

HISTORICAL COMMITTEE

SIMONE MANZI (Cuba crisis)

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The Historical Committee is about re-enacting past conflicts and issues in order to find alternative possible diplomatic solutions different to the real outcomes. We have a knowledge of the outcome of the crisis (and the delegates know it, if they are prepared). But they should intervene with the mind of a delegate who does not know what has happened after the crisis situation. The outcome could be positive or negative for the world or for the countries involved and the delegates should think about alternatives to the real historic development.

It is necessary to bear in mind that some countries may have had different names or policies during that time if compared to what their position is today (Laos, for instance, had a tendency to follow a neutral course concerning the two blocks (USA and USSR) and officially became part of the non-aligned movement in 1964) . Obviously, the debate will take place as if we were in that moment of crisis, specifically. Still nowadays some aspects are not so clear, as they were dim also in that time.

But this is exactly what happens in our time. It is often not so easy to determinate who is the protagonist of actions in debate (e.g.: in the case of bomb attacks. terrorists? secret services? mercenaries?).

The first topic will be:

The Missile Crisis in Cuba: 27th October 1962, the moment of the highest tension between the USA and the USSR

The second topic:

The Vietnam War: the moment is the day of the second Tonkin incident

General background **WHAT WAS THE COLD WAR?**

The two moments of crisis take place in the context of the Cold War.

The Cold War was the most important political and diplomatic issue of the second half of the 20th Century. It was the struggle for global supremacy that pitted the capitalist United States against the communist Soviet Union. Although there are some disagreements as to when the Cold War began, it is generally conceded that mid- to late-1945 marks the time when relations between Moscow and Washington began deteriorating. This deterioration ignited the early Cold War and set the stage for a dynamic struggle that often assumed mythological overtones of good versus evil.

The term "Cold War" precisely refers to the frequently occurring and exacerbating crises between the United States and the former Soviet Union, a tense situation which didn't bring to direct fighting, though. Indeed, the two countries were the emerging nuclear powers at that time, but were afraid of starting a "hot war", which in that case would have resulted in the both combatants' mutual, total, and assured destruction, as well as possibly nuclear winter or other extinction level events. Therefore, at times, both sides refrained from deploying systems capable of unanswerable nuclear strikes against either side. However, in both nations, there were interests that benefited from the development and maintenance of first-strike weapons systems. To avoid the risk of destruction, they fought engaging in smaller proxy wars in different parts of the world, using words as weapons and threatening and denouncing each other.

The Cold War grew out of longstanding conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States that developed after the Russian Revolution of 1917. That year a revolutionary Bolshevik regime, led by Vladimir Lenin emerged, which overthrew the Russian Provisional Government which had replaced the emperor during World War I. In 1918, the United States joined briefly and unenthusiastically in an unsuccessful Allied attempt to topple the revolutionary Soviet regime. Suspicion and hostility thus characterized relations between the Soviets and the West long before the Second World War made them reluctant allies in the struggle against Nazi Germany.

During World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union fought together as allies against the Axis powers. However, the relationship between the two nations was a tense one. Americans had long been wary of Soviet communism and concerned about Russian leader Joseph Stalin. For their part, the Soviets resented the Americans' decades-long refusal to treat the USSR as a legitimate part of the international community as well as their delayed entry into World War II, which resulted in the deaths of tens of millions of Russians. After the war ended, these grievances ripened into an overwhelming sense of mutual distrust and enmity. Postwar Soviet expansionism in Eastern Europe fueled many Americans' fears of a Russian plan to control the world. Meanwhile, the USSR came to resent what they perceived as American officials' bellicose rhetoric, arms buildup and interventionist approach to international relations.

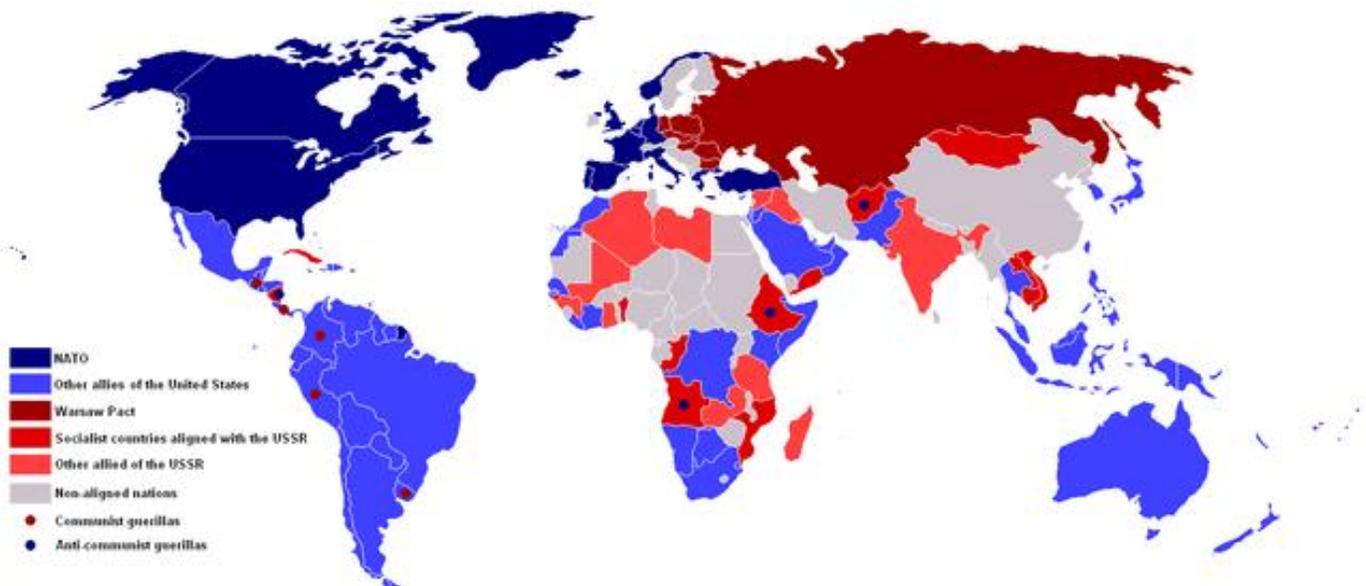
For the first few years of the early Cold War (between 1945 and 1948), the conflict was more political than military. At the close of World War II, the Soviet Union stood firmly entrenched in

