

Committee: Historical Security Council (HSC)

Topic: Deescalating the conflict in Vietnam

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Position: Deputy President

Personal Introduction

Honourable Delegates,

I'd like to welcome you to the 13th Campion School MUN! My name is Athanasios (Thanos) Theodorou, and I'm currently a student of the 10th Grade at Ionios School Filothei. Furthermore, I will be your Deputy President for this year's Historical Security Council, specialising in the first topic, Deescalating the conflict in Vietnam. I believe it is a topic of immense importance, as it has been a vital point in human history, very much needed to examine Cold War dynamics. Being a history enthusiast myself, I have taken great interest in the Vietnam War, and I expect all delegates to show similar interest by reading this Study Guide, but also engaging in external research.

This Study Guide will not provide you with all the information required to engage the topic effectively, and external research is a requirement! I urge you to click the links that you find throughout the Guide, where you will find more research material in order to understand the topic in-depth. I am open to any questions that you may have throughout reading this Study Guide, and my email is teothanos10@gmail.com.

I truly hope you enjoy reading this Study Guide and examining the external research material, so that you may form a clearer perspective of the topic.

Kind regards,

Athanasios (Thanos) Theodorou



Topic Introduction

Figure 1: Map showcasing the division of Vietnam into a North (Communist) and a South (Anti-Communist Vietnam) part, led by Ho Chi Minh and Ngo Nich Diem, respectively.¹



In recent years, Vietnam has devolved into one of the most dangerous fronts of the ongoing Cold War², harming the local population and escalating global tensions in the process. The conflict began back in 1954, when the battle of Dien Bien Phu³ concluded French colonialist rule and gave way to a period of fragile peace, reinforced by the Geneva Accords⁴, which divided Vietnam along the 17th parallel, creating North and South Vietnam. The two parts have been and are still being influenced by the Soviet Union and the United States, respectively, with the United States becoming more active after 1954 and even backing the election of USA-aligned Ngo Dinh Diem⁵ as president of South Vietnam.

The Buddhist majority of South Vietnam⁶, alienated by the policies of the USA-backed government⁷, sought support for the ideas of the communist guerrilla group Viet Cong⁸, supported by the South, which eventually developed into the

¹ Turley, William S., and William J. Duiker. "Vietnam - the Two Vietnams (1954–65)." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 7 Feb. 2019, www.britannica.com/place/Vietnam/The-two-Vietnams-1954-65.

² Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History. "The Vietnam War - the Cold War (1945–1989)." *Cvce.eu*, 2013, www.cvce.eu/en/education/unit-content/-/unit/55c09dcc-a9f2-45e9-b240-eaef64452cae/5ad21c97-4435-4fd0-89ff-b6bddf117bf4.

³ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. "Battle of Dien Bien Phu | History, Outcome, & Legacy." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 22 Feb. 2019, www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-Dien-Bien-Phu.

⁴ See Previous attempts to solve the issue section

⁵ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. "Ngo Dinh Diem | Facts, Vietnam War, & Death." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2019, www.britannica.com/biography/Ngo-Dinh-Diem.

⁶ Central Intelligence Agency. *THE BUDDHISTS in SOUTH VIETNAM*. 26 June 1963, pp. 3–10, www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79-00927A004100030002-4.pdf. Accessed 28 July 2025.

⁷ Taylor, Derek. "Freedom and Independence Denied: How the Policies of the Diem Regime Plunged Vietnam into Civil War." *ResearchGate*, 2 July 2017, <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.15452.69761>.

⁸ See Major countries, organisations and alliances section

National Liberation Front⁹ (NFL), an open protest to Diem's oppressive rule.

Major escalations happened during the years 1961-1962, when, under President John F. Kennedy, American military advisors in Vietnam surged¹⁰, establishing the US as an official supporter of South Vietnam. US engagement in chemical warfare soon followed¹¹, with the use of Napalm Bombs¹² and the chemical agent "Agent Orange"¹³ against the Viet Cong in early 1962 and the Strategic Hamlet Program¹⁴ was launched a few months later, isolating entire villages in fortified hamlets, away from Viet Cong influence, while the Agreement on the Neutrality of Laos¹⁵ targeted aid sent by the north, meant for the NLF.

The situation in the Vietnamese region must be treated with extreme caution if a greater conflict is to be avoided. With no compromise in sight and both sides arming themselves, the Security Council must negotiate the defusal of this time-limited conflict.

