

Contemporary Conflicts *in light of the Cold War*

50-Minute Lesson Plan on “Crisis Diplomacy”

Title: *Analogues and Allies: Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Embraced the “Vietnam Analogy”*

General Goals:

1. Explore why historical analogies are so popular in discussions of current events.
2. Examine why certain analogies endure while others fade away. What makes for a good analogy? Who controls what analogies appear in popular discourse? How can analogies strengthen an argument for or against a policy measure? What does one’s choice of analogies reveal about their worldview?
3. Consider what constraints exist on leaders/policymakers during times of crises.
4. Debate structure versus contingency. Does the “buck really stops here” when it comes to leaders such as LBJ?
5. Learn how to assess critically historical analogies in contemporary policy debates. Participants should take a stand as to how useful they feel historical analogies to be.

Objectives:

1. Be able to define “Munich Analogy,” “Vietnam Analogy,” and “Suez Crisis.”
2. Explain the importance of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution
3. Give at least three reasons why Johnson “chose war.”
4. Give at least three reasons why critics of the Vietnam War did not more forcefully articulate their concerns to LBJ.
5. Define the following vocabulary terms: analogy, quagmire, realpolitik, “special relationship,” guerilla warfare.

College course level:

US history survey (lower or upper-division)
Western Civilization survey (lower or upper-division)
World History sequence (lower or upper-division)
US foreign policy, diplomacy, or Cold War history courses
With modifications- High School US or European History, or Government courses

Time Structure:

50 minutes

Materials:

Readings (circulate these in advance and require students to read before class):

- “Crisis Diplomacy” readings in the *Contemporary Conflicts* reader¹
- “Blast From the Past” (Twelve Leading Historians on Both Sides of the Argument Over Iraq), *The Guardian*, 19 February 2004, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,3604,898341,00.html>, accessed 5 August 2004.
- Gerhard L. Weinberg, “No Road From Munich To Iraq,” *Washington Post*, B04, 3 November 2002, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&contentId=A55403-2002Nov2¬Found=true>, accessed 5 August 2004.
- Donald H. Rumsfeld, “Prepared Testimony of U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld before the House and Senate Armed Services Committees regarding Iraq” (excerpt), Washington, DC, 18-19 September 2002, <http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2002/s20020918-secdef.html>, accessed 5 August 2004. Students should only read the excerpt attached to this lesson plan as Appendix B.
- Susan Page, “Is Iraq Becoming Another Vietnam,” *USA Today*, 1A, 13 April 2004, http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2004-04-13-vietnam-iraq-cover_x.htm, accessed 5 August 2004.
- Polly Toynbee, “Delusions of grandeur” (comment), *The Guardian*, 16 June 2004, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,,1262580,00.html>, accessed 5 August 2004.

Copy the following cartoon but do not distribute in advance.

- Sage Stossel, “History Lessons,” (political cartoon), *The Atlantic Unbound*, 26 September 2002, <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200209u/ss2002-09-26>, accessed 1 August 2004.

Other Materials:

- Blackboard and chalk, or whiteboard and markers
- Pens and paper
- Stopwatch or Timer
- [Optional]: Computer with Internet access

Pre-class Preparation:

Have students *read in advance all readings* except the political cartoon. Encourage students to look-up unfamiliar terms. Make students come in with written responses to objectives 3 and 4.

Talking Points:

Mini-Lecture (4-5 minutes):

Briefly discuss the following (*see Appendix A for tips*):

¹ Chapter 12 (“Choosing War”) from Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999). Fredrik Logevall, *The Origins of the Vietnam War* (Harlow, UK: Pearson, 2001), 124-128. Dennis Merrill and Thomas G. Paterson, eds., *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations*, Vol. 2 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 449-459.

- Munich Analogy
- Suez Crisis
- “special relationship” (US-British relations)
- Gulf of Tonkin Incident
- Origins of the Vietnam conflict

Activity/Activities:

Q&A (5-6 minutes):

- Briefly ask students what they knew (before reading for this class) about the Vietnam War and the “Vietnam Analogy.” (This can be done as a show of hands).
- [Optional]: Ask students about other analogies they have heard about or used themselves in discussions on current events (Write some or all of these on the board as time permits).
- Ask students what makes for a “good” analogy. Have the students try to define what a “good” analogy is (what are its characteristics?). (Write responses on the board).

Debate Preparation (5-10 minutes):

Break students up into three groups as follows: Group 1-Munich Analogy, Group 2-Suez Analogy, and Group 3-Vietnam Analogy. Tell students that it is early 2003 and you are President Bush. Their task, as your trusted advisors, is to convince you, based on their analogies, whether to go to war (or not) against Iraq.

In preparing for this debate, students should focus on the following readings (all groups should incorporate the core readings on Vietnam as appropriate):

- For Group 1 (Munich)- “Blast From the Past,” “No Road From Munich to Iraq,” Rumsfeld Testimony
- For Group 2 (Suez)- “Blast From the Past,” “Delusions of Grandeur”
- For Group 3 (Vietnam)- “Is Iraq Becoming Another Vietnam?”

Debate (20-25 minutes)

Each group spends up to 5 minutes outlining their position. In the remaining time you (as the President) probe each of the three groups on the strengths and weaknesses of their positions.

