Henry Kissinger: Me.
Peace With Honor

- **KISS**: Nixon far superior to LBJ on FP; knew clear-cut victory in Vietnam was impossible (676)
- **Peace Movement** – HK hates them (675)
  – Protests had turned global (677)
Hanoi’s Ultimatums (678)

• #1 – Unconditional withdrawal of US
• #2 – Overthrow of Thieu in Saigon
• OR ELSE: US POWs would not be released
• Mini-Tet Offensive → 1K US killed/month
  – Nixon’s offer to compromise had no effect
  – Ho thinks he can win unconditional victory
  – **KISS**: Capitulation compounded by dishonor
Nixon’s Options

• #1 – Unconditional withdrawal
• #2 – Military & political showdown w/ Hanoi
• #3 – Shifting responsibility of war to Saigon
Option One (679-80)

- Revisionists: Argue this should’ve been done in ’69 – **KISS**: Totally unfair criticism
- Compromise & capitulation (695)
Option Two (680-81)

• Kissinger’s favorite option
  – Thought it would lessen domestic strife & unify goals
  – Eventually enacted in ’72 (too late?)
  – Thought if it had been done earlier, US could have won
Option Three (681-83)

• Vietnamization – Nixon’s choice
  – Boost domestic morale, helped Saigon become self-sufficient & gave Hanoi a chance to compromise
  – Kissinger disagrees, writes memo on its risks

• KISS: After 20 years of containment, US paying price of overextension; no simple choices left
  – On balance, probably the best choice in context
Le Duc Freakin’ Tho (684)

- Paris Peace Talks take four years
- LDT Staunch N.VIE guerrilla supporter
  - Sent him to negotiate b/c they wanted to win, not cut a deal; wants psychological dominance
- Kissinger *HATES* him
Diplomacy Is A Long Road

- Hanoi Goals: Same as always
- US Goals: Cease-fire → total withdrawal → free elections in S. VIE (685)
- Two years later, LDT is still a complete jerk (686)
- LDT changes demands & agrees to ceasefire (687)
  - KISS: Makes various arguments on why he was always on defense
&%$#@ Peace Movement! (688)

• 550K Forces → 20K in 3 yrs; casualties fell from 16K in 1968 to 600 in ’72
• Nixon still wanted “peace with honor” while PM would only settle for unconditional withdrawal
Kind of a Disaster

- Communists essentially want to end the war by “having a dialogue with themselves” (689)
- Nixon didn’t give in to most demands (except total withdrawal) → assured the crumbling of S.VIE
- Well-meaning US Congress didn’t realize that if they conceded anything toward compromise, Hanoi would take it, and not compromise at all (690)
Cease Fire ’72 (691-92)

- POWs returned, MIA tried to be accounted for, Thieu government remains, US aid to S.VIE
- Hanoi accepted b/c of lack of supplies, US attack on CAM/LAO, defeat of Spring ’72 offensive, lack of support from USSR/CHN, resumed US bombing, and fear of Nixon’s reelection
  – Didn’t satisfy PM
- Signed 8/15/73
War Stats

- US: 2M involved, 58K KIA, 300K wounded, 2500 MIA
- S. VIE: 185K-500K casualties
- N. VIE: Around 1M casualties
Cambodia

• Nixon and Kissinger take some heat (693)

• **KISS**: CAM wanted us there
  – Khmer Rouge had been like this since 1950s, not b/c of US intervention
  – Nonetheless, domestic division in US led to tragedy in CAM
Fall of Saigon

- 8/15/73 – Congress ends funding to war effort
- Paris Peace means nothing to N.VIE (697)
- 1975 – Takes N. VIE two weeks to take S.VIE/CAM
  - S.VIE into concentration camps
  - 15% of CAM pop. Killed by Khmer Rouge
  - Reunification under communism in less than a year
- **KISS:** VIE most hurtful domino (699)
Critiques & Responses (695)

- Election?
- War too long?
- 1975?
- Right to enforce peace?
- Credibility gaps? (699)
- Misunderstanding? (698-99)

It's not a matter of what is true that counts but a matter of what is perceived to be true
- Henry Kissinger
Lessons of Vietnam (700)

• Clear understanding
• No alternative to victory
• Factions need to be united
  – These weren’t done b/c Nixon saw it as shirking responsibility
  – Can’t accept abdication
• American unity is a duty and the hope of the world