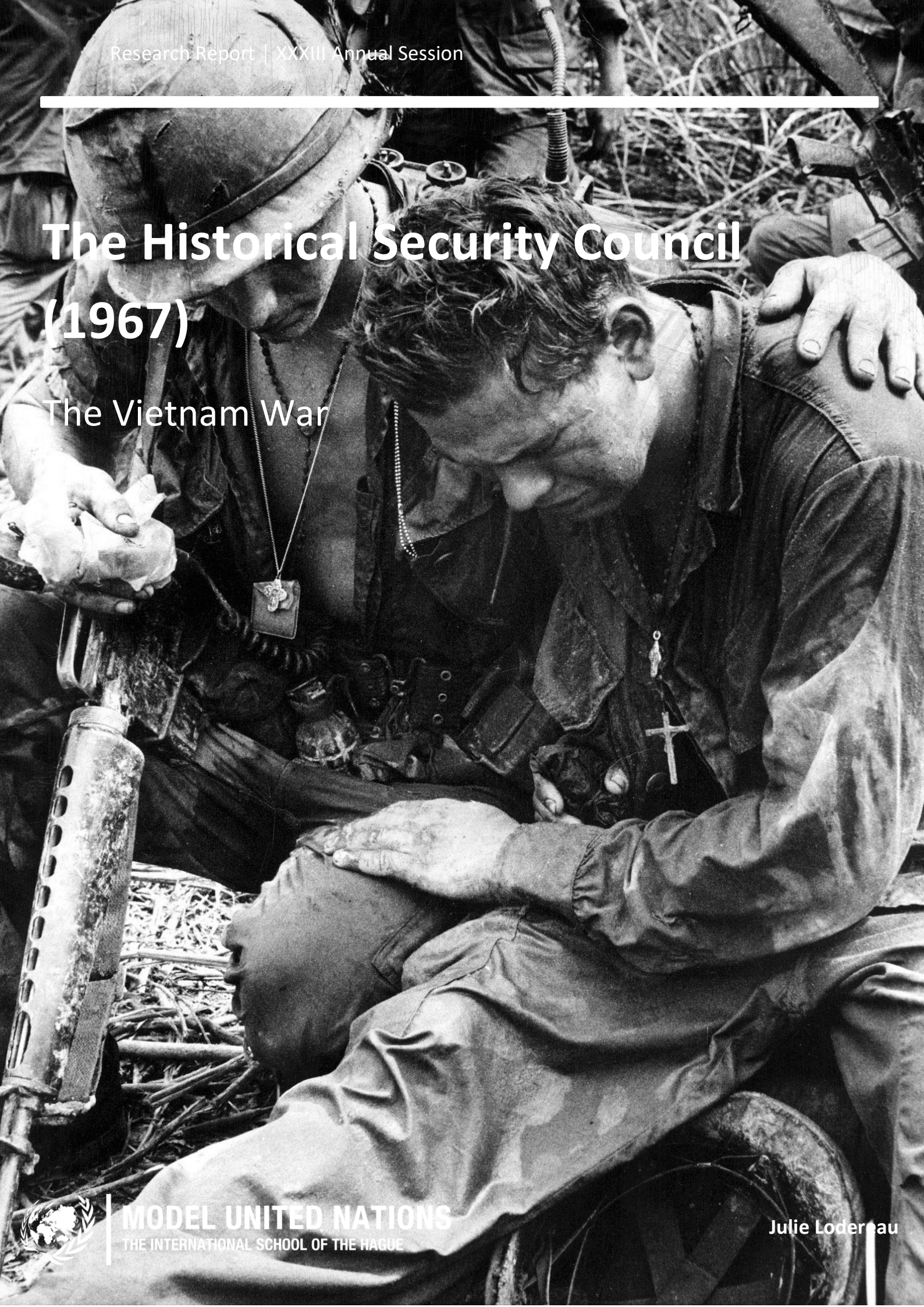


The Historical Security Council (1967)

The Vietnam War



Forum	The Historical Security Council (1967)
Issue:	The Vietnam War
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Introduction

The Vietnam War, also known as the second Indochina war, is a conflict which took place from November 1955 to April 1975. This conflict began as a war between North Vietnam and South Vietnam, with North Vietnam attempting to unite the country under communist rule. This conflict was significantly escalated by the presence of allies on both sides; the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the People's Republic of China supporting North Vietnam, and the United States of America supporting South Vietnam. Through the presence of these superpowers, this conflict became an extension of the cold war, with North Vietnam and its allies fighting to spread communism as a method of governance, and South Vietnam and its ally fighting to prevent the spread of communism in Indochina. It is estimated that more than 3 million people were killed in the Vietnam war, with over half of these being Vietnamese civilians.

Definition of Key Terms

Domino Theory (also called Domino Effect)

The Domino theory was a theory invented by the United States of America (USA) after World War II. According to the Domino Theory, if a state 'fell' to communism, then the neighbouring states would also fall to communism. This theory was one of the main arguments used by the United States of America to justify their involvement in the Vietnam war.

