HISTORICAL: FIRST INDOCHINA WAR

Security Council II

Issue Description:

The first Indochina War was fought between France and the Viet Minh, led by Ho Chi Minh, from 1946 to 1954. The Viet Minh, a communist group, wanted Vietnamese independence , while France wanted to keep its influence in Indochina. Indochina consisted of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, which had been under French colonial influence. Tensions between France and the Viet Minh increased after the Second World War. Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam independent in September 1945, but France did not accept full Vietnamese independence. Although France and the Viet Minh tried to negotiate in 1946, these negotiations failed and both sides became increasingly more violent. France also supported the State of Vietnam, led by Bao Dai, the former emperor of Vietnam. The war later also became connected to the Cold War. China and the Soviet Union supported the Viet Minh, while the United States supported France and the anti-communist government in Indochina. So, the First Indochina war was not only about Vietnamese independence, but also became part of the wider power struggle between the Western bloc and the Eastern bloc.

Why has this issue not been resolved?

The conflict was difficult to solve because the different sides wanted very different things. The Viet Minh wanted independence and political control over Vietnam, while France wanted to maintain its influence in Indochina. Both sides believed that they had the right to determine Vietnam's future. It was also very difficult because previous attempts at negotiations had failed. The agreement between France and the Viet Minh in March 1946 temporarily reduced tensions, but both sides ultimately couldn't agree on how much independence Vietnam should have and how much influence France should keep. The conflict had also become more international. The United States and its allies were concerned about the spread of communism in Asia, while China and the Soviet Union, both communist countries, supported the Viet Minh. This created the risk that the conflict could become part of a much larger international conflict. All in all, it was difficult to find a solution that would satisfy both sides, while also preventing other countries from getting too involved.

Key actors and their stances on the issue

- **France:** wanted to end the war, while protecting French interest in Indochina.
- **United States:** supported France and the non-communist governments, feared further communist expansion in Asia.
- **China** and **the Soviet Union:** supported the Viet Minh and opposed French influence in Indochina
- **Viet Minh:** wanted Vietnamese independence and an end to French influence.
- **State of Vietnam (Bao Dai):** wanted Vietnamese sovereignty and prevent Vietnam from being dominated by the Viet Minh.
- **Laos and Cambodia:** wanted their own independence and sovereignty to be respected.

Timeline of events

September 2, 1945: Ho Chi Minh declares Vietnam independent, creation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV).

March 6, 1946: France and the DRV sign an agreement recognising the DRV as a free state within the French Union.
November 1946: Tensions flare over control of customs, French bombardment of Haiphong.
December 19, 1946: Viet Minh launched an attack on the French in Hanoi, official start of the war (this will be the current situation during the debate).

Sources

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Good luck with your research reports delegates!

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