

The Cold War in Asia: Korea and Vietnam

AUTHOR INFORMATION

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Lesson Grade Span: Secondary (9-12)

Targeted Grade Level/Course: 11th Grade – American History II

Estimated Time to Complete Lesson: 1-2 85 minute classes

FOCUSED QUESTION

How do the Korean and Vietnam compare?

STANDARDS (STATE/C3)

AH2.H.6.1

Explain how national economic and political interests helped set the direction of United States foreign policy since Reconstruction (e.g., new markets, isolationism, neutrality, containment, homeland security, etc.).

AH2.H.6.2

Explain the reasons for United States involvement in global wars and the influence each involvement had on international affairs (e.g., Spanish-American War, WWI, WWII, Cold War, Korea, Vietnam, Gulf War, Iraqi War, etc.).

AH2.H.7.1

Explain the impact of wars on American politics since Reconstruction (e.g., spheres of influence, isolationist practices, containment policies, first and second Red Scare movements, patriotism, terrorist policies, etc.).

STUDENT & TARGET OUTCOMES

Students should be able to answer the following questions:

Where are Korea and Vietnam?

How/When did each conflict begin?

How did the US become involved with these conflicts?

How was each war conducted?

How did each war conclude?

What were the long lasting effects of each war?

LESSON OVERVIEW

The purpose of this lesson is to compare the Korean and the Vietnam wars. Student should have background knowledge of the beginning of the Cold War. Using different sources, students will analyze documents and videos to answer questions regarding the Cold War in Asia.

PROCEDURES

Step by Step Instructions for Educators:

- **Warm-up** – Where are Korea and Vietnam?
 - Map of the Cold War (Student Instructions)
 - Title this map – COLD WAR IN ASIA
 - Include cardinal directions in Lower Left Corner
 - Locate the Korean Peninsula
 - Draw a line at the 38th Parallel
 - Label the line: 38th Parallel (1945)
 - Area north of the line
 - Label it: USSR
 - Color it: red
 - Area south of the line
 - Label it: US
 - Color it: blue
 - Locate Vietnam
 - Draw a line at the 17th Parallel
 - Label the line: Geneva Accords (1954)
 - Area north of the line
 - Label it: USSR/China
 - Color it: red
 - Area south of the line
 - Label it: US
 - Color it: blue
- **Introduction**
 - **Article – Comparison and Contrast of the Korean and Vietnam Wars**
 - Read the article and create a Vinn Diagram comparing and contrasting the two wars
 - Discuss this as a class and put it on the board
 - **Video – Crash Course #38**
 - Watch the video using the questions to guide students’ attention
 - Options for viewing
 - Watch this video as a class, pausing after the video has answered each question.
 - Give students the video to watch on their own or in small groups.
- **Did Stalemate Equal Victory? From the Korean to the Vietnam Wars**
 - This article is fairly long. I know my students would never make it through the entire thing. Therefore, I needed to identify what was the most important that everyone needed to read, which was the introduction and conclusion. Then, we could divide the labor for the content paragraphs.
 - Reading the Article
 - INTRODUCTION – EVERYONE READS TO:
 - Identify the **thesis** of the essay
 - What does the essay intend to prove by the end of the argument?
 - BODY PARAGRAPHS – ASSIGN PARAGRAPHS TO INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS OR PAIRS
 - As students read their paragraphs, their goal is to identify the main purpose of that paragraph and summarize the important information.
 - What is the summary of the paragraph?
 - What information is contained in the paragraph?
 - Going around the class, share this aloud.
 - CONCLUSION – EVERYONE READS TO:
 - Answer the question: DID STALEMATE EQUAL VICTORY?
 - Form an argument and compose a micro-theme argument (your argument must contain a thesis and supporting information, and must fit on an index card)
- **Verbal Response**
 - Students should use Flipgrid to answer three questions of their choosing asked at the beginning of the lesson.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Map: Did the student locate and label the map correctly?

Vinn Diagram: Do your students understand major themes of the war? Do they understand differences as well as similarities?

Crash Course Viewing Guide: Did the students answer the questions correctly?

Article: Did the students correctly identify the thesis of the article? Were they able to summarize the paragraph into pertinent information?

Micro-Theme: Was the student able to articulate and support an argument?

FlipGrid: How well could students articulate what they learned in this lesson?

RESOURCE LIST

- History.com editors. (2009, November 9). Korean War. Retrieved December 17, 2018, from <https://www.history.com/topics/korea/korean-war>
- Rothman, L. (2015, June 25). The Korean War and American History: How the Conflict Started. Retrieved December 17, 2018, from <http://time.com/3915803/korean-war-1950-history/>
- History.com Editors. (2018, November 10). Vietnam War. Retrieved December 17, 2018, from <https://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/vietnam-war-history>
- World History Group. (2018). Vietnam War. Retrieved December 17, 2018, from <http://www.historynet.com/vietnam-war>
- Barr, K. R. (2018, September 27). Comparison and Contrast of the Vietnam and Korean Wars. Retrieved December 17, 2018, from <https://www.theclassroom.com/comparison-contrast-vietnam-korean-wars-12339723.html>
- Robinson, L. S., Ph. D. (2011, November). Did Stalemate Equal Victory? Retrieved December 17, 2018, from <http://americandiplomacy.web.unc.edu/2011/11/did-stalemate-equal-victory/>

MODIFICATIONS & EXTENSIONS (OPTIONAL)

MODIFICATIONS

Anything that may need to be modified, excerpted, or annotated for differing reading levels or abilities.

EXTENSIONS

Is there any way the overall purpose of your lesson can have an impact as part of a larger school or community function?

Comparison and Contrast of the Vietnam and Korean Wars

by Kathryn Rateliff Barr

"I guess we've got no choice, but it scares the death out of me. I think everybody's going to think, 'we're landing the Marines, we're off to battle.'" - President Lyndon B. Johnson, 6 March 1965

Two major wars involved American military troops in the 1950s and 60s. In 1950 when North Korea invaded South Korea, President Harry Truman responded by sending troops to aid South Korea. This required United Nations assistance to the American military conflicts. In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson sent additional troops to Vietnam to assist the South Vietnamese government from being overthrown by the North Vietnamese and disgruntled South Vietnamese citizens. Comparing the wars in Korea and Vietnam shows similarities and differences impacting each of the final outcomes based on conditions and motivations behind the wars.

Divided Countries Go to War

When these two wars began, both Korea and Vietnam were divided nations with communism entrenched in the northern parts of both countries and anticommunism in the southern areas. President Truman's policy in North Korea resisted the spread of communism in favor of free societies that were attacked by armed minority factions or outside invaders. In Vietnam, President Johnson had to respond to conflicts in the Tonkin Gulf while also moving war efforts from initial American military conflicts intervention to full-scale American involvement.

Related Articles

Influences in Both Wars

The Russian and Chinese governments pushed North Korean leader Kim Il-Sung to invade South Korea and supplied troops and weapons when American forces responded to South Korea's defense. Vietnam's war was predominately an internal civil war without external influence, except for a short period of time when China invaded in 1978. The American troops had difficulty determining friend from foe because many South Vietnamese sided with the North Vietnamese because the South Vietnamese government was corrupt.

