

WAR DIPLOMACY IN VIETNAM: THE ROLE PLAYED USA AND USSR

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

This study examines the United States and USSR involvement in Vietnam throughout the Vietnam War and also explores the ways in which the Vietnam War affected the Cold War. The Vietnam War was the longest war in American history, beginning with the United States' involvement in the French Colonial struggle during the early 1950s and ending with the tragic and humiliating fall of Saigon in April 1975. The United States was involved in Vietnam under leadership from six different Presidential Administrations, and, because of the length of the war, many aspects of the Cold War changed as the conflict in Vietnam progressed and escalated.¹ This study examines nature of war diplomacy in Vietnam war and the impact of USSR and USA.

The Vietnam War, spanning from 1955 to 1975, emerged within the broader context of the Cold War. The global struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union for ideological and geopolitical dominance cast its shadow on the Southeast Asian region. The backdrop of decolonization and the spread of communism contributed to the intricate web of factors that led to the Vietnam War.² The division of Vietnam into North and South following the Geneva Accords in 1954 set the stage for a conflict that became emblematic of the

ideological struggle between capitalism and communism. The American perception of the "domino theory," which posited that the fall of one nation to communism would trigger a chain reaction of neighboring states following suit, further fueled U.S. intervention.³

The Vietnam War stands as a poignant illustration of the global power struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Within the intricate geopolitical landscape of Southeast Asia,⁴ The region's history of colonization, with Vietnam having been under French rule, set the stage for a post-colonial struggle for self-determination. The rise of communism, particularly under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, resonated with the aspirations of many in North Vietnam, while the southern part of the country looked toward the United States for support in maintaining a capitalist regime. This ideological dichotomy was exacerbated by Cold War tensions, where any instance of communist expansion was perceived as a threat to the global balance of power. These factors converged to create an environment where Vietnam became not only a geographical battleground but a symbolic representation of the larger ideological contest between communism and capitalism.⁵

The decolonization process across Southeast Asia created a complex environment wherein nations sought to assert their newfound independence.

Vietnam, a country historically under French colonial rule, found itself divided into North and South following the Geneva Accords of 1954. The North, led by Ho Chi Minh's communist forces, embraced Marxism Leninism and sought reunification through revolutionary means. In contrast, the South, supported by the United States, aimed to uphold a capitalist and non-communist regime. This ideological schism was heightened by Cold War tensions, as the spread of communism was perceived as a direct challenge to the global balance of power sought by the United States and its allies. The Vietnam War, often referred to as the Second Indochina War, exemplified the intricate geopolitical maneuvering of the Cold War era. The United States viewed Southeast Asia as a critical arena in containing the spread of communism, fearing the "domino effect," where the fall of one nation to communism might trigger neighboring states to follow suit. As a result, the United States escalated its involvement in Vietnam, providing military assistance to the South Vietnamese government and engaging in an intense conflict against the Viet Cong insurgency in the North.⁶ The Vietnam War, a deeply consequential chapter in modern history, unfolded within the intricate framework of the Cold War, a period defined by the ideological standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union. Embedded within the geographical

expanse of Southeast Asia, the conflict bore witness to a convergence of historical, ideological, and strategic factors that both fueled and escalated the turmoil.⁷

Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study is to examine the nature of war diplomacy in the Vietnam war and the influence of Soviet Union and the United States, while the objectives includes;

- i. To examine the concept and root causes of the Vietnam War.
- ii. To examine the involvement of the Soviet Union and the United States in the Vietnam War and establish their aim and objectives of the war.
- iii. To examine impact of the war on Soviet Union and the United States relations.

Scope of the Study

The study will cover the nature, manifestations and impact of the Soviet Union and the United States involvement in the Vietnam War from 1959 to 1975.

Research Methodology

This study will be carried out using historical method, which involves analyzing the study in past sentence, which will be centre on the primary and secondary sources.

Primary Sources: Primary sources which will be utilized in the course of the research are in two categories; official television interview reports and oral

interviews. They include; some the USSR and the United States movement vision and mission statement and, Annual interview via media of the Israeli president, correspondences and other documents relating to the Israel-Palestine. Oral interviews will be conducted with experienced history lecturers in the University of Benin.

Secondary Sources: Secondary sources will also be employed for this research and they include: textbooks, journals, newspaper, magazine, old newspapers as well as other documented materials such as National Library in Benin City that helped to develop this work and supplemented the information obtained from the primary sources, which will be gotten from both private and public libraries such as the UNIBEN. Also, information relevant to this research will be obtained from the internet.

Literature Review

To achieve the highlighted research objectives of this study literature on the historical antecedences of the involvement of the Soviet Union and the United States in the Vietnam War. They include the following;

Michael Martignago, article titled “Vietnamese Farmers That Changed the World: the Impact of the Vietnam War on the Cold War,” examines the United States’ involvement in Vietnam throughout the Vietnam War and also explores the

ways in which the Vietnam War affected the Cold War. Beginning with President Harry S. Truman in 1945 and ending with President Gerald Ford in 1975, the author examines the motivations behind each of the six United States Presidential Administrations during the Vietnam War and gives an in-depth explanation for the crucial decisions that were made by the United States Government over the course of the war. The effect that these foreign policy decisions and directives had on the Cold War atmosphere is also heavily analysed. The faults and failures of the United States that led to their humiliating defeat in Vietnam consequently altered the Cold War atmosphere. In order to fully understand the Cold War, it is necessary to understand the Vietnam War and its impact on United States foreign policy. The Vietnam War was the longest war in American history, beginning with the United States' involvement in the French Colonial struggle during the early 1950s and ending with the tragic and humiliating fall of Saigon in April 1975.⁸

Khánh Minh, work titled “Unveiling the Complex Tapestry: A Historical Analysis of the Vietnam War and its Impact on America,” presents a comprehensive historical analysis of the Vietnam War and its profound impact on the United States. The author delves into the intricate layers of the conflict, shedding light on its causes, progression, and aftermath. By examining both the military and socio-political dimensions, the article aims to provide a nuanced

understanding of the war's complexity and its lasting implications for American society, politics, and foreign policy. The Vietnam War, intricately woven from geopolitical strategies, ideological clashes, and military tactics, holds enduring significance. Emerging from colonial legacies and Cold War dynamics, its escalation echoed the domino theory and containment policy. Amidst guerrilla warfare and air power strategies, the war's reach extended beyond battlefields, resonating in the anti-war movement, cultural expressions, and societal rifts.⁹

