CHAPTER-III

The United States and Indo-China War in 1970s

Vietnam before the Geneva Accords of 1954.

There was hardly any country in the world which claim to have suffered as much as Vietnam in the Second World War period. Perpetual conflict, with only a brief of peace following the Geneva settlement of 1954, had marked its recent history. Millions of Vietnamese children had grown up to adulthood in this period carrying memories of bloodshed, terror, bombing and dislocation. The long undeclared war in which the United States was involved divided public opinion all over the global effecting human values, national economies, presidential prospects and military strategies.

The French conquest of Indo-China was completed by 1884 and divided Vietnam into three parts: (i) Tonkin in the North with Hanoi as capital, (ii) Annam in the centre with Hua as capital; (iii) Cochin-China in the South including the
Mekhong Delta as administrative headquarters.\(^1\) Since the very early years of French rule, the people of Vietnam expressed their opposition to foreign rule. During the Second World War, Vietnam was occupied by the Japanese which in return provided the good opportunity for the nationalist, to achieve their goal\(^2\).

---


2. Ibid., p.2.

The nationalist movement was not new in Indochina. The natives especially those of Annam, had never been fully reconciled to French rule, which had been imposed between 1860 and 1885. At first protest was unorganized and limited to a few disparate, disconnected groups, mainly among the young and intelligentsia.


At the outset the Viet Minh was not predominantly Communist. In fact, the communist were in a small minority, even among the leaders. The majority were of the middle class, resolved only to free their country from France. If communist had the same end they were willing to work with them but by their close origin few would have welcomed and still fewer approved communism as such. In 1927, the nationalist were organized under the name of Vietnam Quoc Dan Dang (Vietnam Nationalist Party (VQDD). It has been called the most significant of all non-communist revolutionary nationalist organizations; it was modeled on the Kuomintang and frequently received support from it. During the Second World War years, Nationalist and communist
In the meantime, the big three powers in Europe, the United States of America, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union, were deciding the fate of the Asian country. On August 22, 1945, a week after Japan had accepted the Allies terms, the Viet Minh set up a provisional government at Hanoi to take in Annam, Tonkin and Cochin-China, where more than four fifths of Indo-China live. By Agreement at Postdam British and Chinese troops were to occupy Indo-China until the French returned. The British in the South of

leaders found refuge in China. And some members of the old VQDD continued a party of that name, other formed the Dai Viet QDD (Great Vietnam Nationalist Party). With the assistance of Kounmintang, these two formed a nationalist coalition which included the Vietnam Restoration League. This coalition came to be known as the Vietnam Cach Menn Dong Mint Hoi (the Vietnam Revolutionary League or League of Vietnamese Revolutionary Parties). Because Kounmintang leaders were suspicious of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party, the Communist in May, 1941, organized another United Front to include certain independent nationalist elements the Viet Nam Doc lap Dong Min Hoi (Revolutionary League for the independence of Vietnam), popularly known as the Viet Minh.


3. Ibid.
16\textsuperscript{th} parallel and the Chinese in the North, but when the British arrived early in September the administration of most of the colony was already in the hands of the Viet Minh.\textsuperscript{4} By the time French arrived the ground was already laid for struggle.\textsuperscript{5}

The British refused to deal with the Viet Minh. Instead the British ordered the release of the French and thus gave them the chance to re-establish their rule. In October 1945 the French forces were reinforced by troops from home under General Leeker. But with nationalist resistance in Saigon and guerrilla attacks in the countryside did the French again control the Mekhong Delta and by then the British had felt.\textsuperscript{6}

\textsuperscript{4} Under the circumstances, the two occupying armies in the North and South of 16\textsuperscript{th} parallel followed different policies. The British, General Gracy refused to reorganize the Viet Minh Administration and rearmed the French and help them to re-establish their power south of 16\textsuperscript{th} parallel, and by March 1946, the British withdrew. The Chinese who occupied the North proclaimed a policy of non-interference in Vietnam's internal affairs and left the Viet Minh in charge of the administration.

B.S.N. Murti, n.1, p.3.

