CHAPTER V

INDIA’S DIPLOMACY IN THE GENEVA CONFERENCE, 1954
India’s early relations with Indo-China and the cautious policy of non-involvement till 1954 have been discussed in previous chapters. India, however, decided to play an active role in the wake of American decision to step up military aid to France and consequent Chinese military assistance to the Vietminh which threatened to escalate the conflict into a global war. The decision of the Berlin Conference to resolve the Indo-China problem through negotiations in Geneva provided an opportunity and encouraged India to "enter the fray" discarding the policy of non-involvement. The Indo-China negotiations provided an opportunity for New Delhi to experiment with the newly announced principles of peaceful co-existence. Though uninvited and sought to be excluded by the United States (U.S.), India managed to influence the negotiations "from outside" and was eventually chosen as the Chairman of the International Supervisory Commission. India's diplomacy in the Geneva was a great success and forms a watershed in the evolution of India's foreign policy.

The Geneva Conference is an epoch making event in the history of not only Southeast Asia but the entire world. Averting the internationalization of Indo-China war, it ended the Indo-China conflict temporarily, paved
the way for the independence of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam and contributes to the lessening of world tensions. Further, the Agreement in Geneva demonstrated that, given the will, peace could be achieved through negotiations and not through armed conflict.

The France-Vietnam war began on 15 December 1946 as an internal conflict. It assumed international character with the granting of recognition to the competing governments in Vietnam by the rival blocs. In a bid to secure international support to its struggle against the Vietnamese communists, France established a Provisional Central Government for the State of Vietnam within the French Union on 5 June 1948. This government was accorded recognition by the U.S. and the United Kingdom (U.K.) on 7 February 1950. This was immediately followed by the extension of American assistance to the French. Within a month after granting recognition, the U.S. anchored two warships off Saigon, demonstrating its support to the Bao Dai government. In May 1950 Dean Acheson, the U.S. Secretary of State, announced the extension of U.S. economic and military aid to the French and the Associated States of Indo-China. The American aid began to flow into Indo-China and averaged $500 million per annum; by early
1954 the U.S. share of the Indo-China war expenditure accounted for 80 per cent. The People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) and the Soviet Union recognized the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (D.R.V.N.) under Ho Chi Minh in January 1950. In view of its geographical propinquity the P.R.C. was in an advantageous position to help the D.R.V.N. with military supplies. The Indo-China war thus prolonged with the combatants getting increased military aid from outside. However, a change in the attitude of the warring parties as well as their respective allies began to appear after the signing of the Korean armistice in July 1953.

MOWES TOWARDS PEACE IN INDO-CHINA AND THE BERLIN CONFERENCE:

Being a country directly involved in the war, France desired an early settlement of the Indo-China issue. Throughout 1953 political pressure at home was mounting for the termination of the war in Indo-China. The signing of the Korean armistice gave further impetus to their demand. In the Indo-China war the French losses

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in men accounted for 25 per cent of the officers and
40 per cent of the non-commissioned officers of the
French army. The French came to feel increasingly that
the war which consumed so many French lives was not
worth fighting. They also believed that they had "no
future in Indo-China whatever the military outcome".
The situation in Europe consequent to the American
moves to roam West Germany alarmed the French and the
French government felt that it could ignore the defences
in Europe only at its own peril. Another important
factor that influenced the French government to withdraw
from Indo-China was the resolution passed by the anti-
communist Nationalist Congress in Saigon in October
1953. It states that "the Independent State of Vietnam
does not participate in the French Union in its present
form". Ton That Thien points out that "the motion of
the Vietnamese National Congress deprived the Indo-Chinese
war of its raison d'être, and the French government of
its only valid argument for continuing the war". No

2. Robert F. Randles, Geneva 1954 : The Settlement of the
also "Indo-China : The World's Oldest War", The Time
(London), 15 March 1954

3. Anthony Eden, Full Circle : The Memoirs of Anthony
Eden (London, 1960), p.84

4. Ton That Thien, "The Geneva Agreements and the Peace
Prospects in Vietnam", India Quarterly (New Delhi),
vol.12, p.376
doubt the French were receiving American military aid in increasing quantities at that time. They used this aid not for perpetuating their colonial rule over Indo-China but to get into a position of strength from which they could negotiate. Repeated military successes of the Vietminh and the timely feelers of Ho Chi Minh for a peaceful negotiated settlement of Indo-China problem also played their part in influencing the French to work for a peaceful solution. As early as October 1953, Joseph Laniel, the Prime Minister of France, stated that "the French government was ready to grasp all opportunities to make peace".

The British were equally interested in an amicable settlement of Indo-China problem. The growing interest of the U.S. in Indo-China and Washington's increased military aid to the French annoyed the British. The British government wanted France to emulate its example of decolonization which alone will strengthen stability and security in Southeast Asia. Tempting offers of the Soviet Union for the promotion of trade between the U.K.

5. Ibid. World Today points out that "the Communist sweeps into Laos have also the effect of stimulating the French to press for international discussions on a settlement in the Far East". "The Campaign in Laos", World Today (London), vol.10, pp.95-97
and the communist bloc of nations also influenced the British to seek a negotiated settlement. British interest in the termination of Indo-China war was also due to the pressing problem the U.K. was facing in its colonies, particularly in the Federation of Malaya as a consequence of the communist insurgency movement. Besides, the continuation of Indo-China war would effect adversely the interests of the Commonwealth partners in Asia. Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, told British Parliament:

Our concern is also pertinent. We have both responsibilities and friends in Southeast Asia and I have seldom known a situation in which the risks of a wider conflagration should be more apparent to all.6

The desire for peace was equally shared by communist countries also. The Soviet Union, after the death of Stalin in early 1953, abandoned the policy of confrontation and began to pursue a policy of peaceful co-existence. In his first address to the Supreme Soviet on 15 March 1953 Malenkov, the Prime Minister of the Soviet Union, said:

At present there is no litigious or unsolved question which could not be settled by peaceful means on the basis of the mutual agreement of the countries concerned. This concerns our relations with all States, including the United States of America. The states interested in the maintenance of peace can be assured at present as well as in the future of a lasting peaceful policy of the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union needed peace in order to launch an economic programme called 'New Course', which aimed at lightening tax burden, price reduction, expansion of consumer industries and making consumer goods easily available. Their desire for peace was more perceptible from the manner in which the Soviet diplomats endeavoured to conclude Korean armistice towards the close of 1953. Russians also hinted at the desirability and possibility of a cease-fire in Indo-China. The P.R.C. which was also involved in


8. Randle, n.2, p.138. See also Philip E. Mosely, "How 'New' is the Kremlin's New Line?", Foreign Affairs (New York, N.Y.), pp.376-86

9. Randle, n.2, p.19
the Indo-China war wanted early restoration of peace. Chinese attention had been diverted from their internal problems by the Korean war. They wanted to concentrate, to quote Anthony Eden's phrase, "to bring the unfinished communist revolution to a successful end" in China itself.

