



**Shenzhen College of International Education Model
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HISTORICAL COUNCIL

Background Guide

**Topic: Stabilizing Southeast Asia Following of
Unification of Vietnam (1976)**

Committee: Historical Council

Topic: Stabilizing Southeast Asia Following of Unification of Vietnam (1976)

Deputy Chair: Katherine Zhang



Letter from the Chairs

Dear Delegates,

We are delighted to welcome you to the Historical Council's session focused on "Stabilizing Southeast Asia Following the Unification of Vietnam (1976)." I am the deputy chair of this committee, Katherine Zhang. I have three years of MUN experience, and it is my absolute pleasure to serve as a co-chair in the Historical Council this year. I look forward to fostering a friendly and inclusive atmosphere where every delegate can learn from one another and establish effective communication throughout our time together at SCIE.

The unification of Vietnam in 1976 marked the end of a long and brutal conflict, yet it also initiated a new set of challenges that would impact the entire region. The Historical Council serves as a platform for delegates to examine historical events and find alternative solutions, allowing us to understand how the decisions made during that period still affect our lives today.

We look forward to your insightful contributions and innovative resolutions aimed at fostering stability and cooperation in this dynamic region.

Sincerely,

Katherine Zhang

Committee Background and Mission Statement

The Historical Council plays a vital role in understanding and analyzing important moments in world history, with the goal of fostering a deeper understanding on how historical events shaped the current global dynamics. The council's objectives are significant because they not only provide a platform for historical reflection but also promote discussions that can lead to more informed decisions in present and future international relations. By examining the events of the past, the council aims to influence positive change and encourage diplomatic resolutions to ongoing conflicts.

The main goals of the Historical Council include promoting historical awareness, encouraging cooperation, and developing conflict resolution strategies. By enhancing awareness of historical events and their implications, the council allows delegates to engage critically with the past. Moreover, it fosters communication among member states, encouraging cooperation and understanding to address historical events and foster reconciliation. (Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada)

Since its establishment, the Historical Council has made significant contributions to understanding historical conflicts and their resolutions. Notable achievements include the adoption of resolutions that emphasize the importance of recognizing historical injustices and promoting reparative measures.

The Historical Council operates within the framework of the United Nations, contributing to its mission of maintaining international peace and security. The council collaborates closely with other UN bodies, such as the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, to ensure that historical perspectives inform contemporary policymaking. The council's work is integral to the UN's mission, reinforcing the importance of historical understanding in fostering peace and stability in the international community.

In the Historical Council, delegates will engage in critical analysis and debate, exploring alternative historical outcomes and proposing what might have been more

effective strategies. They will draw connections between past and present, examining how historical events inform contemporary geopolitical dynamics, international relations, and current policies. Through this process, they will practice diplomacy, negotiation, and conflict resolution skills, working towards drafting resolutions that offer new insights or solutions inspired by the lessons of history.

Topic Overview

Introduction

The unification of Vietnam in 1976 marked a significant turning point in Southeast Asia, reshaping the political landscape of the region and bringing forth a myriad of challenges and opportunities for stability and cooperation. Following decades of conflict, including the devastating Vietnam War, the newly unified state faced the daunting task of rebuilding its war-torn economy while navigating the complexities of regional politics.

History and Current Situation

Vietnam's journey toward unification began with the French colonization of the region in 1858, leading to the establishment of French Indochina in 1887. (History, "French Colonialism in Vietnam") This period of colonial rule saw strong resistance from Vietnamese nationalists, who sought to end foreign domination and reclaim their sovereignty. The desire for independence grew stronger during World War II when Japan occupied Vietnam, weakening French control. During this time, nationalist groups, especially the Viet Minh led by Ho Chi Minh, organized and prepared to seize power. (Osborne et al.)

