Conflicts and Deadlock: The Eisenhower Years

- What were the main characteristics of Eisenhower’s “dynamic conservatism”?
- What events shaped American foreign policy in the 1950s?
- Why did the civil rights movement emerge in the 1950s?
- What events in Southeast Asia led to the Vietnam War?

- Republicans turned to Dwight Eisenhower to counter coalition of Southern Democrats, African Americans, minorities and labor groups
  - Eisenhower was “moderate Republican,” promised to slow government expansion while retaining social programs of Roosevelt and Truman
  - His administration would restore authority of state and local governments

“Time for a Change”

- Truman left stalemate in Korea, price controls, Communist subversion and corruption

The Political Rise of Eisenhower

- Eisenhower was commander of NATO, inspired confidence
  - Leadership in war
  - “I Like Ike”
  - Won the Republican presidential nomination
  - Vice President Nixon was part of the ticket—built career on opposition to left-wing subversives

The Election of 1952

- 22nd Amendment forbade any president from serving more than two terms
  - Truman endorsed Stevenson, Democrat from Illinois
- Stevenson was hardly known but Eisenhower was well-known due to war efforts
  - Eisenhower wanted to keep honorable peace in Korea
  - Stevenson was too aloof
- Stevenson’s intellect was no match of Eisenhower’s popularity
  - Eisenhower won
  - Marked the turning point in Republican fortunes in the South
  - Eisenhower drew support especially from minorities and major cities
- Democrats lost control of the House

Eisenhower’s Hidden-Hand Presidency

Ike

- Eisenhower was not a do-nothing president
  - Prone to folksy advice and uncultured
  - Cultivated public image of passivity to hide active involvement in policy decisions
“Dynamic Conservatism” at Home

- Enjoyed hobnobbing rich men like Ulysses Grant
  - Conservative with money, liberal with people
  - Budget cutting was a high priority
  - Set out to slash domestic programs and national defense spending
  - Warned against dangers of socialism, abolished Reconstruction Finance Corporation, ended wage and price controls, reduced farm-price subsidies

- Formulated tax reductions that resembled the Republican programs of the 1920s in providing benefits mainly to corporations and wealthy individuals
  - Slashed expenditures
  - Federal Reserve tightened credit policy
  - Business slump followed, reduced government revenues, made it harder to balance budget
  - Money policy became more flexible after that

- Eisenhower’s presidency kept the basic structure of the New Deal
  - Expanded Social Security
  - Federal spending for public health rose steadily
  - Eisenhower endorsed public health insurance
  - Low-income housing was continually built with federal funds

- Some farm-related aid programs were expanded by Eisenhower
  - Endorsed federal construction projects
    - St Lawrence Seaway
    - Interstate highway system
      - Federal funding provided most money, 90%
  - Railroad system decayed

Concluding an Armistice

- New global responsibility of America
  - Deadlock in Korean peace talks
  - UN refused to return Communist POWs, North Korean and Chinese negotiators insisted prisoners be returned
  - Eisenhower resolved by sending Secretary of State John Dulles to threaten atomic warfare

- Eisenhower announced end of fighting in Korea
  - More decisive factors may have been Chinese losses

Concluding a Witch Hunt

- Career of McCarthy ended
  - Scrupulous techniques led to self-destruction
  - Grew more outlandish in his charges

- McCarthy finally overreached when he charged US Army was soft on communism
  - Audience burst into applause, McCarthy was confused
  - Eisenhower worked against McCarthy behind the scenes

Internal Security

- Anti-Communism survived even after McCarthy
Eisenhower broadened ability to fire subversive federal workers
Disloyalty vs security risk
**Eisenhower appointed Earl Warren as chief justice**—his biggest mistake
- Was more liberal than expected, like another court appointee, William Court
- *Warren Court* became important agency of social and political change
- Court upheld traditional individual rights