\textsuperscript{5} Nathaniel Peffer, n.2, p.472.
In September Ho Chi Minh proclaimed the independence of the country and established the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV).\(^7\)

Moreover, when the French occupied certain areas around Saigon. The French installed Bao Dai as a Chief of the state of Vietnam. The United States of America and Britain also recognized him as the ruler of the whole of Vietnam.\(^8\) But the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China recognized the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.\(^9\)

---


7. Ibid., p. 133.


The formation of the Vietnam government under the Ho Chi Minh created a situation that France would have to deal with at once French troops arrived in Indo-China early in 1946 and after some difficulties with the Chinese, who at first refused to evacuate, took over entirely by the end of February. But the
There was some moderation in the Ho Chi Minh regimes that was the Indo-Chinese Communist Party was dissolved and replaced by an Association for Marxist Studies. When Ho realized that he would not get political backing from the United States he decided on temporary cooperation with the French. Then, the negotiations with the French were held and the Treaty was signed on March 6, 1946, after the France made a pact with China in February 1946.\textsuperscript{10}

By this treaty, the French recognized the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) as a free state having its own government, parliament, army and finances, forming part of Vietnam government was in being and there had been some minor skirmishes.

Nathaniel Peffer, n.2, p.474.

As a result, the legal position in Vietnam became confused with the DRV in the North and the State of Vietnam in the South both claimed authority over the whole of Vietnam. Thus, the conflict in Vietnam had its origins in the French refused to accept the Viet Minh’s right to rule Cochin-China.

B.S.N. Murti, n.1, p.4.

\textsuperscript{10} Richard Allen, n.6, p.186.
the Indo-Chinese Federation and the French Union. It was also agreed that the referendum would be held in Cochin-China, where most of France interests and much of colony’s wealth lay, to determine whether Cochin-China should join the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.\(^\text{11}\)

There had been apparent accord on the way in which the future of Cochin-China was to be determined, but the French made it clear that there would be no referendum. On one pretext or another, principally the necessity of first re-establishing law and order, they postponed it and then on their own decision declared the status of Cochin-China to be that of an autonomous republic under French authority. But Ho Chi Minh wanted a literal application of the original application: unity of whole Vietnam as an independent political entity but within the French Union as an equal partner, with economic and cultural co-operation between

\(^{11}\text{ Nathaniel Peffer, n.2, p.474.}\)
Vietnam and France. HO Chi Minh would not accepted a restoration of colonial subservience.\textsuperscript{12}

From 1946 until 1950, the struggle between the French army and the Ho Chi Minh, guerrillas was a large scale colonial comparing of pacification against rebels with hardly more than local significance. But, in 1950, the operation changed into a confrontation of the free World and Chinese-Russian Communist powers when Ho Chi Minh received military equipments from China and Russia.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p.475.


When Harry S. Truman became the President on April 12, 1945. He initiated a change in United States policy on Indo-China. He wanted to achieve unity among the Western European powers including France, in opposition the communist power in Europe. The United States therefore, felt that it was in its national interest to assist France in regaining its lost power and influence in Indo-China.


As early as 1950, President Truman gave substantial arms and aid to the French at the same time as the Americans themselves entered the war in Korea. This policy was continued and accelerated when Eisenhower gained the Presidency in 1952.
As the time went on and the French showed no desire for accommodation, the native inhabitants became convinced that France was resolved to keep their land a colony as before. Therefore, nationalism became more widespread. As usual in such situations, in proportion to the growing strength of the independence movement grew the power of the communist leadership, since communists were a compact group who always knew that they wanted. The hostilities between the French and the Viet Minh, which had been continuing throughout this period, were temporarily halted by a new agreement, the Modus Vivendi of September 14-15, 1946. Nevertheless, sporadic clashes continued. On

---


This supports was the outcome of the perception of threats from the Soviet expansion policy. The American policymakers, therefore, identified the Soviet Union as the principal adversary and communist parties in various parts of the world as accessories of the Soviet Union whose activities endangered the United States interests.