Heather Stur, “Why the United States Went to War in Vietnam,” asserts that this is a question historians continue to debate. One of the main reasons it remains a source of argument is that it is difficult to say when the U.S. war actually began. Should we trace it back to the 1940s when President Harry Truman authorized U.S. financial support of the French war in Indochina? Did it begin in the 1950s when the Geneva Accords divided Vietnam in two and President Dwight Eisenhower offered U.S. aid to help establish a non-communist nation in the southern half to counter the communist north? Eisenhower’s “domino theory,” the idea that if one country in Southeast Asia fell to the communists, the entire region would fall, and the ripple effects would be felt throughout the Asia-Pacific world, informed not only his thinking about U.S. relations with the region but the policymaking of his successors, John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. Kennedy asserted that

Americans would “pay any price, bear any burden” to support democratic nation building as a way to counter communist advances in Asia. During Johnson’s presidency, the U.S. escalated its war in Vietnam, starting with the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in which Congress authorized Johnson to use military force without declaring war.¹⁰

Edward Miller, *An Overview of the Vietnam War*, the author introduced to the Vietnam War through a simulation regarding the anxiety of combat and will then receive an overview of the war via a teacher Power Point presentation or lecture (provided), or a text book reading followed by class discussion. Students will then create an illustrated timeline picturing the prominent events from the years of conflict.¹¹

George C. Herring, book titled *The Cold War and Vietnam*, examines how Vietnam War is thought to be the best-known military conflict after the World War II. This is because of the US’s far-reaching involvement in the war during the 1960s. The Vietnam War originated from the Vietnamese struggle to liberate the country off the French colonization. The United States kept supporting France and by 1954, the Americans were covering approximately 80 per cent of the cost of the French campaign. With fear of the so-called ‘domino theory’ combined with the already massive cost, the United States, under Eisenhower administration, did not

accept the unified Vietnam ruled by the DRV and began to involve more in the conflict in Indochina. At the end of the story, it was the United States who lost in the war in Vietnam. In this context, it might be questionable how a powerful country like the United States, that defeated the powerful Japanese and ended the World War II, lost in war against a poorly equipped Vietnam. Therefore, this paper is intended to point out the relevant factors that contribute to the defeat of the United States in Vietnam War.¹²

Abdul Zahoor Khan, book titled *The Cold War in Southeast Asia: Vietnam Conflict*, posits that the developing Vietnamese revolution experienced periodic windows of permissiveness" regarding the larger world context and involvement of other nations in Vietnam's affairs. The 1936-1939 Popular Front government in France precipitated the release of many ICP members from Vietnamese prisons and presented an opportunity for the ICP to organize openly after earlier repression. The author further buttress that The Japanese overthrow of French colonial authority in March 1945 provided the Viet Minh with a five-month period of relative freedom of movement in the countryside, during which base areas and the foundations of the revolutionary armed forces were securely established. The several weeks, between the mid-August surrender of the Japanese and the arrival of Chinese and British (and later French) occupation forces provided the

maximum favorable conditions for revolutionary insurrections. These were carried out with virtually no resistance from the demoralized Japanese in more than sixty Vietnamese cities. After that time, the huge coercive power of the French (400,000 Vietnamese killed during 1946- 1954) and the even more massive military strength of the United States (over 1 million Vietnamese dead between 1956 and 1975) were inadequate to reverse a revolution that long before had succeeded in achieving widespread popular support.¹³

William Zimmerman and Robert Axelrod, article titled “The “Lessons” of Vietnam and Soviet Foreign Policy,”¹⁴ This study systematically identifies the Soviet lessons of Vietnam as presented in eleven Soviet newspapers, which include Rossiyskaya Gazeta newspaper, Belarus Today Newspaper, Big Tent newspaper Right and Wing Newspaper. A predominant finding is that the most common lessons the Soviet Union learned from Vietnam differed from their American counterparts: the Soviet lessons would not have warned the leadership about the dangers of military intervention in Afghanistan. A left/right scale was constructed, based on such issue clusters as why the communists won in Vietnam, the nature of imperialism, and the implications of Soviet policy in the Third World. Substantial variation was found among the media examined, many of which are linked to specific Soviet institutions. The implication is that Soviet foreign policy

is contingent upon individual choices, institutional interplay, and changing contexts. This, in turn, suggests that Western policy makers should not lose sight of their capacity to influence the Soviet policy dialogue, and hence Soviet policy choices.¹⁵

Mainul Islam, work titled “Vietnam War: A Decade of Conflict & It’s Impact on the United States,” The Vietnam War was a protracted conflict that lasted for over a decade, from 1955 to 1975. It was a complex conflict that involved multiple players, including the United States, South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and their allies. The war was fought in a guerrilla-style, with the North Vietnamese army using hit-and-run tactics to disrupt the South Vietnamese government and the American troops. The United States entered the war with the aim of stopping the spread of communism, but it soon became apparent that the conflict was more complicated than that. This paper explores the causes of the Vietnam War, the strategies used by the United States and North Vietnam, and the impact of the war on the United States.¹⁶

Romain Girard, work titled “A Critical Assessment of the International Relations of the USSR during the Interwar Period,” it seems clear that Russia international relations in the interwar period has little to do with ideology. The various leaders were motivated primarily by securing safe shelter from a world of

vicious predators. Arguably, the Second World War did a lot to change this. After this major conflict Russia had become a powerful country and through the chaos of post-war Europe took the opportunity to impose the influence which it could never really get in the interwar years. Interestingly, one might wonder how much the USSR's inability to achieve a satisfactory amount of integration in the international balance of power affected how aggressive foreign policy in the years of the Cold War. Whereas as before everything was refused to the fatherland, post-1945 he could grab everything he had wished for and went for it.¹⁷

However, this study examines historical origin of Vietnam war, but it is obvious that none had taken the nature of war diplomacy in the Vietnam war and the influence of Soviet Union and the United States. Therefore, it is this vacuum this project essay aim to fulfill.

Chapterization

CHAPTER ONE

Background to the Study

This chapter examines the blue-print of the entire research work; the chapter examines the introduction, aim and objectives, scope of the study, methodology and literature review.

CHAPTER TWO

The Concept and Root Causes of the Vietnam War

This chapter examines the historical antecedes of the Vietnam war and nature of the war.

