

JCC: The Vietnam War (US Cabinet)

Letter from Chairperson

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Vietnam War - US Cabinet. My name is Kaatyaayani Pandey and I will be serving as the Chairperson for this committee in the role of Lyndon B. Johnson. I was introduced to Model UN during high school and pursued it as a hobby for many years. I recently graduated from Mount Holyoke College - a small liberal arts school in the United States with a Bachelor of Arts in Middle Eastern Studies. I moved back to India in May 2018 where I now intend to turn my lifelong passion for the performing arts into a professional career.

As a performing artist, I find Model UN to be very similar to immersive theater. You assume the roles of characters - contemporary or historical - and come up against unexpected incidents and conflicts which you then work toward resolving as your character would have. My duty to you, as your chair, is to facilitate an interaction that enables you to let down inhibitions, learn, grow and have a great time this weekend! From you in turn, I expect mutual support and encouragement toward one another as well as the committee. Be respectful of one another's learning curves, respect procedure and respect one another's time while speaking.

The Vietnam War was a tumultuous time in world history. It took place at the height of the Cold War and resulted in innumerable avoidable deaths. With songs like Billy Joel's *Goodnight Saigon* and Country Joe McDonald's *I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin-To-Die Rag* reverberating through history, the resulting pain of the Vietnam War is palpable to this day. I hope that as delegates assuming positions of power and leadership, you are conscious of the solemnity of this occasion. Furthermore, as future leaders and citizens of the world you are able to put your actions during committee in perspective with the state of world affairs today. I hope you think, question and critique everything that you read and trust in your own moral judgement when you need to choose between what is right and what is easy.

With that, I wish you all the best with your research and I look forward to meeting you on August 4th 1964!

Regards,
Kaatyaayani Pandey

Reference Map



Vietnam Political/Administrative History

Vietnam had been under the administration of multiple clans, tribes and other powers, including China, for many years. After 300 years of warring and divisive rule, Nguyen Anh from the House of Nguyen unified the country in the year 1802 and was crowned under the title Gia Long on 1st June 1802. He was aided by the French in this political endeavor and eventually the French began to erode the political power of the Nguyen Dynasty. In 1862, France colonised the southern third of the country known as Cochinchina. By 1884, the entire country was under the French the northern and central parts being two protectorates - Annam and Tonkin. The three entities were integrated into what became known as French Indochina in 1887. The French developed a plantation economy geared toward the sale of cash crops such as tobacco, indigo, tea and coffee. Meanwhile, populism was on the rise in Vietnam however after the relatively easy suppression of the Yen Bai Mutiny of 1930, they largely ignored the populist movements that were brewing just under the surface of Vietnamese society. France retained absolute control of Vietnam until the Second World War when Japan invaded and by March 1945 had seized control of the entire administration and resources which they went on to exploit.

Of the several populist movements that had emerged during French colonial rule, the Viet Minh became the most prominent. It was a communist and nationalist movement that emerged in 1941 under the leadership of communist leader Ho Chi Minh with the aim of gaining independence for Vietnam. In August 1945, following the fall of the Japanese Empire, the Viet Minh occupied Hanoi and set up a provisional government. On September 2nd 1945, the provisional government under Ho Chi Minh asserted national independence and established the

Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The French retaliated by sending the French Far East Expeditionary Corps to re-establish colonial rule over Vietnam. The Viet Minh therein launched a guerilla campaign that eventually resulted in what came to be known as the First Indochina War that lasted until July 1954. The final stand of the First Indochina War took place at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu the result of which gave Ho Chi Minh a favourable negotiating standpoint at the Geneva Conference that followed.

Result of the Geneva Accords

1. A ceasefire was negotiated
2. French Colonial rule officially ended and French Indochina was dissolved.
3. In place of the erstwhile French Indochina came up the Kingdoms of Laos and Cambodia and Vietnam which was further divided into two separate administrative zones along the 17th Parallel North.

The Division of Vietnam

As per the Geneva Accords of 1954, Vietnam was to be divided into two separate administrative zones along the 17th Parallel (N), approximately. This was known as the Vietnamese Demilitarised Zone. This division was not intended to be permanent, it was simply a temporary measure put in place post the First Indochina War to allow for the allaying of tensions. Elections were slated to be held in July 1956. During this time, a 300-day period of free

movement was established which resulted in the migration of almost a million northerners to the south, primarily Catholics fleeing communist rule.

This interim period of political stability was cut-short in 1955, when Ngo Dinh Diem (the Prime Minister of the State of Vietnam) toppled the Bao Dai government in a fraudulent referendum and took control of southern Vietnam. At this point, the internationally recognized State of Vietnam ceased to exist and was replaced by the Republic of Vietnam in the south under Ngo Dinh Diem and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the north under Ho Chi Minh.