**Foreign Intervention**

**Dulles and Foreign Policy**
- Eisenhower administration promised new foreign policy under Secretary of State, John Dulles
- Foreign policy planks of 1952 Republican platform showed moralist and tactician at work
  - Dulles believed Democratic containment was too defensive
  - Thought Americans should work to aid Europe
  - Eisenhower thought offering aid to belligerents would need military
- **Dulles made no significant departure from containment**
  - He institutionalized containment
  - Endorsed **massive retaliation**: effort to get more bang per buck
  - **New Look**: new budget considerations based on whether or not nuclear weapons would be used in tight situations
- **US and Soviet Union had two hydrogen bombs**
  - Churchill called for **balance of terror**
- **Dulles policy of “brinkmanship” depended for its strategic effect on fears of nuclear disaster**
  - Policy of confrontation to stay on the brink of war
  - Firm stand halted aggression

**Indochina: The Background to War**
- Dulle’s use of brinkmanship in Indochina neglected complexity of the issue there, which presented a special case of nationalism
  - British gave up their colonies, dilemma for US policy makers
  - Americans sympathized with colonial nationalists but also wanted Dutch and French help in fending off communism
  - For Dutch and French to maintain control, they had to conquer areas that passed to Japanese occupation
- **Japanese created puppet Indonesian republic, was independent**
  - Dutch began to regain control
  - **American pressure persuaded Dutch to accept Indonesian self-government under Dutch-Indonesian union in 1949**
  - But only lasted until 1954 when Indonesia became independent
- **1955 Bandung Conference in Indonesia signaled emergence of “third world” of underdeveloped countries**
  - Conference denounced colonialism
- **French Indochina, offered a variation on colonial nationalism**
  - Local nationalists were known as Viet Minh, fell under influence of Communism

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- **Ho Chi Minh** brought Communist influence with hope of independence for his country
  - Declared Republic in 1945
- **Ho’s declaration of Vietnamese independence borrowed from Thomas Jefferson**
  - Secretly received American help against Japanese during the war
  - Vietnam was low priority in US diplomatic concerns
- **French recognized Ho’s new government within the French union in 1946**
  - Ho’s forces challenged French forces to restore their colonial regime
  - Conflict became **First Indochina war**
  - French reinstated former emperor, Bao Dai
  - Chinese recognized Communist government of Ho Chi Minh
  - United States and UK recognized Bao Dai
- **Viet Minh movement became more dependent on Soviets and China**
  - Struggle for Vietnam became cold war conflict
  - US aid to French in Vietnam continued
- **French government requested American air strike to relieve pressure on Dien Bien Phu**
  - Eisenhower initially endorsed but Congress rejected; unless UK joined
  - UK refused, USA moved away from army action in Vietnam
- **Viet Minh overwhelmed French resistance at Dien Bien Phu**
  - New French government promised to get early settlement
  - **Geneva Records:** France, US, UK, China, and USSR signed, proposed to make Laos and Cambodia independent, divide Vietnam at 17 parallel, Viet Minh would take North, French would stay south, USSR and China backed away
- **Dulles responded to growing Communism in Vietnam by organizing mutual defense in Southeast China**
  - **Meeting in Manila:** US joined Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO)
  - Signers agreed that in case of attack on one, others would defend
  - Only 3 Asian counties
  - Demonstrated Dulle’s pactomania
- **Eisenhower announced that Communist aggression would be viewed as a matter of grave concern**
  - Those who wanted to leave North Vietnam—mostly Catholics—were aided by US
  - Aid offered to Ngo Dinh Diem, who was opposed French and Viet Minh
  - US expected democratic reforms in return for aid—police
- **Diem suppressed political opponents on both the right and left; suppressed political opponents instead of using aid for reforms**
  - **After French withdrawal,** Diem ousted Bao Dai and declared himself president
  - **Found recruits among the discontented, Viet Cong**
  - Resistance groups formed **National Liberation Front**

**Protecting Taiwan**

- **Chinese artillery began shelling Taiwan, held by Chiang Kai Nationalists**
  - Dulles stopped in Taipei and worked out mutual defense treaty
  - Congressional overwhelming approval to defend Taiwan
- **Communist Chinese kept up provocative activity**
  - Chinese backed away from the brink
  - **Bandung Conference:** Chinese premier declared People’s Republic of China
Reelection and Foreign Crises

