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United States foreign policy objectives in Asia became the focus of a crisis in 1953-1954. During this period the adminstration of Dwight D. Eisenhower became increasingly involved in the conduct of the war in Indochina. Supporting the French, the Eisenhower adminstration sought to defeat the communist-inspired Viet Minh, and thereby prevent the expansion of Soviet-led communism into yet another part of Asia. Several problems developed in the pursuit of this goal. The French, on whom the adminstration relied to defend Indochina showed an increasing reluctance to continue the war, and indeed pressed for negotiations to settle the conflict. The United States, lacking leverage upon the French, was as a result forced to accept the negotiations at Geneva, in May 1954. The subsequent defeat of French

armed forces at Dien Bien Phu, shortly after the beginning of the negotiations, essentially sealed the fate of the French in Indochina. Unwilling themselves to intervene militarily, the Eisenhower administration thus found itself in a difficult situation. United States foreign policy was adamantly opposed to communist expansion, but it appeared that the likely result of the Geneva Conference would be the establishment of a communist state. The Americans thus refused to associate themselves with the settlement at Geneva, and subsequently paved the way for future American intervention.

ORIGINS OF INTERVENTION:
UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY AND INDOCHINA, 1952-1954

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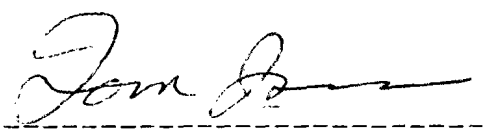

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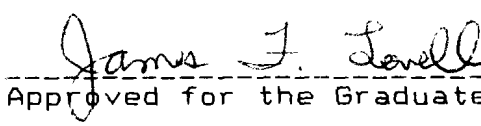

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

The American involvement in the Indochina problems of 1953-1954 came about as the result of a series of conflicting policy goals. The ambiguity of American policy was notable not during this critical period alone. Rather, since the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration, American officials had often displayed uncertainty regarding their intentions. Policy under President Harry S. Truman shifted to an anti-communist slant as part of the overall American policy. However, the earlier Roosevelt concern about colonialism remained a strong part of American policy. Thus the Truman administration could not clearly define its goals regarding Indochina. This problem continued into the Dwight D. Eisenhower administration and proved to be a crippling problem in the American efforts to resolve the Indochina conflict.

The administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt faced a particularly difficult dilemma with the Indochina problem as it then related to World War II. In July, 1941, prior to the United States's entrance into the war, Roosevelt sent a stern warning to the Vichy government of

France. Regarding the anticipated treaty between Vichy and Japan, this message warned the French that depending upon the outcome of the war in the Pacific, either the Japanese or the United States would seize Indochina. Much of this message was based on Roosevelt's personal feeling regarding French rule in Indochina. Roosevelt was resolved to end colonialism in general, and he particularly disliked the French administration of Indochina, in his view a classic example of colonial misrule. Roosevelt was thus determined that France should never have its colonies returned after the war. (1)

Despite this apparent anti-colonial tendency, by 1945 Roosevelt had considerably shifted his stance to a wait-and-see-after-the-war attitude. Roosevelt still retained his distaste for colonialism, but his views had been tempered by the needs of war. In order to placate the French as an ally, the Americans had assured the French that their pre-war possessions would indeed be returned after the war. The result for the Americans was the beginning of an uncertain policy. The Americans both supported national self-determination, with independence for colonial possessions, and also supported the return of these colonies to their pre-war masters. (2)

The death of Roosevelt did not clear up these matters. Harry S. Truman, the new President, did promptly assure the French that the Americans had never questioned "even by implication, French sovereignty over

Indo-China." (3) But the Americans still also maintained a concern about the need to end colonialism. However, the degree of importance of this issue had declined, the result of a shift in the American perception of the world situation.

The Truman administration had become particularly concerned about the threat of communist expansion by the Soviet Union in the post-war period, especially in Europe. The prospects of Soviet military might overrunning all of Europe had led the Americans into a confrontation with the Soviets. The policy pursued by the Truman administration, labeled "containment," required the development of sufficient military force to offset that of the Soviet Union. As the area of this confrontation was in Europe, it was extremely difficult for the Americans alone to face the Soviet menace. Thus the Americans placed a greater emphasis upon the role of the western European nations to maintain their own military forces. France was an essential ally in this scheme. As a result, the Americans were reluctant to agitate the French on Asian matters, lest European policy suffer.(4)

That the French by 1946 were involved in combat against the communist-inspired Viet Minh also had little immediate impact upon American policy toward Indochina. Up to 1950, the Americans maintained a basically neutral policy toward the conflict. The Americans encouraged the French to provide greater independence to the Indochinese

but did not actively press for such reforms. Indeed, the Americans slowly showed signs of supporting French programs, and especially were favorable to the idea of installing the Emperor Bao Dai as Vietnam's chief of state. (5)

The major turning point in American policy in Indochina came in 1949. The communist takeover of China, bordering Indochina on the north, caused a re-evaluation of American policy towards Asia which had a direct effect on American policy for Indochina. In 1950 the Truman administration both recognized the Bao Dai regime and also began operations to supply the French war against the Viet Minh. The importance of these decisions was great: the United States became committed to a containment policy in Asia, much like that in Europe. Through the French, the Americans sought to defeat communist threats and to establish a viable democratic society in Indochina. The Americans, therefore, became more deeply embroiled in events in Indochina, though they were unable, and possibly unwilling, to influence those events. (6)

Truman had approved those actions that brought greater American involvement in Indochina, but little of substance developed in the war as a result. Though the Americans were increasingly supporting the war financially and materially, the influence of the Americans had not itself increased. American aid had

simply led to a stalemate in the situation; neither the French nor the Viet Minh held a superior position, but the Viet Minh held the initiative in action. The global situation seemed similar: neither the United States nor the Soviet Union was militarily superior, but the Americans seemed able only to respond to Soviet initiatives.

It was this policy of containment, then, that became the focus of American discontent, and became an issue in the Presidential election of 1952. The Republican candidate, Dwight D. Eisenhower, asserted that the containment policy endangered the security of the United States: "America's great insecurity . . . [was] the result of 'tragic blunders' that Roosevelt and Truman had committed at the Teheran, Yalta, and Potsdam conferences with the Russians." (7) He further asserted that these conferences had become the basis of postwar expansion by the Soviet Union. And, Eisenhower's campaign stated, containment was a negative policy, able only to respond to Soviet initiatives, and thereby robbing the United States of taking complete global leadership. But possibly worse was that the containment policy sought only to maintain the status quo, a defensive policy that might well result in bankrupting the country. (8)

In contrast to containment, the Eisenhower campaign, specifically John Foster Dulles--destined to be

Eisenhower's Secretary of State--sought to implement a new, aggressive policy. Dulles called for the formulation of a policy that would eliminate entirely the Soviet menace, and would accomplish this goal at less cost. As the Eisenhower campaign presented it, the Soviet goal was to destroy the United States by forcing it to spend ever greater amounts for defense; it was thus necessary to reduce foreign aid and military spending. These promises presented the American people with a perfect solution to their domestic and foreign policy problems. Now security was possible, and at a reduced price. (9)

Though these promises brought victory at the polls, bringing Eisenhower into office, they were to prove more difficult to implement. The Eisenhower administration did indeed pursue those actions it had promised. It gave immediate attention to the Korean War. By ending that conflict the administration could reduce the size of the standing army, and achieve an immediate savings in the defense budget. In the place of a large standing army, the administration relied on strategic air power--"Massive Retaliation"--as the deterrent to Soviet aggression. This concept envisioned the use of nuclear weapons by the United States directly against the Soviets in response to any communist-inspired activity. Thus, regardless of the size and type of provocation, the

Americans were committed to nuclear retaliation against the Soviet Union. (10)

In regard to the situation in Indochina, this stance would prove a major mistake. By placing an emphasis in air power, the Americans had limited their ability to respond to the unique problems posed by the war in Indochina. Unable, and as will be seen, unwilling, to intervene militarily in the conflict, the Americans would be forced into a situation not of their choosing. Indochina would show immediately their lack of resolve to carry out the threats implied by "Massive Retaliation."

NOTES
CHAPTER ONE

1. Weldon A. Brown, Prelude to Disaster (Port Washington, N.Y., 1975), pp. 29-30.

2. Pentagon Papers, Gravel Edition, v. I, Mike Gravel, editor (Boston, 1971), p. 1.

3. Ibid, p. 2.

4. George McT. Kahin, Intervention (New York, 1986), pp. 4-6.

5. Pentagon Papers, Gravel Edition, v. I, p. 2.

6. Ibid, p.41

7. John W. Spanier, American Foreign Policy Since World War II, (New York, 1971), p. 108-09

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid, pp 109-10.

10. Ibid, pp 111-112.

CHAPTER TWO:

A FAILING POLICY

In early 1953 the situation in Indochina became of greater concern to the United States. The Eisenhower administration viewed the area as a major test of western resolve to halt communism. Should the Viet Minh defeat the French, the Eisenhower administration believed, it would lead to greater communist gains throughout Southeast Asia, and possibly tip the global balance in favor of the communist bloc, led by the Soviet Union. The United States had to do as much as possible to prevent this. However, American efforts to prevent a communist victory brought the United States into conflict with its ally, France.

Early 1953 found the military situation in Indochina at a stalemate between the French Union forces and the Viet Minh. Tonkin, in northern Vietnam, had become the major theater of operations in the war, though the Viet Minh had begun to expand their operations into Laos. In most aspects it appeared that the French Union forces were superior; in numbers, mobility, and firepower they had the advantage. Yet it was the Viet Minh who held the initiative, forcing the French

into a defensive posture, widely dispersed to hold important areas. A second reason for the deterioration of the French military situation, as seen by the United States, was the lack of an aggressive French plan of action. American officials hoped for a plan from the French that, according to a March 24, 1953, Discussion Paper, "would specify the military capabilities and actions required to achieve our objective--the defeat of the regular Viet Minh divisions in Tonkin." The inability of the French to develop a plan to defeat the Viet Minh was developing into a major issue between the United States and France, especially given the steadily increasing amounts of financial and material aid supplied by the United States to France to continue the war. To the Eisenhower administration, it appeared that the war was being pursued too timidly and that a suitable plan of operations could reverse the French situation.(1)

But the Eisenhower administration recognized that it was not only poor military judgement by the French that was holding back progress. The failure of the French to provide the foundation for a strong national government in Indochina was also to blame. Since 1946 the French repeatedly had assured the peoples of the Indochinese Associated States (Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos) that independence was to be granted and indeed had effected a series of agreements promising to "perfect" this independence. As of 1953, however, only limited progress had

been made. The Emperor Bao Dai was recognized as Chief of State in Vietnam and had begun to form a government. But the strength of the Vietnamese government, dependent as it was on the French military to maintain its control, was limited. The Eisenhower administration considered this dependence a serious weakness and an important issue. (2)