CHAPTER THREE

The Involvement of the Soviet Union and the United States in the Vietnam War

The chapter surveys how the Vietnam War can be considered the most influential Cold War conflict. The changes that occurred to United States foreign policy throughout the Vietnam War had drastic effects on the Cold War atmosphere. The chapter also caption that in all aspects the Vietnam War was the quintessential Cold War conflict. It included proxy war between the United States and the Soviet Union, it had the potential to escalate into nuclear war, it resulted in the diplomatic recognition of the People's Republic of China, it led to arms reduction treaties between the major superpowers, and brought diplomacy to the forefront of Cold War strategy.

CHAPTER FOUR

Impact of the War on Soviet Union and the United States Relations

This chapter identifies the nature and impact of the war on diplomatic relations between Soviet Union and the United States. The chapter further

elucidated how the aftermath of the war influences the socio-political and economic relations between Soviet Union and the United States.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

This chapter gives a general overview of the entire research work and concludes the research.

Endnotes

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2. Daniel, Ellsberg, *Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers*, New York: Viking Press, 2002, p.12.
3. Marvin E. Gettleman, *Vietnam: History, Documents and Opinions on a Major World Crisis*, Greenwich, CT: Fawcett Pub, 1965, p.23.
4. Ibid., p.24.
5. Hanhimäki, Jussi. “Conservative Goals, Revolutionary Outcomes: The Paradox of Detente.” *Cold War History* Vol.8, No.4, 2008, p.503.
6. Ibid., p.504.
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8. Michael Martignago, “Vietnamese Farmers That Changed the World: the Impact of the Vietnam War on the Cold War,” *North American Academic Research*, Vol.3, No.04; April, 2020, p.3.
9. Khánh Minh, “Unveiling the Complex Tapestry: A Historical Analysis of the Vietnam War and its Impact on America,” *The China Quarterly*, Vol.1 No.3, 1995, p.56.
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11. Edward Miller, *An Overview of the Vietnam War*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p.112.
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14. Abdul Zahoor Khan, *The Cold War in Southeast Asia: Vietnam Conflict*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1985, p.23.
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CHAPTER TWO

ROOT CAUSES OF THE VIETNAM WAR

The Concept and Root Causes

To understand the Vietnam War's genesis, it is essential to explore its historical context, which reaches back to the era of colonial rule. Vietnam had been under French colonial dominion for much of the 19th and early 20th centuries, and the desire for independence simmered beneath the surface.¹ This fervor for self-determination was nurtured by a deep-rooted sense of nationalism and unity among the Vietnamese people, giving rise to various anticolonial movements. The conclusion of the First Indochina War in 1954 saw the division of Vietnam at the 17th parallel, with the communist-backed Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam), led by Ho Chi Minh, governing the northern region, and the non-communist Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam), under Ngo Dinh Diem's rule, in the southern territory.² This partition set the stage for further conflict and paved the way for the Second Indochina War, known more widely as the Vietnam War. The Vietnam War's causes were deeply entrenched in ideological, political, and global power struggles. At its core, the war represented a clash between the communist ideology of North Vietnam and the non-communist stance of South Vietnam.³ With the backdrop of the Cold War and the ongoing

rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, Vietnam became a battleground for the spread of competing ideologies. The United States, as a staunch anti-communist superpower, became increasingly involved in the conflict, providing support and military aid to South Vietnam as part of its containment policy to halt the spread of communism in Southeast Asia.⁴ The domino theory, a prevailing notion during the Cold War, further exacerbated tensions as it posited that the fall of one Southeast Asian country to communism could lead to a chain reaction, impacting neighboring nations and beyond. Furthermore, Vietnam's historical position as a vital region in Southeast Asia added to the complexities of the conflict. The region's historical entanglement with foreign powers, including China and France, and its strategic location made it a significant point of interest for global powers seeking influence and control in the region.⁵

Historical and Causes of the War

The historical context of the Vietnam War is crucial for understanding the conflict's origins. Scholars such as Karnow and Fall have emphasized the impact of French colonial rule on Vietnam's nationalist movements. The desire for independence and unification motivated the Vietnamese people to resist foreign control. The conclusion of the First Indochina War in 1954 resulted in the division of Vietnam, setting the stage for further hostilities. The historical context

highlights the long-standing struggle for self-determination and national unity that shaped the trajectory of the Vietnam War.⁶ Vietnam, located in Southeast Asia, was under Chinese control for centuries before achieving brief periods of independence. However, in the mid-19th century, Vietnam became a French colony as part of French Indochina, along with Laos and Cambodia. The French sought to exploit Vietnam's resources and impose their cultural and political influence on the region. During the colonial period, the Vietnamese people experienced oppression, economic exploitation, and cultural marginalization. The imposition of French language, education, and administration further fueled a desire among the Vietnamese for self-determination and national sovereignty.⁷

The colonization by the French triggered a growing sense of nationalism among the Vietnamese. Intellectuals, scholars, and leaders began advocating for a unified and independent Vietnam, rooted in their rich history and cultural heritage. Key figures like Phan Boi Chau and Phan Chu Trinh emerged as prominent voices of the nationalist movement. In the early 20th century, the Dong Du Movement and the Can Vuong Movement exemplified early attempts to resist French colonial rule. These movements sought to unify the country and expel the French, reflecting the deep yearning for independence among the Vietnamese populace. World War II had a significant impact on Vietnam and intensified the struggle for

independence. As the Japanese occupied Vietnam during the war, they displaced the French administration. In the absence of French control, Vietnamese nationalists saw an opportunity to assert their aspirations for independence.⁸ The Viet Minh, a communist-led nationalist organization under Ho Chi Minh's leadership, emerged during this period. The Viet Minh sought to unite all factions of Vietnamese society in the fight against both Japanese occupiers and French colonial rule. The declaration of Vietnam's independence by Ho Chi Minh on September 2, 1945, marked a pivotal moment in Vietnam's quest for freedom.