- Eisenhower decided to run for reelection
  - Retained wide support even though Democrats controlled Congress

A Landslide for Ike

- Republicans nominated Eisenhower with Nixon
  - Platform endorsed modern Republicanism
- Democrats nominated Stevenson
  - Platform revived less favoritism to big business, repeal of Taft-Hartley Act, tax relief on low-income
- Neither candidate gathered much excitement
  - Fighting in Egypt and Hungary
- Attack on Egypt disrupted alliance
- Two crises led Stevenson to declare foreign policy as bankrupt
  - Voters reasoned that foreign policy was due
- Eisenhower Republicans assimilated into the New Deal

Crisis in the Middle East

- To forestall Soviet penetration in Middle East, Dulles completed alliances across northern region
  - UK joined
  - METO: Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, US, UK (Baghdad Pact Organization)
  - Arab League: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Yemen
  - Owen passed out on the job
- Most fateful developments turned on the rise of Egyptian general Gamal Nasser
  - Bone of contention was Suez Canal
  - UK government had largest block of shares
  - Eisenhower and Dulles supported demand of Egypt for UK to withdraw from canal zone
  - Anglo-Egyptian treaty provided for British withdrawal
- Administration’s proposal was opposed by Jews concerned with Egyptian threats to Israel.
  - Dulles canceled loan offer when Egypt increased trade with USSR
  - Chief victims were Anglo-French interests on the Suez
  - Israelis invaded Gaza Strip to root out Arab guerillas and synchronize with British and French
- Suez War put United States in a quandary
  - Eisenhower opted to help Arab nationalism against imperialist aggression
  - USSR threatened to use missiles on Western threats, after the peace negotiations

Repression in Hungary

- Nikita Khrushchev delivered secret speech on crimes of Stalin
  - De-Stalinization
- Protest movement got out of hand in Hungary
  - Revolt resulted in establishment of moderate Communist regime under Imre Nagy
  - Soviets withdrew from Hungary
  - Khrushchev wanted to maintain satellite states
  - Soviets installed more compliant leader in Hungary
Reactions to *Sputnik*

- Soviets launched first satellite, *Sputnik*
  - Congress was called to address Sputnik
  - “missile gap”
- Led to increased defense spending in US
  - NATO allies were offered ICBMs, new agencies
  - “Sputnik syndrome”
  - NASA created in 1958
  - National Defense Education Act provided grants

**Festering Problems Abroad**

- After Suez and Hungary crises, Eisenhower enjoyed smooth sailing in foreign affairs
  - Hostile demonstrations in Peru and Venezuela against VPOTUS Nixon
  - Tensions in Middle East and Europe continued to simmer, boiled over in 1958

**Crisis in the Middle East**

- Eisenhower Doctrine: promised to extend economic and military aid to Middle East nations and to use armed forces if necessary to assist nations against Communist aggression, Congress approved
- President of Egypt emerged from Suez crisis with higher prestige
  - Created Arab Republic
  - Coup in Iraq threw out pro-Western government
  - Lebanese government appealed to US for help, Eisenhower sent marines
  - British forces went to Jordan as requested
  - Compromise eventually reached, US forces withdrew in 1958

**Crisis in East China**

- Republic of China renewed shelling of Nationalist islands
  - US fleet escorted Nationalist ships but did not enter Chinese waters
  - Cease fire encouraged by Eisenhower
  - Tensions between Communist China and Taiwan continued

**Crisis in Berlin**

- Soviet premier called Berlin a “bone in his throat”
  - West Berlin served as a showplace of Western democracy and prosperity
  - Refugees still passed between east and west
  - Khrushchev threatened to give East Germany control of East Berlin and air lanes into West Berlin
- Eisenhower refused to budge from his position in Berlin but sought settlement
  - Meeting of the Big Four foreign ministers represented US, UK, France, and USSR
- There was little hope for resolving the conflicting views on Berlin and German reunification
  - Khrushchev visited US
  - Endorsed peaceful coexistence

