CHAPTER – 4
VIETNAM AND THE UNITED NATIONS
CHAPTER-4

VIETNAM AND THE UNITED NATIONS

History of Vietnam:

Vietnam requires the full attention of the entire world. It was of paramount concern to those who were free, and to those who were already behind the Iron and Bamboo curtains. The aftermath of the Vietnamese war will not only decide the fate of the people in the area but it will have a great impact on the rest of the world. "Secretary of State Dean Rusk told the NATO Council in December, 1965, that Europe fate may also depend on the outcome in Vietnam."

The Vietnam conflict was worrying the statement and scholars all over the globe. The growing escalation and armed hostilities in Vietnam made U Thant, the Secretary General of the United Nations warn: "I am afraid we are witnessing the initial phase of World War III".

Geographic Location of Vietnam:

"Like two rice baskets at the opposite ends of their carrying pole" this is how Vietnam is being described by its fellow citizens. The Republic of Vietnam located in Indo-China Peninsula, just out between India and China, with China in the North, Laos and Cambodia in the West (Thailand is located further to the West) and South China Sea in the East. It stretches like an immense "S" along the coast of the Pacific. Vietnam is about 4500 miles North and South, about 300 miles wide in the North, 300 in the South; and only 40 in
the center. The Mekong River Delta provides the South with a very rich agricultural area; the Red River is the life of the Northern bulge.5

**Genesis of Crisis:** To understand the situation in Vietnam the knowledge of her past is essential. The Vietnam crisis owes its origin to the time of French conquest of Indo-China, which was completed in 1884. In the days of French colonial rule Vietnam was divided into three parts. Tonkin in the North with Hanoi as its capital, Annam in the middle with its capital at Hue and in the South Cochin China administered from Saigon. Hanoi also served as the administrative capital of the whole of French Indo-China, which besides the three Vietnam territories included Laos and Cambodia.6 To be precise when France controlled Indo-China she governed all the present North and South Vietnam, plus Laos and Cambodia.

France governed on the principle conquer, divide and rule. Since the beginning of the French rule, the Vietnamese expressed their opposition to foreign rule, which they suppressed with speed and austerity. During the World War II Vietnam was occupied by the Japanese, which provided excellent opportunity for the nationalist to achieve their goal.7 The Japanese troops landed in Tonkin in 1940 and occupied the whole of Indo-China by the middle of the year 1941. Both the French and the Japanese joined together and administered the country under Japanese rule.

It was in this situation that Dr. Ho Chin Minh founded the nationalist Independence Front. The Indo-Chinese Communist Party, the leading force was born in May 1941. This front being the broadest national grouping ever seen in the history of the Vietnamese National Liberation Movement, led the
Vietnamese people struggle against the French. Just before the general surrender of the Japanese to the Allies, the Viet Minh declared a part of the Northern Tonkin as a liberated area.

Meanwhile, the Big three powers of Europe i.e. the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union were deciding the fate of the Asian country. On March 9, 1945, the Japanese, realizing that their fate was sealed, suddenly overthrew the French administration and put Emperor Bao Dai as the head of the nominally independent Vietnam administration uniting Tonkin with Annam. On 22nd August 1945 soon after Japan had accepted the allies terms Viet Minh set up a provisional government at Hanoi to take in Annam, Tonkin and Cochin-China which consisted of more than four fifth of Indo-China population. The Viet Minh under Ho Chin Minh refused to recognize Bao Dai Government and proclaimed the independence of Vietnam on September 2, 1945.

The Potsdam Conference held in July 1945 gave a new turn to the course of events in Indo-China. The allied leaders decided that the surrender of Japanese troops in Indo-China, South of 16th Parallel should be accepted by Great Britain and North of 16th parallel by the Republic of China and that the way should thus be prepared for the return of French.

The situation in Vietnam was very delicate at this juncture. Neither the British nor the Chinese troops moved into Vietnam immediately after V-J day. By the time allied troops arrived in the country the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) under Viet Minh had proclaimed its independence and was
demanding that it is to be recognized. By the time French arrived the ground was already laid for struggle.

Under these conditions the two occupying armies in the North and the South of 16th parallel, followed different policies in their dealings with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The British General Gacey refused to recognize the Viet Minh administration, which was having complete control over the Southern half as well. He released and rearmed the French who were imprisoned by the Japanese and helped them in re-establishing their power South of the 16th parallel. By March 1946 the British withdrew. The withdrawal of British was one of the major factors responsible for war in Vietnam.11

In September Ho Chin Minh proclaimed the independence of the country and established the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.12 Bao Dai was made the Chief of the State of Vietnam after the French occupation of certain areas around Saigon.13 On the other hand the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was recognized by China and the Soviet Union.

A change took place in the Ho-Chin Minh regimes. The Indo-Chinese Communist Party was dissolved and an association of Marxist studies replaced it. When Ho-Chin Minh realized that he would not get political backing from USA. He therefore decided to take help from French on temporary basis. As a result negotiations resulted with the French and the Treaty was signed between the French and China in February 1946.14

By the agreement of March 6, 1946, France recognized the DRV (comprising the whole of Tonkin and Annam) as "a free state having its
government, its Parliament, its army and its finances, and forming part of the Indo-Chinese Federation and the French Union".\textsuperscript{15}

It was also agreed that a referendum would be held in Cochin-China, where most of the France interests and much of the colony's wealth lay to determine whether Cochin-China should join, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.\textsuperscript{16}

There had been a marked accord on the way in which the future of Cochin-China was to be determined but the French made it clear that no referendum would be held. Firstly they adjourn the possibility of maintaining law and order and secondly they declared the status of Cochin China to be that of an independent Republic under French authority. But Ho Chin Minh wanted a literal application of the original application i.e. The unity of whole Vietnam as an independent political entity but within the French Union as an equal partner with economic and cultural cooperation between Vietnam and France. But Ho Chin Minh was not ready to accept the revival of colonial subservience.\textsuperscript{17}

Ho Chin Minh also refused to grant independent status under the French Union to the DRV, as conceded in the agreement of March 6, 1946. The ultimate result was that from 1946 until 1950 France and Viet Minh were at a long brutal war with each other. It was in 1950, the operation changed into a confrontation of the free world with China-Russia Communist powers. And Ho Chin Minh received military equipment from China and Russia.

With the passage of time, the French showed no desire for accommodation, the local inhabitants became convinced that France was
determine to keep their land as a colony as before which resulted in widespread nationalism. With the growing strength of the independent movement, the power of the Communist leadership also increased. Since Communists were a compact group who always knew what they wanted.  

The hostilities between the Viet Minh and the French were halted by a new agreement, the Modus Vivendi of September 14 and 15, 1946. Nevertheless frequent clashes continued. On 23 November, the French bombed Haiphong and on 19 December the North responded with joined attacks on Front 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.  

**Vietnam and the United Nations**

The Vietnam war has adversely affected not only the relations between the major powers but also the entire atmosphere in the United Nations. Inspite of the fact that the Vietnam conflict was as old as the United Nations. It had never made a full dress appearance on the stage of the United Nations. The escalation and intensification of fighting in Vietnam has reached such a stage that it was drawn into the vertex of the international conflict and a scene of bitter warfare. Since 1946, yet no serious attempts have been made to refer the question to the United Nations. The initial attempt was made by the United States to present the case of Vietnam to the United Nations Security Council, but the move was rather unrewarding for a number of reasons. Both historical and political, the United Nations as an Organization has been powerless to
intervene or to promote in any way a de-escalation of the fighting or a peaceful solution to the conflict.  

The initial difficulty lies having it adopted in the agenda. After its acceptance, most members thought that public discussion would bring no fruitful results, but on the other hand it might worsen the situation due to denunciation from both sides. Even if the United Nations tries to decide who is the aggressor and what should be done, it would be very difficult for the United Nations to decide what "aggression" is and whether or not it is 'war' or civil war in Vietnam. The General Assembly or Security Council of the United Nations has never defined the term "aggression" neither the words 'war' or "civil war". Hence the United Nations is unable to decide whether it is aggression or civil war in Vietnam.

