THE UNITED STATES AND THE INDOCHINESE WAR

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

By the middle of 1950, the United States was facing serious political problems in East and Southeast Asia. The communization of China and the Korean War had gravely undermined American policies in the Orient and necessitated a re-evaluation of these policies. In the course of this re-assessment, the United States reached the decision that it had a vital interest in preventing communist-oriented forces from gaining political control of Indochina.[1]

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the nature of American interest in Indochina and to analyze American policies there during the four critical years of the Indochinese War, 1950-1954. These policies will be examined in the context of the traditional policies of the United States toward East Asia. To understand the relationship between these more recent policies pursued in Indochina and the traditional policies pursued in Asia, it is necessary to understand the nature and extent of the problems confronting the United States in Asia in 1950.

The defeat of the Kuomintang and subsequent communization of China were major blows to the United States. During the Second World War, she had heavily committed herself to a strong and unified China friendly to the United States and able to play a key role in the

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[1] Indochina was made up of what are today the independent states of North and South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

preservation of a balance of power in the Far East. The establishment of a communist regime in China meant, at the very least, that China would not fulfill the role cast for her by the United States. In addition, it soon came to be realized that China's very communization would prevent the realization of any balance of power favorable to the United States because it had created a power distribution quite inimical to United States interests in Asia. When the Korean War broke out, the United States recognized that not only was the power distribution in Asia unfavorable to her interests, but also that forces were at work which could lead to a Soviet domination of East and Southeast Asia. At the same time, within Indochina, the French were engaged in a war with a communist-oriented nationalist movement, the outcome of which could certainly have great influence on the surrounding areas of Southeast Asia.

By itself, Indochina posed an unhappy dilemma for United States policy makers who were anxious to support independence movements, yet concerned with the communist orientation of Ho Chi Minh. Viewed, however, in the larger context of the growing communist influence in all of Asia, the Indochinese War seemed fraught with danger to the United States and her allies. Thus, in 1950, the concern of the United States with her own deteriorating power position in Asia and the growing influence of communist forces led her to re-examine her policies toward the Far East and to focus new attention on Indochina. The goal of United States policies toward Indochina became the prevention of a communist takeover, because, as shall be discussed, a communist victory would disturb the existing power relations in Asia in a manner unfavorable to the United States.

This study will attempt an investigation of the hypothesis: United States policies in Indochina during the last four years of the Indochinese War represented a continuation of the traditional policies of the United States in the Far East. It is suggested that there was a great deal of similarity between the goals of American policy in Indochina and the instruments of this policy, and the traditional policies and instruments of the United States in East Asia. The study will also investigate a second, but related, hypothesis: The Eisenhower-Dulles' policies toward Indochina attempted to utilize Indochina as a fulcrum for a new balance of power in Asia. The Eisenhower Administration sought to create a counterweight to Sino-Soviet power in the Far East, a counterweight which would contribute to the creation of a new balance of power.

Justification

Although the literature is replete with analyses of the Indochinese War, little has been devoted to an analysis of United States policies in Indochina during this period. Only four studies have focused on this problem. Two, however, were written either during or immediately after the Indochinese War and lacked both resources and historical perspective.[2] Three lack continuity because they were concerned only with United States policies for a selected period of the War.[3]

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[2]Miriam Farley, United States Relations with Southeast Asia (New York, 1955), and Frances Louise Johnson, American Post War Policy in Indochina (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of California, 1951).

[3]Viktor Bator, Vietnam: A Diplomatic Tragedy (New York, 1965). Also, Johnson, American Post War Policy in Indochina, and Melvin Gurtov, The First Vietnam Crisis (New York, 1967).

None have attempted to analyze the historical antecedents of these policies. Thus, there appears some justification for a study of this scope.

Methodology

For the purposes of this study, it is necessary to define certain terms which are frequently employed.

The "traditional" (old) balance of power in the Far East is defined as the equilibrium (not static, however) which existed from the turn of the twentieth century up until World War II.

The power distribution (or power structure) in the Far East at the end of 1949 was characterized by the end of the old balance of power with the Soviet Union and China holding the preponderance of power.

The new balance of power which the Eisenhower Administration appeared to be working for was a balance of power based on the strength of a Southeast Asian organization for collective defense which could "neutralize" Sino-Soviet power. At the same time, Japan in East Asia was also to figure prominently in the containment of China and the Soviet Union. This thesis is not concerned, however, with the Japanese role in the overall containment structure.

The Far East for the purposes of this study, is defined as including not only China, Japan, Korea, but also the entire area of what is commonly called Southeast Asia (Burma, Thailand, Indochina, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia).

This study is based primarily on material gathered from official United States Government sources, particularly the Department of State Bulletin, Foreign Relations of the United States, and the Public Papers

of the Presidents. Memoirs, wherever available, were utilized to provide additional insights into American policies. It should be noted that within the memoirs of the key public officials, conflicting material often is found; some attempt will be made to reconcile or explain these contradictions. For the chapter on traditional American policy in the Far East, secondary sources which have come to be recognized as authoritative are utilized.

Chapter II is devoted to a recapitulation of traditional American policy in the Far East. Chapter III contains background information on the Indochinese War and on early American policies toward Indochina, as well as a discussion of the problems confronting the United States in the Far East in 1949-1950. In Chapter IV, United States policies toward Indochina from 1950-1954 are discussed and analyzed. In the final chapter, V, conclusions are presented and United States policies toward Indochina are evaluated.

CHAPTER II

THE TRADITIONAL FAR EASTERN POLICIES OF THE UNITED STATES

The Far Eastern[1] policies of the United States developed slowly out of a body of precedents laid down in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries and in response to new problems created by changing patterns of political power. The diplomat followed in the wake of the trader; the latter was a critical factor during the gestation stage of American policies. In this chapter, the bases of these policies, as well as the policies themselves, will be examined.

Earliest American Contacts with the Far East

Earliest American contacts with the Far East were almost exclusively commercial in nature. In 1784, the Empress of China, carrying a cargo of ginseng, sailed on an exploratory voyage to Canton. Before this, there were not "more than one or two native born Americans who had ever been on the coasts of Asia, and in 1784, probably there were not a half dozen people on all the Atlantic seaboard who had any first-hand knowledge whatsoever of the other side of the world."[2] Although only modest profits were realized by the Empress of China, some

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[1] In this chapter, the term Far East will be used to refer to China, Japan, Southeast Asia, and the surrounding islands.

[2] Tyler Dennett, Americans in East Asia (New York, 1922), p. 4.

Americans, predicting greater opportunities for trade with the Far East, soon agitated for tariff protection against East Asian goods carried on foreign ships.[3] In the Tariff Act of 1789, preferential duties were extended to Asian imports carried on American ships. Most of this early trade was conducted by numerous small New England merchants, who had to ply a circuitous trade route and, often, were required to pay for Eastern goods with cash. As a small agricultural nation with only incipient manufactures, the United States had little to exchange for Asian goods.

The United States government, during these early days, seems to have taken little interest in the welfare of Americans in East Asia, probably because she did not have the means to protect their activities. As a result, early American traders in the Far East were usually conciliatory toward the local authorities and, without benefit of company warships or treaties, relied on their own bargaining skills and cultivated the friendship of native authorities to promote their interests.

This developing commerce was interrupted by the War of 1812, but subsequently, trade grew rapidly and by the late 1820's, the small merchant had been replaced by a few large commercial firms having somewhat of a monopoly on the trade.[4] These commercial firms gradually came to view China as a potentially unlimited market for American manufactured goods. Exports began to grow. In 1826, fifteen thousand dollars worth of cottons were exported; in 1836, one hundred seventy thousand dollars

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[3]Reportedly $37,727. Ibid, p. 7.

[4]Trade never, however, exceeded a modest sum. Total trade from 1817 to 1833 was twelve and one-half million dollars and most of this represented Chinese imports. C. F. Remer, Foreign Investments in China (New York, 1933), p. 242.

worth of cottons were sold. By 1845, annual sales were well over two million dollars.[5] Americans continued to purchase more than they sold, "but the Americans had had a glimpse of Asia as a market for American manufactured goods, and that glimpse influenced the policy of Americans and guided the formation of the policy of their government."[6]

Almost all trade was with Canton, but Americans were interested in other Asiatic opportunities, especially in Japan. Japan was a closed society, however, with foreign commerce generally prohibited by Japanese law. A few Americans had had an occasion to visit Japan when, in 1798, the Dutch chartered the American ship the Eliza to carry Dutch produce to Nagasaki. The use of American ships became a regular practice. When the United States government began to show an interest in Japan, it was through Dutch sources and Americans employed by the Dutch that the Department of State received its information on Japan.

During these early years of commercial intercourse, no official policy can be attributed to the United States government. As Tyler Dennett has emphasized: "The early American policy in Asia, meaning merely the policy of Americans for there was no other policy, was purely negative in its origins. It appeared only when there was opposition or obstruction to the trade. When trade was free, there was no policy."[7] Satisfied, in general, with their treatment by the Chinese, Americans fostered an atmosphere of harmony and friendship. "Relations between the Chinese and the American traders were, therefore, friendly,

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[5]Dennett, p. 73-74.

[6]Ibid., p. 74.

