**Chapter 30, Section 1: The United States Focuses on Vietnam**

**I. Early American Involvement in Vietnam** *(pages 892–894)*

**A.** Although little was known about Vietnam in the late 1940s and early 1950s, American officials felt Vietnam was important in their campaign to stop the spread of communism.

**B.** During the early 1900s, nationalism was strong in Vietnam. As the Vietnamese sought independence or reform of the French colonial government, several political parties formed. One of the leaders of the nationalist movement was **Ho Chi Minh** who, during his travels to the Soviet Union, had become an advocate of communism.

**C.** In 1930 Ho Chi Minh helped form the Indochinese Communist Party and worked to overthrow the French. Ho Chi Minh was exiled to the Soviet Union and China. Upon his return to Vietnam in 1941, Japan had control of the country. He organized the nationalist group, **Vietminh,** which united Communists and non-Communists to force Japan out.

**D.** With the Allies’ victory over Japan in 1945, Ho Chi Minh and his forces declared Vietnam an independent nation. France sent in troops to regain its colonial empire. France asked the United States for help. American officials were against France controlling Vietnam, but they did not want Vietnam to be Communist either.

**E.** The United States, under the Truman and Eisenhower administrations, supported the French military and their campaign against the Vietminh. Eisenhower defended the United States policy in Vietnam with the **domino theory**—the belief that if Vietnam fell to communism, other nations in Southeast Asia would do the same.

**Discussion Question**

Which two events convinced Truman to help France? *(The two events were the fall of China to communism and the outbreak of the Korean War. It showed Americans that the Soviet Union was beginning a major push for communism in East Asia.)*

**II. The Vietminh Drive Out the French** *(pages 894–895)*

**A.** Despite aid from the United States, the French struggled against the Vietminh. The Vietminh frequently used the tactics of **guerrillas,** or irregular troops who usually blend into civilian population and are difficult for regular armies to fight. They used hit-and-run and ambush tactics.

**B.** In 1954 the French commander ordered his forces to occupy the mountain town of **Dien Bien Phu.** A huge Vietminh force surrounded the town. The defeated French were forced to make peace and withdraw from Indochina.

**C.** Negotiations to end the conflict, called the **Geneva Accords,** divided Vietnam between the Vietminh controlling North Vietnam and a pro-Western regime in South Vietnam. The Accords also recognized Cambodia’s independence.

**D.** In 1956 elections were held to form a single government. The United States stepped in to protect the new government in the South led by **Ngo Dinh Diem,** a pro-Westerner and anti-Communist. The tension between North and South Vietnam escalated with the United States caught in the middle.

**Discussion Question**

What were the provisions of the Geneva Accords? *Vietnam was divided at the 17th parallel with Ho Chi Minh and the Vietminh in control of North Vietnam, and a pro-Western regime in control of the South led by Ngo Dinh Diem. In 1956 elections were to be held to reunite the country under a single government. The Accords also recognized Cambodia’s independence.)*