Secondly the root cause was the French unwillingness to implement the international collaboration in solving the Vietnam problem. During the Franco-Viet Minh war, the United States, encouraged by the successful initiative taken by the United Nations in solving the Korean crises proposed that the Vietnam conflict might also be referred to the United Nations. But the French refused to do so because thereafter their actions in Indo-China would be brought under the United Nations. On the other hand the French wanted to preserve the feeling that Indo-china was a French colonial problem and it should be solved under French sovereignty. Moreover, they felt that to bring this problem under the United Nations might weaken their claim to regard the country as private preserve of France. Since most of the members of the United Nations had no colonies, the French were aware of the separate view they would take and to maintain this identity they were also impervious to do anything, which might
increase the expansion of international jurisdiction in the colonial sphere. Though France was sure to get friendly response from the NATO due to its drain in Military strength which resulting in the intensification of French opposition to German rearmament but she could not be sure of the response from the United Nations. 21

Even Britain was also not eager to place the Indo-Chinese affairs before the United Nations. Because they were afraid that it might cause a great split in the United Nations and “what is even more serious for us is a split in the Commonwealth”. 22

Moreover, by bringing the Peoples Republic of China into discussions on matters relating to Far East created further rift and prompted the Western powers to avoid reference to the United Nations. With reference to the agreement, that China should be present at the conference table to discuss Korea and Indo-China. The Western powers had to find a way out in bringing China to the conference table without comprising their position about China’s representation in the United Nations.

Moreover, the British Government had its own interest and so they wanted to avoid the question of bringing the colonial rule in Malaya before the United Nations. As a result they supported the French attitude that Indo-China question should be discussed outside the United Nations. Above all, the apprehension that the United Nations might not be able to do anything in the face of opposition from the Soviet Union and the possible delays created by the Western powers in securing a speedy solution of the problem, played an
important part in favour of the settlement of Franco Vietnamese war outside the United Nations 23

Finally the big four that is the United States, the UK, the USSR and the France agreed in March 1954 to have the Vietnam problem considered by the Geneva Conference to enable all the Indo-Chinese states and China who were not members of the United Nations to participate in the conference. The conference on Indo-China opened in Geneva on April 26, 1954, and following preliminary consultation on the question of participants to be involved, the first preliminary session took place on 8 May. Delegation from nine countries, which participated in the conference were Cambodia, Democratic Republic of Vietnam, France, Laos, and Peoples Republic of China, State of Vietnam, the Soviet Union, the U K and the USA. The Franco, Vietnamese war was thus brought to an end by the Geneva Agreement concluded on July 1954.24

Once the French willingness to discuss the entire political and military question with the opponent was known, the talks on Indo-China at Geneva reduced themselves to the settlement of technicalities. During this stage it would be useful to note the attitude of the state of Vietnam delegation to the Geneva Conference. Dr. Tran Van Do, leader of the South Vietnam Delegation to the Conference had sent a note on July 17, 1954 to the French authorities protesting that they were negotiating for ceasefire in Vietnam without keeping the Vietnamese government informed. The French denied this allegation. On 18 July 1954, Dr. Tran Van Do put forward his own proposal for a ceasefire in the form of a declaration. The declaration called for the settlement in the following stages, under the United Nations Supervision.
1. Complete Ceasefire in Vietnam without any demarcation being drawn.
2. The regrouping of the forces of both sides in specified areas.
3. The disarming of all irregular forces.
4. The disarming of the Viet Minh forces and the simultaneous withdrawal of all foreign troops from Vietnam; and
5. Elections throughout Vietnam when, in the opinion of the United Nations, security and order had been established. 25

With the signing of the ceasefire agreement on 21 July, between the High Commands of the French Union forces and the Peoples Army the two parties agreed to stop fighting and Vietnam was provisionally divided at the 17th parallel between the French Union Forces High Command and the People’s Army of Vietnam. Certain areas were agreed upon by the parties for the purpose of regroupment of troops of the two parties and general elections in the whole country would be held before July 1956. Which would bring about Unity of Vietnam? An International Commission comprising of India, Canada and Poland was appointed to supervise the armistice with India as Chairman. The parties were not allowed to establish any foreign bases and import of any war materials and military personal excepting by way of replacement. It was agreed that all prisoners of war and civilian internees were to be liberated within 30 days of the ceasefire agreement and both parties agreed to refrain from retaliation against all those who fought against them during the hostilities.

However the exclusion of South Vietnam from the ceasefire agreement proved to be a grave blunder. The American took Geneva Agreement as a challenge and in retaliation to it a separate agreement was signed by Mr. Badell
Smith, the United States representative at the time of the consideration of final declaration. According to his statement, the United States government took note of the cease-fire agreement signed between the parties and also of paragraph 1 to 12, inclusive of final declaration.26

The Geneva Conference marked wide International acceptance, outside the United States, of the People Republic of China as among five great powers. Even though United States, was against having any diplomatic cooperation with China had to sit at the same conference table and recognize China's interest in the settlement of South-East Asian problem. The visit of Chinese Premier to New Delhi for discussion with Nehru helped in creating a friendly atmosphere at the conference. Even though India did not participated in the Geneva talks its success was in no small degree ascribed to the initiative taken by Jawaharlal Nehru. Moreover the presence of V.K. Krishnan Menon (Jawaharlal Nehru revolving Ambassador) at Geneva proved to be of great significance to the negotiating parties who paid tribute for his friendly help. It was a matter of pride for India to find herself mentioned in all the combinations proposed for the composition of the International Commission.

The agreement regarding the military and political settlement of Vietnam rested entirely on the ceasefire agreement and the final declaration and not on the Charter of the United Nations. The full implication of this is evident if one realized the absence of any sanction or guarantee for these settlements by the countries that agreed to the final declaration.

Soviet Union and Peoples Republic of China insisted at the Geneva Conference to that the signatory powers should "jointly assume obligations to
provide collective guarantees for the peace of the three Indo-China states, so as to free these states from any threat of force or outside intervention.\textsuperscript{27}

While dealing with important proposals made by the third parties to bring the various parties together for negotiation the name of U Thant the Secretary General of United Nations should not be forgotten.

Since 1965, the then Secretary General U Thant personally offered several formulas to the parties directly concerned with a view in shifting the quest for a solution from the battle field to the Conference table and creating a congenial atmosphere for negotiations. According to him negotiations were the only honourable way for the Americans to disentangle themselves gracefully from Vietnam. While speaking at a Press Conference on 24 February, 1965 he says. “I am sure that the great American people, if only they know the true facts and the background to the developments in South Vietnam will agree with me that future bloodshed is unnecessary”. Without giving any explanation of what he meant by the statement he said “As you know in times of war and hostilities the first casualty is truth”.\textsuperscript{28} After exploring all possible avenues of a negotiated settlement, U Thant on 16 July, 1966 proposed a three point plan to stop the war in Vietnam.

1. The cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam:

2. The scaling down of all military operations by all parties in South Vietnam and

3. The willingness of all parties to enter into discussions with those who are actually fighting.\textsuperscript{29}
The three point plan offered a solution for all the three aspects of the Vietnam war the international aspect involving the United States and the DRV, the Civil war aspect involving all the four parties (US, DRV, RVN and NLF) and the Peaceful solution to be achieved by negotiations at a conference. United States refused to accept the plan, as it was not prepared to stop the bombing of North Vietnam unconditionally. Agitated at the thought that prolongation of the war might suffocate the United Nations itself and taking into consideration the existing circumstances and prevailing mood of the parties principally concerned, U Thant modified his original three point plan and announced on March 14, 1967 a new three point proposal to end the war in Vietnam.

These proposals conceptualized three steps:

1. A general standstill truce
2. Preliminary talks

These new proposals were accepted by the United States but were rejected by the D.R.V. While modifying his original proposals U. Thant left out the demand for the stopping of United States bombing of North Vietnam, which resulted in Hanoi rejection of the proposal. A spokesman of the Foreign Ministry of the D.R.V. while commenting on U Thant modified peace proposal said “To call on both sides to cease fire and hold unconditional negotiations while the United states is committing aggression against Vietnam and taking serious steps in its military escalation in both zones in Vietnam is to make no distinction between the aggressors and the victims of aggression, to depart from
reality, and to demand that the Vietnamese people accept the conditions of the aggressors”. The Secretary General of the United Nations U. Thant, considered visiting Peking and Hanoi to discuss Vietnam in April 1965, but Peking stated that “United Nations intervention in the affairs of Indo-China cannot be tolerated”, and Hanoi described it as an “inappropriate” approach tending to secure United Nations interventions in the Vietnam situation. However on March 28, 1967 he admitted that it was not an easy task to submit a conciliatory proposal because the war as seen from different sides was so different and so were the perspectives and approaches of different parties. But he was very confident about his original and modified version and considered them to be the perfect solution to the conflict and the most useful steps in preventing further escalation of war.

U. Thant further asserted his conviction in the aide memoir containing the new proposals “that a cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam continues to be a vital need, for moral and humanitarian reasons and also because it is a step which, could lead the way to meaningful talks to end the war”. While replying to question at the Press Conference he maintained that cessation of bombing of North Vietnam is an imperative necessity to create conditions or peaceful talks. He reiterated his belief that “once the bombing of North Vietnam is stopped there will be meaningful talks in a matter of few weeks”.