Korean War vs. Vietnam War

The U.S. did not declare war on North Korea or North Vietnam. The U.S. responded to U.N. Security Council vote and quickly built up troops to aid South Korea under Gen. Douglas MacArthur. In Vietnam, the U.S. had already supplied troops and advisers to South Vietnam when it was under French control. Johnson gradually supplied additional troops as they were needed. One goal in both conflicts was to prevent communist takeover of an anticommunist government. The "domino effect" premise proposed by Truman and later Kennedy was that if one government fell to communism that other countries in the area would follow.

One Strategy, Two Results

While there are similarities, how was the Vietnam War different than the Korean War? Both wars relied heavily on bombing from aircraft. American and U.N. allied troops bombed North Korea to such an extent that most cities, supply depots and industrial sites were destroyed. The North Korean government was plunged into financial and physical ruin to such an extent that the communist forces had to negotiate a peace settlement to survive the devastation. In Vietnam, the destruction from the air was not as severe. North and South Vietnamese troops were fighting the Americans in addition to troops from China. No front-line warfare occurred in Vietnam. Instead, guerrilla jungle warfare occurred as a military response that didn't follow traditional military campaigns. The conflict strategies used in Korea were not effective in Vietnam.

No Victory Won

Looking closer at the conclusions of the two American military conflicts, the Korean War ended after three years and the U.S. continued to aid South Korea with troops, money and supplies. Neither side was defeated as both sides negotiated treaties to end the hostilities. Korea remained divided after the war while the Vietnam War lasted 10 years and wasn't one the U.S. ultimately could win. President Nixon withdrew troops as the war became more unpopular and it became obvious that North Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh would continue to fight until he drove the U.S. out of Vietnam. Ultimately, Vietnam reunited under communist rule.

From the Korean to the Vietnam Wars

by L. Spencer Robinson, Ph.D.

INTRODUCTION

The Korean and Vietnam Wars are well-known hot wars that occurred within the Cold War. To many Americans, they seem similar in that they occurred in East Asia, they involved a Communist north fighting a non-Communist south, were controversial as they became limited wars, involved such issues as bombing strategy and civilian bombing, fighting guerilla units as well as conventional forces, the treatment of prisoners, the legitimacy of the governments involved in the conflict, the toughness of the enemy forces, and the impact of these foreign adventures upon American society. Some perceived differences might include the UN mandate that backed the U.S. side in Korea, as opposed to the international criticism that faced the U.S. over Vietnam, the generally more conventional style of the conflict in Korea as opposed to the initial guerilla strategy in Vietnam, differences in war terrain and in enemy supply routes, the differences in popular backing for the non-Communists in the south, and the varying strengths of the Communist guerilla movements in the south of each conflict. A really striking difference would be the firm loyalty of the North Vietnamese army soldiers contrasted to the Communist and conscripted non-Communist forces fighting for North Korea. At the top of the list in American perceptions of similarity and difference, would be the similarity of each conflict as a crusade against Communism, and the basic perceived difference that while the United States achieved at least a partial victory in Korea, the American experience in Vietnam ended in a huge defeat.



While the Korean conflict became overshadowed by the Vietnam experience, and hence its reputation as “the forgotten war,” the Vietnam War became an important part of American cultural consciousness. The basic mistakes of Vietnam became a common legacy that many Americans claimed to understand to some extent, whereas the lessons of Korea remained obscured in its legacy of forgetfulness. Both conflicts were linked to the U.S. containment policy, and many Americans came to understand that the so-called “domino theory” was an important base of this containment policy. While applicable to both conflicts, the domino theory became firmly linked to the Vietnam War and to the perception that the exaggeration of this theory, had contributed greatly to the disaster in Vietnam. For scholarly critics of Vietnam, the domino theory was a symptom of the American tendency to see the Vietnam Communist enemy as directed by international Communism, when in reality it was an indigenous movement of Vietnamese nationalists, who operated by their own calculations and not those of Beijing or Moscow. This failure of the U.S. to overlook the nationalistic character of the Vietnam conflict, as been bewailed by many commentators and texts as being central to the American misadventure in Vietnam (Stokesbury, 20, 65-66, 194-98; Catchpole, 21; Ridgway, vi-viii; Berger, 9, 27; Khong, 89; Maurer, 349-50, Taylor, 159-63, 241, 400-02; and Memorandum to the President, Report from Henry Cabot Lodge, Nov. 17, 1965).

It is my contention that while the conflict in Vietnam had indigenous roots, the conflict in Korea was indeed an internationalist style conflict directed by major Communist powers to the point of eclipsing local Communist objectives, and that these internationalist perceptions of Korea were valid as far as understanding that East Asian conflict. This fact has not been appreciated by Vietnam war critics. The Korean example helps to explain American intervention in Vietnam, and also to explain the military options taken in Southeast Asia. The options that seemed to work in Korea did not in Vietnam, and by the time the failure became evident in Vietnam, the reasons for the selection of these options seemed to have been forgotten as well. As the incoming Secretary of Defense, Clark Clifford, would discover, no one could explain the American war strategy in Vietnam in 1968, after the policy failures up to that point. In conducting a policy review after the onslaught of the Tet Offensive, he was puzzled to get some of the following answers:

§ Will 200,000 more troops win the war? No one could be sure. If not, how many more will be needed and when? No one knew.

§ Can the enemy respond with a buildup of their own? They could and they probably would.

§ Can the bombing stop the war? No, not by itself.

§ Would stepping up the bombing decrease U.S. casualties? Very little, if at all.

§ How long must we keep sending U.S. troops and carrying the main burden of combat? Nobody knew. The South Vietnamese forces were far from ready to replace the U.S. forces. (Moss, 290).

What was the military plan for victory? He asked General Earle Wheeler of the JCS. Wheeler bluntly told him that there was no military plan for victory, and cited the restrictions in the conduct of the war. Fear of Chinese intervention was a primary concern. Clifford wanted to know, how could America hope to win the war? He thought Wheeler's answer was an unenthusiastic reply that the enemy would reach a point where it could no longer endure the strategy of attrition that was being inflicted upon it. When Clifford pressed Wheeler as to how long this might take, Wheeler would not attempt an estimate. This conversation took place in the third year of full American escalation and direct involvement in Vietnam, when American involvement in the war was supposed to be in the mop-up stages. When Wheeler cited the "breaking point" that the enemy should (or might) reach, he was repeating a point of view that was stated much more enthusiastically a few years before (Moss, 47-50, 290-91). It was also a viewpoint which reflected the American experience in Korea. This article will seek to explain how the internationalist options, which appeared to work in Korea, failed in Vietnam.