Definition of key concepts

Colonialism

Colonialism is "the belief in and support for the system of one country controlling another"¹⁶.

Covert Operations¹⁷

Covert operations are actions from foreign states that aim to influence another state, politically, economically, or militarily, but without revealing the involvement of the first state. As an example, the Strategic Hamlet Program was a covert operation aiming to influence Vietnam politically, and the

⁹ Also see Major countries, organisations and alliances section

¹⁰ Willbanks, James H. "View of the Evolution of the US Advisory Effort in Viet Nam : Lessons Learned | Journal of Conflict Studies." [Journals.lib.unb.ca, journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/JCS/article/view/15238/24499](https://journals.lib.unb.ca/journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/JCS/article/view/15238/24499).

¹¹ Department of Veterans' Affairs. "Agent Orange | Anzac Portal." [Anzacportal.dva.gov.au, 6 Mar. 2020, anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/vietnam-war-1962-1975/events/aftermath/agent-orange](https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/vietnam-war-1962-1975/events/aftermath/agent-orange).

¹² See Definition of key concepts section

¹³ Also see Definition of key concepts section

¹⁴ Office of the Historian. "Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume III, Vietnam, January–August 1963 - Office of the Historian." [History.state.gov, 1 July 1963, history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v03/d197](https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v03/d197).

¹⁵ See Previous attempts to solve the issue section

¹⁶ Cambridge Dictionary. "COLONIALISM | Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary." [Cambridge.org, 27 Nov. 2019, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/colonialism](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/colonialism).

¹⁷ Unknown Author. "Covert Operations | EBSCO." [EBSCO Information Services, Inc. | Www.ebsco.com, 2024, www.ebsco.com/research-starters/law/covert-operations](https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/law/covert-operations).



Laos Agreement was a covert operation aiming to influence Vietnam militarily but also economically, from another perspective, both conducted by the United States.

Indochina

Indochina is “a peninsula in Southeast Asia, between the Bay of Bengal and the South China Sea, comprising Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, western Malaysia, and Myanmar”¹⁸. The region was given the name Indochina as the region is in-between the nations of India and China.

Cold War¹⁹

The Cold War often refers to the rivalry that developed between the USA and the USSR after WWII, characterised by the use of propaganda, political and economic sanctions, yet limited usage of weapons. However, any conflict that meets the above criteria can be labelled as a “Cold War”.

Napalm Bombs

Napalm bombs are bombs that carry “napalm, the aluminium salt or soap of a mixture of naphthenic and aliphatic carboxylic acids (organic acids of which the molecular structures contain rings and chains, respectively, of carbon atoms), used to thicken gasoline for use as an incendiary in flamethrowers and fire bombs”²⁰.

Agent Orange

Agent Orange is “a herbicide mixture being used by the U.S. military in the Vietnam War. Much of it contains a dangerous chemical contaminant called dioxin”²¹. It was first used in January 1962, during the first US operation utilising helicopters.

¹⁸ Unknown Author. “Indochina Definition & Meaning.” *Dictionary.com*, www.dictionary.com/browse/indochina.

¹⁹ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. “Cold War | Causes, Facts, & Summary.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 19 Jan. 2024, www.britannica.com/event/Cold-War.

²⁰ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. “Napalm | Chemical Compound.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 22 July 1998, www.britannica.com/science/napalm. Accessed 6 July 2025.

²¹ Aspen Institute. “What Is Agent Orange?” *The Aspen Institute*, 2016, www.aspeninstitute.org/programs/agent-orange-in-vietnam-program/what-is-agent-orange/.

Policy of Containment²²

The Policy of Containment was a US external policy developed during the 1940s and especially after the 2nd World War, which aimed to limit the spread of communist ideas and notions. The Policy of Containment essentially fueled the Cold War, a conflict between the US and the now largest and strongest communist nation, the USSR. Furthermore, the policy forces the US to actively engage in other, smaller conflicts, such as the conflict in Vietnam.

Media War²³

A media war is a war characterised by high media coverage and the influence of public opinion through these media, sometimes involving the use of propaganda, all to shape the outcome of a specific conflict. In the case of the conflict in Vietnam, the media seem to be moving the international community towards a stance against intervention, especially against US intervention in the region, but it is simply too early to tell what the result of this mobilisation will be.