Eastern Europe, intent upon installing governments there that would pay allegiance to the Kremlin. It also sought to expand its security zone even further into North Korea, Central Asia, and the Middle East. Similarly, the United States established a security zone of its own that comprised Western Europe, Latin America, Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan. From the long view of history, it is clear that both sides were jockeying for a way to secure their futures from the threat of another world war, but it was the threat that each side perceived from the other that allowed for the development of mutual suspicion. It was this mutual suspicion, augmented by profound distrust and misunderstanding that would ultimately fuel the entire conflict.

During the Cold war the world was divided into two main groups: the Eastern Bloc, led by the Soviet Union and which included countries with communist political systems (the so called satellite states), the Western Bloc, of the United States, backed by NATO and other countries, with democratic political systems. There was also the non-aligned group which included countries that did not want to be tied to either the West or the East.

<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/the-bandung-conference-concludes>

The Afro-Asian Conference—popularly known as the Bandung Conference because it was held in Bandung, Indonesia—comes to a close on this day. During the conference, representatives from 29 “non-aligned” nations in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East met to condemn colonialism, decry racism, and express their reservations about the growing Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union.



The Bandung Conference grew out of an increasing sense of frustration and alienation among the so-called “**non-aligned**” nations of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. These were nations that preferred to remain neutral during the Cold War, believing that their interests would not be served by allying with either the United States or the Soviet Union. In April 1955, representatives from 29 of these nations, including Egypt, Indonesia, India, Iraq, and the People’s Republic of China, met to consider the issues they considered most pressing. Various speeches and resolutions condemned

colonialism and imperialism and called for the freedom of all subjugated peoples. Racism in all forms was likewise criticized, with the apartheid system of South Africa coming in for particularly harsh denunciations. The assembled nations also called for an end to the nuclear arms race and the elimination of atomic weapons. The fundamental message of many of the sessions was the same: the Cold War struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union had little meaning to **nations battling for economic development, improved health, and better crop yields, and fighting against the forces of colonialism and racism.**

The United States government was generally appalled by the Bandung Conference. Although invited to do so, it refused to send an unofficial observer to the meetings. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was already on record as equating neutralism in the fight against communism as close to a mortal sin. For the United States, the issue was black and white: join America in the fight against communism or risk being considered a potential enemy. This unfortunate policy brought the United States into numerous conflicts with nations of the underdeveloped world who were struggling to find a middle road in the Cold War conflict.

Both the USA and the USSR squabbled with each other at the UN, sought closer relations with nations that were not committed to either side, and articulated their differing visions of a post-war world.

The United States and the Soviet Union were the only two superpowers following the Second World War. The fact that by the 1950s, each possessed nuclear weapons and the means of delivering such weapons on their enemies, added a dangerous aspect to the Cold War. Many other factors had made the Cold War an increasingly militarized struggle. The communist takeover in China, the pronouncement of the Truman Doctrine, tensions over occupied Germany, the outbreak of the Korean War, and the formulation of the Warsaw Pact and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as rival alliances had all enhanced the Cold War's military dimension. U.S. foreign policy reflected this transition when it adopted the containment policy that sought to "contain" the Soviet Union from further expansion. By and large, through a variety of incarnations, the containment policy would remain the central strategic vision of the U.S. foreign policy from 1952 until the ultimate demise of the Soviet Union in 1991. This policy was a response to a series of moves by the Soviet Union to increase communist influence in Eastern Europe, China, Korea, Africa, and Vietnam.

The containment strategy also provided the rationale for an unprecedented arms build-up in the United States. The American President Truman recommended the country's use of military force to "contain" communist expansionism anywhere it seemed to be occurring. In particular, American officials encouraged the development of atomic weapons like the ones that had ended World War II. Thus, **began a deadly "arms race."** In 1949, the Soviets tested an atom bomb of their own. In response, President Truman announced that the United States would build an even more destructive atomic weapon: the hydrogen bomb, or "superbomb." Stalin, the Premier of the Soviet Union followed suit. Beginning in the late 1950s, space would become another dramatic arena for this competition, as each side sought to prove the superiority of its technology, its military firepower and—by extension—its political-economic system.

In June 1950, the first military action of the Cold War began when the Soviet-backed North Korean People's Army invaded its pro-Western neighbour to the south. Many American officials feared this was the first step in a communist campaign to take over the world and deemed that non-intervention was not an option. Truman sent the American military into Korea, but the war dragged to a stalemate and ended in 1953.

