



Imperial Dilemma - Great Society versus Vietnam in the 1960s

Curriculum Unit 22.02.03, published September 2022

by Mark A. Hartung

Introduction

Lyndon Baines Johnson became the thirty-sixth president of the United States on November 22, 1963, a date that is perhaps more memorable as the date of his predecessor's assassination in Dallas. Later that night back in Washington Johnson remarked to his friend and speechwriter Horace Busby that "...when I came back to Washington tonight as President there were on my desk the same things that were on my desk when I came to Congress in 1937." ¹

With this statement Johnson had telegraphed his own priorities that night to Busby and then outlined them to a joint session of Congress on November 27th. He emphasized continuity with the Kennedy administration goals and noted that these included care for the elderly, jobs, mental health care, and passages of the Civil Rights Bill. In the area of foreign affairs Johnson called for "peace through strength" and stated that the country would keep its commitments in Vietnam and Berlin. ²

Johnson also noted that "We will carry on the fight against poverty and misery, and disease and ignorance, in other lands and in our own." ³ These words foreshadow the bulk of what Johnson would work on as president and the bulk of what students will be learning about in this unit as well. Johnson's commitment to both social justice *and* the containment of Communism in Southeast Asia would become a delicate and difficult balancing act. In this unit students will be asked to think about how attempting to maintain American power abroad by containing communism would come to affect those less fortunate at home waiting for the benefits of the Great Society and the War on Poverty to improve their lives.

School Information

I currently teach at Mt. Pleasant High School in San Jose, California. Mt. Pleasant is a racially diverse school within the city of San Jose but outside of the immediate downtown area. So, it is a cross between an urban and suburban school. According to information found on the California School Dashboard the student population is roughly 1300 students. Roughly seventy-one percent of the students are LatinX while roughly sixteen percent of the students are Asian. Roughly six percent are Filipino and the remaining students are Native American, African American, Pacific Islander, and White.

About three quarters of the students are socioeconomically disadvantaged. At Mt. Pleasant I teach World

History and Ethnic Studies, to students that do not opt for Honors or Advanced Placement classes.

Because my students are predominantly students of color and from mainly lower socioeconomic status families they are especially attuned to the idea of individual rights and the inequality of the society in which they live. Looking at how decisions a country makes about maintaining their empire and the impact that those decisions have on the poor people in the home country will be something that they can relate to and engage with.

This unit will likely be taught in conjunction with a larger unit on Imperialism and Colonialism. Most World History courses focus on European Imperialism but by incorporating this unit students will see that the United States played a role in this era as well. Students will examine how Johnson's goals of eliminating poverty and promoting social justice were undermined by his determination to defend South Vietnam from Communism and maintain the Cold War Empire that had been established in the years after World War Two. In looking at primary and secondary sources students will seek to understand how the Great Society and the war in Vietnam fit together, what Johnson's goals were for each, and how he tried to manage the situation so that the United States could be successful and accomplish both goals.

The unit will be situated in the middle of the school year, and the primary source analysis embedded within this unit will create an opportunity for students to demonstrate the analysis and communication skills that they have learned throughout the year. Projects and papers within this unit will take the place of more traditional assessments of students writing and presentation skills.

Initially students will be given background information to enable their thinking about concepts within the unit. This information will include, though may not be limited to, the policy of containment, the history of Vietnam especially from ~1945 on, Johnson's assumption of the Presidency, Johnson's motivations for the Great Society, and the escalation of war in Vietnam. Students will read and discuss excerpts from several secondary sources along the way to facilitate this learning. Students will go on to investigate the interaction politically and economically between the war in Vietnam and the Great Society programs, think about the idea of America as an empire and how preserving that empire in Vietnam affected the home front and then close out with thoughts about and connections to the present day.

Content Matter Discussion

The War on Poverty

As noted above Johnson recognized almost immediately that the United States had made little progress in continuing the New Deal and solving the problems of poverty and inequality in the country. As a supporter of the New Deal while in Congress Johnson was determined to do something positive in this area. His first effort was contained within his first State of the Union address, given to Congress on March 16, 1964.

