



HISTORICAL CRISIS COMMITTEE
BACKGROUND GUIDE
VANCOUVER MODEL UNITED NATIONS
~ the 13th annual conference ~





VANCOUVER MODEL UNITED NATIONS

The 13th Annual Conference ♦ February 14-16, 2014

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Dear Delegates,

My name is Paul Redelmeier, and I am the director of the Historical Crisis Committee for VMUN 2014. I began participating in Model UN in Grade 6, and have enjoyed each and every Model UN conference I have attended since. I am proud to be directing the HCC at my 6th and final VMUN. As your director, I am looking forward to watching you debate, negotiate, and resolve an important historical matter: the rise of communism in the Indo-chinese peninsula.

The Geneva Conference of 1954 was a very important meeting, and our simulation will require both compromise and innovation. It directly involves the whole of Southeast Asia while indirectly involving most, if not all, of the rest of the world. Resolving the issues raised in the Geneva Conference will require action from both the small countries in the area and the global superpowers who have vested interests in the fate of the Indochinese peninsula. Although this is a challenging scenario, I am confident that over a weekend of strong debating and resolution-writing you will achieve excellent solutions.

Please feel free to ask me any questions you have over the coming months, as I am always happy to help. Whether the question is about a specific element of the topics, the committee, the conference, MUN, or life in general, I will do my best to point you in the right direction. I'll see you at the conference!

Regards,

Paul Redelmeier

Director: Historical Crisis Committee

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Position Paper Policy

What is a Position Paper?

A position paper is a brief overview of a country's stance on the topics being discussed by a particular committee. Though there is no specific format the position paper must follow, it should include a description of your positions your country holds on the issues on the agenda, relevant actions that your country has taken, and potential solutions that your country would support.

At Vancouver Model United Nations, delegates should write a position paper for each of the committee's topics. Each position paper should not exceed one page, and should all be combined into a single document per delegate.

For the Historical Crisis Committee, position papers are mandatory.

Formatting

Position papers should:

- Include the name of the delegate, his/her country, and the committee
- Be in a standard font (e.g. Times New Roman) with a 12-point font size and 1-inch document margins
- Not include illustrations, diagrams, decorations, national symbols, watermarks, or page borders
- Include citations and a bibliography, in any format, giving due credit to the sources used in research (not included in the 1-page limit)

Due Dates and Submission Procedure

Position papers for this committee must be submitted by midnight on January 24, 2014.

Once your position paper is complete, please save the file as *your last name, your first name* and send it as an attachment in an email, to your committee's email address, with the subject heading as *your last name, your first name — Position Paper*. Please do not add any other attachments to the email or write anything else in the body.

Both your position papers should be combined into a single PDF or Word document file; position papers submitted in another format will not be accepted.

Each position paper will be manually reviewed and considered for the Best Position Paper award.

The email address for this committee is hcc@vmun.com.

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The Geneva Conference of 1954

Overview

Set against the backdrop of the Cold War, the Geneva Conference of 1954 stands as one of the great diplomatic failures of the 20th century. Over the course of 86 days, 9 global and regional powers squabbled amongst themselves, undercutting both allies and enemies at every opportunity in a fashion that would lay the groundwork for the longest conflict of the 20th century: the Vietnam War.

The conference aimed to tackle two central questions, each of which had much to do with Southeast Asian foreign policy. The first was an effort at settling the longstanding sovereignty disputes on the Korean Peninsula; for the purpose of the Historical Crisis Committee, we will ignore this question completely, as the segment of the conference centred on this question regarding Korea ending without any treaty or agreement being made.



Rather, we will look into the more contentious Vietnam question, as well as the broader goal of restoring peace to the Southeast Asian peninsula of Indochina. It should be noted of course, that in regards to this last section of the latter question, Indochina was viewed by the world powers as to only consist of the territories of present-day Laos, Cambodia and, of course, Vietnam: in other words, the former Southeast Asian colonies of the fading French Empire.

