



2025 Mid-South Model UN Conference



Historical Crisis Council

Introduction to the Committee

The Historical Crisis Committee focuses on specific conflicts in our world history that are still relevant today. Delegates take on the roles of historical figures and use their negotiation, diplomacy, and problem-solving skills to address the topics at hand. The committee is fast-paced and requires delegates to think as well as strategize quickly during times of crisis.

This committee discusses questions relating to the United States' action and policy decisions during the Vietnam War and will take place in the year of 1965.

Chairs: Lauren Bottom and Prisha Bagul

Topic: The Vietnam War



Figure 1.

1. History and Past UN Action

The Vietnam War was a 20-year long conflict ranging from 1955 to 1975. The war's origins can be traced to the upheaval and disbursement that happened after WWII. The main start of the conflict can be attributed to the end of the French Colonial rule in Indochina. From then, in 1954, the Geneva Accords temporarily divided Vietnam along the 17th parallel. The intention was to hold a national election to unite the country after years of distress. However, this never happened, exponentially increasing political tensions. This eventually led to the creation of the two sides of the Vietnam War: North Vietnam (communist) and South Vietnam (anti-communist).

The Vietnam War pitted two major factions against each other: North Vietnam and its communist allies, including the Viet Cong, who waged guerrilla warfare in the South; and South Vietnam, supported by the United States and anti-communist allies. Their mission was to prevent the expansion of communism.

The United States' involvement in Vietnam began in 1950, when President Truman sent military advisors to assist France against Viet Minh guerrillas in the First Indochina War. Eventually, France pulled out of the Indochina region, leaving North Vietnam with complete control of both North and South Vietnam. This is when US involvement dramatically increased. The United States officially began its military involvement in Vietnam on November 1, 1955. Eisenhower sent hundreds of military advisors to train the South Vietnamese Army and consequently, backed the regime of President Ngo Dinh Diem. On November 2nd, 1963, a major turning point occurred in the war when President Ngo Dinh Diem was assassinated by his own generals in a coup that was carried out with US military support under President Kennedy. Under Kennedy, the USA's involvement only continued to escalate with 16,000 troops being deployed as part of military and counterinsurgency help. Two major turning points came in 1965. First, in February of 1965, President Johnson approved Operation Rolling Thunder. This was a sustained aerial bombing campaign directed at North Vietnam that lasted until 1968. Second, in March of 1965, President Johnson authorized the deployment of the first official combat troops to the region. This included 3,500 Marines that landed at Da Nang. Both of these events marked the beginning of large-scale American presence in Vietnam, which peaked at 500,000+ troops in 1968. The United States military strategy focused on counterinsurgency operations against the Viet Cong. However, the war proved to be far more challenging than anticipated. Due to the US facing intense guerrilla warfare, they were faced with high casualties, all while support for the war rapidly declined at home. President Nixon later implemented a policy of "Vietnamization,". This policy was two-fold: first, it was designed to gradually withdraw US troops from the region; second, it increased support for South Vietnamese forces. By 1973, the United States officially withdrew from the region.

The war had major domestic and international effects on the United States. In the states, it led to widespread anti-war protests and significant political divisions. Trust in the government was rapidly diminishing, and the release of the Pentagon Papers only bolstered that. The financial cost of the war strained the U.S. economy, contributing to inflation and economic instability. In Vietnam and its general region, the war left devastating humanitarian and infrastructural damage, leading to a refugee crisis and major political turmoil in Cambodia and Laos. Globally, the war influenced U.S. foreign policy by instilling a more cautious approach to military intervention, particularly in conflicts involving ideological struggles.

2. Current Situation

The year is 1965 and the United States has increased its military presence in South Vietnam. Vietnam is currently in a state of political unrest and instability, with the South Vietnamese forces struggling to maintain control over northern communist insurgents. The deteriorating situation has led to anti-American sentiments within Vietnam as Vietnamese citizens are living in constant fear and destruction, with many resenting the U.S.

for interfering in their internal affairs. President Lyndon B. Johnson has initiated Operation Rolling Thunder—a bombing campaign with the main goal to deter North Vietnamese aggression, weaken support for Viet Cong, and boost morale for the South Vietnamese forces. In the United States, the initial support for the war-effort is now ebbing and anti-war campaigns are growing, especially among the younger generation.



Figure 2.