Background Information

The Two Vietnams

The Geneva Accords of 1954²⁴ greatly influenced the war in Vietnam. By being split along the 17th parallel²⁵, Vietnam officially transitioned from being a French/Japanese colony to being two independent, internationally recognised nations. Naturally, the transition was particularly difficult, as Vietnam had become a new state that the superpowers of the Cold War could integrate into their spheres of influence. Before long, the two states had become an international battlefield of the Cold War, with the US claiming the Southern part and the USSR claiming the Northern part.

The US chose to support and eventually install a South Vietnamese government that would promote the Western agenda, while the USSR mostly aimed to shift public sentiment against Ngo Dinh Diem's

²² Office of the Historian. "Kennan and Containment, 1947." *History.State.gov*, history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/kennan.

²³ The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "Pathet Lao | Nationalist Organization, Laos." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 28 Apr. 2009, www.britannica.com/topic/Pathet-Lao.

²⁴ See Previous attempts to solve the issue section

²⁵ Vietnam was split along the 17th parallel, into a northern communist-influenced and southern western-influenced part due to the Geneva Accords



government and support North Vietnam financially and militarily.²⁶ At this moment, the population is essentially split into the working class, disappointed by the policies of the South Vietnamese government and supporting the Viet Cong, and the upper class, benefited by Ngo Dinh Diem's policies and, therefore, supporting his government²⁷.

Sociocultural Background

What is important to understand about the sociocultural background of Vietnam is that the region's colonial past deters the population from foreign influence and that the people who remain in Ngo Dinh Diem's southern part are constantly oppressed and robbed of their political rights to elect their preferred representatives, as most other parties are suppressed²⁸. As an example, with most of Diem's policies being supportive of the catholic minority, the Buddhist majority is alienated, as mentioned previously, an issue that must be addressed to avoid a greater crisis.

Apart from religious divides, political clashes have split the nation into communists, favouring Minh's method of governance, and republican nationalists²⁹, favouring Diem's method of governance. The Viet Cong are also supported by the communists³⁰, an alliance that often causes the suppression of public opinion and the forced unification of the Vietnamese under Ho Chi Minh's cause. The confrontations of the Viet Cong and the Army of the Republic of Vietnam³¹, essentially the army of the south, also often destroyed villages and crops, leaving the economically vulnerable population³² with no choice but to engage in illicit activities, such as prostitution, and the recently developed "black market"³³.

²⁶ Central Intelligence Agency. *THE DIMENSIONS of SOVIET AID to NORTH VIETNAM*. www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP78T02095R000900030002-5.pdf. Accessed 28 July 2025.

²⁷ Clever Lili, and BBC Bitesize. "South Vietnam under Ngo Dinh Diem." *Johndclare.net*, 2015, www.johndclare.net/VietnamWar2.htm.

²⁸ Menand, Louis. "What Went Wrong in Vietnam." *The New Yorker*, 19 Feb. 2018, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/02/26/what-went-wrong-in-vietnam.

²⁹ Tran, Nu-Anh. *Contested Identities: Nationalism in the Republic of Vietnam (1954-1963)*. 1954, escholarship.org/content/qt4407j6sj/qt4407j6sj_noSplash_25543b66d5bdbdf2ac68c21999f8e159.pdf.

³⁰ Szczepanski, Kallie. "Who Were the Viet Cong and What Was Their Role in the War?" *ThoughtCo*, 2019, www.thoughtco.com/the-viet-cong-the-vietnam-war-195432.

³¹ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. "Army of the Republic of Vietnam | Vietnamese Military Force | Britannica." *Www.britannica.com*, www.britannica.com/topic/Army-of-the-Republic-of-Vietnam.

³² Imai, Katsushi S., et al. "Vulnerability and Poverty Dynamics in Vietnam." *Applied Economics*, vol. 43, no. 25, Oct. 2011, pp. 3603–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00036841003670754>.

³³ CQ Almanac 1969. "CQ Almanac Online Edition." *Cqpress.com*, 2025, library.cqpress.com/cqalmanac/document.php?id=cqal69-1247070. Accessed 28 July 2025.



Impact on the International Community

The conflict in Vietnam was the first major media war.³⁴ As previously defined³⁵, in a media war, public media usually shape and influence public opinion by promoting certain pieces of news that provoke certain reactions. Up until this point, public media have focused on increased US military intervention and the ineffectiveness of the South Vietnamese government, hinting that the conflict in Vietnam is part of the greater Cold War against the USSR.