BODY OF ESSAY

(1) From the American perspective, the key premise of the Korean experience that would impact Vietnam, was that the Communists acted together, or that the Soviets and the Chinese held a dominant and directing position in terms of international Communism. In Korea, there was much truth to this presumption. Even in the time before the war, the Soviet Union which had occupied the northern half of Korea after World War II, started this pattern of outside control. The U.S.S.R. had orchestrated the selection of Kim Il-Sung as North Korean leader over other candidates, and retained major influence in North Korean political and military establishments. The war was clearly an international effort, as Kim Il-Sung had asked permission to invade South Korea in 1949 but was denied permission by



Josef Stalin. Stalin agreed to Kim's request in 1950 and insisted that Kim get Mao's approval as well. Soviet staff officers planned the details of the invasion, and the Soviets provided the tanks for the North Korean invasion of June 25, 1950. After the Americans intervened, the North Koreans were headed for defeat. Thereafter, it was the Chinese army or the PLA, that became the major force fighting the Americans. After November 1950, it was the Chinese, not the North Koreans, who would determine all military moves for the Communist side. When the Americans prevented the North from taking over South Korea, and threatened to take North Korea as well, it wasn't just the Chinese who reacted. Stalin used his influence to get the Chinese to counter-invade, in order to prevent the pending "debacle". Indeed, it has been concluded that part of Stalin's motivation in pushing the Korean conflict was to enhance the internationalist leadership of the U.S.S.R. and avoid a Communist China that was too independent. (McNamara, *Essence of Security*, 14; Catchpole, 10-11 and Stueck, 351-359).

(2) In illustrating a difference that could apply to North Korea and North Vietnam, Robert Simmons noted that "imposed" regimes such as those in East Europe, had less flexibility in foreign affairs than popular movement-led Communist nations such as China, North Vietnam, Cuba and Yugoslavia. I would argue that North Korea fits the model of an "imposed" regime quite well, and this explains in part the internationalist character of the Korean conflict. (Simmons, 49-50). The most stunning example of the monolithic character of the Communists in Korea, was the desire of two of the parties to drop out of the war but their continued deference to the most dominant partner—Stalin and the Soviet Union. There had been much speculation as

to the exact nature of Communist cooperation that was cleared up when Soviet archives were finally examined in 1995-1996. We now know that North Korea and China had both viewed the conflict as having run its course as early as the spring and summer of 1951, and continued to petition for an end thereafter. Yet as mentioned, Stalin vetoed this idea and his right to dictate policy was accepted at this time. As Carter Malkasian noted, "only Stalin's obstinacy and determination to wear down the West perpetuated the conflict." (Malkasian, 74). Even the maintenance of the cease-fire after 1953 (after Stalin died) provides evidence of the internationalist character of the war. In addition to the balance of conventional forces that existed, which included U.S. forces, it was the "clear purpose" of the great powers to keep the peace. Neither of the two Communist giants had been that insistent on unification of Korea as a goal, even during the conflict. Thus we see, that in regard to foreign policy, North Korea clearly fit the model of an "imposed" Communist regime. (Mosher, 106; Simmons, 24-25; Malkasian, 74, 82-83 and Stueck, 216, 357-58, 361).

(3) Both the Chinese and the North Koreans had their own reasons for obtaining a cease-fire. The Chinese of course were not native to Korea, and wished to return to their own land after a certain time, and this limited commitment helped lead to the misperception in Vietnam, that the "Communists" in general, would be willing to stop the war if successfully stalemated. Although driven back by Chinese forces in late 1950 and early 1951, U.S. forces in Korea successfully counter-attacked. After the Chinese lost 100,000 men in one week in a "human wave" assault that failed to move UN forces in May of 1951, it became evident that the PLA would have to change its general strategy. It now changed course after a number of reverses and decided to listen to UN diplomatic offers it had turned down in January. By August of 1951, the Chinese military realized that they would not even make it back to the 38th parallel. Negotiations were reopened in October 1951 as Chinese forces actually withdrew some by November. China was still suffering from the economic collapses associated with World War II and with the Chinese Civil War, and Korea worsened its situation. Mao had to set aside his plan for the gradual and peaceful transition to Socialism with continued trade with the West due to the cost of the war. There was a shortage of raw cotton, and the burden of paying for heavy Soviet military weaponry was steep. Some 50% of the revenues of the People's Republic of China in 1951 were devoted to the war, as the economy suffered from rampant inflation and a huge and growing debt, and the Chinese people were becoming war weary. China needed to focus on internal economic development and was being drained by the military expenditures necessary for the war. This propelled China towards compromise. The Chinese leadership was more concerned about dissension among their own people than Korean unification, so they wished for a cease-fire in Korea. (Malkasian, 48-49, 73-74; Kahin, 56; Stueck, 216-17, 220-21, 354 and Mosher, 82).

(4) Of the three Communist powers, undoubtedly it was the North Koreans who most desired to see the peninsula unified under their control. It is possible that they may have wanted to fight on, despite the tremendous pounding they were taking in the air war. Yet North Korea was totally dependent on outside aid in what had become a conventional war, and it had little influence in defining the overall Communist position in Korea unless it had the support of at least one of the large Communist powers. After Mao and Peng Dehau had scaled back Chinese ambitions in June of 1951, Kim Il-Sung agreed to follow suit. The North Korean defense minister, Cho' oe Yong-gon (in 1952) was of the opinion that the Soviets were trying to "bleed" the Asiatic nations of China and North Korea while the Soviets preserved their strength by staying on the sidelines. He noted that "the Chinese Communists are unable to understand why the Soviets do not support more strongly the North Korean and Chinese settlement at Panmunjom. True Korean and Chinese nationalists are becoming suspicious of the Soviet's real intentions for the Soviets have openly shown that they are more interested in seducing Japan than in peaceful reconstruction of territories which have been liberated by the People's Republics. Unless the USSR makes a definite promise to intervene in the Korean War, the only alternative is for North Koreans and Chinese to come to terms with the UN. An armistice will permit the communization of South Korea from within; however, the recently revealed Soviet policy clearly shows the Soviet desire to provoke the Chinese into making rash decisions to widen the war in Asia." (Simmons, 215). By obtaining a cease-fire, Kim and the North Koreans hoped to get all foreigners out of Korea and then start a guerilla movement in the south, after a cease-fire ended the internationalist war.

(5) Regarding the war, it was personally galling to Kim to have a foreign military apparatus in his nation directing his field operations, and the Chinese commander, Peng, often voiced his low opinion of Kim's military ability. The North Koreans were belittled by the Chinese for their defeat at the hands of the Americans. Other Chinese officials intrigued against Kim and even the North Korean representative to the Chinese army ignored him. Soviet officials also acted as if their status in North Korea was unchallenged.

(Malkasian, 74; Simmons, 215; Stueck, 218). The North Koreans were also relegated to secondary status when it came to diplomatic importance. A North Korean official, Nam Il, was nominally in charge of the Communist delegation at the peace talks, but the real power was exercised by the Chinese. The Chinese also belittled the North Koreans in the presence of the Americans at Panmunjom. In agreement with the North Koreans, a "negotiation direction group" was established in Peking, led by Vice Foreign Minister Li Kenong and Qiao Guanhua, the head of the International Information Bureau of the Foreign Ministry. Of course, Mao and Stalin were personally involved in the negotiations and had a far greater say in the final shape of any agreement than did North Korea. In this international war, the North Koreans came to believe it would actually be harder to unite the Korean Peninsula under their control while their Communist partners were there. (Stueck, 224, Simmons, 215 and Malkasian, 46).