Yet the French deferred any actions that might have improved the position of the Vietnamese government. Specifically, the French resisted the development of a strong, autonomous Vietnamese army. To the Vietnamese people, this was cause to doubt the sincerity of French promises of independence. In United States regional studies (an ongoing series of reports by the National Security Council that considered probable events in a given area--here concerned with Indochina), the failure to develop the Vietnamese Army would offset any other gains made by increasing the role of the Vietnamese government. (3)

The United States and France, while seeking the same basic goal, differed as to how to attain it. The Americans were dedicated to the establishment of non-communist nations in the region. Accordingly, much of United States policy was directed toward building up the governments in the region into strong democracies. The French, though professing this same intent, were more interested in maintaining their preeminent position in

Indochina, at the cost of strengthening the native governments. The difference between the United States and France on this issue became the center of United States-French relations throughout 1953 and 1954.(4)

American objectives in Indochina were determined by both regional and global considerations. The communist threat was not just to Indochina, though of itself that would be serious. The concept accepted in the United States, the "Domino Theory," regarded the communist aggression in Indochina as part of a pattern that could be stopped only by immediate and forceful action by the Western Powers. Communist success in Indochina would threaten the entire region, from India on the west to Australia on the south and Japan in the northeast. Failure to stop the communists would lead not only to the loss of several countries outright but also to the general loss of western influence in the region. Successful communist aggression would cause those contries not directly under communist domination at least to align with the major communist powers, the Soviet Union and the Peoples Republic of China.(5)

American perceptions of monolithic communism led to the conclusion that the war in Indochina was but a part of communist aggression. It required immediate concerted action by the western allies. A June 1952 United States-France-Associated States Communique called for all "free countries concerned . . . to assume primary responsiblity

for resistance in specific areas where communism has resorted to force of arms. Thus . . . France has the primary role in Indochina." (6)

French perogatives in Indochina posed a problem for the United States. Since the Associated States of Indochina were still closely bound to France, American officials were unable to establish direct relations with the individual states, as might have been possible if France had not been involved. In particular, American desires for the "perfection" of Indochinese independence ran afoul of French designs. It was not that France refused outright to turn over control of the area to the native people; France just appeared to be too slow in carrying out its promises. American officials were disappointed continually by French plans that were not far-reaching enough and particularly by what Secretary of State Dulles considered the "slowness of the timetable." An example of this was the July 3, 1954, declaration by the French Premier Joseph Laniel that all remaining government functions still under French control were to be turned over to the respective Indochinese nations. Notably, no final date for transfer was given. Yet because the French considered Indochina to be an internal affair, the United States could do little.(7)

American relations with France went beyond just Indochina and Asia. It was here that the United States's regional policy again became interlocked with its global

concerns. France was inportant to American designs to contain communism world-wide, not simply in Indochina. The European Defense Community (EDC) had become the key to the containment policy in western Europe. The EDC planned the rearming of Germany as part of a six-nation, integrated army. French membership was considered a desirable counter-weight to German forces. The importance of the EDC put American officials in a precarious position regarding France.

France did not consider the Soviet Union the menace the Americans did. But France did fear an armed Germany and was reluctant to approve German rearmament. American officials thus were caught between two objectives. Any antagonism regarding Indochina could result in French rejection of the EDC. Some officials did advocate linking American aid for Indochina to French ratification of the EDC. Opposition to this position was based upon the reality of the war in Indochina. Dulles cited his concern that the "French would quit if the United States stopped aid, for many French had lost interest in Indochina as soon as [they] had to promise independence." (8) In addition Assistant Secretary of State John M. Allison noted that:

> The hot war now being fought in Indochina is at a critical stage . . . We run the risk of serious adverse developments in both the political and military fields with a possible threat to our whole position in Southeast Asia. We cannot afford to risk the loss of momentum in Indochina at this point

> by tying the intensification of the actual military effort there to the problem of a German contribution to the eventual defense of Western Europe--against a possible Soviet aggression. . . .
>
> Nor do I believe we should subject our Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian friends to the discouragement . . . that our support . . . of the struggle . . . is to be deprived of essential free world support pending the adoption by France of a particular defense formula in Western Europe. (9)

American policy makers were in a quandary. Both the EDC and Indochina were important, but it seemed that only one could be attained, for France was the link in both. This forced the Americans to press France to ratify the EDC and at the same time to maintain its efforts in Indochina. It was an overriding concern of the Americans that France should not link one goal to the other. (10)

The major objective of the United States regarding Indochina was to maintain the French presence there. Throughout the Korean War the United States also had extended aid to France for the war in Indochina. This aid had begun in May, 1950, in response to an urgent French request for military and economic assistance. It had been continued and had increased annually. Yet, as of Eisenhower's inauguration, no substantial progress had been made toward winning the war. And despite the large amount of aid from the United States, according to a Department of State report to the National Security Council, the cost of the war was damaging to the French domestic and foreign policy:

> This constant drain on French resources has had damaging effects on her domestic and foreign policy:

a. The costs of [the Indochina] war, on top on those of rearming within NATO, have been a major factor in the French budgetary deficits, the attendent inflation, and the resulting financial instability. United States assistance while substantial has not been able to prevent these consequences.

b. The apparently endless commitment in Indochina has been a major cause of hesitation and vacillation in French policy toward EDC and German rearmament. Uncertain whether she could maintain military equality with Germany while carrying the military and financial load of Indochina, France has sought to delay and postpone EDC. . . . (11)

By August, 1953, the United States faced the prospect of French withdrawal if American aid did not continue to finance a large part of the war. It appeared that the Laniel government might be the last French government to continue the war. The United States officials saw no alternative but to increase aid on the condition of a French plan finally to defeat the Viet Minh. In connection with this, American policy towards Indochina was adamantly opposed to negotiations by France with the Viet Minh to end the war. The reason for this was that unlike Korea, where the United Nations forces had "held the line", in Indochina France had yet to establish political and military supremacy. Thus American officials believed that any negotiations eventually would result only in a communist takeover of Indochina. (12)

While American objectives emphasized containment, France's did not. France was concerned by the apparent communist activity, but not to the degree the United States was. The position of France, as stated by

Minister Jean LeTourneau in June, 1952, was that the French were in Indochina to "protect the independence and the freedom of the Associated States." This objective indeed seemed to be in keeping with the United States policy objectives. However, when examined further, this was questionable, for the people of Indochina had not yet attained independence. LeTourneau himself acknowledged this, but placed the blame for this failure upon the governments of the Associated States. It was "because of national jealosies involved" that the independence of the Associated States was incomplete. If this was so, it still was evident the French parliament also was a hindrance; as LeTourneau noted, of all agreements reached between France and the Associated States, only the agreement of March 8, 1949, had been approved by the French parliament. Regarding preferential trade agreements with the Associated States, LeTourneau noted that these were necessary to maintain French morale and willingness to continue the war. (13)

France, contrary to American hopes otherwise, was aware of the link between its roles in Indochina and Europe. The French pointed out that they could afford a full role in only one area. To pursue these twin goals could result in France being weak in both areas. The French were especially concerned that they must have a greater force in Europe than the Germans. This, LeTourneau maintained, would not be possible without greater American aid to offset the cost of Indochina.(14)

A greater threat to the United States objectives, though, was the increasing desire of the French to negotiate an end to the war. Part of this desire derived from the French fear of Communist Chinese intervention. By and large, however, it resulted from the length of the struggle. The French people were tiring of the continued effort and wanted to end the war whether or not French goals were attained. Since an end to the Korean War was to be settled through negotiations at Geneva, the French insisted that Indochina should also be placed on the schedule at Geneva. This goal of the French was achieved during the Berlin Conference of February, 1954. According to Dulles, the French had become:

> divided into two categories--those who are prepared to write off Indochina but want France to join EDC, and those who wish to have France remain in Indochina, . . . and are opposed [to EDC]. Accordingly, if we had vetoed the resolution regarding discussion of Indochina [at Geneva], it would probably cost us French membership in EDC as well as Indochina itself. Our present position, therefore, at least offers the fair possibility of salvaging both French membership in EDC and the continuation of the struggle in Indochina." (15)

It was the French threat to the EDC that forced the Americans to accept negotiation. It was doubtful that the French could have won the United States support on this issue were it not for American concerns in Europe. (16)

Clearly, the United States and France, though dependent upon each other for success in Indochina, lacked agreement on the goals that they sought to attain. The

French were not in Indochina solely to fight communism. Rather, they sought to maintain their domination of the region. In spite of pledges to perfect Indochinese independence and alleged efforts to develop a native army, France appeared to be doing neither, or at least not wholeheartedly. This may have been a reason for the French willingness to negotiate. If the French could not attain their goals in Indochina, then the best recourse was to withdraw, thus ending a costly venture. (17)

In contrast the United States sought to halt the spread of communism, regardless of the cost. This attitude stemmed from the American position on communist intervention, the Domino Theory. In such a scheme negotiation with communists would not be useful unless the communists were at a disadvantage. In Indochina the communist Viet Minh held the initiative and could not be negotiated with until the situation changed. To this end American officials encouraged the French to take more aggressive action, with the ultimate goal to defeat the Viet Minh, followed by completion of independence for the Associated States.

NOTES
CHAPTER TWO

1. Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (John M. Allison) to the Secretary of State (John F. Dulles), January 28, 1953, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954 (Washington), pp. 366-69

2. Discussion Paper on Indochina, March 24, 1953, ibid, p. 424.

3. Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison) to the Secretary of State (Dulles), January 28, 1953, ibid, pp. 369-71.

4. "Probable Events in Indochina Through Mid-1954," United States - Vietnam Relations; v. IX, bk i, document 24, p. 51 (Washington).

5. The Department of State, Bulletin, v. XXVIII, n. 711, publication 4912, February 9, 1953. "A Survey of Foreign Policy Problems," Address by Secretary of State Dulles (Delivered to the nation over radio and television on January 27, and as Press Release no. 45, same date. Also as Department of State publication 4911). Dulles stated: The Soviet Russians are making a drive to get Japan, not only through what they are doing in northern areas of the islands and in Korea, but also through what they are doing in Indochina. If they could get this peninsula of Indochina, Siam, Burma, Malaya, they would have what is called the rice bowl of Asia. That's the area from which the great peoples of Asia, great countries of Asia such as Japan and India, get, in large measure, their food. And you can see that, if the Soviet Union had control of the rice bowl of Asia, that would be another weapon which would tend to expand their control into Japan and into India. That is a growing danger; it is not only a bad situation because of the threat in the Asia countries, that I refer to but also because the French, who are doing much of the fighting there, are making great effort; and that effort subtracts just that much from the capacity of their building a European army and making a contribution which otherwise they could be expected to make.

6. Three sources for this statement are useful, giving a fairly accurate depiction of the United States concerns on successful communist aggression: (a) American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955: Basic Documents, v. I (Washington), p. 2375; Address by Secretary of State

Dulles; (b) Public Papers of the Presidents: Dwight D. Eisenhower (Washington), p. 383, (c) United States - Vietnam Relations, v. I, pt. ii, pp. A. 3, A-45, "Perception of the Communist Threat to Southeast Asia and to Basic U.S. Interests."