The War on Poverty was a five-point plan that Johnson noted did not continue to expand existing programs, but instead would create new opportunities for communities to create their own solutions. Johnson explained that these new programs would attack the causes of poverty and not just the symptoms. Johnson also took care to point out that there were no easy answers or quick fixes. He stated that "We are fully aware that this program will not eliminate all the poverty in America in a few months or a few years. Poverty is deeply rooted

and its causes are many. But this program will show the way to new opportunities for millions of our fellow citizens. It will provide a lever with which we can begin to open the door to our prosperity for those who have been kept outside. It will also give us the chance to test our weapons, to try our energy and ideas and imagination for the many battles yet to come. As conditions change, and as experience illuminates our difficulties, we will be prepared to modify our strategy. And this program is much more than a beginning. Rather it is a commitment. It is a total commitment by this President, and this Congress, and this nation, to pursue victory over the most ancient of mankind's enemies." ⁴

At this point in the unit students will be given excerpts from the State of the Union address and asked to identify and analyze the five parts of Johnson's plan. In addition, they will be asked to look for references to Vietnam (discussed further below) and think about whether or not any conflicts could exist between the domestic and foreign plans that Johnson lays out in this speech. Students will be asked to share their findings with others and look for common elements.

The Great Society

For Johnson the War on Poverty was an important but incomplete part of his agenda. Johnson, a white president from the south, held deep beliefs in equality and social justice. Historian and University of Arkansas professor Randall B. Woods notes that Johnson felt it was "...the duty of the rich to care for the poor, the strong to assist the weak, and the educated to speak for the inarticulate." ⁵ Woods goes on to note that Johnson believed that both the African American and the White south needed his assistance at this moment in history. The African Americans needed him to guide Civil Rights laws through the Congress and the White south needed him to help them cast off the legacy of Jim Crow and take a fuller place in American society. ⁶

Woods sees Johnson's spiritual worldview as one impetus for the social programs that were pursued, and that Johnson saw his role as president as ideal opportunity to move them forward. He quotes Johnson as saying that "Now I knew that as President I couldn't make people want to integrate their schools or open their doors to blacks...but I could make them feel guilty for not doing it and I believed that it was my moral responsibility to do precisely that." ⁷

In addition to his War on Poverty programs Johnson sought to further improve the lives of every American and use the country's prosperity to move towards that goal. On May 22, 1964, he gave the commencement address at the University of Michigan where he first publicly outlined his plans. Students will need to have a foundational knowledge of the Great Society and War on Poverty programs to do the kinds of analysis and historical thinking that this unit will call for.

At the outset he talked about the building of wealth during the first half of the twentieth century and called on the country to use that wealth to move the nation upwards. In his words, "The Great Society rests on abundance and liberty for all. It demands an end to poverty and racial injustice, which we are totally committed to in our time." ⁸

Johnson proposed that the Great Society was built on three main areas. Improving life in the cities, improving and protecting the environment, and improving education for all. He described the task as something that called for the cooperation of both the national, state, and local governments. ⁹ Students will be given copies of Johnson's speech and will review and analyze this primary document to determine his goals, the challenges, and the cooperation he felt was necessary.

Lyndon Johnson had been in the United States Congress since 1937 and was an acknowledged master of getting his way and getting legislation passed. No need to rehash that reputation in this unit, but students should be made aware that this reputation was accurate and therefore Johnson would have known that the types of programs that he envisioned would cost money, potentially lots of money. According to Jeffrey Helsing, Research Professor at the Carter School at George Mason University, the success of the Great Society was predicated on the continued growth of the U.S. economy. The American economy had been expanding since Johnson became president and most government officials during this era saw continued growth. ¹⁰

In addition, the wartime buildup of the Korean War years had left the Defense Department with a surplus that enabled their budget to be cut for several years in a row, leaving even more money available for social programs. At the time Johnson proposed his social programs this pattern of cutting defense was expected to continue. In addition, during the early years of the Johnson administration relations with the Soviet Union were improving, enabling the assumption that less money needed to be spent on defense in that specific area again leaving more for the Great Society programs. ¹¹

