CHAPTER – IV

TOWARDS TOTAL U.S. DISENGAGEMENT: THE PARIS AGREEMENT AND ITS AFTERMATH
(27 JANUARY 1973 TO 1 APRIL 1975)
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Introduction

The Paris Agreement could not bring peace in Vietnam, even though a period of relative calmness followed. It marked the beginning of many diplomatic relations of North Vietnam. For some time infiltration of forces from North Vietnam to South Vietnam stopped. The U.S. promised to contribute financially for the economic reconstruction of South Vietnam. South Vietnamese people's right to self-determination was recognized by both the U.S. and North Vietnam. U.S. troops withdrawal under the supervision of Joint Military Commission also started. But many more provisions of the Paris Agreement remained unfulfilled by both the sides. Many bottlenecks arose on the release of prisoners of war and exchange of civilian and political prisoners from both sides. Thieu's emergency measures, anti-peasant steps and struggle of workers against income tax and value added tax created internal problems. On the external front, violation of ceasefire and escalation of war again brought about misery and misadministration in South Vietnam. There was a conflict on the question of settling the line of demarcation. So American bombing of Vietnam again resumed. Many territorial issues became the bone of contention between both sides. After an escalation of war serious proportions in 1975, the war again ended with the total withdrawal of U.S. forces from South Vietnam on 30 April 1975.

The Paris Agreement

The Agreement on ending the Vietnam War was signed on 27 January 1973 by the US government with the concurrence of the government of the Republic of Vietnam and by the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam with the concurrence of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam. The objective of the Agreement was to "ending the war and restoring peace in Vietnam on the basis of respect for the Vietnamese people's fundamental rights and the South Vietnamese people's right to self-determination and to contributing to the consolidation of peace in Asia and the
world". The Agreement presented unparalleled opportunity in South Vietnam.¹ Accordingly, the U.S. at last agreed to give full respect to Vietnamese people's fundamental rights which were guaranteed to Vietnam by the 1954 Geneva Agreement. Along with, the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Vietnam were assured. As it is well known, the Vietnamese, in fact, wanted the recognition of their sovereignty and territorial integrity after Geneva Agreements in right earnest. But it was the U.S. and its Allies which wanted the respectable departure of the French and their own involvement in Vietnam for their own strategic global interests. It took almost nineteen years for the U.S. to recognize the Vietnamese people's fundamental rights, which were due to them since 1945, when they declared establishment of Sovereign Republic of Vietnam on 2nd September after proclamation of their independence.²

Secondly, in the Paris Agreement, a ceasefire declaration followed by stoppage of all military activities in the ground, air and naval bases of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was announced with the objective that cessation of hostilities would be "durable"³ and "without limit of time".⁴

Through this Agreement, the plan of U.S. and Allied troops withdrawal under the supervision of Joint Military Commission and the determination of areas to be controlled by each South Vietnamese party were implemented. In addition, Article 4 of the Agreement explicitly prohibited the U.S. to continue its military involvement or any political intervention in the internal affairs of South Vietnam.⁵ The time period for total troops withdrawal was sixty days from the signing of the Agreement. The withdrawal included military advisers, technical personnel, armaments, munitions and other war material also.⁶ This was a wise step on the part of the U.S. to disengage itself from Vietnam's military affairs after its association for about two decades.

³ The Paris Agreement, n.1, p.2.
⁵ The Paris Agreement, n.1, p. 3.
⁶ Ibid., p. 4.
Along with this, the U.S. policy-makers provided relief to millions of American parents, wives, sisters and children by paving the way for return of captured U.S. and Allied military personnel and foreign civilians within sixty days of the signing of the Agreement. This arrangement was hailed by people all over the world.

South Vietnamese people's right to self-determination was recognized by both the US and North Vietnam. It was declared as "sacred, inalienable" and to be respected by all countries. This clause further provided for political non-interference by either the U.S. or any other country through "any political tendency or personality" and thus the political future of South Vietnam was to be decided through "genuinely free and democratic general elections", under international supervision. In political sphere, U.S. involvement in Vietnam thus ended for ever. Apart from this, both North and South Vietnams were prohibited to join any military alliance or military bloc and were required not to allow any foreign powers to maintain military bases, troops, military advisers and military personnel on their respective territories. Although this provision was included in the Geneva Agreements in 1954, it was not scrupulously implemented by either party. In 1973, the situation was, of course, quite different and both parties were expected to abide by the provision of such an international agreement. In any case, this clause provided ample scope for the U.S. to totally disengage from the military affairs of Vietnam. As a precautionary measure, the Agreement also provided for the Joint Military Commissions (JMCs), the International Commission of Control and Supervision (ICCS) and the International Conference to safeguard and ensure both military and political disengagement of the U.S. from Vietnam. Countries such as Canada, Hungary, Indonesia, Poland, China, France, Russia, U.K. and UN Secretary – General were mentioned as guarantees to oversee smooth ending of the war, and to bring about political solution to the Vietnam issue.

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7 Ibid., p. 5.
8 Ibid., p. 6; and Vladimir Trifonov, "Interview with Pham Van Dong", New Times, no. 29, pp. 8-9.
9 The Paris Agreement, p. 7.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., p. 11.
12 Ibid., p. 16.
Besides, the Paris Agreement provided all parties to refrain from using the territory of Cambodia and Laos to encroach upon the sovereignty and security of other countries. All foreign countries were asked to put an end to all military activities in Cambodia and Laos, totally withdraw from and refrain from reintroducing into these two countries troops, military advisers and military personnel, armaments, munitions and war material. Besides, all political and other internal affairs of both Cambodia and Laos were to be settled by the people of these countries themselves without external interference. Accordingly, the U.S. and the Allied powers were prohibited from interfering not only in the affairs of Vietnam but also of Cambodia and Laos as well, thereby ensuring a total disengagement from Indo-China.

As a reconciliation measure, the U.S. promised to contribute financially to heal the wounds of war and post-war reconstruction not only inside Vietnam but also in the whole of Indo-China. This help was promised with a view to establishing a new, equal and mutually beneficial relationship between the US and Vietnam, along with ensuring stable peace in Vietnam, Indo-China and above all in Southeast Asia.

In this manner, the Paris Agreement of 1973 provided a solid base for U.S. disengagement in Vietnam. It was, of course, a different matter whether the U.S. took full advantage of such a valuable platform in the subsequent period. But that cannot undermine the contribution of the Paris Agreement towards U.S. disengagement by any conceivable degree. Subsequent developments and their analysis will provide a greater insight into the later stages of U.S. disengagement in Vietnam.

13 Ibid., p. 17.
14 Ibid., p. 18.
Period of Relative Calmness

Soon after the signing of the Paris Agreement, a period of relative calmness dawned on the whole of Vietnam territory, even though till the early hours of 28 January 1973 bombing continued unabated from both sides. In fact, on the very first day of the implementation of the Paris Agreement (28 January 1973) North Vietnam bombed Bien Hoa air base and Tanson Nhut airport in Saigon area heavily in the early hours. The policy towards South Vietnam was that the Agreement should be manipulated through “political struggle” and where necessary by “armed struggle”. Thus by 8 a.m. on the same day, North Vietnam had quite a substantial area under its control including Quang Tri province; western halves of the three Northern provinces of Thua Thien, Quang Nam and Quang Tin; parts of coastal areas of Quang Nam, Quang Tin and Quang Ngai; Binh Dinh, Kontum and Pleiku provinces; Binh Long and Tay Ninh provinces; Binh Duong provinces; Bien Hoa, Phuoc Tuy provinces in the Mekong delta; Kien Tuong, Kien Phong and Kien Giang provinces; Kien Hoa, Vinh Binh and Ba Xuyen provinces and the forests of An Xuyen province.

Moreover, Ho Chi Minh trail had been plugged effectively by the time the Paris Agreement was signed. Hence, there was no possibility of any further North Vietnamese troops entering into South Vietnam. The troops from North already present in the South were not to use any force for any action. Hence they would have no importance in South Vietnam. On the other hand, military aid to South Vietnam from the US was restricted to one-to-one replacement basis only.

Before hand, North Vietnamese diplomatic relations had already started with many countries. On 1 September 1972, Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea established relationship with North Vietnam. Close on its heels, Zambia recognized North Vietnam as an independent sovereign state on 14 September 1972. Bangladesh followed suit on 21 November, Austria on 1 December 1972, Tunisia on 12 December 1972, Malagasy on 19 December 1972, Iceland on 25

16 Keesings' Contemporary Archives, Ibid., p. 25511.
January 1973, just two days before the signing of the Paris Agreement. Hereafter, Canada recognized Vietnamese sovereignty on 7 February and Australia on 26 February 1973.  

Both sides, in this period, made an assessment of war casualties in Vietnam. U.S. war casualties between 1961 and 1973 were found to be 45,941 soldiers killed in action, 300,635 persons wounded and 1811 persons missing or captured. It was also calculated that another 10,298 persons died from non-combat causes such as accidents, illness, murder or through drugs. The single year which figured out prominently with respect to maximum casualties was 1968, when 14,592 persons were killed and 92,564 persons wounded.  

After making a comprehensive assessment of war gains and losses, casualties, etc. in the period, it was the time to record various interpretations of the Peace Agreement by various interested and non-interested parties. President Richard Nixon termed the Agreement as the one which brought "peace with honour". He was of the opinion that in spite of various concessions granted by him in the Agreement to the other party, his "peace with honour" policy never betrayed his Allies including President Thieu. President Nixon pointed out that throughout the negotiations, he always had closest consultations with President Thieu. Therefore, this Agreement had been fully supported by Thieu and other Allies of the U.S.  

However, President Nixon admitted that he deliberately did not discuss the peace efforts with anyone publically before it could materialize because it would have spoilt their understanding with Hanoi. It would have also seriously harmed and possibly destroyed the prospects of peace. President Nixon admitted that secret negotiations provided both the U.S. and North Vietnam favourable

atmosphere to overcome a large number of hurdles leading ultimately to the signing of the Agreement. Thus it brought about Nixon’s victory in the polls.\textsuperscript{20}

Besides, President Nixon’s National Security Adviser Kissinger admitted that the negotiated clauses were being deliberately kept secret so that neither side would measure success or failure in terms of their prestige.\textsuperscript{21}

Thieu also hailed the Agreement as a victory for South Vietnam. Along with that, he warned the nation to remain prepared for a dangerous political struggle in South Vietnam, as according to him, Paris Agreement did not solve fully the political issues in Vietnam. He observed that communists might have recognized the sovereignty of South Vietnam along with its people’s right to self-determination, but he was not sure as to how long would the communists stick to that position. According to him, political struggle was soon to follow. Hence, he warned his people to remain vigilant against communists in the coming political struggle, which according to him, “though not bloody, still would be tough and dangerous.”\textsuperscript{22}

To North Vietnam, the Paris Agreement was in no way different from the October Agreement which remained unsigned by the U.S. at that time. However, Hanoi admitted that the Paris Agreement brought U.S. disengagement in Vietnam. It ensured U.S. non-interference in its internal affairs, possible reunification of Vietnam and did not insist on North Vietnamese troops withdrawal from South Vietnam. Le Duc Tho, however, held that the U.S. did not gain anything from the bombings of Vietnam from November 1972 to January 1973, except delay in the signing of the Agreement. This meant that there was hardly any difference between October and January peace agreements.\textsuperscript{23}

The Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam and Saigon regime of South Vietnam did have a difference of opinion while interpreting

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\textsuperscript{22} & \textit{Kissings’ Contemporary Archives}, ibid.; and Allan E. Goodman, “South Vietnam: War Without End?” \textit{Asian Survey}, vol. 15, no. 1, January 1975, p. 70. \\
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provisions of the Final Agreement dealing with political solution of Vietnam. The PRG called for general elections to establish the right of self-determination, whereas South Vietnam demanded presidential election only till North Vietnamese forces were present in South Vietnam. According to Saigon, North Vietnamese forces must be demobilized before any general elections were held.\textsuperscript{24} However, the U.S. did not pay any heed to this South Vietnamese comment. Kissinger opined that the Allies such as Saigon were acceptable to the U.S.. But once he considered the Agreement with Hanoi as fair, just and honourable, he presented it with great conviction and never considered acceding to any unfavourable comments from South Vietnam.\textsuperscript{25}