In 1945, following Japan's surrender, the Viet Minh launched the August Revolution, successfully taking control of key areas in Vietnam. On September 2, 1945, Ho Chi

Minh declared the independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in Hanoi. (History, “The August Revolution”) However, this newfound independence was soon challenged, leading to the outbreak of the First Indochina War in 1946 between the Viet Minh and French colonial forces. The war continued until 1954, culminating in the historic Vietnamese victory at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu, which marked the end of French colonial rule in the region. (“August Revolution an Eternal Epic in Struggle for National Liberation”)

The Geneva Accords of 1954, which followed the end of the war, temporarily divided Vietnam at the 17th parallel into two entities: North Vietnam (under communist control) and South Vietnam (supported by the anti-communist bloc). The agreement called for nationwide elections to be held in 1956 to reunify the country, but these elections never took place due to the refusal of South Vietnam's leader, Ngo Dinh Diem, who feared a likely communist victory. (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica)

In 1955, Ngo Dinh Diem established the Republic of Vietnam in the South, positioning himself as president and intensifying his anti-communist policies. Diem’s refusal to participate in reunification elections and his oppressive regime led to widespread discontent in the South, paving the way for the rise of the Viet Cong, a communist guerrilla force supported by North Vietnam. This marked the beginning of the Vietnam War in 1959, a conflict that would eventually draw in extensive U.S. involvement. (Onion, “Vietnam War: Causes, Facts and Impact | HISTORY”)

The situation escalated further in 1964 with the Gulf of Tonkin Incident, where alleged attacks on U.S. naval vessels by North Vietnamese forces led to the U.S. Congress passing the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. This resolution granted President Lyndon B. Johnson broad military powers in Vietnam, resulting in a massive deployment of U.S. troops, and transforming the conflict into a significant Cold War battleground. (Bauer)

The turning point of the war came with the Tet Offensive in 1968, a coordinated series of attacks by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces on major cities and military

bases in South Vietnam. Although ultimately repelled, the offensive had a profound psychological impact on the American public, leading to growing anti-war sentiment and political pressure in the United States to seek an end to its involvement in the conflict. (*Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations - Office of the Historian*)

In response to the mounting opposition to the war, U.S. President Richard Nixon introduced the policy of Vietnamization in 1969. (“Vietnamization | Miller Center”) The goal was to gradually withdraw American troops while transferring combat responsibilities to the South Vietnamese forces. Despite the intention to empower South Vietnam to defend itself, this strategy did not lead to an immediate resolution of the conflict or the stabilization of the region. (Dates, “Vietnamization - Vietnam War, Definition and Dates”)

The Paris Peace Accords, signed in 1973, resulted in a ceasefire and the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam. (Sullivan, “Paris Peace Accords Signed”) However, fighting between North and South Vietnam continued as both sides aimed to reunify the country under their respective governments. The conflict finally reached its conclusion on April 30, 1975, when North Vietnamese troops captured Saigon, leading to the collapse of the South Vietnamese government.

The unification of Vietnam in 1975, under communist rule, marked the end of decades of foreign intervention and internal strife. It was a decisive step toward stabilizing Southeast Asia, as it ended the division that had plagued the country and diminished the immediate threat of further regional conflicts. Vietnam's unification brought significant changes to the geopolitical dynamics of Southeast Asia, signaling the end of large-scale wars in the region and influencing the strategic calculations of major powers involved in the Cold War. (“See How Communist Forces Turned Saigon Into Ho Chi Minh City and Created the Socialist Republic of Vietnam”)

Following unification, the impact on Southeast Asia was profound, as the region sought to stabilize itself in the aftermath of years of war, ideological conflict, and external

interventions. The fall of Saigon and the establishment of a unified, communist Vietnam under the Socialist Republic of Vietnam had far-reaching consequences that significantly influenced the political landscape and strategic dynamics of Southeast Asia.