7. American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955: Basic Documents, v. I, p. 2367.

8. The Consul at Hanoi (Paul J. Sturm) to the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Philip W. Bonsal), [Hanoi], July 21, 1953, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, p. 692. "The sentiments of many American officials concerning the idea of France as anobstacle to U.S. objectives is expressed by Sturm's comments: 'How humiliating that we should have to contemplate getting down on our knees to ask the French to stay here [Vietnam]. . . . There is no particular point in our paying the French to remain here if they will remain only on conditions which tend to preclude the attainment of our objectives. As long as the people retain their doubts of the French, they will not fully cooperate.'"

9. United States-Vietnam Relations, v. IX, bk. i, doc. 10, p. 21, Telegram from Secretary of State Dulles to Department of State, March 30, 1953.

10. Ibid, v. I, pt. ii, A.2.,p. A-37.

11. Ibid, p. A-40

12. Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison) to the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (H. Freeman Matthews), March 9, 1953, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, pp. 401-402

13. United States-Vietnam Relations, v. I, pt. ii, A. 2., p. A-35.

14. Report to the National Security Council by the Department of State: Further United States Support for France and the Associated States of Indo-china, August 5, 1953, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, p. 715

15. Ibid.

16. Position Paper Prepared in the Department of State: Indochina-French Position, Washington,July 9, 1953, ibid, p. 645.

17. U.S. summary minutes of a meeting between Representatives of the U.S. and France at the Department of State June 16, 1952: General French policy toward Indochina, ibid, p. 191.

18. Ibid, pp. 193, 195.

19. U.S. minute of Tripartite Foreign Ministers meeting with France and the United Kingdom at the Quai d'Orsay, Paris, May 28, 1952, ibid, pp. 164-65.

20. Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Allison), Washington, November 18, 1952; Report on my visit to Indochina: 7. The French approach to the military situation gives ground for apprehension. ibid, pp. 295-96.

21. United States-Vietnam Relations, v. I, pt. ii, A.2., p. A-40.

22. ibid, p. A-41.

CHAPTER THREE:

THE SEARCH FOR ALTERNATIVES

The United States had two goals in Indochina in 1953. The first was complete independence of the Associated States from France. The second was to preserve these independent nations from communism. The realization of these goals required dynamic, aggressive action by France to develop the Associated States politically and militarily. The United States especially hoped that France would appoint a commanding general who would undertake the actions deemed necessary by the United States. This desire by the Americans for a "forceful and inspirational" leader apparently was realized on May 9, 1953, by the appointment of General Henri Navarre as Commanding General for Indochina. United States Ambassador to France C. Douglas Dillon reported that Navarre was a good choice, describing him as a "forceful and strong leader . . . [who] will accurately appraise and report the overall military situation." Thus Navarre became the leader on whom United States officials would base their hopes for success. (1)

Navarre, realizing the importance of aggressive action, quickly developed his "Principles for the Conduct

of the War in Indochina." This six-point plan became the focus of American military policy planning through the period up to the fall of Dien Bien Phu in May, 1954. Immediate reaction by United States officials was favorable, for the plan presented the two key conditions sought by the United States. First, the plan proposed an aggressive prosecution of the war and contained a definite timetable for defeat of the Viet Minh. Second, the plan was linked to political measures designed to complete the process of Indochinese independence. However, as difficulties developed in actual implementation of the Navarre Plan and the completion of independence, the United States would be forced to consider alternatives to attain its goals. (2)

The issue of independence for the Associated States was a particularly important part of United States policy. Here American officials had two concerns. One was the repeated failure of France to "perfect" independence; the French continued to maintain a high degree of influence on the respective governments of the Associated States, in some cases actually maintaining control of some government functions (notably the justice system in Vietnam). The second great concern of American officials was that the French had not yet fully developed the armed forces of the Associated States. American officials hoped that the French would correct these shortcomings by the implementation of the Navarre Plan. The United

States concern with Associated States independence was essentially a problem of trust. United States officials believed that unless France undertook to ensure total independence, the ultimate result would be communism in Indochina. James P. Hendricks's memorandum of June 10, 1953, to C. Tyler Wood reflected this concern:

> Essentially their [Vietnamese government officials] complaint is that they do not trust the French.. . . The French have never trusted the Vietnamese--they have not encouraged their education except in the liberal arts, they do not think they [Vietnamese] can accomplish anything positive or can be relied on. Insofar as the Non-government intellectuals are concerned, they see the country run by a French-appointed sovereign who in their opinion must accept the dictates of the French." (3)

It was this mutual lack of faith that concerned American officials. They realized that such a relationship prevented each participant from taking effective action to defeat the Viet Minh. Indeed, the United States assessment of the situation was quite accurate. Just as the French distrusted the Indochinese, so, too, was the reverse true. The result was that the Indochinese were unwilling to aid the French effort, with the French in turn becoming more reluctant to place Indochinese in positions of authority, because they appeared to show no leadership ability. Unfortunately, this attitude effectively jeopardized the United States objectives. As stated by Hendricks, "the simple matter of the fact is that the Vietnamese . . . want freedom,

but if they cannot have it they are by nature more inclined to place themselves under a Chinese yoke than a French yoke." (4)

The French declaration of July 3, 1953, stated France's intention to undertake the reforms deemed necessary by the United States for the completion of Indochinese independence. According to Ambassador Dillon, the French intended to complete the "transfer of powers that France had still retained in the interest even of the state, by reason of the perilous circumstances arising from state of war." Accordingly, France at that time had "decided to invite each of the three governments to come to an agreement with it [France] on the settlement of the questions that each of them will consider it ought to pose . . . in the respect and the safeguard of the legitimate interests of each of the contracting parties." (5)

In the past France had promised to complete independence, but had ultimately failed to deliver. It was essential to American officials that this promise be speedily realized. It was alarming to them that as of December, 1953, no positive action had been taken in follow-up of the declaration. In fact the only action taken in the political field had been negative, and indeed may have caused delay of implementation of independence. This was the October 16, 1953, resolution by the Vietnamese National Congress to reject membership

in the French Union. The effect of this resolution was to diminish French public support for the war. In return, the extreme reaction of the French served only to diminish Vietnamese confidence that France would complete the process of independence. In essence the situation had grown worse rather than better. (6)

Another concern of American officials, related to the issue of independence, was the failure of France to develop fully the national armies of the Associated States. The development of these armies as autonomous forces independent of the French High Command was particularly important, especially in a political sense. As Ambassador to Vietnam Donald R. Heath noted, "In the long run the only key to success in Indochina is the creation of a strong Vietnamese army imbued with the proper nationalist spirit." Much to the satisfaction of American officials, Navarre had included as part of his plan steps to create a Vietnamese army. Although Navarre's concern was military, the creation of the Vietnamese army would remedy a major political obstacle. (7)

Again, as with the independence issue, there existed among both United States and Indochinese officials a lack of faith in France's willingness to develop the native armies. Vice-President Richard Nixon reflected this in his comments at a National Security Council meeting in January, 1954. According to the memorandum of the

January 8 meeting, Nixon expressed his reservations of French intentions:

> One must realize that the French talk one way but feel another.. . . What [Nixon] had seen when he was in Indochina had given rise to the gravest doubts as to the likelihood of any really strong Vietnamese National Army, at least any army built up to the levels contemplated in the Navarre Plan . . . Generals Navarre and Cogny actually believe that the Vietnamese cannot fight unless led by French officers. The Vietnamese on the other hand, doubt that the French really want to train them in large numbers. When you pin General Navarre down he admits that the great issue as to the success of the war in Indochina is not one of material but rather, of men. He does not indicate very much confidence in the training program for the native forces. This . . . was of course a pessimistic view, but the indigenous forces are the key to success or failure. (8)

American officials linked the Navarre Plan's prospects for military success to political improvements. Nixon's comments indicated the belief of some American officials that the Navarre Plan would be bound for failure without the political improvements necessary to bring about native support for the war effort. (9)

Although American officials remained doubtful that the French would act, they were initially encouraged by France's apparent willingness to support and implement the Navarre Plan. In late August, 1953, French Premier Laniel assured Ambassador Dillon that regardless of internal economic problems, he was prepared to send out the additional nine battalions requested by Navarre. However, owing to the cost of this action, Laniel made this contingent upon receiving financial aid from the United States for all aspects of the Navarre Plan.

American officials nevertheless regarded this assurance as a positive step. (10)

Indeed, American officials sought to help the Navarre Plan as best they could. To this end Lieutenant General John O'Daniel was sent to Indochina. O'Daniel's mission was to thoroughly study all conditions relating to the Navarre Plan and make recommendations for American assistance. As O'Daniel's report was to be the basis on which United States officials were to make their decisions regarding American aid, an extensive study would be expected. Yet, O'Daniel made his report based on observation of only one month. The briefness of this period may have prevented accurate observation, as O'Daniel himself noted. It is also possible that O'Daniel was influenced by the apparent willingness of the French military establishment in Indochina to adopt American recommendations, as he stated them:

> The sending of a small group of qualified experts to Indochina to study the desirability of the U.S. assisting in the development of Associated States small industry . . . Approve necessary augmentations of the Military Assistance Advisory Group--MAAG, Indochina to allow for three (3) U.S. officers for attachment to the French Training Command, and . . . Assign two (2) additional U.S. Assistant Army Attaches . . . in conjunction with the French G-2. (11)

Aside from these recommendations, other portions of O'Daniels report were important. American officials had been encouraged by O'Daniel's report that in accordance with the Navarre Plan, the French were stepping up measures to turn the war over to native forces. The fact

that the French were considering implementation of training methods used by the United States to train the South Korean Army was especially encouraging. United States officials had long been pushing the French to adopt these methods. (12)

O'Daniel's report was also the basis for the Joint Chiefs of Staff report concerning aid for the Navarre Plan. Though also encouraged by O'Daniel's report, previous experience with the French caused the Joint Chiefs to be more cautious in their recommendations. This caution was evident in the August 28, 1953, memorandum from the Joint Chiefs to Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson. This memorandum noted that:

> Based on past performances by the French, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have reservations in predicting actual results which can be expected pending proof by demonstration of continued French support and by further French performance in Indochina.. . . If the Navarre concept is vigorously pursued militarily in Indochina and given whole-hearted political support in France, it does offer a promise of military success sufficient to warrent appropriate additional United States aid required. . . . In light of the apparent slowness of the French in following up the Navarre concept . . . the Joint Chiefs of Staff believe that additional United States support should be conditional upon implementation of French support, [and] demonstration of French willingness to receive and act upon United States military advice. (13)

The Joint Chiefs were no longer willing to accept only French promises; rather they believed that the French should take action, and upon those actions the United States should base its aid program.