The struggle for independence escalated into the First Indochina War (1946-1954) as the French sought to reassert their control over Vietnam. The Viet Minh, with the support of the Soviet Union and China, engaged in a protracted guerrilla war against the French forces. The Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954 marked a significant turning point, leading to the French defeat and the signing of the Geneva Accords. The Geneva Accords divided Vietnam at the 17th parallel, creating North Vietnam, led by Ho Chi Minh's communist government, and South Vietnam, under the rule of Ngo Dinh Diem, a non-communist regime supported by the United States.⁹ The division was meant to be temporary, with reunification elections planned for 1956. However, the elections never took place, leading to further escalation of tensions and the outbreak of the Second Indochina War,

known as the Vietnam War. The historical context of the Vietnam War illuminates the deep-rooted aspirations for independence and unification among the Vietnamese people.¹⁰ It underscores the impact of colonialism and foreign intervention on shaping the course of Vietnamese history. Understanding this context is crucial for comprehending the complexities of the Vietnam War and the motivations of the parties involved. The historical struggle for independence laid the foundation for the protracted and brutal conflict that would unfold over the next two decades, leaving a profound and lasting impact on Vietnam and the world.¹²

The causes of the Vietnam War were multifaceted and intertwined, shaped by ideological, political, and geopolitical factors. Examining the complex web of reasons that led to the outbreak of the conflict provides valuable insights into the dynamics of the war. One of the central causes of the Vietnam War was the ideological divide between the communist North Vietnam, led by Ho Chi Minh and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), and the noncommunist South Vietnam, under Ngo Dinh Diem's rule. Ho Chi Minh's vision was to establish a unified, socialist Vietnam, while Diem and his government sought to maintain a noncommunist regime with the support of the United States.¹³ The clash of these opposing ideologies laid the foundation for a protracted and bitter conflict. The

Vietnam War occurred within the broader context of the Cold War, a period of intense ideological rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. As the Cold War escalated, both superpowers sought to expand their influence and spheres of control, viewing Southeast Asia as a crucial battleground. The United States saw the spread of communism as a threat to its global interests and adopted a policy of containment, committing military and economic aid to anti-communist governments, including South Vietnam.¹⁴

The United States' commitment to the containment policy played a pivotal role in escalating the conflict. The fear of a "domino effect," where one country falling to communism could lead to the fall of neighboring countries, drove U.S. involvement in Vietnam. The belief that losing Vietnam to communism would trigger a chain reaction of communist victories in Southeast Asia led to a commitment to preventing such an outcome at all costs. The legacy of French colonial rule also influenced the conflict. The French had left a deeply divided and unstable Vietnam after their defeat in the First Indochina War. When the country was partitioned at the 17th parallel in 1954, the United States inherited a situation where a noncommunist regime in the South was precarious and required significant support. The desire for nationalism and independence was a driving force for the Vietnamese people.¹⁵ Vietnam had a long history of resistance against

foreign domination, and the struggle for independence was a unifying sentiment among the Vietnamese. This nationalistic fervor fueled the Viet Minh's determination to fight for a unified Vietnam free from colonial and foreign control. The broader regional dynamics in Southeast Asia also contributed to the conflict. Vietnam's neighboring countries, such as Laos and Cambodia, were affected by the war, further complicating the situation. The Ho Chi Minh Trail, a network of supply routes used by North Vietnam to support the insurgency in the South, ran through Laos and Cambodia, drawing these countries into the war's periphery.¹⁶

Conclusion

It should be noted here that the Vietnam War stands as one of the most pivotal events in modern history, leaving a deep and lasting impact on global affairs, the people of Vietnam, and the collective consciousness of the world. The historical context of the Vietnam War, rooted in colonialism and the struggle for independence, laid the groundwork for the conflict's outbreak. The clash of ideologies and the escalating Cold War rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union further entrenched the war's complexities. As the United States increased its military involvement, it attempted various strategies, such as "search and destroy," aerial bombing, and counterinsurgency, in an effort to quell the communist insurgency. However, the war's unconventional nature, combined with

the resilience of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces, proved formidable challenges.²¹ The Vietnam War had devastating consequences on Vietnamese civilians, who endured widespread suffering, displacement, and loss of life. The use of strategic bombing and chemical defoliants resulted in significant civilian casualties and environmental damage. Atrocities committed against civilians, such as the infamous My Lai massacre, further exacerbated the war's humanitarian toll.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER THREE

THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE SOVIET UNION AND THE UNITED STATES IN THE VIETNAM WAR

The Vietnam War, also known as the Second Indochina War, stands as a defining moment in modern history, leaving an indelible mark on the global landscape. Spanning from 1955 to 1975, the conflict was a complex web of political, ideological, and strategic dynamics that involved not only the divided nation of Vietnam but also drew in major world powers, including the United States and the Soviet Union.¹ It is on this backdrop, this study examines the involvement of the Soviet Union and the United States in the Vietnam War.

The Cold War and the Nature of Vietnam War

At the core of the Vietnam War were the ideological struggles between USSR and United States. The Cold War's bipolar world order intensified the confrontation, as the United States and the Soviet Union competed for influence in the post-colonial landscape. The appeal of communism, which promised liberation from historical oppression, resonated deeply within Vietnamese society. Conversely, the United States, motivated by containment and the domino theory, saw the spread of communism as a threat to global stability and its own interests.² The roots of the Vietnam War can be traced back to a complex interplay of factors that shaped Vietnam's post-colonial identity and geopolitical positioning. Colonial

legacies kindled a fervent desire for self-determination, national divisions set the stage for a struggle between two divergent paths, and the ideological tug-of-war between communism and anti-communism cast Vietnam as a battleground in the larger Cold War narrative.³ Understanding these historical foundations is vital for comprehending the intricacies of the conflict's evolution and its profound impact on both Vietnam and the global stage.

The involvement of the United States in the Vietnam War was not a happenstance event but rather a consequence of a complex interplay of motivations driven by geopolitical strategies and Cold War ideologies. Central to American intervention was the domino theory, a belief that the spread of communism in one nation would trigger a cascade effect, leading neighboring countries to follow suit.⁴ The United States feared that a communist victory in Vietnam could serve as a precedent, inspiring similar revolutions across Southeast Asia and beyond. This theory underpinned the United States' conviction that stopping the advance of communism in Vietnam was essential to prevent a potentially catastrophic geopolitical shift.⁵

The containment policy, rooted in the President Harry Truman Doctrine, formed the cornerstone of America's Cold War strategy. As the Soviet Union expanded its influence, the United States sought to "contain" the spread of

communism by supporting nations threatened by communist insurgencies. In Vietnam, this policy manifested as substantial financial, military, and diplomatic assistance to the South Vietnamese government.⁶ The United States aimed to prop up a non-communist regime in the South, thwarting the expansion of communism and demonstrating its commitment to containment. The broader Cold War dynamics played a pivotal role in shaping American intervention in Vietnam. The ideological confrontation between capitalism and communism had polarized the world into opposing camps led by the United States and the Soviet Union.⁷ American policymakers viewed Vietnam as a key battleground in this ideological struggle, where a communist victory would symbolize a setback for democratic ideals and could embolden other anti-Western movements globally. Therefore, Vietnam became a litmus test of American resolve in the face of perceived communist aggression.⁸