Each of these “political units,”¹ as US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles referred to them in an address less than a month before the conference, was in the process of (Vietnam) or had the year before (Cambodia and Laos) become independent, transitioning from their prior statuses as French colonies.

Of course, in the quickly moving world of Southeast Asia, the several-month Geneva conference did not come at time when diplomatic developments lay at a standstill, even relatively speaking. Rather, it came as the military arm of the independence-seeking Viet Minh continued on its final military campaign of the First Indochina War (colloquially known as the Vietnam War of Independence). While your research will indicate that the Vietnam portion of the conference began after the decisive battle of Dien Bien Phu had finished, for the purposes of the Historical Crisis Committee, we will operate under the assumption that there was no Korean section of the conference, and that debate on Vietnam began whilst the battle of Dien Bien Phu was ongoing, with the conclusive Battle of Many Yang Pass also taking place over the course of the conference, the latter finishing just days before the official adjournment.

¹ Dulles, John Foster. "Indochina - Views of the United States on the Eve of the Geneva Conference:

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Timeline

1887	French Indochina is formed from territories encompassing what is now Vietnam and Cambodia.
1893	Laos is ceded to France, following its victory against Siam in the Franco-Siamese war of 1893; the territory is added to French Indochina.
10 February 1930	The Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng (the Vietnamese nationalist party, VNQDD) stages the Yen Bai Mutiny, in which a group of Vietnamese soldiers in the French colonial army conspire with a group of civilians in an unsuccessful attempt to inspire a wider revolutionary movement.
17 June 1930	13 members of the VNQDD's leadership are executed in response to the attempted Yen Bai Mutiny. The subsequent vacuum that is created soon allows for the newly created Indochinese Communist Party of Ho Chi Minh to emerge as the predominant revolutionary force in Vietnam, until its dissolution in 1945.
24 January 1944	Roosevelt asserts to his Secretary of State that "Indochina should not go back to France, but that it should be administered by an international trusteeship." ²
25 August 1945	Emperor Bao Dai abdicates the throne after being persuaded by Ho Chi Minh, whose revolutionary Viet Minh party declares independence 8 days later.
6 March 1946	Ho-Saintenay agreement is signed between Ho Chi Minh, the President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and Jean Sainteny, a Special Envoy of France that "recognizes the Vietnamese Republic as a Free State having its own Government, its own Parliament, its own Army and its own Finances, forming part of the Indochinese Federation and of the French Union." ³ The concession is made in order to satisfy China's demand to force them to withdraw from northern Vietnam.
November 1946	The Viet Minh are forced to retreat into the jungles after relations turn violent. French forces occupy Hanoi.
December 1946	The First Indochina War begins as the Viet Minh launches its first attack on the French forces.
January 1950	Having taken power only months prior, Mao Zedong's communist government recognizes Ho Chi Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam alongside the Soviet Union. Military aid and advice begins to be sent from China as Vietnam transforms its army into a more conventional one.
26 July 1950	Harry Truman authorizes \$15 million in military aid to France. Over the next 4 years, \$3 billion will be spent on the war effort by the United States.
13 March 1954	The Vietnamese Assault on the Dien Bien Phu airbase begins.
26 April 1954	The Geneva Conference on Indochina starts.
7 May 1954	The Vietnamese assault proves successful

² Beamish, Thomas D. "UCSB Case Method - 1941-1945 Indochina at the Crossroads." *UCSB Case Method - 1941-1945 Indochina at the Crossroads*. University of California, Santa Barbara, 2002. Web. 22 Aug. 2013. <<http://www.soc.ucsb.edu/projects/casemethod/beamish.html>>.

³ "Accord Between France and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, 6 March 1946." *The Pentagon Papers*. Gravel Edition ed. Vol. 1. Boston: Beacon, 1971. 18-19. Web. 22 Aug. 2013. <<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon/int2.htm>>.