Nevertheless, the administration approved the additional $385 million requested by the French. The reason for this decision was a growing concern about French commitment. American officials believed that the Laniel government would be the last French administration to prosecute the war with the intention of victory. Indeed, the internal pressures were mounting on the Laniel government either to realize victory in Indochina or to withdraw unilaterally. Recognizing this, and noting the strategic importance of Indochina, the Eisenhower administration approved the additional aid--but with three conditions. First, the $385 million was to be considered the maximum amount of financial aid for calendar year 1954. Second, in return for the additional aid, the United States required assurances of intents, actual activity, and appropriate information for the United States to verify the effectiveness with which the aid had been used. Last, the United States retained the right to terminate all aid if the French failed for any reason to execute the Navarre Plan as outlined. (14)

In particular, the American officials wanted the French to undertake military action as called for in the Navarre Plan. To this end the French on November 20, 1953, undertook the airdrop of six battalions at Dien Bien Phu. Although this action would prove to be a disastrous mistake, at the time it appeared a sensible operation, designed to forestall Viet Minh activity in

Laos. Aside from this, the French explained that the operation was necessary to provide support for guerrilla operations and to protect Lai Chai, a vital road junction. According to Navarre, the defense of Lai Chai would be best accomplished at Dien Bien Phu. (15)

By December, Dien Bien Phu had gained an importance of its own, superceding the defense of Lai Chai. The advance of two Viet Minh divisions to Dien Bien Phu caused the French to look on the situation as an opportunity to inflict a critical defeat upon the enemy. In regard to the Navarre concept, this conformed with the first provision, to press for local offensives and guerrilla activity. Indeed, the operation itself may have been motivated by this provision. However, the Dien Bien Phu operation did not conform with the second provision of Navarre's Plan. This provision called for a French offensive to forestall Viet Minh attack and thus gain the initiative. At Dien Bien Phu the French were intent on defensive action, relying upon superior firepower to deplete and defeat the Viet Minh.

The major importance of Dien Bien Phu was related not to the implementation of the Navarre Plan but rather to the future of the French in Indochina. As the French focused greater attention on the outcome at Dien Bien Phu, American officials faced growing pressure from the French for increased aid, intervention, and support for negotiation to end the conflict. Although reiterating

their commitment, the French pointed out the increasing difficulties they faced in continuing implementation of the Navarre Plan. According to French government officials, their ability to continue the war was being diminished by internal pressures. These officials noted that the French economy was suffering from the strain of the ongoing conflict. If they were forced to continue indefinitely large expenditures on Indochina, the French stated they would not be able to address their economic problems. Also, the French officials pointed out, the French population in general was weary of the war; it had been going on for eight years, and no immediate solution could be foreseen. Since the United States was preparing to negotiate an end to the Korean War, the French could see no reason why they could not also use negotiation to end the war in Indochina. French popular opinion, regardless of political affiliation, reflected a growing desire to negotiate an end to the war. This pressure undermined support within the Laniel government for the Navarre Plan. Rene Pleven, the French Minister of National Defense, expressed the opinion that the increased military effort sought by General Navarre would be impossible; indeed, it would be difficult to maintain the existing effort. Premier Laniel, too, was affected, describing Navarre as being "optimistic . . . and wanting resources which could not be given him." (16)

Although public pressure had diminished the resolve

of the Laniel government to fulfill the Navarre Plan, the French gave no indication of any intention to abandon Indochina. Negotiation was sought as the only means for a satisfactory conclusion to the war. Yet, as the French hoped to bring about a politically acceptable solution, they had to place greater emphasis on a military outcome. The developing battle at Dien Bien Phu became the key to the attainment of French goals.

Further, as the battle developed and the French military situation deteriorated, the United States was forced to contemplate alternatives for the attainment of its own goals. Some American officials had addressed this need before, for they had been concerned that aid to France would not accomplish American goals in Indochina. One study expressing such concerns was presented by Charlton Ogburn (Regional Planning Advisor, Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, Department of State) in September, 1953, during the period when the United States was contemplating the Navarre Plan and French requests for assistance. Ogburn's memorandum, based on a study by Philip Bonsal (Director of Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs, Department of State), noted numerous concerns with French promises, many of which concerns proved accurate later. Ogburn pointed out that it was unlikely the French could conduct any major military operations, as French public opinion was opposed to such operations. The French needed quick results to

placate public opinion. Since this was unlikely to happen, Ogburn suggested that the United States consider three alternatives. The first was based on continued American reliance on France to defeat the Viet Minh. Ogburn considered it the most likely possible result. His scenario expected the seizure of power by the communists following a French defeat, a French withdrawal, or as a result of negotiations. The second alternative contemplated intervention by United States forces, outlined what the goals of such an operation would be, and considered the likely consequences of intervention. These alternatives were those suggested by Bonsal's study. Ogburn presented a third alternative, the possibility of an international solution. Because this alternative looked to negotiation as a means to end the war, it necessitated that France and the United States maintain a position of strength to ensure a favorable solution. Ogburn believed that this was the best alternative available, preferable to United States support of the Navarre Plan. This solution would eliminate both the necessity of American intervention and the uncertainty over the actions of the French. (17)

Even though American officials accepted and supported the Navarre Plan, they continued to consider alternatives. However, up to the time of Dien Bien Phu, the alternatives under consideration tended to be concerned with supplemental aid programs for the French.

One example of this was the January 15, 1954, memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff for Secretary of Defense Wilson. This memorandum noted several alternatives to be considered given the continuing changes in the military situation in Indochina. Among these alternatives were the possible use of volunteers from the United States to serve with the French Union forces, and the forming of a regional coalition of pro-Western countries to oppose communist expansion. The major points of this memorandum, though, were the importance of MAAG personnel to insure the proper delivery and use of United States equipment, and suggestions for the types of tactics (based on United States experience) that would be most effective in Indochina. The need for additional aircraft mechanics had been a major concern of the French, for they had often inquired into the availability of United States personnel for this role. In this regard the portion of the Joint Chiefs memorandum dealing with the possibility of United States forces was increased in importance. This was particularly true when the French increased the urgency of their requests as the battle at Dien Bien Phu intensified. Thus consideration of using American personnel in Indochina became a major topic of discussion. The consensus of United States officials was that the use of American mechanics would be allowed. Still there remained a great deal of opposition to this stance. This opposition was reflected in Senator John

Stennis's letter of January 29, 1954. From his own observations, Stennis did not believe the French need was as great as they claimed. He had previously noticed an abundance of French mechanics at a United States installation at Chatearoux. Also, if the United States sent its own people, Stennis believed it would be only a matter of time before it became necessary to send American forces to protect the initial group, eventually leading to a larger United States presence. Stennis urged that the United States not take this risk. (18)

Nevertheless, due to the urgency of the issue, State Department officials decided that American interests would be best served by providing to the French 200 United States Air Force mechanics, on condition that they be stationed only at bases secure from attack by the Viet Minh. In making this decision, American officials recognized that the possibility of further intervention had grown, but they believed that such a possibility was a worst-case scenario only, and even then excluded the possibility of United States ground forces. American officials were still working on the assumption that the French could and would fulfill the Navarre Plan. Dien Bien Phu, though serious, had not yet become an urgent problem. (19)

As the situation at Dien Bien Phu became critical, the French pressured the United States to undertake assistance programs beyond those originally agreed upon.

Particularly, the French inquired about the possibility of direct American military intervention to save Dien Bien Phu. At least the French sought sufficient American military action to prevent the complete fall of Indochina to communism. Among the first indications that the French government was weakening in its commitment were comments by Pleven, in early 1954, regarding the growing opposition within the French government to continuation of the war effort. The cause of this, according to Pleven, was that two problems had developed in Indochina. First, the battle at Dien Bien Phu had not affected the ability of the Viet Minh to conduct operations elsewhere in Indochina. In contrast the French forces would be demoralized and hindered by the loss of their best troops should Dien Bien Phu fall. Second, the possibility of overt communist Chinese intervention in the form of a Viet Minh air force had become a major concern. In order for the French to continue the war, Pleven argued that the Vietnamese would have to "come through with a convincing program and time-table of governmental and military performance." More important, the French would require assurances from the United States of how it would respond to the appearance of a "Viet Minh Air Force." These same concerns were echoed by General Paul Ely (Commissioner General and Commander of French Forces in Indochina) and Laniel in March, 1954. Like Pleven, Ely and Laniel also were seeking a

commitment for intervention by United States air forces. (20)

These requests forced American officials to consider intervention seriously. Realizing that the French no longer were able to continue the war alone, American officials began seeking alternative measures to prevent the fall of Indochina. The studies they undertook ranged from additional aid to unilateral and multilateral intervention. American officials were forced to consider the extent to which they were willing to involve the United States directly in order to attain policy objectives. Facing this situation, the immediate goal of United States officials was to maintain the French presence in Indochina, possibly by increasing the role of the MAAG mission in Indochina. Particularly, they sought to increase MAAG's role in planning and training functions in order to enhance the ability and use of native troops. This was to be done in conjunction with the French, thereby increasing the United States's participation in the war without the risks of direct military activity. This alternative was tied to the continued existence of a stable French presence, but the French government was wavering in its commitment. The uncertain status of the French forced American officials to contemplate either intervention by United States forces or withdrawal of the French from Indochina. (21)

The ideas concerning intervention by the United States covered a diverse set of possible circumstances. The previous option, that of additional aid, had been based upon a continued French presence. The intervention options were based upon the ultimate goal of developing the native Indochinese armies. It was the depth and the feasibility of United States involvement that were the key issues. As before, studies by American officials were undertaken in response to a particular problem posed to them. However, it was not necessarily in response to French requests alone that these studies were developed. Some studies were begun in response to those questions posed by ranking United States officials, notably Secretary of State Dulles and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Admiral Arthur Radford. The scope of these studies covered conditions ranging from a continued French presence, a phased French withdrawal, or complete and unilateral French withdrawal. Further, these studies looked into the necessity of either unilateral or multilateral intervention. The first studies focused primarily upon unilateral United States action. (22)

The consideration of unilateral intervention was related to direct French requests, although the Joint Chiefs of Staff did on one occasion discuss this possibility prior to the formal request by the French. According to the memorandums by the individual members, on March 31, 1954, Chairman of the JCS Admiral Radford

requested of his own accord the views of the members as to the possibility of United States intervention. The responses to this question indicated that there existed a rather high degree of opposition to the use of United States forces in Indochina. Of the four responses, three stated that the United States should not commit its forces upon receipt of a French request. The reasons stated for this refusal showed a concern that the use of United States forces would be ineffective and, particularly if applied to Dien Bien Phu, could not save that French garrison. Moreover, even a small-scale intervention would inevitably escalate into a major conflict. The only positive response itself was a "qualified 'yes,'" providing certain assurances were given by the French government. These assurances in sum required that the French accept a significantly decreased role, giving up military leadership to the United States and political leadership to the Indochinese states. (23)

United States officials were so uncertain of how the French government might act that the eventual requests by the French for intervention caused considerable confusion as to how to reply to the request. In late March, during his visit to the United States, General Ely apparently stated to Admiral Radford that the situation at Dien Bien Phu was so critical as to require immediate air intervention by the United States. In his report to the French government, Ely stated that Radford had assured him the

