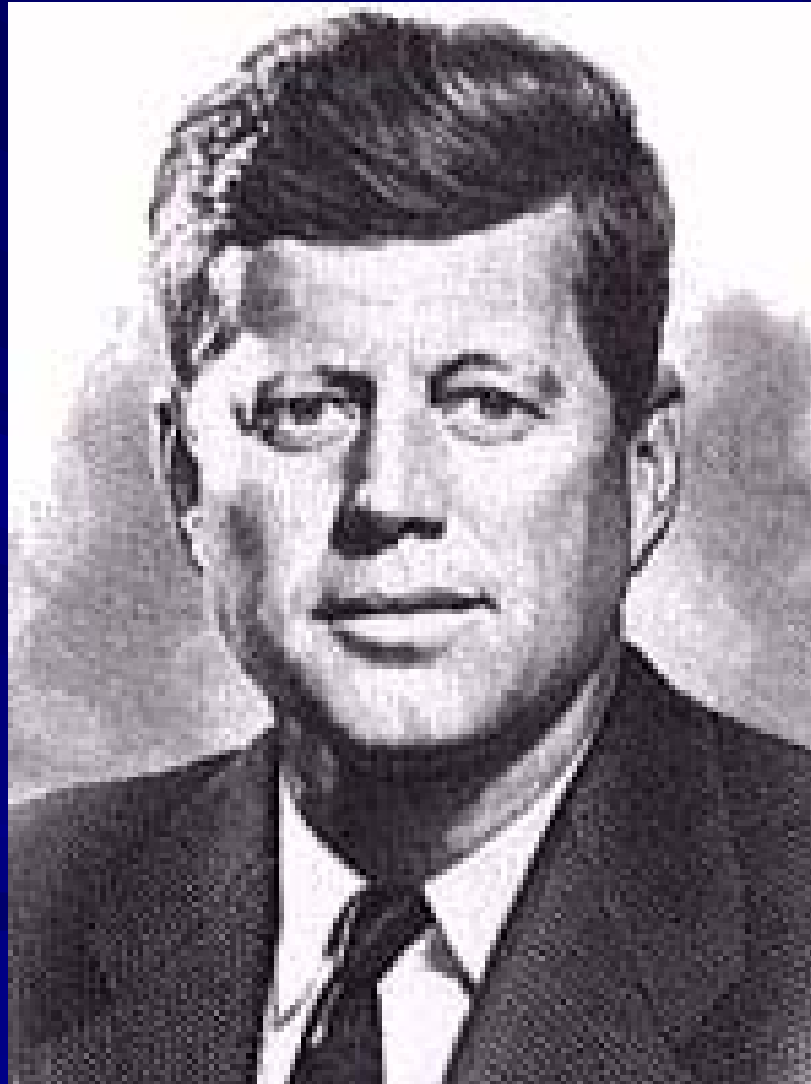




# Kennedy, the New Frontier and the Cold War

Foreign Policy 1961-1963

# John F. Kennedy



# Kennedy as a Cold Warrior

- 1.) Controversial views of his father – Joseph P. Kennedy
- 2.) War hero – elected to Congress 1946 – visited Vietnam in 1951
- 3.) Senate in 1952 – critic of Truman Administration
- 4.) Sickness allowed him to avoid a stand on McCarthy
- 5.) Praised Diem and South Vietnam – member of “American Friends of Vietnam” – called Vietnam “the cornerstone of the Free World in Southeast Asia”
- 6.) Criticism of French on Algeria

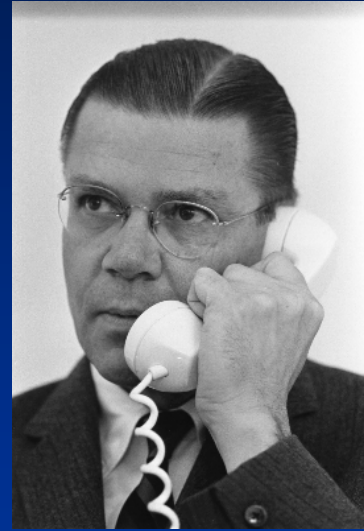
# Khrushchev and "Wars of National Liberation"



# Inaugural address

- [YouTube - JFK Inaugural Address 1 of 2](#)
- A response to Khrushchev and a picking up of the Cold War challenge
- But at the same time a desire to negotiate
- "So let us begin anew -- remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof. Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate. "

