



The Vietnam War

A time of chaos.

Background Guide



Committee Description

The first involvement that the United States had in Vietnam started in 1950, helping France in the Indochina war. By helping out the French keep their rule in the present-day areas of Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, the United States sought to not only repair their rocky relationship with the French, but to further their policy of containment, or stopping the spread of communism. Thus, the United States helped the French occupy the Indochina region by sending economic and military support.

But the continued occupation of Vietnam costing around \$25 billion per year (even after the French left in 1954) led to civil unrest and protests in the United States. Most notably the protest at the Lincoln Memorial with around 100,00 people in October of 1967. Many celebrities and famous personalities also joined the anti-war cause, The Beatles released "Give Peace a Chance" in 1966, famous boxer Mohammad Ali refused to participate in the draft which led him to being arrested, Martin Luther King Jr. declared that this war was "A blasphemy against all that America stands for". But amongus all this distaste for this war, President Richard Nixon made a famous speech addressing the many Anti-War protests saying that the vocal minority should not drown out the silent majority of Americans who think the war is crucial in the protection of freedom.

With the presidential elections coming up, Lyndon B. Johnson must improve his reputation significantly or must step down so that the Democratic party has a chance of retaining the presidential seat.

The United States and USSR have had a tense relationship for years now, especially in competition for superiority in the Space Race. During the Cold War, the two countries fought for superiority in space technologies and arms, leading to tensions not only for publicity, but in the military sector as well. On October 4th, 1957, the USSR landed the first

ever man made object (Sputnik) on the moon. Shortly after, on July 20th, 1969, United States astronaut Neil Armstrong was the first man to land on the moon.

One of the largest causes of the tense relationships between these two nations is the political belief of communism. The USSR was trying to spread communism beliefs to all of the little countries around it while the United States used containment to try and contain the spread of communism. The United States supported the countries that were being pressured by the USSR with loads of financial and humanitarian aid. As seen earlier in history, The Cuban Missile Crisis strengthened the tension between the two countries. However, it is important to note that the creation of the hotline has allowed for communication between these two nations and de-escalated the tension between the two nations during the Cuban missile crisis.

It is our expectation that all delegates and chairs will be respectful throughout the conference. Regardless of “character positions”, outright racism or slurs will not be acceptable.

General History

Indochina Era(1887-1940)

The conflict can be traced back to the 1880s' when the French colonized parts of Indochina. Vietnam was initially part of French Indochina along with present day Laos, Cambodia, Laos Myanmar, Thailand. These countries all are very interconnected culturally and economically centering around the Mekong River which flows north to south. French Indochina was used by Catholic Missionaries. Indochina continued to be controlled by France until WWII in which France was invaded by Nazi Germany and Indochina was invaded by Japan.

Japanese Rule(1940-1945)

The Japanese continued to rule through a puppet emperor Bao Dai from the Nguyen Dynasty. Ho Chi Minh, dissatisfied with outside rule, began a revolution with a new communist party called the Viet Minh that rose up against the Japanese.

First Indochina War(1946-1954)

On September 2nd, 1945, the Vietnamese declared independence with the Proclamation of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and declared Hanoi as the capital. The French, already distraught with the loss of so many territories, fought back against this declaration of independence, launching Vietnam and the surrounding countries into the first Indochina war. During this time, containment was on the mind of the Americans as the People's Republic of China was now communist and the fight against Korean communism was still raging. This led the US and UK to back the French and the USSR and the Chinese to back the Viet Minh. The Viet Minh were ultimately victorious and according to the Geneva Accords, Vietnam was split into the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the State of Vietnam with Ngo Dinh Diem becoming the Prime Minister through a "fair" election in which he won 98% of the vote; Cambodia and Laos were also granted freedom.

Second Indochina War(1955-present)