Ho Chi Minh, the President of the D.R.V.N., repeatedly expressed his willingness for a speedy and negotiated settlement. In a telegraphic interview given to the Swedish newspaper, Expressen, on 29 November 1953 he said that if the French government wished "to bring about an armistice and solve Vietnam problem through negotiations, the people and the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam will be prepared to discuss the French proposals." Growing anxiety on the part of the Soviet Union and the P.R.C. for the restoration of peace in Indo-China and the fear of American intervention on a big scale also induced the D.R.V.N. to seek peace even though it enjoyed a commanding position in the war.

The only power that remained indifferent to a negotiated settlement of Indo-Chinese dispute was the U.S.

10. Eden, n.3, pp.122-3

Even though the U.S. extended military aid to the French ever since 1950, it began to evince keen interest in Indo-China only after the termination of the Korean war, which demonstrated the determination of the communists to pursue their goals. The U.S. government came to view the French struggle against the Vietminh as part of a world-wide struggle to block communist expansion. They feared that loss of Indo-China to communists would lead to the spread of communism throughout Southeast Asia. Eisenhower, the American President, described Indo-China as "the cork in the bottle".

Thus, with the exception of the U.S., all the major powers and the Vietminh expressed their desire to bring the Indo-China war to an end. This general desire for peace found expression in the convening of the Berlin Conference. The Berlin Conference which was held from 25 January to 18 February 1954, was attended by the Foreign Ministers of the U.S., the U.K., the Soviet Union and France. The Berlin meeting proposed a Conference in Geneva to work for the peaceful settlement of the Korean question. At the instance of France it

was also resolved that the "problem of restoring peace in Indo-Chine" would also be discussed in the Geneva Conference. It was decided to invite representatives of the U.S., France, the U.K., the Soviet Union, P.R.C., and other interested states for the Conference.

**NEW DELHI APPEALS FOR CEASE-FIRE:**

India had special reasons to be gratified over the outcome of the Berlin Conference. New Delhi believed that outside intervention would only widen Indo-China conflict rather than helping to promote a climate of peace. As stated earlier India consistently followed a policy of non-intervention ever since the war broke out between the French and Vietnamese. Not only did New Delhi consistently follow this policy but also urged others to follow India's lead. India also requested the big powers to find a solution through negotiations. As early as 1953 V.K. Krishna Menon suggested that "the meeting of the heads of the great states would probably break the existing deadlock". Though that suggestion was not given due consideration at that time, its


14. GAOR, session 9, Plen. mtgs.492, 6 October 1954, p.220
importance was recognized when the Foreign Ministers of the four big powers met in Berlin in 1954 and gave top priority in the discussions to the "measures for reducing tension in international relations". Krishna Menon hailed the Berlin Conference as "the herald of a new era ... and perhaps the beginning of the thawing of the cold war". Nehru described the Berlin decision as a welcome development.

New Delhi's efforts were directed towards enlarging the peace area. The objective of the Berlin Conference—restoring peace in Indo-China—was in line with India's peace policies. It was this factor that encouraged India to involve itself discarding the long pursued policy of non-intervention with regard to Indo-China.


16. GAJR, n.14

17. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches, September 1946-April 1964 (New Delhi, 1971). Reprint, p.397
Within four days after the conclusion of the Berlin Conference, Nehru came out with a cease-fire proposal. On 22 February 1954 Nehru appealed to all the parties and the powers concerned that "in view of the fact that this matter of Indo-China is going to be discussed at the Geneva Conference two months later, it might be desirable to have some kind of cease-fire".

The cease-fire proposal marked the beginning of India's active involvement in the Indo-China issue. Nehru's intention was to put an end as early as possible to the slaughter that was going on in Vietnam and to create a climate of peace which would enable the participants in Geneva to discuss the Indo-China issue in a calmer atmosphere. If a cease-fire was declared forthwith and discussions were initiated for its implementation, Nehru thought it would bring the belligerents face to face even before the Geneva Conference and there might develop a spirit of mutual understanding.

Nehru's cease-fire call had a mixed reception. In France, media, public and opposition parties welcomed Nehru's move. The Paris correspondent of The Times

18. Ibid., p.395
wrote that the French press reacted favourably to Nehru's peace move. Many French people felt that India's initiative even if it did not lead to an armistice before the Geneva Conference might be the cause of some preparatory work for that Conference. Opposition parties were quick to react to Nehru's proposal. Nehru's peace plan found a positive response in the French Parliament on 23 February 1954 the very next day after Nehru announced it in the Indian Parliament. Declaring that he was fully in agreement with Nehru's proposal M. Daniel Mayer, Socialist Chairman of the National Assembly's Foreign Affairs Committee, asked the French government to immediately accept Nehru's proposal. It was on his insistence that the French National Assembly took up Nehru's cease-fire appeal for discussion on 5 March 1954. Though Mendes-France, opposition leader, in the French Parliament, rallied 250 votes, his resolution asking for immediate cease-fire was lost. M. Arthur Giovani, the French communist party spokesman, urged the French National Assembly to order the government to open

19. World Press on India (New Delhi), 25 February 1954
20. The Hindu, 24 February 1954
21. GAOR, n.14, p.228
immediate cease-fire talks "to avoid the Geneva Conference from becoming a manoeuvring ground for the foreign 22 Minister M. Georges Bidault".

Official circles in Paris were of the view that 23 India's proposal was impractical. Joseph Laniel, Prime Minister of France, observed that "we consider as unacceptable all proposals which under the cover of a cease-fire and without sufficient guarantees, would begin by endangering the security of our friends and soldiers". Though the French government at this time was prepared to welcome any peace move with regard to Indo-China, it was not willing to commit itself to any action which would place the Vietminh in an advantageous position before the Geneva talks.

In the U.K., Nehru's peace move was welcomed neither by the press nor by the official circles. The Manchester Guardian Weekly which was generally regarded as pro-Indian, described Nehru's cease-fire proposal as

22. The Hindu, 6 March 1954
23. World Press on India, 24 February 1954
24. The Hindu, 6 March 1954
"ill-timed shots" which "have so far gone off the target". Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, disapproved Nehru's move and declared that since "there was no continuous fighting line as there had been in Korea, it would be difficult to arrange a cease-fire without leaving the peoples of Associated States at the mercy of the Vietminh". Response from the U.S. was similar to that of the U.K. Officials in Washington felt that in view of the guerilla type of fighting, cease-fire might be advantageous to the Vietminh only.

Though the Western allies opposed Nehru's proposal, yet it was welcomed by various other countries. Louis St. Laurent, Canadian Prime Minister, who was in New Delhi at that time told a press conference that he was in full accord with Nehru's cease-fire appeal. The D.R.V.N., unlike the State of Vietnam, greeted Nehru's peace plan. Commenting on Nehru's moves, the New Times of Burma wrote that Nehru "has once again stolen a march.

26. Eden, n.3, p.70
27. The Hindu, 24 February 1954
28. Ibid., 25 February 1954. See also "Visitor to India" The Times 8 March 1954
29. The Hindu, 25 February 1954
on the great powers by promising a cease-fire in Indo-China". Dag Hammarskjold, the U.N. Secretary-General, welcomed Nehru's proposal and said that cease-fire in Indo-China was "extremely desirable".