# Best and the Brightest



# Early Kennedy Policies

- 1.) Increase in military spending – more emphasis on conventional warfare and counter-insurgency – creation of the Green Berets
- 2.) More attention to the “Third World” – Alliance for progress, the Peace Corps, the Agency for International Development



# Kennedy – Press conference

## March 1961

- **THE PRESIDENT:** I want to make a brief statement about Laos.
- It is, I think, important for all Americans to understand this difficult and potentially dangerous problem. In my last conversation with General Eisenhower, the day before the Inauguration, on January 19, we spent more time on this hard matter than on any other thing; and since then it has been steadily before the Administration as the most immediate of the problems that we found upon taking office.
- Our special concern with the problem in Laos goes back to 1954. That year, at Geneva, a large group of powers agreed to a settlement of the struggle for Indochina. Laos was one of the new states which had recently emerged from the French union, and it was the clear premise of the 1954 settlement that this new country would be neutral, free of external domination by anyone.
- The new country contained contending factions, but in its first years real progress was made toward a unified and neutral status. But the efforts of a Communist-dominated group to destroy this neutrality never ceased.
- In the last half of 1960, a series of sudden maneuvers occurred, and the Communists and their supporters turned to a new and greatly intensified military effort to take over.





# Atmosphere of Crisis - Laos

- 1.) Problems in Laos – challenge to neutralization
- 2.) JCS tells JFK that it will take at least 60,000 men to fight in Laos
- 3.) Kennedy chooses to negotiate – Geneva Conference of 1962



# Bay of Pigs – April 1961



# Vienna Summit



# Post-Vienna Crisis

- ▶ 1.) Kennedy Speech to the Nation
- ▶ 2.) Additional \$3.25 billion to defense
- ▶ 3.) Call up of Reserve and National Guard units
- ▶ 4.) Emphasis on civil defense and fallout shelters

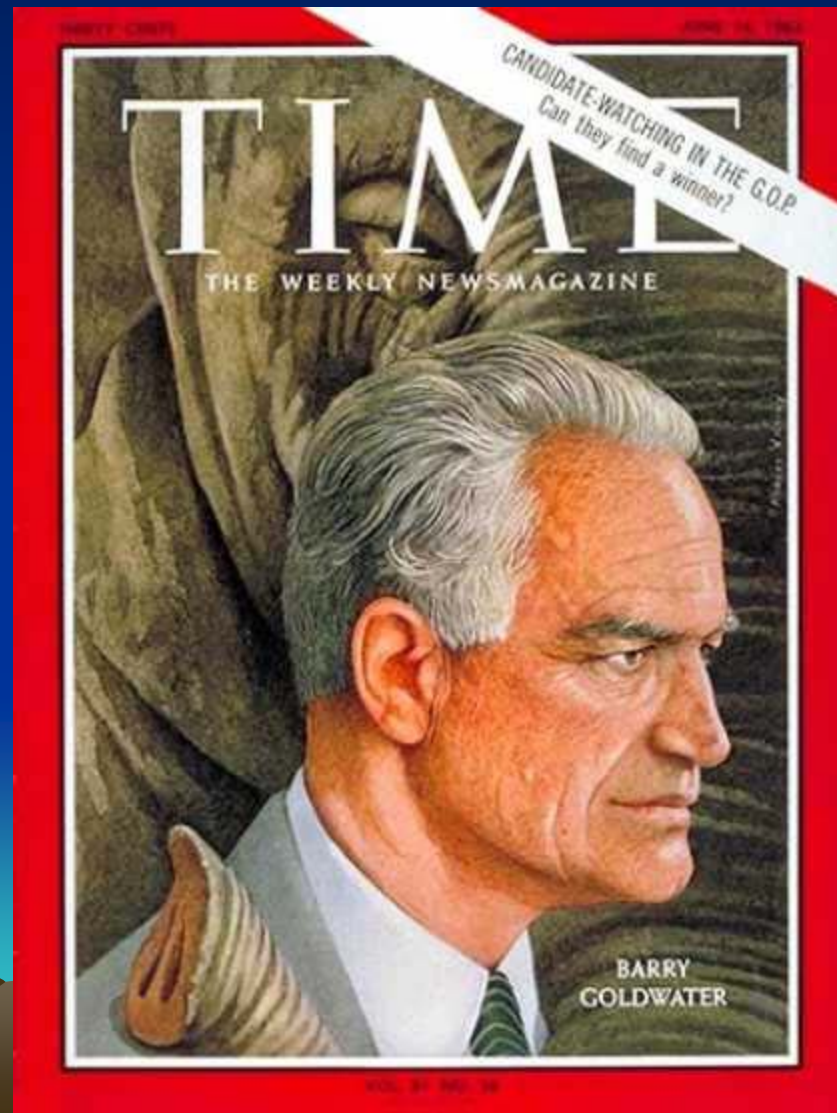
# Berlin Wall – August 13, 1961

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# Perceptions of Weakness – Rise of Goldwater