The United States' intervention in Vietnam was a calculated response to a complex web of motivations driven by geopolitical concerns, Cold War ideologies, and strategies aimed at containing the spread of communism. The domino theory heightened fears of regional destabilization, the containment policy dictated decisive action to prevent communism's expansion, and the broader ideological struggle of the Cold War magnified the significance of Vietnam as a symbolic

battleground. Understanding these motivations is pivotal to comprehending the depth of American involvement and the profound impact it had on the trajectory of the Vietnam War.⁹

The United States' involvement in the Vietnam War was a significant aspect of the conflict. McNamara and Kissinger provide insights into the U.S. government's decision-making processes. The escalation of U.S. military involvement and the adoption of "search and destroy" tactics have been scrutinized by Halberstam and Sheehan. The use of chemical defoliants like Agent Orange, explored by DeBenedetti, raised ethical questions and had severe long-term consequences. The Vietnam War demonstrated the complexities of intervening in a foreign conflict and the challenges of implementing military strategies in a guerrilla warfare environment. The United States' entry into the Vietnam War was gradual but escalated significantly over time. Initially, the U.S. provided economic and military assistance to the South Vietnamese government, aiming to bolster its defenses against the communist insurgency.¹⁰ The military advisors sent to train the South Vietnamese army grew in number, and by the early 1960s, U.S. involvement became more overt. The U.S. military adopted a "search and destroy" strategy as a primary military approach in the early stages of the war. This strategy involved locating and engaging the enemy forces, often through large-scale

ground operations. However, this approach proved problematic in the complex terrain of Vietnam, where the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army could easily blend into the local population and utilize The United States also launched extensive air campaigns, including strategic bombing, to target enemy positions and supply routes.¹¹ The Rolling Thunder campaign, initiated in 1965, was a massive aerial bombardment campaign against North Vietnam. Despite the scale of the bombing, it failed to achieve its intended objectives and instead intensified opposition to the war both domestically and internationally. As the war progressed, the U.S. shifted its military strategy towards counterinsurgency and pacification efforts. The goal was to win the "hearts and minds" of the Vietnamese population by providing security, economic development, and social reforms.¹²

However, the implementation of these strategies faced challenges due to issues such as corruption, inefficiency, and cultural misunderstandings. The deployment of U.S. troops increased steadily, reaching a peak of over half a million by 1969. Despite the growing military presence, the U.S. struggled to gain a decisive advantage over the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces. The war's toll on American soldiers and the perceived lack of progress led to growing disillusionment and anti-war sentiments back home. U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War sparked significant opposition and protests within the United States.

The anti-war movement grew in size and intensity, with demonstrations, rallies, and civil disobedience becoming widespread.¹³ The Tet Offensive in 1968, although militarily costly for the Viet Cong guerrilla warfare tactics and North Vietnamese forces, had a profound psychological impact on the American public and further fueled anti-war sentiments. In the early 1970s, the Nixon administration pursued a policy of "Vietnamization," aimed at gradually transferring the responsibility for combat operations to the South Vietnamese forces. The withdrawal of U.S. troops began, but this process faced challenges due to the continuing strength and resilience of the communist forces.¹⁴

The Soviet Union supplied North Vietnam with medical supplies, arms, tanks, planes, helicopters, artillery, anti-aircraft missiles and other military equipment. Soviet crews fired Soviet-made surface-to-air missiles at US aircraft in 1965. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russian officials acknowledged that the USSR had stationed up to 3,000 troops in Vietnam. According to Russian sources, between 1953 and 1991, the hardware donated by the Soviet Union included: 2,000 tanks; 1,700 APCs; 7,000 artillery guns; over 5,000 anti-aircraft guns; 158 surface-to-air missile launchers; and 120 helicopters. In total, the Soviets sent North Vietnam annual arms shipments worth \$450 million.¹⁵ From July 1965 to the end of 1974, fighting in Vietnam was

observed by some 6,500 officers and generals, as well as more than 4,500 soldiers and sergeants of the Soviet Armed Forces, amounting to 11,000 military personnel. The KGB helped develop the signals intelligence capabilities of the North Vietnamese.¹⁶

Prior to 1967, the Soviet Union provided military assistance by assisting North Vietnamese air force personnel. Soviet ships in the South China Sea gave vital early warnings to PAVN/VC forces in South Vietnam. The Soviet intelligence ships would pick up American B-52 bombers flying from Okinawa and Guam. Their airspeed and direction would be noted and then relayed to the Central Office for South Vietnam, North Vietnam's southern headquarters. Using airspeed and direction, COSVN analysts would calculate the bombing target and tell any assets to move "perpendicularly to the attack trajectory."¹⁶ These advance warnings gave them time to move out of the way of the bombers, and, while the bombing runs caused extensive damage, because of the early warnings from 1968 to 1970 they did not kill a single military or civilian leader in the headquarters complexes. Further assistance was also extended to helping North Vietnam develop anti-US propaganda posters.

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detected and captured. The Soviets helped the Ministry of Public Security recruit foreigners within high-level diplomatic circles among the Western-allies of the US, under a clandestine program known as "B12,MM" which produced thousands of high-level documents for nearly a decade, including targets of B-52 strikes. In 1975, the SIGINT services had broken information from Western US-allies in Saigon, determining that the US would not intervene to save South Vietnam from collapse.¹⁸

By 1967 growing numbers of Americans were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the war. Some, especially students, intellectuals, academics, and clergymen, opposed the war on moral grounds, pointing out that large numbers of civilians in both the North and the South were becoming the chief victims of the war and that the United States was in reality supporting a corrupt and oppressive dictatorship in Saigon. Campus protests became common, and youthful picketers sometimes ringed the White House, chanting, "Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?" In October 1967 at least 35,000 demonstrators staged a mass protest outside the Pentagon. Many more Americans, not part of any peace movement, opposed the war because of the increasing American casualties and the lack of evidence that the United States was winning.¹⁹ Still other Americans believed that Johnson was not doing what was necessary to win the war and was

obliging the military to fight “with one hand tied behind its back.” By the summer of 1967 fewer than 50 percent of polled citizens said they supported the president’s conduct of the war.

