The Cold War: Strategies of Containment

Containment Punctured: Vietnam
Our Class Session Topics

1. Prelude to Containment: A Tense Partnership
2. Containment Begins: The Truman Administration and the late 1940s
3. Containment Implemented: Korea
5. Containment Challenged: Khrushchev and Cuba
6. Containment Punctured: Vietnam
7. Containment Revised and Victorious: Détente and Dissolution

There is more respect to be won in the opinion of this world by a resolute and courageous liquidation of unsound positions than by the most stubborn pursuit of extravagant or unpromising objectives.

—George F. Kennan
Today we will discuss:

The Vietnam Wars (1945-1975)

- French Vietnam War

- Kennedy and Vietnam

- Johnson and Vietnam

- Analogies and Perceptions: Malaya, Munich, Korea and France
Events leading to the US Vietnam War (1945-1961)

- Vietnam (Indochina) a French colony at beginning of WW2

- Japan with French permission took over Indochina in 1940 to stop China supply and as a step toward Dutch East Indies’ oil

- French attempted reccontrol after WW2; FDR’s anti-colonial attitude

- On Sept 2, 1945, Ho Chi Minh and others declared Vietnam an independent state; S Vietnam still controlled by French

- N Vietnam began armed resistance to French and French withdrew from S Vietnam in 1954
In total, 8,744,000 U.S. combat troops fought in the Vietnam War. 58,220 died. From all countries involved, 1.3 million military combatants died, and over 1 million Vietnamese civilians.
The French Vietnam War

- 1945 France attempts to recolonize Southeast Asia
  - Ho and Vietnam had other plans with its hardened Japanese resistance forces
  - Vietnam a third world country with a agricultural infrastructure developed by the French
  - Vietnam also had French trained Vietnamese government employees and a French subculture
- French North Vietnam began armed resistance to French in 1945 and there were continuous hostilities between French and local French supported Vietnamese military and communist Vietminh.

- US provided advisors and serious $ to French beginning in 1945 in part from Korea hostilities; US also perceived as colonists by Vietnamese though.

- Eisenhower recruited British and other European allies to assist US sending in troops but all refused.
- Without allies, as in Korea, Eisenhower will not send American troops

- Concerned with communist incursion into Southeast Asia, Eisenhower successfully obtains SEATO Treaty with quasi defense obligations of parties, including US

- Initially French public supported the French war but majority opinion vehemently turned against War by 1954
- French finally defeated at Dienbienphu in 1954
- Geneva Accords divides Vietnam at 17th parallel in 1954 with country wide elections to occur by 1956
- Eisenhower “installs” Ngo Dinh Diem President of South Vietnam who refuses to hold elections
- Ngo administration grows corrupt and hostile to growing indigenous factions as South Vietnam continues to battle North Vietnam
- After French military withdraw from Indochina in 1954, the U.S. assumed financial and military equipment support for the South Vietnamese state as part of perceived SEATO treaty “obligation”

- During early 1950s, North Vietnam loses 800,000 emigrants to South

- In 1955 Viet Cong start infiltrating South Vietnam to overthrow government and unite North and South; Vietnam Civil War begins
- After Korea, US sees China as communist threat in Asia

- Khrushchev gives “wars of national liberation” speech in 1961

- U.S. involvement escalated under Kennedy from just under 1,000 military advisors in 1959 to 23,000 in 1964

- Cuba was close in time and the culmination of Soviet aggression – how to end?
Kennedy in Vietnam

- Eisenhower Administration more concerned with Laos and does not discuss Vietnam with Kennedy at pre-inaugural meeting in January 1961

- Kennedy Administration understands the Soviet Sino split in 1962 and communists not monolithic

- Kennedy administration supplies military advisors to South Vietnam and cooperates in coup of President in early November 1963

- Kennedy based this decision in part on “Malaya analogy”
Questions?
Analogical reasoning (don’t worry, we do it all the time)

Based on finding **sufficient** commonality between two situations

Ex: My sister has a dog and she likes it. If I get a dog, I will like it.

- Used to fill in “cognitive holes”; one situation can be used to **infer** new information about the other.

- Basic intuition behind analogical reasoning is when substantial similarities between situations, there are likely to be **further similarities**

- Produces “cognitive ease” and memorial understandings; reduces anxiety from the unknown

- Can reinforce personal characteristics and preferences

Key is how similar and how different
DILBERT
BY SCOTT ADAMS

WE CAN'T START DESIGNING THE PRODUCT UNTIL SOMEONE TELLS US WHAT FEATURES IT SHOULD HAVE.

THAT'S LIKE SAYING YOU CAN'T PLAY ON THE BEACH UNLESS YOU KNOW HOW MANY GRAINS OF SAND THERE ARE.

UM... I DON'T THINK IT'S VERY MUCH LIKE THAT.