The U.S., thus, was quite prepared for its disengagement in Vietnam after a thorough conviction. In fact, its policy of disengagement came in the wake of a complete change in the political atmosphere all over the world. The SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks) agreements with USSR, economic cooperation with Japan, subsequent establishment of cordial relationship with Moscow and Peking and at last introduction of the U.S. policy of peaceful coexistence contributed a lot towards formulation of U.S. policy of disengagement. As Kissinger put it in a televised interview on 1 February 1973, if U.S. could coexist with Moscow and Peking, it could also coexist with Hanoi. During his visit to Hanoi, from 10 to 13 February 1973, he expressed the hope that final Agreement would be strictly implemented and economic aid to Hanoi would be forthcoming through a Joint Economic Commission for post-war reconstruction.\textsuperscript{26}

Few of the provisions of the Paris Peace Agreement were gradually implemented during the following two months. The Joint Military Commissions (JMCs) and the International Commission of Control and Supervision (ICCS) were formed with representatives from the U.S., North Vietnam, South Vietnam and PRG for the former and representatives from Canada, Hungary, Poland and Indonesia for the latter. The JMCs were formed to investigate the violations of ceasefire and ICCS was set up to supervise the ceasefire. Secondly, an

\textsuperscript{24} Keesings' Contemporary Archives, ibid., p. 25789; and Goodman, n. 22, p. 79.
\textsuperscript{25} Keesings' Contemporary Archives, ibid., p. 25788.
International Conference was called on 26 February 1973 which continued till 2 March. It considered many issues relating to both military and political disengagement in Vietnam. Thirdly, by 29 March (sixty days from the signing of the Agreement), all U.S. and allied troops were withdrawn, PoWs were released and American mines were removed from North Vietnamese waters. Besides, by 19 March political talks between South Vietnam and PRG had already started.27

The release of PoWs (Prisoners of War), in the initial stages was considered by the U.S., North Vietnam and South Vietnam as a gesture of goodwill. Several reciprocatory moves on the release of PoWs were recorded from all three sides in the first one month after signing of the Agreement. However, on 27 February Hanoi announced the suspension of the release of PoWs until the U.S. and Saigon gave the assurance that the Peace Agreement would be observed strictly by them in all aspects. Hanoi accused South Vietnam of organizing military operations to extend its zone of influence, preventing the refugees from returning to their villages, failing to release imprisoned civilian members of the NLF and hampering activities of ICCS and JMC. It accused the U.S. of delaying the removal of mines from North Vietnamese waters and bombing Laos and Cambodia. To this the U.S. observed that the Paris Agreement linked release of PoWs only with the U.S. troops withdrawal and not with the return of detained Vietnamese civilians, which was to be arranged by the two South Vietnamese parties only. Soon after this the North Vietnamese government agreed to release all PoWs within sixty days as laid down in the Paris Agreement.28

Despite this, many bottlenecks arose in the process of PoWs release in the subsequent periods. On 11 March, after South Vietnam began a large-scale operation in Quang Ngai province, Hanoi refused to release prisoners. As a result the U.S. refused to withdraw the third phase of its troops until the PoWs were released. Therefore, by 14 March, the PoWs release was hastened by North

Vietnam and alternatively the third phase of troops withdrawal could be arranged as usual.29

Meanwhile, the U.S. sought details of American prisoners yet to be released from North Vietnam and NLF and stopped troops withdrawal for a few days. The US also demanded the list of PoWs held by Pathet Lao. The NLF rejected this demand as it had nothing to do with Paris Agreement. However, the phased troops withdrawal on 22 March 1973 did not stop, though a condition was attached with its materialization.30

After few days Pathet Lao announced that it was prepared to release U.S. prisoners at any time if the U.S. respected the Laotian ceasefire and stopped all bombing raids on Laos. The U.S. accepted this proposal and by 28 March, the deadlock in troops withdrawal came to an end. By next day, the entire U.S. forces were withdrawn from South Vietnam. It numbered around 23,700. The final group of 2,501 servicemen left Saigon on 29 March 1973.31

The U.S. forces, however, were not fully cleared off from the Southeast Asian region. Nearly 100,000 servicemen, 800 aircrafts and 50 warships were left by the U.S. in Thailand, Seventh Fleet and Guam.

On the release of PoWs, on the other hand, the U.S. was not fully satisfied. It claimed that 1328 servicemen were still missing in the region.32

On the occasion of complete U.S. troops withdrawal within sixty days as stipulated by the Agreement, President Nixon remarked that the U.S. had achieved what it wanted honourably i.e peace. But he warned North Vietnam of serious consequences if they did not adhere to Paris Agreement scrupulously. He further observed that it was the U.S. which wanted peace in Vietnam and worked for it systematically through negotiations for the past few years. It left South Vietnamese people with their right to self-determination. It introduced Vietnamization programme to provide strength to defend their rights. However,
the U.S. did not find that provisions relating to missing foreign civilians in Indo-China, provisions relating to Laos and Cambodia and provisions prohibiting infiltration from North Vietnam to South Vietnam were being strictly complied with by concerned parties. Still President Nixon hoped that situation would gradually improve and there would be progress towards peace.33

North Vietnam had a genuine grievance on U.S. troops withdrawal issue. It observed that more than ten thousand U.S. servicemen had been retained in Vietnam as civilian advisers and large quantities of arms were being supplied to South Vietnam without any scruples.34

Removal of mines from North Vietnamese waters was one of the most difficult jobs to be carried by U.S. forces before the end of sixty days. From 5 February to 6 March 1973, sincere attempts were made by the U.S. navy in this regard. Haiphong harbour was cleared first on 6 March. For the rest, cleaning operation continued as scheduled. But by 29 March, it was difficult to ensure total removal of mines. Hence, the work continued on this front for a few more days.35

After the end of sixty days from the signing of the Agreement, the four-party Joint Military Commission lost its utility. It was replaced by a two-party Joint Military Commission as stipulated in the Agreement. This Commission consisted of both South Vietnamese government and PRG representatives only.36

During 10 to 13 February 1973, Henry Kissinger visited Hanoi. He discussed with concerned officials the establishment of a Joint Economic Commission on post-war reconstruction, through which the U.S. wanted to extend economic aid to North Vietnam. By 5 March, talks among high-ranking U.S. and North Vietnamese officials began in Paris and by 8 March the Joint Commission decided to hold its meeting on 15 March for discussion on economic aid. In North

34 Guardian (London); and Chandola, n. 28, p. 391.
36 Parker, n. 32, p. 365; and Yurtsev, ibid.
Vietnamese National Assembly, in the meantime, “tasks and guidelines” were announced by the government for the next two years. 37

On political issues, talks between PRG and South Vietnamese representatives started for the establishment of National Council for National Reconciliation and Concord and for holding general elections. The talks started in Paris on 19 March 1973. To everyone's surprise, talks did not move smoothly. Accusations and counter-accusations marked the proceedings without any fruitful solution to the political issue.

The exchange of civilian prisoners started on 28 April 1973. However, the process of exchange was repeatedly delayed due to the lack of safety guarantee to ICCS officials observing the exchanges. Several Buddhist monks and some non-communist opponents of Saigon regime were handed over to PRG. With respect to political prisoners, differences persisted on their exact number and status. President Thieu claimed that there were no political prisoners in South Vietnam; there were only 21,000 common-law convicts and 5081 "communist prisoners". 38

On the discrepancies in estimates of the number of political prisoners, it was pointed out that the system of classification of prisoners was responsible for these discrepancies to some extent. All NLF prisoners were considered as common law prisoners till 1966. After that they were considered as PoWs. Terrorist and NLF officials were considered as “communist criminals”. Persons caught with arms or identity cards issued by PRG were regarded as common law criminals. 39 Accordingly, there was an opportunity for Saigon to declare many political offenders as common law prisoners or communist criminals and never release them. However, a report issued by Amnesty International on 1 July 1973 claimed that at least 70,000 persons were being detained in South Vietnam.

because of their political beliefs. Tran Van Lam and President Thieu always gave different accounts of political prisoners.

By 23 July 1973, exchange of civilian prisoners started. South Vietnamese government handed over 345 prisoners to PRG. By 28 July as per agreement on 13 June Communiqué, handing over of all civilian prisoners was to be completed. But by then this task could not be completed.\(^{40}\)

After the 13 June Communiqué, during the resumed talks in Paris between PRG and Saigon officials, PRG provided a time table for settlement of political affairs of South Vietnam. It was rejected by Saigon, which advanced another plan. As neither was prepared to accept the other's plan, Saigon proposed secret talks on 11 July between them to break the deadlock. However, PRG did not agree.\(^{41}\) On 18 July 1973, PRG proposed that all citizens should be granted democratic liberties; arrest and deportation of political prisoners should be banned; all South Vietnamese should enjoy freedom of movement, speech, assembly, political activity, religion, guarantees for private property and business activity. Any violation of ceasefire agreement should be punished. But this was rejected by Saigon as a manoeuvre aimed at avoiding general elections.

Thus, the managerial problems associated with efforts to radically alter any government, the familiar problems of corruption and administrative inefficiencies, the continuing absence of local commitment to the long-term objectives of the Saigon government and the stress on formalism rather than on functionally effective programmes – all in the context of the increasing pressures of the Provisional Revolutionary Government and the resultant runaway inflation - made it difficult to be sanguine about the possibility of a successful transition from Ngo Dinh Diem's attempt to restore the traditional village environment to Nguyen Van Thieu's belated attempt to expand the scope of political mobilization and

\(^{40}\) Keesing's Contemporary Archives, ibid., p. 26019.

integration throughout the countryside according to the model provided by the Viet Minh and the National Liberation Front.\(^{42}\)

On the interpretation of the Paris Agreement there were some discrepancies also. North Vietnam sincerely hoped after the agreement was signed that the demarcation line on the 17\(^{th}\) parallel was in no sense a political or territorial frontier. Rather the re-unification of Vietnam would take place in peaceful stages without annexation of one part of the country. South Vietnam, on the other hand, emphasized on the sacro-sanctity of the demilitarized zone which had to be recognized by both South and North Vietnams. There was a great difference between the two interpretations.\(^{43}\)

The U.S. on its part, interpreted the provisions of the Agreement differently. It hoped that Ho Chi Minh trail into Laos and South Vietnam from North Vietnam would be checked through strict supervision by ICCS as well as border teams appointed at each terminal point of the Ho Chi Minh trail into South Vietnam. Thus the demarcation between South and North Vietnams would be recognized and no more troops would be allowed to move from one Vietnam to the other.\(^{44}\)

As regards the economic reconstruction of war-devastated Vietnam, Japan came forward to help. In order to bring about peace, Japan considered convening of an International Conference and wanted reduction of arms including nuclear weapons. To bring about peace in the region, it considered normalization of relations among the U.S., the USSR and China as vital. For economic reconstruction, 1.5 million pounds were given by Japan to Vietnam. However, it was apprehended that such economic expansionism would lead to otherwise avoidable friction. This was because Vietnam embarked on a “Resolution on


Cadre Work in the New Stage", thus leading to development of technical and scientific cadres. 45

Meanwhile, Japan took the opportunity to establish diplomatic relations with North Vietnam. By proposing for the establishment of telephone and telegraph links, promotion of trade, economic cooperation, relaxed entry regulations and guaranteeing post-war rehabilitation projects, Japan wanted to take this opportunity to establish itself as an important power in the Southeast Asian region. On 21 September 1973, diplomatic relations were finally established. Japan guaranteed large economic aid and technical assistance to North Vietnam. More than that, a trade agreement with it which included exchange of journalists as well as its recognition of PRG of South Vietnam. Senegal in July 1973 also accorded formal recognition to PRG, thus raising a controversy with Saigon government, which proclaimed that South Vietnam in future would break diplomatic relations with any country that followed the Senegalese path. In contrast, the PRG leader Nguyen Huu Tho proclaimed that recognition of both PRG and Saigon governments would be acceptable. 46 This relation was widely thought to provide Japan an opportunity to increase its influence in Southeast Asia and project itself as a strong power along with the U.S., the USSR and China.

The U.S.S.R and China both maintained a balanced relationship initially with all concerned parties. It was observed in International Socialist Review (April 1974) that:

We are not in a period of cold war, in which the Kremlin or Peking might encourage their supporters around the world to enter anti-imperialist struggles. Just the opposite. The signing of the Vietnam accords in January 1973 was the consummation of a new detente that will strongly influence the Stalinist parties every where to keep the peace with imperialism. Of course, agreements at the top cannot stifle the class struggle or, in the long run, mitigate the fundamental hostility of imperialism to the very existence of the workers states. But Stalinism fights only when its survival is palpably at stake.

Malaysia also recognized North Vietnam and established diplomatic relations with it. This was welcomed by all the political parties in Malaysia as it was thought that it would bring about recognition of North Vietnam by China in its trail.