Nehru was not unaware of the practical difficulties in effecting a cease-fire in Vietnam. Speaking in Lok Sabha on 23 March 1954, Nehru said that "a cease-fire might not come now, because I recognize that there are difficulties ...." Yet Nehru made the suggestion with the hope that the powers concerned would give serious thoughts to the question of cease-fire. While he was happy that his suggestion was endorsed by many quarters in the world, Nehru was not disheartened with the cold response of the Western countries. Making an assessment of the impact his cease-fire appeal had made, Nehru told Lok Sabha:

Although nothing very much has come out of it, I believe it has done some good, in the sense that there has been a good deal of consideration given to these problems and the possibilities of a cease-fire by the countries concerned.


33. Ibid., col.2797
Nehru repeatedly stressed the necessity for creating a favourable international environment which would lead to the success of the Geneva Conference. As the Geneva Conference, which was scheduled to discuss, to quote Nehru's words, the "burning problems of the world, Korea and Indo-China", was fast approaching, India's anxiety over the outcome of the Conference was on the increase. Addressing a large gathering in Bombay, two weeks before the commencement of the Geneva Conference, Nehru said that "it will be good if both the issues were settled". Speaking about Indo-China Nehru underlined the necessity for immediate cessation of hostilities.

SIX-POINT PEACE PLAN:

The U.S. policy toward Indo-China was the most serious obstacle to India's diplomatic initiatives. On 12 January 1954, John Foster Dulles, the U.S. Secretary of State, threatened the D.R.W.N. and the P.R.C. with massive and instant retaliation. He warned the Chinese that "communist intervention would have grave consequences.

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34. The Hindu, 12 April 1954
which might not be confined to Indo-China. Again on 29 March 1954 Dulles declared that the imposition of the communist political system on Southeast Asia would not be "passively accepted" but it "should be met by United action". These repeated references to instant and massive retaliation, possible attacks on the Chinese mainland and the extension of hostilities in Indo-China were followed by American moves to form a military alliance of anti-communist states. The situation was rendered more difficult as the U.S. stepped up the military aid to France. The P.R.C. followed suit and gave increased assistance to the D.R.V.N.

For a country like India which considered peace as an immediate necessity, these developments were of grave concern. The American military threats created widespread suspicion in India that the U.S. was determined to sabotage Geneva Conference. The U.S. moves appeared to strike a blow to the tempo of peace generated by the Berlin decision. India believed

35. United States, Department of State, Department of State Bulletin vol.30, no.761, 25 January 1954, p.108

36. Ibid., vol.30, no.772, 12 April 1954, p.540

37. In a letter written to the P.C.C. Presidents on 26 May 1954 Nehru described the grave situations "During the last few years, there have been frequent crises and climate of war. We have managed to survive them. Probably the present (Indo-China) crisis is a more dangerous one than any we have had before". Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to the PCC Presidents (New Delhi, n.d.), p.2
that by helping the French colonialists with money and equipments the U.S. was perpetuating colonialism in Southeast Asia rather than to help the prospects of freedom. Expressing India’s deep concern over these developments Nehru said:

To us in India, these developments are of grave concern and of grievous significance. Their implications impinge on the newly-won and cherished independence of Asian countries. 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 peoples and for the peace of the world.38

Washington and New Delhi were, thus, taking diametrically opposite positions. The American policy of finding a military solution to the problem of Indo-China was, in fact, a challenge to Nehru’s foreign policy of peaceful co-existence. Nehru considered the Geneva talks as an acid test of India’s foreign policy.

On 24 April 1954, just two days before Geneva deliberations started, Nehru announced in the Lok Sabha a six-point peace plan “to resolve some of the difficulties and the deadlocks and to bring about a peaceful settlement”.38. Nehru, n.17, p.398
Nehru's first suggestion dealt with the creation and promotion of "a climate of peace and negotiation" for the realization of which Indian government appealed "to all concerned to desist from threats and to the combatants to refrain from stepping up the tempo of war". Secondly, the Conference should give "priority" in its discussions to a "cease-fire" and a cease-fire group should be constituted consisting of the actual belligerents namely, France and its three Associated States and the D.R.V.N. Thirdly, the Conference should proclaim that it was essential to grant independence to Indo-Chinese states and "the termination of French sovereignty should be placed beyond all doubt by an unequivocal commitment by the Government of France". Fourthly, the Conference should initiate "direct negotiations between the parties immediately and principally concerned". Fifthly, the Conference should strive to bring about "a solemn agreement on non-intervention" among the U.S., the Soviet Union, the U.K. and the P.R.C. and they should deny "direct or indirect" aid to the combatants. The U.N. should be requested to formulate and enforce "a convention of non-intervention in Indo-China" embodying this agreement. Lastly, the "good offices" of the U.N. should be sought...
"for purposes of conciliation" under the appropriate articles of the Charter.

These proposals represented the application of the five principles of co-existence or Panchsheel to the Indo-Chinese situation. These five principles were (1) respect for each others' territorial integrity and sovereignty; (2) non-aggression; (3) non-interference in each others' internal affairs; (4) equality and mutual benefit and (5) peaceful co-existence. The establishment of peace in Indo-China, Nehru was convinced, could take place only if the big powers adhered to the principles of peaceful co-existence and respected the territorial integrity of Indo-Chinese states.

**COLOMBO CONFERENCE:**

To rally world opinion for his peace plan Nehru proceeded to take further measures. On 28 April 1954 a meeting was convened in Colombo where the Prime Ministers of five Asian countries—Burma, Ceylon, India, Indonesia and Pakistan—assembled for informal talks on Asian and

39. For the text of Nehru's six-point peace plan see *Ibid.*, pp.399-400

40. *Ibid.*, pp.303-4
international problems. Nehru availed of this opportunity to secure their support to his peace plan. The Colombo Conference began its deliberations on the same day when Geneva Conference too started its proceedings. As the situation in Indochina posed the greatest threat to Asian security and world peace, the five Colombo powers devoted their attention to the Indochina problem first. The opinion of these newly independent countries, it was hoped, would exercise a benign influence on the Geneva Conference. Nehru mentioned in his opening address that the Indochina question should be discussed "in a constructive spirit so that we can be helpful to them (Geneva powers) and such weight as we possess might be thrown on the side of peace". Nehru was able to successfully rally the support of Colombo Powers, despite the attempts made by Mohammed Ali, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, to water down the proposals. Mohammed Ali objected


42. Speaking in a press conference in Colombo Nehru declared: "I wish to seek the support of the 2000 million people of the world". The Hindu, 28 April 1954

43. Ibid., 29 April 1954
to the discussion of Indo-China and wanted the countries to consider the issue only after studying the developments in Geneva so that it would be possible for them to come out with a compromise formula in case there was any disagreement between the negotiating parties. Other Prime Ministers disagreed with him and Mohammed Ali had to withdraw his objections. There was also some disagreement on the proposal relating to non-intervention. Mohammed Ali maintained that the Colombo Conference was not the appropriate body, they should leave it to the Geneva Conference to decide the issue. Finally, as a compromise, the non-intervention clause was so amended as to read that the success of "direct negotiations will be greatly enhanced by an agreement on the part of all the countries concerned, particularly China, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the U.S.S.R. on the steps necessary to prevent a recurrence of resumption of hostilities". Nehru himself expressed happiness over the amendment to his non-intervention

44. Jansen, n.41, p.152
45. For the text of the communiqué issued at the end of the Colombo Conference see Jansen, n.41, pp.412-14
proposal when he said that the Colombo Conference had put the non-intervention clause in a much better way than he himself had put it previously.