Concerned with a communist uprising in the South, Diem arrested and executed many people. As a Catholic, he was also at odds with the Buddhist population and by 1960, anti-government groups in the south were organized into the Viet Cong. The Viet Cong were supported through the Ho Chi Minh Trail that connected the north and south through Laos and Cambodia—allies of the north. The Viet Cong also received support from the countryside which were being exploited through high rent and landlord reforms. President Kennedy, faced many failures in the containment of communism elsewhere, believed Vietnam was where he could find success. Reluctant to put US troops in Vietnam, the US tried to aid the South Vietnam Army indirectly to no avail as the government was crippled with corruption and infighting raged on. On 1963 November 1st, Diem and his brother were overthrown through a coup and assassinated. To add to the chaos, that very same year Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas Texas. In 1964, there was a skirmish in which the U.S.S Maddox was attacked by Vietnam torpedo boats resulting in 4 Vietnamese casualties. This skirmish led to an air strike and later a resolution that allowed the US to escalate involvement—The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. The Viet Cong continued a series of victories until on March 8th of 1965, Johnson finally put American troops on the ground and General William Westmoreland Began his 3 point plan to win the war. With Nguyen Cao Ky as Prime Minister, the South Vietnamese began to pull their government together. Regardless, it was a stalemate as both sides had their own advantages. With Tet Nguyen Dan coming up, hopefully, there will be a bit of peace to celebrate the New Year.

Timeline:

At the beginning of March in 1947 in an address to Congress, President Harry Truman stated that the foreign policy of the United States is to assist any country whose stability is threatened by communism. The policy becomes known as the Truman Doctrine. In 1949 the French installed former emperor Bao Dai as head of state in Vietnam.

Later in the same year the Soviet Union explodes its first atom bomb in a remote area of Kazakhstan, marking a tense turning point in the Cold War with the United States.

October 1949: Following a civil war, Chinese Communist leader Mao Zedong declared the creation of the People's Republic of China.

January 1950: The People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union formally recognize the communist Democratic Republic of Vietnam and start supplying goods and military aid to the communist resistance groups.

February 1950: Using the goods and assistance provided by the USSR and PRC, the Vietminh continue to be more offensive against the French.

June 1950 - March 1954: The French receive aid from the United States to defend against the Viet Minh forces, however the French suffer a major defeat against the Viet Minh at Dien Bien Phu ending their rule.

July 1954: The Geneva Accords are established the divided Vietnam along the 17th parallel

1955: Catholic nationalist Ngo Dinh Diem emerges as the leader of South Vietnam, with U.S. backing, while Ho Chi Minh leads the communist state to the north.

May 1959: North Vietnam forces begin to build a supply route through Laos and

July 1959: The first U.S. soldiers are killed in South Vietnam when guerrillas raid their living quarters near Saigon.

September 1960: Ho Chi Minh, facing failing health, is replaced by Le Duan as head of North Vietnam's ruling communist party

December 1960: The National Liberation Front (NLF) is formed with North Vietnamese backing as the political wing of the anti-government insurgency in South Vietnam. The United States views the NLF as an arm of North Vietnam and starts calling the military wing of the NLF the Viet Cong—short for Vietnam Cong-san, or Vietnamese communists

General American History:

In the 1950s and 1960s the United States enacted a policy of containment to stop the expansion of communism. So, then president Dwight D. Eisenhower pledged his support to Diem and South Vietnam as opposition to allies of the Soviet Union by supplying training and equipment. In 1961, President John F. Kennedy sent a team to report on conditions in South Vietnam, and it advised a build-up of American military, economic, and technical aid to help Diem confront the Viet Cong threat.

The United States at this time worked under a “Domino theory”, which theorized that if one Southeast Asian country fell to communism, others would follow; thus, they heavily supported South Vietnam. However, he did not commit a large-scale military intervention. After Kennedy’s assassination, Lyndon Johnson attempted to implement an all-encompassing plan which would continue the fight in Vietnam while also providing social reforms at home. His promise of “guns n’ butter”, attempted to create a plan which would continue the war effort in Vietnam while still instituting domestic social reforms; however, this plan would prove to be way too expensive, and many American citizens were growing increasingly disgruntled with the war effort. The protest movements in the US grew massively in the years preceding 1968, especially among young people. With the executives hiding many secrets, the populace trusts the government less and less. The Johnson administration is now under extreme pressure to win, or get out with the upcoming presidential elections.

General USSR History:

The Geneva Conference partitioned Vietnam into two zones: A communist north supported by the Soviet Union, and an anticommunist south supported by the United States. A provisional agreement was proposed which would reunify the country in 1956 through an election; however, southern leader Ngo Dinh Diem, seeing that his government was extremely unpopular, refused to go through with the elections fearing loss. Tensions between the two countries increased as both sides started consolidating their power. The North used assistance received from the USSR and China to start a program of socialist industrialization. The South, supported by the US, started a program of stabilizing the government, but Diem's borderline tyrannical policies made him widely unpopular. With support from the Viet Cong, a military regime overthrew Diem and established military rule. The regime remained largely the same when Nguyen Van Thieu was established as president in 1967, remaining unstable, unpopular, and oppressive.