In this fashion, a period of relative calmness prevailed in both North and South Vietnams for quite sometime after the signing of the Paris Peace Agreement on 27 January 1973. This did not mean that there was perfect calmness in the battlefront all these days. There had been more than frequent violations of ceasefire during this period also. More than that, there were unexpected skirmishes in the battlefield for which the allies of both the sides such as the U.S. on the one hand and China and Soviet Russia on the other, had been supplying men and material to each of their protégés as well. Despite all these disturbances, a lot of reconstruction work, exchange of PoWs and civilian prisoners, troops withdrawal, establishment of diplomatic relationships, solutions towards political issues of Vietnam, implementation of various provisions of the Paris Agreement, assessment of war casualties, etc. had been continuously going on in this period in a relatively calm atmosphere.

However, this relatively undisturbed period was not to continue for long. Suddenly after the violations of Joint Communiqué ceasefire agreements, the situation went out of control. Still reconstruction work of the totally devastated Vietnam did not stop altogether at this point of time. Gradual and systematic developments continued simultaneously along with skirmishes in the battle-front till the resurgence of United Vietnam. However, during this period, DRV's development of scientific and technical personnel far outstripped that of South Vietnam. In fact DRV had the most highly trained cadre of scientists and engineers than any nation in Southeast Asia.47

Inside South Vietnam, there was a movement of protest against Thieu's emergency measures. The movement for public welfare and democracy on many occasions burst out very implacably as exemplified by the strike of over 10,000 workers in U.S. offices throughout South Vietnam and that of railwaymen in 1972.

In particular Saigon-Cholon witnessed many general strikes enlisting hundreds of thousands of participants, characterized by the spirit of unity, the close coordination between various bases and branches which foiled the divisive tactics of the enemy. The agitation of bus drivers in 1967 was co-ordinated with the general strike of the workers of 127 trade unions. The struggle of the Thu Duc storehouse workers rapidly spread out into a general strike of the Saigon workers.

The struggle of the workers against the income tax in 1971 and against the TVA (Added Value Tax) in 1973, which was in conformity with the interests of different social segments, in cities and the country, had grown into a movement joined by many people from other social strata, such as public and private employees, dealers, military men, teachers, newsmen and artists. Similarly, there had been other movements involving Buddhists, pupils, students, families of soldiers and these movements had been actively supported by the workers.

Since the U.S. imperialists brought their expeditionary troops into South Vietnam and carried out the local war, the Saigon government had been fighting the U.S. aggressors, annihilating the U.S. aggressors, opposing all their cruel and perfidious policies, demanding them to be pulled out of South Vietnam and to put an end to the Vietnamisation of the war, demanding the U.S. and Saigon administration to seriously negotiate with the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam and the Government of Democratic Republic of Vietnam, to sign the Paris Agreement and to strictly and seriously implement it.

The first march of 20,000 Saigonese working people in 1966 to the U.S. Embassy demanding the U.S. to quit South Vietnam had the effect of stimulating the struggle movement of the labour class in cities and towns and of the peasants in the occupied areas. Since then, the struggle of the working people in South Vietnam had obviously taken a different form. The working people had organized the Self Defence Units with their own weapon, "Shock Brigades" with the task of either annihilating the U.S. aggressors in the streets, in restaurants, in snack bars or co-ordinating their activities with the Liberation Armed Forces (LAF) in the attacks against airbases, military camps, depots and other "well defined" bases of the enemy. At times there were places where the workers together with people
from other social segments rose up and paralysed the puppet administration of
the locality, for example, the uprisings in the years 1966-68 of workers in Da
Nang, Dalat and Hue.

Besides, a great many workers had participated in the LAF and fought at
particularly important spots. The worker-guerrilla units, “Shock Brigades”, Self-
Defence Units in Saigon, Municipal Self Defence Units in Da Nang, artillery
women units at plantations, the squad of women workers in Hue keen on
attacking the enemy’s communication and transport units, military engineering
units, ordnance units, medical units, logistic units, crack units, rangers, etc. had
recorded exploits about which the Vietnamese working class was proud of.

In 1973, the first year of the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the
workers’ movement in South Vietnam had developed new steps to hail the great
victory of the whole nation. The working people in South Vietnam had openly
held debating sessions on the Paris Agreement, and by means of sharp
reasoning, had opposed hundreds of the enemy’s debating sessions which aimed
at distorting the Agreement in order to cover up U.S. supported Thieu’s violations
of the Paris Agreement. They demanded respect and strict implementation of the
Agreement.

The workers and labouring class had become the reliable hard core of the
revolutionary forces in South Vietnam. It was one of the decisive factors for the
great victory of Vietnam.

While the U.S. and Thieu were continuing to sabotage the Paris Agreement
and carrying on their aggressive policy in South Vietnam, the urgent task of the
workers and labouring people was to join the struggle on three fronts – political,
military and diplomatic – in order to force them to scrupulously implement the
Paris Agreement, to resolutely foil their land grabbing operations and
“pacification” policy, to resolutely fight against the police, purging operations and
at the same time to work to make the liberated areas stronger in every field; to
rapidly rehabilitate and develop the economy.

In the liberated areas, the workers and labouring people endeavoured to
contribute to the development of economic and cultural branches; to heighten
their vigilance, to participate in the building of armed forces ready to fight the enemy's land-grabbing operations; to safeguard the production, people's life and properties, the liberated areas and the Paris Agreement.

The South Vietnamese people's revolutionary struggle for independence and democracy was thus entering into a new period and was gaining strength.

**Violation of Ceasefire: Escalation of the War**

Out of the provisions of the Paris Agreement which were constantly violated by either side, ceasefire clause was the biggest casualty. Even after the ceasefire which came into force on 28 January 1973, fighting continued unabated on all fronts, except that U.S. planes were no longer seen over the Vietnamese skies. Each side accused the other of violating the ceasefire. However, neutral sources admitted that both sides were to blame for the continuation of the fighting.\(^{48}\)

From 28 January itself, a major clash to open all major roads to Saigon (which were already cut off by NLF forces) started and it continued up to 3 February 1973. A six hour battle took place just south of Pleiku. In Quang Nghi province, North Vietnam captured Thanh Duc and got an outlet to a port. In Quang Tri province, South Vietnam recaptured the naval base at Cau Viet estuary, but North Vietnam again captured it on 31 January 1973. However, by 3 February, the major conflicts had ended. But sporadic local clashes continued.\(^{49}\)

Meanwhile, ICCS established its regional headquarters at Da Nang, Hue and Pleiku on 2 February 1973. Seven peace-making teams were sent to Hue, Da Nang, Pleiku, Phan Thiet, Bien Hoa, My Tho and Can Tho on 5 February. After two days, the JMC supervisory team followed the peace-making teams to all such places. Both JMC and ICCS teams made systematic attempts to supervise the enforcement of ceasefire. However, others looked at it in a different way. They felt that the U.S. had stituated its general teams and provincial consulates in such

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a way that they actually functioned as American commands in various military regions and provinces of South Vietnam.\textsuperscript{50}

By 7 February, the whole situation had changed. Fighting flared up at 16 miles south of Pleikhu, where the North Vietnamese and NLF forces attacked South Vietnamese positions. Soon after both the North Vietnamese and NLF delegates of JMC tried to approach the site of fighting so as to stop it, but to no use. They were severely restricted in their movement at Tan Son Nhut. In fact, they were attacked by violent mobs at Ban Me Thout on 9 February; at Pleiku on 11 February; at Hue on 15 and 25 February and at Da Nang on 25 February 1973 as well. These violent riots were described by the South Vietnamese government as "spontaneous demonstrations of the people's anger". Communists, however, accused Saigon administration of organizing them. In such a situation, JMC delegates had to return back to Saigon expressing fears of their personal safety.\textsuperscript{51}

Meantime, fight continued. On 15 February, a U.S. helicopter was shot down at An Loc. JMC authorities issued as appeal to both sides requesting them to "completely end hostilities throughout South Vietnam, strictly respect the cease fire, and settle all questions by peaceful negotiations in a spirit of national reconciliation and concord." JMC further demanded cessation of armed patrols, fights by bomber and fighter aircraft, end of all hostile acts, terrorism or reprisals, endangering life and property. However, on 18 February itself, the appeal was ignored and each side accused the other for the violation of ceasefire.\textsuperscript{52}

This violation of ceasefire agreement was considered as the first major violation. The ICCS reprimanded all four belligerents of the Vietnam war and declared openly that they had failed miserably to abide by the terms of the ceasefire agreement. Further, it admitted officially that the Paris Agreement had failed to bring peace in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{50} Keessing's Contemporary Archives, ibid.; and Gavro Perazic, "The First Anniversary of the Paris Agreements on Vietnam", Review of International Affairs, vol. 25, no. 573, 20 February 1974, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{52} Keessing's Contemporary Archives, ibid.; and M. Zarkovic, "Two Years, After The Paris Agreements," Review of International Affairs, vol. 26, no. 596, 5 February 1975, pp. 25-27.
\textsuperscript{53} Asian Recorder, vol. XIX, no. 18, 30 April – 6 May 1973, p. 11370; and Chandolu, n. 38, p. 760; and Zarkovic, ibid., p. 25.
The ICCS put the responsibility squarely on the four-party JMC and declared that these four members of the JMC were responsible for the deplorable situation in controlling the war in Vietnam. In fact, as the Canadian Chairman of ICCS observed, JMC by then had not provided any international observer teams with either guidelines or facilities for movements in the fields of Vietnamese hinterland. It had also failed to deploy their liaison teams at selected sites of control according to the schedule laid down in the protocols of the Agreement.\textsuperscript{54}

In the absence of a ceasefire or of agreed demarcation lines between the belligerents and inability of the JMC to stop the hostilities, the ICCS felt quite hopeless. It could not even investigate the violations.

The ICCS enjoyed only an observer status. It did not have any peace-keeping force. Hence it could not reach those sites which were heavily bombed by artillery shelling and could not investigate the ceasefire violations. Such places were situated around Hue and Quang Tri. Exchange of PoWs programme was also affected by heavy bombing. All these unfavourable conditions hampered the working of the ICCS.\textsuperscript{55}

Even though the Canadian President of ICCS, Michael Gauvin was not in favour of withdrawing himself from ICCS, he was apparently disillusioned by the sequence of events in the three weeks following the signing of the Agreement and hence threatened to withdraw his team from ICCS. Gauvin observed at the International Conference on Vietnam, which opened in Paris on 26 February, that if this Conference failed to set up an international authority with the responsibility of receiving reports from the ICCS, he would withdraw from the Commission. Canada's contention was that whatever reports came from the ICCS, there should be some organization to receive them and immediately act upon them for remedial measures. The Canadian delegation did not want to stand idle while agreements they were supposed to supervise were disregarded.\textsuperscript{56}


\textsuperscript{55} Asian Recorder, ibid.

\textsuperscript{56} United States Information Service as recorded in Keesing’s Contemporary Archives, vol. XIX. 14-20 May 1973, p. 25886.
On 20 February 1973, JMC began its investigations of ceasefire at An Loc and Quang Tri provinces. This small attempt from JMC spread the feeling all over that it was gradually stepping out of its inertia.

In spite of this, a small controversy erupted at this stage as to which, out of ICCS and JMC, was responsible to maintain peace after the signing of the Agreement. The ICCS claimed itself as an independent body enjoying only observer status in the maintenance of peace. It denied being a peace-keeping force. Its mandate was only to report on implementation or non-implementation of the Paris Agreement. As against this, the JMC had the duty to supervise the ceasefire, which they had failed to carry out. The JMC also had failed to deploy its teams at regional levels in time and failed to provide any support to ICCS at sub-regional points of observations. The ICCS, of course, could not pin-point as to which out of the four parties was deliberately attempting to frustrate the maintenance of ceasefire.\(^\text{57}\)

At the International Conference in Paris, the Chinese delegation held that signatories to the agreement should only hold the responsibility to implement it and check its violations. JMC and ICCS consisting of other government delegations, should not interfere in the internal affairs of Vietnamese people.\(^\text{58}\)

The U.S. delegation at the International Conference remarked that the ICCS had a major role to play in the maintenance of peace in Vietnam. It should exhort the signatories to the Agreement and all other countries to observe peace strictly. In the event of violations of the ceasefire, the members of the Commission could consult each other and could even reconvene the Commission and suggest remedial measures. It was here, the U.S. rightly observed that the maintenance of peace in any state of Indo-China partly depended on the maintenance of peace in the whole of Indo-Chinese region. Accordingly, the U.S. openly emphasized on the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Laos and Cambodia as well, taking into account Article 20 (b) of the Agreement.\(^\text{59}\)

\(^\text{57}\) Asian Recorder, n. 53, p. 11370; and Chandola, n. 38, p. 760.
\(^\text{58}\) Yurtsev, n. 35, p. 54; and M. Andreyev, “Maoist Diplomatic Manoeuvres in Southeast Asia”, Far Eastern Affairs, no. 2, 1975. p. 34.
North Vietnam seconded the Chinese observation in the Conference. It emphasized on national reconciliation and concord, democratic liberties, free exercise of the right to self-determination to solve South Vietnam’s problem. The USSR also emphasized on the signatories strictly fulfilling their obligations, without external interference.  