(6) The Kim Il Sung government had another important motive to end this internationalist war. North Korea had been driven to the brink of extinction by the war. "The economy was in ruins and the country was racked by food shortages. The air campaign had destroyed the country's air facilities and caused heavy bomb damage to every major city. Towns and villages, often the location of supply depots, were repeatedly targeted by UNC air strikes. Most North Korean civilians fled to the countryside to escape the bombing. Major General William Dean, who had the opportunity to observe North Korea as a prisoner of war, noted that by 1952 the majority of towns he observed were "rubble or snowy open spaces." Historian Bruce Cumming described the Korean Peninsula as a "smoldering ruin" by 1953. Seoul, the capital of South Korea, was described as full of hollow, skeletal buildings while American encampments on the outside of the capital were full of beggars waiting to pick through the garbage left by the foreign troops. There were hardly any modern edifices in the northern half of Korea anymore, as Pyongyang and other cities were described as "heaps of bricks and ashes." (Stueck, 361).

(7) To give an example of one air mission, in July 1952 a raid on Pyongyang left an estimated 400 to 500 Communist officials dead in strikes on government buildings. Radio Pyongyang claimed that this one day attack destroyed 1,500 buildings and caused 7,000 casualties. It was noted that as a consequence of the overall devastation, many people lived mole-like existences in caves and tunnels. This horrific devastation was evidently more acceptable to the U.S. military as part of the price that came with a full-scale conventional invasion of North Korea, an event that followed the North's full invasion of the South. It would be harder in Vietnam, where there was no such U.S. invasion of the north, to justify such an extreme cost. By the summer of 1952, Kim was appealing to Stalin to find a decisive way to obtain the cease-fire, and he cited the devastation done to North Korea as a key reason for doing so. In the case of the Korean war, the results of total bombing would indeed help bring about a cease-fire. (Futrell, 481-82).

(8) While the high level of American bombing was important to the seesaw war between the North Koreans, the Americans and later the Chinese, the bombing strategy as applied to the later limited war, was also seen as key. After the war settled into one with limited objectives, the precedent of massive bombing of the North had already been established and therefore continued. The air war also became seen as part of the diplomatic war arising out of the limited war. Historian Brian Catchpole credited the air war of 1952-53, which made progress in stopping enemy movements on the ground, for also crippling the North Korean economy through their war of attrition and helping "to persuade the Communists to agree to armistice terms in 1953." He also credited ground forces for holding the "main line of resistance" and the navies for dominating the flanks of Korea, in helping to bring about the end to the war. UN airpower, he believed, probably prevented the Chinese from launching another major offensive in either 1952 or 1953. (Catchpole, 239, 242-48). The official Air Force history of the conflict, written by Robert Frank Futrell, noted that after Mark Clark became UN commander in May 1952, General Otto Weyland "was able to secure authority for an air pressure campaign which sought to make the war too costly for the Reds to continue." (Futrell, 657). The majority of these air strikes were termed "destructive interdiction attacks," such as attacks on supply centers, concentrated transportation and groups of hostile personnel.

(9) According to Futrell, after "a year of air pressure attacks the Communists acceded to United Nations armistice terms. The air pressure attacks against their rear areas had evidently made the war too expensive for the Communists to continue." (Futrell, 658). Because of our air attacks against enemy staging airfields and the interception of their airborne planes, he noted, "the Communists were unable to attack United Nations positions in South Korea during the last month of the war." (Futrell, 623). The destruction of aircraft followed the recommendation of a 1952 FEAF study citing the expensive nature of enemy aircraft to the enemy, and the presumption that they were highly valuable to the Communist side. Not only was the



destruction of prize air assets seen as a “costly loss” and a “loss of face,” but the destruction of large hydroelectric facilities (an initial raid cut off 90% of North Korea’s power) was seen as leaving the Reds “deeply depressed.” Major General Emmett O’Donnell believed that the air war had given U.S.-U.N. forces a huge “psychological advantage.” Such raids were seen as helping diplomacy, by getting the enemy to yield on the prisoner of war question, for instance.

(10) Futrell believed that the more enemy planes that were destroyed, the quicker the war would be brought to an end. In this conventional style war, the fact that airpower was responsible for 70% of the destruction of enemy tanks, trucks and artillery, while accounting for 47% of North

Korean casualties, was seen as clearly significant. Futrell added that the entire three-year air war based on air-interdiction attacks had a “decisive significance” second in importance only air superiority operations. He also noted that the peninsular configuration of Korea and the lack of good transportation arteries had simplified interdiction. Futrell felt that the threat of an expanded war may have also deterred the Communists in addition to the “pounding pressure of air attacks against their forces in North Korea,” yet there could be no doubt that “airpower was triumphant in the Korean War.” Writing in 1961 (and undoubtedly of influence in the decisive escalation year of 1965) Futrell was so impressed with the air effort in Korea, that he predicted “airpower would likely be a primary and most economical means for resisting massed enemy ground attacks in the future.” He stated that this ability to prevent new enemy offensives through air power was a basic purpose of the air campaign. General Weyland concurred with Futrell’s assessment. In February of 1954, he stated “We are pretty sure now, that the Communists wanted peace, not because of a two-year stalemate on the ground, but to get airpower off their back.” (Futrell, 643). Brigadier General Don Zimmerman (in January of 1954) stated that “we established a pattern of destruction by air which was unacceptable to the enemy. The degree of destruction suffered by North Korea, in relation to its resources, was greater than that which the Japanese islands suffered in World War II. These pressures brought the enemy to terms!” (Futrell, 452, 608-11, 626-28, 643, 657-58, 664-65, Stokesbury, 128 and Catchpole, 242-47, 437).

(11) The ground strategy of attrition was also seen as important in the ending of the limited war stage of the conflict. Given the context of a limited war, General Matthew Ridgway decided that he would utilize the strategy of attrition in order to increase the costs of the war for the Communists. Instead of a major offensive, limited objective attacks were approved that were designed to take small portions of ground in order to wear the Communists down and make minor improvements in the U.S. Eighth Army’s defensive position. Similarly, Peng Dehuai called for campaigns of “small scale annihilation” and “seesaw” battles as the human wave attacks were abandoned. The UN favored a cease-fire in place, but the Communists wished to press their advantage to the 38th parallel. Both sides now sought to convince the other side that it could not obtain its objective through maintaining the military edge in a limited war. Hence, the limited war became a diplomatic war, not with victory as its objective but simply to gain more concessions at the negotiations table. The United States held a similar view, as it launched a number of small-scale offensives in the summer and fall of 1951 that were designed to convince the Communists that they could not gain the advantage. By November of 1951, Mao was convinced that he could no longer gain the advantage and finally agreed to accept the battle line as a basis for the cease-fire line.

