



# US National Security Council

## CIMUN XV

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The Following guide assumes a historically accurate position on several racial issues in 1960's America. The opinions stated in this guide are purely for academic demonstration and do not, in any way, reflect the opinions of the Chicago International Model United Nations Conference (CIMUN) or the Model United Nations Development Organization (MUNDO).

### **1. Topic 1 - Managing the Vietnam Conflict**

## 1.1. Topic Overview

The Vietnam War rapidly escalated under the Johnson administration to a full-scale American war effort. This year has brought a series of developments that highlighted the difficulties the United States will have in winning the war. The Tet Offensive in January eroded public support for the war in Vietnam, heightening resistance against President Lyndon B. Johnson and endangering his presidential campaign.

We will now need to determine the future of American involvement in the war and explore the possibility of a diplomatic solution to the conflict, balancing sound foreign policy decisions with domestic pressures. The handling of the Vietnam conflict will have effects in American foreign policy with regard to the broader Cold War and in domestic politics as we approach the 1968 election.

## 1.2. Historical Background

Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia were known as French Indochina from 1887 until the French colony was occupied by Japan in World War II. During the occupation, Ho Chi Minh formed the Viet Minh, or the League of Independence of Vietnam, to resist Japanese forces. Ho was deeply inspired by Soviet and Chinese communism before taking power.<sup>1</sup> Japan withdrew in 1945, leaving the French-educated Emperor Bao Dai as the head of Vietnam. Ho and the Viet Minh quickly seized Hanoi in the north of Vietnam and declared the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. In return, Bao declared the state of Vietnam, with the southern city of Saigon as its capital, in 1949. Bao favored being politically and economically integrated with the West while Ho wanted a communist system, but both sought a unified Vietnam.<sup>2</sup>

Beginning in the early 1950s, the United States supported and funded the war efforts of France and South Vietnam against North Vietnam. While France viewed the conflict as a continuation of colonial wars, the United States, motivated by the recently published NSC-68 policy paper, intervened to prevent the expansion of communism.<sup>3</sup> The decisive victory of North Vietnam at the battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954 resulted in the Geneva Conference. Vietnam was split at the 17th parallel, with the stipulation that elections and reunification would occur in 1956. After the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ho-Chi-Minh>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/vietnam-war-history>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/president-truman-receives-nsc-68>

Geneva Conference, the anti-communist Ngo Dinh Diem was elected as the President of the Republic of South Vietnam and was firmly supported by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Diem, with the help of the American military and the CIA, cracked down on Viet Minh supporters in the South known as the Viet Cong. Close to 100,000 were arrested, many of whom were brutally tortured and executed.<sup>4</sup> In response, elections and reunification never occurred. The Viet Cong began attacking South Vietnamese government officials by 1957 and were engaging the military of South Vietnam.

The United States dramatically increased its troop numbers present in the region through the early 1960s, hoping to stabilize the government of South Vietnam. By 1963, the relationship between the U.S. and Diem deteriorated, and he was assassinated in a coup orchestrated by Vietnamese generals who were backed by the CIA.<sup>5</sup> The following year, Northern Vietnamese naval assets engaged a U.S. destroyer in the Gulf of Tonkin. In response, Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, empowering President Johnson to ramp up the U.S. military presence in Vietnam. By 1965, the first regular U.S. combat units had entered Vietnam and the U.S. began bombing campaigns in Laos and Cambodia to disrupt North Vietnamese transportation routes.<sup>6</sup>

General William Westmoreland was assigned to lead U.S. forces in Vietnam in 1964 and had planned to lead a war of attrition against the Viet Cong. In 1966, he designated free-fire zones in much of South Vietnam. These free-fire zones were heavily bombed and uninhabitable areas that South Vietnamese civilians were supposed to have evacuated from, causing large refugee populations to settle in the vicinity of Saigon. The Viet Cong undermined Westmoreland's strategy by resupplying troops in South Vietnam via the Ho Chi Minh trail, with the backing of China and the Soviet Union.<sup>7</sup>

In 1967 and early 1968, a widespread anti-war movement took hold in the United States. In October 1967, 35,000 anti-war demonstrators protested outside the Pentagon, urging the United States to end its support for South Vietnam. As of November 1967, the United States had 500,000 thousand troops in Vietnam with roughly 110,000 injured and another 15,000 dead. The Tet Offensive began earlier this year and is still ongoing, albeit on a more contained scale.