November 23, the French bombed Haiphong and on December 19, the North responded with concerted attacks on Fronts forts in Tonkin and Annam. Thus began the full scale war which ended for a time - in 1954, with the partition of Vietnam at the 17th parallel.  

When communist became victory in China in 1949, it changed the situation in Vietnam. France was forced to look to the United States for help in fighting against the Viet Minh.

The United States assistance to the Forces of the French Union and the Communist China help to the Viet Minh led to the an escalation of the arm conflict. Various attempts to enter into negotiations to end the conflict were thwarted by the United States which was keen on achieving a military victory against the Viet Minh.

15 Frank N Trager, n 2, p 59
16 B S.N. Murti, n 1, p 4
17 The join Franco-American statement issued on September 30, 1953, declared that the total defeat of communism in Indo-China was the aim of France, thus, ruling out negotiations and
So the years from 1950 to 1954 passed, the existing trends growing ever stronger. Meanwhile, the United States had intervened at one removes when it perceived that France could no longer carry the financial burden - the money spent by France in Indo-China almost equaled what it obtained from the United States under the Marshall Plan - the United States took over a large part of the burden. In another word, Indo-China had become a sector in the Cold War.\footnote{Ibid., p.5.} Then came 1954, the door of conference to settle the affairs of compromises. On January 12, 1954, John Foster Dulles, the then American Secretary of States, said, that the communist menace would be opposed by massive retaliation by means of our own choosing. On March 29, 1954, he further stated that: "the imposition on Southeast Asia of the political system of Russia and its Chinese Communist allies by whatever means would be a great threat to the whole free world. The United States of America feels that the possibility should not be passively accepted but should be met by united action. Dulles proposed a confined front of major Western powers to initiate United action in Indo-China to save that area from Communism."

Indo-China was opened on April 26, 1954, just few days before the French defeated at Dien Bien Phu. This conference participated by Russian, British, Chinese and American Foreign Ministers.\(^{19}\)

France could no longer conceal to itself either the fact of the reverse it had suffered on the consequences the reverse dictated. The cease-fire was to go into effect along the 17\(^{th}\) parallel, which meant in actually that at that line Indo-China was being partitioned. This left France an area of 50,000 square miles, including Cochin China, with a population of 10,000,000. The Viet Minh would have a population of 12,000,000 and area of 77,000 square miles, including the Red River Delta, the city of Hanoi, and the port of Haiphong. Laos and Cambodia were to be evacuated by communist troops and maintain such relations with France. Elections were to be held after two years in all Vietnam to determine its future.\(^{20}\)

---

19. Ibid., p.478.
And the significance of this was communism had advanced another step on the continent of Asia. The new Republic of Vietnam was left distressed, chaotic, impoverished. There was no organization, no point of cohesion, no array of groups that a government could base itself on.²¹

This was led to the formation of the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), which intended to put the communist world on notice that a line was being drawn beyond which it could not go with impurity. Whether the Communist World would be deterred by the warning remained to be seen. Thus, all Southeast Asia was incorporated in the Cold War.²²

---

20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., p.479.
22. Ibid.
Post Geneva Accords and United States Policy towards Vietnam

Southeast Asia became a subject of headlines in the Spring of 1954 when the French was defeated at Dien Bien Phu by the forces of Communist Democratic Republic of Vietnam headed by Ho Chi Minh. Three major international conferences were convened in Geneva and Paris in less than three decades and several agreements were concluded to solves the problems on the exit of France from the area.  

At the conclusion of the Geneva conference, neither the United States nor South Vietnam signed the Geneva declaration. General Watter Bedell Smith, the Chief United States delegate, however proclaimed an unilateral American declaration that the United States would refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb the Geneva accords. The Eisenhower Administration viewed the Geneva accords as a major diplomatic defeat for the United States. In meetings in

---

23. Lalita Prasad Singh, n. 8, p. 3.
August 8 and 12, the National Security Council (NSC) concluded that the Geneva settlement was a disaster that completed a major forward stride of communism which may lead to the loss of Southest Asia. Therefore, most concern of the United States was to prevent communism from spreading into other parts of Southeast Asia.\(^{24}\)

During the Geneva meeting, the United States undertook a few covert activities against the Viet Minh in Indo-China. From June 1954 to August 1955, a team led by Colonel Edward G landsdale, a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operative who had earned a reputation for counter guerrilla warfare in the Philippines, was instructed to undertake paramilitary operations against the enemy and to wage political psychological warfare.\(^{25}\)

\(^{24}\) Jaya Krishna Baral, n. 13, p 51.