Vietnam War

Johnson inherited the United States involvement in Vietnam, which was part and parcel of the overall strategy of containment that had been in effect in one form or another since the Truman administration. First formulated by George Kennan in an anonymous article in 1947, the containment strategy focused on keeping the Soviet Union from expanding their land and/or sphere of influence. Although it was not unchanging over the years it was the goal of the United States throughout the Cold War including the Johnson years. ¹²

Formerly a French colonial possession, Southeast Asia had been in conflict since before World War Two. It is not the intent of this unit to present a comprehensive history of Vietnam, but students should know enough to understand the events of the post-colonial era, the causes of U.S. involvement and the perceived stakes of U.S. involvement. There are several easily findable resources on the internet that can be used to discuss Vietnam's history with students including the Weatherhead East Asian Institute at Columbia University, which has a website that supplies key events, timelines, and more (<http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/>). Once students have this background information students can look to the details of American involvement during the Johnson administration.

Whether or not someone believed that Southeast Asia had a compelling role to play in national security, Johnson's Secretary of State Dean Rusk felt that by maintaining the country's commitment there it was maintaining the country's credibility in other areas of the world, specifically Berlin. The policy of the United States at that time was to help the South Vietnamese government by giving them financial help and supplying military and political advice. At the start of 1964 the thought that the possibility that the South would fall to the North Vietnamese communists was remote, but that would change in the coming months and years. ¹³

By the start of 1965 many of Johnson's advisors came to believe that the government in South Vietnam was on the verge of collapse, which would be unacceptable considering the policy of containment, and necessitated an increase in the amount of military pressure that the United States would apply.

In addition to the Secretary of State most people in government and the press, and the American people believed that the commitment to Vietnam should remain strong as well. Presidential historian Robert Dallek, writing in 1996 states that "...the United States could not walk away from Vietnam and sacrifice a pro-Western country to Communist aggression." ¹⁴ Surveys from February of 1965 reveal that 79% of Americans believed

that abandoning Vietnam would mean a communist takeover of all Southeast Asia and 63% felt that Vietnam was 'very important' to the national security of the United States. ¹⁵

Johnson himself felt that the foreign policy of the United States should be based on his moral compass, discussed previously above. Woods lets us know that while Johnson was a pragmatic believer in the Cold War, he nonetheless believed that the policy of the United States should be based on doing things because they are the right thing to do and to assume the burdens of the disadvantaged not only here are home but in other countries as well. Students will have the opportunity to think about this philosophy as they compare speeches from MLK Jr. and Lyndon Johnson. ¹⁶

Johnson's advisors were telling him in February 1965 that the war could last for some time, and that it would be wise for him to speak to the American people about this, preparing them and garnering their support. National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy told Johnson that there would be no quick victory and that the American people should not expect one. Vice President Hubert Humphrey that they needed a "cogent, convincing case if we are to enjoy sustained public support." ¹⁷

To emphasize this point students will examine a primary source from Bundy at this point in the unit. Bundy was sent to Vietnam by Johnson in February of 1965 to personally assess the situation and report back. Students will examine an excerpt of this report and see that in his closing remarks Bundy reinforces the idea that the United States is in for a long slog and that the American people should be aware of that. He states that "At the very best the struggle in Vietnam will be long...Too often in the past we have conveyed the impression that we expect an early solution when those who live with this war know that no early solution is possible." ¹⁸

The president resisted, however, telling Bundy that there would be no "'loud public signal of a change in policy,' that White House aides would say little or nothing to the press..." ¹⁹ So as 1965 continued, Johnson continued to spend time on the two main areas that would come to define his presidency - Vietnam and the Great Society. How these two areas affected each other is well documented in the secondary scholarship and my students will turn to this issue next.