On 2 March 1973, a declaration supporting the ceasefire agreement was signed by 12 nations attending the International Conference. This declaration invariably put the major responsibility of any ceasefire violations on the signatories of the Agreement. The International Conference, in this declaration, reserved its right to receive information from all parties as well as the right to reconvene the Conference. 

In spite of all these deliberations, ceasefire violations continued uninterrupted. On 26 February itself, when the Conference was going on, South Vietnam accused North Vietnam of setting up surface-to-air missile sites at Khe Sanh. The PRG, however, contended that these sites had been installed even before the agreement. In the ICCS, Polish and Hungarian delegations objected to Canada’s request for investigation of these sites. 

Meanwhile, by 12 March, the missiles were dismantled by North Vietnam. However, the U.S. accused North Vietnam of reassembling them only 800 yards away from the main site. Further, it was alleged that North Vietnam had sent 25,000 to 30,000 troops to South Vietnam in the recent past. This incident created a controversy between the U.S. and North Vietnam. A war of words followed between President Nixon and Hanoi. Nixon reacted, "I would only suggest that in the light of my actions over the last four years, North Vietnam should not lightly disregard such expressions of concern." Hanoi retorted saying, "history has shown that threats do not produce much results". The U.S. retaliated saying that in such a situation their government reserved "its right to

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61 For the text of the Agreement, see Annexure-3, pp. xii-xx. Also see Yurtsev, n. 35, p. 54.  
63 Goodman, n. 22, p. 79.
take necessary action”. Close on its heels, on 16 March, General Tra of PRG protested before the JMC that the U.S. was supplying arms to South Vietnam. However, the U.S. claimed that these deliveries were made in accordance with the procedures for replacements laid down in the Paris Agreement. Besides, it was alleged that the U.S. had half-done the clearing of mines and had failed to carry out its obligations as provided in Article 21 of the Agreement i.e. post-war reconstruction. Moreover, it continued sending U.S. war planes over the air space of North Vietnam. With regard to South Vietnam, the U.S. had refused to abandon its military bases and transferred them to Saigon Administration. The U.S. troops had left behind all weapons for the Saigon army. It had provided 25912 military personnel disguised as civilians, 1100 tanks, 200 warships, 800 artillery and 700 aircrafts. It had provided more than 3 billion dollars before Paris Agreement, 1000 million dollars during 1974-75 and 750 million dollars after that. It had maintained 1,100,000 Saigon puppet troops and nearly 500,000 civilian personnel and policemen, expanded the U.S. embassy with a series of military headquarters such as DAO, SAAFO and USAID.64

Sporadic fighting and acts of terrorism continued throughout the month of March, 1973. On 15 March, the worst of hostilities occurred when grenades were thrown into a Buddhist pagoda in Vinh Binh province killing 17 people and injuring almost 88. After three days it was alleged by South Vietnam that two of its outposts, Thong Le Chan and Rach Bap, had been under siege. The JMC was requested to hold an official investigation. But both North Vietnam and NLF objected to it and accused the South Vietnamese forces of first launching attacks in the disputed area and then passing it on to ICCS. They also refused to give guarantee of safety for the investigating parties. Therefore, Hungarian and Polish delegations refused to investigate the areas. Further on 21 March, the ICCS again demanded safety guarantees from the belligerents but was flatly refused.65

At this stage, Canada seriously considered to withdraw from the ICCS, but decided to extend its “trial period” until 31 May, 1973. It was decided that Canada would withdraw by 30 June unless the situation had substantially

64 N.H. Le, n. 48, pp. 21-22.
improved and the real progress towards a political settlement had been achieved by that date.  

Throughout the months of April and May in 1973, breaches of the ceasefire continued in South Vietnam, although the scale of fighting gradually diminished after the middle of April.

Immediately after the two-party JMC started functioning from 29 March, a dispute arose over Ranger Camp at Tong Le Chan, fifty miles north of Saigon. Besides, fighting had broken out in places such as west of Hue, South-west of Pleikhu and at Cai Lay in the Mekong delta. In Hong Ngu area, fighting broke out on 13 April and continued up to May 1973.

Meanwhile on 3 April, after a long talk between Nixon and Thieu, a joint communiqué was issued which reasserted their determination to implement the provisions of the ceasefire agreement scrupulously. They viewed with great concern the infiltration of men and weapons from North Vietnam into the South. Here they reiterated that "actions which would threaten the basis of the agreement, would call for appropriate vigorous reactions". Hence the U.S. expected to continue to supply South Vietnam with the material means for its defence consistent with the agreement on ending the war.

On 7 April, one ICCS helicopter and on 2 May, two ICCS helicopters were destroyed. It was thus confirmed that non-South Vietnamese troops were infiltrating into South Vietnam.

On 20 April, the U.S. observed that the main obstruction to peace consisted of activities of North Vietnam and forces under its control in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. It held that between the day of ceasefire and 18 April, 1973, more than 27,000 tonnes of military supplies and 30,000 North Vietnamese troops had infiltrated into South Vietnam. It denied all such allegations made by North Vietnam against it and held that clearing of mines from

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66 Ibid.
68 Chandola, n. 38, pp. 759-760.
69 N H Le, n. 48, p. 23.
North Vietnamese waters would remain suspended till North Vietnam began to act in compliance with its obligations under the Agreement. Soon after, reconnaissance flights over North Vietnam by pilotless aircrafts were resumed.\(^{70}\)

South Vietnam complained that till 9 May, 1973, more than 12,180 ceasefire violations by the communists had been recorded. Only 4,608 out of 31,818 South Vietnamese PoWs had been released. On the other hand, communists had captured 16,798 civilians by then.

On 16 April 1973, North Vietnam and PRG officially condemned the serious violations of the Agreement by the U.S. and Saigon government. They alleged that South Vietnam was continuously attacked militarily by United States. Earlier on 31 March, the North Vietnamese Defence Minister, Vo Nguyen Giap had condemned the violations by the U.S. and South Vietnam. The head of PRG government, Lt. Gen. Tran Van Tra also supported the North Vietnamese stand.\(^{71}\)

On 20 May 1973, President Thieu retaliated by saying that the communists had stubbornly violated the ceasefire and had a desire to renew the war. He blamed the communists that they had agreed to the Agreement just to breathe an air of rest and recoup themselves militarily before starting renewed fighting in order to take over South Vietnam by force. Hence, he called upon his nation to remain united militarily, politically and economically to thwart communist designs. He reiterated that South Vietnam must rely on military power rather than on the Paris Agreement.\(^{72}\)

Meanwhile, President Nixon on 3 May 1973 warned both the USSR and China not to arm North Vietnam. He requested them to press their ally to observe cease-fire clause scrupulously. Along with this, he got cleared a huge sum of 1,200 million dollars from the U.S. Congress as military aid to bolster defence forces in Cambodia and other places seeking help under the Nixon

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\(^{70}\) Ibid., pp. 21-23.


doctrine. However, the U.S. Congress expressed grave concern that U.S. extravagance in Vietnam was leading to inflation in the continent.\(^{73}\)

The reason behind such resurgent military threats was that both sides wanted to ensure that their strength was not undermined to a point where the presence of their party in Asia lose its relevance. President Nixon reiterated that the U.S. would continue to be a major power in Asia and make its contribution to peace. He feared that North Vietnam’s ambitions to dominate all of Indo-China had not diminished, though it might resort to different tactics or alter the time frame for attaining that goal.\(^{74}\)

Maharaj Chopra mentioned in an article on Laos in *Organiser*,

"Why, one may ask, have Laotians been able to strike a path which eludes the Cambodians and Vietnamese who are still battling? Some plausible reasons are available. By and large Laotians are peace-loving, religious people. They are given to music and song – that is why Indian films are popular in Laos – and left to themselves they would rather not fight. After over two decades of conflict, the antagonists seem to have been convinced that military victory is not possible".

He further wrote,

"The Indo-China accord has its moral. Where common will and aim do exist, as in Laos, agreement is fruitful; where they do not, it is so much cosmetic. Despite cease-fire, war continues, the war of attrition. The merit of this kind of war is that it does not escalate beyond a certain point. This suits the belligerents, who are almost confident of never suffering defeat. It also suits the mighty sharks, the Big Powers, who are sitting on the fence; so long as their own relative positions are unaffected, it is immaterial how many thousands or hundreds of thousands of men get killed. The prime thesis of the accord is not demilitarization but power balance.

Hence "disengagement", does not necessarily mean peace, a point pertinent in Indo-China as in the Middle East.\(^{75}\)


\(^{75}\) Maharaj K. Chopra, "Disengagement for Power Balance", *Organiser*, vol. 27, no. 46, 29 June 1974, pp. 6,10.
For a peaceful solution to the problem, the PRG submitted a plan to the JMC for the enforcement of the ceasefire. The plan envisaged the withdrawal of all troops and police to the positions which they had occupied before the ceasefire; the formation of mixed teams to supervise the observance of ceasefire; the choice of a "pilot region" where the ending of hostilities and contacts between officers of the two sides would be guaranteed; and the progressive extension of this mechanism to the rest of the country. On 22 May 1973, South Vietnamese government put forth another plan which called for a joint appeal from all four former belligerents to stop fighting; withdrawal of all armed forces, delineation of areas of control and meeting of field commanders in contested areas. The PRG delegation rejected the plan on the ground that the Paris Agreement had made the two South Vietnamese parties solely responsible for the ceasefire after the U.S. withdrawal. However, the two parties agreed on 1 June 1973 to set up a committee which would prepare a map delineating areas controlled by each side.

Meanwhile, the Canadian government announced its decision to withdraw from the ICCS on 29 May 1973. Before that on 17 May, talks between Le Duc Tho and Henry Kissinger had started in Paris which culminated in the signing of a joint communiqué on 13 Jun, on measures to ensure the implementation of ceasefire agreement. The level of fighting subsequently dropped. But talks between the Saigon government and the PRG on a political settlement in Vietnam failed to produce any results.

To go back to details of Paris talks, the Saigon government had submitted a proposal on 25 April 1973 for political settlement in Vietnam. The PRG rejected that and presented a separate plan. By 3 May, each side had rejected other's plan. On 9 May, again Saigon rejected another PRG plan on the ground that a general ceasefire could not be established because of the "reciprocal lack of confidence" between the two sides. On 17 May, Saigon delegation proposed the formation of four working commissions to discuss election plans, formation of

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76 Yurtsev, n. 35, pp. 54-56.
77 Keesing's Contemporary Archives, n. 67, p. 26017; and Falk, n. 41, p. 38.
NCNRC, establishment of democratic liberties and the problem of Vietnamese armed forces in South Vietnam. PRG again rejected that.\textsuperscript{78}

Finally, Kissinger and Tho met on 17 May. After a small break, talks resumed on 6 June 1973. In this session it was made clear that a document had been prepared to ensure strict implementation of the Paris Agreement. Ultimately after removal of some hitch, the joint communiqué was signed on 13 June 1973.\textsuperscript{79}

Second ceasefire was declared on 15 June. After this, there was a sharp drop in the level of fighting. By 5 July, except some places like Kontum and Chuong Thien province in the Mekong delta, the whole of South Vietnam was quiet.\textsuperscript{80}

India, in its own small way, had also contributed to the maintenance of peace in Vietnam. Even after the Indian chancery was bombarded by U.S. planes, Indian government was not discouraged. In a very patient manner, they protested against such indiscriminate bombings by US, particularly of civilian areas and of the innocent people of the country. They explained to U.S. policy-makers that such bombings could not solve the Vietnam problem. They held that only negotiations could lead to the permanent settlement of the issue.\textsuperscript{81}

However, the U.S. from the very beginning, believed that the Paris Agreement would not be followed sincerely by either side. U.S. policy-makers felt that "it was not inconceivable that the Agreement would not in all respects be lived up to". This type of negativism in the attitude pointed towards

\textsuperscript{78} Keesing's Contemporary Archives, ibid., p. 26018.
unwillingness in the strict implementation of the Agreement. Both Saigon and Hanoi also held the same view on Paris Agreement since the beginning.\textsuperscript{82}

Secondly, the U.S. always insisted that South Vietnam had a separate identity of its own and its people had the right of self-determination. In this manner, it drew a line of demarcation between the two Vietnams and was not inclined to help both sides to unite under one government and one territory. Leaving enough ambiguity with regard to the status of both Vietnams and their temporary separation from each other, the U.S. government was able to bring about separatist tendencies in the policies of both units and showed that “it had its merits from the point of view of the international position”. For this the U.S. spent 107,000 million dollars on the Vietnam war, a sum thirty times greater than the assistance provided to North Vietnam by the USSR and China.\textsuperscript{83}

On the question of demarcation, U.S. government believed that the lines of demarcation in the post-war settlement had almost always followed the lines of actual control. In this way, the US also put a wrong notion in the minds of both the units that whatever had not been achieved in the battlefield, could not be achieved on the negotiating table. Besides, by making Thieu believe that a security risk was not imposed on him as his own forces could handle the future conflicts, the U.S. government left Thieu in a defensive mood, always to ponder over the solution to the problem through military means and not through conciliatory negotiations. Therefore, Thieu had reasons to blame the US everytime Saigon suffered any military defeat in the battlefield.\textsuperscript{84}

Thirdly emphasis on banning the renewed infiltration of troops and material from either side always led both sides to think in terms of renewed conflict only.