Other international disputes followed. In the early 1960s, the American President Kennedy faced a number of troubling situations in his own hemisphere. The Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 and the Cuban missile crisis the following year seemed to prove that the real communist threat now lay in the unstable, postcolonial "Third World". Nowhere was this more apparent than in Vietnam, where the collapse of the French colonial regime had led to a struggle between the American-backed nationalist Ngo Dinh Diem in the south and the communist nationalist Ho Chi Minh in the north. Since the 1950s, the United States had been committed to the survival of an anticommunist government in the region, and by the early 1960s it seemed clear to American leaders that if they were to successfully "contain" communist expansionism there, they would have to intervene more actively on Diem's behalf. However, what was intended to be a brief military action spiraled into a 10-year conflict.

Another territory where the US and the USSR indirectly clashed was Germany. At the end of World War II, a pair of Allied peace conferences at Yalta and Potsdam determined the fate of Germany. The defeated nation was split into four "allied occupation zones": the eastern part of the country went to the Soviet Union and was called German Democratic Republic (GDR), while the western part went to the United States, Great Britain and (eventually) France and was named Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). Even though Berlin was located entirely within the Soviet part of the country, it was split into similar sectors. The Soviets took the eastern half, while the other Allies took the western. This four-way occupation of Berlin began in June 1945.

The Russians began maneuvering to drive the United States, Britain and France out of the city for good. In 1948, a Soviet blockade of West Berlin aimed to starve the western Allies out of the city. Instead of retreating, however, the United States and its allies supplied their sectors of the city from the air. After a decade of relative calm, tensions flared again in 1958. For the next three years, the Soviets blustered and made threats, while the Allies resisted. Summits, conferences and other negotiations came and went without resolution. Meanwhile, the flood of refugees continued. East German decided to build a makeshift barbed wire and concrete block wall—the Berlin Wall—that divided one side of the city from the other: no one could get from East to West Berlin. The construction of the Berlin Wall (1961) did stop the flood of refugees from East to West, and it did defuse the crisis over Berlin.

What follows now in this introduction concerns the development after the crisis the delegates have to debate:

As soon as Richard Nixon was elected President of the US (1969), he implemented a new approach to international relations. Instead of viewing the world as a hostile, "bi-polar" place, he suggested

using diplomacy instead of military action to create more poles. To that end, he encouraged the United Nations to recognize the communist Chinese government and, after a trip there in 1972, began to establish diplomatic relations with Beijing. At the same time, he adopted a policy of "relaxation" toward the Soviet Union. In 1972, he and Soviet premier Leonid Brezhnev signed the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I), which prohibited the manufacture of nuclear missiles by both sides and took a step toward reducing the decades-old threat of nuclear war.

Despite Nixon's efforts, the Cold War heated up again under President Ronald Reagan (1981). Like many leaders of his generation, Reagan believed that the spread of communism anywhere threatened freedom everywhere. As a result, he worked to provide financial and military aid to anticommunist governments and insurgencies around the world. This policy, particularly as it was applied in the developing world in places like Grenada and El Salvador, was known as the Reagan Doctrine.

Even as Reagan fought communism in Central America, however, the Soviet Union was disintegrating. In response to severe economic problems and growing political ferment in the USSR, Premier Mikhail Gorbachev took office in 1985 and introduced two policies that redefined Russia's relationship to the rest of the world: political openness and economic reform. Soviet influence in Eastern Europe waned. In 1989, every other communist state in the region replaced its government with a non-communist one. In November of that year, the Berlin Wall—the most visible symbol of the decades-long Cold War, as it physically and ideologically divided Berlin from 1961 to 1989 - was finally destroyed, and by 1991, the Soviet Union itself had fallen apart. The Cold War was over. But it could happen again.

THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS (October 1962)

The day of the debate is October 27th

This crisis had its focus in the question of the possession and installation of nuclear weapons. The topic is interesting if we consider that the survival of mankind is still threatened by a quantity of 16.500 nuclear bombs detained by the nuclear power states.

1. DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

- McCarthyism: it is the practice of making accusations of subversion or treason without proper regard for evidence. The term refers to US Senator Joseph McCarthy and has its origins in the period in the United States known as the Second Red Scare, lasting approximately from 1947 to 1956 and characterized by heightened political repression as well as a campaign spreading fear of Communist influence on American institutions and of espionage by Soviet agents. This was also applied at world level.
- The domino theory: <http://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/domino-theory>
- U-2: it is an American single-jet engine, ultra-high altitude reconnaissance aircraft operated by the United States Air Force (USAF) and previously flown by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).
- SAM: which is the acronym of surface-to-air missile, or ground-to-air missile (GTAM), is a missile designed to be launched from the ground to destroy aircraft or other missiles
- ICBM: which is the acronym of intercontinental ballistic missile is a guided ballistic missile with a minimum range of 5,500 kilometres primarily designed for nuclear weapons delivery (delivering one or more thermonuclear warheads). Similarly, conventional, chemical, and biological weapons can also be delivered with varying effectiveness, but have never been deployed on ICBMs. Most modern designs support multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles (MIRVs), allowing a single missile to carry several warheads, each of which can strike a different target.
- MRBM: which is the acronym of medium-range ballistic missile is a type of ballistic missile with medium range, this last classification depending on the standards of certain organizations. Within the U.S. Department of Defence, a medium-range missile is defined by having a maximum range of between 1,000 and 3,000 km.
- IRBM: which is the acronym of intermediate-range ballistic missile is a ballistic missile with a range of 3,000–5,500 km (1,864–3,418 miles), between a MRBM and an ICBM.
- Excomm: which is the acronym of National Security Council Executive Committee, a special advisory group to weigh various options created by Kennedy.