The Dilemma of Guns Versus Butter

Anyone on a budget whether they are a teacher, student, or anyone else knows what it is like to have to make choices about how and where to spend money. Although a government has resources that private individuals do not have, they too do not have unlimited funds to be spent everywhere. Johnson and his administration were betting that the economy would continue to grow and expand, thereby providing the resources that the country would need to continue to aid both the less fortunate at home and the South Vietnamese in their struggle against Communism.

Students should understand the general flow of the involvement of the United States in Vietnam, from at least 1954 on and with special attention paid to the escalation period starting in 1965. Students should also have a working knowledge of the domestic legislation that Johnson worked to pass after his reelection in 1964. Although not specifically part of this unit it is information that will help students process other assignments down the line.

To facilitate this knowledge students will investigate the key events of the Vietnam War from several secondary sources along with some direct instruction. Working in small groups students will create a timeline

of the war that can be saved and used for comparative purposes later in the unit.

Students will then look at legislation passed during the period from 1964 – 1968 to create an overview of the successes (at least in terms of laws passed) of Johnson’s domestic efforts. Another timeline will then be created by the class which, as mentioned above, can be used for comparative purposes and to both generate and answer questions. Though students will be encouraged to come up with their own questions the goal is to have them identify what relationship, if any, existed between the escalation of the war and the success of Johnson in getting laws through Congress.

Students will also view Johnson’s last interview which was filmed shortly before he died. In it he reflects on the programs of his administration and his efforts to move the country closer to a place of equality and inclusiveness.

So, if one considers the costs of Johnson’s Great Society and the War on Poverty, and then considers the costs of the escalation of the Vietnam War, very quickly these add up to quite large sums of money. When people in government began to tally the costs and when the economy stopped expanding Johnson ran into issues moving forward.

Even before the costs were fully known Johnson had his doubts about the involvement of the United States. At this point in the unit students will look at a number of primary and secondary sources that will outline the angst that Johnson felt. Students will look at a phone call between Johnson and National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy where Johnson expresses some of these doubts, and another source in which Vice President Humphrey outlines a possible path for Johnson to quit the war in Vietnam, should Johnson decide on that path.

The Humphrey source is notable for students because in it we see some of the earliest doubts start to creep in that Vietnam could have a negative impact on the domestic social programs. Humphrey points out that an escalation in Vietnam requiring more troops would require more funding as well, and that focus would shift away from the Great Society programs to military spending. He goes on to note that pulling out American forces now would force North and South Vietnam to negotiate a settlement, which would yield “domestic political results” for the President. ²⁰

So, if the President is having doubts, and Humphrey is talking about a way to get out, then why not get out? In fact, Johnson’s words help us understand his thought process. Randall Woods essentially notes that Johnson really had no good options. According to win southern support, Johnson needed to appear tough in foreign policy in order not to alienate the segregationists. In this way they might not vote for his domestic policies, but neither would they actively work against them. ²¹

However, if he pushed too hard on Vietnam, that would bring troubles as well. Woods quotes Johnson saying that “Those damn conservatives are going to sit in Congress and they’re going to use this war as a way of opposing my Great Society.” According to Johnson the conservatives would be afraid to oppose Johnson at a time of prosperity when the country could easily afford the programs, but they could and would use the war to focus attention and funding on beating the communists instead of helping those less fortunate. ²²

Students should also remember Johnson’s moral arguments, and the long history of the policy of containment of Communism. Several months after the Humphrey memo Johnson himself outlines the reasons that he believes the United States should stay the course in a speech given in April of 1955.

He talks about the line of Presidents that have promised to support the people of South Vietnam since 1954,

and states that he intends to keep that promise as well. Without using the term, he references the idea of containment, and the need to check aggression. He goes on to talk about the people of North Vietnam, and what he thinks they want. His answer is that they want what everyone in the region wants: "...food for their hunger; health for their bodies; a chance to learn; progress for their country; and an end to the bondage of material misery." ²³

As the speech continues Johnson appears to offer an extension of his Great Society and War on Poverty ideas to the peoples of Southeast Asia. He references the American generosity of the past and notes that America will once again strive to help, including a "...billion dollar American investment..." ²⁴ Students will be asked to review this source to see what exactly Johnson is offering, and why he is offering it. Is this an offer to stop the war now and pay for a massive building and modernization effort? Would this spending threaten the domestic programs that have already been approved? Randall Woods in his article *The Politics of Realism* sees this argument from Johnson calculated to get the North Vietnamese leaders to the bargaining table and I want to see how my students feel about that, without directly giving them the information. They should get there based on their own analysis and questioning.