Communism

Communism is both an ideology and a way of governing. The basis of communism is the idea that everything belongs to the public, that there are no classes in society and that wealth (money) should be shared equally amongst the people. Communism is the opposite of capitalism. Often



times, it is difficult to actually apply the communist ideology to a political system of governance. The most powerful communist countries at that time were the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Capitalism

Capitalism is an economic system. Private ownership, and the free market are both important defining concepts from capitalism. Capitalism is the opposite of communism, instead of wealth being shared, wealth is owned privately by individuals. The most powerful capitalist country, both at that time and currently would be the United States of America.

Geneva Accords

The Geneva Accords are a set of 10 documents relating to Indochina and created during the Geneva Conference of 1954. None of these documents are binding treaties, simply a set of agreements between the countries. The Geneva accords declared the 17th parallel as the division between North Vietnam and South Vietnam, and officially ended the first Indochina war.

Indochina

The term Indochina refers to 5 countries, Viet Nam, Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos and Thailand. These countries are closely related economically, historically and culturally, and are all based around the Mekong river.

General Overview

First Indochina War

Originally, since the 1880s, Vietnam was a French colony. However, in 1940, taking advantage of the French defeat in the beginning of World War II, Japan took control of Vietnam. Only 5 years later, in 1945, Japan was defeated, leaving the question of who was to rule the country. Immediately, Ho Chi Minh, a revolutionary and the leader of the Viet Minh (also known as the Democratic Republic of Vietnam) declared the independence of Vietnam, as a communist state. However, France was not taking this easily, and wanted to get back it's former colony. France persuaded the Chinese and British, who both had troops present, that the spread of communism in



the country would be a negative thing. The British agreed with the French's anti-communist agenda, and agreed to let France take back control. Eventually, in 1954, the French were defeated at the battle of Dien Bien Phu. During the Geneva Conference that came afterwards, agreements were made separating Vietnam into two halves, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the North, and the State of Vietnam in the South. The French, defeated, surrendered most of their authority to the state of Vietnam. One year later, with a change in leader, the State of Vietnam became the Republic of Vietnam.

Beginning of the Vietnam War

The actual date of the beginning of the Vietnam war differs between countries. For the United States of America, it is considered that the war started on November 1, 1955. Although the Geneva Accords had separated the country into two halves, and had called for a 'ceasefire', tensions between both sides remained high. In South Vietnam, the new leader, Ngo Dinh Diem, was very anti-communist. Within South Vietnam, there was a group of sympathizers of North Vietnam. Diem called them 'Viet Cong' (for Vietnamese Communists) and with the support of the United States of America, started a campaign to arrest them, often torturing and executing them. Eventually, in 1957, the Viet Cong started fighting back, attacking the government, and other targets, becoming a guerrilla backed by North Vietnam. By 1959, they were starting firefights with the South Vietnamese Army. In 1960, a resistance against Diem's reign began, called the National Liberation Front (NLF). Both Diem and the United States assumed this resistance to have come from North Vietnam. Believing the domino theory, the USA started sending more and more military personnel to help Diem defeat the Viet Cong. In 1963, one of Diem's generals started a coup and assassinated him and his brother. Sources disagree on when exactly North Vietnam became directly involved in the fighting, but in 1964, after North Vietnam attacked two US destroyers, the USA started bombing raids in North Vietnam. Both North Vietnam and South Vietnam keep getting more and more developed war equipment from their allies, and more and more soldiers coming from other countries such as the USA are being deployed within Vietnam.

Major Parties Involved

Communist Parties

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)



At the beginning of the Vietnam war, the USSR was a power for peace, who tried to convince North Vietnam to avoid starting a war against South Vietnam and the United States of America. This did not succeed, and the USSR later became more and more involved. During the Vietnam war, the USSR provided logistic, economic, moral and military aid to North Vietnam, as well as information. This military aid came in the form of arms, petrol and missiles. Although technically speaking, the USSR did not send any soldiers to North Vietnam, they did send thousands of 'military experts', who fought for North Vietnam. The USSR's intention in this war was to spread communism through Indochina, and as one of the world's largest communist powers at the time, it's support was not negligible.

The People's Republic of China (PRC)

The PRC, like the USSR, had a key role in helping North Vietnam during the Vietnam war. After the end of the first Indochina war, the PRC sent food, workers and economic advisers to North Vietnam to help them rebuild. After that, the PRC sent massive amounts of military equipment, and funding to North Vietnam, enough for them to finally be able to start the fight. Throughout the Vietnam war, the PRC also sent in military personnel to fight alongside North Vietnam and against South Vietnam and the USA. The PRC was also the supply route for equipment from the USSR to make it's way into North Vietnam.

Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam)

North Vietnam, like South Vietnam, was directly affected in the war. The whole war was fought out on Vietnamese territory (with the exception of a US bombing in Laos). The North Vietnam, supported by the USSR, PRC and other parties was fighting in order to reunite the country under a common, communist rule. The North Vietnam also supported and backed the Viet Cong guerrilla in their attacks against Diem's government. North Vietnam had spies in place throughout the whole of South Vietnam, including in higher positions within the government, that allowed it to have knowledge over South Vietnam and to continue spreading the idea of a communist rule throughout the whole of the country.