2. MAJOR PARTIES INVOLVED

The major parties involved in this issue were the United States of America, the Soviet Union, Cuba, and at a lesser degree, Italy and Turkey.

Since the end of World War II and the start of the Cold War, the United States of America were concerned about an expansion of communism (McCarthyism) and that a Latin American country could ally with the Soviet Union was considered unacceptable.

The Cuban revolution

In 1959, Fulgencio Batista, a Cuban dictator supported by the USA, was deposed by the Cuban revolution lead by Fidel Castro. Even though initially the USA welcomed such revolution, Batista hadn't been the best ally and a democratic government in Cuba seemed more stable, these views didn't last long. Cuba was for the USA an exotic and close tourist resort, it provided a naval base at Guantanamo, and it also was an attractive investment area due to the low paid Cuban labour so most of the agriculture on the island was owned by the USA. Hence the US government has never hesitated to interfere to protect their interests. The US were deeply hated on the island because to Castro and to a large proportion of the Cuban people the US domination was the cause of Cuba's problems such as poverty and illiteracy and they couldn't be tackled without harming the USA. Castro introduced the Agrarian Reform Law (ARF) which effectively redistributed large agricultural landholdings which were owned by wealthy Cubans or US interests to members of the rural population. The majority of this land was owned by US companies such as Coca-Cola and comprised 75% of cultivated land. Almost 100,000 Cubans received 27 hectares each and all uncultivated land reverted to state ownership.

Eisenhower decided that Castro was a communist. Whether this was true is arguable, but he was certainly to turn to communism because of US hostility. The US government tried to overthrow Castro multiple times and attempted to assassinate him, they tried to break him by imposing economic sanctions, yet instead of weaken him this hostility seemed to make him more confident and more openly against the US. The only other option for Castro, in the logic of the cold war, was to turn to the USSR but this could not be tolerated by the USA.

The Bay of Pigs

Arguably Castro's **biggest achievements were in education, healthcare and combating racism** and went a long way to securing the loyalty of the 'first generation of the revolution'. In keeping with his practice of setting ambitious goals and mobilizing the Cuban people, 1961 was declared the 'Year of Education' as he pledged to eliminate illiteracy in 12 months. Particular focus was on the often overlooked rural areas as 100,000 students taught 1 million people to read and write and giving Cuban one of the highest literacy rates in Latin America. Education was made free for all Cubans.

One of the **attempts made by the CIA to overthrow Castro**, consisted in using a group of about 1400 anti-Castro Cuban exiles to invade the island with the help of the US air force and it was assumed that

this action would generate mass risings and depose Castro's government. However, Eisenhower acknowledged the risks of failure of this operation and hesitated. On the other hand, his successor, John F. Kennedy, who had based his election campaign on the necessity to act against the spread of communism and the need to stop Cuba, was more reckless and approved the project. The project was put together in a remarkably sloppy manner. Mass risings were estimated on the basis of nothing more than wishful thinking. Almost nothing seems to have been done to arrange a new government that could receive some degree of popular support. If no mass risings arose, then the group of Cuban exiles was supposed to withdraw into the interior and launch a guerrilla campaign. Nonetheless, the chosen landing ground, called the Bay of Pigs, led only to a swamp making it impossible to realise.

The mission was a complete failure, in fact, air attacks fail to destroy Castro's air force, the ammunition and communications equipment was destroyed before it could be landed. This action only helped increase Castro popular support.

This episode had completely shattered any chance for the US and Cuba to mend fences in fact Kennedy gave approval to the CIA to carry out Operation Mongoose, which meant new attempts to weaken the Cuban regime. The president also advised the Soviet Union not to challenge the USA in the western hemisphere, they would only tolerate the shipment of defensive weapons such as surface to air missiles but they wouldn't tolerate surface to surface missiles, which carried nuclear warheads.

The USSR had welcomed the Cuban revolution, in fact as US opposition to Castro augmented, so did Soviet support. Cuba was never under the Soviet domain but it was becoming more and more reliant on the USSR for economic and military support. However, after the Bay of Pigs, Castro had declared to be a communist for the first time. Therefore there was the belief that the US were getting ready to occupy Cuba but Khrushchev could not permit such a thing since it was the only communist state in the western hemisphere.

Khrushchev had also other worries, in fact in 1959 he had claimed a superiority in intercontinental ballistic missiles which was fictional. Since then, Kennedy affirmed that he would develop new missiles to match the fictional Soviet advantage and even when he discovered that the strategic balance was in reality in the USA's favour he continued enhancing their arsenal. Khrushchev was now trapped by his own bluff and had to face great expenses rebalance things which were clearly in US' favour.



The **US installed in 1962 in Turkey and in Italy Jupiter missiles within the range of Soviet targets** and this gave Khrushchev the idea to place IRBMs and MRBMs in Cuba from where they could easily

The day of the debate is October 27th

The moment of the highest tension between the USA and the USSR with two frightening moments:

At 11:19 am Washington time, USAF Major Rudolf Anderson became the only combatant fatality of the Cuban Missile Crisis when his U-2 airplane was shot down by a surface-to-air missile while he was flying over Cuba. Soviet Army Major Ivan Gerchenov had been ordered to fire missiles, from a station near the city of Banes.] The Joint Chiefs recommended to President John F. Kennedy that the U.S. should attack Cuba within 36 hours to destroy the Soviet missiles. At Washington, General Taylor recommended an air attack on the Banes site, but immediate action was not taken.

