The Washington Post, reporting on August 16 of that same year called the Tonkin Gulf incident a “snafu” and cast doubt on whether the Senate was provided with the whole story. It seems from the sources that more and more news reports and testimony started to appear which led to the original facts being brought into question.

Supporting question 2	What did Senator Fulbright's hearings reveal to the nation?
Source 2A	Who was J. William Fulbright?
Seventy-Third Congress, 2 nd Session. (1934, June 16). Report of the Committee on Banking and Currency. Senate.gov. Retrieved September 20, 2024, from https://www.senate.gov/about/resources/pdf/pecora-final-report.pdf	

From 1966 to 1971, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a series of oversight hearings about the Vietnam War. Popularly called the “Fulbright hearings” after its chair, Arkansas Democrat Senator J. William Fulbright, these televised congressional hearings educated Congress and the American public about unknown facts, forced greater scrutiny of U.S. military actions, exposed misrepresentations by the executive branch, and helped shift public opinion against the war. The hearings illustrate the powerful role that congressional inquiries can play in informing the public about their government and shaping public opinion.

Senator Fulbright was a well-known, popular senator when he launched the hearings¹. A foreign policy expert, he chaired the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for 16 years from 1959 to 1974, becoming the longest serving chair of that committee in Senate history.² Senator Fulbright's relationship with President Johnson before he started to investigate the Vietnam war was a warm one. They regarded one another as mutual friends, and it was Fulbright himself who led the charge for quick passage of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in the senate.³ When Fulbright began to publicly question the wisdom of the Vietnam war and Gulf of Tonkin Resolution however, their relationship soured. President Johnson viewed Senator Fulbright's hearings and public statements as disloyal, especially given that Senator Fulbright was a former supporter and from the same political party. Senator Fulbright once remarked, “With a man like President Johnson, you either went along or you got off. He didn't tolerate differences of opinion very easily.”⁴

At the same time, Senator Fulbright told a journalist that he was convinced President Johnson had engaged in deception when it came to the Gulf of Tonkin: “I personally feel that the committee, the public and [me] personally were duped, that we were lied to.... You can't have an opportunity to exercise judgment if the facts are misrepresented.”



Senator J. William Fulbright
Source: U.S. Senate



Senator J. William Fulbright and Lyndon B. Johnson in Washington DC, June 21, 1960.
Source: Christie's, NY.

¹ Fulbright-1-sized.jpg. (2023, August 3). Wikimedia Commons. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fulbright-1-sized.jpg>

² U.S. Senate. (n.d.). J. William Fulbright: A featured biography. https://www.senate.gov/senators/FeaturedBios/Featured_Bio_Fulbright.htm

³ Yergin, D. (1974, November 24). Fulbright's last frustration: The great dissenter finally found himself a compatible Secretary of State. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/11/24/archives/fulbrights-last-frustration-the-great-dissenter-finally-found.html>

⁴ U.S. Senate. (n.d.). J. William Fulbright: A featured biography. https://www.senate.gov/senators/FeaturedBios/Featured_Bio_Fulbright.htm

Name: _____



“Who was J. William Fulbright?” comprehension questions

1. Why was Senator Fulbright so personally invested in getting to the bottom of the war in Vietnam?
2. The Gulf of Tonkin incident happened in 1964. Based on what you already know about the domino theory, containment, and American attitudes towards communism, why might Johnson have felt it necessary to get the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution passed quickly?

Name: _____



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“Who was J. William Fulbright?” comprehension questions ANSWER KEY

1. Why is Senator Fulbright so personally invested in getting to the bottom of the war in Vietnam?

Senator Fulbright took the lead in convincing other senators to pass the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, and subsequently felt misled by Johnson.

2. The Gulf of Tonkin incident happened in 1964. Based on what you already know about the domino theory, containment, and American attitudes towards communism, why might Johnson have felt it necessary to get the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution passed quickly?

According to the Domino Theory, allowing even one country to become Communist would lead to a catastrophic chain-reaction, wherein countries would fall like dominos. Fear of this possibility meant that any Communist expansion had to be dealt with, and quickly.