Characterising Vietnam as a Cold War battlefield, however, carries the risk of provoking a more general debate about foreign intervention, sovereignty, and human rights³⁶ during such situations. It is the very first time that public media has truly attempted to impact public opinion in such a way that could change foreign policy not only for the US³⁷ but for the entire Western Bloc.

Meanwhile, neighbouring countries have not remained inactive and are actively involved in the conflict, a significant development that has impacted the peace process in Vietnam and rendered local security quite fragile. The Viet Cong have taken advantage of civil unrest in Laos, which has been facing a civil war, an issue interconnected with the conflict in Vietnam, and have been running military operations to expand and secure the Ho Chi Minh Trail in complete disregard of the International Agreement on the Neutrality of Laos. Cambodia has declared neutrality, yet housed North Vietnamese logistical bases, essentially aiding the Viet Cong.³⁸ Lastly, Thailand has declared allegiance to the US and allowed operations and the presence of personnel and equipment on Thai soil³⁹, acting as an Asia bulwark against communism. All of these situations must be addressed if peace is to be truly established in the region.

³⁴ Kratz, Jessie. "Vietnam: The First Television War." *Pieces of History*, National Archives, 25 Jan. 2018, prologue.blogs.archives.gov/2018/01/25/vietnam-the-first-television-war/.

³⁵ See Definition of key concepts section

³⁶ VU, Giao Cong, and Kien TRAN. "Constitutional Debate and Development on Human Rights in Vietnam." *Asian Journal of Comparative Law*, vol. 11, no. 02, Dec. 2016, pp. 235–62, <https://doi.org/10.1017/asjcl.2016.27>. Accessed 11 Mar. 2019.

³⁷ Mesher, Kate. "The Vietnam War: A Moment of Change in American Foreign Policy?" *The York Historian*, 7 Nov. 2018, theyorkhistorian.com/2018/11/07/the-vietnam-war-a-moment-of-change-in-american-foreign-policy/.

³⁸ Central Intelligence Agency. *CAMBODIA and the VIET CONG*. 28 Dec. 1965, www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79T00472A000800030022-4.pdf. Accessed 28 July 2025.

³⁹ Moore, Ryan. "U.S. Bases in Thailand during the Vietnam War and Agent Orange | Worlds Revealed: Geography & Maps at the Library of Congress." *Blogs.loc.gov*, 12 Aug. 2019, blogs.loc.gov/maps/2019/08/u-s-bases-in-thailand-during-the-vietnam-war-and-agent-orange/.





Figure 2: A map of Southern Asia with the Indochina area, as of 1897, highlighted in orange.⁴⁰

Vietnam shares a single border with both Cambodia and Laos, resulting in the two ongoing conflicts in Laos and Vietnam affecting the entire region.

Date	Description of the event
17 October 1857	Vietnam became a French colony and part of French Indochina ⁴¹ , a characterisation given to nearby areas at that time, such as Cambodia and Laos

⁴⁰ Britannica. "Indochina." *Britannica Kids*, kids.britannica.com/students/article/Indochina/275049. Accessed 6 July 2025.

⁴¹ Ladenburg, Thomas. "Chapter 1: The French in Indochina." *Digital History*, 2007, www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/teachers/lesson_plans/pdfs/unit12_1.pdf.

3 February 1930	The Indochinese Communist Party is founded by Ho Chi Minh ⁴²
22 September 1940	The Japanese Empire invades Vietnam ⁴³ but continues collaboration with the French colonisers
9 March 1945	Operation Akira, a Japanese coup d'état, awarded the Japanese Empire full control of Vietnam ⁴⁴
2 September 1945	Ho Chi Minh establishes the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, declaring Vietnam an independent nation ⁴⁵
19 December 1946	The Viet Minh Revolution in Hanoi marks the beginning of the Indochina War ⁴⁶
13 March-7 May 1954	Battle of Dien Bien Phu, concluding in Viet Minh victory over French forces, ending France's conquest to reclaim Vietnam ⁴⁷
21-23 July 1954	The Geneva Accords ⁴⁸ are signed and go into effect, dividing Vietnam along the 17th parallel
20 December 1960	The National Liberation Front was established by the Viet Cong ⁴⁹

⁴² Smith, R. B. "The Foundation of the Indochinese Communist Party, 1929–1930." *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 32, no. 4, Oct. 1998, pp. 769–805, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0026749x98002923>. Accessed 22 Jan. 2022.