The Asian plan for Indo-China put forward by the Colombo powers represented a new concept of collective security. These proposals were diametrically opposite to the Dulles' plan for a military alliance as the only guarantee of peace in Southeast Asia. Harold Wilson put the whole issue in the right perspective when he said: "The road to peace in Asia is the road of Nehru, not the road of Dulles".

**GENEVA CONFERENCE:**

The Geneva Conference which commenced on 26 April 1954 devoted the first few days to the Korean issue. The Korean phase of the Geneva Conference which proceeded on a dull note finally got deadlocked on the issue of unification of Korea. As the solution for Korea was not within sight and the situation in Indo-China was deteriorating day by day the Geneva Conference took the


47. *World Press on India*, 4 May 1954
Indo-China issue for discussion on 8 May 1954. The participants included the U.S., the Soviet Union, the U.K., France, the U.N.C., Laos, Cambodia, the State of Vietnam and the D.R.V.N. On 27 April 1954 Molotov, the Russian delegate, suggested that India should be invited to participate in the Conference. The Russian proposal was opposed by the U.S. and France.

The U.K., which had serious reservations on the American policy towards Indo-China did not wish to contribute to further deterioration of relations between the two by taking a hardline on India's participation. Thus, India was kept out of the Conference at the instance of the U.S. Krishna Menon told Michael Brecher later: 'We were not taken into the Conference because Americans would not have us. Everybody would have welcomed us .... The British would not take the initiative'.


Randle, n.2, p.159

Michael Brecher, India and World Politics (London, 1968), p.44. Writing in France Soir, a Paris-based daily, Pertinex, the well-known commentator, claimed that it was due to Dulles' insistence that it was decided in the Berlin Conference to keep India out of the Geneva Conference. Quoted in The Hindu, 3 March 1954
opening speeches in Geneva both Chou En-lai and Molotov made pointed reference to the absence of India. Chou En-lai said: "Unfortunately some Asian states which express concern about peace in Asia such as India ... are unable to participate in our Conference; this certainly cannot be considered good". Molotov declared that "we are bound to find a disadvantage in the fact that a whole number of Asian powers such as India ... are not taking part in our Conference although their presence would be very valuable for our work".

The press was critical of India's exclusion from the Geneva Conference. The Manchester Guardian Weekly pointed out that the exclusion of India "will heighten the feelings in Asia of the incongruity of the present proceedings. Many people in Asia complain that the western powers are anxious to settle the affairs of Southeast Asia over their heads". New Age, a monthly publication of the Communist Party of India (C.P.I.) assailed the "open, shameless attempts made by the imperialist powers to throttle the voice of the Asian...


52. Ibid., p.24

53. Manchester Guardian Weekly, 29 April 1954
people" by excluding India. Nehru was naturally piqued at the deliberate exclusion of India at the behest of the U.S. from Geneva Conference. He gave vent to his feelings on several occasions by pin pointing the non-Asian character of the principal participants (with the exception of the P.R.C.) and the non-Asian venue of the Conference. Addressing a public meeting in Bhopal on 1 June 1954, Nehru pointed out that it was strange that the venue of the Conference discussing problems vitally affecting Asian countries should be in Europe and their fate decided by other nations. Making a statement in the Lok Sabha on 25 August 1954 Nehru said:

Both these conferences (Korea and Indo-China) were concerned with the countries of Asia. Yet the principal participants, with the significant exception of China, were non-Asian states. This corresponds in some measure to the reality which reflects the territorial, racial and political imbalances in the modern world.

54. *New Age* (Bombay), vol.3, no.7, July 1954, p.2
55. *The Hindu*, 2 June 1954
56. Nehru, n.17, p.401
In a press conference in Colombo in May 1954 Nehru cautioned the countries of Europe and the U.S. that in the vital developments affecting world peace or war it was not as though they alone were intimately concerned but Asian states "were also equally concerned... and in fact a little more concerned if they relate to Asia." 57

**INDIA'S DIPLOMACY:**

New Delhi watched the developments in Geneva with great anxiety. India was convinced that the failure to arrive at a settlement in Geneva would only result in the escalation of the Indo-China war in which case India's interests would be adversely affected. Speaking in Parliament on 15 May 1954 Nehru said:

In Geneva today the question of war and peace — world war and peace — hangs in the balance ... both these major questions that are being considered in Geneva, that is Korea and Indo-China are Asian questions. Both the countries are in Asia ... naturally as countries of Asia we are intimately concerned ... because of our geographical proximity with Indo-China.... peace for us, is not merely a pious hope, but an emergent necessity.58

57. The Hindu, 4 May 1954. Eastern Economist, however, pointed out that even though India was "actually excluded" from the Geneva Conference, "it will be spiritually participating at Geneva". "The Geneva Conference", Eastern Economist, 30 April 1954, p.703

Nehru asked Krishna Menon, India's representative in the U.N., to proceed to Geneva to explore ways and means of rescuing the Conference. Nehru's choice of Krishna Menon for this crucial role was appropriate. Krishna Menon had intimate knowledge of Asian questions. He was closely connected with the various negotiations in the U.N. which eventually led to the signing of the Korean armistice agreement on 27 July 1953. The six-point peace plan, which Nehru announced in Parliament on 24 April 1954, was drafted by Krishna Menon. In the Colombo Conference of April-May 1954, which endorsed Nehru's peace proposals for Indo-China, Krishna Menon played a key role in drafting the joint communiqué. He also possessed the unique qualities of a conciliator and a mediator. Above all he had a long record of personal relationship with Nehru which went back to the 1930's. Krishna Menon had the uncanny ability to grasp Nehru's thoughts and objectives to the minutest detail and the capacity to clearly articulate and translate into action his leader's foreign policy objectives.

When Krishna Menon arrived in Geneva on 21 May 1954, the military situation was deteriorating rapidly in Vietnam. The U.S. was making frantic efforts to

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59. Brecher, n.50.
establish the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (S.E.A.T.O.) before the conclusion of the Geneva Conference in spite of British expressions of disapproval. Rumours were rife that the U.S. might create fresh hurdles by taking up the Indo-China matter in the U.N. The uncertainty regarding the continuance of Laniel's government in France added to the confusion in Geneva. It was against this background that Krishna Menon launched a new diplomatic offensive.