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Historical Analysis

While there are many things about the first Indochina War that can be characterized as dubious or questionable, its inevitability could never have been said to be in doubt. Unlike other colonies set up by Western European nations, France's Indochina colony was one driven purely by a thirst for profit. Over six decades, France ruled what are now Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in a fashion that, though justified as a "civilizing mission," was anything but in truth.⁴ This economic prioritization naturally, led to a string of French governors — 20 from 1900 – 1945 — whose self-interest trumped any desire to improve Vietnam.

Corrupt bureaucrats and officials, despite their lack of a continuous ruling style, had some crucial similarities. The first was a dependence on patronage, a system wherein French officials would elevate a small group of Vietnamese collaborators who would then cooperate with their European partners, exchanging loyalty and information for the status that was granted to them when they were appointed to a position of authority in the local government or commerce sector. The most famous of these, the final Vietnamese emperor, Bao Dai, would remain an important figure in Vietnam from his ascension of the throne in 1926 to his fraudulent removal as head of state in 1955.

Ho Chi Minh's path as the future liberator of Vietnam was paved by the disastrous 1930 Yen Bai Mutiny. This gamble by the VNQDD, whose position as the leading Indochinese independence group had been secure up until then, proved disastrous when on February 10th, the revolutionary organization abandoned its previous, clandestine modus operandi for more direct, publicized action. The 50 Vietnamese soldiers who took on their French officers with the help of 60 or so civilians attacking from outside their military base had hoped to inspire a revolutionary fervor in citizens outside of the general VNQDD constituency, but instead only inspired a crackdown on rebellious activities: the ensuing judicial commission convicted 547 individuals associated with the VNQDD, with 80 given death sentences.⁵⁶

This evisceration of Vietnam's premier revolutionary group allowed for Ho Chi Minh's recently formed Indochinese Communist Party to seize power. Where the VNQDD had been supported by Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang party (and thus was fervently anti-communist), the Indochinese Communist Party was a coalition of the Marxist organizations in each of Vietnam's three provinces. The Indochinese Communist party was thus able to solidify communism's place

⁴ Lewlyn, Jennifer. "French Colonialism in Vietnam." *Alpha History*. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Aug. 2013.
<<http://alphahistory.com/vietnam/french-colonialism-in-vietnam/>>.

⁵ Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang (VNQDD) (Vietnamese Revolutionary Organization)." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d. Web. 22 Aug. 2013.
<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/628333/Viet-Nam-Quoc-Dan-Dang-VNQDD>>.

⁶Joes, Anthony James. *Modern Guerrilla Insurgency*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1992. Web. 22 Aug. 2013.
<http://books.google.ca/books?id=hguhU2cj4IwC&pg=PA85&lpg=PA85&dq=mission+civilisatrice+indochina&source=bl&ots=MHLWP03Arx&sig=rRx14nTOqX6XV9SASbhulgi_tc&hl=en&sa=X&ei=hRAMUve2HcPUiwLX9YC4BQ&ved=0CIIBEogBMAk#v=onepage&q=mission%20civilisatrice%20indochina&f=false>.

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in the Vietnamese Independence movement while building ties the Soviet Union, which would prove crucial later on.⁷

The Indochinese Communist Party would continue to build support in the coming years, despite the fact that it was obviously wary that it would suffer the same fate that had befallen the VNQDD. Barely a decade into this development, however, the Japanese struck, invading China and then taking advantage of an already weakened France to take control of Vietnam in 1940, despite allowing French colonial officials to retain a semblance of power. This defeat, which would have the effect of stripping the European country of its mandate of heaven, no doubt emboldened Ho Chi Minh and his fellow revolutionaries. A year later, the Indochinese Communist Party would declare that the class war central to Marx's beliefs would not be prioritized over national independence, and with that statement, the Viet Minh, the front for all anti-imperialistic sentiments in Vietnam was founded.