Countries like Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, which had their own struggles against communist insurgencies, felt particularly threatened by the prospect of Vietnam's ideological influence extending beyond its borders. In response, these nations took proactive measures to reinforce their own internal security and to limit the influence of communism within their territories. Governments across Southeast Asia strengthened their alliances with Western powers, particularly the United States, which remained committed to containing the spread of communism in the region. (Spector)

These countries also focused on stabilizing their political systems, bolstering national unity, and promoting anti-communist policies to counter any potential threat posed by a unified Vietnam. (Atlanta History Center)

Event Timeline

Date	Event	Description
1858	French Colonisation Begins	France invades Vietnam, marking the start of its colonial rule over the country.
1940-1945	Japanese Occupation	Japan occupied Vietnam during World War II, weakening French control.
August 1945	August Revolution	The Viet Minh, led by Ho Chi Minh, launches a revolution against the Japanese and French authorities.
September 2, 1945	Declaration of Independence	Ho Chi Minh declares the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) independent in Hanoi.
1954	Battle of Dien Bien	The Viet Minh defeats the French at Dien Bien

	Phu	Phu, leading to the end of French colonial rule.
July 1954	Geneva Accords	The Geneva Accords are signed, temporarily divided Vietnam at the 17th parallel into North and South Vietnam.
1955	Ngo Dinh Diem Becomes President of South Vietnam	Ngo Dinh Diem establishes the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) and refuses to hold reunification elections.
1959	Start of the Vietnam War	North Vietnam begins supporting the Viet Cong in the South, marking the start of the Vietnam War.
1969	Nixon's Vietnamization Policy	U.S. President Richard Nixon announces the Vietnamization strategy, aiming to transfer combat roles to South Vietnamese forces while gradually withdrawing American troops.
1973	Paris Peace Accords	A ceasefire agreement is signed, leading to the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam.
April 30, 1975	Fall of Saigon	North Vietnamese forces capture Saigon, leading to the collapse of South Vietnam.
July 2, 1976	Official Unification of Vietnam	North and South Vietnam are officially united as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Bloc Positions

China

China's position regarding the unification of Vietnam and the broader dynamics in Southeast Asia was complex. Initially, China supported North Vietnam against both French colonial forces and the U.S.-backed South Vietnamese government, providing military assistance, logistical support, and economic aid during the Vietnam War as part of its broader effort to counter Western influence in Asia. However, tensions grew between China and Vietnam after unification, fueled by regional rivalries and ideological differences. Despite sharing a communist ideology, China viewed the

Soviet Union as a rival for influence in Southeast Asia, and as Vietnam aligned more closely with the Soviets post-unification, China's support for the unified Vietnamese state began to wane, leading to increased distrust. (Chen)

Indonesia

Indonesia positioned itself as a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement, maintaining a neutral stance amidst the Cold War rivalries. Although it did not fully align with either the U.S. or the Soviet bloc, Indonesia was cautious of communist expansion in Southeast Asia due to its history of communist uprisings. (Van Thuy) To uphold its strategic autonomy, Indonesia aimed to balance its relationships with both Western and communist countries, employing a diplomatic approach that allowed it to pursue its national interests without fully committing to either side of the ideological divide.

Philippines

Viewing this unification as a threat to regional stability, the Philippines aligned itself closely with U.S. policies aimed at counteracting communist influence in Southeast Asia. This alliance was not only strategic but also reflected a broader commitment to the containment of communism, as the Philippines actively focused on internal security measures to suppress communist movements within its borders. The government implemented various strategies to curb leftist insurgencies, including military operations and socio-economic reforms, thereby reinforcing its role as a key partner in the U.S.-led efforts to maintain stability in the region. Through these actions, the Philippines exemplified a proactive stance against communism, reinforcing its position as a critical player in the broader geopolitical landscape of Southeast Asia during this tumultuous period. (*The Philippines and Vietnam*)

Soviet Union

The Soviet Union viewed the unification of Vietnam as a significant victory for the global communist movement and a strategic gain in its rivalry with the United States.