[7]Underlined by the author of this thesis for emphasis. Ibid., p. 69.

and on the whole not unsuccessful, though there were exceptions."[8]

It was not until 1833 that the United States evinced an interest in establishing diplomatic relations with countries in the Far East. In that year, at the request of Andrew Jackson, Edmund Roberts was sent to East Asia in an attempt to establish official contacts with Cochin China, Japan, Muscat, and Siam. Roberts died before he could get to Japan and was unable to establish diplomatic ties with Cochin China. The official relations between the United States and China were postponed until after the Opium War. The British, as a result of the Opium War, were able to extort numerous trading privileges from the Chinese. American merchants at Canton hungrily eyed the concessions secured by the British, and petitioned their Government, in 1842, to send an emissary to China to negotiate a commercial treaty. Under pressure from this nascent "China Lobby", the Government ordered the East India Squadron, commanded by Commodore Kearny, to proceed to China in a show of force. Kearny obtained a verbal promise from the Governor of Canton that the United States would receive most-favored nation status, but Kearny thought a written treaty was necessary. At the same time, the House of Representatives initiated investigations into the desirability of establishing treaty relations with China, and asked the Executive to furnish it with information on China. President Tyler decided to act, and in 1843, he sent Caleb Cushing, a member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, to China, with instructions which constituted the

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[8]Samuel Flagg Bemis, A Diplomatic History of the United States (New York, 1955), p. 345.

first official declaration of American policy in China.[9]

Cushing succeeded in negotiating the Treaty of Wanghia, 1844. Under the terms of this treaty, the United States was granted most-favored nation status and, in addition, privileges of extraterritoriality. This treaty established a precedent Americans were to adhere to throughout the nineteenth century: to insist, in negotiations with the Chinese, on privileges commensurate with those obtained by the British by force of arms. "It became ingloriously, yet very profitably, the role of the United States pacifically to follow England to China in the wake of war, and to profit greatly by the victories of British arms."[10] After the second Opium War of 1857-1858, Americans again reaped the benefits of European arms. Although at no time during the nineteenth century did the United States involve herself in acts of war in China and although she harshly condemned the "gun-boat diplomacy" of the Europeans, she was always quick to exploit conditions created by others.

Ten years after the first American treaty with China, the United States secured a treaty of friendship and restricted trade with Japan. This did not come about, however, until after several unsuccessful attempts had been made to "open up" Japan.[11] Finally, in 1853, Commodore Matthew C. Perry was sent to Japan to "persuade" the Japanese to open some of their ports to Americans for refueling, to make treaty

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[9]Cushing's official instructions were "to secure the entry of American ships and cargoes into these ports on terms as favorable as those which are enjoyed by English merchants." Quoted in Bemis, p. 345.

[10]Dennett, p. 159.

[11]Roberts had been given instructions to make treaty arrangements with Japan, but he never reached Japan, having died in Macao (1833). Subsequent missions by Biddle (1846), Glynn (1849), and Harris (1856) were unsuccessful.

arrangements for American ships wrecked off the coast of Japan, and to secure a commercial treaty, if possible. The resulting treaty, the Treaty of Kanagawa, proved somewhat disappointing to the Americans, in part, because Perry had been no match for the wily Japanese politicians. Two ports were opened to American citizens and arrangements were made to repatriate shipwrecked sailors, but Americans were prohibited from taking up permanent residence in Japan and trade was limited to a cash and carry basis. The Treaty did, however, contain a most-favored nation clause which permitted the United States to share in concessions later gained by the more sophisticated European diplomats. Townshend Harris was appointed consul-general in 1855 and in 1857 he negotiated a more favorable commercial treaty with Japan which was later used as the pattern for Japanese commercial relations with other states.

Throughout the nineteenth century, United States policies in the Far East were motivated primarily by commercial considerations. The principle means for the realization of American goals were: insistence on most-favored nation treatment for Americans and on equality of commercial opportunities. The United States never sought territorial concessions in the Far East, nor until 1898, did she seek naval bases in the Pacific. Since the American navy was still in a most rudimentary state of development, military measures could not be relied on to secure policy goals. Still, when propitiation of the Chinese authorities failed, and when the European powers managed to extort concessions by force, the United States, following in the wake of foreign navies, demanded privileges and rights equal to those obtained by the Europeans. Thus, early American policy in East Asia was aggressive diplomatically, but unsupported by American arms; its overriding concern was to

preserve and enhance commercial opportunities for Americans in the Far East.

Economic Interests

Economic factors continued to influence American Far Eastern policy during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, although American economic interests in the Far East never exceeded modest proportions, in spite of the optimistic predictions of expansionistic people such as Lodge, Roosevelt, and Mahan. Trade with China, for the four-year period 1926-1930, amounted to only 3 1/2 percent of the total United States imports and 2.3 percent of the total United States exports.[12] Still, by 1936, the United States possessed the largest share of China's foreign trade. During the 1930's Japan purchased between 8 and 9 percent of the total of United States exports.[13] American investments in the Far East were also somewhat limited. The total Far Eastern investment of the United States during the 1930's equalled three-quarters of a billion dollars, or between 5 and 6 percent of the total of American foreign investments. Slightly less than one-quarter of a billion dollars was invested in China, and a comparable amount in Japan.[14]

Several factors may have been responsible for the modesty of actual American commerce and investment in the Far East. The inability of the

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[12]Harold V. Sare, The United States and the Chinese Civil War (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1955), p. 3.

[13]John King Fairbank, The United States and China (Cambridge, 1965), p. 258.

[14]Ibid., p. 258.

Asian masses to buy foreign imports more than compensated for the ostensible vastness of the market. The subsistence level at which the majority of people lived, combined with the anachronistic economic structure existing in so many East Asian nations, rendered these markets of only limited value. Under these conditions, there were limited profitable investment opportunities. Investors were also loathe to risk their capital in nations that were unwilling or unable to guarantee the investments. The political instability prevalent in China and other Asian nations, along with the obvious inability of the United States government to protect American interests by arms, if necessary, let potential investors to shun the Far East.

Interestingly enough, even when the Government attempted to sponsor increased American economic involvement in the Far East, Americans were unwilling to take the risks involved. During the Taft Administration, the United States government tried to increase American influence in the Far East by augmenting American investments there. It lobbied the bankers to channel their money into Manchuria to build a railroad and subsequently, to extend their investments into railroad building throughout China. One plan, The Knox Neutralization Plan, called for the establishment of an international consortium to loan money to China. Although dollar diplomacy incurred the hostility of the Japanese and the Europeans by demanding equal opportunities for American capital investment in China, it was unsuccessful, because American investors could not be convinced by their government of the wisdom of increased economic involvement in China. In fact, from

1908-1912, American investments in China actually declined.[15]

Governmental loans and economic aid were another aspect of American economic involvement in the Far East. During the 1930's, the United States undertook the stabilizing of the Chinese economy in the face of Japanese aggression against China. Money was loaned to China in 1937 and again in 1938, to stabilize the Chinese currency. Credits for the purchase of United States agricultural products were extended in 1931, 1933 and again in 1938. By 1940, one hundred twenty million dollars had been allocated to China for the purchase of United States wheat, cotton, flour, and other agricultural and manufactured goods.[16]

Aside from commercial interests in the Philippines, American economic interests in the rest of the Far East, exclusive of China and Japan, were thinly spread and relatively insignificant. As mentioned previously, they totaled only one-quarter of a billion dollars during the 1930's.

It can be concluded then that although American policies often were oriented toward encouraging economic ties with East Asia, these economic ties were always quite circumscribed and never fulfilled the expectations of the expansionists. Instead of economic considerations dictating the foreign policies of the United States in the Far East, the United States, during the Taft Administration, tried to promote commercial ties with the Far East, so that these might serve as a bulwark of foreign policies. That American investment in and trade with

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[15]Whitney A. Griswold, The Far Eastern Policy of the United States (New York, 1938), p. 174.

[16]United States Department of State, United States Relations with China, Far Eastern Series 30 (Washington, 1949), p. 32.

the Far East never attained the heights anticipated was always as much a disappointment to the government as it was to eager businessmen.

Strategic Considerations

By 1900, strategic, as well as commercial considerations had to be weighed in the formulation of America's East Asian policies. Many years earlier, Perry had strongly recommended the procurement of bases and coaling stations in the Pacific, possibly through the occupation of Formosa, the Bonin Islands, or the Riyuku Islands, but his advice was not then heeded. The westward expansion of Americans and the fulfillment of Manifest Destiny, along with the expansionistic fever of the 1890's, led many Americans to look to the Far East as America's Far West and to clamor for Pacific bases. Hawaii was annexed by the United States in August, 1898, after almost forty years of agitation by the annexationists. Guam, Samoa, and the Philippine Islands were incorporated in December of the same year.

Truly, the acquisition of these distant possessions caused United States policies in the Far East to take on a new urgency, and strategic considerations--namely the defense of the Philippine Islands--became a dominant theme in the years which followed. By this almost inadvertent departure from the mainstream of nineteenth century policies--equality of commercial opportunity, most-favored nation status, no territorial concessions or naval bases--the United States dramatically increased her vested interests in the Far East, and burdened herself with the necessity for a more active role in Asian affairs. Strangely enough, the Philippine Islands had been acquired on the assumption they would further United States commercial interests in China, by providing

fueling stations and naval protection for American shipping, yet United States policies in China soon came to be shaped by the need for Philippine security.[17]

> The Philippine Islands, under the sovereignty of the United States became a monument to American good works and good-will, a model for colonial dominion and administration in the world. They also became a military and a diplomatic liability. They were the Achilles' heel of American defense, a hostage to Japan for American foreign policy in the Far East ... time and again ... American diplomats had to make concessions to Japanese aggression on the Continent of Asia in return for Japanese disavowal, either explicit or implicit, of aggressive intentions toward the Philippines.[18]

From 1900 on, strategic considerations, especially the defense of the Philippines, were a dominant theme in American Far Eastern policies. This hostage in foreign seas made it incumbent on the United States to try to preserve some sort of balance of power in the Far East. Insistence on the maintenance of the Far Eastern balance of power became, then, one of the pervasive themes of America's Far Eastern policies. The United States hoped that by preventing any one nation from becoming undisputed master of the Orient, it could most parsimoniously preserve its interests in the Pacific. The United States attempted to preserve this balance of power by bolstering any nation that happened to be the current Asian underdog. Thus, at the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, Roosevelt initially supported Japan who was then the Asian underdog, but by the end of the War, Japan's overwhelming victory over Russia led Roosevelt to try to secure mild peace terms for the Russians. Soon, however, China though traditionally weak came to be the undisputed underdog, the sick man of Asia, and Japan the major threat to the

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[17]Griswold, p. 145.