Students should also see the opposition to the war, as opposed to the goals of the Great Society. In yet another primary source students will read the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. and seek to learn the reasons for his resistance to continuing the conflict. In a speech to clergy in April of 1967 King talks about the promise of the Great Society and the disappointment of seeing the program watered down by the escalation in Vietnam.

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In his speech King also discussed the issue of continued racism and discrimination at home, made even more unpalatable by the images of "...Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools." ²⁶ Students will be asked to compare Johnson's promise of exporting the Great Society outward to Southeast Asia with King's accusation that Vietnam has hampered the delivery of the Great Society at home.

America as Empire

After World War Two most of the globe was split into three main parts. The United States led the so-called western world of capitalist society, while the Soviet Union led the communist nations. Some nations were non-aligned, but for the purposes of this unit my students will focus on primarily the bi-polar U.S./Soviet world. As noted above in this unit the policy of containment was the main strategy of the United States. No need to push back the Soviets and take their lands, but a definite need to hold them where they were.

I want my students to think about is whether or not this state of affairs constituted an empire on the part of the United States. To decide this, they will need to examine some information about the imperial history of the United States.

What is an empire? That would depend upon what historians one regularly reads. Webster defines the word as an extensive group of states or countries under a single supreme authority, formerly especially an emperor or empress. In their work *Empires in WorldHistory* NYU History professors Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper define an empire as "...large political units, expansionist or with a memory of power extended over space, politics that maintain distinction and hierarchy as they incorporate new people." ²⁷

Daniel Immerwahr, professor of history at Northwestern University, provides us with much more detailed and

nuanced descriptions of empire, especially as it relates to the United States. Students in my classroom will read excerpts from his book *How to Hide an Empire*, especially those dealing with the Spanish American war, and the acquisition of the Philippines, Guam, Wake Island, and Puerto Rico; as well as the outsized influence that the United States had over Cuba in that country's early years of independence. This would be an example of a physical empire that my students can better relate to than what Europe was doing at the time.

Immerwahr also discusses economic power, most notably the tremendous influence that the United States had on Western Europe after World War Two. No land was taken, no colonies established, but he goes on to claim that the worlds today is dominated by U.S. dollars and companies like McDonalds. ²⁸ Is this a form of imperialism?

Another type of empire the Immerwahr notes is military power. He reminds us about the most well-known like Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, but also notes that the United States military has been deployed abroad two hundred and eleven times in sixty-seven different countries. ²⁹ Is this also a form of imperialism?

My students will grapple with this with as the unit comes to an end. They will review the idea of containment and think about whether or not the U.S. intervention in Vietnam was an expression of imperialism. Were we, as a country, trying to hold on to the empire that containment suggested? Other questions (outlined above as well) would include - What sacrifices society is making to maintain that empire. Who is bearing the brunt of the costs? Is it the poor? People of color? Immigrants? Someone else? What parallels and connections to Vietnam/Great Society can be made? Was the Great Society sacrificed in order to hold onto empire as the war in Vietnam escalated?

Teaching Strategies

During this unit there will be a mix of teaching and assignment strategies. Whenever possible student inquiry will be the preferred method of instruction, but some direct instruction will be necessary as noted above. Use of graphic organizers for note taking, both during direct instruction and during review of secondary and primary sources will be important as an aid for students to organize their thinking. Students will spend time working in pairs and groups but will also work independently. Students will be tasked with looking at different sources for different reasons.