Over the next 4 years, under General Vo Nguyen Giap, the Viet Minh army would grow in ranks to several hundred thousand and would assume control of several territories near Vietnam's north border. Recognized as the only real anti-Japanese force in Vietnam, the Viet Minh were buoyed by the support of the Allies, who parachuted in many of the supplies that allowed the Viet Minh to continue. On March 9, 1945 the Japanese ended the fictitious sharing of power, arresting French officials and convincing Emperor Bao Dai, the former French puppet whose 20 year rule had not been interrupted to declare a free and independent Vietnamese state.⁸ After the Japanese rule was put to an end several months later, the Viet Minh-led what is known as the August Revolution. Ho Chi Minh himself reaffirmed Bao Dai's declaration, whilst simultaneously securing his abdication. Unsurprisingly, with the Japanese deposed, the French were eager to reassert their control. The next month, they landed in Saigon, re-establishing their power in the south. As Ho Chi Minh consolidated power in the north, formally dissolving the ICP two months later, conflict became inevitable.

Tensions seemed to have been quelled⁹ the next year, when on March 6th Ho Chi Minh signed an accord allowing the French to re-enter Vietnam for the following 5 years in return for Vietnam being recognized as a free state within the French Union. The following months would see the formation of a partnership between the two groups, as the Viet Minh, supported by French troops, worked to eradicate other independence groups after the withdrawal of the at-the-time anti-communist Chinese in mid-1946. This relationship would not prove to be lasting, however, and resistance against European forces soon arose, culminating in an open conflict in North Vietnam that December. In this conflict, the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (the free state that Ho Chi Minh had earlier proclaimed whose representatives were almost purely Viet Minh party members) had to retreat for the hills.

⁷ Minh, Ho Chi. "Appeal Made on the Occasion of the Founding of the Indochinese Communist Party." Address. Founding of the Indochinese Communist Party. Hong Kong. 18 Feb. 1930. *Marxists.org*. Web. 22 Aug. 2013. <<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/ho-chi-minh/works/1930/02/18.htm>>.

⁸ "Vietnam - Prelude." *Research/American Political History*. Eagleton - Rutgers, n.d. Web. 22 Aug. 2013. <http://www.eagleton.rutgers.edu/research/americanhistory/ap_vietnam.php>.

⁹ "Background to the Crisis 1940-50." *The Pentagon Papers*. Gravel Edition ed. Vol. 1. Boston: Beacon, 1971. 42-52. *The Pentagon Papers, Vol. 2, Chapter 2, "The Strategic Hamlet Program"* Web. 22 Aug. 2013. <<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon/pent4.htm>>.

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As war broke out, the Viet Minh took steps to consistently downplay its communist qualities, instead painting itself as a patriotic anti-foreign movement more than anything else. No major progress was made by either side in the first years of the war. However, in 1949, the political situation shifted substantially. In an effort to retain legitimacy in both South Vietnam and around the world, the French installed Bao Dai, its old stalwart, as 'chief of state' in the rebellious colony. The need for a Vietnamese figurehead was furthered later that year after the victory of Mao Zedong's communists in China. What had previously been a relatively low-key conflict had been fundamentally turned on its head after this development, with Mao wasting no time to introduce automatic weapons, trucks and artillery on the Viet Minh side: aid which would allow General Giap to transform his guerilla forces into a more conventional army.

China's entrance into the war was a catalyst for a more involved United States. Not only did they, alongside Britain, immediately recognize Bao Dai's government in a tit-for-tat response to China and the Soviet Union's endorsement of Ho Chi Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam, but the United States was also compelled to begin financing much of the war effort, despite their doubts of the viability of the "Bao Dai solution." A February 1950 report by the National Security Council on the position of the US with respect to Indochina noted, "It is important to United States security interests that all practicable measures be taken to prevent further communist expansion in Southeast Asia. Indochina is a key area of Southeast Asia and is under immediate threat ... the neighbouring countries of Thailand and Burma could be expected to fall under Communist domination if Indochina were controlled by a communist-dominated government. The balance of Southeast Asia would then be in grave hazard."¹⁰

Indeed, while the US attempted to convince France to compromise with the Vietnamese nationalists, American attempts to contain communism in Europe and Asia meant that the power was firmly in France's hands. Whereas the war was viewed as anti-communist in the United States, it was viewed as colonial in France, and thus America's policy, which desired an eventual French withdrawal, was rendered incompatible by its headstrong ally. It should be noted moreover, that the purpose of the funding was in no way to help a struggling NATO; the Americans only cared about preventing communism. By 1954, the US found itself financing 78% of the war.