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<sup>4</sup><https://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/vietnam-war-history>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.newsweek.com/2013/10/18/death-president-243702.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/operation-barrel-roll-begins>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1875.html>

It has thus far failed to achieve a tactical victory for the Viet Cong, but because of domestic outrage at the carnage, the administration began peace talks in Paris only days ago.

### 1.3. Current Situation

Today, the administration is facing waning public support for the war and significant hurdles in achieving strategic objectives against communist forces in Vietnam. The administration has divided the current situation into three broad areas of consideration: the Vietnam War itself, the East/West balance of power, and the domestic politics surrounding the war.

#### 1.3.1. The Vietnam War

The status of the Vietnam war has wide-ranging implications, but the administration will have to be invested in the management of the conflict from the highest levels. Since assuming office, President Johnson has consistently raised American troop numbers in Vietnam and authorized large-scale bombing operations to support the South Vietnamese government against the communist North Vietnam.

After a tumultuous start to the year, the initial wave of Viet Cong assaults have been contained and rolled back.<sup>8</sup> At present, the authorized strength of the American forces in Vietnam is 549,500, but this maximum number of troops has not yet been mobilized. Mounting casualties and the inability of the United States to make significant strategic gains have raised questions about the purpose of the war. Faced with large U.S. military and Vietnamese civilian casualties, as well as a robust North Vietnamese logistical capacity backed by Moscow and Beijing, the future of the U.S. war effort seems dire.<sup>9</sup>

Due to the waning public support and the difficulties of the American war effort, the administration may have to look toward engaging in peace talks with North Vietnam, despite it being a reversal of current policy. Peace talks would be difficult to begin due to the North Vietnamese insisting the U.S. halt all bombing. Further complicating potential talks, the

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<sup>8</sup><https://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/tet-offensive>

<sup>9</sup> <http://alphahistory.com/vietnamwar/chinese-and-soviet-involvement/>

government of South Vietnam does not view the Viet Cong as a legitimate entity, and the North Vietnamese do not recognize the legitimacy of South Vietnam.<sup>10</sup>

The administration will have to weigh the difficulties of a political settlement against the difficulties of staying the course of current policy.

*“Keep in mind now, that the election is coming up at the end of the year. Now I’ve been talking with Dick Nixon and he has agreed to not come out against the war and will support whatever we’re going to do. We need to worry about Bobby though. That little weasel has had it in for me since his brother tapped me as VP in ‘60. He and the other doves like Eugene McCarthy are going to use the situation in Vietnam against us, but McNamara has been telling me for years that the situation is improving, but we must be persistent!” - President Johnson*

### 1.3.2. The Cold War

One of the strategic imperatives for the United States while navigating the Vietnam conflict is maintaining the balance of power in East Asia, as well as the larger balance of power vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and rolling back Soviet design. Similar to previous administrations, the president believes the fall of a Western-aligned democracy such as South Vietnam to communists will result in neighboring countries following suit.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the president is concerned that a unified Vietnam under communist leadership would be a puppet state either to China or the USSR, especially considering the developing split between China and the Soviet Union in recent years.<sup>12</sup>

The administration ultimately seeks a resolution to the conflict where South Vietnam rules a unified Vietnam. In the same vein as the Korean War, however, so long as the balance of power is maintained the situation should be stabilized. That is to say, if Vietnam remains divided, it will prevent a domino effect because South Vietnam will ostensibly balance against the communist North.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://thevietnamwar.info/what-was-paris-peace-accords/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/domino-theory>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.thoughtco.com/the-sino-soviet-split-195455>

The potential of a communist Southeast Asia is distressing to say the least, if not threatening to democracy around the world. We must find a way to prevent such a communist threat from growing.