⁴³ Llewellyn, Jennifer, and Steve Thompson. "Japanese Occupation of Vietnam." *Vietnam War*, 18 June 2018, alphahistory.com/vietnamwar/japanese-occupation-of-vietnam/.

⁴⁴ Kyoichi, Tachikawa. Independence Movement in Vietnam and Japan during WWII. Mar. 2001, www.nids.mod.go.jp/english/publication/kiyo/pdf/bulletin_e2000_5.pdf.

⁴⁵ "Democratic Republic of Vietnam - VIETNAM the Art of War." *VIETNAM the Art of War*, 20 Nov. 2018, vietnamheartofwar.com/glossary/democratic-republic-of-vietnam/.

⁴⁶ "The First Indochina War (1946-1954) - War Wings Daily." *War Wings Daily - Military & Aviation News*, 28 June 2024, warwingsdaily.com/wars/the-first-indochina-war-1946-1954/.

⁴⁷ Office of the Historian. "Dien Bien Phu & the Fall of French Indochina, 1954." *State.gov*, United States Department of State, 2019, history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/dien-bien-phu.

⁴⁸ See Previous attempts to solve the issue section

⁴⁹ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. "National Liberation Front | Facts, History, & Vietnam War." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 20 July 1998, www.britannica.com/topic/National-Liberation-Front-political-organization-Vietnam.

1961	US military presence in Vietnam surges under President John F. Kennedy ⁵⁰
9 January 1962	First recorded use of chemical agent “Agent Orange” in the Vietnam conflict by US forces ⁵¹
16 March 1962	The Strategic Hamlet Program was launched by the South Vietnamese government ⁵²
23 July 1962	The International Agreement on the Neutrality of Laos ⁵³ was signed, aiming to dismantle the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

Major countries, organisations, and alliances

United States of America

The United States has been a constant aid to South Vietnam, providing financial and military aid as well as military advice to Diem’s government⁵⁴. US intervention in Vietnam has been increasing since 1961, with covert operations⁵⁵ aiming to damage North Vietnamese morale and the use of chemical warfare⁵⁶. Its Policy of Containment⁵⁷ makes the US hostile to the USSR and all openly communist nations, yet allied to Thailand and the rest of the West Bloc, opposing the communist rise.

⁵⁰ Willbanks, James H. “View of the Evolution of the US Advisory Effort in Viet Nam : Lessons Learned | Journal of Conflict Studies.” [Journals.lib.unb.ca. journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/JCS/article/view/15238/24499](https://journals.lib.unb.ca/journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/JCS/article/view/15238/24499).

⁵¹ US Department of Veteran Affairs. “Exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam - Public Health.” *Va.gov*, 2014, www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/locations/vietnam.asp.

⁵² The US Vietnam War Commemoration. “Strategic Hamlet Program.” *Vietnamwar50th.com*, 2020, www.vietnamwar50th.com/1945-1964_the_road_to_war/Strategic-Hamlet-Program/.

⁵³ United Kingdom of Great Britain, and Northern Ireland. *Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos. Signed at Geneva*. 23 July 1962, treaties.un.org/doc/publication/unts/volume%20456/volume-456-i-6564-english.pdf.

⁵⁴ Willbanks, James H. “View of the Evolution of the US Advisory Effort in Viet Nam : Lessons Learned | Journal of Conflict Studies.” [Journals.lib.unb.ca. journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/JCS/article/view/15238/24499](https://journals.lib.unb.ca/journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/JCS/article/view/15238/24499).

⁵⁵ Middleton, Joey. “MACV-SOG: The Special Operators Who Took on the Vietnam War’s Most Dangerous and Secret Missions.” *SOF Support Foundation*, 14 Feb. 2025, sofsupport.org/macv-sog-the-special-operators-who-took-on-the-vietnam-wars-most-dangerous-and-secret-missions/.

⁵⁶ National Academy Of Sciences. “Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans and Agent Orange Exposure.” *Www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov*, National Academies Press (US), 2011, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK209597/.

⁵⁷ Office of the Historian. “Kennan and Containment, 1947.” *History.State.gov*, history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/kennan.