[18]Bemis, p. 475.

balance of Asian power. The Russo-Japanese War may well have marked the high water mark of American-Japanese relationships, for thereafter, the United States embarked on a course of containing Japanese ambitions in the Orient. Thus, American diplomacy from the early years of the twentieth century was oriented toward preserving the balance of power in the Far East.

Diplomatic Relations

The military posture of the United States during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries demanded that Far Eastern policy goals be realized solely through diplomatic instruments. Rarely before World War II was the United States willing to commit American men or munitions to the defense of any policy in the Far East. With the exception of the Roosevelt-ordered round the world cruise, even sabre-rattling was prescribed as a means for the realization of American goals. Thus, in spite of the fact that after World War I the United States could easily have become the leading naval power in the Pacific, American antipathy to the use of force, along with economy minded publics and administrations, led the United States to deprive herself of the ability to defend militarily her Far Eastern interests.

By the rejection of military measures, the United States forced herself to depend heavily on the good will of other nations and on diplomatic caveats, to preserve her vital interests in East Asia. Diplomatic maneuvering--the sending of notes, the formulating of agreements, the calling of conferences--was the major instrument of United States foreign policy in East Asia throughout the first part of the twentieth century. The United States could not afford to isolate herself

- warning Kavecat
- explanation to prevent misinterpretation

diplomatically from the affairs of Asia as she did in the case of Europe, if only because the strategic liability imposed by the possession of the Philippine Islands demanded some American participation. No administration, even had it desired, could ignore the Asian situation.

The dominant concern of American foreign policy was to preserve the Far Eastern balance of power. No nation was to be allowed to become so dominant that it could threaten American ties with the Philippines. Neither China, Russia, nor Japan could be allowed to establish its own Monroe Doctrine for Asia. These beliefs guided American foreign policy until World War II. Support of the Asian underdog became a keynote of American foreign policy in Asia. Thus, when it became apparent that China was the sick man of Asia, the United States committed herself to the diplomatic defense of the unity and territorial integrity of China, on the theory that the dismemberment of China could only jeopardize United States commercial interests in China and could, possibly, result in a disturbance of the balance of power in Asia. "The principal center of international rivalry and conflict in the Far East after the first Sino-Japanese War was China."[19] Since the United States desired only a passive role in the maintenance of the territorial integrity of China and the balance of power in the Far East, it was necessary to try to line up other nations in such a way that they would serve United States goals. This the United States attempted to do, as early as 1898.

In 1898, spurred on by the British who feared that the dismemberment of China was imminent, the United States decided that her most-

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[19]Harold M. Vinacke, The United States and the Far East, 1945-1951 (Stanford, 1952), p. 12.

favored nation status was in danger and decided to issue what became known as the first of the Open Door Notes.[20]

> Although after 1900 we stood for the territorial integrity of China, usually without any reliance upon British diplomacy, the fact remains that our traditional policy began as an inheritance from the British who, as a trading nation at a great distance, wished to preserve China as an open market.[21]

In the fall of 1899, Secretary of State John Hay announced the principle of the Open Door, in identical notes to Great Britain, France, Russia, Germany, and Japan. These notes requested only equality of commercial opportunity for all nations throughout China. The recipient nations were requested to pledge themselves not to levy discriminatory tariffs against any nation within particular spheres of influence and to agree that Chinese tariffs would apply equally to all nations; Hay's notes, in addition, gave recognition to existing special interests. However, in these first notes, there was no mention of preserving the territorial integrity of China or of guaranteeing equality of investment opportunity within China, but these two demands came soon. In an interesting letter penned by William Rockhill (on whom Hay relied heavily in formulating the Open Door Notes), Rockhill wrote:

> Of course, there is another side to the question, and that is that none of the European Powers interested in China would care, at the present moment at least, to openly oppose such a seemingly very moderate request as that this Government has made, as it would put them in a very awkward position not only as regards each other, but as regards China. There is no doubt, however, that by these assurances, or rather by the acceptance by each of the European powers of the

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[20]The British, earlier, had tried to convince the United States to issue a joint declaration along the lines of the Open Door.

[21]Fairbank, p. 249.

declarations sought to be obtained from them by the United States, this country holds the balance of power in China.[22]

The European powers accepted Hay's Notes, but with reservations. Hay, perhaps attempting to present these nations with a fait accompli, announced publicly that since all concerned had responded favorably to his Notes, the principles enunciated in them could be regarded as binding on all. In spite of Hay's attempt at bluff, the adherence of these nations to the principle of the Open Door depended, for the next twenty years, on world conditions, the power relationships among those in China, and on the good wishes of these nations, rather than on the United States, and it was not until 1922 that the United States succeeded in elevating the principle of the Open Door to the level of a formal treaty, binding on all.

The second of the Open Door Notes followed on the heels of the Boxer Rebellion and the subsequent European intervention in China. It greatly enlarged the scope of the original Open Door Policy. Dispatched in July, 1900, Hay's second circular called on all interested parties to act in a concert so as to preserve the territorial integrity and administrative unity of China.[23] This circular, in essence, called for a far more circumspect attitude toward China than that called for in the first circular. Basically, it was a request by the United States that the

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[22]William Rockhill to Alfred E. Hippisley, 1899. Quoted in Griswold, p. 76.

[23]Hay wrote: "... the policy of the government of the United States is to seek a solution which may bring about permanent safety and peace to China, preserve Chinese territories and administrative entity, protect all rights guaranteed to friendly powers by treaty and international law, and safeguard for the world the principle of equal and impartial trade with all parts of the Chinese Empire." United States Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (Washington, 1902), p. 299.

great powers of the world agree to sustain and preserve China in her then present boundaries, and abstain from dividing China up into colonial satrapies. In later years, American policy makers vacillated in their support of this latter principle, and, at times, interpreted the Open Door to mean only equality of commercial opportunity, while at other times the territorial integrity of China.[24] Generally, however, as far as the United States was concerned, the Open Door meant equality of commercial opportunity and the territorial integrity of China.

That the United States appointed herself to be the guardian of Chinese unity and territorial integrity cannot be credited with preventing the dismemberment of the Chinese Empire. "The Boer War, the German Navy, the maneuverings of the hostile European coalitions, the Czar, the Kaiser, Declasse and Salisbury - these were the factors and agents that called the halt, not the diplomacy of John Hay."[25] Again and again, the balance of power in the Far East was preserved no thanks to American diplomacy, but rather by the very nations most in a position to threaten the tenuous equilibrium.

The balance of power remained precarious in the face of Russian ambitions to detach Manchuria and absorb Korea. When the Russo-Japanese War broke out in 1904, American sympathies were extended to the Japanese, then thought to be the underdog. Roosevelt "...was especially anxious to preserve the balance of power in the Far East between Russia and Japan, for if either should become dominant--he particularly distrusted Russia--there was reason to believe that the Open Door

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[24]As early as 1903, Hay reverted to his original interpretation of the Open Door, when he recognized the Russian seizure of Manchuria.

[25]Griswold, p. 82-83.

would be closed."[26] Roosevelt, however, quickly repented of his early championship of the Japanese, for the Japanese astonished the President, and indeed the world, by their successes over the Russian troops.

> But the President, like most of the world, had not counted on such an overwhelming defeat as that administered to the forces of the Czar. He had looked to the temporary exhaustion of Russia; now he feared her total collapse. As the cataclysmic outcome began to appear inevitable, the President's stratagem underwent two progressive changes. From the mere elimination of Russia from Manchuria, he turned to the re-establishment of the balance of power between Russia and Japan, and from that to the prevention of further territorial expansion by the latter.[27]

Thus, when the Japanese sought the good offices of the President in negotiating a peace treaty with the Russians, Roosevelt deterred Japan from imposing a heavy indemnity on Russia and from annexing all of Sakhalin. In so doing, he incurred the hostility of the Japanese who felt cheated of the booties of war. "The Russo-Japanese War marked both the high-water mark of Japanese-American friendship and a sharp turning point in our relations."[28] Thereafter, the Treaty of Portsmouth, the immigration policies of the United States, and the expansionistic yearnings of the Japanese were to cast a pall over American-Japanese relationships.

The Japan which emerged from the Russo-Japanese War was a power with which any nation, concerned with the Far Eastern balance of power, had to reckon. The United States was determined to preserve her interests in the Philippine Islands and found it necessary to secure

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[26]Thomas A. Bailey, A Diplomatic History of the American People (New York, 1946), p. 566.

[27]Griswold, p. 104-105.

[28]Edwin O. Reischauer, The United States and Japan (Cambridge, 1965), p. 20.

Japanese guarantees of her Philippine Islands possessions. In a secret executive aggreement of 1905, the United States sanctioned the Japanese takeover of Korea, and in return the Japanese promised to respect United States interests in the Philippines. Again, in 1908, it seems that the United States agreed not to interfere with Japanese designs on Manchuria, in return for Japanese respect for the Philippines.[29] It seems then that the United States had to trade recognition of Japanese ambitions in the Orient for Japanese promises to respect United States sovereignty in the Philippine Islands.

During the Taft Administration, another method of preserving United States interests in Asia was underwritten. Efforts were made to increase the commercial and investment interests of the United States in China, on the assumption that this would lead to a greater voice for the United States in Asian affairs. Taft demanded that Americans be allowed equal investment opportunities in China. But American capital shunned China, and the unhappy results of the Taft policies were to solidify Russian-Japanese relations and to incur the hostility of the great powers.