Internationally, the Soviet Union faces its own issues. There is unrest in Czechoslovakia, with the liberal Prague Spring ideals being proliferated by their leader, Alexander Dubcek. The KGB has been very active in the area. There are rumblings of a potential invasion of Czechoslovakia, amongst some Warsaw Pact nations. The struggle in Vietnam is being closely monitored, and some new strategies have come to light. The Soviet Union and Vietnam have been coordinating closely since the beginning of the war. In East Germany, tensions are high between Brezhnev and Walter Ulbricht. Ulbricht has been advocating for more independence from Moscow. In Moscow, there is a struggle between liberal and conservative ideals, in the post-Khrushchev era. The current leader, Leonid

Brezhnev wishes to maintain the Stalinist ideals of ruling with an iron fist. The liberals, like Alexei Kosygin and Nikolay Podgorny, have been looking for a more relaxed communist government. Suffice to say, tensions are very high.

United States Character List

Robert Kennedy

Brother of President John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy's accomplishments are often overlooked. From becoming the U.S. Senator from New York to serving as the United States Attorney General, Robert soon became his brother's closest advisor. He is also known for advocating for the Civil Rights Movement, Cuban foreign policy, and dealing with Mafia crimes. Unfortunately, the minority of Americans that disliked the Kennedy Administration became louder, aiming threats at both the President and his brother. It is notable that Robert's biggest priority is surviving through the rest of the Administration, generating a positive image of himself to the entirety of America, and stepping out of his brother's shadows.

Vice President Hubert Humphrey

Former pharmacist, mayor of Minneapolis, and United States Senator of Minnesota, Vice President Hubert Humphrey has many connections with local, state, and national politicians. As a liberal, Humphrey believes in advocating for freedom of speech and separation between church and state. Yet although Humphrey is largely liked by the American public, he is constantly criticized for the establishment of the non-communist liberal organization Americans for a Democratic Society. He was also criticized for being too "soft" on communism during McCarthyism, a time of social paranoia in the States. One of Humphrey's goals for the future is to become President of the States someday.

Secretary of the Treasury Joseph W. Barr

Former businessmen and House of Representative of Indiana, Secretary of the Treasury Joseph W. Barr has many economic relations. Barr is constantly aware of the balance of checks- quickly spreading his influences when working on the Banking and Currency Committee in Indiana, and while creating legislation for the Inter-American Bank and International Development Association. With his prior company, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), Barr has many connections with businessmen and the wealthy.

Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford

Former lawyer, Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford is one of the biggest advocates against the United States involvement in the Vietnam War. He is known for having many arguments with the President prior to 1968, yet those arguments never made the public eye. Clifford has fewer external relations than most, but his powers include but don't limit to: overseeing the Department of Defense and acting as the principal defense policymaker and advisor. Clifford uses his powers to warn about Soviet expansion and the spread of communism in Asia.

Attorney General Ramsey Clark

As attorney general, Clark is an aggressive supporter of civil liberties and rights and is active in the anti-war movement as he is currently working on acquitting Philip Berrigan, an anti war activist. He was the national president of the Federal Bar Association and still has several connections within the association. His rather liberal ideas are beginning to create a rift between him and Johnson.

Secretary of State Dean Rusk

One of the strongest advocates for the presence of the United States in the Vietnam War, Dean Rusk constantly supports the U.S. Armed Forces to fight in the Asian country. He believed that the current conflicts would show the world how the States are determined to follow the policy of Containment. Rusk has many external connections. He was a soldier in the U.S. Army, administrator and analyst during World War II, worker in the Army Intelligence in Washington, and an important member of General Joseph Stilwell's staff in India. He quickly rose the rankings of both the State Department and the War Department during the Korean War and emergence of the United Nation. Rusk can accomplish almost anything with his networking system, but must be cautious of his high status.

Ambassador to the United Nations James Russell Wiggins

As the Editor and Executive Vice President of the Washington Post and the United States Ambassador to the United Nations, James Russell Wiggins has many external resources to retrieve crucial information on the Vietnam War. Wiggins was also part of the Army Air Corps Intelligence Division during World War II, forming strong relationships with influential people like Philip Graham. Wiggins recognizes the importance of public knowledge, making him the key advocate of the Freedom of Information Act. It is in Wiggins' interest to support the President's decisions in Vietnam and gain support for the war in the United Nations.