French Republic

The withdrawal of French forces after the Battle of Dien Bien Phu⁵⁸ marked the complete expulsion of French authority from Vietnam, giving way to US influence, essentially a new representative of the Western bloc, after France lost its colonial master status⁵⁹. France and the US are naturally allied, with the United States being France's successor and influencing the region.

People's Republic of China

China has been supplying North Vietnam with military equipment, advisors, and logistical aid since the beginning of the conflict, recognising an ally to be made from a newly independent communist nation⁶⁰. However, what seems to be the worsening of relations between the PRC and the local communist superpower, the USSR, also known as the Sino-Soviet split⁶¹, may influence China's goal of pulling Vietnam into its sphere of influence, engaging in a constant power struggle with the USSR, with both sides aiming to gain a new ally for their own version of communism in the newly-established nation of Vietnam. Nevertheless, China remains aligned against the opponents of communist spread, the Western Bloc, and supports other communist countries such as the USSR, regardless of their differences

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Similar to China, the USSR sought allegiance in Vietnam, supplying the north with military equipment⁶² and advisors, as well as political backing as the local communist superpower⁶³. Allied to China, even though the aforementioned Sino-Soviet⁶⁴ split has begun damaging their alliance, and

⁵⁸ See Timeline of events sub-section

⁵⁹ Buttinger, Joseph, and William J. Duiker. "Vietnam - the Conquest of Vietnam by France." Encyclopædia Britannica, 7 Feb. 2019, www.britannica.com/place/Vietnam/The-conquest-of-Vietnam-by-France.

⁶⁰ "China Provided Valuable Support for Việt Nam during the American War." *Vietnamnews.vn*, 2025, vietnamnews.vn/politics-laws/1716730/china-provided-valuable-support-for-viet-nam-during-the-american-war.html.

⁶¹ Britannica. "20th-Century International Relations - the Sino-Soviet Split." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 26 July 1999, www.britannica.com/topic/20th-century-international-relations-2085155/The-Sino-Soviet-split.

⁶² Llewellyn, Jennifer, et al. "Chinese and Soviet Involvement in Vietnam." *Vietnam War*, 12 June 2018, alphahistory.com/vietnamwar/chinese-and-soviet-involvement/.

⁶³ Combs, Paul. "The Little-Known Role of the Soviet Union in the Vietnam War." *Medium*, Medium, 22 Oct. 2021, paulcombs.medium.com/the-little-known-role-of-the-soviet-union-in-the-vietnam-war-2da12f2b6c4e.

⁶⁴ See PROC sub-section

the major opponent of the West Bloc's anti-communist ideology, the USSR is the most prominent supporter of North Vietnam.⁶⁵

Kingdom of Cambodia

Prince Norodom Sihanouk has declared Cambodia's neutrality on the Vietnam conflict⁶⁶, but that hasn't prevented the Viet Cong from using parts of the kingdom as logistical bases and sanctuaries⁶⁷ from South Vietnamese authorities. Regarding the conflict, Cambodia remains neutral, but its cooperation with the Viet Cong is a valid reason for concern.

Kingdom of Thailand

Thailand stands as the only Western bloc sympathiser in the region, allowing the conduction of covert operations from the US⁶⁸ both in Laos and North Vietnam. The kingdom acts as an accessible and secure West Bloc hub, the final barrier preventing the spread of communism⁶⁹ from the USSR to the rest of the world.

Kingdom of Laos

Since 1958, the Viet Cong have used otherwise neutral Laos to run the Ho Chi Minh Trail⁷⁰, a supply chain between North Vietnamese communists and South Vietnamese pro-communist guerrilla Viet Cong. While the Laotian Civil War⁷¹ raged in the Kingdom of Laos, the major superpowers, the UK, the USSR and the USA, were trying to dismantle the Ho Chi Minh Trail using the Laos Agreement⁷².

⁶⁵ Llewellyn, Jennifer, et al. "Chinese and Soviet Involvement in Vietnam." *Vietnam War*, 12 June 2018, alphahistory.com/vietnamwar/chinese-and-soviet-involvement/.

⁶⁶ Corell, John T. "The Shadow War in Cambodia." *Air & Space Forces Magazine*, 28 Nov. 2017, www.airandspaceforces.com/article/the-shadow-war-in-cambodia/.

⁶⁷ Central Intelligence Agency. *CAMBODIA and the VIET CONG*. 28 Dec. 1965, www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79T00472A000800030022-4.pdf. Accessed 28 July 2025.