America's Cold War Policies/theories

1. **Containment:** The doctrine of containment was a policy adopted by the Truman administration that called for curtailing the spread of communism. It was a policy adopted by the Truman administration as a response to the USSR's moves to spread their sphere of influence.
2. **Domino Theory:** The Domino Theory was a theory that fed into the containment policy. This theory articulated that if one country came under the influence of communism, the surrounding countries would follow suit similar to the way dominos fall one after the other.
3. **Truman Doctrine:** The Truman Doctrine established that the United States would provide political, military and economic assistance to all democratic nations under threat from external or internal authoritarian forces

Soviet and Chinese Involvement in Vietnam

Following the Second World War, USSR gave only marginal support for communist movements in Vietnam, which was outside its sphere of influence at the time. Joseph Stalin sought to maintain his wartime alliance with the West, temporarily at least, and chose not to antagonise them by backing the Viet Minh. By the end of 1949, the situation had changed markedly. US-Soviet tensions were rising and Mao Zedong's communist victory in China (October 1949) was a radical development in the Cold War. It was only in January of 1950 that the USSR recognised Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh as the 'official' rulers of Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh sought Soviet military backing for his war of independence against the French but since Stalin was focused on Europe, rejected this. The latter instead encouraged his communist ally, Mao Zedong, to support the Viet Minh.

The Chinese already had a history of working with the Viet Minh. Chinese communists and the Viet Minh had provided each other with cover and material support during their struggles in their respective countries and this relationship was particularly strong in border regions. Chinese communist forces often retreated into North Vietnam, to rest or prepare for further offensives. In return, the Chinese provided the Viet Minh with weapons, munitions and training. Beijing continued this assistance in the early 1950s, providing significant amounts of military aid to Hanoi. Most Chinese supplies arrived in Kunming in Yunnan province, where they were transported to the Vietnamese border, then carried down a narrow jungle track. Chinese communism also had some influence on Vietnamese communist ideology, organisation and

policy. Chinese advice and technical expertise influenced Hanoi's programs of land reform and industrialisation during the 1950s.

The death of Joseph Stalin in March 1953 and the stabilisation of events in Europe drew Moscow's attention back to south-east Asia. While the Viet Minh were preparing to drive out the French and move toward reunification, the Soviets preferred a more conciliatory approach. Soviet delegates at the Geneva conference urged the Viet Minh to accept a negotiated peace and the proposed transitional division. A divided Vietnam, Soviet strategists argued, would allow for a period of stabilisation: the communist regime in the North would be able to consolidate its power, undertake economic reforms and improve its military capability. Moscow also had broader concerns: it was worried that US military involvement in Vietnam would require some kind of Soviet response. Under pressure from the Soviet Union, Ho Chi Minh advised his representatives in Geneva to sign the accords.

US Involvement in Vietnam

In the north, Ho Chi Minh's government instituted several land reform policies, a by-product of which was severe political oppression and resulted in the death of thousands.

In 1961 when President Kennedy assumed office he was faced with a crisis in three parts - the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba, the building of the Berlin Wall by the Soviet Union and third, a settled agreement between the pro-Western government in Laos and the communist Pathet Lao movement. This gave an impression to USA's allies that it was unable to sustain its spheres of influence and that communism was on the rise. Therefore in order to ensure global

credibility of the United States' power, Kennedy decided to turn Vietnam into a 'project', so to speak. In the National Security Action Memorandum - 52 also known as the Presidential Program for Vietnam, Kennedy confirmed the United States' commitment to supporting and defending South Vietnam. In this Memorandum the United States committed, among other things, to containing the rise of communism, enabling the creation of a strong democratic society and achieving the aforementioned goals by providing Vietnam with military, political, economic, psychological and even covert support.

Following the establishment of Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam, the communist National Liberation Front (NLF for short and derogatively known as the Viet Cong) launched a number of guerilla campaigns against the government. This resulted in a crackdown on communists by the Diem government. They would detain suspected communists in "Political Reeducation Centers". Kennedy at the time was very intrigued by the usage of counterinsurgency troops and deployed the United States Army Special Forces, called the Green Berets, to South Vietnam to counter the NLF's guerilla tactics. What was originally seeming like a sure shot victory for Diem's government rapidly began to falter by January of 1962 and the NLF seemed to be gaining the upper hand.

Meanwhile, Diem's unpopularity was growing, largely due to his government favouring Catholics over the Buddhist majority. The year 1963 saw a rise in Buddhist opposition to Diem's government in the form of mass demonstrations. This was followed by a violent government crackdown. This violence resulted in the complete breakdown of the United States' relationship

with the government in South Vietnam and the USSD sent a telegram to the US ambassador in Saigon indicating their discontent with the government's policies.

Gulf of Tonkin Incident

On July 27 1964, 5,000 additional U.S. military advisers were ordered to South Vietnam), bringing the total American troop level to 21,000. Shortly thereafter another incident occurred off the coast of the North Vietnam that escalated the conflict.

On the evening of August 2, 1964, the destroyer USS *Maddox* was conducting an electronic intelligence collection mission in international waters in the Gulf of Tonkin when it was attacked by three P-4 torpedo boats of the North Vietnamese Navy. Reports later reached the Johnson administration saying that the *Maddox* was under attack. Two nights later, after being joined by the destroyer *C. Turner Joy*, the *Maddox* again reported that both vessels were under attack.

Our Committee begins in an emergency session of the cabinet called for on August 4th 1964.