World War I upset the Asian balance of power. Japan, quick to take advantage of the preoccupation of Great Britain and France with European affairs, sought to reduce China to the status of a Japanese protectorate. After seizing Shantung, Japan presented China with the Twenty-One Demands, designed to establish Japanese economic and political supremacy within China. China was powerless to resist. The United States insisted on some modifications in the original Demands, but by then, was so involved herself in European Affairs, that she was not in a

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[29] Bemis, p. 490.

position to defend China. Upon the Chinese acceptance of the Demands, the United States issued a statement of nonrecognition of any agreement impairing United States rights in China, the territorial integrity of China, or the Open Door.[30] The most that the United States would concede to Japan was recognition that "Japan has special interests in China, particularly in the part to which her possessions are contiguous."[31] At the same time, the United States attempted to restrain Japanese ambitions in the Orient. She insisted that Japanese capital work only through the new four power consortium, established in 1917. She refused to sanction Japanese military intervention in Siberia, unless it was to be an allied venture which would include American troops. Japan, in spite of her ambition to take over Siberia and northern Manchuria, had to acquiesce and at the close of World War I, United States forces entered Siberia along with the Japanese. She insisted that Shantung be restored to China, and, finally, that the principle of the Open Door be codified in treaty form.

At the Peace Conference of Versailles, "the United States fought a losing battle to defend China from the encroachments of Japan."[32] The United States had to yield to Japan on almost all counts, rather than see Japan leave the peace conference.

The calling of the Washington Conferences of 1921-1922 marked the United States response to the Japanese expansion of the War years. The United States had survived World War I as the foremost naval power of

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[30]Griswold, p. 195.

[31]Ibid., p. 216.

[32]Ibid., p. 239.

the world. Unwilling to accept the costs of a naval armaments race, convinced that armaments led to war, and seeking to restrain Japan in the Far East, the United States decided to limit her own naval armaments and to leave Japan essentially unchallenged in the Far East, in return for Japanese promises of good will and adherence to a treaty codifying the Open Door.

Three documents came out of the Washington Naval Conferences: the Four, Five, and Nine Power Treaties. In return for Japanese naval supremacy in the Pacific, Japan pledged to respect the integrity of the Philippines and to respect the administrative unity and territorial integrity of China. For the first time the principle of the Open Door had been elevated from the level of moral commitment to that of formal international law. Yet, in the final analysis, there were no means provided for in these treaties for the enforcement of the treaty provisions, and thus the Open Door continued to rest on the good will of nations and their sense of obligation under international law. By the Treaties of Washington,

> ...no power gained or lost much ... save in the nebulous categories of ultimate goals and logical consequences. They were primarily a recognition of existing, if brutal facts, a consolidation of the status quo. By them, the Pacific suffered no peaceful change; it was only partially frozen. The same was true of China. Admitting these limitations, the treaties constituted the most dynamic and the most comprehensive attempt on the part of the United States to uphold the territorial integrity of China and all that it believed to depend on it; to make the Open Door in China an enduring principle of international law; to obtain security for its Philippine hostage to fortune, and to confine within barriers manufactured in Washington the hungry expansionism of Japan.[33]

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[33]Ibid., p. 331.

For a time, the Washington Treaties seemed to stabilize the Far Eastern balance of power, and led to improved American-Japanese relations. However, by 1929, the balance of power was once again threatened by the undeclared war between China and Japan. Diplomatic pressures by the United States failed to restore the situation. When Japan overran Southern Manchuria and established the puppet state of Manchuckuo, the United States put forth the now-famous Stimson Doctrine of Nonrecognition and joined with the League of Nations in an investigation of the Japanese aggression. Diplomatic caveats were no longer sufficient to preserve the balance of power, however, and the United States was unwilling to adopt more stringent measures. Thus, the 1930's marked the breakdown of the balance of power in Asia.

In 1937, Japan attacked Peking. At first, the United States offered only verbal recriminations against Japan. At the Brussels Conference of the same year, the United States opposed employing coercive measures against Japan. However, Roosevelt did abstain from invoking the Neutrality Resolution, thereby aiding China, by allowing arms shipments to China via Hong Kong. With the signing of the German-Japanese Nonaggression Pact, the United States attitude toward Japan began to harden. A moral embargo was placed on arms shipments to Japan, and late in 1940, such shipments were prohibited by law. China was given additional financial aid. When the American commercial treaty with Japan expired, the United States did not renew it, and by July, 1941, all trade with Japan had ceased and Japanese assets in the United States had been frozen.

Until 1941, then, United States foreign policy in the Far East relied primarily on diplomatic instruments. Its underlying assumptions

were that support of the underdog in Asia would best protect American interests there. That the balance of power had to be preserved in East Asia was accepted as the best way of preserving United States strategic and commercial interests in the Far East.

World War II Policies of the United States

American entrance into World War II marked the first significant occasion when the United States was willing to defend its Asian interests militarily. One major consideration dictated American policies toward the Far East during the War: that the balance of power must be restored at the end of the War, so that once again the United States would be able to play a somewhat passive role in Asian affairs. To secure this end, Japan had to be defeated; but a Japanese military defeat would not guarantee that Japan would never again rear an aggressive head. Thus, along with Japanese military defeat must go the destruction of the Japanese military machine--the destruction of the Japanese capacity to wage war, not merely then, but for the future as well. Japan, for United States policy makers, had to be demilitarized and demobilized, reduced to a second or third rate power in the Far East.

At the same time, the United States pinned her hopes on China. China, once the War was over, was expected to serve as a guardian of United States interests in the Far East, and as the protector of the peace. All of the United States wartime policies were predicated on two assumptions: that China would be friendly to the United States and that Japan would be weak and demilitarized. "The United States was grooming China to become a great power that would not only be able to

defend itself and its own existence, but to assert a decisive influence in the Orient in support of the United Nations."[34]

However, China was beset by civil war, incapable of defending herself, let alone any anticipated Asian peace. For United States policies in Asia to be realized, China would have to be strengthened and unified; China, in fact, had to enter the big power club. United States policies toward China during the War attempted to strengthen China. Even prior to the entry of the United States into the War, a military mission was sent to China, along with an air force mission, to aid in the training of Chinese pilots. One and one half billion dollars, in military and economic aid, was given to China during World War II.[35] General Stilwell and later General Wedemeyer were sent to China to try to modernize the Chinese army and to get the Chinese to fight Japan. Time and again, in diplomatic summit meetings, China was treated as if she were, in fact, a great power. The United States did all she could to promote this image. In January, 1943, a new treaty was signed between the United States and China, by which the United States relinquished all rights of extraterritoriality in China. At the Cairo Conference, China was promised the return of Formosa, Manchuria, and the Pescadores Islands. The United States insisted that China be given a permanent seat on the anticipated Security Council as one of the big powers. Although at Yalta, Roosevelt made some concessions to the Russians in respect to Manchuria, he succeeded in obtaining a Russian promise to support the Nationalist Government in China and Chinese

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[34] Sare, p. 27.

[35] Fairbank, p. 260.

territorial integrity.

However, the United States recognized that for China to take its place as a great power, she would first have to be united. Throughout the War, the United States then operated on the assumption that the Civil War between the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communists could be settled and the United States tried to do just that. As early as August, 1944, General Patrick J. Hurley was sent to China as Roosevelt's personal representative. His task was to work out a political solution for China. At the close of the War, General Marshall was sent to China to try to bring about a political settlement between the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party.

Thus, by the end of World War II, the United States had committed herself to the re-establishment of a balance of power in the Far East, a balance of power that would depend heavily on China. Unable to assess the seriousness of the Chinese situation, the United States based its whole Far Eastern policy on a unified and stable China, friendly to the United States, and willing to act with her to preserve the balance of power.

The traditional Far Eastern policies of the United States thus relied on others to preserve the balance of power. China was a dominant consideration in these policies, first as the nation whose independence was essential to the balance of power, later, following World War II, as a nation significant to the preservation of the balance of power. Were China to fail to realize United States hopes, the entire Far Eastern policy of the United States would be in jeopardy and the United States would be forced either to sacrifice her Asian interests or to develop a new strategy for their defense. This, in fact, is what

happened at the end of World War II.

CHAPTER III

INDOCHINA: 1940-1950 AND THE FAR EASTERN SITUATION

Traditional foreign policies of the United States ignored, for the most part, Southeast Asia. Up until World War II, the involvement of the United States in Southeast Asia, with the exception of the Philippine Islands, was minimal; one searches in vain the literature on American Far Eastern policies for any detailed discussion on United States policies toward this region. Since most of Southeast Asia was under colonial dominion, the United States seems to have regarded this area as a political extension of Europe and as "neutral" as far as the Far Eastern balance of power was concerned. Until World War II, United States policies seem to have been predicated on the assumption that Southeast Asia, including Indochina, could in no way affect the Far Eastern balance of power, because of the stability imposed on this area by the European powers.

In this chapter, the status of Indochina[1] during the Second World War, along with United States policies toward Indochina during this period, will be discussed. In addition, the internal situation in Indochina subsequent to World War II will be described and analyzed, as

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[1]Indochina includes Tonkin, Annam, and Cochin China, which together make up Vietnam; Cambodia, and Laos. Most of the Nationalist ferment existed in Vietnam and most of the fighting during the Indochinese War was in and over Vietnam. Still, the War is generally referred to as the Indochinese War and this author will use this generally accepted term.

well as United States policies toward Indochina prior to and immediately after the outbreak of the Indochinese War. It will be suggested that the immediate response of the United States to the Indochinese War was one of relative disinterest, and that the United States did not become vitally concerned with Indochina until after the defeat of the Nationalists in China and the outbreak of war in Korea. In order to understand this shift in American policies toward Indochina, it is necessary to recount briefly the situation in the Far East at the end of World War II, the defeat of the Chinese Nationalists, and the re-evaluation of United States Far Eastern policies which resulted from the establishment of the People's Republic of China and the commencement of the Korean War.