Supporting question 2	What did Senator Fulbright's hearings reveal to the nation?
Source 2B	Clip of 1966 Fulbright Vietnam Hearings, Retired General and Ambassador Maxwell Taylor <i>[play from 00:31:33-00:39:20 (7:47 min)]</i>
C-SPAN. (1966, February 17). 1966 Fulbright Vietnam Hearings, General Maxwell Taylor. C-SPAN. https://www.c-span.org/program/american-history-tv/1966-fulbright-vietnam-hearings-general-maxwell-taylor/431225	

FEBRUARY 17, 1966

American History TV

1966 Fulbright Vietnam Hearings, General Maxwell Taylor

General Maxwell Taylor (Retired) testified at a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing investigating the Vietnam War. His opening statement was followed by committee member questions.



Report Video Issues



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LEARNING BY
HEARINGS

Supporting question 2	What did Senator Fulbright's hearings reveal to the nation?
Source 2C	1966 Vietnam Hearings Preview – Senior US Diplomat George Kennan
C-SPAN. (2016). 1966 Vietnam Hearings Preview [Video]. In <i>YouTube</i> . https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-yO6GLooPiA	

1966 Vietnam Hearings Preview

C-SPAN ✓
1.64M subscribers

28

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Supporting question 2	What did Senator Fulbright's hearings reveal to the nation?
Source 2D	Clip of 1966 Fulbright Vietnam Hearings, Secretary of State Dean Rusk <i>[play from 1:00:23-1:04:00 and 1:06:05-1:08:48 (6:20 min)]</i>
C-SPAN. (1966, February 18). 1966 Fulbright Vietnam Hearings, Dean Rusk. C-SPAN. https://www.c-span.org/program/reel-america/1966-fulbright-vietnam-hearings-dean-rusk/431224	

FEBRUARY 18, 1966

Reel America

1966 Fulbright Vietnam Hearings, Dean Rusk

Secretary of State Dean Rusk testified at a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing investigating the Vietnam War. He described and defended President Lyndon Johnson's policy.

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Supporting question 2	What did Senator Fulbright’s hearings reveal to the nation?
Source 2E	Clip of 1971 Vietnam War Hearing, Lt. John Kerry [play from 00:12:43-00:18:26 and 00:19:19-00:20:00 (6:22 min)]
C-SPAN. (1971, April 22). Vietnam War Hearing 1971. C-SPAN. https://www.c-span.org/program/senate-committee/vietnam-war-hearing-1971/132342	

APRIL 22, 1971

Vietnam War Hearing 1971

On April 22nd, 1971, 27 year-old former Navy Lt. John Kerry testified against U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War as a member of "Vietnam Veterans Against the War". Senator J. William Fulbright (D-Arkansas) chaired the committee. Coverage included, ...Show More

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Report Video Issues



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Name: _____

Supporting question 2: What did Senator Fulbright’s hearings reveal to the nation?

Directions: Each video will be played for you as a whole class. After each video, talk in your teams for two minutes, and create a newspaper headline that captures what you think is the most important or interesting takeaway from what you just saw. Be prepared to share your headline with the class.

Video	Headline
Retired General and Ambassador Maxwell Taylor	
Senior US Diplomat George Kennan	
Secretary of State Dean Rusk	
Lt John Kerry	

What did Senator Fulbright’s hearings reveal to the nation?

Name: _____

Supporting question 2: What did Senator Fulbright’s hearings reveal to the nation? **ANSWER KEY**

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Video	Headline
Retired General and Ambassador Maxwell Taylor	<i>Answers may vary</i>
Senior US Diplomat George Kennan	<i>Answers may vary</i>
Secretary of State Dean Rusk	<i>Answers may vary</i>
Lt John Kerry	<i>Answers may vary</i>

What did Senator Fulbright’s hearings reveal to the nation?

Answers will vary, but may include:

Fulbright’s hearings showed the public that the executive branch had misrepresented military actions to them and caused public opinion to turn against the war.

Names: _____

Revised Tonkin Gulf Resolution Graphic Organizer

Use the table below to draft your revised Tonkin Gulf Resolution.

What happened in the Tonkin Gulf?
How did the events in the Tonkin Gulf affect the U.S.?
What were U.S. goals in the Vietnam region?
What are your team's recommendations to the President? Do you support his actions? Why or why not?
What do you want the U.S. to do? What powers are you giving to the President? When do these powers expire?

Eighty-eighth Congress of the United States of America

AT THE SECOND SESSION

*Begun and held at the City of Washington on Tuesday, the seventh day of January,
one thousand nine hundred and sixty-four*

Joint Resolution

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

Whereas: _____

Whereas: _____

*Resolved by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of
America in Congress assembled,*

APPROVED

AUG 10 1964

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Acting

President pro tempore of the Senate.