Assessment:

In-Class Writing Exercise (10 minutes)

Circulate copies of the “History Lessons” cartoon. Have students write on the prompt “Should we attack Iraq? History offers us an obvious and sobering lesson on that question!” focusing on whether “history offers obvious and sober lessons.” Collect and grade responses.

[Optional]: Expand the in-class writing exercise into a 3-5 page essay assignment.

Appendix A- Tips for Using this Lesson Plan

Tips

Tip 1: Feel free to modify this lesson plan at your discretion by substituting different analogies, changing readings, or adjusting the amounts of time allocated for different sections. For example, you could replace one of the above three analogies with comparisons between Pearl Harbor to September the 11th (“9/11”).

Tip 2: Keep the mini-lecture short and emphasize the following key points:

- Munich Analogy- View that appeasing Hitler in 1938 (when the UK and France pressured Czechoslovakia to give up the Sudetenland to Germany in exchange for German promises of peace) set a precedent for future action whereby tyrants must be forcefully resisted.
- Suez Crisis- Early example of an application of the Munich Analogy, in this case by British Prime Minister Anthony Eden who viewed Nasser as akin to another Hitler. Eden embarks (with the French and Israelis) on an unpopular war and the subsequent effort fails after US, Soviet, and UN pressure. Not an exact parallel to 21st century America, though, as the British position in 1953 was far weaker than that of the modern US.
- “special relationship” (US-British relations)- Belief that the US-UK share common interests due to shared cultural values, linguistic, and historical ties. Therefore, the US and UK should work (and have worked) together closely in world affairs. Popularized at the beginning of the Cold War by Winston Churchill in his “Iron Curtain” speech.
- Gulf of Tonkin Incident- Event that leads to passage of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which is effectively the Congressional authorization for the Vietnam War.
- Origins of the Vietnam conflict- Note that the Vietnam conflict began as an anti-colonialist struggle against the French presence in Indochina (from after WWII) and turned into a US-Vietnamese conflict after French withdrawal.

Appendix B- Rumsfeld testimony excerpts

United States Department of Defense

Speech

On the web: <http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2002/s20020918-secdef.html>

Media contact: +1 (703) 697-5131

Public contact: <http://www.dod.mil/faq/comment.html> or +1 (703) 428-0711

Prepared Testimony of U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld before the House and Senate Armed Services Committees regarding Iraq

Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, Washington, D.C., September 18-19, 2002.

[...]

Mr. Chairman, as the President has made clear, this is a critical moment—for our country and for the world. Our resolve is being put to the test. It is a test that, unfortunately, the world's free nations have failed before in recent history—with terrible consequences.

Long before the Second World War, Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf* indicating what he intended to do. But the hope was that maybe he would not do what he said. Between 35 and 60 million people died because of a series of fatal miscalculations. He might have been stopped early—at a minimal cost of lives—had the vast majority of the world's leaders not decided at the time that the risks of acting were greater than the risks of not acting.

Today, we must decide whether the risks of acting are greater than the risks of not acting. Saddam Hussein has made his intentions clear. He has used weapons of mass destruction against his own people and his neighbors. He has demonstrated an intention to take the territory of his neighbors. He has launched ballistic missiles against U.S. allies and others in the region. He plays host to terrorist networks. He pays rewards to the families of suicide bombers in Israel—like those who killed five Americans at the Hebrew University earlier this year. He is hostile to the United States, because we have denied him the ability he has sought to impose his will on his neighbors. He has said, in no uncertain terms, that he would use weapons of mass destruction against the United States. He has, at this moment, stockpiles chemical and biological weapons, and is pursuing nuclear weapons. If he demonstrates the capability to deliver them to our shores, the world would be changed. Our people would be at great risk. Our willingness to be engaged in the world, our willingness to project power to stop aggression, our ability to forge coalitions for multilateral action, could all be under question. And many lives could be lost.

We need to decide as a people how we feel about that. Do the risks of taking action to stop that threat outweigh these risks of living in the world we see? Or is the risk of doing nothing greater than the risk of acting? That is the question President Bush has posed to the Congress, to the American people and to the world community.

The question comes down to this: how will the history of this era be recorded? When we look back on previous periods of our history, we see there have been many books written about threats and attacks that were not anticipated:

- * "At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor"
- * "December 7, 1941: The Day the Admirals Slept Late"
- * "Pearl Harbor: Final Judgment"
- * "From Munich to Pearl Harbor"
- * "While England Slept"
- * "The Cost of Failure"

The list of such books is endless. And, unfortunately, in the past year, historians have added to that body of literature—there are already books out on the September 11th attacks and why they were not prevented. As we meet today, Congressional committees are trying to determine why that tragic event was not prevented.

Each is an attempt by the authors to "connect the dots"—to determine what happened, and why it was not possible to figure out that it was going to happen.

Our job today – the President's, the Congress' and the UN's is to connect the dots before the fact—to anticipate vastly more lethal attacks before they happens—and to make the right decision as to whether we should take preventive action-- before it is too late.

We are on notice—each of us. Each has a solemn responsibility to do everything in our power to ensure that, when the history of this period is written, the books won't ask why we slept—to ensure that history will instead record that on September 11th the American people were awakened to the impending dangers—and that those entrusted with the safety of the American people made the right decisions and saved our nation, and the world, from 21st century threats.

President Bush is determined to do just that.