The Wartime Status of Indochina

On the eve of World War II, Japan was making plans for the conquest of Indochina and, subsequently, of all of Southeast Asia, as part of her dream of a Japanese "Co-Prosperity Sphere for Asia." Taking full advantage of the French defeat by the Germans, the Japanese, on June 19, 1940, presented the French Governor-General of Indochina, Georges Catroux, with an ultimatum demanding the closing of the Indochinese frontiers, to prevent the export of war materials to China, and the establishment of a Japanese control commission to insure compliance with the order. Catroux complied, only to be dismissed by the Pétain Government, and replaced by Jean Decoux. The French, however, had no alternative but to accede to Japanese demands and when, in August, 1940, Japan demanded the right of transit through Indochina and the use of several airfields, Decoux was also compelled to bow to the ultimatum. It was agreed that

Haiphong would serve as a port of transit for the Japanese Army and that air bases in Tonkin would be turned over to the Japanese. In spite of this, Japan invaded Indochina in July, 1941, and for the remainder of the War, used Indochina as a base for Japanese military operations against China.[2]

Until March of 1945, the French, represented by Jean Decoux, were allowed to retain nominal control over Indochina, but, in fact, were only puppets serving at the pleasure of the Japanese. The French themselves offered little opposition to the Japanese, but an indigenous resistance group was formed, under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh. This group, known as the Vietminh,[3] united Vietnamese nationalists and communists in opposition to Japan and Vichy. It aided the Allies by conducting intelligence work, and, with aid given through the Office of Strategic Services in 1944, initiated guerrilla warfare against the Japanese. Its long range goals, however, were independence and statehood for Vietnam.[4]

Toward the end of the War, Japan ousted the French from nominal control and allowed the establishment of native governments in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, hoping these governments would be more sympathetic to her after the War than the French. Annam, Tonkin, and Cochin China were united in the independent state of Vietnam, under the leadership of Bao Dai, former emperor of Annam. In Cambodia and Laos native rulers were also permitted to proclaim their independence.

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[2]Ellen J. Hammer, The Struggle for Indochina (Stanford, 1954), p. 95.

[3]The League for Independence for Vietnam, formed May 1, 1941.

[4]Ibid., p. 100.

The Japanese occupation of Indochina failed to impose a Japanese brand of colonialism on the Indochinese, but it had very significant consequences. Its net effect was to discredit further an already detested French colonial administration and to stimulate the Indochinese desire for independence. That French rule was without any substantial benefit was proven to the Indochinese by the inability of France to protect Indochina from external aggression. That Asian peoples were capable of self-government was proven to the Indochinese by the Japanese successes against the "Westerners". "Japan's occupation of Southeast Asia during the Pacific War failed insofar as it sought to substitute one imperialism for another, but it was successful in stimulating Asian nationalist movements and Asian self-confidence."[5] The close of the War saw the Indochinese seeking recognition from the rest of the world of their right to independence.

Indochina at the Close of World War II

At the close of World War II, Indochina was in a state of nationalist ferment. The Vietminh had been developing an organization throughout the countryside and were capitalizing on the antipathy felt by the people toward both the French and the Japanese. Shortly after the news of the Japanese defeat, the Vietminh gained control of the northern part of Tonkin, moved in around Hanoi, and sponsored a general uprising which, in August, 1945, led to the abdication of Bao Dai. A provisional government, controlled by the Vietminh, was established with Ho Chi Minh as leader and Bao Dai as Vice-President. In September, 1945, the

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[5]Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, Empire's End in Southeast Asia (New York, 1949), p. 8.

independent Democratic Republic of Vietnam was proclaimed. The Vietminh were bent on securing independence for all of Vietnam, and having already obtained de facto control of part of the area, hoped that by presenting a united front to the Allies, they would be allowed to retain their independence. But the population was split into warring factions, and especially in the south, the control of the Vietminh was shaky. Most importantly, the Vietminh did not anticipate the determination of the French to reassert sovereignty and the unwillingness of the Allies, especially the United States, to support the independence of Vietnam.

The French quite early laid the foundations for a reassertion of their dominion. In March, 1945, the French announced plans for the establishment of an Indochinese Federation, to consist of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia; the Federation was to be allowed some autonomy within the projected French Union. France completely rejected the concept of an international trusteeship for Indochina.[6] To the French, national pride plus the preservation of the French Empire precluded any consideration of an Indochina independent of French control. The plans of the French fell far short of the desires of the Vietminh.

The end of World War II saw the Chinese march into northern Indochina to receive the Japanese surrender, while the British occupied the southern half. No sooner had the British occupied southern Indochina, than they ousted the Vietnamese administrators from control of Saigon and turned the city over to the French. Throughout their occupation, the British sympathized with the French and did what they could to aid them.

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[6]Russell H. Fifield, The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia: 1945-1958 (New York, 1958), p. 38.

In the north, the situation was somewhat different. There the Vietminh were firmly in control of the political and administrative apparatus. The Chinese were unsympathetic to the French desires and allowed the Vietnamese to retain control of the countryside. So long as the Chinese refused to allow the French to occupy northern Indochina and so long as the Vietminh retained control over the administrative apparatus, the likelihood of a reassertion of French sovereignty was slim. Thus, for a time it appeared as if an independent state in Vietnam might be allowed to exist.

The Chinese, however, were more interested in using Indochina as a bargaining weapon vis à vis the French than they were in promoting the independence of Indochina. In February, 1946, China agreed to withdraw all of her troops from Indochina. In return, France renounced rights of extraterritoriality in China, as well as other privileges. She agreed to exempt Chinese merchandise shipped over the Haiphong-Kunming Railroad from customs duties, and to set up a free zone for Chinese goods at Haiphong, as well as to relinquish railroad ownership rights in China, and to guarantee the existing position of Chinese nationals in Indochina.[7]

Ho Chi Minh and the Vietminh had little option then but to secure the best deal they could from the French. With the Chinese gone, there was little to stand in the way of a forceful French reconquest of the north. In addition, there existed the danger that the French would sponsor a rival nationalist group and thereby deprive the Vietminh of the right to act as sole representative of the Vietnamese in bargaining

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[7]Hammer, p. 147.

with the French. Thus, on March 6, 1946, Ho Chi Minh and Sainteny, the French Representative in Indochina, signed a preliminary agreement by which the French recognized the Democratic Republic of Vietnam as "a free state with its own government, parliament, army, and finances, forming part of the Indochinese Federation and the French Union."[8] The French promised to hold a referendum to determine whether or not Cochin China should be included along with Annam and Tonkin. In return, the Vietminh agreed to allow the return of the French Army to Tonkin and Annam, and they permitted troop numbers not to exceed 25,000, with the stipulation that by 1952, the French were to withdraw all troops except those stationed at a few specified bases.

Neither side acted in good faith in respect to this agreement, although the French were particularly at fault. Ho Chi Minh was invited to Paris to draw up some final agreements, but once there, was not even received by the high French political officials. Meanwhile, with Ho and his principle lieutenants out of the country, the French arbitrarily established the "autonomous republic" of Cochin China, without holding the promised referendum.[9] This was in clear violation of the preliminary agreement. In Paris, the negotiations were unsuccessful, and Ho Chi Minh returned to Hanoi. Conditions continued to deteriorate, while the political discussions were stalemated. In December, 1946, the French, by way of reprisal against Vietnamese uncooperativeness, bombed civilians in the port of Haiphong, whereupon the Vietminh retaliated by launching an attack against the French in Hanoi. The Indochinese

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[8]Ibid., p. 153.

[9]Denis Warner, The Last Confucian (New York, 1963), p. 34.

War had begun.

Upon the outbreak of hostilities, the French concentrated not only on trying to destroy the Vietminh, but also on finding a more cooperative nationalist movement which would recognize French sovereignty over Indochina. Convinced that a military victory was possible, the French made no further attempts at negotiation with the Vietminh. Many rival nationalist groups existed in the south, and it was to these that the French looked to find a counterweight to Ho Chi Minh. Bao Dai, former emperor of Annam, appeared to be a promising possibility, but Bao Dai was unwilling to acquiesce in complete French control over Indochina, and demanded that the French negotiate an agreement with him at least as favorable as that earlier accorded to the Vietminh. By 1948, the French had no choice but to accede to his demands, for what they had thought would be only a mopping-up operation in northern Tonkin had developed into a full-scale guerrilla war in Tonkin and Annam, and a campaign of terrorism in the south. Thus, in June, 1948, an agreement was signed by Bao Dai and the French according to which the French recognized Vietnam as an "independent state" within the French Union. On March 8, 1949, the Independent State of Vietnam was proclaimed, after the signing of the Élysee Agreements between Bao Dai and President Auriol of France. The French were loathe to grant even this much autonomy to the Vietnamese, however, and it was not until January, 1950, that the French Assembly ratified the Élysee Accords. Soon, however, the French were forced to conclude similar agreements with Laos and Cambodia.

Bao Dai was somewhat of an opportunist and inspired little popular support among his people, many of whom regarded him as a French puppet;

at the same time, the Vietminh continued to grow in strength. Although the Vietminh had not the means to defeat the French Army, neither were the French able to destroy the Vietminh. By the end of 1949, French casualties in Indochina approximated 100,000. Rice exports had fallen from the pre-World War II figure of one million tons to less than one hundred thousand tons.[10] It was a war of attrition, a war which the Vietminh were more capable of continuing indefinitely than were the French for whom the war constituted an ill-afforded drain of men and money. The French, however, were still unwilling to give Bao Dai enough independence to lend credence to the independence of Vietnam and to rally popular support around him as a true nationalist leader. Bao Dai, on his part, was content to reside at Dalat, far from the field of military operations. He did little to win popular backing for his government.