Lyndon B. Johnson



Name: _____

**Compelling question: How important is it that Congress and the President
trust each other?**



After you have participated in the gallery walk and voted on a new resolution, answer the following questions individually.

1. How did the new resolution that your team created differ from the original and why?
2. How important is it that Congress and the President trust each other?

Name: _____

**Compelling question: How important is it that Congress and the President
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Extension/Taking Informed Action	Congress revisits approval for Iraq invasion, recalling change of heart on Vietnam
Elving, Ron. (2023, March 25). <i>Congress revisits approval for Iraq invasion, recalling change of heart on Vietnam</i> . NPR. https://www.npr.org/2023/03/25/1165953799/congress-repeal-iraq-war-aumf-vietnam	

In the coming weeks, both chambers of Congress are expected to debate and vote on a bill repealing the authority that Congress gave President George W. Bush to use force against Iraq.

It has been more than half a century since Congress repealed a similar resolution. That was the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution of 1964, which had allowed then-President Lyndon Johnson to escalate the conflict in Vietnam.

That war ultimately cost more than 55,000 American lives and many times that many Vietnamese lives, destabilizing the entire region.

We will return to that precedent in a moment. For now, Congress is focused on the fallout from its decision to greenlight a war with Iraq in October 2002. The U.S. and its allies invaded and occupied Iraq the following March. It was 20 years ago this month.

There was no declaration of war against Iraq, although the Constitution gave that power to Congress in its Article I. Congress has not declared war on anyone since 1942, nor has any president asked it to. But there have been long and bloody wars in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq – not to mention hundreds of strikes using drones, missiles and "special forces" (the exact number is not known).

By repealing its 2002 authorization for the war in Iraq, Congress may hope to reassert more control on the war-making decisions of the executive branch. That is the goal, at least, of many on Capitol Hill.

One of repeal's principal sponsors in the Senate is Virginia Democrat Tim Kaine. He says the 2002 authorization (and another granted to President George H.W. Bush in 1991 prior to the Persian Gulf War) "are no longer necessary, serve no operational purpose, and run the risk of potential misuse."

A struggle as old as the republic

Congress has tried to stand up to presidents in previous eras, as the struggle between the branches is built into the nation's founding documents. But Congress has been weakened in this struggle by events over a long period of time and more recently by dramatic events in real time.

Congress has often been complicit in allowing the executive leeway for military adventures, dating back at least to Thomas Jefferson's forays against pirates in the Mediterranean in the early 1800s.

But the expansion of presidential war-making accelerated literally in a flash on Sept. 11, 2001, when hijacked airliners smashed into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Nearly 3,000 lives were lost, exceeding even the death toll from the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that propelled the U.S. into World War II.

Sept. 11, 2001, galvanized Americans much as Pearl Harbor had. Americans were fearful, and also vengeful. The awfulness of the Twin Towers collapsing and the grief of thousands of families who lost loved ones turned swiftly to anger. There were popular songs on the radio and rants on TV about what the U.S. would do in retribution. Just three days after those attacks, Congress met and passed an authorization for the use of military force, or AUMF, directing President Bush to go after the perpetrators and those who harbored or enabled them.

That covered the invasion of Afghanistan that fall and has been used by every president since for scores of operations — many still secret. It is important to note that the 2001 AUMF against terrorists would remain intact under the current Senate's repeal bill; the measure would apply only to the later resolution aimed specifically at Iraq and a 1991 AUMF concerning Iraq's invasion and occupation of neighboring Kuwait.

Shifting the onus of Sept. 11 to Saddam

The Iraq resolution came 13 months after Sept. 11. The initial thrust into Afghanistan had ousted the Taliban regime but failed to capture al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden. The Bush administration increasingly turned its attention to the regime of Saddam Hussein. While never explicitly saying Saddam had aided in the Sept. 11 attacks, Bush and his national security strongly implied it.

"Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror," Bush told Congress in January 2002. "... The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas and nuclear weapons."

Bush also asked Congress to "imagine those 19 hijackers [on Sept. 11, 2001] with other weapons and other plans, this time armed by Saddam Hussein." Just before the AUMF of 2002 was debated, national security adviser Condoleezza Rice warned the U.S. could not wait to find "a smoking gun" because it might be "a mushroom cloud."

So the Iraq AUMF was approved by a vote of 296-133 in the House and 77-23 in the Senate. Only six Republicans voted no in the House and just one in the Senate. A majority of Democrats in the House were opposed (126-81). But in the Senate, the majority of Democrats voted yes (29-21). There was one Independent vote against the resolution in each chamber.