For the primary sources students will be asked to follow the argument presented - what is the speaker saying, why are they saying it, and what are the desired outcomes and/or consequences. For secondary sources students will be asked to determine the author's purpose, who the audience is, and again what the desired outcome and/or consequence will be. In one instance students will be given a secondary source and then supplied with several reviews/commentaries about that source. Student in this exercise will be asked to evaluate the counter arguments and decide whether they belied the original author, or the review authors are correct and why. In all cases students will be called upon the use evidence to support their conclusions.

Students will present their findings to their peers and participate in peer review as well. To give all students the opportunity to show their different strengths, student output methods will also be varied including both written and visual responses including but not limited to paragraph writing, slide presentations, timelines, infographics, posters and more.

Students will begin with background learning, as described above. To thoughtfully process the primary and secondary sources that this unit will put in front of them students need content knowledge upon which to build their analysis and conclusions. From there the unit will flow as outlined below.

Step two will involve looking at available primary sources that detail the discussions being had both within government and within society about the cost of the war, and who was bearing the brunt of that cost. Many historians call this the “guns versus butter” debate, and I want my students to see how this debate played out in American society in the mid to late 1960s. An example of one primary source students would look at would be the speech given by Martin Luther King, Jr. at the Riverside Church in New York City. Speaking in April of 1967 King voices his opposition to the war for several reasons but embedded in those reasons that I want my students to find is that the war is taking resources away from the efforts to lift Americans out of poverty. Students will also look at meeting notes, press conference transcripts, and phone transcripts that are relevant and digestible for them. The primary sources will be excerpted as needed for the 11th grade student.

Step three will involve a discussion about what it means to have an empire and will involve students looking at excerpts from Daniel Immerwahr’s book and thinking about maps and the American Empire over time. Students will be familiar with this work since they will have read excerpts about the Spanish American war and the questions surrounding territories after that conflict. Questions that the class will ponder are – Does the United States still have an empire? If so, what kind of empire? Where is it and what does it look like? How did the policy of Containment during the Cold War (which relates directly to this unit through Vietnam) resemble an attempt to maintain empire and how did it affect domestic policy?

Assuming they decide that the United States does still have an empire then step four will require students to question and investigate what sacrifices society is making to maintain that empire. Who is bearing the brunt of the costs? Is it the poor? People of color? Immigrants? Someone else? What parallels and connections to Vietnam/Great Society can be made?

Students who decide that the United States no longer has an empire will be tasked with asking why not? What happened to it? Was it willingly discarded or lost through weakness or mismanagement? What positive and negative outcomes are there from the loss of empire, and who benefits from the fact that there is no longer an American empire?

Their final task will be to make a judgement about empire and its costs and worth. If one assumes that there is a finite amount of money available to a nation, how does that nation decide between domestic and foreign priorities? There is no easy or simple answer, but it will be an important step for students to consider the options and tradeoffs and try to communicate how they would respond if they were in positions of government.

Students will begin by using one of several budget simulators that are available online, such as <https://us.abalancingact.com/2022-federal-budget> or <https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/education/teachers/curricular-resources/high-school-curricular-resources/federal-budget-simulation> for example. After a whole class discussion about what they are and how they work, I will have them work in pairs to create different combinations of adjustments and write a short reflection about what they saw and learned. Then I will introduce a wild card, just like the escalation in Vietnam introduced a wild card into Johnson’s plans. Students will have to react to a sudden loss of revenue and/or a sudden new commitment that cannot be ignored or wished away. They will then need to make and reflect on additional adjustments made in response to that wild card.

Student Activity Samples

Analyzing the Great Society Speech Activity #1

For this activity one will need transcripts of the speech and the audio or video from YouTube. Because links change it does not make sense to give them here, but a general search of Johnson's Great Society Speech on Google and YouTube will yield easily findable copies of both. In addition to audio and text copies of the speech students should be given a graphic organizer to fill out as they are listening, and then specific questions to respond to once they have the transcript.