⁶⁸ Moore, Ryan. "U.S. Bases in Thailand during the Vietnam War and Agent Orange | Worlds Revealed: Geography & Maps at the Library of Congress." *Blogs.loc.gov*, 12 Aug. 2019, blogs.loc.gov/maps/2019/08/u-s-bases-in-thailand-during-the-vietnam-war-and-agent-orange/.

⁶⁹ Kislenco, Arne. "A Not so Silent Partner: Thailand's Role in Covert Operations, Counter-Insurgency, and the Wars in Indochina." *Journal of Conflict Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1, June 2004, journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/jcs/article/view/292/465.

⁷⁰ See definition of key concepts section

⁷¹ Stentiford, Barry M. "Collapse of the Laotian Government Leads to Civil War | EBSCO." *EBSCO Information Services, Inc.* | www.ebsco.com, 2023, www.ebsco.com/research-starters/politics-and-government/collapse-laotian-government-leads-civil-war.

⁷² See Previous attempts to solve the issue section



However, the continuation of Viet Cong activity, supported by the local left-oriented combatant of the Laotian Civil War, the Pathet Lao movement, in Laotian soil jeopardises Laotian neutrality and raises the question of whether or not the kingdom's neutrality still stands.

Viet Cong (National Liberation Front)

The Viet Cong, formally known as the National Liberation Front, was a pro-communist South Vietnamese guerrilla group that was established in 1960 with the support of North Vietnamese communists. Its primary objective is to overthrow Ngo Dinh Diem's government⁷³ and dismantle the programmes implemented by it, such as the Strategic Hamlet Program⁷⁴. The Viet Cong are aligned with the USSR and the PRC, which supply them with military equipment⁷⁵ and advisors, aiding their plan to oust US influence from Vietnam.

Indochinese Communist Party (ICP)

The Indochinese Communist Party was the product of the merger of the Communist Party of Indochina, the Communist Party of Annam, and the Communist League of Indochina, which happened in 1930. With close ties to the Communist International⁷⁶, which, however, was dismantled by 1943, the ICP sought to unify the former colonies of Indochina under one communist state, supporting communist movements in Laos and Cambodia. The ICP was dismantled on November 11th 1945.⁷⁷

⁷³ Clever Lili. "Vietcong." *Www.gcsehistory.com*, www.gcsehistory.com/fag/vietcong.html.

⁷⁴ US Department of Defense. "Strategic Hamlet Program." *Vietnamwar50th.com*, 2022, www.vietnamwar50th.com/1945-1964_the_road_to_war/Strategic-Hamlet-Program/#skltbs-demo1.

⁷⁵ PBS. "Battlefield:Vietnam | Guerrilla Tactics." *Www.pbs.org*, PBS, www.pbs.org/battlefieldvietnam/guerrilla/.

⁷⁶ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. "Third International | Association of Political Parties." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 28 Apr. 2017, www.britannica.com/topic/Third-International.

⁷⁷ UQAM Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. "UQAM | Guerre d'Indochine | DISSOLUTION of the INDOCHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY." *Uqam.ca*, 2025, indochine.uqam.ca/en/historical-dictionary/422-dissolution-of-the-indochinese-communist-party.html. Accessed 28 July 2025.

Previous attempts to solve the issue

Geneva Accords (1954)⁷⁸

Description

During the 1954 Geneva Conference, the Geneva Accords, a collection of military and multilateral agreements concerning the sovereignty of Vietnam, were signed, dividing Vietnam along the 17th parallel and creating the North and South parts of Vietnam. The initial goal of the division was to ensure stability in the region and conduct a nationwide election in 1956, ending political instability in the region.

Reasons of Failure

The promising nationwide election never actually happened as South Vietnam, pressured by the United States and fearful of communist victory, refused to participate.⁷⁹ The refusal was considered a major diplomatic fallout, and tensions escalated.

Potential Success

A joint neutrality agreement could have been signed beforehand, ensuring transparency and a lack of US, USSR, and/or PRC intervention. Additionally, to ease the United States' concerns, the United Nations could monitor the electoral procedures, ensuring a fair election.

⁷⁸ *Geneva Agreements*. 1954,

peacemaker.un.org/sites/default/files/document/files/2024/05/kh-la-vn540720genevaagreements.pdf.

⁷⁹ Central Intelligence Agency. *THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS ISSUE in VIETNAM from 1954 to 1960*. 25 Feb. 1966, www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79T00826A000400010001-0.pdf. Accessed 28 July 2025.