Hours later, the Soviet submarine B-59 was detected by U.S. Navy destroyers in the Atlantic Ocean, and one of the ships began dropping explosive depth charges to force the sub to surface. Thirty years later, a communications intelligence officer on the B-59, would report that the Captain Valentin Savitsky ordered a nuclear-armed torpedo to be armed for firing at the U.S. ships, and that the second-in-command, Vasili Arkhipov, persuaded Savitsky to surface instead.

- October 27: A U-2 strays into Soviet airspace, near Alaska, and is nearly intercepted by Soviet fighters. 13 days (movie)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-yfloHXOO9E&list=PLs2B5JEJge_OoLzqvolgmbrHOBX-

3. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- Withdrawing of the missiles from both sides, Europe and Cuba;
- Direct contact between USA and USSR;
- Ban of nuclear weapons;
- Creation of an emergency committee to cool down the emergency composed by the big 5 and 2 countries of every continent.



SOURCES AND USEFUL LINKS

<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/cuban-missile-crisis>

<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/cuban-missile-crisis>

<http://www.historytoday.com/john-swift/cuban-missile-crisis>

<http://globe.blogs.nouvelobs.com/archive/2012/10/19/crise-de-cuba-le-jour-le-plus-dangereux-de-l-histoire.html>

VIETNAM

A brief introduction

The Vietnam War was a long, costly and divisive conflict that pitted the communist government of North Vietnam against South Vietnam and its principal ally, the United States. The conflict was intensified by the ongoing Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. More than 3 million people were killed in the Vietnam War, and more than half of the dead were Vietnamese civilians. Opposition to the war in the United States bitterly divided Americans, even after President Richard Nixon ordered the withdrawal of U.S. forces in 1973. Communist forces ended the war by seizing control of South Vietnam in 1975, and the country was unified as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam the following year.

Indochina

French Indochina, officially known as the Indochinese Union after 1887 and the Indochinese Federation after 1947, was a grouping of French colonial territories in Southeast Asia which included Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

After the Fall of France during World War II in 1940, the colony was administered by the pro Nazi French government and was under Japanese occupation until March 1945. Beginning in May 1941, the Viet Minh, a nationalist army led by Hồ Chí Minh, began a revolt against the Japanese. In August 1945 they declared Vietnamese independence and extended the war, known as the First Indochina War, against the newly established French domination liberating the Northern part of the country.

In Saigon, the anti-Communist State of Vietnam, led by former Emperor Bảo Đại, was granted independence in 1949.

The Indochina Wars

- **The First Indochina War (called the Indochina War in France and the French War in Vietnam)** began after the end of World War II in 1945 and lasted until the French defeat in 1954. After a long campaign of resistance against the French and the Japanese, Viet Minh forces had claimed a victory (the August Revolution) after Japanese and Vichy French forces surrendered in the North on 15 August 1945. In the War in Vietnam (1945–46), British forces temporarily occupied the South, starting from 13 September 1945, only to restore French colonial control in 1946. In the United Nations and through their alliance with the United Kingdom and the United States, the French demanded return of their former Indochina colony prior to agreeing to participate in the NATO alliance (founded in 1949) opposing Soviet expansion beyond the countries of the Warsaw Pact (founded in 1955) in the Cold War. The communist/nationalist Viet Minh, whom the Allies had supported during the war, continued fighting the French with support from China and the Soviet Union, ultimately forcing the NATO-backed French out of Indochina (1954).

First Indochina War

In the First Indochina War, the Viet Minh, supported by the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union, **fought to gain their independence from the French**, supported initially by the remaining troops of the Japanese Army after its surrender to Britain, also by the French-loyalist Vietnamese catholic minority, and later by the United States in the frame of the Cold War. This war of independence lasted from December 1946 until July 1954, with most of the fighting taking place in areas surrounding Hanoi. It ended with the French defeat at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu and French withdrawal from Vietnam after the Geneva Agreements. The parties agreed that the partition line should be at the 17th parallel and that the elections for reunification should be in July 1956, two years after the ceasefire. The "Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam" was signed only by French and Viet Minh military commands, completely bypassing the State of Vietnam. Based on a proposal by Zhou Enlai, an International Control Commission (ICC) chaired by India, with Canada and Poland as members, was placed in charge of supervising the ceasefire. These elections never took place. The new ruler of South Vietnam, Diệm launched the "Denounce the Communists" campaign, during which communists and other anti-government elements were arrested, imprisoned, tortured, or executed.

- **The Second Indochina War**

(called **the Vietnam War** in the West or the American War in Vietnam) began **as a conflict between the United States-backed South Vietnamese government and its opponents, both the North Vietnamese-based communist Viet Cong (National Liberation Front) and the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN), known in the West as the North Vietnamese Army (NVA)**. The conflict began in 1955 and lasted until 1975 when the North Vietnamese conquered South Vietnam. The United States, which had supported France during the first Indochina war, backed the South Vietnam government in opposition to the National Liberation Front and the Communist-allied NVA. The North benefited from military and financial support from China and the Soviet Union, members of the Communist bloc.

- The Third Indochina War was a period of prolonged conflict following the Vietnam War, in which several wars were fought, like the Cambodian–Vietnamese War and The Sino-Vietnamese War.

Roots of the Vietnam War

Southeast Asia, with Indochina at the center, had long been a region of interest to outside powers. Most of the region fell under European colonial control after the mid-19th century.

Vietnam, a nation in Southeast Asia on the eastern edge of the Indochinese peninsula, had been under French colonial rule since the 19th century. Vietnam was absorbed into French Indochina in stages between 1858 and 1887. Nationalism grew until World War II provided a break in French control.