United States would honor this request. Ambassador Dillon's April 4 telegram contained further clarification of this request. Dillon reported that the French, based upon Radford's assurances to Ely, now formally requested immediate air intervention by United States air forces. As basis for this intervention, the French documented previous Chinese intervention, pointing out the considerable assistance given the Viet Minh at Dien Bien Phu. (24)

Interestingly, the French request coincided with the release of a National Security Council report (NSC 1704-A) on intervention on April 5--a revision of an April 3 report. The focus of the report was on the feasibility of United States intervention, depending upon the conditions on which the United States became involved. The NSC study contemplated three possible scenarios for intervention--in concert with the French only, with the French and other allies, or alone to replace the French. In the first two cases American officials sought to avoid the use of United States ground forces in the conflict; thus the study restricted the United States intervention to air and naval forces. With the military role of the United States restricted, the primary concern of the report was the political ramifications of intervention by the United States. Intervention with other allies was considered the best solution, especially if the form of intervention was as a United Nations-sponsored operation

or as part of a regional security group. American officials believed that the involvement of other allies would serve to moderate opposition from other parts of the free world. This type of intervention, though, weakened the options available to the United States in how it chose to deal with the Viet Minh. American options on the use of tactical nuclear weapons was a particular concern. That is, the concern was that American intervention would lead directly to an escalation of the conflict to the point of sparking a general world war. With this in mind, the NSC report recommended that this action be taken only upon consultations with other allies, especially North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members, and then only if the use of nuclear weapons was the only alternative left to preserve Indochina. Regarding the communist reaction to United States intervention, American officials believed that the communist Chinese would undoubtedly intervene in response. These portions of the study still excluded the direct use of United States ground forces. The third contingency, the replacement of the French, addressed this possiblilty. This action brought concerns of American obligations in Europe. The need for the United States to commit its military forces could, in the event of a protracted conflict, divert its attention and military resources away from Europe. Further, the NSC study found that

regardless of the type and circumstances of American intervention, the possiblity of escalation of the conflict into a major war was increased. The report still recommended that a decision be reached quickly, as delay would result in the French acceptance of any terms to settle the conflict. To fortify the French position at Geneva, the United States at least had to hint that it might intervene. The Army position paper, based on the NSC study, found that United States intervention was undesirable, as the effort involved would undermine NATO commitments and still not be sufficient to achieve military victory. This report found that the strain upon manpower and resources would be higher than previously thought; a quick victory was not likely. (25)

Thus the United States officials chose not to intervene on behalf of the French. At this time, though, the official response to the French was that American intervention could only be taken with Congressional backing, and must be in the national interest of the United States. This was considered impossible by American officials, including Secretary of State Dulles himself, and indeed he, too, opposed the use of United States air and naval forces. Dulles was concerned that if the United States complied with French desires in this case, it could cause the United States to be confronted later by a demand to replace the French completely. (26)

Although United States officials were at this time reluctant to commit to unilateral intervention, this prospect was not completely eliminated. But the emphasis of United States officials shifted toward multilateral intervention--option 'B' of the NSC study. Multilateral intervention--intervention in concert with other concerned allies--was considered the best scenario for American intervention, as it would restrict the role of the United States, while still attaining policy goals. United States officials were especially eager to get Great Britian involved, for it was British interests that would be most threatened should Indochina fall to the communists. British involvement also would illustrate that the free world viewed communist aggression with great concern and would take the necessary actions to halt its spread. United States officials were unable to convince the British, who rejected the idea of multilateral intervention. The reasons for this rejection had been accurately predicted in NSC 1704-A. The British feared that intervention would lead to a major war involving Communist China, and the use by the United States of nuclear weapons. The British in fact chose to use their influence in the region to discourage any participation in multilateral intervention by other nations. (27)

The United States thus found itself in a difficult situation. It was unable to convince other nations to

join it in multilateral intervention (although United States officials continued to develop regional defense schemes). At the same time, American officials themselves were unwilling to commit United States forces to the conflict unilaterally. This situation was made worse by the continued requests from the French for some type of action by the United States, if only token forces as a show of support. Thus as the Geneva Conference opened, the United States's position remained ambiguous, with American officials uncertain how to deal with the Indochina problem.

NOTES
CHAPTER THREE

1. Telegram: Ambassador in France (C. Douglas Dillon) to the Department of State, Paris, May 9, 1953, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, v. XIII, pt. 1 (Washington, 1981), pp. 561-62.

2. Memorandum: Lieutenant General John W. O'Daniel to Admiral Arthur W. Radford (Commander in Chief, Pacific), Saigon, June 30, 1953, ibid, p. 634: Principles for the Conduct of the War in Indochina.

i. To retake the initiative immediately thru the carrying out, beginning this summer, of local offensives and by pushing to the utmost commando and guerrilla actions.

ii. To take the offensive in the north beginning Sept. 15, in order to forestall enemy attack. To conduct the battle which will take place during the fall and winter of 1953-54 in an offensive manner by attacking the flanks and rears of the enemy.

iii. To recover from areas not directly involved in the battle a maximum number of units. To pacify these regions progressively.

iv. To build up progressively a battle corps by grouping battalions into regiments and regiments into divisions and by giving to the units thus created the necessary support (arty engr armor communications) taking into account the very special character of the war in Indochina (the terrain, the enemy). To bring about a maximum of cooperation with the Air Force and the Navy.

v. To have a reserve of special type units (armored commandos light battalions etc.) designed to adapt the character of the groups and divisions to the nature of the terrain and of the mission assigned.

vi. To continue the effort of instructing and organizing the army of the Associated States so as to give them a more and more extensive place as well as more and more autonomy in the conduct of operations.

3. Memorandum by James P. Hendrick to C. Tyler Wood [Washington], June 10, 1953, ibid, pp. 605-06.

4. Ibid.

5. Telegram: The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State, Paris, July 3, 1953, ibid, p. 634.

6. Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Philip W. Bonsal) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Walter S. Robertson), Washington, December 8, 1953, ibid, pp. 910-11.

7. Telegram: The Ambassador at Saigon (Donald R. Heath) to the Department of State, Saigon, July 24, 1953, ibid, p. 696. Interestingly, Heath's comments were part of a telegram relaying his opinion that United States officials needed to put greater pressure on the French to allow reinforcement with additional French troops.

8. Memorandum of Discussion at the 179th meeting of the National Security Council, Friday, January 8, 1954, ibid, pp. 949-51.

9. Ibid.

10. Telegram: The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State, Paris, August 29, 1953, ibid, pp. 740-41.

11. Report of the Joint Military Mission to Indochina, July 14, 1953, United States-Vietnam Relations (Washington, 1971), v. IX, bk i, doc. 27, pp. 71-85. This is O'Daniel's report of his findings on French capabilities to carry out the Navarre Plan.

12. Memorandum For the Secretary of State, Subject: Terms of Reference for Military Mission to Indochina, ibid, doc. 25, p. 59: "1. As you are aware, the French Government has invited the United States to send a Military Mission to Indochina to make an overall survey of the military situation, with particular reference to the requirements for utilization of U.S. military aid in relation to French plans for successfully concluding the war in Indochina."

13. Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense. (Charles Erwin Wilson) [Washington], August 28, 1953, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, v. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 744-46.

14. "Memorandum of Discussion at the 161st meeting of the National Security Council, Wednesday, September 9, 1953." ibid, pp. 780-88. See also: Joint Communique, September 30, 1953, Eisenhower Library, Ann Whitman File, International Series, Box 10, France 1953 (1) folder: "The Governments of France and the United States have now agreed that, in support of plans of the French Government for the intensified prosecution of the war against the Viet Minh, the United States will make available to the French Government prior to December 31, 1954 additional financial resources not to exceed 385 million dollars. This aid is in addition to funds already earmarked by the United States for aid to France and the Associated States.

"The French Government is determined to make every effort to break up and destroy the regular enemy forces in Indochina. Toward this end the Government intends to carry through, in close cooperation with the Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese Governments, the plans for increasing the Associated States forces while increasing temporarily French forces to levels considered necessary to assure the success of existing military plans. The additional United States aid is designed to help make it possible to achieve these objectives with maximum speed and effectiveness."

15. Telegram: The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State, Saigon, November 21, 1953, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, v. XIII, pt. 1, p. 881.

16. National Security Council meeting 161, September 9, 1953, United States - Vietnam Relations, v. IX, bk. i, doc. 39, p. 146: "On 1 September, the French presented to the United States a memorandum, . . . that even if France's financial situation requires a reduction of her military budget, the French government nevertheless intends to carry out General Navarre's recommendations; . . . Complete execution remains subject, however, to US aid amounting to $385 Million up to the end of 1954. It goes on to say: 'In the event this aid could not be granted, a complete reconsideration of the plan of operations in Indochina would be unavoidable.' See also: "Position Paper Prepared in the Department of State [Washington], July 9, 1953, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, v. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 643-44; Telegram: The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State, Paris, August 29, 1953, ibid, p. 740; Telegram: The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State, Paris, May 23, 1953, ibid, p. 579: "Embassy is forwarding in immediately following telegram (not printed) . . . recent comment on French policy Indo China taken from Non-Communist French press. Comment noteworthy in that it shows increasing volume and attention devoted to question of solution for IC problem . . . Lead in this campaign is for moment in hands of neutralist organs, such as LeMonde, latter apparently endeavoring build pressure for negotiated withdrawal."

17. Memorandum by the Regional Planning Advisor, Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs (Charleton Ogburn), Washington, September 8, 1953, Subject: Alternatives in Indochina, ibid, pp. 762-64.

18. Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense; Subject: Steps Which the United States Might Take to Assist in Achieving Success of the Navarre Plan, January 15, 1954, United States - Vietnam Relations, v. IX, bk. ii, doc. 50, pp. 212-16. See also: Letter from Senator John Stennis to Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson, January 29, 1954, ibid, doc. 52, p. 239; Memorandum for the record--Subject: Meeting of President's Special Committee on Indochina, 29 January, 1954, ibid, doc. 53, pp. 240-41; Memorandum by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Everett F. Drumright) to the Under Secretary of State (General Walter Bedell Smith), Washington, January 5, 1954, Subject: French Ambassador's call with regard to additional aircraft and other facilities for Indochina, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, v. XIII, pt. 1, p. 943; Memorandum for the Acting Secretary of State (Smith) from the Secretary of State (Dulles), February 10, 1954, Eisenhower Library, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 2, February 1954 (2) folder.

19. Memorandum for the record--Subject: Meeting of President's Special Committee on Indochina, 29 January, 1954, United States - Vietnam Relations, v. IX, bk. ii, doc. 53, pp. 240-41.

20. Telegram: The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State, Saigon, February 28, 1954, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, v. XIII, pt. 1, p. 1087. See also: Telegram: The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State, Paris, April 2, 1954, ibid; Memorandum for the President, March 23, 1954--Subject: Indochina Situation, Eisenhower Library, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 2, March 1954 (1) folder; Telegram: The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Secretary of State (Dulles), May 14, 1954, ibid, May 1954 (2) folder.