(12) At that time, the line was above the 38th parallel for much of the peninsula, but dipped below the 38th parallel to west, thereby giving the Communists control of the traditional Korean capital of Kaesong. (Ridgway, 191; Malkasian, 47-53). Hence, there was room for compromise. Yet due to Stalin and perhaps other issues, the war continued. The small-scale actions would continue right up to the time of the cease-fire. American successes at Heartbreak Ridge and Bloody Ridge were seen as influencing the Communists to return to the negotiating table. As James Stokesbury noted, “the battlefield thus became a means of impressing the other side with one’s sincerity, one’s determination to stay the course and get a favorable

settlement... for two years the belligerents offered up the lives of their young men on the altar of firm commitments.” (Stokesbury, 156). Ridgway would credit the small-scale offensives for bringing the Chinese back to the conference table in the fall of 1951 after negotiations had broken off, and credited the successful defensive position of the U.N.-U.S. forces for leading the Communists, who like the Americans had lost the appetite for a general offensive, to eventually take care of the Korean “annoyance” through negotiation. The UN goal, it was noted, was to inflict “maximum casualties on the Communist armed forces, thereby compelling Communist China and North Korea to seek a military armistice.” (Futrell, 347).

(13) This emphasis on “persuading” the enemy to give up, sounds very much like the rhetoric used by American officials during the Vietnam War, particularly at the start of the conflict. So do other themes, such as forcing the enemy to the negotiating table, fighting while negotiating, making the war too costly for the other side, the presumed importance of high value targets, convincing the enemy of our will or the fact that he could not win, and impressing not only the Communist side in the North, but also China and the Soviet Union, of our determination to stay the course. In the conventional war in Korea, convincing the Soviets and the Chinese of our determination made sense, as their objectives like ours, were limited in nature. They did not make sense when applied to a situation like Vietnam, where the enemy was willing to bear the cost, and where limited objectives did not apply. Indeed, as the North Viet leader Ho Chi Minh famously stated, we could fight the Americans for twenty years if needed. The other factor that was important to the North Korean Communists related to the possible total destruction of their country. Despite the popular perception during the Vietnam era, this factor really did not apply to North Vietnam, as that nation did not experience anywhere near the level of destruction that North Korea did. Yet the blueprint for the course to be followed in Vietnam had been set. It is true that there was some division among political and military leaders as to how significant or how overstated contributions of the air or ground war may have been.

(14) Regarding the air war, General Ridgway, General Douglas MacArthur, Assistant Secretary of State (and later Secretary of State during Vietnam) Dean Rusk all noted some of its limitations as concerning the ability of airpower to stop supplies or isolate the battlefield. During the Vietnam era, Ridgway would complain that U.S. government officials believed that it could accomplish miracles it could not. Yet even such critics saw the air war as vital, with many of those who were later skeptical about its impact in North Vietnam, enthusiastically advocating its use in defense of U.S. troops or in bombing the enemy guerillas in the South. In Korea, Ridgway still felt that despite its limitations, air power had saved the UN forces from disaster and made the ultimate accomplishment of their mission possible (Ridgway, 82, 244, 250; and Rusk, 446-49, 496-97).

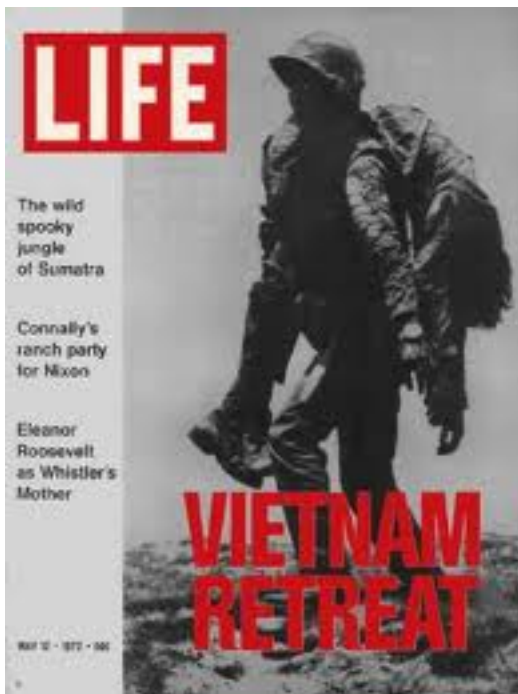


(15) Yet the overall impression of victory in Korea remained with American officials thereafter. In January 1954, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles credited the U.S. military strategy for throwing the aggressor back “to and behind his place of beginning” as well as for presenting him with the prospect of an expanded war beyond the limits and methods that the Communists envisioned. This was thought to have shortened the war. Dulles also expressed the belief that would become dogma, that military victory was the only guarantee of diplomatic success (Futrell, 643, Pentagon Papers, Book I, Part II, B-18). Another precedent for Vietnam was echoed in the comments of General Mark Clark who noted that the failure to achieve a Korean armistice by 1952 was because we had “not exerted sufficient

military pressure to impose the requirement for an armistice on the enemy.” (Futrell, 453). This thinking would be evident in the later actions of U.S. officials during Vietnam, who when faced with a failed strategy, would reason that not enough pressure or “persuasion” had been applied, and that a greater degree of the same would do the job. Clark and others believed that it was through ground and air pressure, that the Chinese and North Koreans had been “persuaded” to accept an end to hostilities. Some of the potential

pitfalls that would bedevil the situation in Vietnam, had been partially appreciated by those who analyzed the situation in Korea.

(16) According to Futrell, one of the main dilemmas of the Korean air war was how to assess its effectiveness. “Air intelligence,” he noted, “could target physical objectives for attack and could calculate the physical damage done to the air targets by air strikes, but it was not able to determine what significance a particular objective might have to the Communist regime nor could it project the effect of a given amount of destruction upon the hostile regime’s primarily political decision to end the fighting.” (Futrell, 469). General Zimmerman noted that the Army could judge its success based on “a line drawn on a map which showed the current position of the fighting front in relation to the enemy’s territory. The Air Force, however, had no way of judging or portraying the effect of its attacks which could range all over the enemy’s homeland.” Zimmerman noted that the Air Force would have to come up with new forms of social and political intelligence as a result, but that for now these methods were unknown to Air Force intelligence. (Futrell, 469). Obviously, this difficulty of knowing how the enemy leadership would react to American military actions, was a central dilemma in the minds of American planners in the Vietnam War. For that matter, so was the traditional method of assessing conventional ground success, for Vietnam would be a lot less of a conventional war than the Korean conflict. It would be a war without a front line.



(17) We see in the Vietnam conflict, how the domino theory related to internationalist perceptions and how a nationalist perception led to thoughts of the Titoist option. Prior to the U.S. escalation of the conflict, a National Security Council staffer, Paul Kattenburg, who had lived in Vietnam in the 1950s, complained that no one in Washington understood Vietnam, and did not know what they were talking about, as the perception of nationalism was of primary importance in understanding public opinion in that country. Concerned that the United States was heading for a major disaster, Kattenburg’s influence ended when he was forced off the Vietnam Task Force in January, 1964, after Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy called his pessimism a “disservice” to the country. (Bird, 255). Critics have pointed out that Vietnam should have been seen as a separate conflict and not as a sign of Chinese expansion, a popular view of that time. However, one foreign policy expert complimented Johnson administration officials, in fact, for not falling for the “illusions” that the National Liberation Front (the political wing of the Viet Cong) was an inbred South Vietnamese movement. President Johnson seconded this view, quoting President Kennedy (in 1962) as saying that the war was not a war of national liberation but one of “attempted subjugation”

from the outside. (Stebblins, 32 and Johnson, 68).

