

## Theme III: The Cold War and Southeast Asia

### Topic: Manifestations of the Cold War in Southeast Asia

## The Second Indochina War (1959-1975)

**INQUIRY QUESTION: WHO OR WHAT CAUSED THE OUTBREAK OF THE SECOND INDOCHINA WAR?**

**INQUIRY QUESTION: HOW AND WHY DID THE SECOND INDOCHINA WAR DEVELOP?**

### Factors shaping the Second Indochina War (1959–1975)

- 1959 marked Hanoi's public declaration of a war to unite Vietnam, while 1975 marked the fall of Saigon.
- Context of outbreak of the Second Indochina War: Soviet and Chinese diplomatic recognition of Ho Chi Minh's government; American open support for the French and Ngo Dinh Diem; impact of Geneva Accords and South Vietnam's refusal to hold elections; establishment of Republic of Vietnam (RVN) and Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV)

#### **1. Cold War developments**

- Superpower competition for influence in the Third World; worsening Sino- Soviet relations; Sino-American confrontation and rapprochement

#### **2. Role of North and South Vietnam**

- North Vietnam's efforts to reunify Vietnam [e.g. declaration of war to reunify Vietnam (1959), creation of National Liberation Front (NLF) (1960)]; South Vietnamese regimes' consolidation of political power and efforts to combat communist insurgency; both North and South Vietnam's exploitation of Cold War tensions to obtain support from major powers; use of military force (e.g., Tet Offensive (1968), Operation Lam Son 719 (1971)); North Vietnam's negotiations with the USA; fall of Saigon (1975)

#### **3. Role of the USA, the USSR and China**

- The USA: fear of spread of communism; commitment trap; USA's economic and military aid to South Vietnam; direct military involvement [e.g., Operation Rolling Thunder (1965)]; Vietnamisation (1969) and withdrawal of American troops; negotiations with North Vietnam; Paris Peace Accords (1973)
- o The USSR: military and economic support for North Vietnam; preference for negotiations
- o China: military and economic support for North Vietnam; increasing tensions between China and North Vietnam due to Sino-Soviet rivalry

## The Third Indochina War (1978-1991)

**INQUIRY QUESTION: WHO OR WHAT CAUSED THE OUTBREAK OF THE THIRD INDOCHINA WAR?**

**INQUIRY QUESTION: HOW AND WHY DID THE THIRD INDOCHINA WAR DEVELOP?**

- Factors shaping the Third Indochina War (1978–1991)

1978 marked Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia, while 1991 marked the signing of the Paris Peace Agreements.

**4. Historical animosities and Cold War developments**

- Historical animosities: between Khmer and Vietnamese ethnicities; past Vietnamese exploitation and territorial expansion (e.g., Emperor Minh Mang's aggressive policies towards Cambodia, Cambodia's perceived loss of Kampuchea Krom)
- Cold War developments: détente and renewed confrontation between superpowers; Sino-Soviet rivalry and rapprochement; ending of the Cold War in late 1980s

**5. Role of Vietnam and Cambodia**

- Vietnam: Vietnam's alliance with the USSR; political competition with Khmer Rouge for influence and dominance; Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in 1978; gradual withdrawal of troops from Cambodia; military and diplomatic efforts to resolve conflict; its changing relations with the USSR and China
- Cambodia: Khmer Rouge's alliance with China; political competition with Vietnam for influence and dominance; military and diplomatic efforts to resolve conflict (e.g.; formation of Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) in 1982, its eight-point proposal); the Khmer Rouge's changing relations with China

**6. Role of China, the USSR and the USA**

- China: provision of military, economic and diplomatic support to Khmer Rouge due to Sino-Soviet rivalry and Sino-American rapprochement [e.g., Sino-Vietnamese War (1979)]; pressure on Khmer Rouge to resolve conflict due to decrease in Cold War tensions
- The USSR: provision of military, economic and diplomatic support to Vietnam due to Sino-Soviet rivalry and Sino-American rapprochement; pressure on Vietnam to resolve conflict due to decrease in Cold War tensions
- The USA: preference for minimal involvement due to Sino-American rapprochement and Cold War developments in Europe; economic sanctions against Vietnam; support for Cambodian resolution at the United Nations