During World War II, Japanese forces invaded Vietnam and collaborated with French officials loyal to France's Vichy regime. To fight off both Japanese occupiers and the French colonial administration for Vietnamese independence, political leader Ho Chi Minh—inspired by Chinese and Soviet communism—formed a guerrilla organization, the Viet Minh, or the League for the Independence of Vietnam.

Ho, made contact with the Allies and aided operations against the Japanese in South China. In early 1945, Japan ousted the French administration in Vietnam and executed numerous French officials.

Following its 1945 defeat in World War II, Japan withdrew its forces from Vietnam, leaving the French-educated Emperor Bao Dai in control. France promised Vietnam its autonomy by 1949, but only offered limited independence, continuing to oversee defense and foreign policy.

Seeing an opportunity to seize control, Ho's Viet Minh forces immediately rose up, taking over the northern city of Hanoi and declaring early in September 1945 the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) with Ho as president.

French forces opened talks with the Vietnamese communists. These talks collapsed in 1946, and French warships bombarded the northern Vietnamese city of Haiphong, killing thousands. In response, the Viet Minh launched an attack against the French in Hanoi in December 1946. That was the beginning of the First Indochina War. The French quickly struck back, and Ho and his followers found refuge in a remote area of northern Vietnam. The Viet Minh, undefeated and widely supported by the Vietnamese people, waged an increasingly effective guerrilla war against the French.

Seeking to regain control of the region and to counter the influence of popular nationalist Ho Chi Minh, France seized southern Vietnam and backed Emperor Bao, who set up the state of Vietnam (Republic of Vietnam) in July 1949, choosing Saigon as the capital city. However, Vietnam's independence movement continued to grow.

Bao Dai eventually abdicated a second time and lived out his life in exile in France.

The DRV and RVN wanted the same thing: a unified Vietnam. But while Ho and his supporters wanted a nation modeled after other communist countries giving the land to the farmers, Bao and many others wanted a Vietnam with close economic and cultural ties to the West. The difference in ideology resulted in one of the world's longest and brutal wars.

During the eight-year war, Mao Zedong's Chinese communists supported the Viet Minh, while the United States aided the French and anti-communist Vietnamese forces.

American interference

Concerned about regional instability, the United States became increasingly committed to countering communist nationalists in Indochina. The Vietnam War and active U.S. involvement in the war began in 1954, though ongoing conflict in the region had stretched back several decades.

Although Ho Chi Minh would become famous for leading the North Vietnamese forces against the United States in the 1960s, despite his communist leanings, he was not at the outset anti-American. He had been disappointed by the lack of support given native peoples struggling for independence from colonial rule at the Versailles Conference that ended World War I. In the 1940s, he made repeated requests for American aid and campaigned for independence.

U.S. interests in the late 1940s and early 1950s did not, however, include supporting Vietnam's effort to gain independence under a nationalist with communist leanings. Active communist rebellions in Malaya and the Philippines, and the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, caused U.S. officials great concern. President Eisenhower explained the link between Vietnam's status and that of the rest of Southeast Asia through the metaphor of falling dominoes: if one country fell to communism, the rest of them would follow. The United States also required French assistance developing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and rebuilding West Germany, and, as such, supported the failing French regime in Indochina. By the time of the Korean War armistice in 1953, the United States was already irrevocably committed to defending the French against the increasingly aggressive Viet Minh forces.

After Ho's communist forces took power in the north, armed conflict between northern and southern armies continued until a decisive battle at Dien Bien Phu in May 1954 ended in victory for northern Viet Minh forces. The French retreated from Vietnam and formally recognized the DRV. The French loss at the battle ended almost a century of French colonial rule in Indochina.

In the wake of the French defeat, the French and Vietnamese, along with representatives from the United States and China, met in Geneva in mid-1954 to discuss the future of Indochina. At the Geneva conference two agreements were reached. First, the French and the Viet Minh agreed to a cease-fire and **a temporary division of the country along the 17th parallel** (17 degrees north latitude): Ho would control the North and Bao the South. The second agreement **promised that neither the North nor the South would join alliances with outside parties**, and called for **general elections in 1956** for the reunification the country.

However, the United States did not sign the second agreement, and, as the French pulled out, they appointed the strongly anti-communist politician Ngo Dinh Diem to lead South Vietnam in 1955. He pushed Emperor Bao aside to become president of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam (GVN), often referred to during that era as South Vietnam. Like Bao Dai, Diem was an unpopular choice in Vietnam as he had waited out the nationalist struggle against France abroad. Diem had also collaborated with the Japanese occupation, but his Catholicism appealed to the Western powers. The

United States also supported the formation of the **Southeast Asia Treaty Organization**, designed to respond if there was an armed attack on any nation in the region.

In the late 1950s, Ho Chi Minh organized a communist guerrilla movement in the South, called the Viet Cong, also known as the National Liberation Front, and which later became a communist political organization with its own army – the People's Liberation Armed Forces of South Vietnam (PLAF) –. North Vietnam and the Viet Cong successfully opposed a series of ineffectual U.S.-backed south Vietnam regimes and beginning in 1964 withstood a decade-long military intervention by the United States.

The Vietnam War

With the Cold War intensifying worldwide, the United States hardened its policies against any allies of the Soviet Union, and by 1955 President Dwight D. Eisenhower had pledged his firm support to Diem and South Vietnam.

With training and equipment from American military and the CIA, Diem's security forces cracked down on Viet Minh sympathizers in the south, those being part of the Viet Cong (or Vietnamese Communist), arresting some 100,000 people, many of whom were brutally tortured and executed.