South Vietnamese-American Military Advisory (1961-1962)

Description

Up until this year, the Army of the Republic of Vietnam was receiving similar training to the army of the US⁸⁰, hoping that US tactics and advanced technology⁸¹ would be sufficient to counter the Viet Cong insurgency.

Reasons of Failure

What was misunderstood about the ARVN was its purpose: the ARVN was created to protect the sovereignty and maintain the anti-communist stance of South Vietnam, and not to counter foreign guerrillas. Therefore, regardless of the advanced technology and US tactics, the ARVN was not created to engage in warfare.

Potential Success

The ARVN could potentially evolve into an army that could counter the Viet Cong if guerrilla fighting training was provided by the US instead of the common tactics. Furthermore, political appointees within the army would need to be removed from senior positions in order to tackle corruption and allow the army to grow into its full potential.

International Agreement on the Neutrality of Laos (Laos Agreement) (1962)⁸²

Description

The International Agreement on the Neutrality of Laos was an attempt by the USSR, the US, as well as other countries to keep Laos neutral on the conflict in Vietnam. Furthermore, the agreement aimed to dismantle the Ho Chi Minh trail, which supplied the Viet Cong, and stop all foreign interference and military operations in the region.

⁸⁰ Lawton Collins, Jr., James. *THE DEVELOPMENT and TRAINING of the SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARMY, 1950-1972-CHAPTER V*. Department of the Army, 1991, webdoc.sub.gwdg.de/ebook/p/2005/CMH_2/www.army.mil/cmh-pg/books/vietnam/devtrainrvn/ch5.htm. Accessed 28 July 2025.

⁸¹ Pritzker Military Museum & Library. "Armed Forces | Vietnam War | Pritzker Military Museum & Library | Chicago." www.pritzkermilitary.org, www.pritzkermilitary.org/explore/vietnam-war/armed-forces.

⁸² United Kingdom of Great Britain, and Northern Ireland. *Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos. Signed at Geneva*. 23 July 1962, treaties.un.org/doc/publication/unts/volume%20456/volume-456-i-6564-english.pdf.



Reasons of Failure

One of the main reasons that the agreement failed was that North Vietnam partially disregarded the agreement and never fully withdrew its forces, keeping the Ho Chi Minh Trail operational. Additionally, the same countries that had signed the agreement never meant to lose their influence in the region, making full implementation or the creation of an enforcement mechanism unlikely.

Potential Success

Truthfully, the Laos Agreement does not have any true success potential as it is unrealistic to request the Viet Cong, an armed guerrilla, to cease activities that are assisting towards the completion of their goal(s). Furthermore, it is also unrealistic to request the USA and the USSR, two major superpowers in the region, to fully disengage their influence.

Possible solutions

Political Liberalisation

The establishment of a nationwide multi-partisan system has been deemed vital in order to mitigate political tensions in Vietnam. Diem's US-backed government and Minh's Indochinese Communist Party have had a monopoly in the political systems of South and North Vietnam, respectively, for far too long, and it is time for the voices of the people of Vietnam to be heard. If we could free the Vietnamese population from the political oppression that troubles it, both the north and the south would lose enough support so that the two regimes would no longer be sustainable, and elections would be a necessity.

UN-Facilitated Negotiations

Inviting the USSR, the US, North and South Vietnam, and potentially other neighbouring states involved in the conflict, to UN-facilitated talks could actually prove an effective way to assess the people's and the state's demands and concerns towards the peaceful resolution of the conflict. Furthermore, rotating representatives and a presidency that switches between North and South Vietnam would ensure impartiality in decision-making, while the presence of UN mediators could ultimately get the UN involved, ensuring that the conflict in Vietnam becomes an internationally recognised crisis that all states should address.



Negotiated Settlement on the Neutrality on the Vietnam War

Even though it would seem inconceivable, withdrawing all military personnel and equipment from both North and South Vietnam and allowing the region to process the situation internally can be an effective plan. With an agreement between the PROC, the USSR, and the USA to withdraw troops and artillery as well as measures to prevent economic and political collapse, such as the deployment of UN Peacekeepers to monitor the border, oversee democratic procedures and distribute humanitarian relief packages to the farmers whose land was impacted, Vietnam could be unified as a functioning, fully sovereign state.

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