While Krishna Menon was on his way to Geneva, press reports appeared that he was carrying a secret formula. The fact, however, remains that Krishna Menon neither had any secret formula nor carried any instructions from his Prime Minister. As the Economist put it, the sound of quiet and continuous talks Krishna Menon held with the participants soon after his arrival in Geneva had "dispelled the widely prevalent idea that Delhi was sending him to Geneva equipped with a miraculous key that would unlock doors". Menon's principal task in Geneva was to secure the approval of the conferences to Nehru's peace plan by projecting it into the peace talks.


51. "Asia's Hour", The Economist (London), 29 May 1954, p.68
Within hours of his arrival in Geneva Krishna Menon busied himself in carrying out his mission. Before long he fully grasped the peculiar situation in Geneva. The participants could not carry on fruitful talks for any length of time, they "would not make direct contact" and there was "the constant danger of one or another backing out of the door". As a result they suspected each others' motives. In the prevailing circumstances the absence of a power truly neutral to act as a kind of catalytic agent was badly felt. In the beginning, the U.K., in view of its comparatively better relations with the communist countries, assumed the role of an intermediary even at the risk of being called a "Munichair".

On his arrival Krishna Menon immediately became the mediator and a link between the two sides. He was the principal channel of communication between the East and West in the back stage talks and endeavoured to narrow the gap between the communist and non-communist delegates. Parkinson pointed out that by performing "the most valuable go-between services Menon eased Eden's heavy burden materially".

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62. Eden, n.3, p.128
64. Parkinson, n.15, p.65
In Geneva the private talks in hotel rooms and villas outnumbered the talks at the Conference table. At times they were even more important than those in the Conference table because it was there that the leading participants held bilateral talks to thrash out their differences, chalk out tactics and give warnings or promises to each other. Krishna Menon converted this situation to his advantage and played a very active and influential part behind the scenes.

Krishna Menon was able to discharge the duties of an "honest broker" with considerable ease because of the close and cordial relations he maintained with the principal delegates. Chou En-lai, on whom all the eyes were concentrated in Geneva, welcomed India's initiative and helped Krishna Menon in his endeavours in the off-stage talks. Menon had prolonged talks with Chou En-lai. Their consultations "probably went on for two, three or four hours each time". Of the two countries, the U.K. and India, which played mediatory roles in Geneva, it was India that was fully taken into confidence by the P.R.C. and not the U.K., which was, in the ultimate analysis, a partner in the western alliance.

65. The Hindu, 27 May 1954
66. Brecher, n.50, p.47
Subimal Dutt, former Foreign Secretary, has recorded that the close rapport which Krishna Menon established with Chou En-lai was, in fact, taken full advantage of by Anthony Eden. Krishna Menon also got very good support from Molotov, the Russian delegate. Krishna Menon found him "easier to handle than even the British". This was possible in view of the changed attitude of Moscow towards India. Moreover, like India, the Soviet Union too was basically against war and earnestly desired an early settlement of Indo-China issue.

Krishna Menon was convinced that the Vietminh were the "real parties to negotiate with". He held prolonged discussions with them and established good friendship with Pham Van Dong. Krishna Menon was also helped by Chou En-lai "in bringing the North Vietnamese around".


68. Bracher, n.50, p.47

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.
India was aware of the fact that in Geneva the P.R.C. and the Vietminh were not so close as they appeared to be. Vietminh, therefore, took Krishna Menon more into confidence than Chou En-lai. Krishna Menon's contacts with Anthony Eden were particularly close and continuous. In fact, even though India was not invited to take part in the Geneva Conference, Anthony Eden expressed the hope that India could play a considerable part in Geneva behind the scenes. One happy feature of the Indo-British relations was the close co-operation and frequent consultations between the two countries. This gave added importance to Krishna Menon's role in Geneva.

As long as Lalit government was in power Krishna Menon received little help from the French delegate in Geneva. However, Krishna Menon's relations were extremely cordial with Mendes-France, who became the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of France, on 18 June 1954. Mendes-France was an opponent of "old fashioned colonialism" and became the Prime Minister on the promise, "peace in one month or I quit". Krishna Menon has mentioned that he

71. Ibid., p.48. See also Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, Minority Problems in Southeast Asia (Stanford, 1955), p.17
72. Vietminh were apprehensive of Chinese intentions in Vietnam. A French economic mission which returned to Paris from Peking towards the end of 1953 reported that the P.R.C. would not oppose a solution to the Indo-Chinese war that might entail Vietnam's remaining within the French Union. Randle, n.2, p.4
73. Eden, n.3, p.94
74. The Hindu, 19 June 1954
advised Mendes-France to fix a time limit for arriving at a peace settlement on the model of the Mountbatten plan. Fortunately for Krishna Menon, Dulles left Geneva for Washington on 3 May 1954, just five days before the Conference took up Inda-China issue for discussion. Bedell Smith who replaced Dulles was relatively more "helpful" to Krishna Menon.

As a result of the close relationship that Krishna Menon maintained with the delegates his presence was resented by none. On the other hand, they welcomed Krishna Menon's peace endeavours. Krishna Menon met the principal participants often and had free and frank exchange of views. According to Randle the total number of meetings between the heads of the nine delegations and Krishna Menon "may have been as high as fifteen, probably twenty in the course of one day." The hectic diplomatic activity of Krishna Menon aroused tremendous curiosity. To quote T.J.S. George, Krishna Menon's biographer, Krishna Menon "became an important,

75. Bracher, n.50, p.45
76. Ibid., p.46
77. Randle, n.2, p.332
almost a decisive influence in Geneva. Krishna Menon's tireless and prolonged talks had the desired effect on the Geneva conferences who appreciated the importance of India's mediation in the settlement of Asian problems. Even though Krishna Menon was fully immersed, as any of the official participants, he did not disclose anything to the press on the course or substance of the talks. When a correspondent asked Krishna Menon about his role he replied: "I am an old fool, I am here only as a tourist, just a bystander, if people ask to see me or come and see me, well that is very nice".

Before Krishna Menon's arrival in Geneva, even the minimum diplomatic courtesy was absent on the part of the members of the two groups and the Conference made little progress. With Krishna Menon's entry into the complex inter-delegation diplomacy, the whole complexion of the Conference changed. In the first phase of the Conference, he succeeded in bringing both parties face to face in private talks. In the second phase, by

78. George, n.60, p.178
79. The Hindu, 21 July 1954
exhorting each side to take into account the difficulties of the other, he brought about conciliation between the rival parties. T.J.S. George points out that "by offering himself as a bridge between the opposing camps, Menon revived the Conference". Thus it will be seen that the promotion of East-West understanding was the chief factor that contributed to the success of the Geneva Conference and this was the contribution of India. Krishna Menon’s invaluable service to the cause of world peace was duly recognized and appreciated throughout the world. In a message Mendes-France, the Prime Minister of France, observed: "I would like to express my thanks for the assistance rendered in the negotiations by the good offices of Mr. Krishna Menon". He considered the Geneva Conference "ten-power conference— the nine at the table—and India. A French spokesman paid rich tribute to