21. Report by the President's Special Committee on Indochina [Washington], March 2, 1954, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, v. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 1112-16. See also: Memorandum by the Executive Secretary (James S. Lay) of the National Security Council Planning Board, (Enclosure) Special Annex on Indochina, ibid, pp. 1182-87.

22. Series of Memorandums for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Radford) prepared by: Chief of Staff, United States Army--General Matthew B. Ridgeway; Chief of Naval Operations--Admiral Robert B. Carney; Chief of Staff, United States Air Force--General Nathan F. Twining; Commandant of the United States Marine Corps--General Lemuel C. Shepherd, all dated April 2, 1954, ibid, pp. 1220-23.

23. Telegram: The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State, Paris, April 4, 1954, ibid, pp. 1236-38. See also: Memorandum for the President--Subject: Discussions with General Ely relative to the situation in Indo-China, March 24, 1954, United States - Vietnam Relations, v. IX, bk. ii, doc. 62, pp. 288-89; Telegram: The Ambassador to France (Dillon) to the Secretary of State (Dulles), April 4, 1954, ibid, doc. 67, pp. 296-97: "French report Chinese intervention in Indochina already fully established as follows: First. Four-teen technical advisors at Giap headquarters plus numberous others at divisional level. All under command of Chinese Communist General Ly Chen-hou who is stationed at Giap Headquarters. Second. Special telephone lines installed maintained and operated by Chinese personnel. Third. Forty 37mm. anti-aircraft guns radar-controlled at Dien Bien Phu. These guns operated by Chinese and evidently are from Korea. Fourth. One thousand supply trucks of which 500 have arrived since 1 March, all driven by Chinese army personnel. Fifth. Substantial material help in guns, shells, etc., as is well known."

24. Multilateral intervention envisioned the United States entering the Indochina conflict in concert with other Western allies, preferably Great Britain. Unilateral intervention was the concept of the United States expending military force without the assistance of other western allies. There were in addition two different premises involved. First, intervention , in either form, was to supplement existing French forces. The second premise involved intervention, again in either form, to replace the French.

25. NSC Action no. 1074-A, April 5, 1954; revision of report distributed April 3, United States-Vietnam Relations, v. IX, bk. ii, doc. 68, pp. 298-331. See also: Army Position Paper on NSC Action 1074-A, ibid, doc. 69, p. 332.

26. The Secretary of State (Dulles) to the Acting Secretary of State (Smith), April 25, 1954, Eisenhower Library, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 2, April (1) 1954 folder: ". . . it is my (Dulles) opinion that armed intervention by executive action is not warrented. The security of the United States is not directly threatened. Also it is not clear that intervention as requested under present circumstances would best protect our long-range interests." See also: Memorandum for the Secretary's File-Subject: Conference with Congressional Leaders concerning South East Asian Crisis, April 3, 1954, Eisenhower LIbrary, Dulles Papers, Subject Series, Box 9, Indochina 1954 (2) folder: "The Secretary then said that he felt that the President

should have Congressional backing so that he could use air and seapower in the area if he felt it necessary in the interest of national security."

27. Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson), and the Counselor (Douglas MacArthur II), London, April 2, 1954, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, v. XIII, pt. 1, pp. 1311-13. See also: Memorandum of Discussion at the 192nd Meeting of the National Security Council, Tuesday, April 6, 1954, ibid, pp. 1250-65; Telegram from the Secretary of State (Dulles) to the Department of State, Geneva, April 29, 1954, United States-Vietnam Relations, v. IX, bk. ii, doc. 86, pp. 397-98.

CHAPTER FOUR:

GENEVA

The Geneva Conference sessions on Indochina opened with the United States at odds with France and Britain as to the value of negotiations to settle the conflict. France, the western belligerent in the conflict, considered negotiations the best means to end the war. This view was shared by the British, who encouraged the French to achieve a negotiated settlement. In contrast the Americans opposed the negotiations, which they believed would lead only to a settlement favorable to the Viet Minh. Forced to accept the process of negotiation, the Americans then encountered the problem of being unable to influence directly the type of settlement that the United States would prefer. Indeed, they were helpless to prevent the French from accepting an agreement with which the Americans felt they could not be associated.

The Geneva Conference had been originally scheduled to settle the Korean War. At the Berlin Conference of February, 1954, the French managed to attain American agreement also to discuss Indochina at Geneva. (Those nations sending delegations to this phase of negotiations

were the United States, France, Great Britain, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, The Soviet Union, and China; also present were representatives of the Viet Minh.) American officials had opposed inclusion of the Indochinese situation in negotiations at Geneva, but conceded on the point due to their fear that the French would not ratify the European Defense Community, a foreign policy goal of high priority. Still, the Americans remained skeptical of the negotiations. Secretary of State Dulles pointedly warned the French that the commitment to negotiate "may give us trouble, although it does not compromise my basic principles and was made inescapable by pressure on [French Foreign Minister Georges] Bidault. We have a difficult negotiation ahead of us." (1) The American concern regarding negotiations was that the French had not yet proved their military and political superiority over the Viet Minh. The Americans were also worried that the announcement of negotiations would lead to increased Viet Minh activity, which could weaken the French position. (2)

These fears became reality as the French military position in Indochina deteriorated. American efforts to strengthen the French situation had failed, primarily because of the inability of the Americans to get British support. The British, in fact, refused to consider military action until after the Geneva Conference. The British stated that should there be a peaceful settlement by partition, they would then consider a defensive area

including non-communist Indochina. Among the French, the Americans found a great determination to achieve a settlement through negotiation. The French did, however, assert that they would accept no agreement that would threaten the security of the French forces or would change the military situation in favor of the Viet Minh. French Prime Minister Laniel, in fact, had laid down terms that would require the Viet Minh to accept defeat. Despite this apparent forceful position, the Americans were certain that the French were losing their will to fight and that they would seek any settlement. The Americans were forced to consider how to attain their policy goals through a process of negotiations in which they had little influence. (3)

In developing their negotiating position for the Geneva Conference, the Americans had to consider several real and possible aspects. First, it was necessary to establish the assumptions with which they would operate. These assumptions were: American policy would continue to oppose communist expansion; it was improbable the communists would accept an agreement that would maintain a non-communist Southeast Asia; and domestic pressures would cause the French to accept any settlement of the Indochina war. Based on these assumptions, the Americans emphasized the need to convince the French to stand firm against any settlement that would threaten Laniel's stated goals. The Americans made it clear to the French

that any settlement falling short of these goals would have an adverse effect on American relations with the French and would also result in diminishment of French global prestige. The Americans were still aware that the French might still decide that the end of the conflict was more important. As such, the Americans also considered the possible effects of their participation in an unsatisfactory settlement. The disadvantages of participation were the possible diminishment of American prestige and the loss of American influence to prevent the French from accepting such an agreement. The advantages of participation were that the Americans would moderate their image as overly aggressive (a prime cause of allied reluctance to be associated with American-sponsored "united action") and would also remain in a position to "whittle down the degree of unacceptability of an Indochina settlement." (4) On the whole they considered it more advantageous to participate, but still deemed it essential that they should not be associated with an unsatisfactory agreement. If this became a possibility, the Americans extended their planning to contemplate the possible necessity of intervention to continue the conflict, by fighting with the Associated States. Considering all this, the American delegation resolved first to bolster the French position. This was the first step toward attaining their own objectives of preventing the spread of communism in Southeast Asia. (5)

The efforts to bolster the French were primarily military. Although the decision had been reached not to intervene, the Americans continued to imply the possibility of future action. This ploy required careful maneuvering by the American delegation. As Dulles noted, it was essential that the possibility of American intervention should not be used by the French as a "card" to be played at Geneva, especially if the French themselves had no intention to request that intervention. That would result in the Americans appearing as an obstacle to settlement and would provide the French with an excuse and scapegoat for failure to complete a settlement. (6)

The instructions issued to the American delegation dictated that their participation in negotiations was to be limited. American participation was as an "interested nation which . . . is neither a belligerent nor a principal in the negotiation." (7) The American role was to assist in the completion of an agreement, providing that such an agreement did not either lead to a communist dictatorship or threaten in any way the existing governments and forces of the Associated States. These instructions further dictated that the delegation should, in the event of an unsatisfactory agreement, determine whether or not the American participation should continue, or if disassociation from the proceedings was necessary. (8)

Going into the Geneva Conference, the American delegation faced a difficult situation. The primary goal

of the delegation was to assist the French in the attainment of a settlement that would guarantee a non-communist Indochina and assure the safety and continuance of western interests in the region. This would seem to require that the Americans take an active role in the process. Yet the American delegation's instructions were such that they could not exercise their influence. With the deterioration of the French military situation, the American influence correspondingly also fell.

At the opening of the Geneva proceedings on Indochina, the Americans reiterated to the French that the American position was based on the anticipated success of the Navarre Plan. The Americans required of the French a positive indication that this plan would be actively pursued throughout the negotiations, especially if a settlement proved unattainable. The Americans were aware that this position could be difficult to pursue, even if the French were offered direct American intervention, because the French government was unstable as a result of public dissatisfaction. The Americans were particularly concerned that the public pressure for settlement would undermine Laniel's negotiating stance. (9)

The domestic political situation in France appeared more serious when coupled with the military situation in Indochina. The French already faced the prospect of a major defeat at Dien Bien Phu as the conference opened, and attempted to put up a strong front on this point,

implying that reinforcements might be sent to Indochina following the fall of Dien Bien Phu. Among American officials there was little doubt that this was merely a bluff, and that the fall of Dien Bien Phu would have serious repercussions. Indeed, the Americans realized that the French threat to intensify their efforts was a ploy to induce the Communists to settle the conflict quickly. The Americans believed that in the event Dien Bien Phu fell, it was likely that the Laniel government would collapse and be replaced by a government dedicated to ending the conflict. (10)

The importance of Dien Bien Phu to the French position was indicated by Dulles on the eve of his departure for Geneva:

> The Communists in Vietnam, spurred on by Red China, have acted on the assumption that a quick easy victory at Dien Bien Phu would open the door to a rapid Communist advance to domination of the entire Southeast Asia area. They concluded they were justified in recklessly squandering the lives of their subjects to conquer this strong point so as to confront the Geneva Conference with what could be portrayed as both a military and political victory for Communism. (11)

Clearly, the Americans had tied the outcome of Dien Bien Phu to the type of settlement that could come out of Geneva. The political aspects were as important as the military. For this reason it was essential that the garrison hold out as long as possible once the Geneva Conference was underway. It was unfortunate for both the French and American positions then that the garrison fell on May 8. (12)

The loss of Dien Bien Phu greatly weakened the French military posture in Indochina. The Americans became particularly concerned that the French could no longer prevent the Viet Minh from taking large areas of the Tonkin Delta in the north, including the cities of Hanoi and Haiphong. Should this occur, it was highly probable that the French would be forced to accept any settlement the Communists put forth. As French public pressure increased after the fall of Dien Bien Phu, the Americans feared this possibility had increased. The Americans thus appeared to have but one option remaining--intervention, although they realized that it was still dependent upon a direct French request. The French, however, were no longer likely to request this action. Also the British, to whom the Americans looked for support, were still very much committed to negotiations. The Americans were thus unable to develop this option of intervention. (13)