Individual teachers are capable of creating their own lessons and procedures around analyzing a primary source, but here is how my students will work with this speech. They will first listen to or watch Johnson give the speech, and as they do, they will fill out an organizer asking them to list the source, occasion, audience, and purpose, as well as the tone. (This is sometimes referred to as SOAPsTone.) After Johnson finishes speaking students will compare answers first in pairs and then in groups of four. Some of the groups of four will then share with the whole class or write their thoughts on the whiteboard.

After discussing as a whole class students will then get copies of the transcript and be required to think more in-depth about Johnson's purpose and reasoning. Why was he proposing this program? Who was it supposed to help? Who might be hurt or be opposed to this type of program and why? And, based on what they see in the world around them, was this program successful and why/why not?

Johnson's Social Programs - Success or Failure? Activity #2

In this activity students will be broken up into nine groups - Civil Rights, War on Poverty, Education, Health, Arts and Media, Environment, Housing and Urban Development, Consumer Protection, and Immigration. Using information from the Washington Post article *Evaluating the Success of the Great Society* each group will prepare a presentation for the class that includes the following key components: Summarize the article and state its point of view, find an additional source that supports the Post's point of view, find an additional source that refutes the Post's point of view.

The presentation must explain all three and support each with evidence from the additional sources that students find. Students will be given a choice as to what their output looks like. They can create a presentation using slides, create a video, or make a three-panel poster display instead. All students will present their work to the class regardless of the format that they choose.

Great Society / Vietnam Interaction Analysis Student Activity #3

In this activity the students in my classes will be broken into three different groups. Using a set of primary sources one group of students will examine the case for withdrawal from Vietnam by examining a May 1964 telephone conversation between President Johnson and National Security Advisor Bundy as well as a memo written in early 1965 by then Vice President Hubert Humphrey.

Another group will look at a Johnson speech from April of 1965 that outlines why the United States continues to be involved in the conflict in Vietnam. The third group of students will read and analyze a speech given by Martin Luther King Jr. in April of 1967 that damage that King believes the war is doing to American society.

After the three large groups have had time to read and discuss the materials, the students will be shuffled into new groups with at least one student having knowledge of each of the three different sources. They will then look at the evolution of what is happening with the Great Society and Vietnam during this extended timeframe and take notes about the change and continuity that they see.

The final step in this activity is for students to write a paragraph outlining that cause and continuity in their own words, using the notes created from the two groups sessions. This final paragraph will be done independently, not as a group activity.

Notes

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29. Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire*, 11.

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Bundy, McGeorge. "The Case for Withdrawal." In *America in the World: A History in Documents from the War with Spain to the War on Terror*, edited by Jeffrey A. Engel, Mark Atwood Lawrence, and Andrew Preston, 264-266. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014. Primary source for students to review showing McBundy's thoughts on whether or not the United States could withdraw from Vietnam in xxxx and what the consequences would be.

Burbank, Jane and Cooper Frederick. *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010. Useful for students to see how the authors define the difference between an empire and a nation, and how once those definitions are accepted how they overlap and evolve over time.

Dallek, Robert. "Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam: The Making of a Tragedy." *Diplomatic History*, 20, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 147-162. Accessed April 29, 2022. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24913374>. Dallek's view of the Johnson presidency during the full terms. In this he comments on the tension between Vietnam and Johnson's desire to fulfill his social policy dreams.

"Evaluating the Success of the Great Society." Washington Post. Accessed August 3, 2022. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/national/great-society-at-50/> This website provides a month by month listing of all of the legislation passed by the Johnson White House during the Great Society and War of Poverty years. It also provides students with commentary on the relative success in several key areas, including Civil Rights, Housing, Immigration, and more.

Helsing, Jeffrey W. *Johnson's War/Johnson's Great Society: The Guns and Butter Trap*. Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2000. More detailed than some secondary sources listed here, Helsing also traces the trajectory of

both the Great Society and Vietnam during Johnson's full term. Helsing's work stands out from an organization viewpoint as he discusses events from the perspectives of major players involved, including Johnson himself.

