

SS7H3 – CONTAINING COMMUNISM

Name: _____

Analyze continuity and change in Southern and Eastern Asia.

- e. Explain the reasons for foreign involvement in Korea and Vietnam in terms of containment of Communism.

THE CONTAINMENT POLICY

At the end of World War II, the Soviet Union and the United States both found themselves in a competition to prove which country was the dominating world power. It was a fight between the communism of the Soviet Union and the democracy of the United States. As each country set out to help rebuild war-torn Europe and Asia, they began to spread their form of government to other countries.

The United States spread democracy and fought against communism, not only to prove itself as a world power, but also to protect the equal rights of citizens around the world. When the Soviet Union began to take over Eastern European and Asian countries by force, the United States offered aid to the countries so they could resist communism and protect their individual rights.

Once the communists took control over China in 1949, the United States became extremely concerned about communism spreading through Southern and Eastern Asia. President Harry Truman believed countries that were near a newly communist nation would start turning to the communists themselves. It would be as though one domino in a row knocked down the others. The idea became known as the “domino theory.”

The United States responded with a new policy of containment.

The goal of containment was to keep communism from spreading. America would not go to war to change a country's communist government. But it would provide money and other aid to democratic governments that wanted to remain non-communist. It was this policy of containment that led the United States into wars in Korea and Vietnam.

WAR IN KOREA

Before World War II, the Korean peninsula was controlled by Japan. After the war, the United States and Soviet Union jointly took responsibility for Korea. The two countries agreed to govern the country together until they could establish a stable national government.

However, the U.S. and the Soviet Union had very different political philosophies and could not agree on a single approach to government. So they agreed to let Korea be divided at the 38th parallel (38 degrees north) into North Korea and South Korea. The Soviet Union helped establish North Korea as a communist state. The United States backed a democratic government and capitalist economy in South Korea.

The First Shots

Koreans opposed division, but the differing political philosophies of their governments helped prevent reunification. In 1950, soldiers supplied by the Soviet Union crossed over from North Korea and invaded South Korea.

President Truman sent American troops to South Korea and asked the United Nations for assistance. The UN saw North Korea's invasion as illegal and agreed to send troops from member nations to help stop the conflict.

With help from the UN, U.S. General Douglas MacArthur (who had led Allied forces in the Pacific and overseen the rebuilding of Japan) led the defense of South Korea. American and UN forces drove North Korean soldiers out of South Korea and all the way to the Chinese border. It seemed the conflict was nearly over.

China Gets Involved

At that point, China entered the fight on North Korea's side. Chinese troops helped push the American and UN forces back into South Korea.

In 1953, the Korean War ended in a stalemate—a tie with no winner. The Korean Peninsula remained divided into separate communist and democratic countries.

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Match countries to the reason they were involved in the Korean War.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| _____1. Soviet Union and China | A. To prevent the spread of communism and promote democracy. |
| _____2. United States | B. To help spread communism |
| _____3. United Nations | C. To protect its democracy |
| _____4. South Korea | D. To unite Korea under on communist government |
| _____5. North Korea | E. To end the illegal invasion of South Kores |

WAR IN VIETNAM

Before World War II, Indochina (an area that includes today's Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos) was ruled by France. Japan took control of Indochina throughout the war. After Japan's defeat, France tried to reassert control.

The Vietnamese, however, resisted the French. A nationalist movement arose under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, who wanted the Vietnamese to make their own decisions. His views became popular among the people.

In 1945, Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam's independence from France, even though France refused to give up control. He created an army called the Viet Minh. For eight years, the Viet Minh attacked French troops in what is known as the First Indochina War.

Vietnam is only 30 miles wide at its narrowest point. Some rare animals live in Vietnam like giant catfish, Indochinese tigers, and Sumatran rhinos.

Division of Vietnam

In 1945, the Viet Minh were getting the best of the war. France began withdrawing from the country and finally agreed to negotiate Vietnam's independence. Several countries, including the United States, met to decide how France could leave peacefully.

Ho Chi Minh wanted control of all Vietnam. The United States opposed that idea because Ho Chi Minh favored communism. In 1954, a compromise was reached. The country would be divided into Northern Vietnam and South Vietnam.

Ho Chi Minh established a communist government in the north, receiving military support from the Soviet Union. A democratic government was established in the south, receiving military training and aid from America.

Number the events in the order they occurred.

- _____ Vietnam is divided into a communist north and democratic south.
- _____ A nationalist movement grows in Vietnam.
- _____ An eight-year war is fought in Vietnam.
- _____ France takes back control of Indochina.
- _____ Various countries start negotiating terms of Vietnam's independence.

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Another War Begins

Shortly after the division of Vietnam, the North Vietnamese army invaded South Vietnam in hopes of bringing the entire country under communist rule.

Fearing the spread of communism to other parts of South and East Asia, the United States sent weapons and troops to help defend the government of South Vietnam. The U.S. government felt obligated to keep its promise to support democracies around the world.

Supporters of South Vietnam

United States	South Korea
Australia	Thailand
New Zealand	Philippines

Supporters of North Vietnam

Soviet Union
China

Fighting the Vietcong

The Vietnam War was a complicated conflict for U.S. troops. They were fighting not only the North Vietnamese army, but also communist supporters in South Vietnam known as the Vietcong. The Vietcong were mostly poor farmers who believed communism could give them a better life. They also felt it was time to end the involvement of foreign nations in their country.

The Vietcong and North Vietnamese troops were not nearly as well supplied as the South Vietnamese and American troops were. So, they engaged in guerilla warfare. As the weaker side, small bands would attack quickly and without warning. Then they would retreat and hide before the enemy had time to react and fight back. Guerilla warfare in Vietnam's thick brush and jungle was brutally violent.

The U.S. Withdrawal

For nearly a decade, America sent more and more troops to Vietnam. Then in 1969, the United States began to withdraw its forces. Why?

- The war had become extremely unpopular back home. Students had started protesting or fleeing the country to avoid being drafted into the military.
- Many Americans were upset over the war's cost.
- The United States and South Vietnam were not making great progress in winning the war.

In 1973, the last remaining American military troops withdrew from Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh died, but North Vietnam continued the war. In April 1975, South Vietnam officially surrendered. Vietnam became one communist country.

Communism Today

The American containment policy had failed to keep the communists out of the Korean and Vietnamese peninsulas. However, the government in Vietnam struggled for several decades before experiencing strong economic growth recently. In North Korea, communist rule left citizens extremely poor and with access to few modern conveniences. Their government devotes most of its available resources to the military.

Worldwide, democracy eventually proved more appealing and successful than communism. When the Soviet Union disbanded in 1991, the United States became the world's leading superpower. Although there are still a few communist countries in the world, the test of time seemed to favor the U.S. approach.

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Match countries with the reason they were involved in the Vietnam War.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| _____1. Australia | A. To protect itself from attack |
| _____2. North Vietnam | B. To prevent the spread of communism and promote democracy |
| _____3. South Vietnam | C. To help its ally the United States |
| _____4. United States | D. To help spread communism |
| _____5. Soviet Union and China | E. To create an independent Vietnam under communist rule |

Cite specific textual evidence to answer the questions below.

1. What are two reasons for the United States wanted to stop the spread of communism?

2. What was the main reason the United States got involved in the Korean and Vietnam Wars?

3. Why did America defend South Korea and South Vietnam against the northern parts of each country?

4. Name the type of government each country has today.

South Korea _____

North Korea _____

Vietnam _____

5. Which government, the United States' democracy or the Soviet Union's communism, was ultimately more successful?

6. What is a democracy? Describe it in your own words.