80. George, n.60, p.179


Krishna Menon when he told the correspondent of *Press Trust of India* that Krishna Menon "played the useful part of connecting link among the various delegates". Chou En-lai was appreciative of India's peace efforts and he said that Nehru's efforts had been undoubtedly one of the most important factors that contributed for the success of the Conference. Churchill was so much impressed by India's valuable contribution to peace in Indo-China that he considered Nehru as a fighter against mankind's worst enemies: hate and fear. The *Manchester Guardian Weekly* remarked that "the Indians too, have done well in mediation although officially excluded from the conference". The *Guardian* paid glowing tributes to India's role in Geneva when it observed that the Geneva settlement owes a lot "to the efforts of Mr. Nehru - from the original idea of cease-fire to patient oiling of negotiations by Mr. Krishna Menon". *Burman*, a Rangoon-based English daily, considered India's

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84. *India 1954*, p.90  
Burman, a Rangoon-based English daily, considered India's role in Geneva as a success against the U.S. machinations: "It was Mr. Nehru's Ambassador, Mr. Krishna Menon, with his whispers in the ears of Europe's statesmen that brought about a settlement in Indo-China even against dollars and the poms of the U.S.A."

Krishna Menon's significant and successful role in Geneva was naturally acclaimed in India. Commenting on the Geneva outcome J.B. Kripalani, a noted parliamentarian, said that even though India was not invited, it played a notable part behind the scenes. He added that "the settlement reached there was on the lines suggested by us. As a matter of fact, Geneva was the triumph of India. Nehru was naturally proud of the decisive part India played in finding a solution to the Indo-China dispute. Speaking in a public meeting in Allahabad he said:

"We were not participants in the Geneva Conference, but none the less India played her part in creating better atmosphere for solving the Indo-China issue. We have rendered a lot of helping in our own way in untangling the Gordian knot in which the issue was involved."

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88. Ibid., 22 October 1954
89. J.B. Kripalani, "Failures in Foreign Policy", Janata (Bombay), vol. 9, no. 38, 10 October 1954, p. 7
90. The Hindu, 12 July 1954
Nehru was extremely pleased with the role played by Krishna Menon in Geneva. Subimal Dutt, the then Foreign Secretary, writes that Nehru was very happy about the successful completion of the job entrusted to Krishna Menon and "was most generous in his references to him in discussions in the Foreign Office and elsewhere". Nehru felt that the tributes paid to India by the Prime Ministers of France and the P.R.C. for India's good offices in Geneva were "due to Menon personally". "Anxious to show his appreciation of Krishna Menon's work in Geneva" Subimal Dutt writes, Nehru "had suggested Menon's name to the President on 1 August, for inclusion in the Cabinet". In view of severe opposition from Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Nehru, however, "withdrew his proposal for the time being".

91. Dutt, n.67, p.63
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid., p.68
94. Ibid. See also Sárvepalli Gopal, Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, 1947-1956 (New Delhi, 1979), vol.2, pp.224-5
An analysis of the terms of the Geneva Agreement would enable us to appreciate better India's contribution to the success of the Geneva Conference. The Geneva Agreement was a collection of several documents comprising, besides the final declaration, eight unilateral declarations and three cease-fire agreements.

It provided for a cease-fire. It was for the achievement of cease-fire that Nehru, as stated earlier, took the bold initiative and came out with a cease-fire appeal. Again in his six-point peace plan the cease-fire proposal occupied an important place. Nehru also successfully rallied other Asian countries in Colombo and they jointly made the Colombo proposals for consideration in Geneva. India also refused to let planes carrying military personnel or equipment to Indo-China cross its territory.

In June 1954, a Saigon-bound French air craft passing through Dum Dum was thoroughly checked and three revolvers, twelve stretchers, several steel helmets and military kits were recovered. When the U.S. asked permission for troop-carrying planes to fly over Indian


96. India, Lok Sabha Debates pt. 1, vol. 4, 31 August 1954, cols. 357-8. See also The Hindu, 19 June 1954
territory the Government of India refused to accede to the request. The importance of cease-fire appeal was duly recognized in the Geneva Conference. The first item to be discussed was the question of cease-fire and an agreement was reached over it after protracted talks. The cease-fire in Indu-China prevented the Indu-China war from developing into a world war. It reversed the trend of conflict. Nehru was extremely happy with the cease-fire agreement and he announced in Lok Sabha on 29 September 1954 that "for the first-time in many years there was no national war in the world".

The Conference not only agreed on a cease-fire but also took steps for its effective implementation by creating a machinery called International Supervisory Commission (I.S.C.). Anthony Eden was the first to give serious thought to the question of guaranteeing the settlement that might be arrived at in Geneva. He wanted a supervisory body to be composed of the Colombo powers-India, Burma, Pakistan, Ceylon and Indonesia. To ascertain their views, he wrote to the Prime Ministers of the Colombo powers, well in advance. Though Nehru did

97. *The Hindu*, 13 June 1954

not make any commitment, he agreed to "assist in
promoting and maintaining a settlement in Indo-China".
On 31 May 1954 the Conference took up the topic of the
composition and powers of the I.S.C. Even though all
the delegates accepted the need for a supervisory body,
dispute arose over its composition.

On 31 May 1954 Gromyko, the Russian delegate,
suggested that the I.S.C. should be composed of Poland,
Czechoslovakia, India and Pakistan. Chou En-lai
considered it "entirely reasonable" and endorsed the
Soviet proposal. Nguyen Quoc Dinh, head of the
dlegation from the State of Vietnam, rejected the
Soviet proposal and proposed on 3 June 1954 to entrust
the job of supervision to the U.N. His proposal was
supported by the U.S. and France. The U.K., however,
differed from them. On 8 June 1954 Anthony Eden
suggested that the Asian powers represented in the
Colombo Conference were "admirably qualified" to

99. Eden, n.3, p.114
101. Documents relating to the Discussion on Korea and
Indo-China at the Geneva Conference n.51, p.160
1954, p.906
assume the responsibilities of supervising whatever agreements reached in the Geneva Conference. In support of his proposal he cited the "impartiality" of these five countries. He said that as Asian countries, they had particular interest in the restoration of peace in Indo-China and possessed first-hand knowledge of the situation there. Besides, in view of their geographical proximity, there would not be any difficulty in securing the "large staff of qualified observers that will be needed". Finally there was little danger of the proceedings of the I.S.C. being deadlocked since they were all truly neutral. Anthony Eden persuaded Bidault the Foreign Minister of France, to accept the five Colombo Powers as members of the I.S.C. In the course of the talks among Eisenhower, Dulles, Churchill and Anthony Eden on 25 June 1954, Anthony Eden succeeded in convincing the Americans too. In a statement, made in the House of Commons, Churchill said:

"There is no doubt that the Foreign Secretary's care and zeal in bringing the five Asian Colombo powers prominently into the situation is fully appreciated now by the United States Government. Their association would be and is regarded as important and welcome."