Meanwhile, June 13 Kissinger-Tho joint communiqué, in its 14-point accord for the strict observance of the Paris Agreement, also called for the strict

\textsuperscript{82}Asian Recorder, n. 43, p. 11284; Goodman, n. 22, p. 70; and Hoang Nguyen, “The Paris Agreement on Vietnam: Glimpses of the Past and the Future”, Vietnam Courier, no. 16 (new series), September 1973, pp. 9-10.

\textsuperscript{83}Asian Recorder, ibid., p. 11285; and Zarkovic, n. 72, p. 26.

\textsuperscript{84}Asian Recorder, ibid., p. 11286; and Nayan Chanda, “President Thieu, and the agony lingers on”, Far Eastern Economic Review, vol. 88, no. 16, 18 April 1975, p. 10.
observance of the ceasefire throughout South Vietnam beginning on 15 June, 1973.\textsuperscript{85} It prohibited any major redeployments or movements that would extend each party's area of control or would result in clashes between opposing armed forces. It asked U.S. government to stop all air reconnaissance operations over North Vietnam and to resume the de-mining of North Vietnamese waters within the next five days. It provided that within the next forty-five days mapping of the country's political future was to be done by South Vietnam. U.S. economic help to North Vietnam was also promised in this document.\textsuperscript{86} It banned any introduction of new troops, military advisers and military personnel into South Vietnam. Except periodic replacements of existing weapons through certain entry points, subject to supervision by the two-party JMC and the ICCS, introduction of new arms and ammunitions was also banned.\textsuperscript{87}

By the end of August 1973, the situation in the region had already taken a different turn. The Cambodian government-in-exile in Peking headed by Prince Norodom Sihanouk had joined hands with Peking and North Vietnam. It proclaimed that Cambodian insurgents would launch an attack on Pnom Penh in the month of December. This incident provided an opportunity for the Vietnam issue to be linked with Cambodia. It brought China into direct attack with U.S. interests limited in South Vietnam. Without violating the Paris Agreement, the men and material for the attack would come from stockpiles of communist forces in South Vietnam only. The Lon Nol government was to be thrown out.\textsuperscript{88}

North Vietnamese government, in fact, promised to help the Prince in terms of weapons and ammunitions without at all violating the Paris Agreement. Hence ammunitions from stocks in South Vietnam were handed over to Cambodian insurgents with the promise from China that one-to-one replacement of these ammunitions to North Vietnam would be done by it without in any way violating the Paris Accord. In fact, by then, the Ho Chi Minh trail had been quite

\textsuperscript{85}\textit{Asian Recorder}, vol. XIX, no. 32, 6-12 August 1973, p. 11538; and Gareth Porter, n. 47, pp. 28-29.
\textsuperscript{86}\textit{Asian Recorder}, ibid.; and Trifonov, no. 8, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{87}\textit{Asian Recorder}, ibid.; and Yurtsev, n. 35, p. 54.
muddy due to incessant rain. So this arrangement was thought to be the best possible help which could be provided to the Prince.\textsuperscript{89}

For the U.S., this was a clear violation of the Paris Agreement. Hence it threatened to send back its Air Force to Indo-China. It threatened to stop all U.S. aid for their reconstruction work as well.\textsuperscript{90}

However, such an attempt of Prince Sihanouk was condemned by Lon Nol as one inviting foreign aggression against his own country. The planned attempt of the Prince to make the Khmer Rouge a success and bring communism into Cambodia was highly criticized by Lon Nol government as utterly inhuman and was branded as Prince's betrayal of Cambodia.\textsuperscript{91}

Despite these accusations, China announced fresh grant of military aid to North Vietnam under the protocol for gratuitous supply of military equipment and material.\textsuperscript{92}

Meanwhile, the ICCS revived its activities for strict observance of the ceasefire accord. After Canada's exit, Iran agreed to replace it on the request of the U.S.. Other nations associated with it along with the big five (US, USSR, China, France and Britain) had to give their consent for Iran's entry. However, it was thought to be a mere formality. In fact, its entry into the Commission was thought to end Commission's bankruptcy, inefficiency and inactivity. But North Vietnam and Vietcong did approve the entry of Iran into the Commission.\textsuperscript{93}

By the month of September, the level of fighting in South Vietnam dropped to some extent. But soon after, the vituperative propaganda war between the two sides increased significantly. Saigon continuously downgraded the PRG as

\textsuperscript{89} Asian Recorder, ibid.; and Bill Manson, “Vietnam's war without end”. The Spectator, no. 7647. 18 January 1975, p. 57.
\textsuperscript{91} Asian Recorder, ibid; and Despande, n. 88, p. 52; and “Historic Victory in Indo-China”, Secular Democracy, vol. 8, no. 7, 1 May 1975, pp. 9-10.
the tool of North Vietnam in South Vietnam. This propaganda war went up to such an extent that one wondered if the Paris Agreement and the June Communiqué would ever be able to have some effect. In fact, the gradual extinction of their effect began to show. It was made clear that the political concessions, which were the real incentives for PRG to sign the agreement, were not going to be granted by President Thieu.94

There were apparently several considerations behind Thieu’s decision to not comply with the Agreement. First, the very fact that he had to continue negotiating with the PRG over the political outcome in South Vietnam impaired his regime’s legitimacy and lent credence to the notion that there were indeed two administrations in the country, as the PRG claimed. These negotiations and the National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord to which they were intended to lead, also implied that his own government’s sovereignty was only temporary – even in his own zone. Second, his defiance of the provisions of the Paris Agreement, which called for the restoration of democratic freedoms, was the object of sharp political attacks by the opposition in Saigon, who also alleged that his carefully rigged Senate elections on 27 August violated the spirit of the Agreement. Thieu was clearly irritated by these criticisms and felt that he was being put on the political defensive.

Probably more important in Thieu’s calculations was his feeling that Saigon would face a military showdown with the communists at some point of time and that it might as well come early so that he could obtain U.S. air support which would be on his terms. But seeing the attitude of non-involvement in the U.S. as well as the deepening political crisis of his primary ally, Richard Nixon, Thieu realized that the indefinite continuation of limited war was dangerous for him in the long run.

Thieu had to reopen the possibility of American bombing in Indo-China, which Congress had at least temporarily closed during the summer of 1973. His strategy for bringing about the complete breakdown of the agreement and a return to full-scale war with U.S. air support consisted of a concerted propaganda

94 Ibid., no. 48, 26 November – 2 December 1973, p. 11721; Falk, n. 41, pp. 38-41; and Zarkovic, n. 72, p. 27.
campaign to create American anticipation of a communist offensive and the launching of his own "preemptive" attacks against the other side which he hoped would provoke a significant communist military response. Any communist attack could then be portrayed to the American public as the beginning of the alleged Hanoi offensive.

On the other hand, both PRG and Saigon, at this time, tried to establish new diplomatic connections to show to the world that they were full-fledged governments functioning in their own sphere. The unimplemented Articles 10 and 11 of the Joint Communiqué provided the two parties with equal status in negotiations. Hence, they were recognized by many nations as granting equal status to both parties in South Vietnam.\(^{95}\)

Gradually the two-party JMC, consisting of PRG and Saigon delegates, lost its relevance. The meetings of JMC later degenerated into slanderous attacks. Both PRG and Saigon lost interest in such meeting. The JMC became totally defunct as a mechanism to monitor the ceasefire acting upon the reports of the ICCS. This was another blow to PRG.\(^{96}\)

On top of all these, the biggest blow to PRG came from the tacit understanding between Saigon and the US that Article 10 of the Paris Agreement was nothing but a dead letter. To the PRG, this provision had given the hope of gradual political change in South Vietnam. Similarly, the creation of NCNRC with three equal segments of PRG, Saigon and neutralists could not be possible at all. Due to all these failures in the implementation of the Agreement, no solution to the problems in Vietnam was in sight. Nor did it bring about total U.S. disengagement in Vietnam as well.\(^{97}\)

By 16 October 1973 a new government in Thailand had been formed. Everyone expected that it would improve relationship with both North Vietnam and China. But it was not clear as to how relations with these nations would improve without involving any withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces from South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos on the one hand and the removal of U.S. bases in

\(^{95}\) Asian Recorder, ibid.; and Falk, n. 41, p. 39.  
\(^{96}\) Asian Recorder, ibid., p. 11722; and Chandola, n. 38, pp. 759-60.  
\(^{97}\) Asian Recorder, ibid.; Silverman, n. 42, pp. 76-77; and Chandola, n. 38, p. 761.
Thailand on the other. These were highly unlikely to happen in the near future. Hence, the new Thai government’s relations with these two nations seemed did not seem to improve so soon. Rather Thailand was used as an airbase for U.S. aircrafts and a naval base for U.S. Seventh Fleet as deterrent against communist revolution in South Vietnam.\textsuperscript{98} However, the Japanese relations with these two nations (North Vietnam and China) improved quite rapidly on a purely reciprocal basis.\textsuperscript{99}

Like Thailand, even US relationship with North Vietnam and China did not seem to be improving. Throughout this period, continuous fighting was recorded in whole of the region. Besides, military help continuously flowed from their respective allies to both South and North Vietnamese governments. Meanwhile, South Vietnamese sources complained that on 20 January 1974 Chinese troops backed by fighter-bombers landed at Duncan Island and forced South Vietnamese troops to retreat to Robert Island. Chinese troops kept on landing there as the fighter-bombers attacked the three Islands heavily in that area. South Vietnamese troops, on the other hand, showed heavy resistance. But the South Vietnamese side suffered heavy losses in terms of both men and material.\textsuperscript{100}

Earlier on 11 January 1974, China laid claim on Nansha Islands. But South Vietnam claimed them as its own and brought them under the administrative control of Phuoc Thuy province. These islands were believed to be rich in oil and other natural resources. Hence China could not leave these islands into the hands of South Vietnamese administration, which it considered infringement of its territorial integrity and sovereignty by Saigon authorities. But this conflict soon ended and by 31 January 1974 exchange of PoWs between China and South Vietnam had already taken place.\textsuperscript{101}

\textsuperscript{98} The Straits Times (Singapore) as recorded in Asian Recorder, vol. XX, no. 1, 1-7 January 1974, p. 11783; and Chandola, n. 28, p. 391.
\textsuperscript{100} The Indian Express (New Delhi) as recorded in Asian Recorder, vol. XX, no. 12, 19-25 March 1974, p. 11905.
Soon after, there were clamours all over the world that the American herbicides used in the war had destroyed Vietnamese ecology, which could not be healed even within a century. This was brought to notice by none other than the U.S. National Academy of Sciences. They found out that the herbicides had done extensive damage on inland tropical forests and destroyed 36 per cent of the mangrove forests along the South Vietnamese coasts. In fact, they even caused death among children of the Montagnard tribes in the hills of Western South Vietnam.\(^{102}\)

Between 1961 and 1971, the U.S. dropped more than 100 million pounds of herbicides affecting more than 5.7 million acres of land. It brought about destruction of crops, etc. In fact, the use of herbicides had an adverse psychological effect in turning world opinion against the unwarranted U.S. aggrandizement in Vietnam. It was symbolically referred to as “an American assault on the Vietnamese land and people”, and was strongly condemned by the world public opinion.\(^{103}\)

One of the official justifications for massive intervention in Vietnam was that, in addition to bringing self-determination, security and peace in the region, the U.S. would improve the quality of Vietnamese life. Thus Lyndon Johnson in February 1966 pledged to "build a decent society for the people of South Vietnam and to win victory over hunger, disease and despair." President Nixon echoed this theme five years later when he applauded American troops for their "countless acts of generosity and kindness" in promoting social welfare programmes in Vietnam. But two new reports exposed the contrast between the ideal resolves and the cruel reality of U.S. actions in the region.