The Vietminh, meanwhile, continued to improve their position. The success of Mao's forces in China led to some changes in Vietminh strategy and tactics which rendered them a greater threat to the French than they had been. Vietminh forces were sent to China for training and the Vietminh began to study the strategy which had proved so successful for the communists in China. Early in 1949, perhaps in accordance with Chinese advice, the Vietminh switched from purely guerrilla to mobile warfare and began to establish regular army divisions.[11] In addition, the Vietminh and Mao Tse-tung reciprocated recognition of one another's regimes and, in January, 1950, the Vietminh received recognition from

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[10]Ibid., p. 37.

[11]Ibid., p. 40.

the Soviet Union.

Wartime Attitudes of the United States toward Indochina

The United States first evinced an interest in Indochina when the Japanese commenced the execution of their plans for an "Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere." Were the Japanese to occupy Indochina, the United States feared they would use it as a base of operations against China, the rest of Southeast Asia, and possibly the Philippine Islands. The Japanese acquisition of the raw materials of Southeast Asia would disrupt the balance of power in the Far East and might endanger American interests in the Philippines. The United States was vitally concerned. Throughout 1941, she cautioned Japan against operations in Indochina and, in November, let it be known that unless Japan withdrew her troops from Indochina there could be no basis for settlement between her and the United States.[12]

Following the entry of the United States into the War, Roosevelt frequently expressed very definite opinions on the future status of Indochina. He was appalled at the way the French had administered Indochina and opposed any reassertion of French sovereignty at the end of the War. Cordell Hull reports that Roosevelt had strong views on the need for Indochina to become independent at the end of the War.[13]

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[12]In a letter from Franklin D. Roosevelt to Winston Churchill, November 24, 1941, Roosevelt wrote, in part: "It is also proposed to offer to the Japanese Government an alternative proposal...which will contain an undertaking by Japan to withdraw its forces from Southern French Indochina, not to replace those forces, to limit those in Northern Indochina...and not send additional troops to Indochina." Elliott Roosevelt, F.D.R. His Personal Letters (New York, 1950), p. 1245 and 1246.

[13]Cordell Hull, The Memoirs of Cordell Hull (New York, 1948), p.1595.

When Roosevelt met with Chiang Kai-shek at Cairo in 1943, he raised the subject of Indochina. Chiang allegedly expressed no interest in incorporating Indochina into China. When Roosevelt broached the idea of an international trusteeship for Indochina, Chiang was agreeable. Stettinius reports the conversation as follows:

> The President said that the country is worse off than it was a hundred years ago. The white man's rule there is nothing to be proud of. The President said that a trusteeship is the only practical solution. When the President asked Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek what he thought, the General replied that...he thought a trusteeship would be an ideal arrangement.[14]

Again, this time during a private conversation with Stalin, Roosevelt raised the subject of the future status of Indochina. Stalin also expressed opposition to restoring Indochina to the old French colonial rule, and reportedly favored the trusteeship idea.[15] So great was Roosevelt's opposition to the re-establishment of French sovereignty in Indochina that in March, 1944, he warned against the use of French troops for any military operations there, lest this provide the French with the opportunity needed to reassert themselves.[16]

The British rejected the idea of trusteeship for Indochina, perhaps in fear that they too might be invited to surrender some of their territories to international trusteeship.[17] Roosevelt believed the British opposed trusteeship because of the implications it might have

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[14]Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., Roosevelt and the Russians. The Yalta Conference (New York, 1949), p. 237.

[15]United States Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945 (Washington, 1955), p. 770.

[16]Ibid., p. 566.

[17]Stettinius, p. 50.

for British Burma and did not hesitate to express his views to the British. Thus:

> I saw Halifax last week and told him quite frankly...that I had, for over a year, expressed the opinion that Indochina should not go back to France, but that it should be administered by an international trusteeship...The only reason they seem to oppose it is their fear for the effect it would have on their own possessions and those of the Dutch...Each case, of course, must stand on its own feet, but the case of Indochina is perfectly clear. France has milked it for over one hundred years. The people of Indochina are entitled to something better than that.[18]

However, by 1945, Roosevelt was finding it difficult to contend with both the British and the French opposition. During a press conference, he reiterated his views on Indochina, but asserted that it was necessary to avoid too much talk on the subject, lest Allied unity be impaired.[19]

It was not until the closing year of the War that any decisions were made as to who should receive the Japanese surrender in Indochina. Although during most of the War, Indochina had been part of the Chinese Theater of Operations, at the Potsdam Conferences, it was decided to place the southern half of Indochina under the jurisdiction of the Southeast Asian Command and the British. Whether this decision was motivated by any high level political considerations is difficult to ascertain; the decision seems to have been taken on military grounds, but the United States could not have failed to realize that once in Indochina, the British would do all in their power to aid the French to return. By the time this decision was taken, however, Roosevelt was

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[18]Roosevelt, p. 1489.

[19]Samuel I. Rosenman, ed., The Public Papers and Address of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1944-1945 (New York, 1950), p. 562.

dead and Truman does not seem to have shared his views as to the desirability or feasibility of a trusteeship for Indochina.

Truman makes no mention of Indochina during the closing year of the War, except insofar as military operations were concerned.[20] He was, perhaps, willing to leave the question of trusteeship to the San Francisco Conference. His primary interest was that Americans in Indochina do nothing to prejudice the political situation.

Postwar Policies of the United States toward Indochina: 1945-1949

United States policies toward Indochina immediately after the War were shrouded in ambiguities and were never very well defined. As previously mentioned, in the closing days of the War, the United States had dropped her demand that a trusteeship system be established in Indochina. To what extent this idea had represented the thinking of the State Department and to what extent it was a personal project of Roosevelt's is difficult to ascertain. Secretary of State Hull earlier had expressed misgivings as to the feasibility of a trusteeship system,[21] and it may be that even Roosevelt would not have pursued the idea had he lived. In any event, immediately after the War, the United States seemed committed to a policy of "wait and see". No serious attempt was made to influence the course of events in Indochina. Had the United States desired to influence the future status of Indochina, she could easily have secured a foothold there, by employing American troops in

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[20] No statements by Truman are to be found in his Memoirs, the Department of State Bulletin, or the Public Papers of the Presidents, nor are any attributed to him.

[21] Hull, p. 1597.

the Japanese surrender; however, no Americans participated in this surrender. Truman personally did not make any official reference to the future status of Indochina in 1945, and up until February, 1947, there were almost no official statements on Indochina from the United States government.

The only official statement of United States policy toward Indochina in 1945 or 1946 expressed a determination to remain uninvolved. It was stated that the United States would respect the legal authority of the French in Indochina, but would not "assist or participate in forceful measures for the imposition of control by the territorial sovereign." The United States was, however, willing to help settle the dispute between the indigenous population and the mother country, if France sought American aid, and would commit herself to the eventual independence of these countries.[22] Although the United States felt bound to respect French rights in Indochina, she did not relish doing this and would not aid the French in re-establishing their prewar position. If the French, however, would follow the example of the United States in the Philippines and work for the eventual independence of these peoples, the United States would then try to be of service. If not, she wished not to get involved.

During 1945 and 1946, the United States did nothing to pressure the French into allowing some measure of independence to the Indochinese. Even after an agreement had been signed between the Vietminh and the French, "the United States Government made no serious attempt to persuade

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[22]John V. Carter, United States Department of State , Bulletin, XII (October 21, 1945), p. 646.

France to live up to its 1946 Agreement with the Republic of Vietnam."[23] Yet, the United States had no desire for a French return to Indochina. In essence then, during the critical and formative years when the situation in Indochina was still fluid, and the position of the parties to the conflict had not been polarized, the United States made no effort to try to influence the course of events. "It is a significant indicator of the American role during the first postwar years that one will search in vain among the many analyses of the problems of the area for a reference to American policy ..."[24]

Thus, immediately after the Second World War, the United States lacked well-defined policies toward Indochina. On the one hand, she opposed colonialism, particularly in Indochina; on the other hand, she did not want to antagonize the French by pressing them to grant independence to the Indochinese. In these early years the war in Indochina had only local significance and the United States was too concerned about European affairs to involve herself extensively in the Indochinese question.

By 1947, however, United States interests in Indochina began to develop, even though no real policies are in evidence. In the fall of 1947, William Bullitt was sent on a fact-finding mission to the Far East. While there, he spoke with Bao Dai, ex-emperor of Annam. In an article published in Life, Bullitt reports his impressions.

> Ho Chi Minh, the Communist leader of the Annamite fight for independence, is followed by millions of Annamites who

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[23]Oliver E. Clubb, Jr., The United States and the Sino-Soviet Bloc in Southeast Asia (Washington, D. C., 1962), p. 51.

[24]Lawrence S. Finkelstein, American Foreign Policy in Southeast Asia (New York, 1950), p. 5.

> disagree with his political views because he is the symbol of resistance to France ... Yet the worst disaster which could befall the French, the Annamites, and the civilized world would be for the French, in weariness, to surrender to Ho Chi Minh and his communist comrades.[25]

Bullitt's report reflected the dilemma of American decision makers at the time. The United States recognized that within Indochina there existed an indigenously supported war directed against French colonialism; and the United States was, in fact, sympathetic to the desires of the Vietnamese for independence and wished that the French would improve the position of the Vietnamese moderates by granting some real autonomy. Yet, the United States was coming to view Ho Chi Minh as basically an agent of international communism and to fear a communist takeover of Vietnam. The overall deterioration in relations between the Soviet Union and the United States resulted in a hardening of American attitudes toward communism. Ho Chi Minh was viewed as a communist rather than as a nationalist. This same deterioration in relations quickened the desire of the United States to maintain unity with her European allies and to avoid giving offense to the French by pressing them on Vietnam.

In spite of her lack of concrete policies toward Indochina during 1947 and 1948, the United States was not completely detached from the struggle, because France was allowed to use lend-lease material left over from World War II in Indochina.[26] The failure of the Marshall Mission to bring about a reconciliation between the Nationalists and the Communists in China caused a growing apprehension in the United

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[25]William Bullitt, "The Saddest War," Life, Vol. XXIV (December 29, 1947), pp. 64-65.