(18) When the war was greatly expanded in 1965, Robert McNamara expressed the hope that the Chinese would eventually help to end the conflict — a view that echoed American perceptions of China’s central role. Like Korea, the war was equated with Chinese interests when the war policy should have gauged North Vietnamese self-interest. (Kahin, 355). As early as 1952, the National Security Council began planning for a possible Chinese invasion of Southeast Asia, as China was seen as replacing the Soviet Union as the primary threat in that region. Maxwell Taylor believed that China’s sending of 50,000 troops to North Vietnam, actually gave the U.S. increased diplomatic leverage, as opposed to dealing with North Vietnam and a guerilla movement alone. A number of documents from this era perceived that the Chinese (or international Communism) could change the objective of infiltrating South Vietnam to that of taking Laos or even Thailand instead. Such speculation clearly showed that policymakers failed to understand that Vietnam conflict as one directed by North Vietnam for reasons related to Vietnamese nationalism. Regarding Soviet influence, it did not take long for the U.S. to recognize North Vietnam’s independent course. Increased Soviet influence never meant Soviet control, as Dean Rusk observed in noting that the Soviets soon realized this not long after the war was expanded. Perhaps belatedly, Robert McNamara had also recognized by 1968, that North Vietnam had avoided overdependence on either China or the Soviet Union

((Simmons, 60; Pentagon Papers, Book 1, A-4, A-6, A-8, A-47; Book 1, Part II, A-2, A-47-48; Stebbins, 32-35; Rusk, 471 and McNamara, Essence of Security, 20-21).

(19) Those who saw the conflict more in nationalist terms at this time, thought that perhaps we could deal with Vietnam as if it were an independent Communist nation, much like Tito's Yugoslavia. During the escalation debate in the mid 1960s, famed journalist Walter Lippmann concluded that a neutral Communist regime like Tito's in Yugoslavia was probably the best that Washington could hope for, in regard to South Vietnam. Another news writer, David Astor, was mistakenly under the impression at that time that the U.S. government was looking at a "Titoist solution in South Vietnam." The premise of neutralism or nonalignment in the Cold War seemed to be very much at the heart of the so-called "Gaullist" proposals coming from France since 1963. Edwin Reischauer thought that the Yugoslavia analogy could be applied to Vietnam, and a number of OSS officials who dealt with North Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh, felt we missed an opportunity to come to an arrangement with him in the late 1940s. Dean Acheson was aware of this argument but felt that Ho's Stalinism was more relevant than his nationalism. In the late 1940s, this possibility was debated by government officials. A document from the Department of Defense study known as the Pentagon Papers, contained an article that asked the question, "Was Ho an Asian Tito?" The arguments about Ho's past affiliation and previous statements were examined along with other evidence of his possible "nationalist" Communism.

(20) This was not enough for Acheson who had stated that we could not afford to assume that Ho was anything but a dedicated Communist, and that he was required to denounce Moscow and Peking in all ways before we would consider another possibility. The decision not to trust Ho became solid, and like other aspects of the Cold War evolved somewhat into a dogma that could not be changed. As the United States neared the point of escalation, the doubters continued to push for neutralization. Senator Mike Mansfield warned in January 1964, that we were nearing "the point of no return" in Vietnam and should seek a peaceful solution, perhaps through neutralization. Averill Harriman, Chester Bowles, John Kenneth Galbraith and Abram Chayes called for the neutralization of South Vietnam, as they pointed to the example of Laos. (Bundy to President, July 1, 1965; Bird, 272-73; Khong, 85; Pentagon Papers, Book 1, Part 1, C-1-C-5, C-29 and C-45).

(21) Interestingly enough, the idea of "Titoism" was not completely renounced by the American government. Yet U.S. officials tended to feel that any kind of neutralization in the current state of affairs would lead to a Communist takeover. If, however, the United States was able to defeat the NVA/VC forces prior to such an agreement, then neutralization would become a valid option. After being briefed by White House officials, Lippmann could therefore write that Washington's objective was "to create a balance of forces which favors and supports a negotiated settlement in Southeast Asia." Michael Forrestal, chief deputy to National Security adviser McGeorge Bundy, felt that with time regimes that were "at the very least" Titoist in nature would emerge on the periphery of China. Bundy's brother and government official, William, hoped that a neutral Vietnam would emerge, that even if it were to be Communist, might serve as a barrier to future Chinese expansion. (Bird, 291). In 1967, Arthur Schlesinger felt that such independent Communist states on the periphery of China may have represented the best hope for containing Chinese expansion. (Pentagon Papers, Book 4, Part III, 14, and Pentagon Papers, Book 1, Part 1, C-25). One source, at the time of U.S. escalation in the summer of 1965, encouraged hopes of a future Titoist solution. It was reported that an entire wing of the National Liberation Front was against Hanoi, as the American ambassador in Saigon was about to establish contact with this group. This assertion of fact undoubtedly encouraged U.S. policymakers to pursue the policy of military action first. (Memorandum to the President, July 7, 1965).

(22) Yet the U.S. government evidently did not feel that North Vietnam could play that role, but envisioned such a force emerging from within South Vietnam. (Pentagon Papers, Book 1, C-1 to C-47). In late 1963 and early 1964, it also felt that the gap between the Minh-Don leadership of South Vietnam and the National Liberation Front, was too wide for an acceptable compromise. (Kahin, 185). If one were to listen to President Johnson's speech at Johns Hopkins where he talked about the people of South Vietnam being free to choose any form of government they wanted, including Communism, one might be a bit confused. From the administration's viewpoint, this would have referred to an independent Communism not aligned with Russia, China or presumably North Vietnam. In trying to reassure Senator Mansfield that the Senator's views and the views of the administration were not that far apart, President Johnson assured the Senator that U.S. actions were limited and geared towards a settlement. The United States was not opposed to South Vietnam emerging as a neutralist nation, somewhat like Burma or Cambodia. Yet Johnson said we

must avoid “capitulation”. South Vietnam must be free to work out its own destiny, he insisted. Such freedom to choose, according to the President, even included its own decision towards alignment or non-alignment! (Lyndon B. Johnson to Mike Mansfield, April 12, 1965).

(23) Maxwell Taylor wrote that most U.S. officials were willing to accept a neutral or Communist government if it were the free choice of the South Vietnamese people. (Taylor, 369) Robert McNamara saw the whole issue of Vietnam, as our preventing the forced imposition of a regime through external violence, not necessarily as the issue of what kind of government South Vietnam had. The issue of “Titoism” and the historic relationship between China and Vietnam, was contained in a letter forwarded to President Johnson. An administration critic, Professor Hans Morgenthau, had compared Indochina to Yugoslavia in an article for The New York Times magazine. The letter to President Johnson was from lawyer-diplomat Arthur Dean, who, commenting on that article, stated that the situation in Indochina was hardly comparable to Yugoslavia, and that there was “no assurance that Ho Chi Minh would be Titoist in character, except for vaguely defined ideas that historically the North Vietnamese do not like the Chinese.” (Arthur Dean to Lyndon B. Johnson, April 19, 1965). Interestingly enough, General Taylor also referred to Charles DeGaulle’s neutralization proposal as “vague”. McGeorge Bundy summed up the administration attitude when commenting on Walter Lippmann’s call for a “single Titoist Vietnam.” Bundy believed that such a call at this “particular stage” seemed foolish. (Taylor, 310 and Memorandum for the President, March 20, 1965). American policymakers did seem to see their options as limited, and did seem to hope that a nationalist solution could one day be found for what they saw was an internationalist conflict. Many years later, Robert McNamara would lament the fact that we did not try the Titoist option, yet the Johnson administration did not see Hanoi as being part of such a solution (McNamara, *Essence of Security*, 4, 24; McNamara, *Argument without End*, 1, 49-56 and 99-150).