In Hanoi the communist leadership was also becoming impatient with the progress of the war. Although pleased with their ability to hold their own against the more-numerous and better-armed Americans and their South Vietnamese allies, they were aware that the United States showed no sign of giving up its hopes of victory and indeed had continued to pour more troops into Vietnam. In the summer of 1967 the communists decided on a bold stroke that would cripple the Saigon government and destroy once and for all American expectations of success.²⁰ Their plan was to launch simultaneous military attacks at cities, towns, and military installations, combined with popular uprisings throughout the country. The “general offensive/general uprising” was scheduled to occur during the Lunar New Year festival, or Tet, early in 1968.²¹

To distract attention from their preparations and attract U.S. forces away from the large cities, the communists launched diversionary attacks in October 1967 against the important but isolated town of Dak To in the central highlands and against Loc Ninh on the route to Saigon. Finally, beginning in late January 1968, two North Vietnamese divisions began a prolonged offensive against the

Marine base at Khe Sanh, in the northwest corner of South Vietnam near the Laotian border. Like other bases along the DMZ, Khe Sanh was within range of artillery in North Vietnam, and, beginning on January 21, the North Vietnamese unleashed a heavy barrage against it. News reports repeatedly drew comparisons between Khe Sanh and the siege of the French fortress at Dien Bien Phu. Both the president and General Westmoreland were convinced that Khe Sanh was the enemy's main objective and that signs of a communist buildup in the urban areas were merely a diversion.²²

Exactly the opposite was the case. On January 31, while approximately 50,000 U.S. and South Vietnamese troops were occupied in defending or supporting Khe Sanh and other DMZ bases, the communists launched an offensive throughout South Vietnam. They attacked 36 of 44 provincial capitals, 64 district capitals, five of the six major cities, and more than two dozen airfields and bases. Westmoreland's Saigon headquarters came under attack, and a VC squad even penetrated the compound of the U.S. embassy. In Hue, the former imperial Vietnamese capital, communist troops seized control of more than half the city and held it for nearly three weeks.²³

Although taken by surprise, U.S. and South Vietnamese forces struck back quickly against the often poorly coordinated attacks. With the exception of Hue,

the communists were unable to hold any town or base for more than a day or two, and their forces suffered extremely heavy casualties. South Vietnamese soldiers, often defending their homes and families, fought surprisingly well, and nowhere did the population rise up to support the Viet Cong. Indeed, so destructive were some communist attacks that many in the local population, while still disliking the Saigon government, became far less supportive of the Viet Cong.²⁴

U.S. and South Vietnamese troops may have recovered quickly, but that was not true of Americans at home. The Tet Offensive sent shock waves throughout the United States, startling those who had believed the White House's claims that victory was near and convincing those with doubts that the situation was even worse than they had imagined. Television coverage of the destructive fighting in Saigon and Hue was extensive and graphic and left many with the impression that the United States and its ally were in desperate straits. Many in Washington still expected a major battle at Khe Sanh or further large communist attacks elsewhere.²⁵

As criticism of President Lyndon Johnson's leadership by political leaders and the media mounted, the public was shocked to read in a *New York Times* headline story on March 10 that General Westmoreland had requested 206,000 additional troops for Vietnam. This news was widely interpreted as confirmation

that the U.S. situation in Vietnam must be dire indeed. In fact, Westmoreland, assessing the Tet attacks as a serious defeat for the communists, wanted the additional troops to deliver a knockout blow against the weakened enemy. He had been encouraged to request the troops by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who saw this as an opportunity finally to mobilize the reserves and reconstitute a strategic reserve for use in contingencies other than Vietnam.²⁶ The president turned the request over to his new secretary of defense, Clark Clifford, who had replaced a disillusioned McNamara a few weeks before. Clifford soon decided not only that massive reinforcements were ill-advised but that the entire war effort had to be reassessed.²⁷

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CHAPTER FOUR

IMPACT OF THE VIETNAM WAR ON SOVIET UNION AND THE UNITED STATES

The Vietnam War was a long, costly and divisive conflict that pitted the communist government of North Vietnam against South Vietnam and its principal ally, the United States.¹ The conflict was intensified by the ongoing Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. More than 3 million people (including over 58,000 Americans) were killed in the Vietnam War, and more than half of the dead were Vietnamese civilians.² It on this backdrop, this chapter examines the impact of the Vietnam war on Soviet Union and the United States.

Soon after the war, Vietnam's economic situation deteriorated. The industrial centers in the north had been damaged by the war. Much of the agricultural land in central and southern Vietnam had been poisoned by Agent Orange or other chemical agents, as well as scattered with land mines and other unexploded ordinances rendering it unusable for agricultural production.³ Moreover, foreign aid, upon which Vietnam had grown dependent during wartime, was withdrawn by both China and the Soviet Union. The termination of U.S. aid to South Vietnam and the lack of reconstruction aid also crippled the economy (Marr and White, 1988).⁴ Faced with these challenges, combined with the U.S.-led trade embargo, natural disasters, and internal political turmoil, Vietnam entered a

serious economic crisis characterized by food shortages and declining standard of living in the late 1970s and the early 1980s.⁵

Impact of Vietnam War on American Society

During the Vietnam War, there was strong discontent within the American domestic community. There were two main reasons why the U.S. domestic community was dissatisfied with the U.S. military action against Vietnam. First, the United States in military operations against Vietnam for the first time in the form of live broadcast presented to the domestic public, but due to the United States did not achieve the original expected results,⁶ the United States intended to show the military's strong, as well as the control of the war situation, but in fact, the U.S. military in the Vietnam battlefield did not make effective progress, but instead there are this huge casualties and losses, with the advancement of the war, the United States has never abandoned As the war progressed, the U.S. never gave up on Vietnam and was still paying for it in terms of military funding and troop replenishment, which led to strong protests from the American domestic public. The second reason was that many Americans believed that the U.S. intervention in the war was wrong.⁷

Protests broke out from time to time in the U.S. By 1968, anti-war demonstrations had spread throughout the country. Under the mood of discontent

at all levels of society, bloodshed continued to break out within the U.S. In May 1970, the Kent State University shooting, in protest of the Ohio National Guard shot and killed four students involved in protests the Vietnam War and the U.S. invasion of Cambodia at Kent State University, in the wake of which the first nationwide student general strike in U.S. history erupted, with more than 100,000 students flooding Washington, D.C., to protest to protest.⁸ As the U.S. draft became increasingly harsh during the Vietnam War, draft-eligible young men became fearful, and much of the population began to choose to resist military service, with thousands of young American men choosing to flee to Canada or Sweden to avoid the risks of the draft, and the Swedish government's welcoming of young U.S. draft dodgers once caused a strain in Swiss American relations. As the anti-war wave grew, people from all walks of life began to join the movement.⁹