Having provided extensive support to North Vietnam during the Vietnam War, the Soviets continued their alliance with the unified Vietnamese state after 1975, seeing this unification as an opportunity to expand communist influence in Southeast Asia. The Soviet Union aimed to strengthen its strategic presence in the region through its alliance with Vietnam, which served as a counterbalance to both U.S. and Chinese influence. After unification, the Soviet Union continued to provide military and economic assistance to help Vietnam rebuild its economy and consolidate control over the newly unified country, thereby enhancing Soviet influence in Southeast Asian affairs. Additionally, the partnership with Vietnam served as a means to contain China's growing power in the region, particularly after the Sino-Soviet split, leading to closer alignment between Vietnam and Soviet policies and interests. (Kimball)

Thailand

Thailand, a close ally of the United States, maintained a strongly anti-communist stance, fearing the spread of communism following Vietnam's unification. In response, Thailand worked closely with the U.S. to prevent communist influence from penetrating deeper into Southeast Asia, increasing its military readiness and cooperating with other Southeast Asian nations to ensure regional stability against the perceived threat from Vietnam. (Moore)

United States

The United States viewed the unification of Vietnam as a significant loss in its efforts to contain communism in Southeast Asia. Heavily involved in the Vietnam War, the U.S. supported South Vietnam militarily and economically as part of its broader Cold War strategy to prevent the spread of communism. Following its defeat and the withdrawal of American forces in 1973, the U.S. shifted to a more indirect role in the region. Even after the fall of South Vietnam, the U.S. remained committed to containing communism by strengthening military and economic alliances with key Southeast Asian countries like Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia. These nations were seen as crucial

partners in resisting communist influence. To further counter communist expansion, the U.S. supported anti-communist governments by providing military aid, economic assistance, and political backing. This approach aimed to prevent the further spread of communist ideology. Additionally, in response to domestic pressure to avoid another conflict like Vietnam, the U.S. increasingly focused on diplomatic engagement and economic partnerships in Southeast Asia, adopting a strategy centered around diplomacy rather than direct military intervention. (Atlanta History Center)

Possible Solutions

Regional Cooperation

Strengthening regional cooperation in Southeast Asia is crucial for fostering stability and security in a region marked by diverse geopolitical challenges. Establishing multilateral dialogue platforms that include all nations facilitates discussions on security, trade, and political issues, allowing countries to address shared concerns collaboratively. This is particularly important in a landscape where tensions can arise from territorial disputes and differing political ideologies. Additionally, formal security agreements among Southeast Asian countries help build trust and enhance collective defense mechanisms against external threats, including potential conflicts fueled by the power dynamics of larger nations like China and the Soviet Union. By fostering collaboration and communication, these efforts can create a more stable and secure environment for the region, ultimately promoting economic growth, preventing conflicts, and enhancing the overall well-being of Southeast Asian nations.

Economic Development

Promoting economic development in Southeast Asia is essential for creating a stable and prosperous region. Encouraging economic cooperation and integration through trade agreements and regional economic initiatives fosters interdependence among countries, reducing the likelihood of conflict by aligning their interests. This approach

can include shared infrastructure projects and cooperative trade policies that benefit all parties involved. Furthermore, development aid and investment from stronger economies, such as Japan and the U.S., can play a significant role in boosting economic stability and growth in Southeast Asia. By focusing on critical areas like infrastructure, education, and healthcare, these investments not only improve living standards but also help countries build resilient economies less susceptible to political unrest and external pressures. Promoting economic development in this way is vital because it lays the foundation for long-term peace, strengthens regional ties, and creates opportunities for sustainable growth, ultimately enhancing the region's overall stability and prosperity.

Internal Security

Addressing internal security concerns is crucial for ensuring long-term stability in Southeast Asia. Governments facing internal insurgencies should implement comprehensive counterinsurgency strategies that tackle the root causes of conflict, such as poverty and inequality, while also maintaining security and stability. By focusing on these underlying issues, states can prevent discontent from escalating into larger, more violent movements. Additionally, investing in community development programs that target marginalized populations plays a vital role in reducing the appeal of extremist ideologies and movements. Such initiatives promote social cohesion by addressing economic and social disparities, giving communities a stake in their nation's progress. It is important to focus on these areas because addressing internal security and fostering inclusivity not only enhances national stability but also prevents conflicts from spreading across borders, contributing to a more secure and unified Southeast Asian region.

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