One of these reports, prepared by Senator Edward Kennedy's Judiciary Subcommittee on Refugees, estimated that more than 3.6 million Vietnamese soldiers and civilians on both sides were killed or wounded and some 10 million Vietnamese were at some point of time made homeless during the eight years after the U.S. escalated the war in 1965. The other report, the product of three years of research by the National Academy of Sciences, concluded, among others,

\(^{102}\) *New York Times* (New York) as recorded in *Asian Recorder*, vol. XX, no. 13, 26 March–1 April 1974, p. 11923.

\(^{103}\) Ibid., p. 11924.
that the damage inflicted by the U.S. on the ecology of Vietnam through the use of defoliants might take at least a century to heal. Considering that the total population of both North and South Vietnams was roughly 30 million, the human cost of the conflict might be one of the highest in history. And considering that Vietnam was essentially an agricultural country, the destruction caused by chemical warfare nearly crippled its economy.

The Kennedy study, conducted by a team that included medical and public hygiene specialists, reported that the superior firepower of the US and Saigon government forces was responsible for most of the civilian casualties, more than half of whom were children. According to conservative official figures, the war had left some 8000 paraplegics, 40,000 blind or deaf and 83,000 amputees. Little was being done to help those victims. Only about one-third of the amputees had been given prosthetic devices and, the team reported, the paraplegics were "wasting away" in a clinic in the coastal town of Vung Tau "with no rehabilitative treatment and scarce hope of receiving any." The ranks of the maimed were bound to swell since, the study noted, there might be as many as 600 million pounds of unexploded bombs, rockets, mines and artillery shells lying in the fields and forests of Vietnam. The war also left nearly 90,000 civilians abandoned in want of facilities to beg or steal for survival. They included many children fathered by American troops, and pathetically isolated among them were the children of black American soldiers.\(^\text{104}\)

Similar was the case with Paracel Islands, like Nansha Islands, which were claimed by China as its own but contested by South Vietnam. These contests and the ultimate victory of China showed that China had become sufficiently confident of its own prestige and influence without any fear of resulting widespread military conflagration.\(^\text{105}\)

However, the Soviet Union did not recognize the Chinese claim of sovereignty over Paracel Islands. It was described by the USSR as "political

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\(^{105}\) *U.N. Newsletter* as recorded in *Asian Recorder*, vol. XX, no. 14, 2-8 April 1974, p. 11927; and John F. Copper, "China’s claim to South China Sea Islands", *China Report*, vol. 10, no. 3, May-June 1974, p. 10.
provocation". The USSR also pointed out that it was difficult to disregard the fact that the stepping up of the Maoist subversive activity in independent Asian countries coincided with Peking's military action in the Paracel Islands. In fact, it was also pointed out that western militarists were seeking an alliance with China with a view to intensify pressure on independent countries of Asia.106

Moreover, South Vietnam had to withdraw its protest against China from the Security Council as China enjoyed the veto power there. Besides, Saigon could not be allowed to speak for South Vietnam in the Council as most of the members never recognized Saigon regime as the real representative of the South Vietnamese people.107

In spite of all these developments at home and abroad, the government of Saigon never lost confidence in President Thieu. On 20 January 1974, the Senate and the Lower House in a joint emergency session decided for Thieu to stand for the third term as President next year, even though it required amendment of the Constitution. Even Thieu did not allow others to follow the Paris Agreement scrupulously as he was sure that the implementation of the Agreement would not give him any opportunity to rule South Vietnam for the third time.108

A lot of economic aid reached for Vietnam's post-war reconstruction programme during the next few months. The Netherlands was the first one to provide economic assistance to Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. This aid was meant for agricultural projects, irrigation, hydro-electricity works, building bridges, etc.109

Australia was another country which also extended economic aid to Vietnam. In addition, Australia expected to formalise an agreement so as to bring about the most-favoured-nation treatment between the two countries. This

106 Asian Recorder, ibid.; Copper, ibid., pp. 12-13; and Wilson, n. 59, p. 43.
107 Asian Recorder, ibid.
agreement would provide for medium and long-term credits to North Vietnam for buying certain Australian commodities.¹¹⁰

Besides, the French government signed an accord with North Vietnam for providing economic aid and credit from private banks guaranteed by government. It was hoped that this would help in the economic development of North Vietnam.¹¹¹

On the other hand, the Algerian government provided moral support to North Vietnam by signing a joint communique on 8 March 1974. It condemned the U.S. government and the fascist Saigon administration for violating many essential provisions of the Paris Agreement on Vietnam. This, according to them, had sabotaged peace and national reconciliation and concord, thus creating a very grave situation in South Vietnam. They firmly demanded that U.S. government and Saigon administration should sincerely respect and implement all the provisions of the Paris Agreement and the 13 June 1973 joint communique.¹¹²

On 22 March 1974 the PRG issued a six-point declaration for achieving peace and national concord in South Vietnam. It included ceasefire, release of prisoners, safeguarding and observance of democratic liberties, formation of the Council of National Concord, general elections and an agreement on armed forces. This initiative was rejected by Saigon.

Meanwhile, talks started between Saigon government and PRG at La Celle St Cloud outside Paris in order to reach a political solution to the country. But on 16 April 1974, Saigon government abruptly suspended the talks for an indefinite period in protest against the communists' systematic sabotage of the Paris Agreement. According to them, the take-over of Tong Le Chan Ranger on 11 April 1974 was the culmination of the sabotage. Air flights between two Vietnams

¹¹¹ *Asian Recorder*, ibid.; and Turley, ibid.
¹¹² *Asian Recorder*, vol. XX, no. 21, 21-27 May 1974, p. 12017.
and news conferences were suspended. However, the two-party JMC was still meeting twice in a week at Saigon.\textsuperscript{113}

In fact, right since the beginning, these La Celle St Cloud talks had been only failures and ineffective as the negotiators had not even been able to manage to draw an agenda for talks. After the siege of Tong Le Chan, the communists had penetrated the North-west parameters of Saigon’s defences and thus directly threatened the capital. The PRG, however, claimed that they had not attacked anything. According to their version, when their troops moved to the base after shelling it, they found no one there and defenders had run away by that time into the government lines. Saigon interpreted this capture as a part of preparation for an offensive against South Vietnam.\textsuperscript{114}

On 5 April 1974, North Vietnamese troops occupied Chi Linh base. Duc Hue base was also heavily shelled. These developments indicated that the PRG was now gradually taking over those government bases, which were surrounded by communist-controlled territory. This left some important provincial cities particularly Tay Ninh and Kontum totally exposed and difficult to defend if there were to be an offensive.\textsuperscript{115}

On 15 April fighting renewed in the Central highlands. Both sides incurred losses. Saigon was thus getting gradually exposed to communist take over anytime in the face of duly planned strong offensive.

Meanwhile, the PRG vehemently objected to the suspension of talks which they held as a premeditated act aimed at sabotaging the settlement of internal political questions. In fact, such a step was interpreted as retaliatory measures against the JMC in order to launch military adventures. They denounced Saigon’s bombardment of Loc Ninh area from 12 to 15 April and operations of encroachment in Quang Ngai province. It accused South Vietnam of destroying homes, schools, hospitals and pagodas and of killing many civilians. It blamed U.S. government for increasing its military aid to Saigon government, derailing

\textsuperscript{113} *Asian Recorder*, ibid., p. 12018. For details of violations of the Paris Agreement during January 1973 and April 1974, see Harish Chandola, n. 38, pp. 759-762.


\textsuperscript{115} *Asian Recorder*, ibid., and Gareth Porter, n. 47, pp. 29-30.
the talks and aggravating the war again. Since the very beginning, it was thus believed that Washington and Hanoi were interested in solving their problems and not those of PRG or Saigon government, which had to find their own formula for peace. Still, these areas such as Quang Ngai, Kien Hoa, Dinh Tuong, Binh Dinh even though partially under the control of government troops, they remained pro-NLF in sentiment. Accordingly, the PRG expressed its resolve to respond to any military adventure by the U.S. or South Vietnam to defend its zone of control and to protect the Paris Agreement.

Meanwhile, South Vietnam became quite aware of threat to Spratly Islands. In order not to lose them to China like Paracel Islands, it increased its military strength in the Islands. The Islands were reach in oil. Hence South Vietnam wanted to defend them from Chinese aggression.

Due to these bitter reciprocal wranglings, U.S. government stopped economic aid for reconstruction of North Vietnam. Its demand was that North Vietnam and PRG must strive to account for the rest of American servicemen still listed as missing in the former war theatre. It demanded information on missing soldiers and return of dead bodies. Moreover, the U.S. government denied that they had made any commitment to North Vietnam with regard to aid for post-war reconstruction. On the other hand, the US took a decision to militarily support the friendly regimes in that region so as to defend them from communist attacks. For 1975, the U.S. had doubled the budget for military aid to Indo-Chinese regimes.

The U.S. stand was that even without direct U.S. intervention, these military aids could help maintain regional stability in crucial areas of the world. In fact, they realized that in the aftermath of U.S. disengagement the region would face different kinds of problems. Hence, security assistance from them would

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play an important role in the region. This was a new theory propounded by the U.S. Defence Secretary, James Schlesinger on 5 June 1974.\textsuperscript{119}

Meanwhile, complete withdrawal of U.S. troops from Laos on 3 June had its impact on Vietnam also. Soon after, North Vietnam demanded U.S. troops withdrawal from Thailand also. This was interpreted in U.S. circles as a sign of communist intention of launching large-scale military attacks in Indo-China as soon as they were free from the possibility of American air intervention.\textsuperscript{120}

Despite this, the U.S. announced that it wanted to gradually reduce its forces in this region. On 22 June all air operations at two of its six remaining air bases in Thailand were ended. Besides, a complete withdrawal of U.S. troops from Takhil base was planned before 1 October 1974. It was decided that instead of completely withdrawing troops from Thailand, 27,000 servicemen would be allowed to stay as against 45,000 and 300 to 400 aircrafts would be retained as against 700 available at that time in all bases of Thailand.\textsuperscript{121}

During this period President Nixon went on record to say: "in cases of non-nuclear aggression, we shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested in accordance with our treaty requirements. But we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defence".\textsuperscript{122} Thus America would not, in Nixon's words, "conceive all the plans, design all the programmes, execute all the decisions and undertake all the defence of the free nations of the world".

In June 1974, in his address to the US Naval Academy at Annapolis, and at the height of Congressional efforts to block the proposed Soviet-American trade treaty with its most-favoured - nation status, the U.S. President put the Cold War to rest, at least in the form that it had originally been conceived. He observed:

Eloquent appeals are now being made for the United States, through its foreign policy, to transform the internal, as well as the international behaviour of other countries, especially the Soviet Union..... It affects not only our relation with the Soviet Union but also our posture toward many

\textsuperscript{119} Asian Recorder, ibid.; Copper, n. 105, p. 12; and Chandola, n. 28, p. 391.
\textsuperscript{120} The Times (London) as mentioned in Asian Recorder, ibid.
\textsuperscript{121} New York Times (New York) as recorded in Asian Recorder, ibid.

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nations whose internal systems we totally disagree with, as they do with ours. Our foreign policy must reflect our ideals and purposes. We can never acquiesce in the suppression of human liberties. We must do all that we reasonably can to promote justice.

Having said that, the quintessential Cold War warrior cautioned that there were limits to what the nation could expect its foreign policy to achieve and that the time of asking hard questions was at hand. In a real sense, to raise the questions was to answer them:

What is our capability to change the domestic structure of other nations? Would a slowdown or reversal of detente help or hurt the positive evolution of other social system? What price-in terms of renewed conflict - are we willing to pay to bring pressure to bear for human causes?123

Holding that the primary responsibility of America must be what Paul Nitze referred to as the maintenance of an 'essential equivalence', the President concluded that "we would not welcome the intervention of other countries in our domestic affairs, and we cannot expect them to be cooperative when we seek to intervene directly in theirs." Thus, officially, it marked the end of the spirit of one age and the beginning of a new one.124

Having thus reviewed the lessons of Vietnam up to 1974, it is interesting to compare them with various kinds of lessons drawn from the same American experience in Vietnam, but this time in the context of President Thieu's collapse in April 1975. Against the background of his ill-fated efforts to extract eleventh-hour appropriations from the Congress for South Vietnam, Cambodia having already been 'liberated' by the Khmer Rouge, President Ford, conceding the apparent arguments of his critics that the nation's commitments seemed overextended, held that the real world was quite different from the theoretical world. "We cannot," exhorted the erstwhile Congressman from Grand Rapids, Michigan, "in the meantime abandon our friends while our adversaries support and encourage theirs. We cannot dismantle our defenses, our diplomacy or our intelligence capability while others increase and strengthen theirs". A short time

123 President Nixon's Address to Graduates at the US Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, 5 June 1974. This and subsequent data of a related nature are courtesy of the United States Information Service.
afterwards and with the battle plainly lost, the President dramatically changed his stance. At Tulane University in New Orleans a week later, Ford told a largely friendly audience, “I ask tonight that we stop re-fighting the battles and recriminations of the past”. Simultaneously and to emphasize the point, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was elsewhere repeating the same message.