(24) Nationalist concerns were also overridden by the big picture of internationalism which focused on the domino theory. The references to the domino theory were used in both Korea and Vietnam, but were even more numerous when it came to Vietnam. As Paul Nitze warned President Lyndon Johnson, if we acknowledge that we can’t beat the Viet Cong, then the “world stage” will change. (Kahin, 380). According to George M. Kahin, the Presidential advisers who made the decision to escalate the U.S. conflict in Vietnam in the summer of 1965, were heavily influenced by the domino theory. They feared that there would be adverse consequences in Thailand, Japan, India and Europe were South Vietnam to fall. McGeorge Bundy predicted neutrality for Thailand, the collapse of anti-Communists in Laos, heavy pressure on Malaysia, a shift towards neutrality by Japan and the Philippines, a blow to American prestige in South Korea and Taiwan and generally increased influence for Hanoi and Peking. The top decision-maker, President Johnson, seemed as concerned about dominos as much as anyone else. Johnson saw the conflict as internationalist, as he cited in his memoirs a letter from South Vietnamese President Diem to President Kennedy, claiming that South Vietnam did not have enough resources to fight “international Communism” and therefore needed U.S. help. (Johnson, 56). To American officials, the domino theory was not just about territory, but as the President noted in quoting a report from the National Security Adviser, “The international prestige of the United States and a substantial part of our influence are directly at risk in Vietnam.” (Johnson, 126). Assistant Secretary of Defense John McNaughton warned the President that the cost of U.S. intervention in Vietnam would seem cheap compared to the cost of failure in Vietnam. In addition to the geopolitical implications, Vietnam was seen as an important test case for stopping wars of national liberation, a test which could have global implications. (Kahin, 361). Walter Rostow, special White House adviser on Vietnam in 1965 and later National Security Adviser, stated that both Presidents Kennedy and Johnson felt that U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam would only result in a larger war later. In fact, President Johnson feared that a retreat in Vietnam could “open the path to World War III.” As far as the domino theory in Asia was concerned, a prominent member of the Council on Foreign Relations, felt that this threat was centered in the Communist People’s Republic of China. (Rostow, 501; Johnson, 136 and Stebbins, 32, 34, 356).

(25) As in Korea, the American strategy in Vietnam was not to defeat the enemy, but to “persuade” him to negotiate. Such a strategy had evidently worked in Korea and — bolstered by perceptions of a fight against international Communism, the belief that the enemy saw the stakes as limited, and apparently solidified by the emotional appeal of the fight for freedom against Communism — such premises were mostly unchallenged. While the aptness of the Korean situation in general as applied to Vietnam has been appreciated, the role of the military strategy as it applies from Korea to Vietnam has not been as well analyzed. Yuen Khong did mention in passing that one of the legacies of the Korean conflict was to pass on

to the Vietnam war, the strategy of trying to “convince” the Communists to give up. For example, when General Westmoreland requested 180,000 additional troops in 1965, he stated that the purpose was “to convince the enemy it could not win.” (Kahin, 348).

(26) In order to win, Deputy Secretary of Defense John McNaughton noted, we had to obtain a high degree of probability that our military action would move us “towards a favorable settlement in South Vietnam.” In early July 1965, when the escalation decision was being made, his boss, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara recommended an increase in U.S. troop levels that would “prove to the Viet Cong that they cannot win, and thereby force them to a settlement on our terms.” (Robert McNamara to President, July 20, 1965, p. 1).

(27) At the same time, the Goodpaster Study recommended that U.S. forces fight at a pace that the enemy could not sustain, hoping that this strategy would “be able to convince the Viet Cong and the North that they could not win and arrive at a settlement.” McNamara echoed this idea, predicting that after phase one was accomplished (which sought to prevent South Vietnam from falling and to provide basic security), phase two envisioned going on the offensive and compelling the enemy to fight “at a higher and more sustained intensity” that could result in “higher logistical consumption” and thereby “limit his capability to resupply forces in combat at the scale...” President Johnson himself, in his memoirs, cited McNamara’s belief that after ground troops were fully deployed and the bombing continued to do its work in the north, diplomatic initiatives could begin. This strategy of convincing the enemy that he could not win, was essentially victory through stalemate. An administration critic, Senator Wayne Morse, understood this strategy, but doubted that the American people would support the war long enough for the strategy to work. Senator Mike Mansfield, who expressed considerable doubt about the decision to escalate, felt that the so-called “stalemate” option was our best hope, as we needed “a quick stalemate and negotiations.” (Kaiser, 465-67; Memorandum to the President, Wayne Morse’s Arguments Against the War, June 21, 1965; Johnson, 151).

(28) The persuasion strategy applied to the air war in Vietnam. The Sullivan-Forrestal Plan, proposed in the fall of 1964 and named after adviser William Sullivan and top McGeorge Bundy deputy Michael Forrestal, called for slow but escalating bombing of North Vietnam that would “hopefully, bring negotiations.” Bundy’s successor as National Security adviser, Walter Rostow (the top White House adviser on Vietnam at the time of escalation) felt that the start of bombing in February of 1965 had changed North Vietnam’s perceptions of imminent victory, as it was staring at defeat instead, and were beginning to realize that “time has ceased to be their friend.” Journalist-historian David Halberstam noted that the bombing of North Vietnam was originally intended as an effort to bring negotiations. Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy, who was in charge of much of the war contingency planning during 1964, saw the bombing as part of “actions to convey a believable threat of force, then negotiate.” McGeorge Bundy told Lyndon Johnson in a memo that the bombing was meant to hurt but not destroy, as the reason to strike in the first place was “for the purpose of changing the North Vietnamese decision on intervention in the South.”

(29) Before coming up with his final recommendations on Vietnam, McNamara had sought outside expert advice. He may have been particularly impressed by the suggestions of Bernard Fall, who while opposing a number of escalatory suggestions, somehow felt that we ought to find a way to negotiate “through strength.” Fall suggested that North Vietnam’s new, expensive factories might be highly prized, and might be held hostage to American bombing, in an effort to elicit a settlement. The hitting of “lucrative” targets in Hanoi and Haiphong, General Westmoreland believed, would “hurt” the enemy enough to lead to a settlement. The example of making a difference by targeting key enemy assets, was a lesson learned from the Korean War, where such assets tended to be Chinese or Russian, and did not really apply to the situation in Vietnam (Rostow, 512; Halberstam, 357, 377; Bird, 277-78, 281 and Westmoreland, 112-122).