This stubbornness by France fostered an attitude that continually prevented South Vietnam from gaining any degree of autonomy. While Bao Dai's regime was purported to be in power of everything save for the army and foreign policy, in reality, he was but a puppet. This attitude proved deficient of course, especially against a foe that, after 1949, was increasingly well-funded and equipped. Ultimately, the fighting would reach a climax at the French air base of Dien Bien Phu, in northwestern Vietnam. After building several outposts around the jungle valley, the French had amassed their forces in anticipation of a showdown. Their underestimation of General Giap's forces, however, proved to be their downfall. On March 13th 1954, Giap's army,

¹⁰ "Report by the National Security Council on the Position of the United States with Respect to Indochina, 27 February 1950, Pp. 361-2." *The Pentagon Papers*. Gravel Edition ed. Vol. 1. Boston: Beacon, 1971. 361-2. *Report by the National Security Council on the Position of the United States with Respect to Indochina, 27 February 1950, Pp. 361-2*. Web. 22 Aug. 2013.
<<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon/doc1.htm>>.

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which outnumbered France's five-to-one, began its assault on the French position. His forces proved to be overwhelming; two months later, on May 7th, the air base fell. The next day, the Geneva conference on Indochina began.

Bloc Positions

United States

Central to American foreign policy was "the domino theory" – the belief that if Vietnam were to fall to communism, so too would the rest of Southeast Asia, including Cambodia, Laos and Thailand. With this in mind, we can extrapolate that above all, the Americans favoured a situation where some type of capitalistic foothold remained on the Indochinese peninsula at all cost. For all intents and purposes, anything that was not a communist state would have been good in the Americans' books. With this in mind, central to the American desire of a French withdrawal from Indochina was a build-up of the Vietnamese National Army (VNA), a crucial step towards self-government. While the United States most certainly recognized that the Vietnamese in the south were not ready to rule on their own at present, like in Afghanistan today, they would have been intent on a plan that would put the fragile nation on the path towards this. Moreover, the United States was conscious of the dangers of losing the war of public opinion, and thus would have been resistant to the idea of entering into compromises that painted the free world as the settler. They were insistent, finally, that Laos and Thailand remained independent and free of Viet Minh control.¹¹

France

It is important to note of course, that, for the purpose of this simulation, we will carry on as if there is no leadership change in the French republic. We will ignore, therefore, the June 18th resignation of French Prime Minister Joseph Laniel, whose replacement, Pierre Mendès-France, was anti-war and anti intervention. France, in entering the negotiations, wished to extract itself from the war in an honourable manner without losing all its influence and its economic interests in the Southeast Asian peninsula. In keeping with this belief, the western European nation prioritized the creation of a stable South Vietnam. For all their hesitancy earlier on, by the time the Geneva negotiations began, the French hoped for the creation of a state which would be able to endure Viet Minh aggression for some time afterwards and defend its territory if need be. Aware that its financial holdings would not be able to survive in Ho Chi Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the French were intent on securing what little territory they remained influential in for the long haul. Entering into the conference, therefore, one can extrapolate that they were fully interested in supporting the nascent South Vietnam Government for several years afterwards.

United Kingdom

The British entered the negotiations in a cautious fashion that was epitomic of their wariness to any sort of aggression on the United States' part. Eisenhower's insistence on signing a collective

¹¹ Gurtov, Melvin. "Negotiations and Vietnam: A Case Study of the Geneva Conference." www.rand.org.
The Rand Corporation, n.d. Web. 22 Feb. 2013.