3. Problems a Resolution Should Address, & Possible Solutions

In preventing the spread of communism, the United States thought that the best course of action was to become directly involved with the Vietnam War. This resulted in years of on-going conflict that ultimately resulted in Vietnam falling to communism. The war also resulted in the depletion of American resources and cost the lives of American soldiers. The failure marked an era of anti-war sentiments and low-trust in the American government.

Some questions to consider:

1. Did the U.S. have a moral obligation to intervene in the war?
2. What were the key decisions made by President Johnson during the war?
3. What could the U.S. have done differently?
4. Was U.S. military intervention beneficial to the war effort?

4. Resources

www.ilo.org/ipec/ChildlabourstatisticsSIMPOC/WCMS_817699/lang--en/index.htm

www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child

www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/genericdocument/wcms_845907.pdf

www.worldvision.org/child-protection-news-stories/child-labor-facts

www.un.org/en/ga/third/index.shtml

www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/05/un-experts-urge-action-address-alarming-increase-child-labour-agriculture

www.pritzkermilitary.org/explore/vietnam-war/key-people

www.britannica.com/list/vietnam-war-timeline

Note to the Delegates

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2025 Mid South Model United Nations Conference (MSMUN) and to the Historical Crisis committee. My name is Lauren Bottom, and I will be one of your 2025 Historical Crisis chairs. I am a Sophomore majoring in International Studies with minors in Spanish and Computer Science. Prisha Bagul will also be chairing Historical Crisis with me. Prisha is a Freshman planning on majoring in Philosophy and Economics with a minor in Political Science.

We are all very excited to chair the Historical Crisis committee.

The year 2025 marks the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War. For this reason, we have decided to focus on debating one of the United State's most controversial international interventions.

We look forward to meeting all of you at the conference and hope that these issues will inspire debate and cooperation. Please do not hesitate to email Prisha or me if you have any questions.

Best regards,

Lauren Bottom

Lauren Bottom: botlh-27@rhodes.edu

Prisha Bagul: bagpr-28@rhodes.edu

List of Historical Figures:

Lyndon B. Johnson (President; 1963-1969): President Johnson ordered the first large-scale deployment of US troops in Vietnam. He also launched Operation Rolling Thunder.

General William Westmoreland (Commander of US Forces in Vietnam; 1964-1968): General Westmoreland led the first major deployment of US troops in Vietnam. He was also instrumental in shaping the battlefield strategy.

William Colby (CIA Deputy for Vietnam; 1962-1967): Deputy Colby managed many covert operations against Vietnam. One of the most notable being the highly controversial Phoenix Program

General Lewis Walt (Commander, U.S. Marine Corps in Vietnam; 1965-1967): General Walt commanded the III Marine Amphibious Force in Vietnam; his strategy focused on civil relations and programs in the local Vietnamese population.

Edward Lansdale (CIA Officer & Counterinsurgency Expert; 1950s-1960s): Officer Lansdale advised South Vietnamese leadership and was instrumental in shaping US counterinsurgency efforts.

Robert McNamara (Secretary of Defense; 1961-1968): Secretary McNamara was a major architect for the US war strategy. He was a major advocate for increasing the amount of troops deployed as well as continuing the aerial bombing campaign.

Dean Rusk (Secretary of State; 1961-1968): Secretary Rusk was a strong proponent of US intervention efforts and supported diplomatic efforts to ease the region.

Henry Cabot Lodge (US Ambassador to South Vietnam; 1963-1967): Ambassador Lodge played a key role in the United State's policy during the overthrow of President Diem and the subsequent political instability. He strongly supported American military involvement, believing it was essential to counter Communist expansion in Vietnam.

Maxwell Taylor (US Ambassador to South Vietnam; 1964-1965): Ambassador Taylor worked to stabilize the South Vietnamese government amidst wide scale political upheaval. Ambassador Taylor was a former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and in that position supported U.S. military involvement. As war efforts continued, he grew skeptical of escalating troop deployments.

George Ball (Under Secretary of State; 1961-1966): Undersecretary Ball was a vocal critic of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam. He was a strong proponent for diplomatic solutions.

General Earle Wheeler (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; 1964-1970): General Wheeler oversaw U.S. military strategy during the Vietnam War. He was a strong advocate for increased troop deployments to counter North Vietnamese forces.

Lieutenant General John L. Throckmorton (Deputy Commander & Military Assistance Command in Vietnam; 1964-1965): Lieutenant General Throckmorton served as Deputy Commander of MACV (1964–1965), overseeing U.S. military advisory efforts in Vietnam.