

Foreign Policy and the Cold War *(continued)*

"Peaceful Coexistence"

In the mid-1950s U.S. and Soviet attitudes softened somewhat. The Soviet Union had not taken over more of the world. But neither had the U.S. pushed it back. In fact, the United States did nothing when the U.S.S.R. crushed a rebellion in Hungary. The deadly possibility of a worldwide nuclear war held both superpowers back. The new Soviet leader was Nikita Khrushchev. He expressed this new stance when he spoke of "peaceful coexistence." Both East and West, he said, could exist side by side in the world without war.

"Peaceful coexistence" didn't mean real peace. U.S.-U.S.S.R. relations were very poor at times during the later 1950s and the 1960s. The U.S.S.R. shot down a U.S. spy plane in 1960. The Soviets then canceled a summit meeting between Eisenhower and Khrushchev. In 1962, the U.S. discovered that the Soviets had set up nuclear missiles in Cuba. These missiles could reach most of the United States. President Kennedy demanded that the Soviets remove the missiles. A naval battle loomed. The world teetered on the edge of nuclear war. Then Khrushchev agreed to Kennedy's demand. War was averted.

The Vietnam War

The most deadly conflict of the Cold War was the war in Vietnam. U.S. policymakers developed a "domino theory" about Southeast Asia. If one country in the region fell to the Communists, the theory went, all the rest would go too. They would go down just like a row of falling dominoes. Other foreign policy experts had warned that it would be impossible for U.S.

forces to win a land war in Asia. The domino theory overcame these warnings.

The U.S. involvement in Vietnam began in a small way and kept increasing.

- President Truman had given military and economic aid to the French in their fight against the Communist Vietminh. Eisenhower continued the aid.

Vietnam became divided. The Communist North was headed by Ho Chi Minh. The anti-Communist South was led by Ngo Dinh Diem. Communist guerrillas called Viet Cong were supported by North Vietnam. They began fighting Diem's troops.

- President Eisenhower sent military supplies and a few military "advisers" to Vietnam. They were to help train the South Vietnamese army.

As the Viet Cong grew stronger, American aid grew larger.

- President Kennedy increased the number of U.S. troops in Vietnam to 16,000. President Johnson sent more.



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