I. Vietnam: overture

A. “The Story”: need to go to war

1. Armed troops from a communist country have invaded the tiny republic of S. V.

2. If the U.S. lets this happen then communism will move unchecked through SE Asia to Australia-the domino theory

a. communism is monolithic

b totalitarian

c. bent on world conquest

d. against our way of life - the evil empire

3. moral imperative: US obligation to defend democracy

4. Self-defense: “They attacked us.” N. Vietnam attacked our ship in neutral waters at Gulf of Tonkin

B. Confirmed our conventional wisdom

1. communism was evil and threat

2. US was force for good in the world

C. Reality

1. Pentagon Papers published by NY Times in summer 1971 (available now)

a. Daniel Ellsberg and Pentagon Papers (1970)

b. Nixon's plumbers

2. Reasons:

a. economic: wealth in rice, rubber, coal, and iron

b. strategic: access to Indonesian wealth, contain China

c. political: “rotten apple”

II. U S involvement

A. Atlantic Charter 1941, assurances to the French,

in Pentagon Papers "Top Secret - Sensitive"

Roosevelt's representative to French: "It is thoroughly understood that French sovereignty will be re-established as soon as possible throughout all the territory, metropolitan or colonial, over which flew the French flag in 1939."

B. Ho Chi Minh the nationalist leader of Vietnam

1. US ally in WWII - Vietminh

2. Declaration of Independence based on US and French

3. Eight letters to the US listing their grievances and asking to be recognized

a. injustice

b. massive starvation

4. US ignored Ho’s request for recognition, literally

C. US support of French

1. persuaded Chang Kai Shek in North and British

to turn over Vietnam to French

2. 1946 French bombed Haiphong in attempt to retake

Vietnam

3. 8-year war against the French for independence

4. French lost and by the end of the war US was

paying 80% of cost of war, inclu 300,000 weapons

5. 1954 during battle of Dienbenphu

a. French trapped

b. US offers two atomic bombs to French, the offer

is rejected

c. US considers using atomic weapons itself seeks support from British - no

6. US Covert intervention 1953

a. “Third Force”

b. Undermine communism

D. Geneva Peace Accords

1. Temporary settlement of the Vietnam into North and South in 1954

a. divide country at 17 parallel

2. All parties agree

a. National elections to reunify in 1956 (Art 14)

b. No new troops (Article 16)

c. No new bases (Article 18)

3. US realizes that Ho would win

a. Joint chiefs of staff, US Congressman

b. Ho would win election, imperial powers would lose Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand

4. US decides on policy to undermine Peace Accords

a. creates country: Pentagon Papers: "South Vietnam was essentially a construction of the United States."

b. set up puppet government in 1954

i. US put Diem a Catholic from New Jersey in charge of a Buddhist country

ii. no popular support

iii. only support from U.S. and the colonial elite

5. Diem

a. oppression of peasants economically

b. maintaining colonial land distribution, actually reversed land reform returned 1,500,000 acres to French land owners

c. repression of dissent through military with US support: 60,000 political prisoners

d. cancelled the elections

E. Resistance

1. 1958 guerilla activity started

2. in 1960 the National Liberation Front was organized, aka Viet Cong

a. mass based political-social organization in over 2500 villages

b. Pentagon Papers 1962: Only the Viet Cong had any wide based popular support

3. 1959 US advisors who organized and directed violence towards SV peasants, limit 685

4. 1961 Kennedy picked up also okaying covert operations in the North, upped "advisors" to 16,000 which violated Peace Accords

5. Bright Shining Lie