On 12 May 1967, U. Thant said the he considered his earlier peace plans dead because neither side had accepted them without reservations. He repeated his appeal for a cessation of the bombing “which alone can produce the conditions necessary for negotiation”. He regarded such bombing as of “questionable morality and doubtful legality” Even after receiving repeated
Vietnam and the United Nations

rebuff U. Thant was hopeful that one day his council would bear fruit. The United States lost a great opportunity offered by U Thant to withdraw herself from Vietnam with honour in 1966 and 1967, by rejecting his proposals for a cessation of bombing of North Vietnam.37

Before involving itself with massive combat troops in Vietnam in 1961 and extending the war till February 1965, the United States did not follow the United Nations Charter provisions for peaceful settlement of conflict and it even failed to bring this issue before the United Nations. Nevertheless, the United States representatives in the United Nations have been following the procedural obligation of reporting their action in Vietnam under article 51 to the Security Council. No other country thought of raising this issue in the United Nations Security Council. The first attempt on January 31, 1966 was made by the United States to held the meeting of the Security Council “to consider the situation in Vietnam” and submit a draft Resolution to that effect.38 The Soviet Union and France opposed the inscription of the item on the Council agenda. The Soviet Union supported the position of the DRV that the Vietnamese question should be settled within the machinery established by the Geneva Agreement of 1954.39 France considered that the United Nations was not competent enough to consider the conflict as the principle parties concerned, with the exception of the United States were not represented in that Organization. It was also doubted whether the United Nations was empowered to discuss a question, which was formally settled within the framework of the Geneva Conference.40 The United States was however, successful in putting the issue before the Council. But as the issue involved was a procedural matter in
which the permanent members of the Council did not have the right of Veto so no further action was taken to consider that item in the Council.

Moreover, the reasons, if any, for non-involvement of the United Nations with regard to Vietnam may be found in the political field. Under the Charter, only the Security Council is empowered to take “preventive action” to preserve international peace. This is an organ where the permanent members enjoy the Veto power in regard to all non-procedural matters. That is, the Council is ineffective against the permanent members who enjoy their support. Therefore the Council failed in bringing any settlement on the question of Vietnam. The Soviet Union and France were sure to reiterate their objections. Moreover they were committed to the positions that no negotiations could take place unless the United States stops bombing of North Vietnam unconditionally.

In these circumstances there was no possibility of United Nations taking effective measures to settle the Vietnam conflict. During the 22nd session of the United Nations General Assembly in September 1967, most of the members supported the idea that the Geneva Agreement would provide the basis for a peaceful settlement of the Vietnam War. Even U Thant played no useful role for the United Nations at this juncture. He felt if a cease-fire agreement could be achieved in Geneva in 1954, outside the framework of the United Nations, the same condition was applicable even at this moment. According to him peace can be restored by the return to the Geneva Agreements.

Great many problems could be solved in Vietnam if all the countries of the world recognize the fact of existence of two independent sovereign states in
Vietnam. Moreover, if both these states were given the membership of the United Nations it might pave the way for peaceful co-existence of these states.

**Importance of this conflict and Impact on the region**

Vietnam, situated as it is in South-East Asia, torn, troubled and afflicted, continues to be a sensitive spot in world politics full of explosive potentialities. Vietnam due to its strategic significance for the superpowers & their conflicting ideologies is the most discussed subject in the world. It is of greatest concern to the free world as well as the Communist world. To the free world it is a symbol of aggression whereas to the Communist world it represents the current phase of war for world domination. It is of greatest importance no other International problem since the Korean war has caused so much concern to the rest of the globe. The interference of the big powers has further made the solution of the problem more difficult and Vietnam has become “Berlin of Asia” threatening peace and security of entire humanity.

The continuing war in Vietnam has opened up dangerous possibilities of a global conflict, which has resulted in political uncertainty and economic instability in the whole region of South-East Asia. The last decade has witnessed a shift of the Cold War from Europe. This is because of the big power focusing their foreign policies on South-East Asia and converting it into a puppet on the international chess board, before the newly independent countries into the region had time to settle themselves down to a stable political system and achieve basic economic standards. Various events have shown that a military victory to either party is not possible in Vietnam without
engulfing the whole world into war. The only alternative left is to seek a negotiated peace.

**French States in Vietnam:** For the French the war in Vietnam was a fight to preserve their empire in Asia, their precious balcony on the Pacific and to maintain their position as one of the great powers. But after the victory of the Communist China in 1949 it was looked upon by several Western nations, including Britain and the United States as an important phase in the Cold War in which they were involved. Also, the Vietnamese struggle was a great danger for the “democratic” nations of the world because the frontier of China was a Communist country ran along with those of Tonkin which was under the bastion of Ho Chin Minh. Moreover the immediate recognition of the DRVN by China and Russia led France to view it as the vanguard of the Communist thrust towards South-East Asia and this explanation they even passed on to the USA. In order to look for American support they even tried to change the character of the war by impressing upon the Americans that the Indo-Chinese conflict was mainly anti-Communist in character. Although the United States agreed to aid the French efforts, but it refused to Americanize the war, as the whole of South-East Asia was beyond her defense perimeter in the Pacific. While refusing to participate in the war directly, the Secretary of State nevertheless admitted that the United States “must be prepared to meet wherever possible all thrusts of the Soviet Union”.

In May 1950, due to her economic and military weakness France approached the United States for aid to fight in Indo-China. Since then American aid to France agreed $500 million annually. In 1953 the aid
increased up to $750 million per year. In 1953-1954, the United States was bearing between $2/3^\text{rd}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ of the cost of war.

At this stage the Indo-Chinese war appeared to be a conflict between the two power blocs. While the United States was supplying military aid and equipment to France, on other hand, the People Republic of China was supporting the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The intensity of war increased and negotiations became fruitless.\textsuperscript{45}

**United States Involvement in Vietnam:**

Indo-china has been the testing ground of American policies in South-East Asia, although the evolution of hostilities between the French and the Viet Minh, involving a complexity of factors, United States support for the freedom movement of the colonial peoples: United States policy towards the United Nations, United States interest in French internal stability and economic strength, Western European military strategy and defence against the expansion of Communism not only in Indo-China but in the world as well. Prevented the United States from making satisfactory policy decisions in the beginning towards Indo-China while recognizing that the problem of meeting the threat to the security of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia was the concern of France and the respective government.\textsuperscript{46} United States was not inclined for any deep commitment in Vietnam although it had started realizing the importance of the struggle that the French were waging against communism. It was the Communist victory that led to American involvement in the area. America not only believes that its own well being is served by assuring dignity and security to other peoples, but it has economic as well as strategic interests in the area.
“Vietnam is a peace of real strategic state being on the corner of mainland
Asia, across the East-West trade routes and in a position that would make it an
excellent base for further Communist aggression against the rest of free
Asia”.\textsuperscript{47} It was the involvement of the global forces of expanding Communism
that there emerged a, complex of interests, direct and indirect, which dictated a
policy of active involvement. According to Hans Morganthao\textsuperscript{48} the stakes that
led to American presence in Vietnam were: resistance to Communist
aggression; the containment of China, the containment of Communism and the
prestige of the United States. The United States also considers it to be the most
expedient to get involved in the conflict and thereby to settle the past dues of
the Korean warfare in which 96,000 American soldiers were killed by the
Chinese.

The American stakes in Vietnam may be summed up as follows: -

Vietnam symbolizes the bedrock of the free world in South-East Asia;
the keystone to the arch, the finger in the dike. The DRVN come on state to be
"a Veritable Communist spearhead and a dangerous threat in South-East Asia".
Communist expansions in Vietnam would terrorize Burma, Thailand, India,
Japan, Philippines, Laos and Cambodia. Therefore efforts must be laid down to
build up a strong and free Vietnam. A weakening of the basic will to help
South East Asia would tend to encourage separate Soviet pressures in other
areas. Secretary of State Dulles was afraid that, “if the Communist won over
Indo China.................they would surely resume the same pattern of
aggression against other free people in the area”.\textsuperscript{49} America ‘South-East Asia’
was of great strategic value to USA in terms of defence. It has an important
position in the East-West air and sea routes and flanks the Indian sub-Continent
on one side and Australia, New Zealand and Philippines on the other, and
dominates the gateway between the Pacific and the Indian Ocean. If this area
falls into the hands of Communist, it would pose a serious threat to the security
of the United States and the free world. Thus it was necessary for America to
meet the challenge in Vietnam. According to President Humphrey “The war in
Vietnam is not an isolated phenomenon ... it is the focus of a broader conflict
which involves the whole Asian Continent. It also involves basic principles of
international conduct”. fifty

Thus American policy was systematized in the context of American
Security. Vietnam was important not only in itself but as an area of conflict
between United States and China the one seeking containment and the other
expansion. The American policy in Vietnam might know that if it did not
intervene in Vietnam, the whole of area would go overboard and become
Communist. Therefore it became necessary for America to defend South
Vietnam because its whole position depended on it. According to Eisenhower
“if Indo-China fell not only Thailand but Burma and Malaya would be
threatened with added risks for East Pakistan, South Asia and Indo-China as
well”. fifty-one Mr. Nixon while expressing similar views says “Why is the United
States spending hundreds of millions of dollars supporting the forces of the
French Union in the fight against Communist China?...If Indo China
falls...then the whole part of South-East Asia goes under Communist
domination... Japan, who trades and must trade with this area in order to exist,
must, inevitably is oriented towards the Communist regime”. fifty-two

The war in Vietnam made the United States realize its security interests
in South-East Asia. Secretary Rusk stated, “Certainly we are not there merely
because we have power and like to use it. . . . But we are in Vietnam because the
issues posed there are deeply intertwined with our own security and because
the outcome of the struggle can profoundly affect the nature of the world in
which we and our children will live").

