THE VIETNAM WAR
• Containment was successful through the 1950s
  – Truman Doctrine
  – Marshall Plan
  – Korean War

• BUT...in 1945, US gov’t became concerned with threat of Communism in Asia
Vietnam

- Controlled by France since 1887
- 1945: Ho Chi Minh leads war for independence
  - USA concerned revolution would result in Communist government
- Truman and Eisenhower sent aid to France
VIETNAM

- 1954: France withdrew troops
- Vietnam divided at 17th parallel
- Ho Chi Minh took over the North
- Ngo Dinh Diem became Democratic leader of the South
Vietnam

- Eisenhower & Kennedy supported Diem in South Vietnam
- Sent military advisors to put down Communist supporters in S. Vietnam
- Nov. 1963: Diem assassinated
  - Led to chaos in S. Vietnam
- LBJ inherited Vietnam "problem"
Gulf of Tonkin

- 1964: USS Maddox attacked by North Vietnam in the Gulf of Tonkin
- Congress issued the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution which gave LBJ broad powers to "defend Vietnam at any cost"
- Led to escalation of US involvement in Vietnam
ESCALATION

• LBJ began sending U.S. troops in 1965
  —Goal: CONTAIN COMMUNISM
• By 1968, over 500,000 U.S. soldiers were fighting in Vietnam
FIGHTING IN VIETNAM

• US troops were battling the Vietcong
  — Vietcong: supporters of Communism in South Vietnam

• Problem:
  — difficult to tell who the enemy was
  — Vietcong used guerilla tactics to combat U.S. military superiority
  — Jungle made fighting difficult
The Tet Offensive

• 1968: the Vietcong launched the Tet Offensive against U.S. forces in South Vietnam
• American anti-war movement grew
  - LBJ announced he would not run for re-election
• = a turning point, as the US began to withdraw from Vietnam
ELECTION OF 1968

- Chaos of 1968 led Americans to demand peace and stability
- Republican Richard Nixon won election
NIXON AND VIETNAM

• "Peace with Honor"
• Vietnamization:
  gradually withdraw U.S. troops & replace them with South Vietnamese soldiers
• secretly sent U.S. troops Cambodia & ordered bombings of Laos

Led to biggest protests in US History
ENDING THE WAR

• 1973, the U.S. & North Vietnam agreed to a cease fire
  –the U.S. withdrew troops from Vietnam
• 1975, North Vietnam invaded South Vietnam
  –unified the nation under a communist government
IMPACT OF VIETNAM

• Vietnam was the longest & most divisive war in U.S. history

• Of the 3.3 million U.S. soldiers who served:
  – 58,000 were killed
  – 303,000 were wounded
  – 15% were diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder after the war
  – Many vets faced hostility from other U.S. citizens when they returned home
The war changed foreign policy

- Containment ended as Americans became cautious of the U.S. role in the world
- Congress limited a president's ability to send troops without a declaration of war by passing the War Powers Act in 1973
The war changed America at home

- People began to lose faith in the honesty of gov't leaders during the Johnson & Nixon years
- The $176 billion cost of the war led to high inflation in the 1970 & weakened LBJ's Great Society
- The 26th Amendment lowered the voting age to 18 years old