Justice Abe Fortas

Former American lawyer and jurist, current associate Justice of the Supreme Court, Justice Abe Fortas. Although it's clear that Fortas' presence in the Supreme Court is short with his relationship with the President, Fortas still has a large impact on the community. From protecting wrongfully convicted juvenile offenders, supporting student protestors, and supporting Civil Rights acts, Fortas has the back of the youth of America. He looks favorable on giving the underrepresented people a chance in government, and often uses his powers to advocate for such causes.

Justice Thurgood Marshall

As the first African American in the Supreme Court, Justice Thurgood Marshall was a key advocate on Civil Rights. He often uses his powers to prevent Jim Crow and segregation, his most notable case being *Brown v. Board of Education*, in which the Supreme Court deemed "separate but equal" unconstitutional in schools. It is clear that all of Marshall's intentions go towards bringing black and other underrepresented races a platform in government. With his popularity with the minorities, he is quite capable of fulfilling his agenda behind the public eye. Though, he must be aware of his image with the white colleagues.

Senate Majority Whip Leader Russell B. Long

Long is a Senator from Louisiana and is the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee in addition to being Senate Majority Leader Whip. As chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, Long holds jurisdiction over 100 percent of federal revenue and 40 percent of government spending. Long is very popular with a 75 percent approval rating among Louisiana voters because of his efficacy. Long generally supported Johnson with hawkish opinions of Vietnam but was rather conservative when it came to race. He voiced displeasure with both the Civil Rights Acts and Voting Rights Acts. These conservative positions on race

are putting him at odds with the more liberal side of his party. Long must be careful to maintain the support of his party while fighting for his own opinions.

General William Westmoreland

As the youngest Major General in the United States at that point in history, William Westmoreland was vastly respected by his colleagues. With many connections in South Vietnam, especially with South Vietnamese politicians and army leaders. He strategized the rest of the war using firepower- specifically using intensive aerial bombardments. Westmoreland has proved to have many connections, but he must be careful about who his allies really are.

Chairman and CEO of Ford Motor Company Henry Ford II

The eldest grandson of Henry Ford I, Henry Ford II is the current CEO of Ford Motor Company. Currently, Ford Motor company is supplying the war with Ford M151 "Quarter-Ton" 4x4 that are especially designed with independent suspension and coil springs for high maneuverability and stability regardless of terrain. Previously there was talk about the government absorbing the company to ensure war production during periods of loss so it is essential to keep the company healthy looking. As a key supplier of the war, it is in Ford's best interest to continue the war while limiting the use of the M60 tank supplied by Chrysler.

Secretary of Agriculture Orville L. Freeman

The start of Freeman's political career began in 1945 as an administrative assistant to the then Minneapolis mayor Hubert Humphrey. After some time in lower government positions, Freeman was elected governor in 1954. After losing the re-election in 1960, Freeman was appointed U.S Secretary of Agriculture by president Kennedy and continues to retain that position through the Johnson administration. His ambitions no longer lie in the public sector as if Johnson is not re-elected, Freeman will most likely turn his attention towards his private companies such as E.D.P Technology International and Business International Corp.

Chairman and CEO of Raytheon Tom Phillips

Credited with the invention of the Hawk missile, Phillips controls one of the largest defense contractors in the nation. The Hawk missile has not been used in this conflict yet, but with some persuasion in this committee, they could become widely used. Raytheon has also used its versatile microwave technology to enter civilian markets. Still, he is known as an extremely reclusive man, even going as far as to hide his age from the media. Fittingly, Phillips typically chooses to operate from the shadows, manipulating the situation to his advantage while remaining behind the scenes. Though he claims to be a devout Christian with a strict moral code, his company has been observed excessively treating government employees. Tom Phillips has an interest in escalating the Vietnam war

Chairman and CEO of General Dynamics David Lewis

General Dynamics is one of the largest suppliers of defense equipment worldwide but is still looking to expand. Because of the worldwide market for defense equipment, it is in General Dynamics best interest to stoke conflicts outside of the United States. With the company facing some large losses in the near future, Lewis is looking to steer the company into profitability. Lewis will do whatever it takes and is unafraid of the legality of it all.