Secondly, South Vietnam was a testing ground for American policy in
South-East Asia. Vietnam was a deciding factor for Americans whether or not
the free world could help a nation defend itself against the subversion and
Guerrilla warfare, which make up the war of “national liberation” tactics. If
South Vietnam fell the will of the other undeveloped nations to resist
aggression would be weakened and the whole fabric of free-world strength
damaged.

Thirdly, war in Vietnam represented a proving ground of democracy in
Asia. If this democratic experiment failed, then it would lead to fall of
democracy in the minds of Asians. The United State was directly responsible
for this experiment and could not allow it to fail. Fourthly, Vietnam
represented a test case of American responsibility and determination in Asia.
American involvement in Vietnam was considered to be a moral commitment
to help the Vietnamese who were fighting not only for themselves but also for
all the freedom loving people. If South Vietnam sank, American stature would
also sink to low ebb. It would also affect American allies, who would lose
faith in American promises of help and security in face of aggression. This
point was stressed in President Johnson’s famous John Hopkins speech of April
7, 1965. He said “Around the globe from Berlin to Thailand are people whose
well-being rests in part on the belief that they can count on us if they are
attacked. To leave Vietnam to its fate would shake the confidence of all these
people in the value of an American commitment and in the American world. The result would be increased unrest and instability, and even wider war”.

Lastly, America’s stake in Vietnam’s strength and security was selfishly motivated, for it could be ultimately measured in terms of American lives and American dollars. American commitment in Vietnam was indirectly connected with the future security of America.55

India’s Efforts for the Solution of the Problem:

“Vietnam, the Cinderella of South East Asia, is fighting unhonoured, unwept and unsung”

The Madras Mail (1948)

Peace in Asia was of instant significance to India. Asian peace as a rule was generally threatened during this period by the rise of internal Communist forces in many Asian countries an occurrence that in turn drew the American and then the Russian on to the Asian stage.

As normal, the Indian policy during this phase of Vietnamese crisis was also the same i.e. her concern for peace and stability in Indo-China, appeal for political solution through a Geneva type conference to end the crisis for good to ensure peace and security of the people of Vietnam.56

In this Asian drama Nehru played many roles but mainly those of mitigator of fear of Communism among the Asian nations, a peacemaker between the two power blocks and a proud and sensitive nationalist. He maintained an incomparable ideological firmness between his different roles but in times of conflict, he choose sometimes reluctantly to act in India’s
national interest for which he was often misunderstood by his own country men and had to face a lot of criticism.

Thus, from the very beginning Nehru has been very vocal on the Vietnam issue. He always spoke in favour of the Vietnamese people and viewed the Vietnam crisis from an angle diametrically opposed to that of USA, which even resulted in strained relations between the two countries. India has always been distrustful of the Western powers whose main aim is subverting independence and establishing colonial rule. Biased by this view India saw American move in Vietnam as a struggle for world domination in some form of imperialism. Moreover Nehru was of the opinion that American interference in Indo-China would draw the Chinese into the arena and that the Korean story would be repeated. He was prepared to accept the Communist rule in North Vietnam in preference to the possibility of a super power confrontation in the region because that would lead to the possibility of a World War III. On 1st January 1946, Nehru expressed his views in the following words:

“Recent developments would ..........seem to indicate that America is underwriting this empire, possibly with suitable minor changes. That is a big decision to take for it is certain that the countries of Asia will not willingly submit to any empire or any domination and will revolt against it......”

But later on Indian attitude and reactions towards the developments in Vietnam were conditioned by the imperatives of her relations with the P.R.C. and her own domestic problems. Because during the mid sixties, India was passing through an acute food shortage caused by successive failures of crops. As a result India had to heavily depend on United States aid (PL-480) to obtain
food grains. Therefore Jawaharlal Nehru has to slow down his voice reluctantly to act in India’s national interest. Besides, India’s growing closeness with Soviet Union and her dependence on her for obtaining arms to meet the threat to her security also seems to be a factor, which cast its shadow over Indian Policy in the following years.\textsuperscript{58}

For a country like India which was extremely anti-colonialist, and which favoured nationalism rather than communism, the situation in Vietnam looked very complicated. Because all the three “ism” there were so interwined that to support nationalism without strengthening colonialism and Communism amounted to tight rope walking.

Thus India’s policy towards Vietnam from 1945 to 1960 can be divided into three phases i.e. from 1945 to 1949; from 1950 to July 1954 and from July 1954 to 1960.

During the first period, India strongly opposed French colonialism, and was sympathetic towards the Communist dominated nationalist movement led by Ho-Chin Minh, but she did not carry this sympathy to the point of actually strengthening this movement materially, morally and diplomatically to the advantage of Communism. During the second phase, India was still showing sentimental preference for Ho Chin Minh, but was strictly neutral politically and diplomatically. During the third phase, India progressively moved closer to the nationalist to the disadvantage of the Communists.\textsuperscript{59}

If the years 1945-1949 were critical for Vietnam\textsuperscript{60}, they were same for India, which was beset by all sorts of difficulties at home, yet inspite of her internal difficulties, India could not close her eyes and turned a deaf ear to what
was happening in the Vietnam. Nevertheless, in 1945-46, she could do nothing more than expressing moral support for the Vietnamese struggle for freedom.

In the year 1945 when the British troops were sent to Saigon to disarm the Japanese, who were used by the British Commander to suppress the Vietnamese nationalist under the guise of maintaining order. There was a storm of protest among the Indians, especially as among these troops there was a contingent of Indian soldiers from the 20th Indian division. Moreover, the All India Congress Committee, passed a Resolution stating that it viewed “with anxiety the attempts that are being made to maintain the political and economic subjection of Burma, Malaya, Indo-china and Indonesia”. In December, the same Committee, meeting in Calcutta, passed another Resolution declaring that “any support from any quarter to imperialist design in Indonesia, Indo-china, and elsewhere, is resented throughout Asia”. In March 1946, it passed another Resolution stating that “it had become urgent and necessary to end foreign domination over the countries of Asia and Africa and for foreign armies to be withdrawn from all such countries, and notably from Indonesia, Manchuria, Indo-china, Iran and Egypt”. In Delhi in January 1946, Nehru declared that “we have watched British intervention there with growing anger, shame and helplessness, that Indian troops should be used for doing Britain’s dirty worked against our friends who are fighting the same fight as we are.........”. In the same year, he even sent greetings to Ho-Chin Minh. He even made clear to France that “Our hearts are with the people of Indo-china. The attempt to crush the spirit of freedom in Indo-china has deeply moved the Indian people... Though it is difficult for Indians to know the facts of the conflict; one
thing is patent that foreign armed forces are trying to crush Vietnam”. President of the Congress Party A.J.B. Kripalani, warned France that fighting “worse than the last war” would break out in Indo-china “unless the people of Asia were granted freedom”. At the same time steps were taken by the Indian Government to help Vietnam. However, these steps were limited in scope.

**India and the Geneva Agreements:**

From 1950 onwards, Communist China and the United States became increasingly involve in Indo-china. The war further added fuel to the flames and was in danger of leading to a general conflict. The prevention of this event was foremost in the mind of the Indian Government, especially from 1952 onwards after the invasion of Laos by Viet Minh troops had brought the war closer to the Indian borders. Keeping these considerations in mind Nehru appealed for a cease-fire in Indo-china in a speech in Parliament on February 22, 1954.