By 1957, the Viet Cong and other opponents of Diem's repressive regime began fighting back with attacks on government officials and other targets, and by 1959 they had begun engaging the South Vietnamese army in firefights.

In December 1960, Diem's many opponents within South Vietnam—both communist and non-communist—formed the National Liberation Front (NLF) to organize resistance to the regime. Though the NLF claimed to be autonomous and that most of its members were not communists, many in Washington assumed it was a puppet of Hanoi.

Domino Theory

A team of experts sent by President John F. Kennedy in 1961 to report on conditions in South Vietnam advised a build-up of American military, economic and technical aid in order to help Diem confront the Viet Cong threat.

Working under the “domino theory,” which held that if one Southeast Asian country fell to communism, many other countries would follow and communism would spread uncontrollably, Kennedy increased U.S. aid, though he stopped short of committing to a large-scale military intervention.

By 1962, the U.S. military presence in South Vietnam had reached some 9,000 troops, compared with fewer than 800 during the 1950s.

Gulf of Tonkin incident

A coup by some of his own generals succeeded in toppling and killing Diem in November 1963, three weeks before Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas.

The ensuing political instability in South Vietnam persuaded Kennedy's successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to further increase U.S. military and economic support.

The basic story line of the Gulf of Tonkin incident is as follows:

First incident August 2nd 1964

At approximately 1430 hours Vietnam time on August 2, 1964, USS Maddox (DD-731) detected three North Vietnamese torpedo boats approaching at high speed. Along with other American warships, Maddox was steaming in international waters some 28 nautical miles off North Vietnam's coast, gathering information on that country's coastal radars. As the torpedo boats continued their high-speed approach, Maddox was ordered to fire warning shots if they closed inside 10,000 yards. When the boats reached that point, Maddox fired three warning shots, but the torpedo boats continued inbound at high speed. In the subsequent exchange of fire, neither American nor North Vietnamese ships inflicted significant damage. However, planes from the aircraft carrier Ticonderoga (CVA-14) crippled one of the boats and damaged the other two.

Second incident August 4th 1964

Two days later, August 4, Maddox returned to the area, supported by the destroyer Turner Joy (DD-951). This time the U.S. ships detected electronic signals and acoustic indications of a likely second North Vietnamese naval attack, and they requested U.S. air support. This second attack was used by President Johnson to obtain from the Congress to "take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression" by the communist government of North Vietnam. It was passed on August 7, 1964, by the U.S. Congress after an alleged attack on two U.S. naval destroyers stationed off the coast of Vietnam. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution effectively launched America's full-scale involvement in the Vietnam War. The president signed it into law three days later, and plans to increase U.S. military involvement in Vietnam were begun in earnest.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWAmAOctuxI>

<https://www.usni.org/magazines/navalhistory/2008-02/truth-about-tonkin>

<http://www.historynet.com/case-closed-the-gulf-of-tonkin-incident.htm>

The date set for the debate is August 8th 1964. Take into consideration that the delegates understand that something awful would happen in the following period.

What follows is just to tell the delegates how it ended.

Johnson made the decision—with solid support from the American public—to send U.S. combat forces into battle in Vietnam.



Despite the concerns of some of his advisers about this escalation, and about the entire war effort amid a growing anti-war movement, Johnson authorized the dispatch of troops. In addition to the United States, South Korea, Thailand, Australia and New Zealand also committed troops to fight in South Vietnam (albeit on a much smaller scale).

By November 1967, the number of American troops in Vietnam was approaching 500,000.

The later years of the war saw increased physical and psychological deterioration among American soldiers—both volunteers and draftees—including drug use, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), mutinies and attacks by soldiers against officers and noncommissioned officers. In 1982, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was unveiled in Washington, D.C. On it were inscribed the names of 58,200 American men and women killed or missing in the war.

Between July 1966 and December 1973, more than 503,000 U.S. military personnel deserted, and a robust anti-war movement among American forces spawned violent protests, killings and mass incarcerations of personnel stationed in Vietnam as well as within the United States.

Bombarded by horrific images of the war on their televisions, Americans on the home front turned against the war as well: In October 1967, some 35,000 demonstrators staged a massive Vietnam War protest outside the Pentagon. Opponents of the war argued that civilians, not enemy combatants, were the primary victims and that the United States was supporting a corrupt dictatorship in Saigon.

Tet Offensive

By the end of 1967, Hanoi's communist leadership was growing impatient as well, and sought to strike a decisive blow aimed at forcing the better-supplied United States to give up hopes of success.

On January 31, 1968, some 70,000 DRV forces under General Vo Nguyen Giap launched the Tet Offensive (named for the lunar new year), a coordinated series of fierce attacks on more than 100 cities and towns in South Vietnam.

Vietnamization

Nixon sought to deflate the anti-war movement by appealing to a "silent majority" of Americans who he believed supported the war effort. In an attempt to limit the volume of American casualties, he announced a program called Vietnamization: withdrawing U.S. troops, increasing aerial and artillery bombardment and giving the South Vietnamese the training and weapons needed to effectively control the ground war.

In addition to this Vietnamization policy, Nixon continued public peace talks in Paris, adding higher-level secret talks conducted by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger beginning in the spring of 1968.

The North Vietnamese continued to insist on complete and unconditional U.S. withdrawal—plus the ouster of U.S.-backed General Nguyen Van Thieu—as conditions of peace, however, and as a result the peace talks stalled.