Tracing a familiar track with tragic results

In all this, the trajectory of the Iraq War as an issue in domestic politics tracked the precedent set by the Vietnam War.

The Tonkin Resolution was named for a bay on the Vietnamese coast where torpedo boats were alleged to have attacked U.S. warships. Johnson persuaded Congress the national honor was at stake and Vietnam was the key to stopping the advance of global communism. Congress passed a resolution saying he could "take all necessary measures" to protect U.S. interests in Vietnam. The House voted unanimously for it, and only two members of the Senate opposed it.

In 1970, the Senate vote to repeal it was 81-10. (The lopsided vote for Tonkin in 1964 was nearly matched by the vote for the September 2001 AUMF against terrorists, which had one House member, Democrat Barbara Lee of California, opposed and two senators not voting.)

Back in 1964, Johnson had his Tonkin authority and public support (he won a full term in the White House that November with 60% of the popular vote). Soon, he was escalating the war until half a million U.S. personnel were in Vietnam. Draft orders soared, protests proliferated, and support on Capitol Hill deteriorated.

Although popular at first, Johnson's war became an albatross. He aborted his bid for a second elected term in 1968.

Two years later, Johnson's Republican successor Richard Nixon was trying to wind down U.S. involvement in Vietnam and did not want to defend the Tonkin resolution. The leaders in both parties in Congress were ready to have it off the books so as to assert more oversight on presidential war-making.

Attempts in that direction were made in the years that followed, including the passage of the War Powers Resolution in 1973. But presidents continued to find ways around Capitol Hill in the decades to come, especially after the life-changing experience of Sept. 11, 2001.

The 2002 Iraq vote cast a long shadow on domestic politics

Any comparison to Vietnam seemed far-fetched when Congress went along with Bush on Iraq in 2002. The initial invasion was successful: Baghdad fell and the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein went into hiding (later to be captured, tried and executed).

But the occupation that followed was awkward at best, breeding far greater resistance among Iraqis than Bush administration planners had expected. Even those glad to be rid of Saddam chafed at the presence of a foreign army.

Over time, support waned back at home, as well. The war paid the U.S. no visible dividends and made no new friends. Multiple polls measured support above 70% in the month of the invasion, but below 50% by the summer of 2004. It has remained under water ever since.

While Bush survived to be reelected in 2004, he came close to losing in the Electoral College. He had the protection, too, of noting that his Democratic opponent John Kerry, a Democratic senator from Massachusetts, had voted for the Iraq authorization — as had Kerry's running mate John Edwards of North Carolina.

But two years later, Democrats stormed to majorities in both chambers of Congress in 2006 for the first time in 12 years. The central issue that year: the Iraq War.

Early in 2007, as debates began among Democratic candidates for president and first-term Sen. Barack Obama used his opposition to the Iraq War as an Illinois state legislator to set himself apart from more experienced Senate colleagues — especially putative frontrunner Hillary Clinton of New York.

More than a few observers at the time noted that without that Iraq vote, Obama would not have had an actual issue to use against Clinton.

Just as Obama had made Clinton pay for her 2002 vote on Iraq, Trump used it to question her judgment in the 2016 fall campaign. Trump himself had expressed ambivalence about the Iraq War on several talk shows when it began, but he later claimed to have been against it before it even began. He has also later classed it among the "forever wars" the U.S. should never have fought.

Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, an independent running for president in 2016 and again in 2020, called the Iraq War "the worst foreign policy blunder in U.S. history." He himself had voted against the resolution in 2002 as a member of the House. But his effort to use the issue against Biden in the 2020 primaries was ultimately not successful.

As president, Biden has signaled the president would sign the repeal, which some in Congress have been pushing for years. The House passed a repeal bill in 2021 that did not get to the Senate floor. The sponsor of that House bill, as well as this year's successor version, was Democrat Barbara Lee of California.

Lee was the lone member of Congress to cast a vote against not only the 2002 Iraq resolution but also the previous AUMF against terrorists that cleared Congress three days after Sept. 11, 2001.



Name: _____



Comprehension Questions

1. When was the Authorization for Use of Military Force that covered the war in Afghanistan and Iraq first passed?
2. What are two similarities between the AUMF and the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution? (cite specific passages from the text in your answer)
3. Having learned about the Gulf of Tonkin and the AUMF, how would you recommend Congress grant authority to a president in the future, if faced with a similar threat or attack?

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