[26]Finkelstein, p. 10.

States concerning all of Asia, including Indochina. United States policies, however, continued to vacillate between granting support to the French, so that a communist take-over might be prevented, on the one hand, and trying to exert pressure on the French to grant some measure of autonomy to a moderate government within Indochina, on the other.

Early in 1949, in his Inaugural Address, Truman put forth what came to be known as the Point Four Program, which was meant to have some application to Southeast Asia, including Indochina. Truman called for a program of technical and economic assistance to underdeveloped countries, to strengthen them against communism. But the prerequisite of this program was the existence of stable governments in those underdeveloped countries that were to receive aid, so that the assistance could be effectively utilized. In Indochina, there was of course no stable government and thus this program (which did not become law until June 5, 1950 anyway) could have had little effect on the Indochinese situation. The United States was, however, throughout the spring and summer of 1949, watching developments very closely in Asia. On June 21, 1949, three months after the signing of the Élysee Agreements and the proclamation of the State of Vietnam, the United States issued a statement commenting favorably on the establishment of the Bao Dai Government.

> The formation of the new unified State of Vietnam and the recent announcement by Bao Dai that the future constitution will be decided by the Vietnamese people are welcome developments which should serve to hasten the re-establishment of peace in that country and the attainment of Vietnam's rightful place in the family of nations. The United States Government hopes that the agreements of March 8 between President Auriol and Bao Dai, who is making sincere efforts to unite all truly nationalist elements in Vietnam, will

> form the basis for the progressive realization of the legitimate aspirations of the Vietnamese people.[27]

Perhaps the key to this statement is the "hope" expressed by the United States that Bao Dai would be able to rally his country around him, and that the French would grant to him genuine autonomy. Still, the United States did not try to actively involve herself in the politics of Vietnam, nor offer any aid to the new state or to the French. She wanted, again, to wait and see if Bao Dai would prove to be an effective leader.

Thus, even after the outbreak of the Indochinese War, although the United States displayed an increased interest in the Indochinese situation, she neither tried to push the French to foster a real nationalist counterpart to Ho Chi Minh nor actively supported the French effort in Vietnam. Although her concern with the situation increased, United States policies, up until the defeat of the Chinese Nationalists, remained rather ill-defined. United States vital concerns lay elsewhere, and she was evidently neither sufficiently interested in nor worried by the Indochinese situation.

The Re-evaluation of United States Far Eastern Policies

The defeat of the Nationalists in China caused the United States to re-evaluate her entire Far Eastern policy, including her policy toward Indochina. For "Nationalist China's collapse and the establish- of a Communist Government on the mainland in late 1949 had even further weakened the Western position in Asia, for it had gravely shifted the

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[27]United States Department of State, Bulletin, XX (July 18, 1949), p. 75.

lest: that : used after expressions denoting fear or apprehension

balance of power in the Far East."[28] As a result, the Nationalist debacle led to a belated attempt on the part of the United States to formulate a more precise policy for Indochina.

Throughout World War II, the United States had counted on a strong government in China, friendly to the United States, and able to support the balance of power in Asia. The maintenance of the Far Eastern power equilibrium had traditionally been an American goal, and World War II further convinced the United States that her own vital interests demanded the re-establishment of this balance of power. China was designated as a key nation in this structure. Disturbed lest civil war in China prevent her from performing her role, and fearful that the mutual animosity between the Communists and Nationalists would lead to conflict, the United States sought, both during and after the War, to unify China by reconciling the Communists and the Nationalists through the establishment of a coalition government. Immediately after the War, General Marshall was sent to Asia for the express purposes of working out a political settlement for China. For a time, it appeared that he might succeed. He successfully negotiated a truce between the Nationalists and Communists and got them to engage in political discussions. But each party to the conflict used the truce to its own advantage and neither was seriously interested in compromise. By early 1947, Marshall was compelled to return to the United States and to admit the failure of his mission; the Chinese Civil War entered its decisive stage.

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[28]John Spanier, American Foreign Policy Since World War II (New York, 1962), p. 71.

With the breakdown of political discussions within China, the United States devoted itself to supporting and strengthening the Nationalist Regime. Chiang Kai-shek was urged to make some long-needed social reforms and then to try to gradually extend his control throughout China. Approximately two billion dollars in grants and credits were extended to China between V-J Day and the summer of 1949.[29] The American military mission in China attempted to advise Chiang on the military strategy needed to win the war. But Chiang was unwilling or unable to effect major reforms needed to win him popular support and he refused to follow the advice of the American military leaders. Meanwhile, by early 1949, the Nationalists had lost 80 percent of the American military equipment furnished to them during and after World War II and it is estimated that 75 percent of this fell into communist hands.[30] The growing fear, within the United States, that a debacle collapse was imminent led, in the summer and fall of 1949, to a re-examination of the United States policies toward China. In the course of this re-assessment, the United States came to the conclusion that further support of the Nationalists was futile.

However, American Far Eastern policies still demanded a China friendly to the United States and willing to act with her to keep the balance of power. Thus, in the immediate months after the re-establishment of the People's Republic of China, the re-examination of United States policies that was undertaken involved a readjustment of policies toward Chiang Kai-shek rather than a departure from traditional

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[29]United States Department of State, United States Relations with China, Far Eastern Series (Washington, 1949), p. 35.

[30]Spanier, p. 83.

policies. The United States hoped that China, under Mao Tse-tung, might be somewhat friendly to her and a positive agent in the preservation of the balance of power. Acheson emphasized rather optimistically that Mao was a potential Tito, because Russian ambitions in Manchuria would alienate Mao from the Soviet Union. Acheson predicted that if Mao accepted a position of subservience in relation to Russia, the Chinese people, given time, would come to view him as a foreign puppet and would rise against him. The thing for the United States to do then, if she wished to retain the friendship of the Chinese people and continue to focus on China as the key nation in the Far Eastern balance of power, was to disengage herself from the Nationalists toward whom the Chinese had already displayed their antipathy. To do just this, the United States issued a statement that she would no longer aid the Nationalists with money or equipment and that American forces would not be used to defend Formosa.[31] The United States had every expectation that without American support, Formosa would quickly be taken over by the communists and that then, since there would be only one claimant to the government of China, the United States could recognize the new regime. Thus, even after the defeat of the Nationalists, the United States continued to view China as the fulcrum of the Far Eastern balance of power.

As American optimism in respect to the new Chinese regime began to fade, the entire Far Eastern policy of the United States, including policies toward Indochina, underwent revision. Late in 1949, Phillip K. Jessup, United States roving ambassador to the Far East, was sent

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[31]United States Department of State, United States Relations with China, Far Eastern Series 30 (Washington, 1949).

to Southeast Asia on a fact-finding mission. Subsequently, he met with American diplomats at Bangkok, where it was agreed that the United States ought to support the Bao Dai Government and the French in Indochina. Then in January, 1950, in a speech to the National Press Club, Acheson announced a new policy in respect to Asian underdeveloped countries, whereby the United States would grant aid to those countries to secure them against internal subversion. He also outlined the defense perimeter of the United States in the Far East. Acheson emphasized, however, that certain conditions must be met within these countries if aid were to be effective. Indochina did not fulfill these conditions nor was she included within the defense perimeter of the United States.[32]

The diplomatic recognition by the Soviet Union of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam further convinced the United States that Ho Chi Minh was a communist agent. Almost immediately after the Soviet's recognition, the United States granted diplomatic recognition to the Associated States of Indochina;[33] and on the same day, Jessup was quoted as saying that the United States would regard an armed aggression against Indochina as a very serious matter.[34] Subsequently, The New York Times reported that American diplomats meeting with Jessup had agreed that the United States ought to commit military and diplomatic aid to Indochina, if the people would fight communism.[35] Then, on February 25,

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[32]Dean Acheson, United States Department of State, Bulletin, XXI (January, 1950), p. 291-292.

[33]Ibid., February 20, 1950, p. 294-295.

[34]The New York Times, February 7, 1950, p. 14.

[35]Ibid., February 16, 1950, p. 12.

the United States announced that it was raising its consulate in Saigon to a legation and that United States warships would visit Saigon in the near future as a gesture of friendship.[36] Early in March, a mission headed by R. Allen Griffin arrived in Saigon to consider the possibility of economic aid to Indochina and the rest of Southeast Asia. On April 1, it was reported that President Truman had approved in principle a commitment of military aid to Indochina,[37] and in May, the Griffin Commission proposed that twenty-three million dollars in economic aid and fifteen million dollars in military aid be granted to Indochina.[38]

It is surprising, however, that as late as May, 1950, although military and economic aid had been decided upon and the funds were available under already allocated funds to be used in the general area of China, nothing had been sent to Indochina. This seems particularly surprising in view of the haste with which the United States had granted diplomatic recognition and the favorable reports of both the Jessup and Griffin Missions. The United States seems to have been vacillating, but she might have been trying to exert pressure on the French to grant more autonomy to the Vietnamese. The New York Times reported on March 10 that "in the highest French official circles apprehension was expressed that the United States may insist upon a greater measure of independence for Bao Dai's regime by giving it greater authority."[39] Again on March 12, it was reported that the

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[36]Ibid., February 26, p. 36.

[37]Ibid., April 1, p. 1.

[38]Finkelstein, p. 44.

[39]The New York Times, March 10, 1950, p. 13.

French were worried that the United States will make the complete independence of Vietnam a condition for aid.[40]

Finally, in Paris at a meeting of the Big Three, Acheson announced formally that the United States had decided to grant military and economic aid to France and the Associated States "to restore security and develop genuine nationalism."[41] Later in the month, the Saigon Legation announced the establishment of an Economic Cooperative Administration to develop a program of economic aid.[42] Robert Blum, director of the ECA, announced in Paris on May 30 that the first installment of economic aid would be twenty-three million five hundred thousand dollars to be spent by June 29, 1951.[43] On June 11, the first shipment of United States arms aid was shipped to Indochina.