First Lady Claudia Alta "Lady Bird" Johnson

An American socialite and first lady of the United States, Claudia has many connections. Despite Lyndon's hot headed and rather crude personality, Claudia has always been his greatest supporter. She funded his early career and is a mediating force between him and those who he clashes with. Some who hate Lyndon would "walk over hot coals for Lady Bird". Claudia is also heading the capital beautification project by protecting roadside wildflowers and attracting tourists with flowers in D.C. Claudia. She is very close with her press secretary Liz Carpenter as fellow alumni of University of Texas will be a great ally. One of Claudia's major objectives is to keep Lyndon in line throughout the duration of the committee.

American Singer Eartha Kitt

Despite Kitt's rough childhood as a child of rape and bouncing between homes, Eartha exceeded all expectations by becoming a world renowned singer known for her distinct singing style. Currently, she is playing Catwoman in the Batman television series and has several connections with different directors and popular actors through her previous jobs—namely Orson Welles. Already an activist as a member of the Women's International League and her non-profit "Kittsville Youth Foundation", Kitt is already under surveillance by the CIA. Currently, she has an invitation to a White House luncheon where she will have a question-and-answer session. Should she take the risk and speak up about the situation in Vietnam which she disapproves of, or should she hold her tongue?

American Actress Jane Fonda

Jane Fonda, starting on the stage, moved to the big screens with her first breakout success with Cat Ballou in 1965. Now a successful actress and model, Jane is in a valuable position as an influence of public opinion. She has very strong opinions on the Vietnam war but has yet to use her celebrity status to influence social and political movements as she is pregnant and living in France. Coming back home after 5 years abroad, she might finally voice her opinions with the world and establish her status as an activist. Considering her shared opinions on the Vietnam war in addition to Native American rights, she also might be interested in reaching out to Eartha Kitt in this committee.

USSR Character List

Alexei Kosygin

Chairman of the Council of Ministers, When Krushchev was removed from power in 1964, there was a collective leadership between Kosygin and Brezhnev. Kosygin holds more liberal ideals, and is considered to be Brezhnev's political opponent.

Nikolay Podgorny

Ran the interim government when the Supreme Soviet wasn't in session. Furthermore, he led the rebellion with Brezhnev, and Kosygin against the Khrushchev government. Kosygin and Podgorny are on the same side of the political spectrum.

Nikolai Tikhonov

Tikhonov, serving as Kosygin's deputy, has gained some control of the Gosplan, which sets the standard for the Soviet economy. Tikhonov may be Kosygin's deputy, but he is hungry for more power.

Alexander Dubcek

Alexander Dubcek is the de facto leader of Czechoslovakia. He is in the middle of a reform of the communist government, much to the chagrin of the Soviet Union. The Stalinist voices in Czechoslovakia are trying to stop him, with the aid of the Soviet government. Furthermore, there are rumblings of a potential invasion of Czechoslovakia, in response to his ongoing Prague Spring.

Nicolae Ceausescu

Ceausescu became the leader of the Romanian Communist Party in 1965. This new-found power enabled him to spread his strict Stalinist ideals throughout all of Romania. He is good allies with Brezhnev.

Walter Ulbricht

Ulbricht has been the leader of East Germany since its creation. He was instrumental in the construction of the Berlin Wall. His economy has been failing in recent years, and is losing popularity with the leaders of the Eastern Bloc. He has been demanding greater independence from Moscow, an act that has infuriated Brezhnev.

Ho Chi Minh

Ho Chi Minh is the leader of North Vietnam. He has been coordinating with the Soviet Union since the beginning of the war. Him and his second-in-command, Le Duan, have devised a strategy that promises to deal a heavy blow to the American military. However, Minh's health is failing, and he wishes to expedite the reunification of Vietnam.

Le Duan

As Ho Chi Minh's second in command, Duan has slowly assumed most of Minh's responsibilities, as the latter's health continues to deteriorate. It would appear that he wishes to sideline Minh, from most of the policy-making, and assume power.

Yuri Andropov

Leader of the KGB, Andropov is in control of the Soviet response to the Prague Spring. He has been suppressing dissidents for the better part of the decade, using mass arrests, and admitting people to psychiatric hospitals.

Andrei Grechko

Grechko has been a major part of the Soviet military for the better part of the decade, and has recently become the minister of Defense. Him and Brezhnev are close.

Andrei Gromyko

Gromyko has been the Soviet Foreign minister for a long time. In this time, he has worked with the People's Republic of China, and ran multiple industrialization projects in China. Gromyko is trusted by Brezhnev, and in fact served as the Soviet representative to the UN in the late 1940s.

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