Humphrey, Hubert. "The Case for Withdrawal." In *America in the World: A History in Documents from the War with Spain to the War on Terror*, edited by Jeffrey A. Engel, Mark Atwood Lawrence, and Andrew Preston, 264-266. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014. *Much like the Bundy article from the same book, students can use this source to see the words of someone involved in the action at the time being studied.*

Immerwahr, Daniel. *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States*. New York: Picador, 2019. *The author's take on different forms of empire and how the United States may continue to be one even in its territories are diminished provides students with a framework to start thinking about how Vietnam affected programs designed to assist at home. This book is a great resource for a history classroom beyond this unit.*

Johnson, Lyndon Baines. "Why America Fights." In *America in the World: A History in Documents from the War with Spain to the War on Terror*, edited by Jeffrey A. Engel, Mark Atwood Lawrence, and Andrew Preston, 267 - 269. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014. *Another primary source, this time president Johnson's own words about why the United States needs to be involved in Vietnam. Great for making comparisons to his reasons for the social programs that he championed.*

"Kennan and Containment, 1947." U.S. Department of State. U.S. Department of State. Accessed July 25, 2022. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/kennan>. *This short article does a great job in explaining how the theory of containment came to be. This will be a good resource at the start of the unit for students that have not already begin to study the Cold War in other ways.*

King, Martin Luther Jr. "The War and Damage Done." In *America in the World: A History in Documents from the War with Spain to the War on Terror*, edited by Jeffrey A. Engel, Mark Atwood Lawrence, and Andrew Preston, 272-274. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014. *In this primary source King describes the negative effect that the war in Vietnam is having on the poor and people from minority groups in the United States. Students can begin to judge the effectiveness of the War on Poverty using King's words.*

LaFeber, Walter. *The Deadly Bet: LBJ, Vietnam, and the 1968 Election*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005. *LaFeber describes Johnson's balancing act as a wager that was made. Would the economy remain robust enough to support the increase in social programs that Johnson wanted as well as the cost of escalation in Southeast Asia? This is the question that LaFeber attempts to answer with his work here.*

"Lyndon B. Johnson, Commencement Address at the University of Michigan ("Great Society" Speech), May 22, 1964." Bill of Rights Institute. Accessed July 25, 2022.

<https://billofrightsinstitute.org/activities/lyndon-b-johnson-commencement-address-at-the-university-of-michigan-great-society-speech-may-22-1964>. *Transcript of the speech in which Johnson began to announce his Great Society. Students can study Johnson's rationale in his own words.*

"Modern History Sourcebook: President Lyndon B. Johnson: The War on Poverty, March 1964." Internet history sourcebooks. Accessed July 25, 2022. <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1964johnson-warpoverty.asp>. *Similar to above, this speech transcript allows students to see Johnson's words introducing his War on Poverty.*

Woods, Randall B. "The Politics of Idealism: Lyndon Johnson, Civil Rights, and Vietnam." *Diplomatic History*,

31, no.1 (April 1964): 1-18. Accessed April 18, 2022. <https://academic.oup.com/article/31/1/1/356070>. *This source also traces the Johnson years of decision between his social programs and the need to commit more resources in Vietnam.*

Woods, Randall B. *LBJ: Architect of American Ambition*. New York: Free Press, 2006. *This work expands on the Johnson work by Woods above, including readings about Johnson's pre-presidency days. Some passages useful for students to see that Johnson's emphasis on social programs came from a much longer-term interest and commitment in helping those less fortunate in the United States, and was not just a knee-jerk continuation of Kennedy programs already in progress.*

Appendix on Implementing District Standards

California Content Standards:

Analyze the causes of the Cold War, with the free world on one side and Soviet client states on the other, including competition for influence in such places as Egypt, the Congo, Vietnam, and Chile.

Understand the importance of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, which established the pattern for America's postwar policy of supplying economic and military aid to prevent the spread of Communism and the resulting economic and political competition in arenas such as Southeast Asia (i.e., the Korean War, Vietnam War), Cuba, and Africa.

Common Core Standards:

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding the text as a whole.

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

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