Nixon & Vietnam

-Peace with Honor
Vietnamization – withdraw troops over extended period
- SV can gradually take back war
- US will give $, weapons, advice

Anti-war protests – massive
Vietnam moratorium in Oct 1969
- 100,000 in Boston, 50,000 in DC
- Want prompt, complete, unconditional, irreversible withdrawal
American Troop Withdrawal

The War in Vietnam: Richard Nixon and the De-escalatory Phase
U.S. Troops Stationed in Vietnam (in 1000s)
January 1969-December 1972

End of 1969
480,000

End of 1970
335,000

End of 1971
157,000

End of 1972
27,400
My Lai Massacre

- US troops killed officers killed innocent women and children

Lt. William Calley
Son My Village in South Vietnam. Lt. William Calley was convicted of ordering the massacre of 347 civilians.
Are We Becoming the Enemy?

Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry

- My Lai Massacre, 1968
- 200-500 unarmed villagers

- Lt. William Calley, Platoon Leader
US Army unit commits mass murder

All unarmed civilians – mainly women, children, and elderly

Brutality increased with each kill

Many herded into a ditch and shot with automatic weapons
Huge cover-up

Many soldiers wrote letters describing incidents

Lt. Calley charged with several counts of premeditated murder

Served 3 yrs of a life sentence under house arrest – thanks to Nixon
“He fired at it [the baby] with a .45. He missed. We all laughed. He got up three or four feet closer and missed again. We laughed. Then he got up right on top and plugged him.”

“I would say that most people in our company didn't consider the Vietnamese human.”
Soldiers went berserk, gunning down unarmed men, women, children and babies. Families which huddled together for safety in huts or bunkers were shown no mercy. Those who emerged with hands held high were murdered. ... Elsewhere in the village, other atrocities were in progress. Women were gang raped, Vietnamese who had bowed to greet the Americans were beaten with fists and tortured, clubbed with rifle butts and stabbed with bayonets. Some victims were mutilated with the signature "C Company" carved into the chest. By late morning word had got back to higher authorities and a cease-fire was ordered. My Lai was in a state of carnage. Bodies were strewn through the village.
TIME
Who Shares the Guilt?

Lieut. William Calley Jr.
Cambodia (The “Secret War”)

- Purpose of widened war: end quicker
  - Secretly began bombing in 1969
- NV and Vietcong were using Cambodia as springboard for troops, weapons, supplies
- Nixon (w/o Congress) orders US troops to clean out enemy in neutral Cambodia – cut Ho Chi Minh Trail (1970)
Nixon announcing the invasion of Cambodia in a televised address to the nation.
The Ho Chi Minh Trail
Anti-War Protests

- Kent State (OH) – National Guard fired into anti-war crowd – killed 4, more wounded
  - Students threw rocks, smashed windows
- Jackson State – black school, highway patrol volleyed into dorm
- Senate repealed Tonkin Gulf Resolution
- To appease the public:
  - Draft calls reduced
  - 26th amendment – voting to age 18
Kent State incident
-- 4 students dead; 11 wounded
“Pentagon Papers” (1971)

- Daniel Ellsberg, former Pentagon official, leaked classified docs to *NY Times*
- JFK and LBJ mistakes and deceptions about role in Vietnam
- Truth revealed about Tonkin Gulf
- Nixon tried to block publication – overruled
- More of a credibility gap
Ending the War

- Spring 1972 – NV crossed the DMZ
- Nixon ordered massive bombing of NV – stopped NV offensive
  – Bomb them to the peace table
- Jan 1973 – cease-fire
- Nixon wanted “peace with honor” – really a disguised American retreat
- Paris Accords (1973) – Vietnam War Treaty
Paris Accords (1973)

- North Vietnam controlled large areas of the South
- U.S. POWs would be released within 60 days.
- U.S. would withdraw its forces after POWs were released.
- March 29, 1973, last U.S. forces left Vietnam
Peace Negotiations

- US & Vietnamese argue for 5 months over the size of the conference table!

Dr. Henry Kissinger & Le Duc Tho
CEASE-FIRE: WHO OWNS WHAT NOW

- Communist control
- Government control
- Guerrilla activity
Secret Bombing of Cambodia

- July 1973 – US shocked to learn of US Air Force secretly conducted 3500 bombing raids of Cambodia

- After cease-fire – Nixon continued bombing of communist forces to “help” Cambodian govt
  - Nixon falsified reports, destroyed records

- Low morale, worse economy = Pol Pot becomes leader in Cambodia
  - Kills 2 million
  - Vietnamese have to enter in 1978 to help, military occupation
**War Powers Act** – intended to check the president’s power to commit the United States to an armed conflict w/o consent of Congress

- President must report to Congress within 48 hours after committing troops to a foreign conflict or enlarging combat units in a foreign country
- Limited authorization would end 60 days after unless dec of war
Fall of Saigon (April 30, 1975) resulted in unification of Vietnam under communist rule

- Saigon was renamed Ho Chi Minh City
- Not until 1995 did President Bill Clinton recognize Vietnam
The Fall of Saigon

South Vietnamese Attempt to Flee the Country
The Fall of Saigon

America Abandons Its Embassy

April 30, 1975
The Fall of Saigon

North Vietnamese at the Presidential Palace
A United Vietnam

Formerly Saigon
Costs of the War

1. 58,000 Americans dead; 300,000 wounded
2. Over 2 million Vietnamese dead
3. The Great Society was derailed; $150 billion spent on the war – economic issues
4. Large percentage of Americans came to distrust their gov’t
5. Nixon abolished draft in 1973