**The U-2 Summit**

- The planned summit meeting blew up in Eisenhower’s face
Soviet rocket brought down American spy plane
Khrushchev succeeded in entrapping Eisenhower
Khrushchev disclosed that they held an American pilot
Eisenhower took personal responsibility, justified aerial spying on grounds of national security
Eisenhower refused to cut off spies

**Castro’s Cuba**
- Castro came to power in Cuba in 1959
  - Fought against Batista for two years
  - Castro’s forces had American supporters who hoped for democracy in Cuba
  - Hope were dashed when corruption was publicized
  - Castro’s program of land redistribution, nationalization, worsened relations with US
- Castro readily embraced Soviet support
  - Trade agreement
  - Eisenhower ordered strict limits on imports of Cuban sugar
  - Khrushchev warned that US intervention in Cuba would spur Soviet action
  - Suspended diplomatic relations with Cuba

**The Early Years of the Civil Rights Movement**
- Race relations in the US threatened to explode the tranquil domesticity
  - Eisenhower was committed to civil rights in principle
  - Public services in DC were desegregated, navy yards, hospitals
  - Two aspects of Eisenhower’s philosophy limited progress of civil rights
    - Preference for state action over federal action
    - Doubt that laws could change racial attitudes
  - More civil rights leadership came from judiciary than legislative
- NAACP resolved to test separate but equal clause
  - Charles H Houston laid plans with Thurgood Marshall
  - Decided to focus on higher education
  - *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950), Supreme Court ruled that separate black law school in Texas was not equal to quality in white schools

**The Brown Decision**
- Challenges to state laws were rising during the 1950s
  - Five cases made up the Brown decisions
  - *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*: separate but equal had no place in public education
- Eisenhower refused to force states to comply with Court’s decisions
  - Citizen’s Councils were middle and upper-class versions of the KKK, used economic coercion instead of violence, widespread acceptance
- Opposition to court-ordered integration
  - Harry Byrd: Massive Resistance
  - Southern Manifesto denounced Court’s decision in *Brown* cases
The Montgomery Bus Boycott
- Rosa Parks
  - Leader of boycott movement
  - Inspired Civil Rights movement
  - Nonviolence inspired by Henry David Thoreau and Gandhi
- Martin Luther King Jr.
  - Leader of boycott movement
  - Inspired Civil Rights movement
  - Nonviolence inspired by Henry David Thoreau and Gandhi
- Montgomery bus boycott had remarkable solidarity
  - Boycotters won federal case
- King and associates organized Southern Christian Leadership Conference

The Civil Rights Act
- Eisenhower was reluctant to take lead in desegregating schools but supported African Americans’ right to vote
  - Hoped to reclaim black vote
  - Eisenhower proposed Civil Rights Act
  - Established Civil Rights Division in the Justice Department
  - By 1959 it had not added a single southern black vote, none in 1960 either
  - Bill won southern acceptance through Lyndon Johnson’s watering down
  - Civil Rights Act of 1960 provided federal court referees
  - Lacked enforcement

Desegregation of Little Rock
- Arkansas governor Orval Faubus called out national guard to prevent 9 black students from entering Central High School
  - White mob forced local authorities to fend off black students
  - Eisenhower sent federal troops
- Faubus decided to close the school rather than allow integration
  - Resistance to integration collapsed when both state and federal courts struck down laws that cut off funds to integrated schools
  - Massive resistance was confined to the Deep South

Assessing the Eisenhower Years
- Alaska and Hawaii joined the union
- Economic slump, drop in tax revenues, large federal deficit
- Embarrassment of U-2 spy plane
- Cuba falling into Communist orbit
- Emotional civil rights issues, defense policy, corruption
- Reluctance to enforce civil rights rulings
- Opinion of Eisenhower improved with time
  - His farewell address showed expertise in military
  - Warned that America faced communism
  - Highlighted the dangers of military establishment in peacetime