As expected, the fall of Dien Bien Phu strengthened the negotiation position of the Communist delegations. The Communists had adopted, as part of their position, a hard-line attitude. This led the Americans to believe that the Geneva Conference could continue indefinitely. On May 20 the American delegation reported that the Communists were refusing any concessions, in an effort to get "at maximum a major part or possibly all of Indo-china, and at minimum a partition which would produce

a Communist state comprising considerable part of Vietnam. They must anticipate that the present French Government cannot long survive . . . so it is to their interests to prolong this conference without making concessions." (14) Further comments from the American delegation on the subject of partition indicated that they were unclear of the position they were to take on this issue. The American delegation was aware that partition was unacceptable, subject to the disassociation if approved. But the unclear nature of the American instructions as to exactly what would be considered unacceptable caused uncertainty. (15)

An additional concern of the American delegation was that along with a partition, there now arose the issue of instituting a cease-fire, which required some type of supervision. The controversy over supervison centered on the composition of the supervisory commission. The position of the French and British, supported by the Americans, called for the commission to be comprised of four Asian neutrals. The Communists on the other hand were in favor of a commission composed of India, and Pakistan (Asian neutrals) and Czechoslovakia and Poland. The latter two nations, controlled by the Communists, were rejected by the Western nations. The Communists remained adamant on this point, refusing to consider any other options. (16)

As the first phase of the Indochina negotiations came to a close, the Americans realized they were in a weak position. The instructions issued to the delegation at Geneva effectively blocked any direct American influence in the negotiations. That the French and British positions were equally weak, being intent upon reaching a settlement, also presented the Americans with problems. In contrast to the disunity of the Western delegations, the Communist delegations showed a great cohesion and unity of purpose. As the Americans had feared, the Communists played upon the superiority of their military position to stone-wall the negotiations. The Communist resistance to compromise was preventing settlement of the conflict, a fact that also resulted in the undermining of the Laniel government.

The fall of the Laniel government did not come as a surprise to the Americans, nor were they surprised in the election, on June 18 by the French National Assembly, of Pierre Mendes-France as Premier. The Americans had believed that the Communist negotiating position had been designed to bring about the fall of Laniel's government, with the hope it would be replaced by a more pliable leadership. Consequently, the Americans became more convinced that an unsatisfactory agreement was to be reached soon. Mendes-France's stated intention to resign if he could not obtain at least a cease-fire by July 20 was seen by the Americans as evidence of the French

desperation to end the war. As a result of these new developments in France and the continued deterioration of the military situation in Indochina, the Americans thought it necessary to reconsider their stance at Geneva. (17)

As the negotiations reconvened in late June, the French once again approached the Americans on the issue of military assistance. Particularly, Henri Bonnet (French Ambassador to the United States) complained to Dulles that because of American reluctance to commit to intervention, the French negotiating position had been weakened. Dulles replied to this charge "That the French could not have a continuing option to call [the United States] into war at some future date and under conditions which could not be foreseen." (18) This indicated that the Americans had begun to evolve a new position that no longer called for the continued military support of the French. Further evidence could be seen in Dulles's remarks to Congressional leaders concerning a message he had received from Mendes-France. This message (received June 7, 1954) had conveyed Mendes-France's hope that should the talks break down, the Americans would take a serious view of the situation. Dulles remarked that he felt this to be rather strange, as the American effort had been to get the French to take a serious view of the situation. (19)

These expressions of concern by the French appeared to be posturing on their part in hopes of loosening the Communist negotiating position. In fact, at the same time that the French were inquiring as to what the Americans would do if the talks failed, they were also beginning to express their optimism that a tentative agreement (via direct talks with the Viet Minh) would be completed within two weeks. The Americans were already certain of this possibility; they already had moved into discussions with the French and British of what terms were to be considered to be the minimum acceptable. (20)

These discussions, conducted through June, led to the development of a set of seven conditions that the Americans and the British required to be included in any settlement. The Americans emphasized that it would be essential for these conditions to be met if they were to accept the settlement. The seven points were:

> 1. Preserves the integrity and independence of Laos and Cambodia and assures the withdrawal of the Viet Minh forces therefrom;
> 2. Preserves at least the southern half of Vietnam, and if possible an enclave in the delta; in this connection we would be unwilling to see the line of division of responsibility drawn further south than a line running generally west from Donghoi;
> 3. Does not impose on Laos, Cambodia, or retained Vietnam any restrictions materially impairing their capacity to maintain stable non-Communist regimes; especially restrictions impairing their right to maintain adequate forces for internal security, to import arms and employ foreign advisors;
> 4. Does not contain political provisions which would risk loss of the retained area to Communist control;

5. Does not exclude the possibility of the ultimate reunification of Vietnam by peaceful means;

6. Provides for the peaceful and humane transfer, under international supervision, of those people desiring to be moved from one zone to another of Vietnam;

7. Provides effective machinery for international supervision of the agreement. (21)

The development of these Seven Points was an indication of the American realization that an agreement was inevitable. The Seven Points themselves were established as a minimum solution that the French believed could be obtained through negotiation. This being the case, the Americans insisted that they should include all of the points in any settlement. American officials warned the French that failure to ensure the inclusion of all the points would cause the Americans to opt for disassociation from the settlement. (22)

The Americans, through these talks with the French and British, had laid down the basis for their possible withdrawal or disassociation from the Geneva Conference. The France-United States Position Paper (Communique, issued July 13-14, 1954) recognized the right of the Americans to disassociate themselves publicly from any terms that differed from those established in the Seven Points. (23)

The idea of withdrawal from the Geneva Conference had already gained the attention of American officials as a last measure to prevent an unsatisfactory agreement. Robert R. Bowie's (Director, Policy Planning Staff)

memorandum of June 24 contemplated the advantages and disadvantages of American withdrawal. Bowie's premise was that as the Americans were unable to influence the negotiations at Geneva, it was essential to develop new settings. The best way to accomplish this would be to "bust up the Geneva Conference." Bowie noted that Congress had already approved such a move if it appeared that negotiations were to lead either to partition or to a subversion of the established governments in Indochina. In Bowie's estimation both conditions appeared to be part of the conceived agreement. However, to be effective, it was essential that the Americans draw the Associated States out of Geneva as well. Bowie was able to develop only one strong point in favor of withdrawal: provided the Americans were successful in bringing the Associated States out of the confernce, they would then be in a position to offer direct aid to these governments, plus have a greater influence on new negotiations. This prospect, though, again brought up the question of the extent to which the Americans would be willing to become involved in Indochina. (24)

The disadvantages of such action kept the Americans from withdrawing. As long as the possibility remained that either the talks would break off or that a satisfactory agreement could be reached, the Americans found continued participation more advantageous. This was particularly true if the Americans wished to continue

their pressure upon the French and British to negotiate within the framework of the Seven Points. Important as this was, a second factor causing the Americans to continue participation was the concern over the European Defense Community. The Americans feared that should they decide to withdraw from Geneva, the French might in retaliation reject EDC, a move that could cause serious damage to the Western alliance. (25)

Thus the Americans found themselves dependent upon the French to conclude a favorable agreement based on the Seven Points. Yet, having no influence on the French aside from some consultations, the Americans could not be certain of such an outcome. Facing this situation, the Americans began preparing their position in the event of an unsatisfactory settlement. The first step was to make clear the United States would not guarantee a settlement that would establish directly or indirectly a communist regime. This action was taken in response to pressure from the Communist delegations that all participants in the negotiations should also guarantee the settlement. The second step was to warn the French and British that any settlement outside the provisions of the Seven Points would not receive American support. By these actions the Americans established that their position had remained consistent with American policy to resist communist expansion, however achieved. (26)

The American delegation thus had firmly established as well their position with regard to the completion of the negotiations. The essential points established were: complete compliance by the French with the Seven Points as the only basis for settlement, and the right of the Americans to disassociate themselves from any settlement that did not include those points; and refusal by the United States to guarantee any conditions of settlement, especially if those terms pointed toward a communist takeover.

Contrary to American expectations, the final agreement drafted essentially satisfied all conditions of the Seven Points. At worst, the Americans were able to find only a few instances in which they found that a point had not been completely applied. This was the case with Point Six, calling for provisions of "peaceful and humane transfer . . . of those peoples desiring to be moved from one zone to another of Vietnam." (27) The agreements in this regard lacked only sufficient international supervision. That the Americans declined to participate as a signatory to the agreements was somewhat of a surprise. The Head of the American delegation, Under Secretary of State Walter Bedell Smith, instead read a statement explaining the position of the United States on the agreements. This statement declared that the American position was:

(i) it will refrain from the threat or use of force to disturb them, in accordance with Article 2(4) of the Charter of the United Nations . . . (ii) it will view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the aforesaid agreement with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security.

In connection with the settlement in the declaration concerning free elections in Vietnam, my government wishes to make clear its position . . . as follows:

'In the case of nations, now divided against their will, we shall continue to seek to achieve unity through free elections, supervised by the United Nations to ensure that they are conducted fairly.'" (28)

That the Americans refused to be directly associated with the agreements was surprising, as the settlement did not differ substantially from the Seven Points. Yet, as the American goal had been defeat of the Viet Minh, coupled with the establishment of strong pro-Western governments in Indochina, the final settlement did fall far short of that goal. The establishment of a communist enclave in north Vietnam had been objected to by the Americans prior to the negotiations, and preventing such a development had been the primary purpose of American aid to the French. The Americans had also counted on France to maintain its military pressure upon the Viet Minh throughout the negotiations. Yet following the fall of Dien Bien Phu, the French military effort had largely frozen, undertaking only those measures to consolidate its forces. In essence the Americans had gotten nothing through the negotiation process, and indeed had lost ground with the establishment of a communist enclave in

the northern part of Vietnam. The stance taken by the United States on the Geneva Conference can be seen in Dulles's statement of July 23. Noting that the results of the Geneva Conference were caused by the weakness of the French military position, Dulles now directed American attention to the future:

> The important thing from now on is not to mourn the past but to seize the future opportunity to prevent the loss in northern Vietnam from leading to the extension of communism throughout Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific. (29)

NOTES
CHAPTER FOUR

1. Telegram: The Secretary of State (Dulles) to the Department of State, Berlin, February 19, 1954, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, v. XVI, p. 416

2. Secretary's Briefing for Members of Congress, May 5, 1954, Eisenhower Library, Dulles Papers, Subject Series, Box 9, "Indochina" 1954 (3) folder.

3. Telegram: The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State, Paris, March 6, 1954, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, v. XVI, p. 437. See also: Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson), Washington, March 15, 1954, ibid, pp. 463-4; Telegram: The Secretary of State to the Acting Secretary of State, April 25, 1954, Eisenhower Library, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 2, April 1954 (1) folder; Telegram: The Secretary of State to the Acting Secretary of State, April 26, 1954, ibid; Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs (Bonsal), Washington, March 8, 1954, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, v. XVI, pp. 437-41.