Negative Effects of the Vietnam War on the United States

Under the pressure of domestic public opinion and enormous economic pressure, the withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam in 1973 signaled the complete withdrawal of the United States from the Vietnamese civil war and its non-interference in Vietnamese politics.¹⁰ On July 2, 1976, North and South Vietnam were reunited, and the U.S. war deployment in Vietnam was declared a

failure. As a result, the U.S. suffered a great blow both internally and externally. Within the United States, antiwar marches and waves led to a negative attitude towards the government.¹¹ The Vietnam War was the longest war in American history. Over ten years of the Vietnam War cost the United States at least two hundred and fifty billion dollars. From an external point of view, it was not just a loss of the war for the United States, but also a turning point in the Cold War when the United States and the Soviet Union confronted each other.¹² The Vietnam War changed the Cold War in some ways, as the U.S. loss in Vietnam led to the strengthening and expansion of the ideology of Soviet Communism, and to a certain extent weakened U.S. dominance over the Third World. The U.S. war also consumed many human resources according to the website National Archives, statistics show that the U.S. in Vietnam as of 2008, according to statistics, there were 58,220 deaths, while another source shows that the number of deaths from 1960 onwards has risen sharply every year, the highest figure in 1968 deaths reached 16,899. This side projection shows that the US military was relatively passive during the Vietnam War and shows the failure of the US in this military operation.¹³ Also, the negative effects were that the Vietnam War exacerbated racial and civil rights issues within the United States, the anti-war movement made the national system fragile and led to a disconnect between the American popular

level and the governmental level, as well as creating a lot of discontent amongst the American masses, which had a great negative impact on the American society.¹⁴

The US's contribution to the Vietnam War was a significant part of the contention. McNamara (1995) and Kissinger (1999) give experiences in the US government's dynamic cycle. The rising inclusion of the US military and the reception of "search and obliterate" strategies have been concentrated by Halberstam (1973) and Sheehan (1988).¹⁵ The utilization of compound defoliants like Napalm, investigated by DeBenedetti (1991), brings up moral issues and has extreme long-term results. The Vietnam War exhibited the intricacy of mediation in unfamiliar contentions and the difficulties of carrying out military methodology in a hit-and-run combat climate.¹⁶ The US's entrance into the Vietnam War was progressive; however, it expanded altogether over the long haul. At first, the US gave monetary and military help to the South Vietnamese government, pointing toward working on its safeguards against the socialist revolt. The number of military counselors shipped off to train the South Vietnamese armed forces expanded, and in the mid-1960s, the US contribution turned out to be more plain.¹⁷

The US military embraced a "search and obliterate" technique as its essential military methodology in the early phases of the conflict. This technique

includes finding and drawing in foreign powers, frequently through enormous-scale ground activities. Nonetheless, this approach demonstrated danger in Vietnam's complicated landscape, where the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Armed Forces could without much of a stretch mix into the nearby populace and use close-quarters combat strategies.¹⁸ The US additionally sent off a broad air crusade, including key bombardment, to target enemy positions and supply lines. The massive aerial bombing campaign against North Vietnam, known as the Rolling Thunder campaign, began in 1965. Regardless of the size of the bombings, they neglected to accomplish their expected objectives and, on second thought, expanded protection from the conflict both locally and globally. As the conflict advanced, the US changed its tactical system to endeavor to kill resistance and guarantee security. By supplying the Vietnamese population with security, economic development, and social reform, the objective is to win their "hearts and minds".¹⁹ However, issues like corruption, inefficiency, and cultural misperceptions make it difficult to implement this strategy. U.S. troop organizations kept on expanding, arriving at the pinnacle of the greater part of 1.000.000 in 1969. Notwithstanding a developing military presence, the U.S. battled to acquire an unequivocal advantage over Viet Cong and North Vietnamese powers. The misfortunes endured by American troopers because of

the conflict and the apparent absence of progress prompted expanding dissatisfaction and hostility toward war opinion at home.²⁰ The US contribution to the Vietnam War ignited critical resistance and fights in the US. The counter-conflict development filled in size and power, with progressively far and wide exhibits, rallies, and common defiance. The Tet Hostile in 1968, albeit unfavorable straightforwardly to North Vietnamese soldiers, mentally affected American culture and further energized enemies of war opinion. In the mid-1970s, the Nixon organization executed a strategy of “Vietnamization”, focused on slowly shifting liability regarding battle tasks to South Vietnamese powers.²¹ The withdrawal of US troops has started; however, this interaction faces difficulties because of the strength and versatility of socialist powers.

Impact of Vietnam War on Soviet Union

Soviet ships in the South China Sea gave vital early warnings to PAVN/VC forces in South Vietnam. The Soviet intelligence ships would pick up American B-52 bombers flying from Okinawa and Guam. Their airspeed and direction would be noted and then relayed to the Central Office for South Vietnam, North Vietnam's southern headquarters.²² Using airspeed and direction, COSVN analysts would calculate the bombing target and tell any assets to move "perpendicularly to the attack trajectory." These advance warnings gave them time

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Some Russian sources give more specific numbers: Between 1953 and 1991, the hardware donated by the Soviet Union included 2,000 tanks, 1,700 APCs, 7,000 artillery guns, over 5,000 anti-aircraft guns, 158 surface-to-air missile launchers, and 120 helicopters. During the war, the Soviets sent North Vietnam annual arms shipments worth \$450 million.²⁵ From July 1965 to the end of 1974, fighting in Vietnam was observed by some 6,500 officers and generals, as

well as more than 4,500 soldiers and sergeants of the Soviet Armed Forces. In addition, Soviet military schools and academies began training Vietnamese soldiers in all more than 10,000 military personnel. The KGB also helped develop the signals intelligence (SIGINT) capabilities of the North Vietnamese, through an operation known as Vostok (also known as Phương Đông, meaning "Orient" and named after the Vostok. The Vostok program was a counterintelligence and espionage program.²⁶ These programs were pivotal in detecting and defeating CIA and South Vietnamese commando teams sent into North Vietnam, as they were detected and captured. The Soviets helped the Ministry of Public Security recruit foreigners within high-level diplomatic circles among the Western-allies of the US, under a clandestine program known as "B12, MM" which produced thousands of high-level documents for nearly a decade, including targets of B-52 strikes. In 1975, the SIGINT services had broken information from Western US-allies in Saigon, determining that the US would not intervene to save South Vietnam from collapse.²⁷