The fight in Indo-china was, therefore, in his views, essentially one of nationalism and colonialism. In the eyes of Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indo-chinese conflict was “born of a movement of resistance to colonialism and attempt to deal with it by the traditional method of divided and rule”. Although foreign intervention had made the issue more complex, but it did not change its basic character. “The recognition of this aspect, he said, as well as the recognition of national sentiments for freedom and independence and safeguarding them against external pressure can alone form the basis of a settlement and of peace”.

Regarding India's interest in the matter Nehru declared that the developments in Indo-china were of "grave concern and grievous significance" to his country, and that their implications encroached on the newly won and cherished independence of Asian countries. According to Jawaharlal Nehru "The maintenance of the independence and sovereignty of Asian countries as well as the end of colonial and foreign rule are essential for the prosperity of Asian people and for the peace of the world". Furthermore, India did not seek any special role in Asia, nor did she champion narrow and sectional Asian regionalism. "We only seek to keep ourselves and others, particularly our neighbours, he affirmed to a policy of peace and non-alignment in world tension and wars".67

Moreover the proclamation of the "Democratic Republic of Vietnam" in September 1945, and its recognition by the Government of China further complicated the issue by transforming a local conflict into an international one, and that too at a stage when the battle-lines for the ensuing Cold War were being drawn.

Hence, in an earnest desire to maintain peace and help resolve some of the differences. Nehru followed up his cease-fire proposal by a vocal protest against the contemplated extension of the Indo-China conflict. He said that peace could not be established with threats in view of the forthcoming Geneva Conference, as it was not the time for provocations and threats. Furthermore, in line with her policy of non-involvement, India did not permit any foreign troops and military supplies bound for Indo-China to fly through her territory.
When the threatened intervention in Indo-China did not materialise and Geneva Conference was about to commence its business, Nehru put forward his six-point plan for the peaceful solution of the Indo-China problem. While announcing this six point plan on Indo-China, Jawaharlal Nehru expressed his earnest hope that the conference in Geneva would seek to resolve the question of Indo-China by negotiations and succeed in doing so, so that the "shadow of war which had for long darkened our proximate regions and threatened to spread and grow darker still be dispelled".

Hence having stated India's basic approach to the question, Jawaharlal Nehru made the following six suggestions.

1. "A climate of peace and negotiations has to be promoted and the suspicion and the atmosphere of threats that prevails ought to be dissipated. To this end, the Government of India appeals to all concerned, to desist from threats, and to the combatants to refrain from stepping up the tempo of the war.

2. A cease-fire: - To bring this about the Government of India propose:

(a) That the item of a "cease fire" be given priority on the Indo-China Conference agenda.

(b) A cease-fire groups (sic) consisting of the actual belligerents; viz., France and her three associated states and Viet Minh.

3. Independence: The conference should decide and proclaim that it is essential for the solution of the conflict that the complete independence of Indo-China, that is, the termination of French Government, should be placed beyond all doubt by an unequivocal commitment by the Government of France.
4. Direct negotiations between the parties immediately and principally concerned should be initiated by the Conference. Instead of seeking to hammer out settlements themselves, the conference should request the parties principally concerned to enter into direct negotiations and give them all assistance to this end. Such direct negotiations would assist in keeping the Indo-China question limited to the issue, which concern and involve Indo-China directly. These parties would be the same as would constitute the cease-fire group.

5. Non-Intervention. A solemn agreement on non-intervention denying aid, direct or indirect with troops or war-material to the combatants or for the purposes of war, to which the United States, the USSR, the UK and China shall be primary parties, should be brought about by the conference. The United Nations, to which the decision of the conference should be reported, shall be requested to formulate a convention of non-intervention in Indo-China embodying the aforesaid Agreement and including the provisions for its enforcement under United Nations auspices. Other states should be invited by the United Nations, to adhere to this convention of non-intervention.

6. The United Nations should be informed of the progress of the conference. Its good offices for purpose of conciliation under the appropriate articles of the Charter, and not for involving sanctions, should be sought.

Though, Nehru’s six point plan for a peaceful settlement of the Indo-China conflict failed to attract any positive response from the Western countries. But as far as Britain was concerned, the plan was received without much enthusiasm both in official and non-official circles. Nevertheless, when
the Prime Ministers of Ceylon, India, Burma, Indonesia and Pakistan met at a conference in Colombo. Anthony Eden, British Foreign Secretary had taken the initiative in linking the Colombo Conference with the Geneva Conference. Though none of the parties to the Colombo Conference was represented at Geneva. But, Eden was fully convinced that any settlement for Indo-China to be reached at Geneva could only be affected if Asian states including India were associated with it. Agreeing to this approach, Eden on 29 April, sent from Geneva a cable to the Prime Minister of Ceylon, India and Pakistan in Colombo. He was believed to have given an assurance to the three Commonwealth Prime Ministers that the British Government did not wish to be a party to any decision likely to be reached at Geneva, which would conflict with the legitimate aims of the Asian countries. He further enquired of them whether they were prepared to participate in a guarantee to assure the future of Indo-China if the Geneva Conference arrived at an acceptable settlement. Jawaharlal Nehru, in his reply was reported to have stated that the Government of India would be willing to participate in, or be associated with a guarantee, if the Geneva Conference arrived at an acceptable decision and if India were invited to do so by both sides. Furthermore, it was emphasized that India would not be willing to consider as part of her commitments the obligation to use force against anyone violating the terms of the settlement.

A trend away from extremist enthusiasm for freedom and towards a more cautious advocacy of it was discernible in India’s attitude regarding Indo-China. Thus India followed an attitude of non-commitment towards the Indo-Chinese Government and was not in favour of any foreign army functioning in Asia. Nehru even refused to recognize Ho-Chin Minh or Bao Dai and said that
India would follow the developments until the people had reached some decision. He was against taking sides in this issue. His admonition was "we should not jump into the fray". After all, what can we do about it, except to give moral sympathy and get involved? We do not think that is practical politics.

The Indian Government tried its level best to persuade other British Commonwealth countries to remain aloof from the power politics of this region. India considered Bao Dai to be a puppet of France and the image of Ho Chin Minh was that of great patriot and nationalist in the eyes of the Indian people. But his close links with China and the Soviet Union were not liked by Indians. But Indian Government was confused as to which of the two regimes had full support and sympathy of the people not could it get proper information regarding the political situation at that time. Moreover India believed that it would not benefit her if Indo-China became a pawn in the Cold War. Regarding India's attitudes towards Indo-Chinese issue Jawaharlal Nehru said that it was a positive attitude because we do not want to make the situation more difficult for Indo-China's fight for Independence. Thus India adopted a policy of neutrality in Vietnam in order to help facilitate the solution of the problem and in accordance with it declared the policy of non-alignment.

The Government of India in April 1954, made a public appeal to all the government and people's concerned to seek to bring about a cessation of hostilities in Indo-China. This was without prejudice to any of the political, military, territorial or other issues involved. The Indian appeal evoked favourable response from Burma, Indonesia and from the Prime Minister of Canada who happened to be in India at that time. There was a significant
interest, concern and appreciation for Government of India’s appeal in France, both in the country and in the Parliament, favoured the Indian approach and suggestions. The Indian Government felt that the question of cessation of hostilities was an important statement, which could open the way to further negotiation.77

However, India played an active role in its negotiations, which resulted in the Geneva Agreement in 1954. Even after Nehru’s death there was no change regarding India’s basic position in Vietnam Swaran Singh, Minister of External Affairs stated78 that “we firmly believe that the only way to solve the Vietnam problem is to abandon warlike activities and to hold discussions with the object of implementing the Geneva Agreement so that the people of Vietnam may be able to determine the future with their wishes without any interference from any quarter whatsoever”. Under Article 34 of the Agreement signed on July 20, 1954 in Geneva. India served for over a decade as a Chairman of the tripartite International Commission for supervision and control on in Vietnam (ICV) with Canada and Poland as the other members. With a few exceptions India mainly played a negative role in the Commission. It was for the first time in the year 1962, that India issued a report along with Canada, with Poland disagreeing, in which North Vietnam was found guilty of infiltration into South Vietnam. Another occurrence was when the ICV produced a majority report on 13, February 1965 in which the Indian and Polish representatives said that the air strikes of February 7 and 8, indicated the violation of Geneva Agreement.79

On 24th April 1965, the then President Radhakrishnan of India proposed a cease fire on both sides, policing the boundary between North and South
Vietnam with an Afro-Asian force and the maintenance of the present boundaries as long as the people concerned wished this. The United States called the proposal "constructive" and full of interest and of hope. Peking denounced it as "preposterous in the extreme" and the Government of North Vietnam described it as "erroneous" and accused India of "indirectly encouraging, through the plan in the sleeves". To sabotage the 1954, Geneva Agreement, as it would tend to perpetuate the division of Vietnam. However, India's policy has been to continue to make used of every forum and channel to secure peace in Vietnam.