*“The administration needs to focus on stopping the communists in Vietnam. Allowing Vietnam to fall behind the iron curtain would be catastrophic and put the region safely in communist hands for the foreseeable future. As president, I cannot and will not allow that to happen. We are prepared to pay to commit resources in order to secure a democratic Vietnam that benefits not only the United States’ foreign policy interests, but most importantly, the people of Southeast Asia.” - President Johnson*

### 1.3.3. Domestic Political Implications

As the Vietnam War moves on, the Johnson administration is faced with mounting public dissent for the war effort. In February, Walter Cronkite called for the United States’ departure from Vietnam, and war journalism has negatively influenced the public perception of the Vietnam War.<sup>13</sup> Initial opposition to American involvement in Vietnam began in 1964, with more and more Americans beginning to view the war as a mistake, according to Gallup polls in 1967.<sup>14</sup> Since the Tet Offensive, American support for the war and President Johnson’s policies have been at an all-time low.

Reasons for opposing the war vary. The Selective Service System, known as the “draft,” conscripted thousands of young men into military service each year, but allowed for deferments for college students. Therefore, affluent men were better able to avoid being drafted. There are also moral and legal questions, such as the possibility of imperialistic ambitions in Vietnam, the legality of U.S. involvement, and increasing violence, especially during and after the Tet Offensive.<sup>15</sup> A final, and potentially more germane argument, is the seemingly endless failures of the U.S. military to make significant strategic gains with little indication that further expansion of the war effort would result in victory.

A central concern for the administration will be the effects of the war on the upcoming 1968 election. Democratic challenger and anti-war candidate Eugene McCarthy is a serious

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=106775685>

<sup>14</sup> <http://news.gallup.com/poll/2299/americans-look-back-vietnam-war.aspx>

<sup>15</sup> [https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/91773/Schuman-Two\\_Sources.pdf?sequence=1](https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/91773/Schuman-Two_Sources.pdf?sequence=1)

contender in the New Hampshire primary.<sup>16</sup> A growing faction of the Democratic Party has been critical of the war, and much of the fate of the president's campaign will hinge on the successes and failures of our handling of Vietnam.

An area of particular concern for this cabinet is the connections between prominent Vietnamese officials and American presidential candidates. The Johnson administration will have to work to keep keep a firm grasp on the handling of the Vietnam War and enforce the Logan Act as the election draws nearer.

#### 1.4. Discussion Questions

- 1) Should the Johnson administration alter its policy in Vietnam to facilitate peace talks?
- 2) To what extent should the United States involve itself in the Vietnam War to support the integrity of South Vietnam?
- 3) What can the Johnson administration do to weaken the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese war-making capacity?
- 4) What steps can the United States take to prevent the spread of communism throughout Asia?
- 5) How can the Johnson administration use the Vietnamese conflict to roll back or contain communism?
- 6) How can we disrupt Chinese and Soviet support of South Vietnam?
- 7) What can the Johnson administration do to salvage domestic support for the war in Vietnam?
- 8) How can the Johnson administration change its Vietnam policy to aid allied Democrats in the 1968 election?
- 9) What should the administration do to ensure that American individuals don't disrupt the president's agenda in the months leading up to the election?

#### 1.5. Key Terms

- NSC-68
- Viet Minh

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<sup>16</sup><https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=9xkVAAAAIBAJ&sjid=zvcDAAAAIBAJ&pg=5491,2863720&dq=eugene+mccarthy+1968>

- Viet Cong/National Liberation Front
- Containment
- Domino Theory
- Gulf of Tonkin Incident
- Gulf of Tonkin Resolution
- Operation Rolling Thunder
- Tet Offensive
- Communism
- Ho Chi Minh Trail
- Logan Act

## 2. Topic 2 - Additional Civil Rights Reform

### 2.1. Introduction

Three days ago, the United States Senate passed the Civil Rights Act of 1968, another victory in a long list of landmark pieces of civil rights legislation to come out of the Johnson White House. The stage is now set for the bill to be signed into law in just a few days, after a conference committee with the House. With this victory, it will soon be illegal in the United States to discriminate against any man “by reason of their race, color, religion, or national origin” in housing opportunities. This is the third major civil rights law passed under the Johnson administration, after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Now, the national civil rights dialogue shifts to poverty, with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Poor People’s Campaign” set to fixate U.S. public attention on economic justice for all. No longer a forgotten, flagging campaign at the periphery of the nation’s attention, the Johnson administration’s War on Poverty has been thrust back onto the public’s radar and is poised to improve the lives of some 50 million Americans.