103. The Hindu, 10 June 1954
104. Ibid., 4 June and 5 June 1954
105. U.K., House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates vol.530, no.146, 26 July 1954, col.44
The reasons for Anthony Eden's anxiety to associate the Colombo powers with the I.S.C. were obvious. With the exception of Burma and Indonesia, other Colombo powers were members of the Commonwealth. Anthony Eden wrote in his memoirs later that the Indo-China vortex "affected our Asian partners in the commonwealth, particularly India, quite as much. For this reason my aim was to secure the participation of these Asian countries in any settlement that we might reach...." To break the deadlock, created by conflicting suggestions, Molotov, the Russian delegate, proposed on 14 June 1954, that India should be the permanent Chairman of the I.S.C. The suggestion was opposed by none. Molotov came out with further concessions on 16 June 1954, when he put forward two alternative suggestions, that the supervisory body might be a five-member commission with Czechoslovakia, Poland, Pakistan, India and Indonesia

106. Eden, n.3, p.77. There was consensus in British political circles that intimate co-operation and consultation with India was essential to the Indo-China tangle. Attlee, leader of the opposition, echoed this feeling when he stated that "the key to many of the problems of Asia lies in keeping in close touch with our Indian friends". U.K. House of Commons. Parliamentary Debates vol.529, no.133, 23 June 1954, col.446

or a three-member commission with Poland, India and Indonesia. Finally the ice was broken by Chou En-lai who proposed that the I.S.C. should consist of India, Canada and Poland. The proposal was accepted by all. Accordingly, at the end of the Conference it was agreed to set up the I.S.C. composed of an equal number of representatives of Canada, India and Poland, presided over by the Representative of India, in each of the three countries for control and supervision of the application of the provisions of the agreement on cessation of hostilities in Indo-China. It is obvious from the various proposals that at no time did Canada figure in the discussions on the composition. Moreover, the P.R.C. did not trust Canadians. Yet Chou En-lai proposed Canada. This change in the P.R.C.'s attitude was largely due to the persuasive efforts of Krishna Menon. As Krishna Menon told Michael Bracher: "I had great difficulty in persuading Chou En-lai to accept Canada on the Commission. Ultimately in Geneva he agreed after many talks".

108. Ibid.

109. Eden, n.3, p.141

110. **External Affairs** (Ottawa), vol.6, p.275

111. Bracher, n.50. p.49
An interesting feature of the discussion on the composition of the I.S.C. was the fact that India's name figured invariably in all proposals and was opposed by none. The consensus on India among all the parties concerned could rightly be regarded as the fitting tribute to India for its continuous, consistent and relentless pursuit of peace and independent judgement throughout the Indochina conflict. India which worked vigorously for the establishment of peace was now made the guarantor of peace in Indochina. The unanimous election of India not only to the membership but also to the Chairmanship of the I.S.C. was greeted in India with joy and enthusiasm.

Addressing a public meeting in Ajmer on 25 July 1954, Nehru said that India could feel proud, for it enjoyed the confidence of the warring groups who had entrusted it with a very responsible task, namely the Chairmanship of the I.S.C. The Government of India expressed great satisfaction over India's nomination to the I.S.C. In a special statement issued on the occasion, it said:

112. The Hindu, 26 July 1954
The Government of India express their deep appreciation of the trust and confidence placed in them by the Geneva Conference as a whole and by each of the participants thereof, severally, in naming India to the membership of the International Supervisory Commission at various stages of the Conference and finally in inviting her to be the Chairman of each of the commissions.

J.B. Kripalani considered India's appointment as the Chairman of the I.S.C. as a reward for India's "silent service to the cause of world peace". India's nomination to the I.S.C. was also welcomed abroad. M. Daniel Mayer, a French Parliamentarian, observed that it was difficult to suppose "peace or to contemplate anything in any field in Asia without India's active participation".

The Geneva Agreement paved the way for the demise of French colonialism and the dawn of independence of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. India, which opposed colonialism and incessantly worked to put an end to it wherever it existed, had reason to be particularly gratified over the liquidation of French empire in Indo-China. India's efforts at this time were chiefly directed in extending the peace area. The continuance - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

113. For the text of the statement issued by the Government of India see The Hindu, 14 August 1954

114. Kripalani, n.89

115. World Press on India, 24 July 1954
of French imperialism in Indo-China, which formed a great obstacle in the realization of this grand design, was now removed. The All India Congress Committee in a resolution adopted in Ajmer on 24 July 1954 welcomed the recognition of the independence of the countries of Indo-China "as putting an end to colonial rule in that part of Asia". Krishna Menon credited the attainment of independence by the Indo-China states largely to India when he declared in the Rajya Sabha that "complete independence" for Indo-China "was asked for in the statement made by the Prime Minister (Nehru) in another place (Lok Sabha) on the 24th of April last and which the Government of France has now publicly committed itself to through its Prime Minister ...."

The most significant feature of the Geneva settlement was that the U.S., the Soviet Union, the U.K., France and the P.R.C. undertook not only to respect the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, but also to refrain from any interference

116. Indian National Congress, Resolutions on Foreign Policy, 1947-1957 (New Delhi, 1957), p.31

117. India, Rajya Sabha Debates vol.7, 27 August 1954, col.582
in their internal matters. On their part the Indo-Chinese
states of Cambodia and Laos, in their analogous unilateral
declarations, and the D.R.V.N., in the cease-fire
agreement, undertook not to join any military alliance
which would not be in conformity with the principles of
the U.N. Charter or with the principles of the
agreement on cessation of hostilities or unless their
territory was threatened, not to permit the establishment
of bases in their territories for military forces of
foreign powers. Thus Indo-China was neutralized.

It was Nehru who gave the neutralization call to
all powers concerned when he proposed in his six-point
peace plan, a "solemn agreement on non intervention".
Nehru firmly believed that the only peaceful future for
the Indo-Chinese states was to be independent and not to
be interfered with by other countries. Nehru took
necessary steps to help the Conference ultimately give a
concrete shape to his proposal. When Chou En-lai visited
India towards the end of June 1954, Nehru availed the
opportunity to secure the approval of the P.R.C. to his
non-intervention proposal. India and the P.R.C. had
reached an agreement earlier, on the principle of
"non-interference in each other's internal "faires", by
signing the Panchsheel agreement on 29 April 1954.
Nehru's efforts were now directed towards securing
the approval of the P.R.C. for the extension of the
area of operation of this principle to Indo-Chino
states. Outside world attached great importance to
this meeting of the two great statesmen of Asia.

"Le Monde", a leading French daily, considered the
Chou-Nehru meeting "an extension of the Asian Conference
of Geneva". In the course of the talks, the P.R.C.
agreed to recognize the independence of Laos, Cambodia
and Vietnam, provided they were granted full
independence and not made bases for military operations
against Peking. Indian diplomacy was aimed at the
extension of the area of peace. New Delhi did not find
it difficult to assure the P.R.C. to do everything

118. For the text of the agreement see Foreign Policy
of India: Texts of Documents, 1947-58 (New Delhi,
1958), pp.87-93

119. Sardesai, n.81, p.48

120. Rosemary Brissenden, "India, Neutrality and SEATO",
in George Modelski, ed. SEATO: Six Studies
(Melbourne, 1962), p.209
possible to keep the western powers out of Indo-China.