The Geneva Settlement was regarded by Jawaharlal Nehru as a memorable event in history, one in which he saw United Asian opinion tripping in favour of peace. The Indian Government extended its full support to the agreement.

(a) The agreement provided for the insulation of the country from outside military intervention and has specified clauses forbidding entry of foreign military personal or material of any type into Vietnam except in replacement of permissible quantities already in the country. India regrets that foreign interference is continuing and the dream of reunification of Vietnam remains unachieved. The Government of India has always worked for the implementation of Geneva Agreement.

The communique of the Colombo Conference of the Asian Prime Ministers largely incorporated the points from Nehru's six-point plan. After welcoming the attempt made by the Geneva Conference in finding out a peaceful solution, it advocated a speedy cease-fire and direct negotiations.
between the parties principally concerned. It even urged for the complete independence of the Associated States and reiterated the suggestions regarding the utilization of the good offices and machinery of the United Nations. Though the term 'non-intervention' did not appear in the communique the Prime Minister suggested that the principal countries concerned, apart from the belligerents, should reach an understanding to prevent a resumption of conflict after the cease-fire.84

However, in August 1964, Gulf of Tonkin incident produced a critical phase in Vietnam situation. The Indian Government expressed distress over the incident and was of the opinion that the situation would not be further aggravated and peace would soon be restored.85 On the contrary the situation worsened and on 7 February 1965 the United States started bombing North Vietnam. The Indian Government issued a statement expressing its deep concern over the situation as it might lead to full-scale escalation of war in Vietnam. The statement called for an immediate suspension of all provoked action in South and North Vietnam by all parties involved in the issue and steps should be taken to create the atmosphere necessary for the convening of a Geneva-type Conference for an enduring solution to the Vietnam problem. This new Conference would be in conformity with the declaration of the Cairo Conference of non-aligned Nation in October, 1964.86

On 26th March 1965, Swaran Singh, External Affairs Minister of India in the Lok Sabha expressed “distress” and “shock” over the use of gas in South Vietnam affecting the Vietcong and civilian population. He declared that India considered this act against humanity and hoped that no further use of it will be made in South Vietnam.
Besides India also played an active role at the Belgrade Conference so that the political solution of the problem could be achieved. But to its dismay only United States welcomed it but the Democratic Republic of Vietnam rejected it. Inspite of the rigid attitude of Hanoi, L.B. Shastri asked for the halt of the Northern Bombings as a precondition for discussions. The Prime Minister said that though Hanoi had imposed conditions for negotiations, but held that this was not a vital point. Since then, the demand for an end to Northern bombing without urging simultaneous de-escalation by the other side became a major plank in the Indian evaluation of Vietnam.

The Annual report of the Ministry of External Affairs (1966) summarized the Indian position on Vietnam. As follow:

a). The impossibility of the military solution.

b). The urgency of the political settlement on the Geneva Model.

c). The immediate need for the Northern bombing to cease.

d). The ending of fighting throughout Vietnam.

e). The withdrawal of United States forces from South Vietnam and

f). The peaceful creation of a unified Vietnamese state without foreign troops and military alliance.

The report resulted in a heated controversy. The United States sought explanation on the mention of the withdrawal of the American forces, and was told by the Minister of External Affairs that the document misrepresented India’s policy on this point. But a close estimate of India’s policy shows that
the demand was in fact a part of India’s position at that time which was based on:

a). India’s opposition to American military forces in Asia.

b). Her interpretation of the 1954 Geneva Agreement, and

c). Statement by the Indian leaders during the year 1965. Pressurized by critics who blamed that food shortage in India during 1956 and the aid provided by the American in the form of PL-480 prevented the government from speaking against the American’s. The letter dated 15th Feb. 1966 says:

“For quite sometime the United States Government has been pressuring India to side with them in their aggression against the Vietnamese people”. Indira Gandhi and Swaran Singh defending themselves against the critics say’s that the conditions for the withdrawal of the report had official endorsement and was not in error. However the Indian Government did not approve of United States withdrawal before as desired by Hanoi and NLF (National Liberation front). Indira Gandhi also tried to calm the United States by saying90 “if you look at the reality of the situation, it is easy to say ‘withdraw’ but it is not so easy to do it in practice”.

However, on 30, June 1966, when United States planes started bombing in North Vietnam Swaran Singh our External Minister regarded it as a “most serious development” and hoped that the bombing would stop.91 Mrs. Indira Gandhi also expressed the fear that the bombing would intensify the war, which may pose danger not only for South-East Asia but also for India.92
India engulfed with other problem was unable to do anything. The East it could do was to convey its dissatisfaction of the bombing. Again Mrs. Indira Gandhi made an important effort on 7th July 1966 in the form of 7-point formula for the solution of the Vietnam Crisis. The Proposal was broadcasted from All India Radio, on the eve of her visit to Soviet Union. The proposal runs as follows:

2. Bombing of North Vietnam to be stopped immediately.
3. This should be followed by a cessation of hostilities and belligerent movement throughout Vietnam in full observation of the (1954) Geneva Agreement.
4. The International Control Commission to safeguard the “stand-still arrangements” with India accepting added responsibility in their task if necessary.
5. Withdrawal of all foreign troops, forces from Vietnam.
6. The guarantee by the Geneva powers of territorial integrity and independence of not only a neutral Vietnam but also Laos and Cambodia.
7. The Geneva powers could also write a rehabilitation and development plan for the three Indo-China states to repair the ravages of war.

While presenting the basic approach followed by Mrs. Indira Gandhi that there could be no military solution in Vietnam. A peaceful solution could
only be reached through a conference table and hence necessity for the co-
chairman to convene a Geneva type Conference.

Thus the objective of the conference should be to find a solution within
the frame work of Geneva Agreement of 1954 i.e. the Vietnamese people
should be able to decide their future according to their own wish without
pressure or interference from any quarter.94

Mrs. Indira Gandhi plan showed a way by which all the parties involved
could stop fighting and start negotiating. This plan proved satisfactory both for
United States and Hanoi since it sought to prevent North Vietnamese supplies
flowing to the Viet Cong in the South which was what the United States
desired and it also provided for a peaceful settlement which would let the
Vietnamese decide their own future without any outside interference, which
was demanded by Hanoi. Thus the proposal was welcomed by the United
States since it gave priority for a conference and demanded for a bombing halt
as a precondition.

However, when Mrs. Indira Gandhi reached Moscow, there appeared a
change in her original proposals. The Gandhi-Kosygin communiqué, issued
after her visit to Russia, marked a shift in India’s stand i.e. she demanded an
immediate end to the American bombing of North Vietnam and maintained that
the conflict could only be settled within the framework of the Geneva
Agreement of 1954. The communiqué was significant, as it did not mention the
conveying of a conference or an end to the fighting or even the withdrawal of
foreign forces. Though foreign bases were regarded as obstacles to peace
Certain rearrangements of ideas were noticeable in the joint communiqué
priority was given to the cessation of bombing while Mrs. Indira Gandhi’s suggestion for a conference was relegated. India’s option of securing a Russian call for a Geneva type Conference was of no particular benefit. In the ultimate analyses the communiqué was more akin to soviet than Indian formulas. Some likely explanation for this act on the part of India can be given in terms of India’s concern about possible Russian Military aid to Pakistan following Soviet mediation at Tashkent, the influence of T.N. Kaul, India’s economic needs and the deficit policy planning Mrs. Indira Gandhi later on showed some modifications in her proposals that she now linked the demand for ending Northern bombings to a call for negotiations and made the halt a precondition for peace meetings. It caused misgivings in the minds of the United States. It was felt that Mrs. Indira Gandhi had changed the original proposal according to which both parties should discontinue their actions, and that she was demanding that unless the United States took the first step and halted the bombing without the counter-assurance that Hanoi would reciprocate or Moscow would call the Geneva Conference it would be difficult to hold a Geneva Conference. It was felt that this change in original position by Mrs. Indira Gandhi was to please the Russian and possibly it was because of pressure from them. The press reports say that Mrs. Indira Gandhi might have taken the Russian sides to ensure that Moscow did not agree to Pakistan request for arms from the Soviet Union. The New York Times of 21st July 1967 says that Mrs. Gandhi’s new statement was causing anguish in Washington. Firstly it was aroused by the communiqué in which both India and Soviet Union expressed concern at the deterioration of the international situation and the
increasing war danger which had occurred as a result of imperialist and other reactionary forces.