\(^{25}\) Ibid.

In the evaluation of American policy regarding Indo-China in general and Vietnam in particular had to be review in the context of the overall objectives of American foreign policy. In the Immediate post war period, American policy-makers identified the Soviet Union as the principal adversary and
The United States views the conflict between North and South Vietnam as an extension of the clash between the forces of freedom and communist totalitarianism. The United States had perceived the problem as being military, not political and perceived the conflict in South Vietnam mainly in terms of aggression by North Vietnam. Hence, almost seventy-five percent of United States economic aid provided to South Vietnam was used to bolster the country’s military budget. A White Paper entitled A threat to the peace stated that:

"The determined and ruthless campaign of propaganda, infiltration, and subversion by the Communist regime in North Vietnam to destroy the Republic of Vietnam and subjugate its people is a threat to the peace. The independence and territorial integrity of that free country is of major and serious concern not only to the people of

Jaya Krishna Baral, n. 13, p. 38.
Vietnam and their immediate neighbours but also to all other free nations."}

Thus, the American policy towards Vietnam was principally governed by the doctrine of containment of communism. With the fall of Dien Bien Phu, the United States Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, pursued the "united action" within two months of the Geneva Agreement.  

The Geneva Accords were only binding upon the United States to the degree admitted in Smith's Declaration. When France quit her involvement and ran out on her


27. Ibid., p.400.

As regards Vietnam the conference took note of the clauses in the Agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Vietnam prohibiting the introduction into Vietnam of foreign troops and military personnel as well as of all kinds of arms and ammunition. The two parties in Vietnam further took the obligation:

... To see that the zones allotted to them shall not constitute part of any military alliance and shall not be utilized for the resumption of hostilities or in the service of an aggressive policy...

Lalita Prasad Singh, n.8, p.6.
obligations, the United States had to enter the scene or see another slice of territory fall under communist despotism. The policy of picking up the pieces abandoned by older imperial nations had began with the Truman Doctrine applied to Greece and Turkey in 1947. In case of Vietnam, however, the United States did not depart from its position, only France did. The reason was explained by M. Pinean, France of Foreign Affairs, February 23, 1956 that:

"We are not entirely masters of the situation. The Geneva Accords on the one hand and the pressure of our allies on the other creates a very complex situation... You ask me what will be our position after the reckoning of July 1956 provided by the Geneva Accords. The position in Principle is clear: France is the guarantor of the Geneva Accords. But we do not have the means alone of making them respected."

Meanwhile, the United States had assumed that any forceful attempt by external invasion on internal subversion inspired and aided from the outside to seize South Vietnam.

after a failure to get it was aggression against a sovereign state and within the scope of Smith Declaration and the SEATO treaty of September 1954, temporarily or permanently. The United States, therefore, explained her stand on the case of election in Vietnam by Dwight D. Eisenhower that:

"I have never talked on corresponded with a person knowledgeable in Indochinese affairs who did not agree that had elections been held as of the time of the fighting possibly 80 percent of population would have voted for the Communist Ho Chi Minh as their leader rather than Chief of State Bao Dai."\(^{29}\)

One of the first acts in the post-Geneva American policy in Vietnam was the establishment of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). It was in a way the brain of Secretary of States, John Foster Dulles for common defence against Chinese expansion. Soon after the Geneva conference was over, there started a big debate in Washington on whether the United States should impart

military training to the South Vietnam. It was mainly a tussle between the State Department and the Defence Department. John Foster Dulles was very forcefully argued that the United States take over the responsibility of giving military training to the forces of the Saigon regime. He also insisted that political stability was not possible without military security.30