4. Memorandum by the Advisor to the United States Delegation (Stelle) to the Special Advisor to the United States Delegation (Bowie), Geneva, May 1, 1954, ibid, pp. 645-46.

5. Letter to U. Alexis Johnson, Coordinator of United States Delegation from Foreign Military Affairs, April 15, 1954, United States-Vietnam Relations, v.IX, p. 385-87. See also: Ibid, v. I, pt. III, A.1., p. A-8; Telegram: The Secretary of State to the United States Delegation, Washington, May 8, 1954, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, v. XVI, p. 731.

6. Memorandum by Edmund A. Gullion of the Policy Planning Staff to the Director of that Staff (Bowie) [Washington], February 24, 1954, ibid, pp. 417-24. See also: Telegram: The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France, May 17, 1954, Eisenhower Library, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 2, May 1954 (2) folder; Memorandum by the Special Advisor to the United States

Delegation (Heath) to the Under Secretary of State (Smith), Geneva, May 3, 1954, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, v. XVI, pp. 672-75.

7. Draft Instruction for Head of United States Delegation, United States-Vietnam Relations, v. IX, pp. 445-50.

8. Ibid.

9. Draft Position Paper Prepared for the Indochina Phase of the Geneva Conference, Washington, March 29, 1954, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, v. XVI, pp. 488-89. See also: The Director of the Office of Foreign Military Affairs of the Department of Defense (Vice-Admiral Arthur C. Davis) to the Coordinator for the United States Delegation to the Geneva Conference (Johnson), Washington, April 15, 1954, ibid, pp. 520-22; Memorandum for the Special Advisor to the United States Delegation (Bowie), Geneva, April 28, 1954, ibid, p. 598.

10. The Director of the Office of Foreign Military Affairs of the Department of Defense (Davis) to the Coordinator for the United States Delegation to the Geneva Conference (Johnson), Washington, April 15, 1954, ibid, p. 522. See also: Memorandum by the Special Advisor to the United States Delegation (Douglas MacArthur) to the Secretary of State, Geneva, April 27, 1954, ibid, p. 581; Memorandum for the Special Advisor to the United States Delegation (Bowie), Geneva, April 28, 1954, ibid, p. 599.

11. Statement by Dulles, April 19, 1954, Eisenhower Library, Ann Whitman File, International Series, Box 28, "Indochina" folder.

12. Memorandum of Discussion at the 196th Meeting of the National Security Council, Saturday, May 8, 1954, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, v. XIII, pt. 2, p. 1505.

13. Memorandum by the Advisor to the United States Delegation (Bowie) to the Head of the Delegation (Smith), Geneva, June 7, 1954, ibid, v. xvi, pp. 1051-52. See also: Telegram: The Secretary of State to the Department of State, Geneva, April 26, 1954, ibid, p. 575.

14. Telegram: The United States Delegation to the Department of State, Geneva, May 20, 1954, ibid, pp. 864-65.

15. United States Delegation to Special Advisor to the United States Delegation (Davis), United States - Vietnam Relations, v. IX, pp. 498-99.

16. Ibid. See also: The United States Delegation to the Department of State, Geneva, June 2, 1954, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, v. XVI, p. 1001.

17. Telegram: The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State, Paris, June 18, 1954, ibid, v. XIII, pp. 1720-21. See also: Document dated June 23, 1954, Eisenhower Library, Legislative Meeting Series, Box 1, May-June folder.

18. Telegram: The Secretary of State to the Under Scretary of State and the Ambassador in France (Dillon), June 16, 1954, Eisenhower Library, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 2, June 1954 (2) folder.

19. Ibid. See also: Document dated June 28, 1954, Eisenhower Library, Legislative Meetings Series, Box 1, May-June folder.

20. Telegram: The United States Delegation to the Department of State, Geneva, June 26, 1954, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, v. XVI, pp. 1252-53.

21. Telegram: The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France, Washington, June 28, 1954, ibid, pp. 1256-57.

22. Position Paper for Geneva, Eisenhower Library, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 3, July 1954 (1) folder.

23. France-United States Position Paper, Communique, Paris, July 13-14, 1954, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, v. XVI, pp. 1363-64.

24. Memorandum by Charles C. Stelle to the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Bowie), Washington, June 24, 1954, ibid, pp. 1741-43.

25. Telegram: The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Secretary of State, Paris, July 4, 1954, United States-Vietnam Relations, v. IX, pp. 606-07. See also: Telegram: The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France, Washington, June 9, 1954, Eisenhower Library, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 2, June 1954 (2) folder.

26. Ibid.

27. Memorandum by the Special Advisor to the United States Delegation (Herman Phelger), Geneva, July 21, 1954, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, v. XVI, p. 1491. See also: Telegram: The Secretary of State to the Embassy in France, Washington, June 28, 1954, ibid, pp. 1256-57.

28. Eighth Plenary Session on Indochina, Geneva, July 21; Telegram, The United States Delegation to the Department of State, Geneva, July 21, 1954, ibid, pp. 1500-01.

29. News Conference Statement by Secretary Dulles, Department of State Bulletin, v. XXXI, no. 788, August 2, 1954, p. 163.

CHAPTER FIVE:

CONCLUSION

The American failure in Indochina was the result of an inability to form a cohesive, positive policy. The Eisenhower administration, upon assuming office, had inherited a bad situation in Indochina. Indeed, the administration realized that swift action was necessary to reverse the deterioration of the situation. Yet the administration was unable to take those actions that it considered essential for the defense of Indochina. Between January, 1953, and the close of the Geneva Confernce in July, 1954, the Americans contemplated several possible actions. But none were acceptable, leaving the administration with the continuation of aid as the only suitable policy for the region.

The reasons for the American failure had several roots, ranging from domestic concerns to European policy goals. Essentially, it appeared that the concern for Asia was overridden by other policy goals. One facet of this was in the administration's reluctance to press France on the issue of reforms in Indochina. The Americans had long desired the formation of strong,

independent states as a means of solidifying native support against communism and diminishing support for the Viet Minh. Still, the administration was unwilling to apply pressure upon the French. Though the administration's concern was directed at the need for continued French military presence in Indochina, the greater concern was related to American policy goals in Europe, specifically the French ratification of EDC. Fearing that the French might pull out of Indochina completely, refuse ratification of EDC, or in an extreme reaction, both, the administration chose only to encourage reform, but did not press the issue. The administration thereby avoided a potentially disastrous confrontation with the French.

A second cause of the American failure was the inability of the Americans to define fully their role in the conflict. The Americans had since 1950 provided increased financial and material aid to the French effort. By 1954, the Americans were providing 70 percent of the material cost of the war. (1) However, when the situation took a drastic turn for the worse, especially at Dien Bien Phu, the administration was unsure how it should respond. The 1952 Presidential campaign promises of Eisenhower to avoid the involvement of American ground forces in combat prevented the Americans from replacing the French as the dominant Western power. Likewise, an attempt to confront the communists with a "united front" also failed. The British in this case refused to

cooperate. Like the Americans, the British were concerned about having their forces tied up in a ground war in Indochina. But the British were also concerned about the administration's downgrading of conventional military force in favor of nuclear forces: the possible use by the Americans of nuclear force in Indochina might lead to a response by the Soviet Union in Europe. In this instance then, the administration's domestic policy had a profound effect on its foreign policy. As a direct result of budgetary concerns, the Americans were unable to fully utilize all options in Indochina. (2)

It seems that from the beginning the Eisenhower administration had crippled its own ability to develop a policy for Indochina that would fit into an overall global policy. Throughout 1953-1954 the Americans were consistently forced into a series of responses to communist actions, a problem that was inconsistent with the desired goals of Eisenhower's policy to place the communists on the defensive. Still, the American dependence upon the French, and the fact that the Americans themselves had chosen to move away from the use of conventional forces, were the primary hindrances to a workable policy.

Other authors, too, have noted these problems. Robert Shaplen (The Lost Revolution) contends that the great American failure was in not pressing strongly enough nor early enough for complete Indochinese

independence. According to Shaplen, if the Americans had adopted a stronger position between 1948 and 1952, the subsequent development of stronger native governments in Indochina might have prevented the crisis of 1954. (3)

While this analysis surely points out the major problem that the Eisenhower administration faced, it still falls short of explaining all the problems confronted in developing a policy for Indochina. Alonzo Hamby (The Imperial Years) and John Spanier (American Foreign Policy Since World War II) incorporate into their analyses that during the critical period of 1953-1954--when it had become clear that the French were militarily unable to win the war--the administration was unable to develop a suitable alternative to the French. Hamby particularly points out that:

> Pledged as he was to roll back communism on the one hand and avoid Korea-style wars on the other, Eisenhower faced a dilemma. The New Look defense posture practically foreclosed the use of ground troops . . . and the use of atomic weapons, probably diplomatically impossible anyway, carried the serious danger of obliterating Deinbienphu as well as its attackers. The British were adamantly opposed to any widening of the Indochina crisis. . . . Under the circumstances, the adminstration could do little more than undermine its creditability. (4)

Spanier, too, notes that it was domestic politics that had the greater role in American decisions. The administration had publicly stated its consideration of Indochina as strategically vital, possibly necessitating American intervention to save the region. Still, the administration did not act, Spanier explaining:

> The reason for this is simple: because of the nature of American domestic politics, the Eisenhower administration was . . . unwilling to involve the United States in another Korea. Moreover, the administration was already cutting the size of the army, and apparently there were not sufficient divisions available for fighting in Indochina. (5)

Spanier further notes that the administration was unable to implement its own stated policy of 'massive retaliation' (the concept of punishing the enemy--presumably with nuclear weapons--in response to aggressive action) because of the risk of total war. (6)

The American failure, then, was not because of any one problem, and indeed, not necessarily as a result of those points presented here. The Eisenhower administration itself cannot be held solely accountable for the failures of 1954, as it was attempting to handle a situation inherited from a previous administration. Still, considering the high ideals presented by the administration as the basis of its foreign policy, the Eisenhower administration displayed a surprising inability to confront the situation in an constructive manner. Indeed, rather than placing the communists of the defensive as envisioned in Eisenhower's first speech to Congress, the administration instead became caught up in a cycle of response to communist action. In the end the administration could not prevent the culmination of a major crisis that eventually led to the formation of a communist state at a geographical location that the Americans could not tolerate. The experience of

Indochina proved to be a poor beginning for the administration's foreign policy and quickly displayed the weakness of the American commitment when faced with critical decisions.

NOTES
CHAPTER FIVE

1. John W. Spanier, American Foreign Policy Since World War II; (New York, 1971), p. 117. See also: Walter LaFeber, America, Russia, and the Cold War; (New York, 1980), p. 161.

2. Spanier, American Foreign Policy Since World War II, p. 118.

3. Robert Shaplen, The Lost Revolution; (New York, 1966), p. 99.

4. Alonzo L. Hamby, The Imperial Years; (New York, 1976), p. 208.

5. Spanier, American Foreign Policy Since World War II, p. 118.

6. Ibid, p. 119.

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