



## **Oasis International School Model United Nations**

The Special Conference Committee

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Guiding Package

Topic (1) : Assessing the United States' military intervention in the Vietnam  
War

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## Abstract :

After the first Indochina war between Vietnam and France which ended in 1954 with France's defeat. The Viet Minh, founded by Ho Chi Minh, had settled in the north of Vietnam and identified itself as a country, Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam). After the Geneva conference (1955), Vietnam was divided into North and South at the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel. It was arranged that an election would take place in 1956, ending this division. However the United States of America feared North Vietnam's Communist policy and that it would spread across Asia. At a time when tensions between the US and the Soviet Union were high, the US wanted to prevent the Communist uprising. They supported the anti-communist politician, Ngo Dinh Diem, in the south of Vietnam, who then became its president and canceled the election of 1956. However due to corruption and his fascist agenda, by the Diem regime, a coup d'état took place in 1963 and he was removed from power. None the less the government which preceded him was similar. In 1964, after the Gulf of Tonkin incident, in which US ships were attacked by Viet Cong (Viet minh) artillery, the US then deployed over 400 000 troops in Vietnam. However, the USSR saw an opportunity to aid the north of Vietnam by providing better military equipment. The US resorted to aerial tactics by deploying bombs or toxins, such as napalm, which burned the skin and killed the affected. However, the Viet Cong used guerilla tactics, such as ambushes, hit and run, which were made by small groups. Since most of the conflicts were in the forests of Vietnam. In 1968, the Viet Cong carried out the Tet Offense, whether they attacked 30 US targets in Vietnam and a couple of South Vietnamese villages, even though the US forces prevailed, this was a defeat, and a turning point in the war. The time frame for this topic is until the **24th of March 1969.**

### Introduction:

The United States intervention in Vietnam is considered one of the biggest involvements of a country in war, which does not directly affect them. They spent and scarified many resources in fighting this war. After World War II, Vietnam attempted to become an independent country, however France, having at the time control of Vietnam prohibited it from accomplishing that. This led to North Vietnam to fight against France and they won. However, in the midst of the cold war, the US feared the domino theory, speculating that if one country in a region came under the influence of communism, then the surrounding countries would follow in a domino effect. They had a containment policy, which used numerous strategies to prevent the spread of communism abroad As the US was unable to control the communist uprising, led by the Viet Minh, they intervened directly by deploying their army in south of Vietnam.

### Definition of Key Terms:

- Napalm: Flammable liquid used in warfare, as it sticks to skin and causes severe burns when on fire.
- Agent Orange: The herbicides and defoliants used by the U.S. military as part of its herbicidal warfare program.
- French Indochina: A grouping of French colonial territories in southeast Asia, which included Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia

### Background Information:

At the beginning of World War II, France still had control of the Indochina region, which included Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. During the war, Japan had invaded Vietnam; however the Viet Minh, who were a national independence group, opposed the Japanese forces with the aid of the United States of America and China. When the axis powers surrendered, the control returned to France. The Viet Minh, who were led by Ho Chi Minh, would then seek independence from the French, and attempt to create the Democratic