Capitalist Parties

United States of America (USA)



The United States of America, through the domino theory, believed the struggles going on in Vietnam to be posing a risk for communism to spread through Indochina. Under the Kennedy Administration, they believed the Vietnam war to be an opportunity to test the USA's ability to fight back against communism. The USA contributed both economic and military aid to South Vietnam, as well as political support. They sent massive amounts of military equipment, including helicopters and armoured personnel carriers. Throughout the Vietnam war, the USA sent more and more military personnel to help South Vietnam. In the end, to the United States of America, the war in Vietnam was simply an extension of the cold war, a war against communism. The real enemy to them was not North Vietnam, but rather the USSR and the PRC supporting it.

Within the USA itself, a pacifist movement about the Vietnam war started in the 1960s. Many Americans were starting to advocate for the withdrawal of the American troops in Vietnam. There were many reasons for the rise of this movement. Some people became opposed to the war due to the 'just war theory' which looks at how morally justifiable a war is. Others were opposed to the war simply because they did not want to be sent to fight for another country and saw this war as pointless. In 1965 this movement grew bigger, with people starting anti-war manifestations.

The Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam)

South Vietnam, lead in the first few years by Diem, was also one of the two major parties involved in this war. Within South Vietnam, the goal was not to reunite the country under a capitalist rule, but simply to eliminate all and any signs of communism within the country. It's main ally in this war was the United States of America, but it was supported by other nations as well. Within South Vietnam, there was some resistance against Diem's rule, but these were attacked alongside the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese. In these times, those who were not with Diem and his government were automatically enemies sent by North Vietnam.

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of event
October 17 th 1887	French Indochina is formed
December 19 th 1946	Start of the First Indochina War
April 26 th 1954	Geneva Accords are established



July 20 th 1954	End of the First Indochina war.
November 1 st 1955	Start of the Vietnam War (According to the United States Department of Defence)
December 20 th 1960	National Liberation Front (NLF) is formed
November 8 th 1965	The First US combat troops arrive in Vietnam

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

There has been very limited involvement of the United Nations regarding the Vietnam War, and only one resolution signed upon this matter. However, the Geneva Agreements resolution is also closely related to the matter and has been added underneath.

- Security Council resolution 189, 4 June 1964. (S/RES/189)

Geneva Agreements

- Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Viet-Nam, 20 July 1954

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

As mentioned before, no real attempt to solve the issue has been made by the United Nations. However, the Geneva convention did make an attempt to solve the issue through the 'Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Viet-Nam', also known as the Geneva Accords. Through this accords, an attempt was made to de-escalate the situation. A border was declared between North Vietnam and South Vietnam, as well as a ceasefire. Both parties had 300 days to bring there troops back to their country. The Final Declaration of the Geneva Accords stated that elections would be held before July 1956 in order to reunite the country as one. The United States of America did not sign any of the agreements, and both North Vietnam and South Vietnam did not sign the Final Declaration. In this end, the Geneva Accords did not work. They were non-binding, and so both North Vietnam and South Vietnam simply stopped respecting them at some point.

Possible Solutions

Although previously, the goal in this war has been to reunite North Vietnam and South Vietnam together, this is not the only possible solution. The tensions between North Vietnam and



South Vietnam are really high, and there are many cultural differences brought by the differences between communism and capitalism. Instead of trying to reunite the two countries together at all costs, instead the opposite could be considered; recognizing North Vietnam and South Vietnam as two separate, independent nations. The differences and tensions present between the two means that if they were to be reunited, one of the two systems would dominate the other, and either completely get rid of the opposition, or the country would be in a state of civil war again shortly.

In this war, the involvement of other superpowers has been a major cause of escalation. It could prove to be very beneficial to have the USSR, PRC and USA remove themselves from the conflict, as their communism vs capitalism conflict is one of the driving forces of the war. Without their involvement, the situation could be massively deescalated. However, this would have to be done through very careful negotiations in order to find terms to which all countries agree, since all 3 of them have veto power. It is unlikely that they can be convinced, but it still a possibility that should be explored, especially considering how the USA's population itself is divided over the issue.

A third possible solution to this conflict would be to simply build up open the Geneva Accords. In this scenario, the main goal would still be the peaceful reunification of Vietnam, and to attempt to eliminate tensions present within the Nation. For this, something similar to what was proposed in the Geneva agreements could be done, this times with binding. A UN commission could be created specifically to deal with this issue, and to supervise the reunification of North Vietnam and South Vietnam, as well as to see if the ceasefire is kept.

No matter which path is taken, the solution to this problem should be non-violent, as the United Nations encourage peace. Not all solutions need to be tailored specifically to stop the war between North Vietnam and South Vietnam, some could be made to resolve the violations of human rights happening in the war.

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