

The Vietnam War



Review

1. What was the Marshall Plan?
2. What is the United Nations?
3. What was the Truman Doctrine?
4. What were NATO and the Warsaw Pact?
5. Where in Asia did America help fight a war in the 1950s against Communism?



34.

Eisenhower: "Help the French and send some advisors"

Johnson: "Send A LOT more troops; we cannot lose a war"



36.

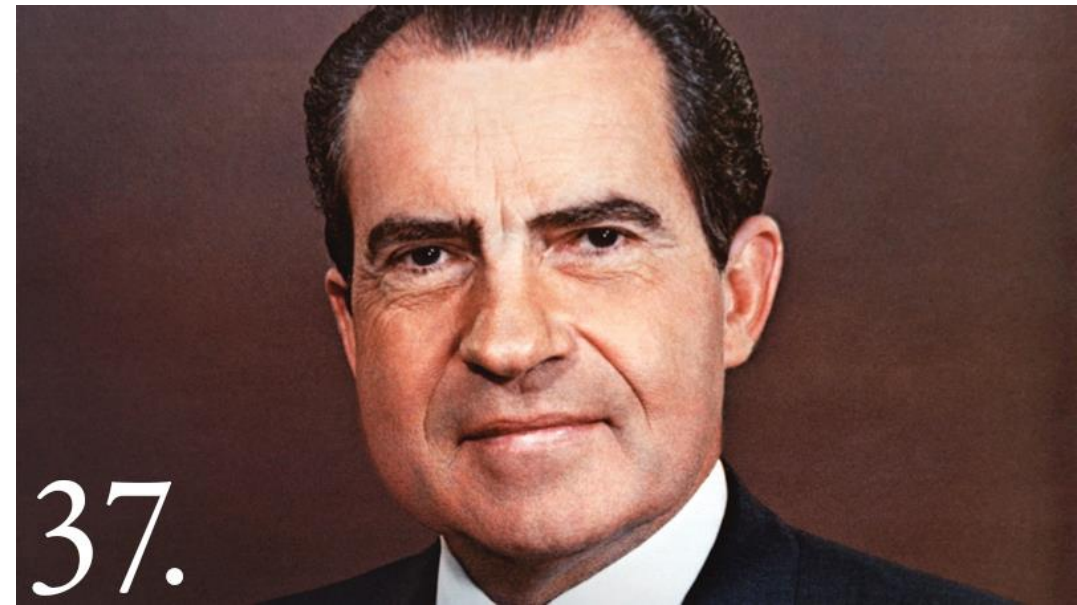
Vietnam Presidents



35.

Kennedy: "Send more advisors & send some troops"

Nixon: "We can't win; we gotta get out!"



37.



Vietnam War: 1954-1973

An American attempt to contain communism in southeast Asia



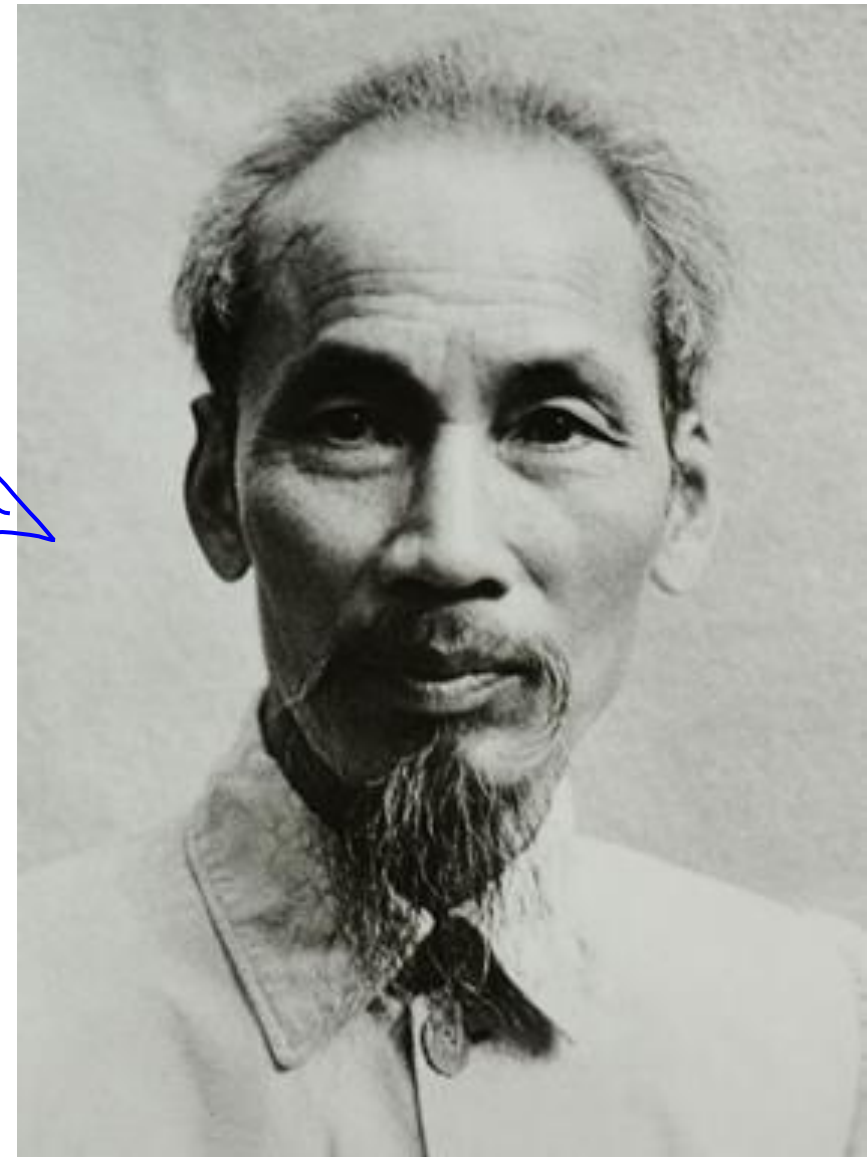
Containment:

- Preventing the spread of communism
- U.S. feared the "Domino Theory": if one nation fell to communism, its neighbors would soon fall, too.



Vietnam Background

- Vietnam had been part of French Indochina (a colony).
- After WWI, the Communist Party, led by Ho Chi Minh, rose to power
- France asked U.S. to assist (we financed 75% of their efforts)
- In 1954, France lost the Battle of Dien Bien Phu and fled the Vietnam.



Ho Chi Minh

A true communist, he taught his followers the deadly arts of guerrilla warfare and terrorism.

Vietnam Divided

- Vietnam was divided (similar to Korea) along the 17th Parallel
 - North = Communist / South = Pro-West
- Ho Chi Minh made popular communist changes in the North
- Beginning in the 1950s and continuing into the early 1960s, the communist government of North Vietnam attempted to install through force a communist government in South Vietnam.
- The United States helped South Vietnam resist.



South Vietnam Resistance

- U.S. assisted South Vietnam by sending military advisors under John F. Kennedy. The American military buildup in Vietnam began under President JFK.
- After Kennedy's assassination in 1963, the buildup was intensified under President Lyndon Johnson who sent more troops to Vietnam.
- American containment policy now included battle.



President Lyndon B. Johnson

American Involvement

US - Destroyer
was attacked by
N. Vietnam

- Gulf of Tonkin Resolution (passed by Congress in 1964) gave President Johnson the right to expand the war effort.
- Involvement steadily increased through the 1960s (escalation) under LBJ
- Many Americans supported these efforts in the early 1960s.
- Even though LBJ would have preferred to build the "Great Society" in America, he was bound to not allow the U.S. to actually lose its first ever war.



Big Win For North

* Tet Offensive, 1968

Year long

Simultaneous attacks on 100+ cities in South V.

- * A strong attack by Vietcong (communist) forces in South Vietnam
- Even though U.S. troops held, it proved the war was not nearly over
- Turned many Americans against the war effort



Our Problems Fighting This War

- We fought a limited war: not allowed to engage civilians or leave certain areas
- Ho Chi Minh was a very popular leader with popular reforms (inspired his country)
- The Ho Chi Minh Trail supplied Vietcong in the South by running through Laos and Cambodia (both neutral nations)
- We could not identify the enemy
- Many U.S. soldiers were not inspired to fight (low morale); saw no reason to care



Richard Nixon & Vietnamization

- Nixon was elected in 1968 (LBJ refused to run again, and Robert Kennedy was assassinated)
- * • Goal of Vietnamization: withdraw American troops from Vietnam and replace them with South Vietnamese troops
- Nixon increased bombing and invaded Cambodia
- U.S. drew up peace accords with North Vietnam in 1973 ("Peace with honor") and left the war



Nixon's campaign in 1968 focused on peace with honor in Vietnam and law and order at home

Bitter Division in America over Vietnam



America Divided over Vietnam

- America became bitterly divided over the Vietnam War.
- While there was support for the American military and conduct of the war among many Americans, others opposed the war.
- Active opposition to the war mounted, especially on college campuses.





This photograph was taken during a student protest at Kent State University in Ohio. The National Guard opened fire on a demonstration, killing four and wounding nine. This violence made the nation realize that there was a war raging in the U.S. as well as in Vietnam.

"Ohio" by Neil Young

*TIN SOLDIERS AND NIXON'S BOMBING
WE'RE FINALLY ON OUR OWN
THIS SUMMER I HEAR THE DRUMMING
FOUR DEAD IN OHIO*

*GOTTA GET DOWN TO IT
SOLDIERS ARE GUNNING US DOWN
SHOULD OF BEEN DONE LONG AGO
WHAT IF YOU KNEW HER AND
FOUND HER DEAD ON THE GROUND
HOW CAN YOU RUN WHEN YOU KNOW*

*FOUR DEAD IN OHIO
FOUR DEAD IN OHIO
FOUR DEAD IN OHIO
FOUR DEAD IN OHIO*

Legacy of the Vietnam War

- U.S. pulled out of Vietnam in 1973.
- Nixon's "Vietnamization" failed, and by 1975 Vietnam had been reunited under Communist rule.
- Nixon was forced to resign due to the Watergate scandal.
- American faith in government diminished.
- Opposition to war was reflected onto the treatment of veterans returning home.



Summary

- The U. S. government's anti-Communist strategy of containment in Asia led to America's involvement in the Korean and Vietnamese Wars.
- The Vietnam War demonstrated the power of American public opinion in reversing foreign policy.
- It tested the democratic system to its limits, left scars on American society that have not yet been erased, and made many Americans deeply skeptical of future military or even peacekeeping interventions