Strangely, the U.S. withdrawal coincided with the sinking of a North Vietnamese landing craft loaded with arms by South Vietnamese forces. In fact, this was reported to be the first ship sunk off the Vietnamese coast since the ceasefire agreement seventeen months ago. The place of sinking was slightly off the former demilitarized zone.125

By 2 July both the PRG and Hanoi representatives suspended their military talks in Saigon as South Vietnam refused to guarantee diplomatic privileges for the delegations in the negotiations. Sinking of the North Vietnamese ship and arrogant attitudes of the U.S. and Saigon representatives were humiliating to them. Besides, the political talks at La Celle St Cloud had already been suspended long back. Moreover, the military talks had already lost their relevance after the final round of PoWs exchange in the beginning of 1974. Secondly, North Vietnam accused the US of intensifying the war and sabotaging the ceasefire agreement. It alleged that both the US and Thieu administrations were refusing to negotiate seriously and were “feverishly stepping up war and sabotaging negotiations in an attempt to impose U.S. neo-colonialism on South Vietnam and to perpetuate partition of Vietnam”.126

Even eighteen months after the signing of the Paris Agreement, peace was not in sight and the third equal segment of administration in South Vietnam which was envisioned by the Agreement as bridge between the communists and President Thieu’s government remained with a forlorn hope in the minds of the intellectuals in Saigon and Paris as a non-reality.

The Third Force in South Vietnam as an adherent to peace, was still-born even though it had been conceived in the mind of U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. An article by diplomatic writer Tad Szulc revealed that Kissinger

125 Asian Recorder, n. 118, p. 12085.
stunned the Soviets at a meeting in Moscow in May with his proposal for a tripartite national commission in South Vietnam. That proposal led to the first real breakthrough in the stalled peace negotiations and eventually to the Paris Agreements of January 1973. The Election Commission was referred to in the Agreements as the National Council of Reconciliation and Concord. Apart from its composition of "three equal segments," no guidelines were mentioned for the establishment of the Council, which was to be set up through mutual consultation between the two South Vietnamese parties. It was now clear that this was one of the many major weaknesses in the Agreement. The Council was supposed to "organise free and democratic general elections", as well as "to exercise the vaguely-defined, quasi-governmental function of achievement of national reconciliation and concord and insurance of democratic liberties". 127

Immediately after the ceasefire (also still-born), there was a great deal of speculation in Saigon and elsewhere about the Council and the role of what was known as the Third Force. The Council would have 36 members, twelve in each segment. (The idea was even floated that Bao Dai, the deposed former emperor of Vietnam, would be brought back as a figure-head chief of state, but this turned out to be baseless gossip). However, the two sides had never seriously discussed the size of the Council, much less who their choices would be for the Third Force.

At that time, the Third Force existed only as an aspiration among a hard core group of 200-300 people, mostly in Saigon and also including a handful of Vietnamese exiles in Paris.

In the opinion of expert analysts and even in the view of its own members, the Third Force simply had not gathered any strength as a political movement. This was despite the undeniable fact that the majority of South Vietnamese people had no liking for either the communists or President Thieu's government and thus, would presumably be open to a middle alternative.

There were several reasons for the failure to develop the Third Force. First, no strong leader was visible; secondly, members of the Third Force were sharply divided and often squabbled bitterly; and thirdly, it was a fact of political

life in South Vietnam that as long as there was a formidable North Vietnamese military threat barely 25 miles from Saigon, most of the non-communist opposition was unwilling to rock the boat by criticising the Thieu Government or lending itself to the Third Force.\textsuperscript{128}

During this period in Cambodia, the US could not achieve its objective of ending war through negotiations. Prince Sihanouk wanted the end of U.S. involvement and end of U.S. military help to Lon Nol regime. He did not agree to simultaneous withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops from Cambodia, which the US demanded to bring an end to hostilities in the country. So war continued.\textsuperscript{129}

However, by this time a few other problems had already started troubling the US. Firstly the West Asia problem had reached to serious proportions by then. Hence, U.S. disengagement and Israeli withdrawal were contemplated as positive steps towards bringing peace in West Asia. Here also President Nixon wanted to introduce Israelization of the war on the same lines as that of Vietnamization policy.\textsuperscript{130}

Similarly during this period, the US sought a rapprochement with the USSR. Both pledged on the limitation of the strategic arms; strengthening of world peace; expansion of international cooperation; ban on nuclear weapon's use; and disarmament of dangerous lethal weapons. They also agreed on bringing about peace in the West Asia through peace settlement.\textsuperscript{131}

**Ford Era – the Gradual Submission**

In the background of such a conciliatory U.S. policy towards the Asiatic region, President Richard Nixon resigned from Presidentship due to Watergate crisis. His deputy Gerald Ford took over as the US President on 9 August 1974. With this change in the leadership, the entire spectrum of U.S. involvement in Asiatic region recorded a major change. The first to take advantage of such a

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{129} Nivolon, n. 114, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{130} For details of American policy of that time, see David K. Shipler, “No Room for Peace: Possible Futures for Indo-China”, *World Review*, vol. 17, no. 4, April 1974, pp. 25-29.
change was Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia. He utilized the opportunity and met President Ford on 24 August. He requested him to stop all military aid to Marshal Lon Nol in order to bring peace in Cambodia. His contention was that as President Kennedy and President Johnson had started the Vietnam war and Nixon ended it; similarly the Cambodian war was started by Nixon and Ford could end it as he was free from old obligations. At this stage President Ford's 30 August speech before students in Ohio praising China made quite a history.132

By 2 September there was already a marked change in North Vietnamese attitude towards peace in the region. Hanoi reiterated its resolve to faithfully abide by the Paris Agreement, even though the US and Saigon regime still violated it blatantly and were busy in Vietnamizing the war in South Vietnam. Moreover, North Vietnam was slightly pleased in the sense that genocide had not been able to affect North Vietnamese population growth rate, which recorded 2.9 per cent increase in spite of devastation by the US. This was another encouraging reason to look for peace rather than war in the region.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 6 September 1974 opposed any U.S. involvement in Indo-China. It imposed drastic cuts in military aid to Cambodia, Laos and South Vietnam, though total stoppage of aid was not possible.133

On 8 October 1974 the PRG issued a statement which was circulated by Embassy of DRVN in New Delhi. This statement graphically explained the reasons behind collapse of peace agreement, accusing the U.S. and Thieu regime of going back on all of their commitments and sabotaging 13 June 1973 communique.134

By the end of October, the internal political situation in South Vietnam had become very volatile. President Thieu, by then, was facing the most serious political dissent at home within the last three years.

People were protesting against his one-man candidacy for re-election and mounting corruption. They were demanding his resignation. Besides, there was a massive Buddhist protest against Thieu demanding him to either bring peace or resign. On top of that, there were many violent marches in the streets since 1971. Gradually by the end of 1974, these marches became very violent and uncontrollable, demanding overthrow of Thieu. But Buddhists were also quite afraid of the communist take over of South Vietnam. So they were slightly cautious in demanding the sudden overthrow of Thieu.135

There was also a Catholic anti-corruption movement in South Vietnam. This movement raised the consciousness of the people and became a prelude to mass anti-government protests and violence. Thus there were a number of protests against Thieu regime in Saigon in this period.136

All these factors led to a conspicuous change in the US policy towards Vietnam. Gradually the conflicts in the battlefield also dwindled day by day. However, this was not to suggest that the U.S. either lost its interest in South Vietnam or there were no incidents of fighting at all. By November 1974, oil was explored in the South Vietnamese coast and U.S. interest in the country grew more and more. During that time, a South Vietnamese plane was hijacked to North Vietnam. Both the U.S. and Saigon governments condemned the incident. This incident helped in the normalisation of relationship between the U.S. and South Vietnam.137

By January 1975, the conflict again escalated to an enormous proportion. The PRG forces overran and captured Phuoc Binh, the capital of Phuoc Long province, after a full week-long siege. Even though the town was not well-


populated and strategically not very important, its capture was a significant psychological blow to the government of Saigon. The PRG openly propounded that the objective of its enhanced military action was to “force” the U.S. and Saigon governments to implement the Paris Agreement.138

The last time they had captured a provincial capital was during their 1972 Easter Offensive. But Quang Tri city which fell on 1 May 1972 was reduced to ashes by U.S. and South Vietnamese bombardments. However, South Vietnam recaptured it four and a half months later. But in case of Phuoc Binh, there seemed little hope for Thieu to retake it because it laid in the midst of communist—controlled territory, 75 miles north of Saigon. Besides, Saigon armed forces had no strategic reserve. Hence an attempt at retake of Phuoc Binh would have automatically weakened other defended areas in South Vietnam.139

Moment after, another important government outpost was overrun by PRG forces in Tay Ninh province, 65 miles north-west of the capital. Thus the capture of this outpost along with Phuoc Long province gave the PRG a solid control over vast areas in the three provinces that formed an arc from Tay Ninh, north-west of Saigon. Gradually almost half or more of the areas of the provinces of Tay Ninh and Binh Long came under the North Vietnamese control. By then eleven of the South Vietnam’s 242 district towns had already fallen into the hands of PRG troops.140

The U.S. government showed much concern with regard to these developments in South Vietnam. But President Ford showed his inability to break the peace provisions of August 1973 which barred the U.S. from any direct military intervention in the war. Secondly, without the consent of the Congress, the government had no desire to directly intervene in this war any more. However, a naval carrier group was sent by the U.S. for waters off South Vietnam coast. And sending such naval carriers did not amount to any direct involvement

138 Chandola, n. 38, p. 760.
as the U.S. by then had already been sending these carriers periodically to the
area since the signing of the ceasefire two years ago. These carriers were not
going to even nearer the South Vietnamese waters, according to a U.S.
spokesman.\footnote{Rai, n. 134, p. 2014.}

Along with that, the U.S. protested on 13 January 1975 to North Vietnam
that it was a gross violation of the Paris Agreement in resuming warfare. The
protest was referred to all the other nine guarantors of the Paris Peace
Agreement, under which U.S. troops were withdrawn from Southeast Asia. The
U.S. further protested that North Vietnam had already infiltrated more than
160,000 troops and 400 armoured vehicles to South Vietnam since 27 January
1973. It held that Vietnam had expanded armament stockpiles and improved its
military logistics system in Laos, Cambodia and the DMZ. Besides, it criticized
North Vietnam for not honouring the commitment to cooperate in determining the
status of American and other personnel missing in action as it had broken off
from the four-party joint military team and suspended discussions for the last
seven months.\footnote{“Vietnam And Here Too”, The Economist, vol. 254, no. 6864, 15 March 1975, p. 57; and Parker, n. 32,
p. 368.}

On 14 January 1975 the US contended that it was free to violate the
ceasefire agreement as North Vietnam had also violated it. It argued that
international law permitted one party to breach an accord if the other side had
already done so. Hence the U.S. resumed reconnaissance flights over North
Vietnam in open violation of the accord. The Defence Secretary acknowledged
the flights saying that the blatant failure of North Vietnam to live upto its
commitment had created circumstances different from those at the time of
signing of the Paris Peace Treaty.\footnote{Chandola, n. 38, p. 760; and Rai, n. 134, p. 2014.}

Meanwhile, on the other side, North Vietnam was preparing itself for a
long battle. Simultaneously, it engaged itself enthusiastically in production
activities, thriftily building up socialism as well. They expected that in the year
1975 their revolution would steadily move forward towards freedom and
independence. This was because for the last two years, their successes and achievements in their anti-U.S. resistance had been quite commendable.\textsuperscript{144}

By the end of January, Le Duc Tho charged U.S. government for supplying additional military aid to Saigon, thereby contributing to the war. In fact, it was Tho who had rejected Nobel peace prize of 1973 on the ground that war in South Vietnam had not stopped and U.S. involvement still continued. Needless to say, Tho's allegations had no effect on US policy-makers.\textsuperscript{145}

The war intimidation had no impact on North Vietnam as well. They strongly demanded removal of Thieu from Saigon administration as he had completely violated the Paris Agreement. Secondly, the situation by then was getting quite unfavourable to U.S. and Saigon administration as they had run into much difficulties in many aspects, both internally and internationally such as military set backs and problems of unemployment and inflation at home.\textsuperscript{146}

North Vietnam was quite sure by then that if the US was to resume war again, it would suffer heavy set backs.