This shift in the Indian stand greatly disappointed the United States because it was for the first time such controversial predictably offensive languages was used by the Indians to the USA. The United States Official was quite realistic to admit that it was extravagant to ask India to take their side in the Vietnam conflict. They even realized that India had to drive a middle course between the United States and the Soviet Union because United state itself took an "impartial" position between India and Pakistan during the 1965 conflict but complained that India by asking the United States alone to take the first step towards de-escalation was tilting the balance the other way.

Even after the 7th July proposal by Mrs. Indira Gandhi. India continued its efforts for a peaceful solution in Vietnam. In August India advised the revival of the joint Commission, which would enable the two sides to patrol together the demilitarized zone. American appreciated this suggestion because an effective patrol could end North Vietnam's illegal and increasing use of zone as a funnel for its South bound troops. It would also proved beneficial for Hanoi because it would end the threat of retaliation on the Northern side of the line, which would be in the interest of Hanoi. But Hanoi could not be expected to agree to this suggestion since in the past also it had obstructed the functioning of the ICC so as to shield from its scrutiny the acts of Vietnamese Communists in violation of the Geneva Conference.

Regardless of its peace efforts, India was not a participant to the Manila Conference of October 1966 as it was considered to be "a gathering of a group
of specific nations would increase rather than decrease tensions”.  
India wisely condemned this peace bid by the USA and its allies as a diplomatic stunt to mislead world opinion which opposed the continuance of American bombing of North Vietnam.

In 1966 India also joined hands with Egypt and Yugoslavia to demand withdrawal of “all foreign forces” without any time limit.

Next, along with other Non-aligned nations India supported the United Nations Secretary General initiative to bring about peace in Vietnam. On 6th October 1967 Swaran Singh who led the Indian delegation to the United Nations General Assembly at its last session said “It is our conviction that people of Vietnam alone can decide their destiny without any foreign interference”. The Indian emphasized that unconditional stoppage of bombing was the first essential step, which could lead to cessation of all hostile activities in Vietnam and peaceful talks between the parties concerned. But the USA disagreed with the Indian assessment of Hanoi. However, a certain amount of flexibility was visible in the United States attitude when Arthur Goldberg, the United States Ambassador to the United Nations, announced at the United Nations that USA would support an invitation to South Vietnam (NLF) to present its case before the Security Council. This was according to the Indian demand. Thus, at East one of the obstacles to negotiation was removed by the United States.

India as a Chairman of International Control Commission made an appeal to Chester Bowles, American Ambassador, that she did not recognize the right of hot pursuit as claimed by USA to chase the Vietcong across the
The United States urged that India should active it and intensify supervision of the Cambodian border so that the conflict might not spread to Cambodia. In 1968, India informed the Cambodia Head of state (Prince Norodom Sihanouk) that the ICC would inspect specific complaints of violation of the Cambodian territory by Vietcong or any other belligerent of the Vietnam war. This Indian interpretation was against American expectation of utilizing the Commission as a mobile border patrol would spread a wave of anger in USA.

USA and the State department criticized India for not using its position as Chairman of the ICC as the discriminatory treatment meted out to USA caused great resentment. Again India's refusal of accepting American advise on Cambodia implied that India had supported the Communist plan and sided with those who were responsible for spreading the war. It was clear that India has drifted from its original position of neutrality previously. India accepted that the infiltration and subversion was from the North but now India took an altogether different view of the issue. Replying to Hem Barua (BSP) Mrs. Indira Gandhi said, “She was aware of the Soviet Union supplying arms to North Vietnam. But the people in Vietnam were fighting for security and as long as there is no end to aggression, “we cannot say from whom they should take arms and from whom they should not”.

As far as Johnson visits with North Vietnam in Geneva was concerned. Mrs. Indira Gandhi had no hope if anything could come out through this meeting. Contrary in the beginning he regarded President Johnson as a “man of peace”. This marked change in India’s attitude implied that India was close to North Vietnam and away from USA. Moreover the North Vietnamese claim
that America was an aggressor and the Vietnamese victim of aggression, fighting for self-protection.

On 1st April 1963 United States announced to stop aerial and naval bombardment of North Vietnam. India described it as “most welcome” and as a step towards de-escalation of the war in Vietnam. India as a Chairman of the ICC also assured its whole-hearted cooperation.\textsuperscript{104}

India also took the initiative to confirm Hanoi’s response to the United States decision to halt bombing of North Vietnamese territory. Hanoi reply was partial but not conditional. Personally also Mrs. Indira Gandhi offered India’s good offices for arranging peace talks between Dr. Ho Chin Minh and President Johnson. India also welcomed the agreement between the United States and North Vietnam to hold preliminary talks in Paris, and called it as “an act of Statesmanship”.\textsuperscript{105} In order to create a better atmosphere for negotiation United States finally offered to stop all bombing of North Vietnam and agreement was also reached on including both South Vietnam and NLF representative in the negotiations. India hailing the American decision characterized it as “a step towards peace”. Paying accolade to President Johnson, Mrs. Indira Gandhi said that he had acted with “understanding and courage”. However India kept silent on the Paris Peace talks because being the Chairman of ICC she desired to maintain a position of neutrality. Moreover, she believed that any expression of opinion on delicate issues of procedures concerning Vietnam by nations other than those directly involved would not help in resolving the difference.
The year 1969 showed a fresh strain in India's relations with USA. Previously India had approved President Nixon's 8 Point peace plan, but a clash occurred when USA showed its disapproval against India's decision to recognize the Communists new Provisional Revolutionary Government in Vietnam. Mrs. Indira Gandhi also rejected Nixon's assertion that United States had made ultimate concession for peace and declared that every country had the right to decide its future without any interference from outside power. Moreover India's decision to send the Cabinet Minister to attend the funeral of President Ho Chin Minh represented a new direction in India's foreign policy. It marked a shift from the half-hearted attempt of the past to treat North and South Vietnams on par and could very well become the starting point of a new trend in India's Asian Policy. Our Foreign Minister Mr. Dinesh Singh, after having proposed a 4-step programme for peace in Vietnam to the United Nations General Assembly went to pay tribute to Late Dr. Ho- Chin Minh in whom according to him, "Asia has lost an indomitable soldier for freedom". This was liable to be interpreted in the State department as an avoidable attempt to needle the United States.

The United States raised a lot of hue and cry over the report that India was favourably considering to regrade its consulate general in Hanoi to an embassy level. As it would unbalance India's position as the Chairman of the International Control Commission and it would seem to extend support to North Vietnam at a time when United States was in full mood of having a settlement without any demands from other sides. The United States was much annoyed at India's false assertion that real negotiation would soon follow once bombing stops in the North. It was bitterly alleged that India was adopting a
double standard, which demanded United States to withdraw and make all concession while at the same time supporting Hanoi's unreasonable stand. Therefore, in retaliation President Nixon warned that India's move to ungrade the status of the mission in Hanoi would be considered as an unfriendly act by the United States Congress.\textsuperscript{108}

Further, a Congressman informed the Foreign Secretary, Kaul, that such action would jeopardize the American aid to India including the food aid. William Broomsfield a representative even went to the extent of introducing a Resolution which aimed at denying all aid to India. Subsequently the Resolution was withdrawn as the Government of India agreed to extend diplomatic recognition both to the Government of North and South Vietnam.\textsuperscript{109} Later on India refused to grant diplomatic recognition to Saigon until President Thien made his government more broad based.

No doubt American threat to stop giving aid created serious concern in India, but its immediate reaction was to unite public opinion against America's Vietnam Policy and to improve relations with North Vietnam. Taking any notice of America's feeling India decided to follow its national interest and maintain friendly relations with nations, which were geopolitically important to it, regardless of ideology. India thought, North Vietnam which was on China's doorstep, could very well become a bridge between India and China in future. On the other hand India tried to soften American sensitivity by pointing out that India's should be welcomed by America as it was in America's interest that a major non-Communist influence, which till now was imaginary would be operating in Hanoi. India further argued that once USA maintained friendly relations with Vietnam then there would be no particular virtue in India
following suit. Later on Dinesh Singh kept aside United States objections on upgrading the mission and assured Parliament that further decisions would be taken keeping India’s national interest and not under pressure.\textsuperscript{110}

India also raised her voice against American encroachment on the sovereignty of Cambodia, as it would only worsen the situation. Our External Affair Minister, Swaran Singh further went on to describe the Vietnam War as a “heroic struggle of a people of a small country to preserve its independence against the world’s greatest military power”. To make the matter worse he further added that India at present is in no mood of according official recognition to the Provincial government of South Vietnam (Set up by NLP and Vietcong). “It would be unpractical for us to close our eyes and say that we have nothing to do with the NLP or the agencies they may set up. Infact, we need to have close relations with them”.

America took great exemption to this statement, which cast aspersions on the United States role in Vietnam. On the invitation sent by Foreign Minister of India Madame Binh, Foreign Minister of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of India visited India in July 1970. This was another example of marked departure from the policy of calculated non-involvement it had so far being following.