In the joint communiqué issued at the end of their
talks, Chou En-lai and Nehru declared:

In particular the Prime Ministers hoped that these (five) principles would be applied to the solution of the problems. In Indo-China where the political settlement should aim at the creation of free, democratic, unified and independent States, which should not be used for aggressive purposes or be subjected to foreign intervention. 121

Thus the P.R.C. committed itself not to interfere in the internal affairs of the Indo-Chinese states.

In Geneva the Western Allies feared that the Indo-Chinese states would be absorbed into the communist system and that would endanger the stability and security of non-communist Southeast Asian countries. Peking, on the other hand, felt that the Indo-Chinese states would be used by the U.S. to contain and confront the P.R.C. The only way out, India felt under the circumstances, was to allow Indo-Chinese states to remain neutral. India’s diplomacy in Geneva was geared towards this goal. In the course of his long interviews with Chou En-lai, Krishna

121. For the text of the joint statement issued by the Prime Ministers of India and the PRC see S.L. Poutai, ed. The Tempo of Peace: Select Documents 1954-55 (New Delhi, 1955), p. 10-12
Monon explained the West's concern over Laos and Cambodia. He also explained P.R.C.'s similar concern to the U.K. and France. By explaining suspicions of one against the other Krishna Menon helped both sides to arrive at a settlement on the basis of a give-and-take policy. Anthony Eden and Mandes-France assured Chou En-lai that if an armistice was reached in Geneva there was no question of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam joining the proposed Southeast Asian alliance. Chou En-lai, on his part, gave the assurance that the P.R.C. would not interfere in the internal affairs of the Indo-Chinese states.

In Geneva India strove not only for keeping the U.S. and the P.R.C. out of Indo-Chinese states but also in committing Vietnam to withdraw Vietminh troops from Cambodia and Laos. Washington Post highlighted Indian pre-occupation with the protection of Cambodian and Laostian sovereignty. India warned the Soviet Union that Moscow would lose the friendship of independent nations of South and Southeast Asia if it supported the Vietminh refusal to evacuate from Laos and Cambodia.

122. The Statesman, 28 May 1954
123. J.A. Modefski, "Indo-China and SEATO", Australian Outlook (canberra), vol.13, p.33
124. Eden, n.3, p.129
125. World Press on India, 23 July 1954
126. Ibid., 4 June 1954
When Chou En-lai arrived in New Delhi, Nehru explained to him the necessity of the Vietminh withdrawal from Laos and Cambodia. Chou En-lai, who was apprehensive of Vietnam's intentions, worked for the evacuation of the Vietminh from Laos and Cambodia. He brought the representatives of Laos and Cambodia into direct contact with the Vietminh in a bid to help them to settle the matter. India also exerted pressure directly on the Vietminh. In view of his close relations with Pham Van Dong, Krishna Menon did not find it difficult to bring the Vietminh around. The persuasive efforts of India finally bore fruit when the Vietminh agreed to renounce their claims in Laos and Cambodia. This gesture contributed a great deal to the success of the Geneva negotiations.

Neutralization of Indo-China which formed, in the words of Nehru, the "basis of Geneva Agreement", was achieved largely due to the positive and vigorous efforts of India. Indo-China was left to work out its own future.

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127. Hammer, n.1, p.331

128. Randle, n.2, p.195

129. India, Lok Sabha Debates pt.2, vol.8, 29 September 1954, col.3688
The chances of "Latin Americanization" or further "communization" of Indo-China receded. Nehru had every reason to be gratified over this achievement. Expressing his deep satisfaction Nehru said in Lok Sabha:

It is a notable feature of the Indo-China settlement that it provides for the establishment of the independence of the three States - Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia - and seeks to safeguard their sovereignty on the pledges of mutual respect of each others' territorial integrity, freedom from interference in each others' internal affairs, and the undertaking not to enter into military alliances with other states. Thus, the Indo-China states bid fair to find a place in collective peace rather than in war blocs.131

The Geneva Agreement provided for the temporary division of Vietnam at the seventeenth parallel and its ultimate unification after elections in July 1956. Anthony Eden's mind was working on partition even in the beginning of 1954, much before the Geneva Conference began. He considered "some form of partition as a solution which might bring hostilities to an end and effect a settlement which would hold". Sir Roger Mekins, the British Ambassador in Washington, informed Dulles and Bedell Smith on 1 April 1954 that "if it came to negotiation we considered partition of Vietnam to be the least damaging solution". Though Anthony Eden

130. Tibor Mende, Conversations with Nehru (Bombay, 1958), p.119
131. Nehru, n.17, p.403
132. Eden., n.3, p.87
133. Ibid., p.92
reached Geneva with some idea of partition, it was Krishna Menon who articulated and paved the way for the temporary division of Vietnam at the seventeenth parallel. In the course of several rounds of talks Krishna Menon convinced Pham Van Dong that the division envisaged was a temporary expedient and in view of the popularity of the D.R.V.N. and demoralization that prevailed in the State of Vietnam, Vietnam was sure to be unified under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh. Molotov and Chou En-lai also exerted considerable pressure on Pham Van Dong. The Vietminh, who understood the Russian and Chinese motivations, ultimately yielded to outside pressures and agreed for the temporary de facto partition of Vietnam and even placed this proposal before the Geneva Conference on 25 May 1954.

134. Bracher, n.50, p.46

135. The Vietminh popularity ran very high throughout Vietnam. Even their worst enemies admitted this fact. Eisenhower, the then President of the U.S., wrote in his memoirs that if elections were held possibly eighty percent of the population would have voted for the communist Ho Chi Minh as their leader rather than Chief of State, Bao Dai. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Mandate For Change, 1953-56 (New York, N.Y. 1963), p.88. Bernard B. Fall, who had made an on the-spot study of the situation in Indochina in 1953 observed that "it is beyond doubt that the Ho Chi Minh Government commands the obedience... of the majority of the Vietnamese". Bernard B. Fall, The Vietminh Regime (New York, N.Y. 1954), pp.116-17

Partition was an inescapable necessity. From the viewpoint of the West it was a face-saving device by which half of Vietnam was salvaged. The D.R.V.N. viewed the division as an interim solution which "would erase the lingering possibility of direct American intervention".

India strived for a temporary division of Vietnam because it was not possible to have cease-fire pockets all over the territory. Krishna Menon told Rajya Sabha that the idea of cease-fire line at the seventeenth parallel "was the result of the compulsion and practical considerations". Highlighting Krishna Menon's role in the partition of Vietnam The Hindu wrote that "the greatness of Menon lies in that his efforts largely contributed to the communists accepting at a time when they were militarily on top an agreement which the French could consider honourable".

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137. Kelb and Abel, n.135, p.186
138. India, Rajya Sabha Debates vol.7, 27 August 1954, col.58
139. The Hindu, 23 July 1954