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security pact *before* the conference reinforced suspicions on the eastern side of the Atlantic that the conflict in Vietnam was putting the United States on the path towards open war with China, which was to be avoided at all cost. Indeed, across the board, the British position was one that attempted to decrease tensions and prevent an inflammation of the current antipathy between the Western and Communist sides. Churchill and his chief negotiator, Anthony Eden, would have faced a difficult predicament should war between America and China come to fruition. As neither becoming involved in the war effort as part of a united front *nor* throwing the Anglo-American alliance into jeopardy was in any way alluring, preventing conflict remained Britain's chief priority throughout the conference.

Soviet Union

The Soviet Union entered the conference determined to prevent an escalation in the Indochinese war. Aware that the United States had not been able find support for its desired united action, the Soviets would have been concerned that a breakdown in negotiations might have brought the west together and thus heightened the risk of an escalated international conflict. Speeches like John Foster Dulles' "Massive Retaliation" address had convinced them that, should negotiations with the West prove futile, the United States would have been perfectly fine with escalating tensions to the point of conflict. Suspicious of how able the Chinese would be in a situation like this, the Soviets were also committed to preventing the United States from intervening in the Peninsula. Achieving a united Vietnam was *not* seen as a priority.¹²

China

Like the Soviets, the maintenance of lasting peace was seen as far more desirable and needed than the creation of one Vietnam on the Chinese side. Especially important to Peking was the idea that China would act as an advocate for other, less powerful, Southeast Asian nations and in turn offering them a viable, collectively secure alternative to sidling up to the West. If unable to convince Cambodia and Laos to join communism's ranks, China was intent on, at very least, neutralizing the two states from being forces in the region.

Possible Solutions

Like in Korea, the desire for a unified state in Vietnam was severely mitigated by the fact that neither the communists nor the West were interested in allowing their foe a puppet state in this volatile area. With the Americans wary that a communist Vietnam would simply mean an extension of Chinese influence onto the rest of the Indochinese peninsula and the French immensely protective of their economic interests, the West would have been unlikely to agree to this scenario at any cost. Meanwhile, on the Communist side of things, neither the Soviets nor the Chinese would have been open to the latter nation having a Western ally on its border.

¹² Jian, Chen, and Shen Zhihua. "The Geneva Conference of 1954: New Evidence from the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China." *Wilsoncenter.org*. The Wilson Center, n.d. Web. 22 Aug. 2013.

http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/CWIHPBulletin16_p1.pdf.

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If a two state solution is seen as necessary, then it will be up to the delegates to decide the answers to two further questions: how invested the global powers will be and whether there will be any mechanism for unification.

Should the 5 great powers of the world be allowed to intervene if an imbalance develops between North and South Vietnam? Would there be a procedure for this? Some have, with hindsight, advocated that North and South Vietnam (and particularly the latter) required support and assistance in their early years to allow them to follow the path to prosperity, as South Korea has today, and avoid the depths of poverty that its northern neighbour now dwells in. But how much is too much? At which point is this meddling seen not as aid but as intervention?

The case study that is the Korean Question also provides insight into the second issue. Is a ceasefire between Ho Chi Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the Western-led Government of South Vietnam desirable, knowing full well the fractious relations that persist today between the two Korea's, and the effect that those tensions have caused throughout both their particular peninsula but also the entire region? On the other hand, knowing how skeptical the great powers were of a one state solution, how would that eventually develop?

Although represented at the conference, Cambodia and Laos were bargaining chips in negotiations, traded around as each party attempted to get them to join their sides. This involved attempting to sign them up as part of their collective security organizations; SEATO in the West's case, or a possible communist equivalent.

All of these questions must be settled at the bargaining table, and delegates are advised to attend the conference with answers to all of these questions and any more that they see fit to answer.

Discussion Questions

1. Should outside nations that are unaffiliated with the conference be involved in a supervisory role for the fledging nation(s)?
2. How supportive were the Big 5 states of their allies' positions? Did they contradict each other openly, or would that have been limited to a more discrete moderated forum?
3. What are the appropriate consequences should the Geneva agreement that you eventually agree to be violated?
4. What will be the ripple effects of unifying/dividing Vietnam on the rest of the world?
5. How long (if at all) should the transition period be for the state(s) from somewhat autonomous to fully independent? Which states should be included in this process

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