In case of general elections, according to the Geneva Accords, it must be held in July 1956 throughout Vietnam. For this, North and South Vietnam were required to begin consultation in July 1955. But, when the time had come, Saigon refused to undertake any consultation with Hanoi. She argued that there was no use in holding the proposed election because it would not be free and democratic in North Vietnam. There might have been some elements of truth in this charge but the motivation of the Dien regime for bulking at the election seems to have been different. The

Pentagon Papers revealed that the United States had a hand in it.31

On June 17, 1954, Ngo Dinh Dien was appointed as the Prime Minister of the State of Vietnam. President Dwight D. Eisenhower promptly promised his country’s support to assist the government of South Vietnam towards developing and maintaining a strong viable state capable of resisting attempted subversion or aggression through military means.

31. Before the Geneva conference was over, the JCS had pointed out that communists were likely to win if an election were held in Vietnam. In August 1954, the CIA reported that if elections were held in 1956, the Viet Minh would win. In 1954 President Eisenhower himself was reported to have said that Ho Chi Minh would win 80 percent of the votes if the election were held that year. Thus Washington was almost convinced that the communists were sure to defeat the Dien regime in election. Against this background, Dulles’ instructions and demand guarantees that the Communists were likely to reject seems to have been a deliberate ploy to prevent the holding of general elections in Vietnam. On July 7, 1954 Dulles wrote to General Walter Bedell Smith, the Chief United States delegate at Geneva that:

"Since undoubtedly true that the elections might even eventually mean unification (of) Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh, this makes it all more important they should be only held as long as after cease-fire agreement as possible and in conditions free from intimidation to give democratic elements best chance."

Ibid., pp.54-55.
From that time the American involvement in the State of Vietnam became deeply felt and increasingly directed.\(^{32}\) Dien, however, on October 23, 1955 declared the State of Republic of Vietnam (RVN) and on October 26, 1955, proclaimed himself as its first President. It was mainly American influence which removed General Nguyen Van Hinh, a powerful opponent of Dien from Vietnam, enabled Dien to devide and defeat the seats, and displaced the French in the South of Vietnam.\(^{33}\)

According to Geneva Agreements the Commanders of the French Union Forces and the People's Army of Vietnam were responsible for the execution of the provisions contain therein and affording full protection and all possible assistance and cooperation to the International Commission in the performance of its functions. But between the end of 1954 and early 1955, the French gradually withdrew their

\(^{32}\) B.S.N. Murti, n.1, p.11.

\(^{33}\) Ibid, p.12.
forces from Vietnam, and the United states gradually assumed their functions, supporting the Dien regime in the South. The premature withdrawal from the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) of the French who were considered responsible for the election in the South complicated the question of implementing the Geneva Agreements, especially the provisions concerning elections. The government of the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) adopted a categorized stand that it was not bound by the Geneva Agreements and refused to talk with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) to prepare for general elections which was supported by United States and Britain.\(^{34}\) Besides, there was enough evidence to say that the United States was at no stage serious about a political settlement of the Vietnam problem on the lines visualised by the Geneva Agreements. The real reason was that they wanted the RVN as a separate anti communist state. They were convinced that if elections were held Ho

\(^{34}\) Ibid., pp.12-13.
Chi Minh would win them and the whole of Vietnam would go under communist rule. Dulles made no secret of this when he said that:

"South Vietnam must be strengthened; and we must not be trapped into a fictions legalism that could condemn ten million potentially free persons into slavery."\(^{35}\)

And also, as a legal justification, the United States had maintained that:

"From the very beginning, the North Vietnamese violated the 1954 Geneva Accords. Communist military forces and supplies were left in the South in violation of the Accords. Other communist guerrillas were moved north further training and then were infiltrated into the South in violation of the accords."\(^{36}\)

For the American views the Geneva Accords marked the end of the French presence in Asia which, however obnoxious at one time to Americans on general anti-colonialist principles, could have been regarded useful in anti-communist terms. Having decided in 1954 not to buttress