President Thieu, on the other hand, was quite adamant and did not want to give up so soon. He asked for more military help from the US in order to resist communist aggression and take over South Vietnam. He sincerely hoped that the US would not abandon its ally in the time of war. He favoured free democratic elections in South Vietnam in accordance with the Paris Agreement provisions. But communists were opposed to elections. In fact, when talks started in La Celle St Cloud for setting up the NCNRC to arrange elections, they were abandoned by the parties in April 1974 itself.\textsuperscript{147}

In the US, in spite of serious objections from the Congress, President Ford demanded military aid for South Vietnam as North Vietnam had already built up an array of 289,000 men, hundreds of tanks, artillery pieces and anti-aircraft

\textsuperscript{144} Asian Recorder vol. XXI, no. 9, 26 February – 4 March 1975, p. 12462.
guns in South Vietnam against Saigon which was running short of fuel, spare parts, medical supplies, etc. President Ford observed that as North Vietnam was trying to force a solution in South Vietnam through the battle-field, sufficient aid should be provided to Saigon to deter the North from escalating military pressure. Besides, it would compel the North to come down to the negotiating table for a solution in South Vietnam.148

However, the U.S. Congress refused this on 4 February 1975. Meanwhile, Thieu closed down five U.S. sponsored newspapers in Saigon and arrested fifteen journalists contending that “U.S. must stop being an unquestioning sugar daddy to South Vietnam”. On the other hand, the Congress was of the opinion that Saigon government was going to fall. Hence the famous McCarthyism reiterated that Democrats were going to be held responsible if the communists took over South Vietnam.149

The main reason why the U.S. Congress objected to military aid to Saigon was that it would deepen American involvement in Vietnam and prolong the war. This policy would also reverse a slow trend of disengagement in the region. Hence it was decided to push the two governments to negotiations to end the war and build solutions on the model of Laos, where a coalition government would hold power. In fact, there might not be any basis to hold negotiations in Cambodia. But in South Vietnam, the Paris Agreement was available at the main framework for political talks.150

Thieu government had always been reluctant to comply with the political clauses of the Agreement. North Vietnam also had been quite vague regarding what it meant by its “implementation”. In fact, of late, they had been demanding removal of Thieu as a condition for negotiations. Similarly for Thieu, there was no assurance that if any political “solution” would be reached, it would be

149 Asian Recorder, ibid.
favourable to him. Negotiations would also inevitably entail renewed U.S. involvement.\textsuperscript{151}

In spite of varied reactions of North and South Vietnams, the U.S. had developed many compelling circumstances which had a bearing on its relationship with South Vietnam. It had developed fragile relationships with the USSR and China. The West Asia crisis had been badly mismanaged. Sagging world economy invited constant attention of the U.S. and other nations as well. Hence, Henry Kissinger described his own involvement in Vietnam as a squandering of energy and resources when other problems needed tending.\textsuperscript{152}

At this juncture a peculiar diplomatic relationship developed between China and Vietnam which gradually drew the USSR and Vietnam closer to each other against the U.S. and China, thus making U.S. disengagement in Vietnam easier.

The most significant development in postwar Southeast Asian politics had been the break-up of the alliance of Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian and Lao communists against U.S. intervention and the emergence of a serious conflict in which China and Vietnam were the principal actors. The Sino-Vietnamese conflict, which reflected divergent geopolitical perspectives and historical animosity between the two peoples, was intertwined with the Sino-Soviet global conflict from which it sprang. Thus, the Sino-Vietnamese conflict had begun to take a life of its own. And the fighting between Vietnam and Kampuchea, in which China was deeply involved, had been the single most important factor in raising Sino-Vietnamese tensions to the crisis point.

There were serious policy differences between China and Vietnam from the beginning of the Vietnam War. But the present conflict was directly related to China's decision in 1971 to improve relations with the United States. This fundamental shift in China's view of "the enemy" also implied a change in its view of Hanoi's close relations with Moscow. By 1975, China was trying to persuade Hanoi not to launch an offensive that would upset the power balance in South

\textsuperscript{151} *Asian Recorder*, ibid.; and Chandola, n. 38, pp. 760-761; and Falk, n. 41, pp. 38-41; and Zarkovic, n. 52, p. 26; and Do Ngoc An, n. 136, p. 27.

\textsuperscript{152} *Asian Recorder*, ibid. For details of reason behind détente between US, USSR and China and how détente was a betrayal of Vietnam revolution, see Rai, n. 134, pp. 2014-15.
Vietnam. The Chinese had hoped to see Vietnam remain divided for some years, believing that division would delay the development of a strong Vietnamese role in Cambodia and Laos.

After the war, Vietnam still saw the U.S. as the primary threat to security and cooperation among Southeast Asian states, while China argued privately and indicated publicly that the U.S. military power in the Pacific was necessary to prevent the Soviet Union from moving into the region to fill a power vacuum. As China normalised relations with Thailand and the Philippines in 1975, it warned both of them not to be hasty in requesting the withdrawal of U.S. military bases. At the same time, China sought to build a coalition of states including the U.S., Thailand, Kampuchea and China as a counterweight to Vietnamese influence on the Southeast Asian mainland.

When Vietnamese Communist Party Secretary Le Duan visited Peking in October 1975, the Chinese demanded North Vietnam’s agreement to the “anti-hegemony” clause which the Philippines and Thailand had already accepted in joint communiqués on the normalisation of relations. Le Duan refused, and the visit ended prematurely on a note of extraordinary tension, with neither the usual Vietnamese return banquet nor a joint communiqué. Le Duan went on to Moscow, where he negotiated a major new economic aid agreement on which the Chinese had been noncommittal.

Chinese leaders then took two steps that indicated their extreme irritation with the Vietnamese. First, they informed the Vietnamese that they would not provide any further grant assistance, despite a pledge by China’s Premier Chou En-lai in June 1973 to continue the grant programme for five more years. Second, they warned that they would not permit the Vietnamese to occupy any part of the Spratly Islands, which had been claimed by both China and Vietnam.

155 The anti-hegemony clause, obviously directed at the Soviet Union, was first used in the United States-China Shanghai Communiqué of 1972 in which both countries pledged that neither would seek hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region, and that both would oppose efforts by any other country to do so.
157 Note from the government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam to the government of the People’s Republic of China, 18 May 1978.
and which the North Vietnamese revolutionary forces had taken over from the South Vietnamese government in their final offensive.\footnote{158}{Shih-Ti-tsu, "The South Sea Islands Have been China's Territory since Ancient Times," \textit{Kwangming Daily}, reprinted in \textit{New China News Agency}, 26 November 1975.}

Peking apparently calculated that firmness towards North Vietnam would help reverse what it regarded as Vietnam's pro-Soviet tilt. Instead, the Vietnamese turned more decisively towards Moscow for support. In 1976, a Vietnamese party spokesman told a Swedish journalist that Vietnam was clearly leaning toward Moscow for the first time in reaction to Chinese pressure.\footnote{159}{"Vietnam : Editor Outlines Relationship with PRC, USSR", \textit{Defense and Foreign Affairs Daily}, 13 July 1976, p.2.}

On the other hand, the cornerstone of U.S. policy in post-agreement period had been to turn over decision-making and diplomatic initiatives gradually to the South Vietnamese only. Saigon government was gradually allowed to move along its own way. This policy only was acceptable to Ford administration. Hence aid gradually declined and U.S. did not intervene either politically or militarily in South Vietnamese affairs.\footnote{160}{For details of reasons behind American withdrawal, see Earl C. Ravenal, "The End game in Vietnam", \textit{Insight}, vol. 5, no. 9, September 1975, pp. 35-38, 40, 42, 44, 46-48.}

The political interests of the U.S. in the region had fluctuated with the security interests. The atmosphere in Washington after the Geneva settlement of July 1954 ending the First Indochinese War was quite different from that in the post-Watergate, post-Vietnam period. The Eisenhower administration and the Senate had welcomed India, Ceylon, Burma and Indonesia as signatories of the Manila Pact in 1954, thus further extending American commitments in Southern Asia. In marked contrast, the Ford administration in 1975 was not even able to get the Congressional approval for further military aid in arms and supplies to Cambodia and South Vietnam. The political interests of the U.S. still called for a friendly Southeast Asia, but how to get the Congressional and public support for such a policy was the problem.

America's over-all economic interests in the region were growing though they had never been a determining factor in U.S. policy. Washington had found certain valuable products like tin, natural rubber and petroleum. In fact, the
possibilities for the discovery of important petroleum reserves in the offshore waters of Southeast Asia were good. Trade was expanding with the region, but it had never been a major market for U.S. products. Investments were noticeably growing with American corporations and banks were very active in the area.

In terms of US interests, the value of Southeast Asia had fluctuated from a high in much of the 1950s and 1960s to a low in the mid 1970s. Although the defence of Southeast Asia was not vital to the security of the U.S. and its political and economic interests in the area were limited, the region did have a total population of over 250 million people located in one of the most strategic areas in the world. Washington as well as two of its major allies in the Western Pacific, Japan and Canada, would have been adversely affected if Southeast Asia fell under the control of a hostile or potentially hostile major power or combination of powers.

America's role in the region had shifted with its interests and capabilities. No longer was the U.S. the great military power it once was in Southeast Asia. Yet Washington still had a very significant military capability on sea through the Seventh Fleet and in the air. Nevertheless, the influence that the U.S. could exert politically and diplomatically had definitely declined in various capitals of the area. Moreover, the reduction in the margin of influence was across the board. In economic field, for instance, the American role in direct aid was much less, and relations between the U.S. and even a key country like Indonesia had seriously suffered.

The official instruments of American policy continued to be diplomatic missions, which reduced in number and the remaining programmes of military and economic aid. The latter assistance was still provided on a bilateral basis and through multilateral institutions. Military base facilities influencing policy continued in the Philippines and for a while at least in Thailand, but the exact contours of the future were uncertain in both the cases. Semi-official instruments of American policy were still various cultural programmes and the Peace Corps in a number of countries, while American business corporations and private foundations as well as educators, journalists and others could advance the
national interest. It was clear that the official presence of the U.S. in Southeast Asia had drastically declined.

Regarding the perception of the Southeast Asians of America, no definitive answer could be given. Before the Indo-China debacle, the nuances of the perceptions varied from one individual to another and from one country to another. Widespread questioning certainly existed after Indo-China. From the perspective of time, however, there emerged a sharp contrast between the military zenith of the U.S. at the time of the defeat of Japan and the utter military collapse in the hands of Hanoi of the American position in Vietnam. Furthermore, the role of the U.S. in the long run would be evaluated in terms of the overall American activities and efforts in Southeast Asia. However, in future, an American role in economic activities without military involvement in this region would be widely wanted.

Multipolarity had not been basically affected by the fall of Indo-China. Former Secretary of Defence James R. Schlesigner publicly asserted that when the world military balance was considered, the effect of the American retreat from Indo-China was relatively limited. At the same time, the U.S. had to cope with a credibility problem not only in East Asia but also in other parts of the world. Repeated assurances from the White House and Department of State that America would honour its treaty commitments were not taken at face value in a political situation where the Congress had conclusively shown that it had veto power.

**Conclusion**

The main development in the final stage of US involvement in Indo-China was not a collapse of bipartisanship but a major controversy between the executive and legislative branches of government. In broader terms Washington lost self-confidence in its role in the world. In the aftermath of the Indo-China debacle with the Mayaguez finale, both sides in Washington became more conciliatory, public opinion did not apparently swing to isolationism and some U.S. Allies began rather soon to regain confidence. North Korea decided that it was prudent not to test Washington. American tactics of warning potential foes not to
take advantage of the Indo-China debacle and of telling allies that they must view their ties with the U.S. as mutually beneficial, at least in the short run, really worked.

A role for Washington in multipolarity in Southeast Asia would continue. The U.S. in its own national interest could not leave the area. Specifically America would play a moderate role in the defence, development and diplomacy of the region. The Indo-China experience would condition at least for the foreseeable future, the interpretation of 'moderate'. But the basic American objective would remain that no major power or combination of powers hostile or potentially hostile to U.S. interests dominate Southeast Asia. Here alliance with Tokyo, détente with Moscow and rapprochement with China would still enter into the question.