Impacts on Civilians and Soldiers

Both Vietnamese civilians and American soldiers were significantly impacted by the Vietnam War. FitzGerald (1972) and Schell (1984) make sense of the loss of life, depicting the experiences experienced by Vietnamese regular people trapped in the crossfire of the contention. Hersh (1970) and Bilton and Sim (1992) conducted investigations into the My Lai massacre, which revealed the atrocities committed during the war.²⁸ The mental effect on American fighters, ordinarily alluded to as “Vietnam Disorder”, has been concentrated on by different analysts (Lifton, 1973; Shay, 1994). The encounters of regular citizens and fighters during the Vietnam War highlight the staggering effect of the struggle on both sides of the conflict. The majority of the damage and violence caused by the war fell on Vietnamese civilians. Broad utilization of airborne bombs, mounted gun shelling, and substance deforestation brought about various regular citizen setbacks and harm to the framework and towns. Vital bombarding efforts, for example, Activity Moving Thunder, annihilated homes, schools, emergency clinics, and fundamental administrations, dislodging a huge number of regular people. This war saw various instances of war wrongdoings and monstrosities carried out against Vietnamese regular citizens.²⁹ The My Lai slaughter in 1968, in which American soldiers killed many unarmed townspeople, is quite possibly the most well-known episode. Different occurrences of viciousness against regular

folks, including assault, torment, and synopsis executions, were likewise revealed during the conflict.³⁰

The mental cost for Vietnamese regular folks and American troopers was tremendous. The steady feeling of dread toward brutality, loss of friends and family, and the experience of living in a disaster area significantly affect the psychological prosperity of regular citizens. Moreover, American troopers face horrible encounters in the combat zone, prompting high rates of post-awful pressure issues (PAPI) and other mental circumstances. The utilization of defoliant synthetic substances, like napalm, has serious and durable ecological results.³¹ These chemicals not only harm vegetation, but they also pollute soil and water, affecting agricultural productivity and posing long-term health risks to civilians. The Vietnam War became a philanthropic emergency, with a great many Vietnamese regular folks dislodged from their homes and compelled to reside in tricky circumstances. Disturbance of social designs and loss of occupations lead to far-reaching destitution and languishing. In Vietnam, the environment was difficult and demoralizing for American soldiers.³² The uncommon idea of war and the difficulties of battling a guerrilla foe added to their pressure and disillusionment. Disillusionment and disagreement among soldiers were sparked by the stark contrast between the war depicted by the US government and the

harsh reality on the ground. One of the main long-haul effects of the Vietnam War was the tradition of napalm. This poisonous herbicide, splashed by the US military to deforest and uncover foe hideaways, caused extreme medical issues for those uncovered, including Vietnamese regular people and American veterans.³³ In Vietnam and the United States, the effects of Agent Orange continue to affect subsequent generations, resulting in birth defects and health issues. For fighters getting back, the reintegration interaction is frequently troublesome. Large numbers of them face moves in acclimating to nonmilitary personnel life, managing PAPI, and adapting to the physical and close-tohome scars of war. The absence of satisfactory help and understanding from the local area further disturbs their battle.³⁴

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The first chapter examines the blue-print of the entire research work; the chapter examines the introduction, aim and objectives, scope of the study, methodology and literature review. The second chapter examines the historical antecedes of the Vietnam war and nature of the war. The third chapter surveys how the Vietnam War can be considered the most influential Cold War conflict. The changes that occurred to United States foreign policy throughout the Vietnam War had drastic effects on the Cold War atmosphere. The chapter also caption that in all aspects the Vietnam War was the quintessential Cold War conflict. It included proxy war between the United States and the Soviet Union, it had the potential to escalate into nuclear war, it resulted in the diplomatic recognition of the People's Republic of China, it led to arms reduction treaties between the major superpowers, and brought diplomacy to the forefront of Cold War strategy. The fourth chapter identifies the nature and impact of the war on diplomatic relations between Soviet Union and the United States. The chapter further elucidated how the aftermath of the war influences the socio-political and economic relations between Soviet Union and the United States.

In conclusion, the Vietnam War can be considered the most influential Cold War conflict. The changes that occurred to United States foreign policy throughout

the Vietnam War had drastic effects on the Cold War atmosphere. In all aspects the Vietnam War was the quintessential Cold War conflict. It included proxy war between the United States and the Soviet Union, it had the potential to escalate into nuclear war, it resulted in the diplomatic recognition of the People's Republic of China, it led to arms reduction treaties between the major superpowers, and brought diplomacy to the forefront of Cold War strategy.¹ The Vietnam War impacted the Cold War by generating change in American foreign policy, consequently altering the Cold War atmosphere, and by creating dissent across the globe against the United States government for their role in the Vietnam War. Out of all the critical events that occurred during the Cold War era, the conflict between a hegemonic global superpower and a poverty-stricken society of farmers turned out to have the biggest influence on the Cold War.²

Central to this study arguments is a rejection of the "Cold War mindset" that the Vietnam War was predominantly a battle between communists and capitalists to determine if Vietnam were to look like the United States or the Soviet Union. In fact, to view the Vietnam War as a proxy war between the United States and the Soviet Union ignores many fundamental aspects of the conflict. A complete analysis of the Vietnam War should view the war as an event embedded in international systems, rather than through the lens of American parochialism.

The Soviets knew from the onset that war in Vietnam was not favorable to their foreign policy aims, one reason being the potentially dangerous effect on relations with the United States and China.³ The Vietnam War, for the Soviet Union, produced the unintended risk of empowering the Chinese as an anti-imperialist alternative to the USSR. Through exploring the intersection of the United States, the Soviet Union, and China in Vietnam, this thesis has explored international relations in the Cold War beyond the bipolarity of the United States and the Soviet Union, illustrating Mao's attempt to turn revolutionary rhetoric to action on its largest global stage through the Vietnam War.⁴

Tracing Soviet and Chinese ideologies heading into the Vietnam War allows us to understand what each government's goals were in Vietnam, explaining why Sino-Soviet competition existed in Vietnam. A close examination of the largely understudied organization Interkit furthers this story, showing that not only did the Soviet Union and China have differing goals and strategies in Vietnam, but also that the Soviet Union acknowledged and actively fought against China's rise to prominence. As the above analysis demonstrates, one factor leading to this rise in prominence was China's role as one of the "two big brothers" to North Vietnam, providing advice contrary to that of the Soviets.⁵

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