\(^{35}\) Ibid., p.16.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., p.17.
French rule any longer, the United States sought an alternative anti communist and anti Chinese forces. They disapproved of the General Accords because it not only failed to constitute such a force but threatened to accelerate Chinese Communist expansion by giving Ho the whole of Vietnam in two bites - the North by the armistice agreement and the South through elections - they regarded Ho Chi Minh as a satellite and discounted his chances of becoming the Tito of Asia. They resolved, therefore, to maintaining the independence of the anti communist regime established by Bao Dai in the South, and also to create a new anti-communist alliance to check China in Asia as NATO had checked the USSR in Europe.\textsuperscript{37}

**The Buddhist Crisis**

In the wake of national revival, Buddhism in Vietnam had become a strong political force. Naturally, Dien's biased

religions policy turned a large number of Buddhists who were in majority in South Vietnam, to become his staunch opponents.\textsuperscript{38}

This enraged the anti-Dien Buddhists who had formed in 1963, the body known as the Buddhist United Church of Vietnam (BUC) which had played an important role in the frequent changes in government in South Vietnam. The BUC was, therefore, considered by the Americans as a trouble making and anti-American organization. But its demand for a sovereign national assemble and opposition to Dien's puppet government showed that it was following a nationalist policy.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{38} The Buddhist were regarded by Dien as his religions enemies as he himself was a staunch Catholic. Besides, his Catholic brother Archbishop Ngo Dinh Nue and his another brother Ngo Dinh Nhu and his wife prevented him from showing any conciliatory attitude towards the Buddhists. To add to this, on the advice of his brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, Dien had given official recognition in 1963 to one eldest sect of Buddhists, namely, Co-Son-Mon, which was completely a political. It was called the General Association of Buddhists in Vietnam.

R.S. Chavan, n.13, p.111.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
Another reasons for the annoyance of the Buddhists was the order issued by Dien prohibiting them from exhibiting the Buddhist flag and other signs on the Birthday of the Buddha (May 8). They protested against such an anti-Buddhist order and took out demonstrations.\textsuperscript{40}

The Buddhist protests aroused great concern in the United States. John F. Kennedy urged Dien to improve his dealing with the Buddhists. But Dien ignored the advice, John F. Kennedy then supported a group of South Vietnamese general who opposed Dien's policies. On November 1963, the generals overthrow the Dien government. Against Kennedy wishes, Dien and Nhu were murdered.\textsuperscript{41}

The fall of the Dien government see off a period of political disorder in South Vietnam. New government rapidly

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.

succeeded one another. During this period, North Vietnam stepped up its supply of war materials and began to send units of its own army into the South Vietnam by late 1964, the Viet Cong controlled up to 75 percent of South Vietnam’s population.\textsuperscript{42}

\textbf{The Gulf of Tonkin incident}

During August 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson approved secret South Vietnam naval raids against North Vietnam. He announced that the United States destroyers Maddox and C. Turnerjoy had been attacked in the Gulf of Tonkin, off the coast of North Vietnam.\textsuperscript{43}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{43} Some Americans doubted that an attack had occurred, and the attack had never been confirmed.
\end{itemize}

\textit{The World Book Encyclopedia, no. 41, p.391.}

Later on, when the war was as it height, the captain of Maddox admitted that his ship had not been attacked. The aim of the noisy campaign raised over the “Tonkin incident” was to justify the attack on the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and to arouse anti Vietnamese sentiments among Americans.
However, following this doubtful events President Lyndon B. Johnson asked Congress for powers to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression and he reacted sharply an issued instructions to the United States Pacific Command.\textsuperscript{44}

Meanwhile, on August 7, Congress approved these powers in the Tonkin Gulf resolution. The United States did not declare war on North Vietnam. But Lyndon B. Johnson used the resolution as the legal basis for increased United States involvement. In March 1965, he sent a group of United States Marines to South Vietnam.\textsuperscript{45}