# Vietnam, 1961

- 1.) deteriorating situation – May 1961 58 percent of country under communist control;
- 2.) Debate within US government – some favored troops, some wanted more reform, some negotiation
- 2.) Taylor-Rostow report – Nov. 1961  
recommendations: increase aid and military advisers, increase size of ARVN by 50,000, covert operations against the North (Kennedy ruled out combat troops and neutralization)



# Cuban Missile Crisis

- 1.) Complex Soviet Motivation – gamble, protect Cuba, improve nuclear position, seeking advantages in Berlin-
- 2.) US – Kennedy's determination to avoid precipitous [Cuban Missile Crisis: "You're in a Pretty Bad Fix"](#)
- 3.) Kennedy's Speech [YouTube - John F. Kennedy Missile Crisis](#)
- 3.) US superiority – both local and strategic – Kennedy willing to trade missiles in Turkey for those in Cuba, but not publicly





# Easing of the Cold War

- Limited Nuclear Test Ban treaty – signed in August 1963
- Creation of Hot Lines between Moscow and Washington
- Kennedy's American University speech

# Vietnam: The Growing Crisis

- 1.) Kennedy expands involvement – lifts number of advisers to 16,000 – US begins to take casualties
- 2.) Strategic Hamlet program
- 3.) Diem and Nhu remain firmly in control – assassination attempt Feb. 1962
- 4.) War appears to be going better, but battle of Ap Bac reveals doubts about ARVN's fighting capacity, loyalty to Diem

# Vietnam – Strategic Hamlet Program

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# Strategic hamlets

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- 1.) Modeled on strategy in Malaysia
- 2.) Hamlets designed to deprive guerillas of peasant support
- 3.) Problems in implementation; government corruption; peasants not compensated adequately; too many hamlets not protected; too restrictive in their design, Viet Cong penetrated

# Battle of Ap Bac, January 2, 1963

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- 1.) helicopters and armored personnel carriers had given US and ARVN advantages over VC guerillas
- 2.) But – ARVN generals were political appointees – Diem wanted them to avoid high casualties
- 3.) Battle of Ap Bac – US advisers (John Paul Vann) wanted more aggressive tactics – ARVN let Viet Cong escape – new VC tactic was to fighting close, preventing US from using airpower; also benefitted from information from Pham Xuan An, who worked for US journalists

# Battle of Ap bac – January 1963

- ▶ [WhiteHouseTapes.org Transcript + Audio Clip](#) Wheeler discusses dealing with the US press
- ▶ Reporters – Kennedy discusses the press in Vietnam [WhiteHouseTapes.org Transcript + Audio Clip](#)