Simultaneously, Paris peace talks were deadlocked because Swaran Singh said that the talks could only progress if there was a definite programme for the withdrawal of all United States forces, and a more broad based government was formed in South Vietnam. He further added that the problem of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, could not the solved in isolation but had to be
tackled as a whole. In such critical condition a Geneva Conference should be held and India along with other interested parties would work out arrangement to ensure respect for the neutrality independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of all the states in Indo-China.  

President Nixon in 1970 set out a proposal to solve the Vietnam problem. There was no comment from official side in India on this proposal but the Foreign Office regarded it as fallen short of expectations from the Communist side in the Indo-China conflict.

Firstly the cease-fire proposal to be strictly supervised by withdrawal of the United States, North Vietnam and other troops from South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia sought to pin down Hanoi to an implied admission of the pressure of its troops in these countries.

Secondly it did not fulfill the Communist demand for coalition in a broad based government in South Vietnam, without any election, although the United States. President indicated that the election should not be the only criteria for determining political realities in South Vietnam and other countries. Since the Indian Government’s view on both these issues corresponded with that of the Communist side it faced a dilemma since it did not wish to reject the Nixon proposals on the same ground as those given by the soviet Union, North Vietnam and the Vietcong as it would be blamed for taking sides in the Indo-China conflict. Therefore the only way left was to sent a critical note on the failure of the Nixon proposal to meet the demands of the situation as seen from New Delhi.
Anyhow India readily welcomed the Paris Agreement when finally the two warring camps agreed to give up war and solve issues through mutual negotiations in January 1973.

Asian peace was of paramount importance to Nehru. Asian peace during the Vietnam crises was generally threatened by the rise of internal Communist forces which in turn drew the American, China and Russia on to the Asian stage. Thus the battle in Vietnam was not only a clash between personalities, but also a fight for world Communist leadership. The interference of the big powers has further made the solution of the problem more difficult and Vietnam has become “Berlin of Asia” threatening peace and security of entire humanity.

Nehru has always been distrustful of the Western powers whose main aim is subverting independence and establishing colonial rule. Biased by this view, Nehru saw American move in Vietnam as a struggle for world domination in some form of imperialism. Moreover Nehru feared that American intervention would bring in the Chinese and then the conflict might spread beyond the frontier of Indo-China state and the next stage would be that the Americans and the Chinese would be fighting each other and that was in all probability the beginning of the World War III.

Thus for a country like India which was extremely anti-colonialist and which, favoured nationalism than Communism the situation in Vietnam looked very complicated. In this Asian drama Nehru played many roles but mainly those of mitigator of fear of Communism among the Asian nations, a peacemaker between the two power bloc and a proud and sensitive nationalist. India
as a Chairman of the International Control Commission made a proposal for the
development of Afro-Asian force in Vietnam to control the demarcation of land
between the North and South Vietnam. But this proposal was however
rejected. In the meantime, on the eve of the Geneva Conference, the Colombo
Conference of South-East Asian Prime Ministers consisting of India, Burma,
Ceylon, Indonesia and Pakistan was convened at the instance of Nehru on April
26. His call for cease-fire in Indo-China was endorsed by other Asian nations.
He put forward a six-point formula for consideration of the parties concerned.
All other Prime Ministers supported his peace proposals.

Soon “the Nehru plan” which proposed direct negotiations between the
belligerents became the basis of the conference. K. Menon, who arrived in
Geneva with the approval of Nehru, became the focus of attention. He
“established close rapport with Chou En Lai and of this full advantage was
taken by Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary who was most anxious to
see the conference succeed”.

The members of the nine-nation group that met at Geneva could not carry on fruitful talks because of the mutual suspicion among the different members. They needed someone to explain the difficulties of one side to the other. K. Menon, thus, served as a buffer, an interpreter and an intermediary all roles rolled in one.

The Geneva Conference had a brief spell of research in the third week of
June. Later on Chou En-Lai met Nehru on 25th June and said that China would
be satisfied if the Indo-China states followed a non-alignment policy after their
liberation. Both the Prime Ministers issued a joint statement emphasizing that
the Indo-China conflict to be solved in accordance with the principle of
Panchsheel.
On 18th July, when the conference was held Chou En Lai proposed that the International Commission to supervise the armistice arrangements should consist of India, Canada and Poland and thus the proposal was accepted by all three Western powers. Later on July 19, “Nehru received a frantic telegram from Eden enquiring whether India and other Colombo powers would agree to guarantee a settlement of Indo-China and join a collective pact for the purpose”. Nehru was against signing this pact as it went against India’s policy of non-alignment.

The conference reached a deadlock on the question of composition of the Commission to supervise the armistice arrangements. During this final phase of negotiations, K. Menon again acted as an intermediary and clearing up misunderstanding persuaded one party to take into account the problems of the other. Thus on July 20, Mendes France and the Viet Minh delegates had reached an agreement on a demarcation line and by midnight the armistice agreement for Laos and Vietnam was signed on July 21. The armistice provided for three separate cease-fire agreement for Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia and three International Commissions to control and supervise the cease-fire agreements. India acted as the Chairman of all the three Commissions. Though the United States and South Vietnam did not signed the final agreement on cease-fire they promised not to use force to resist the procedure for implementing the cease-fire agreement. With this the eight year war came to a happy end. When the hostilities ended in Indo-China Nehru felt greatly relieved and happy about India’s effort in averting another world war and said, “For the first time during these difficult months, we can feel that there is no likelihood of a world war in the near future. We came very near it. Many
worked hard for starving of this World War III ... I think it is right to say that the part India played, quietly and unobtrusively, made in a great measure, the development possible".115
REFERENCES:


6. J.R.E. Waddell; An Introduction to South-East Asian Politics, (John Willey, Sydney, 1972), P.74


8. BSN Murti; Ibid., p.2.


11. B.S.N. Murti; n. 8, p.3.


17. Ibid., p.475.

18. Nathaniel Piffor; n.16, p.475.


23. B.S.N. Murti; n.11, p.67.

24. Ibid., pp.67-68.

25. B.S.N. Murti; n. 21, p.15.

26. Ibid., p.17.

27. Ibid., pp.19-20.
28. Stephen Pan and Danial Lyous; n.1, p. 202
31. Ibid.
36. The Indian Express, (New Delhi), May 15, 1968.
37. B.S.N. Murti; n. 23, p.53.
41. B.S.N. Murti; n.37, pp.100
42. Sailendra Nath Dhar; n.10, pp. 555-556.
43. Amry Vandenbosch and Richard Butwell; n. 5, pp. 168-70.
44. B.S.N. Murti; n. 25, p.8.
45. B. S.N. Murti; n.41, p. 7.
Vietnam and the United Nations


51. Ibid. p. 589.


55. Frank N. Trager; n. 19, pp. 111-112.

56. Saroj Pathak; India and South-East Asia; A study of Indian Perspective and Policy since 1962, (Atma Ram and Sons, Delhi, 1990), p. 112.


58. Saroj Pathak; n. 56, p. 12.


61. Rammanohar Lohia; Indian Foreign Policy, (All India Congress Committee, Allahabad, 1938), p. 89.

62. Ton That Thien; n.59, p.121.

63. Rammanohar Lohia; n. 61, p.89.

64. Ibid., p.90.

65. Ibid., p.91.


67. Rammanohar Lohia; n. 63, p. 396.


71. The Geneva Conference on Indo-China was a nine-power conference of UK, USA, USSR, France the three Associated States and the Viet Minh.


74. The Hindu, January 16 and February 8, 1950.

75. The Hindu, February 10, 1950.

76. The Hindu, July 1, 1966.

77. B.S.N. Murti; n. 25, p. 9.

78. The Hindu, July 1, 1966.


80. Proposal for the cessation of hostilities in Vietnam by the President of India, 24th April, 1965.

81. Statement by the United States Secretary of State, 23rd June, 1965.

82. Nehru’s Statement in the Lok Sabha, 25 August 1954, India’s Foreign Policy, 401-4.


84. Nehru’s broadcast from Colombo, 2 May 1954, IFP, p.401.


88. The Hindu, April 15, 1966.

89. Report Ministry of External Affairs 1965-66


92. The Hindu, July 1, 1966.

93. The Hindu, July 8, 1966.

94. LSD., Third Series, Vol. LVII, No.1 July 25, 1966,

95. Prime Minister Mrs. Gandhi’s Statement in Times of India, August 20, 1966.


97. Times of India, October 25, 1966.

98. Indian Express, August 2, 1967.


100. Hindustan Times, October 11, 1967.


106. Times, August 1, 1969.