With this shift in the national discourse, we now prepare for another battle over civil rights, but with a markedly different outlook than previous campaigns. An increase in inner-city black riots has reduced white suburban support for additional civil rights legislation, and the meteoric rise of the Black Power Movement has begun to splinter the ideological stronghold that the King has

enjoyed since the Civil Rights Movement's conception. Demonstrations promoting civil rights are occurring while the administration is incredibly focused on the Vietnam War, forcing us to consider how to balance two different protest movements on the steps of the national capitol.

## 2.2. Historical Background

### 2.2.1. The Beginnings of the Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement traces its roots back to the days of Reconstruction following the Civil War, most notably with the passage of the Reconstruction Amendments adopted in the late 1860s. Over the past century, however, the suffrage of African-American Southerners has been slowly eroded, and their economic situation has largely remained stagnant from their era of servitude. The introduction of Jim Crow laws in many Southern states in the late 19th century had, to varying degrees, kept minorities out of the voting booth, living in segregated neighborhoods, attending segregated schools, and eating at segregated restaurants. This explosion of segregation laws led to the landmark Supreme Court case *Plessy vs. Ferguson* in 1896, which upheld the ideal of "separate but equal" as a legal justification for a segregated society.

The standard of living for Southern African Americans had stayed roughly the same from the 1870s until just over a decade ago, when the Supreme Court overturned the reviled "separate but equal" doctrine in the case *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka*, followed shortly thereafter by growing unrest and civil disobedience across the South. Over the course of the next year, organized protest groups began to form, culminating in the Montgomery bus boycotts of 1955. These two events are now considered formative moments in the modern Civil Rights Movement of the past decade.

### 2.2.2. Rise of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the SCLC

Following the Montgomery bus boycotts, the Civil Rights Movement found a leader in King, the first president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), who has since become the undisputed figurehead of the movement. Throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s, he organized several non-violent protests, most notably the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, for which a quarter of a million people gathered at the nation's capital to demand civil, social, and economic justice for African Americans. King's presence at the March on

Washington, where he delivered his now-famous “I have a Dream” speech, solidified his ascension as the primary leader of the movement.

In the subsequent years, King worked with the late President John F. Kennedy and President Lyndon B. Johnson to secure the passage of a series of civil rights laws. He was granted the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964; his organization of the Selma to Montgomery peace marches the following year, however, seem to have marked the apex of his national power and influence. Since then, his shift in focus toward general poverty in America and, more controversially, the Vietnam War, has seriously damaged his popularity with his liberal allies and white Americans, including the president. It has been nearly a year since King delivered his “Beyond Vietnam” speech, and the anti-Vietnam War rhetoric from the King camp has only continued since then.

### 2.2.3. The Johnson Administration and Civil Rights

The presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson is shaping up to be a watershed era for African-American civil rights in the United States. The passage of the legendary Civil Rights Act of 1964—which outlawed discrimination based on religion, sex, national origin, color, or race—and the Voting Rights Act of—which established strong voting protections for African Americans in Southern states—marked a turning point for the Democratic Party and has set the stage for a mass exodus of Southern whites from the party. Party insiders and analysts alike fear that the New Deal Coalition formed by FDR, which has been the dominant political force in America for nearly four decades, is at risk of losing a crucial demographic: white Southerners. All signs point to the realignment of parties in the coming months, and the Democratic Party has been scrambling to figure out how to keep their precious hold on power.

Nevertheless, national tensions are focused not on the coming election, but on the future of the civil rights era. The pacifistic leanings of the Southern Christian Leadership are being increasingly undermined by the pan-African inspired Black Power Movement and the more violent Black Panther Party, both of which believe that the SCLC has conceded too much to white legislators, hindering overall progress for African Americans.