(30) The U.S. bombing campaign in the North was meant to impose an unacceptable price upon the North Vietnamese, but in reality was quite bearable. In showing the “remarkable” restraint of the American air campaign, Dean Rusk cited North Vietnam’s own estimates of civilian casualties at the conclusion of the first year of the U.S. bombing campaign of North Vietnam. Hanoi claimed that there were 500 civilian casualties after a year’s bombing, a far cry from the bombardment of North Korea where there were 7,000 casualties in just a one day raid. (Rusk, 458). Part of this myth is the perception that some policymakers recommended a far more severe bombing campaign, but if you look at the record, they were just advocating a stronger form of “persuasion” and not a Korea-style blitz. For instance, in saying that we should have used

stronger and more regular bombing of the north, Westmoreland stated in hindsight that we needed to “hurt” the enemy, but that to use everything we had available would have been “overkill”.

(31) In a 1964 paper, the Joints Chiefs of Staff, along with William Westmoreland, had stated that only nuclear weapons could compel North Vietnam and China to give up quickly. The reality of the bombing issue was summed up by Walter Rostow, who stated that “I never believed that bombing operations alone, short of the mass destruction of population, could induce Hanoi to end the war, and I know of no member of the government who recommended such mass destruction.” (Rostow, 509). Regarding overall American policy, Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., reported in a memo to President Johnson (August 1965) that the enemy could not be defeated militarily “short of genocide.” Instead, the policy was to “persuade” the enemy. If you look at the recommendations of those who said later on, that an expanded list of targets would have achieved victory, it would seem that these proposals would have fallen way short of both victory and what was done in Korea. (Westmoreland, 112-22; Goodman, 43; Sharp, 252-53, 268-270; Bird, 277; Kaiser, 107, 439, 477 and Henry Cabot Lodge to President, Aug. 3, 1965).

(32) Some advisers felt that the ground war could be even more significant than the air war in achieving victory. Alexis Johnson and others felt that winning the ground war would be the crucial test of the “persuasion” policy. After the air war of early 1965 failed to produce the miraculous results that some predicted for it, the ground war was now given “top billing.” At the Honolulu Conference (April 20, 1965) the decision was made to “plateau” the air war, as the predictions now stated that it would probably take a year or two to demonstrate Viet Cong failure in the south. In February of 1965 David Halberstam was told by a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that it would take “eight U.S. divisions, just like in Korea,” to stop the communists in Vietnam. Defense Secretary McNamara optimistically predicted that when the U.S. plan reached its second phase, VC forces would be harassed “night and day” in their so-called safe havens. After resupply broke down and the enemy suffered higher losses after being compelled to fight more, main enemy units would be destroyed. Not only would the enemy be persuaded it could not achieve victory, but the enemy could be stopped from moving into large-scale combat units. Chester L. Cooper believed that we could actually turn back the clock, by first preventing the enemy from engaging us head on, and then by forcing the enemy back into a guerilla war mode. After this happened, more serious pacification efforts could begin in the south. A settlement favorable to the U.S. side would then follow (State Dept. Telegram from Maxwell Taylor, Apr. 7, 1965; Kaiser, 439; Memorandum to the President, Apr. 26, 1965; Pentagon Papers, Book 4, Part III, 100-01, 132-35, 139; Halberstam, 486; Robert McNamara to President, July 20, 1965, p. 6; Chester L. Cooper to McGeorge Bundy, July 21, 1965).

(33) Despite past setbacks, American officials remained optimistic. General Harold Johnson would later state that it was believed that if the U.S. merely demonstrated its power and prestige, then the other side would have to cave in. Clark Clifford, who attended these 1965 meetings as a skeptic, felt that U.S. policymakers believed that “American power could not be successfully challenged, no matter what the circumstances, anywhere in the world.” (Clifford, 411). American optimism owed a great deal to the perception that the American experience had been successful in Korea, and if we only saw things through, we would also triumph in Vietnam. Dean Rusk for example, noted that we had to encountered some “rough patches” in Korea but we still overcame.

(34) Yuen Khong, who studied foreign policy analogies used in regard to Vietnam, noted that in both public and private pronouncements regarding Vietnam and some other crises, the Korean analogy easily led all others. He noted that it was the analogy most invoked during the crucial July 1965 meetings among U.S. officials. He also observed that Dean Rusk and Lyndon Johnson were the two most vocal proponents of applying the Korean analogy to Vietnam. As early as 1961, U.S. officials were expressing confidence that the NLF in South Vietnam could be defeated “Korea-style”. A State Department White Paper (February 1965) that Yuen Khong discovered, concluded that the situation in Vietnam was most analogous to the situation in Korea, although not very similar to other Cold War crises. (Khong, 3-4, 11, 16, 61-62, 84, 97-105, 110-11, 135).

CONCLUSION

Near the end of 1964, University of Chicago Professor Herman Finer sent a letter to McGeorge Bundy, which helps to illustrate American optimism regarding Vietnam at that time. Professor Finer’s observations seemed to mirror a lot of the official thinking in U.S. circles. National Security Adviser Bundy forwarded the letter in a memorandum to President Johnson, and while the more circumspect Bundy described Finer as “volatile,” he also described him as “extremely intelligent” and stated that he was in



agreement with most of Finer's analysis about world events and completely so on Vietnam. Finer also believed that leaving Vietnam would result in greater casualties later on, and did not buy the argument that Vietnam was an indigenous civil war. In answer to critics, current and future, who alleged that the U.S. fully entered the conflict without a detailed plan of action, Finer observed the following. (Indeed, his answer seems representative of what probably was in the minds of those U.S. officials who advocated escalation in 1965.) "Do you mean to tell me," the political scientist wrote, "that all of our brains, Rand, the psychological warfare experts, etc. cannot think out ways of giving him [Ho] and his friends the jitters every day?"

Finer felt that propaganda directed against the state of the North Vietnamese economy could be particularly effective along with sabotage aimed at industrial targets in North

Vietnam. He surmised that there must be "dozens of ways" of "disrupting everyday life in the north," in order to persuade Ho to realize that if he supported insurgency in the south, "he'll make no progress in the north." Finer's advocacy of hurting and persuading North Vietnam had its own World War II-era analogy. Finer claimed to have overheard British Prime Minister Winston Churchill state that one "growl" from the West would have deterred Hitler prior to the Second World War. Finer now claimed that a similar "growl" should be directed at North Vietnam, and that it should prove sufficient to deter Ho's communists. (Letter on Foreign Affairs from Herman Finer, Dec. 21, 1964; forwarded to Lyndon Johnson, Jan. 2, 1965).★

Title:



Title:



The Cold War in Asia

Crash Course US History #38

1. (1:00) How did the United States become involved in the Korean conflict and why did it occur in the first place?
2. (2:10) What was Truman's fateful decision with regard to the Korean conflict and what did it mean in terms of the fighting?
3. (3:20) What was the toll of the Korean War (conflict)?
4. (5:30) What is the Domino Theory and why was it perhaps a flawed theory?
5. (7:00) Explain the Gulf of Tonkin incident.
6. (10:00) What was different about Vietnam's draft compared to drafts of other wars?
7. (10:30) What was Nixon's secret plan to end the Vietnam War?
8. (11:30) Describe the War Powers Act and explain what brought this legislation about.
9. (12:00) What was the outcome of the Vietnam War?
10. (12:30) Why did America lose the war in Vietnam?

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