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{44} That was
(i) to continue patrol in the Gulf of Tonkin
(ii) to provide a combat air pilot over the destroyers
(iii)to attack any force which attacked United States Naval patrols with the object of destroying it
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textit{R.S. Chavan, n.13,} p.117.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{45} \textit{The World Books Encyclopedia,} n.41, p.391.
\end{flushright}
Mc Namara, the then American Defence Secretary, told the American Senate Foreign Relations Committee in July 1964 that the United States efforts in the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) carried the risk of escalating to military actions outside the border of South Vietnam. Thereafter, an incident that took place on August 1964, in the Gulf of Tonkin changed the complexion of the conflict in Vietnam. It provided a turning point in the United States war policy in Vietnam to one open and direct participation.\(^46\)

Following these events, the Communist guerrilla attacked Bienhoa airfield in November against the United States officers' billet in Saigon in December and against the United States advisers' compound at Pliku in February 1965.\(^47\)

\(^{46}\) Actually, this crisis was not an accident or a sudden event. It had its origin in the covert operations against North Vietnam approved by President Kennedy in 1961.

R.S. Chavan, n.13, p.117.

\(^{47}\) B.S.N. Murti, n.1, p.28.
Ultimately, this incident offered President Lyndon B. Johnson an opportunity to have his policy of escalation unconditionally endorsed by Congress in the so called Gulf of Tonkin resolution, which authorised the President to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.\(^{48}\)

**Escalation of war**

The gathering momentum of National Liberation Front (NLF) in 1961 alarmed President John F. Kennedy who, in May 1961, gave green signal for covert operations against North Vietnam by the Central Intelligence Agencies (CIA) and the Pentagon.\(^{49}\)

---


Actually, in the middle of June 1960 the Strategic Hamlets Programme was conceived and implemented when Willian Colby was promoted as the Chief of the CIA station in Saigon. It was based on the assumption that the villages which were the targets of attacks of the underground communist guerrillas should be enabled to defend themselves by providing them weapons so that they would not have to depend on the Vietnamese army units which were never there when needed. The weapons were to be provided by the CIA the only American agency with the flexibility that could respond to such a local request directly and did not have to set up a complex programme through Vietnamese government channels, which might or might not pass the material to the place it was need. Colby and his associated decided to combine the self defence concept with the economic and social improvement for the villages, and recommended that the Vietnamese Special forces be put in charge of the effort, with American in supporting role only.

Along with the Strategic Hamlets campaign to fight the Vietcong at the local level, the CIA developed other approaches also like recruiting, training, and running Mountains Scouts of Highlanders to patrol deep into the unpolluted areas along the Cambodian and Laos borders to bring back intelligence of communist infiltration there, and assisting a so-called “People’s Force” of politically trained terms in their programme of moving into rural communities to live with, work with and help the peasants in their community efforts.

A part from fighting the Viet Cong in South Vietnam the CIA also undertook upon itself the taste of penetrating North Vietnam and undertaking para-military action there. According to Willian Colby, he once stated that:

“with our experience in Korea and against China, CIA was the natural agency to which the job of penetrating North Vietnam should be assigned.”

In July 1962, Premier Pham Vandong had told Bernard Fall, the United Nations Secretary General that:

"We fully realize that the American imperialists wish to provoke a situation in the course of which they would use the heroic struggle of the South Vietnamese people as a pretext for the destruction of our economic and cultural achievement. And he added, we shall after them no pretext that could give rise to an American military intervention against North Vietnam." 

In the very first days of the Kennedy Administration the number of American advisors in Saigon totaled first to 10,000 and then 18,000. The President allowed them to take part in military operations. At the time of Kennedy’s death these were between 14 and 16 thousands American troops in Vietnam. And that number was to grow substantially after his Vice President, Lyndon B. Johnson takeover. There was a

50. Charles E. Morison and Astri Suhrke, n.47, p.68.

However, North Vietnamese responses to American and South Vietnamese operations on the North Vietnamese Coast in 1964 appeared in retrospect to have provided such a pretext.

Ibid., p.69.