ANALOGY POLICE, COME WITH ME.

ARE YOU TAKING ME TO JAIL FOR MAKING A BAD ANALOGY?

THE ANALOGY POLICE DON'T USE A REAL JAIL. WE USE SOMETHING SIMILAR.

YOU'LL BE HERE WITH THIS BEAUTIFUL WOMAN.

REALLY? THAT'S NOT SO BAD.

SHE'S THE ONE BEING PUNISHED.

YOUR NECKTIE IS LIKE HITLER AT AN ICE RINK.
Malaya Analogy

Britain faced communist guerrilla insurgency in its Malayan colony beginning in 1945

Insurgency composed of identifiable Chinese ethnic groups, not native Malayans

Malaya surrounded by countries with strong borders not sympathetic to communism

British instituted “strategic hamlet program” to convert and control countryside

British defeated insurgency after about 12 years

Malaya experience was looked by US to as the path to follow in South Vietnam
JCS chairman Lyman Lemnitzer objections to the Kennedy administration’s counter insurgency plan in south Vietnam in October 1961: Malyaya conditions were different in South Vietnam

1. Malayan borders were far more controllable; ex. neighboring Thailand cooperated in refusing the communists an operational safe haven
2. The racial characteristics of the Chinese communist insurgency made identification and segregation possible; Vietcong insurgents cannot be distinguished from the loyal citizen
3. The scarcity of food in Malaysia versus the relative plenty in South Vietnam made the denial of food to the communist guerrillas a far more important and readily usable weapon in Malaya than Vietnam
4. British were in actual command and used highly trained Commonwealth troops to implement the counterinsurgency; not so in 1961-1962 Vietnam
5. Finally, took the British nearly 12 years to defeat the insurgency which was less strong than Vietcong insurgency.
- Lemnitzer’s objections were disregarded
  - McNamara, Rusk and Bundy et. al. presented various options to Kennedy based on Malaya

- Kennedy’s anti-insurgency plan for providing military advisors and strategic hamlets for South Vietnam was proving ineffective by November 1963

Bundy, McNamara and Rusk
Johnson in Vietnam

- Continues Kennedy’s policies with Kennedy’s people (Rusk, Bundy, McNamara) while running for election in 1964

- Faces failing Vietnam policy beginning November 1964 after election

- Decides on graduated strategic bombing campaign beginning February 1965 and sending 100,000 troops to Vietnam in July 1965; used Korean and Munich analogies in making these decisions
Korean and Munich analogies

Munich Analogical Lesson (more of a schema)

Appeasement of an aggressor results in a world war

- Do not appease North Vietnam/China/Soviet Union by withdrawing advisors and support from South Vietnam

- Instead increase support graduated bombing then with limited number of troops on the ground

- Why not do even more? China in Korea

- Little in depth analysis of differences though
Korea analogy

Aggressive attack by communist forces

Supported by Soviets and China across an established bounty

Showed that the United States would be victorious if it persevered.

China bordered Korea

Rusk and President Johnson characterized the Korean War as a US victory

Using military force to stop the North Vietnamese was an option and morally acceptable per Korea.
George Ball (Undersecretary of State) says “wait a minute”

Korea unlike South Vietnam:

1. United States had allies and UN support in Korea

2. South Korea had a stable government when Korean war started; North Koreans and Chinese did not experience a friendly South Korea when they invaded

3. Korean people were excited by their new found freedom from the Japanese; war fatigue in Vietnam
4. Korean War started with a massive land invasion of 100,000 troops by North Korea; a “classic” invasion with traditional hardware across an established border. Unassailable that there was a political and legal basis for counteraction. Vietcong insurgencies more ambiguous in invasion and morally

5. North Korean and Chinese armies did not have strong indigenous support in South

6. Korea more conventional WW2 like war; Vietnam a guerrilla, jungle war

7. Chinese and Soviets were much more peripheral in South Vietnam than in Korea; North Vietnam hostile to both

Ball argues a different historical analogy should be used: French War in Vietnam.
Ball’s objections rejected

1. French did not have public support in 1954 like US does for Vietnam in 1965 (60% approval)

2. US more powerful than France (expectations of a symmetrical fight)

3. French were fighting a colonial war, US a war of liberation (French experience countered Johnson’s image)

Ball proposed a limited military commitment, or better, a political solution.

Ball also argued that Vietnam was not the place to take a stand but instead Thailand

Ball was ignored. The rest is history.

Johnson committed air support beginning in February 1965 and 100,000 troops in July 1965
But a lot of this post Vietnam War history is the US shy about intervening in third world countries to contain Communism.

We talk about that next week with Containment Victorious: Détente and Dissolution
A foreign policy aimed at the achievement of total security is the one thing I can think of that is entirely capable of bringing this country to a point where it will have no security at all.

George F. Kennan