# Buddhist Crisis of 1963





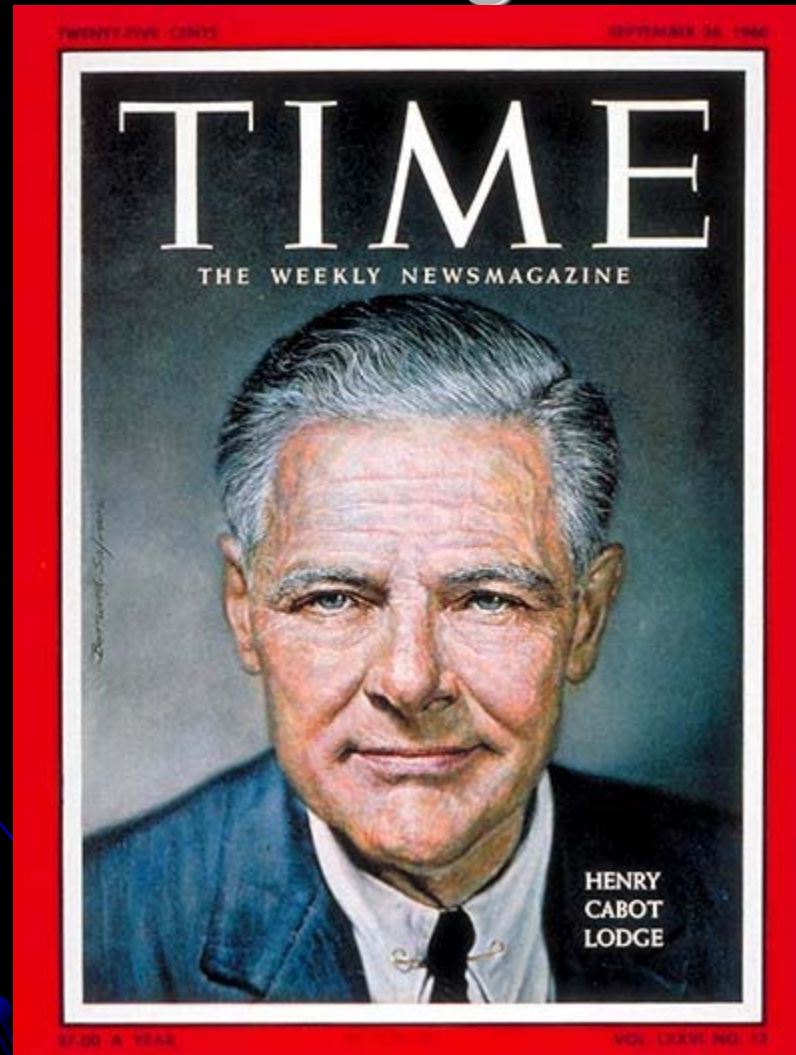
# Birmingham, June 1963



Photograph by Charles Moore / Black Star



# New Ambassador – Henry Cabot Lodge



# US involvement in coup attempt

- 1.) Nhu – raid on pagodas, Buddhist riots, 30 killed, 200 wounded, 1400 monks arrested – Madame Nhu's comments [YouTube - Madame Nhu's response to Thich Quang Duc](#)
- 2.) US publically distanced itself from government – Lodge visited a pagoda
- 3.) Cable – Aug. 24, 1963 – “US would find it impossible to continue support GVN militarily and economically unless above steps are taken immediately which we recognize requires removal of Nhus from the scene. We wish give Diem reasonable opportunity to remove Nhus, but if he remains obdurate, then we are prepared to accept the obvious implication that we can no longer support Diem. You may also tell appropriate military commanders we will give them direct support in any interim period of breakdown central government mechanism.”

# DeGaulle's proposal for neutralization



# Fact-finding Missions, September 1963

- 1.) Krulak-Mendenhall – Krulak (Marine general) argued war was going well in the countryside; Mendenhall (State Department) focused on cities and believed government on verge of collapse Kennedy “You did go the same country, didn’t you?”
- 2.) McNamara-Taylor – military had made “great progress and continues to progress” and US military effort over by 1965; but political tensions could undermine it; recommended against coup but favored more pressure on Diem; urged withdrawal of 1000 men as symbol

# The Administration Debates Policy

- [WhiteHouseTapes.org Transcript + Audio Clip](#)
- JFK on Withdrawing Troops
- [http://tapes.millercenter.virginia.edu/clips/1963\\_1029\\_rfkj\\_vietnam\\_coup.swf](http://tapes.millercenter.virginia.edu/clips/1963_1029_rfkj_vietnam_coup.swf)
- Robert Kennedy on problems of a coup

# Overthrow and Murder of Diem, November 1963





# Kennedy's Reflections on Diem, November 1963

- [http://tapes.millercenter.virginia.edu/clips/1963\\_1104\\_jfk\\_vietnam\\_memoir.html](http://tapes.millercenter.virginia.edu/clips/1963_1104_jfk_vietnam_memoir.html)



# Effects of the Diem Coup

- 1.) Political Instability in Saigon – frequent coups and changes of leadership for two years
- 2.) North Vietnamese Decision to expand war – sending North Vietnamese regular troops
- 3.) General deterioration of the war effort in the countryside, attacks in the cities



November 22, 1963



# What would JFK have done?

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- 1.) Some argue he wanted to withdraw, but would wait till after 1965; opposed sending combat troops
- 2.) Others argue he believed in the domino theory and would not have lost South Vietnam; he didn't live to face that choice
- 3.) Part of the mythology of the 1960s; the movie "JFK"