51. Alexander Lavrentyev, n.43, p.47.
hint of what was to come in the first major speech on his occasion to the Presidency in November 1963, that was:

"Under John Kennedy's leadership, this nation has demonstrated, that it has the courage to seek peace and it has the fortitude the risk war. We have proved that we are a good and reliable friend to those who seek peace and freedom. We have shown that we can also be a formidable foe to those who reject the path of peace, and those who seek to impose upon us, and our allies. This nation will keep its commitments through South Vietnam to West Berlin. we will be increasing in the search for peace resourceful in our pursuit of areas of agreements, even with those with whom we differ, and generous and loyal to those who join with us in common cause."


By spring 1963, United States forces in South Vietnam numbered 45,500 in the next twenty-four months the number would rise to a staggering half-a-million. Corresponding United States estimates were 160,000 in spring 1964 and 250,000 two years later. The United States military strategy was to search and destroy the enemy in the South through a variety of means, including bombing, chemical warfare, psychological warfare, and counter-insurgency operations. And the criterion of success was not how much territory was conquered or brought under control but how many Viet Cong were killed. To complement these actions in the South, the continued bombing of North Vietnam was aimed at crippling its economy, interdicting the infiltration of North Vietnamese troops and supplies and forcing Hanoi to agree to a negotiated settlement. At the same time, the United States gave massive economic and military aid to the Saigon Government, whose armed forces numbered nearly one million by the end of sixties.

D.R. Sardesai, n.25, p.414
By 1964, the Johnson Administration adopted the McNamara plan which provided for increasing South Vietnam’s armed strength to a half a million officers and men and concentrating the forces in the Mekhong Delta.\footnote{Ibid., p.417} It was decided to extend hostilities to the entire peninsula of Indo-China. The United States Air Force executed raids on the North Vietnam, Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), Cambodia and Laos. The United States of America tried to enforce a blockade on the North Vietnam. When there steps prove ineffective, the United States of America decided to enter the war. By this time the National Liberation Front (NLF) controlled more than three-quarters of the country’s total area. The United States of America Landed military units in the ports of South Vietnam which was a repetition of the French invasion, only an incomparably larger scale.\footnote{Gennadi Chufrim and Igor Mozhaiko, n 9., p.149.}
Since overt military operations against the North were rejected as being overly risky and not feasible at the moment. American attention was focused on a programme of covert activities designed to harass and sabotage enemy transportation facilities and other installations wherever accessible. General Maxwell Tayler, speaking for the joint Chiefs of staff in January 1964, declared that the stakes for victory over Communist insurgency in South Vietnam were compellingly high. Such wars of national liberation must not be allowed to succeed. Taylor concluded that:

"The United States must make the ranking service commander at Saigon responsible for the total United States program in Vietnam and take over from the Saigon authorities the actual direction of the war. The United States should organize and direct large scale commando raids against North Vietnam, using South Vietnamese and some Chinese Nationalist volunteers to destroy military facilities on the ground and operating under South Vietnamese cover would conduct reconnaissance and paratrooper drops."^{55}

---

The unflinching United States commitment to maintain a non-communist government in Vietnam led to the step by step escalation of the United States war from the limited risk gamble of Eisenhower through counter-insurgency operations of Kennedy to open aggression under Presidents Johnson and Nixon.\textsuperscript{56}

The full scale United States war from 1965 onwards was aimed at attaining full victory. This strategy was tailored to compel and pressurize North Vietnam to persuade the National Liberation Front (NLF) to give up in the South. Interestingly, it was promised on the awareness of NLF's indigenous sources of strength. This policy of escalation of war into North Vietnam coupled with the maximization of military pressure against NLF in South was hoped to give total military victory to the United States in Vietnam. With the United States military terror tactics extended from South to North, the North Vietnam (DRV) was left no choice

\textsuperscript{56} R.L. Walli, n.49, p.145.
except to respond to aggression throughout the state of Vietnam.  

The arrival at Danang of 1400 men at 9 A.M. on March 8, 1965 also marked the beginning of induction of 542, 558 (June 1966) United States troops, and thousands of troops from Australia and its Asian satellites. This was in addition to one million puppet troops from combat the formidable. United States military build-up since 1965 included all conventional and non-conventional weaponry.  

57 Ibid, p 142  
58 Ibid