Unlike previous civil rights campaigns led by the SCLC, the Poor People’s Campaign is seen by much of Congress as a threat to the stability of the Capitol, and not anything akin in spirit to the earlier March on Washington. In fact, many members of both parties perceive the campaign as

a serious nuisance that is distracting important government resources from winning the Vietnam War.

## 2.3. Current Situation

### 2.3.1. The Electoral Ticking Time Bomb

The United States Cabinet meets to discuss the proper response to the increasingly unpopular Poor People's Campaign, which is largely seen as a distraction from the more important fallout from the Vietnam War. With the 1968 election looming, we must also discuss the rapidly changing political landscape of the nation. Just three days ago, Minnesota Senator and challenger for the Democratic Nomination Eugene McCarthy received 42 percent of the vote in the New Hampshire primary. This has been seen as a wake-up call for many in the administration—a warning that the Democratic Party is set to endure a serious identity crisis in the coming months. To further exacerbate this unfolding political crisis, former Attorney General Robert Kennedy, brother of former President John F. Kennedy, is widely rumored to be considering launching a challenge to the sitting president. Such a challenge would be a serious blow to the reelection chances of Johnson and would be seen as a clear sign of blood in the water. Serious consideration must be given to how the president should deal with McCarthy and Kennedy—and, more importantly, how he can hold together an increasingly broken coalition of activists, union supporters, minorities, and Southerners.

### 2.3.2. The Shift, and Forming Rift, in the Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement has begun to show signs of wear. The 1966 formation of the Black Panther Party is yet another clear indication that a growing number of African Americans are fed up with the MLK-model of protest and civil disobedience. These new groups are, overall, more violent, less patient, and more sympathetic to communists than their SCLC counterparts. It is still unclear whether this is simply a fringe movement or an omen of where the Civil Rights Movement is headed.

King still retains a strong hold on the movement, but he has put all of his efforts into his new Poor People's Campaign. The campaign is markedly different from earlier efforts by the SCLC, as it purports to promote economic justice for all races, not just African Americans. The campaign was launched after King and other conference leaders noticed how little progress has been made in the welfare of many black Southerners and concluded that the government needs to pursue new anti-poverty measures. The campaign, currently in its nascent planning stages, hopes to establish a camp on the Washington Mall, a base of operations from which they can manage the campaign and protests.

Also bearing down on the national focus is the Memphis sanitation workers strike, which is now entering its second month. Rallying under the infamous 'I AM A MAN' posters, African American sanitation workers throughout Memphis are protesting poor working conditions after two workers were crushed in garbage compactors. The strike is reaching a fever pitch amid talk of King traveling to Memphis to meet with city officials, who have thus far refused to engage with representatives of the strikers.

### 2.3. Key Terms

- *Civil Rights Act of 1968* (otherwise known as the *Fair Housing Act*)
- *Civil Rights Act of 1964*
- *Voting Rights Act of 1965*
- *Poor People's Campaign*
- *War on Poverty*
- *Black Power Movement*
- *Vietnam War Protests*
- *New Deal Coalition*
- *The Southern Christian Leadership Conference*
- *Black Panthers*
- *Pan-Africanism*

### 2.4. Discussion Questions

- 1) What actions can the cabinet take to try and dissuade Robert Kennedy from challenging Johnson?

- 2) How can the administration best maintain the presence of white Southerners in the party, without backtracking on its record of supporting civil rights?
- 3) What can be done to combat the growing unpopularity of the Vietnam War among the Americans without a disastrous retreat from the region?
- 4) What should be done about the growing number of disaffected African Americans within the Civil Rights movement? (i.e., Should steps be taken to mitigate the influence of more violent strains of civil disobedience?)
- 5) How should the administration respond to the Poor People's Campaign? While in theory, Johnson is a champion of the War on Poverty, he cannot side with a campaign that opposes the Vietnam War as one of its main tenants.

## 2.5. Sources

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