Republic of Vietnam. France then refused to recognise this declaration, and the Viet Minh requested aid from the US, who went on to aid France. Ho Chi Minh, followed a communist doctrine, therefore found aid from the Soviet Union (USSR). Afterwards, the First Indochina War broke, which lasted from 1946 until 1954. Where one side, there was France, the state of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia and the other side, the Viet Minh. Both countries had support from the US and the USSR respectively. Battle of Dien Bien Phu, fought between March 1954 until May 1954, initially the French had a plan to draw out the Viet Minh forces and bomb them with air raid, however because of the Viet Minh knowledge of the land and region and the artillery brought in from the USSR and China, France faced a humiliating defeat and called for a peace settlement. During the Geneva conference in 1954, this had the goals of settling the issues in the Korean peninsula and creating peace in Indochina. The Geneva accords, signed by the French, demanded that retreat of the French troops from the Indochina region, as well as it stated to separate the region into three countries: Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Furthermore, Vietnam was divided at the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel; this led to the north being controlled by the Viet Minh and the south, becoming the state of Vietnam. However the separation was temporary, as it hoped that Vietnam would unify after the election in 1956. The US feared for the domino affected to take place, which would see an uprising of communist policies in Asia. Therefore, they began to support anti-communist politician Ngo Dinh Diem, and with the support of the US, he took control of South Vietnam and proclaimed it as the republic of Vietnam and he cancelled the election of 1956. This was the start of the Vietnam War. The Diem regime proved then to be corrupt and fascist dictatorship, however still backed by the US in fear of a communist uprising. The national liberal front, also known as the Viet Cong, previously the Viet Minh, was a resistance against the Diem regime. In 1962, John F. Kennedy, then president of the US Sent American military advisors to aid against the Viet Cong, however when noticing the issues which the Diem Regime created. The US, in 1963 backed a coup d'état that overthrew the Diem Regime, after which an army official, Dương Văn Minh, became president of the republic of Vietnam. None the less, he was as corrupt and ineffective as his predecessor. In 1964, occurred the Gulf of Tonkin incident, in which the US declared that their ships were destroyed by north of Vietnam Forces. This led Lyndon B. Johnson, successor to Kennedy, to begin sending US

troops over to Vietnam. This 'Americanization', had sent over 400 000 US troops by the end of 1966. Leading to operation such as Operation Rolling Thunder, which were aerial bombardments from 1965 until 1968. However, the Viet Cong had adapted guerrilla tactics, which is considered an irregular warfare, as they would attack in small groups, by ambush, petty warfare or hit and run tactics. AS well, as they had great knowledge of the area and used the forests to their advantage. This led the US to using Agent Orange and Napalm, which were toxic substances, which then killed and injured thousands, in order to better improve their offense against the Viet Cong's tactics. In 1968, the Viet Cong launched the Tet tactic, in which they attacked 30 US targets and dozens of cities in South Vietnam, the US was able to hold their offense, yet it was considered a defeat. This led to the My Lai massacre, in which a platoon of soldiers enraged by the outcome, open fired on Vietnamese civilians, killing over 300 citizens. At the time began an anti-war movement in the US, which protested against the American intervention in Vietnam, as the war cost them over 173 billion dollars.

#### Major Countries and organisations involved:

- Vietnam:
- United States of America: Beginning their intervention in Vietnam since 1964
- Soviet Union: heavily supported Vietnam, supplying them with military equipment and advisors
- Laos and Khmer Republic (Cambodia): Both neighbour countries to Vietnam, were heavily affected by the war, and were victims of bombardments by the US

#### UN Involvement:

The Security Council committee, the US, USSR and China, three veto powers, that were able to block any Vietnam related solution or resolutions, therefore the UN couldn't do much to control the situation.

#### Possible Solutions:

- A cease fire between the South and north of Vietnam. Considering both countries are not prepared to surrender in the war, and as the US will lose the most. A ceasefire will give the opportunity to the countries to participate in peaceful negotiations and further evaluate the effect of the war.
- Limiting the US intervention and control in Vietnam. This alternative will calm the situation between both sides, as it gives both sides some breathing space to resolve their own issues.
- Holding elections and improving communication between the south and the north of Vietnam

#### Guiding Questions:

- How is your country's relation to Vietnam?
- What type of doctrine does your country follow?
- Is your country more affiliated to the US or the USSR?
- What is your country's opinion on foreign intervention?

#### Useful Links:

1. <http://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/vietnam-war-history>
2. <http://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war>
3. <http://www.britannica.com/event/Vietnam-War>
4. <http://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2015/03/the-vietnam-war-part-i-early-years-and-escalation/389054/>
5. <http://alphahistory.com/vietnam/first-indochina-war/>
6. [http://www.historyguy.com/indochina\\_war\\_first.htm](http://www.historyguy.com/indochina_war_first.htm)