My Lai Massacre

The next few years would bring even more carnage, including the horrifying revelation that U.S. soldiers had mercilessly slaughtered more than 400 unarmed civilians in the village of My Lai in March 1968.

After the My Lai Massacre, anti-war protests continued to build as the conflict wore on. In 1968 and 1969, there were hundreds of protest marches and gatherings throughout the country.

On November 15, 1969, the largest anti-war demonstration in American history took place in Washington, D.C., as over 250,000 Americans gathered peacefully, calling for withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam.

The anti-war movement, which was particularly strong on college campuses, divided Americans bitterly. For some young people, the war symbolized a form of unchecked authority they had come to resent. For other Americans, opposing the government was considered unpatriotic and treasonous.

As the first U.S. troops were withdrawn, those who remained became increasingly angry and frustrated, exacerbating problems with morale and leadership. Tens of thousands of soldiers received dishonorable discharges for desertion, and about 500,000 American men from 1965-73 became "draft dodgers," with many fleeing to Canada to evade conscription.

Kent State Shooting

In 1970, a joint U.S-South Vietnamese operation invaded Cambodia, hoping to wipe out DRV supply bases there. The South Vietnamese then led their own invasion of Laos, which was pushed back by North Vietnam.

The invasion of these countries, in violation of international law, sparked a new wave of protests on college campuses across America. During one, on May 4, 1970, at Kent State University in Ohio, National Guardsmen shot and killed four students. At another protest 10 days later, two students at Jackson State University in Mississippi were killed by police.

When Did the Vietnam War End?

In January 1973, the United States and North Vietnam concluded a final peace agreement, ending open hostilities between the two nations. War between North and South Vietnam continued, however, until April 30, 1975, when DRV forces captured Saigon, renaming it Ho Chi Minh City (Ho himself died in 1969).

More than two decades of violent conflict had inflicted a devastating toll on Vietnam's population: After years of warfare, an estimated 2 million Vietnamese were killed, while 3 million were wounded and another 12 million became refugees. Warfare had demolished the country's infrastructure and economy, and reconstruction proceeded slowly.

In 1976, Vietnam was unified as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, though sporadic violence continued over the next 15 years, including conflicts with neighboring China and Cambodia. Under a broad free market policy put in place in 1986, the economy began to improve, boosted by oil export revenues and an influx of foreign capital. Trade and diplomatic relations between Vietnam and the U.S. resumed in the 1990s.

In the United States, the effects of the Vietnam War would linger long after the last troops returned home in 1973. The nation spent more than \$120 billion on the conflict in Vietnam from 1965-73; this massive spending led to widespread inflation, exacerbated by a worldwide oil crisis in 1973 and skyrocketing fuel prices.

Psychologically, the effects ran even deeper. The war had pierced the myth of American invincibility and had bitterly divided the nation. Many returning veterans faced negative reactions from both opponents of the war (who viewed them as having killed innocent civilians) and its supporters (who saw them as having lost the war), along with physical damage including the effects of exposure to the toxic herbicide Agent Orange, millions of gallons of which had been dumped by U.S. planes on the dense forests of Vietnam.

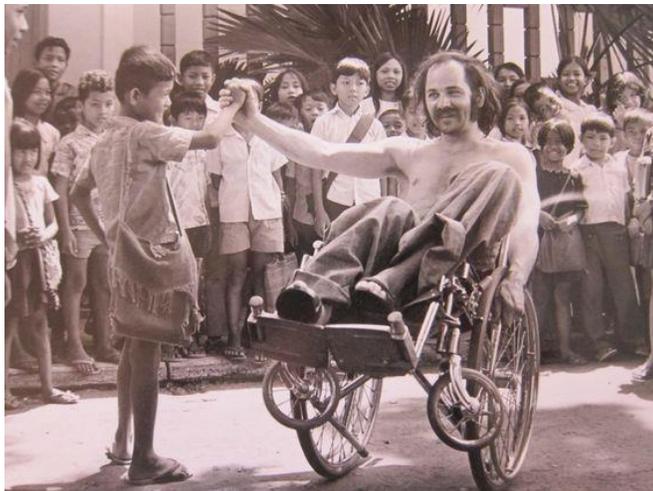
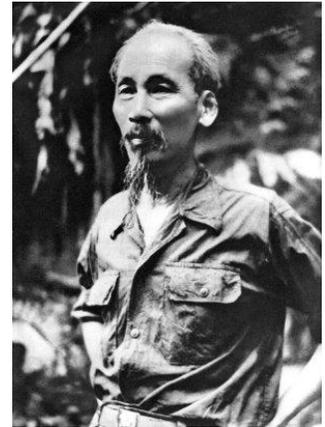
Suggestion. Movies

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFTXT4FYM-k> (US)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KFdu_6qM8c(Vietnam)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ylw5Ggc45Lk> (Vietnam)

Ho Chi Minh died on September 2, 1969, 25 years after declaring Vietnam's independence from France and nearly six years before his forces succeeded in reuniting North and South Vietnam under communist rule. Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam, was renamed Ho Chi Minh City after it was liberated in 1975.



According to a survey by the Veterans Administration, some 500,000 of the 3 million troops who served in Vietnam suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, and rates of divorce, suicide, alcoholism and drug addiction were markedly higher among veterans.

Ronald Lawrence "Ron" Kovic (born July 4, 1946) is an American anti-war activist, writer, and former United States Marine Corps sergeant, who was wounded and paralyzed in the Vietnam War. He is best known as the author of his 1976 memoir *Born on the Fourth of July*, which was made into the Academy Award-winning film in 1989 directed by Oliver Stone.