Thus, shortly after the defeat of the Chinese Nationalists, the United States made the decision to aid France in Indochina. The choice for American policy makers at this time seemed to be either support for Bao Dai, regarded as somewhat of a French puppet, or complete absention from a conflict which might well result in another communist takeover. The United States felt bound, in the face of the growing spread of communism to adopt the first course of action. Still, she did not like aiding in what appeared to be the reimposition of colonialism in Indochina, and stalled in her actual delivery of aid to the French, in the hope of compelling the French to grant more

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[40]Ibid., March 12, 1950, p. 4.

[41]Ibid., May 9, p. 1.

[42]Ibid., May 26, p. 1.

[43]The New York Times, May 31, 1950, p. 11.

concessions to the Vietnamese.

The outbreak of the Korean War sent the United States in search of a new overall policy toward the Far East, a search which had actually been underway since 1949; it forced the United States to develop a comprehensive policy for Indochina, rather than merely to rely on ad hoc responses to new developments. Korea triggered the conviction, long-growing in American minds, that the United States could not afford to write off Indochina and that a new strategy for Asia would have to be developed. Thus, the combined effects of the fall of China and the outbreak of the Korean War on the Far Eastern balance of power led the United States in search of a new means for balancing power in Asia. Indochina became one place where the United States sought to influence events so as to stabilize the Far Eastern balance of power.

CHAPTER IV

UNITED STATES POLICIES TOWARD INDOCHINA: 1950-1954

To United States decision makers, the Korean War epitomized the deteriorating situation in the Far East. After World War II, the United States had concentrated, primarily, on the problems of Europe, and had relegated the Far East to a secondary position. The defeat of the Kuomintang in China and the Korean War awakened the United States to the serious problems of instability in Asia, and led to a growing concern with a possible communist takeover in that region. By June 1950, the Asian situation had developed to the point of being extremely unfavorable to the interests of the United States. China was hostile and seemed bent on expanding her influence into some of the surrounding areas. North Korea had invaded South Korea in an attempt to unify all of Korea under communist rule. This invasion had the tacit approval, if not the overt sponsorship, of the Soviet Union. Japan, economically undermined by World War II, the American occupation, and the policy of reparations, was unable to exert any great power influence on Asian events; and Indochina seemed to be on the verge of succumbing to Ho Chi Minh's communist movement, thereby opening the door to a communist entry into all of Southeast Asia.

During the Second World War, the United States had directed her energies toward restoring a balance of power in the Far East; she had hoped that China, with American support, would be able to balance

Russian ambitions in the Far East and to act as a stabilizing influence. Now, however, with China lost as an American ally, the power situation was extremely unfavorable to the United States and there seemed little hope for establishing the balance of power the United States wanted. Several policy alternatives existed for the United States. She could commit herself actively to the defense of the status quo and announce that she intended to prevent, by military means if necessary, any further communist expansion. She would thus have to commit herself to the defense of each and every nation of East and Southeast Asia. The United States could withdraw completely from the Far East, reorient her lines of defense, and leave Japan and the Philippines to fend for themselves. Or, she could try to establish a cordon sanitaire to contain communism, by extending financial, material, and moral support to those nations engaged in conflicts with forces supported by the communist camp.

It was this last policy alternative that was most in keeping with the traditional Far Eastern policies of the United States. The United States has always been concerned with power relations in the Far East. Long before a single communist state existed in Asia, the United States had tried to deter the expansion of any nation in that area that could upset the pre-World War II balance of power. Prior to World War II, however, the United States had been unwilling to assume the military responsibility for the defense of this balance of power. Diplomatic instruments, along with the periodic willingness of other nations to use their military arsenals in defense of the balance of power, had long been the means relied upon by the United States. By 1950, the traditional balance of power no longer existed; if the United States,

however, wanted to continue to concern herself with the power relations of the Far East and wanted to pursue her traditional policies, Communist China and the Soviet Union had to be contained, but the United States had to find means other than its own military forces.

This decision to try to prevent the expansion of communist powers in the Far East led the United States to formulate a different policy in respect to Indochina. No longer could French Indochina be viewed as the battleground of a colonial war with only local significance, but rather it became one of the testing grounds of "communism" versus "democracy" or, more realistically, of the Soviet Union and China versus the United States. Just as containment and the prevention of any further deterioration in the power structure demanded the commitment of American troops to Korea, so in Indochina these policies required that the United States extend moral and material support to the French, for the French now represented an American instrument for the containment of communist influence in the Far East.

Truman-Acheson Policies

There is evidence to suggest that the containment of communist power and influence in Indochina did not become a definite policy goal until after the outbreak of the Korean hostilities. Although the United States had been moving in this direction since late 1949, Acheson, as late as January 1950, did not include Indochina within the defense perimeter of the United States.[1] In addition, although the United States promised economic aid to the French in Indochina in the

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[1]Dean Acheson, "Speech Before the National Press Club," United States Department of State, Bulletin, XXII (January 15, 1950), p. 158.

spring of 1950, actual deliveries of this aid were held up, possibly for political reasons.[2] However, immediately after receiving news of the North Korean aggression, Truman took steps to provide the French with economic and military aid for Indochina. The Korean crisis seems to have crystallized in Truman's mind the decision that the United States must support the French in Indochina in order to prevent communist leadership from becoming dominant. In his first public statement on the situation in Korea, Truman announced that he had ordered General MacArthur to go to the aid of the South Koreans; that he had requested the stationing of the Seventh Fleet between Formosa and the Chinese mainland, and the strengthening of defenses in the Philippine Islands, and had ordered the acceleration of military aid to Indochina. He also ordered the establishment of a United States military advisory mission for Indochina.[3] Truman's reference to Indochina seems quite significant. This was the first time since the outbreak of the Indochinese War that he had made any public reference to the political situation there. This alone suggests that Korea precipitated an increased American concern with Indochina. The simultaneous concern with Korea, Indochina, and Formosa suggests that events in Indochina were being viewed in a total Asian context, which was, in fact, influencing the policies of the United States in Indochina. Shortly after Truman's announcement, concrete steps were taken to provide Indochina with American aid and a military mission was dispatched to investigate the needs of the

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[2]There is some indication that the United States withheld actual deliveries of this aid, in order to apply pressure on the French to grant independence to the Vietnamese.

[3]Harry S. Truman, "Press Conference," United States Department of State, Bulletin, XXII (July 3, 1950), p. 5.

French. Thereafter, large quantities of both military and economic aid were quickly dispatched.[4]

Truman wanted to prevent communist expansion anywhere in Asia, but Indochina had a singular value. Sino-Soviet power was threatening to break through into Indochina. The danger was immediate and it was imminent. Indochina was also viewed as being of critical strategic importance to the United States. Truman repeatedly emphasized that the loss of Indochina "would mean the loss of freedom for millions of people, the loss of vital raw materials, and the loss of points of critical strategic importance to the free world."[5] If Indochina remained "free", it could act as a buffer zone between China and the rest of Southeast Asia; it could act as a lock on the rest of Southeast Asia and prevent the southward expansion of the Chinese. If controlled by the communists, it could then serve as a staging area for communist attacks on almost all of the other countries of Southeast Asia. Thailand, Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, even the Philippines, would find themselves more open to communist expansion, if Indochina came under communist rule. Truman did not contend that the "fall" of Indochina would necessarily lead to the "fall" of all of Southeast Asia, but he did fear that a communist Indochina would menace these other countries of Southeast Asia. Thus, the defeat of the French in Indochina would only further disturb the power structure within Asia and could make it

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[4]In early July, 1950, a military aid mission was sent to Indochina to assess the needs of the French and on August 10, the first shipment of American arms aid arrived in Saigon.

[5]Underlined by the author of this thesis for emphasis. Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States. Harry S. Truman, 1952-1953 (Washington, 1966), p. 186.

even less favorable to the United States.

In addition, as Truman stated, Indochina and the rest of Southeast Asia possessed raw materials necessary for both East and West. Southeast Asia had long been regarded as the "rice-bowl" of the Orient. The nations of this region were among the few of the world who exported rice. The rice-deficient nations, including China, were dependent upon Southeast Asian products. The region also contained valuable deposits of raw materials: five-sixths of the world's supply of natural rubber, one-half of the international supply of tin, and two-thirds of all coconut products originated in this region. The area was also a major supplier of quinine and kapok. These raw materials were necessary for America's European allies, many of whom depended, to some extent, on triangular trade with this region to speed up their own economic recovery.[6]

The United States, however, did not want to assume the primary responsibility for preventing the communists from taking over in Indochina, and for this reason she vigorously supported the French. As Virginia Thompson has pointed out, "in Southeast Asia the United States has tried to devise policies that would stop the Communists, without, however, involving itself extensively in affairs of that area."[7] Truman emphasized on several occasions that the primary responsibility for the War rested on French shoulders, just as the primary burden in Korea lay

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[6]William Henderson, New Nations of Southeast Asia (Headline Series #110, March-April, 1955 [New York, 1955]), p. 5.

[7]Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, Empire's End in Southeast Asia (New York, 1949), p. 8.

with the United States.[8] The United States thought it necessary to support the French, out of fear, perhaps, that were France to divest herself of the Indochinese burden, the United States might then be compelled to intervene. With war raging in Korea, such intervention would have been highly undesirable, and contrary to the way in which the United States traditionally tried to effect policy goals in this region.

However, Indochina had a significance which extended beyond Asian affairs. The Indochinese War was burdening France with a costly and frustrating conflict. By 1950, the French were spending $300,000,000--or approximately 35 percent of their entire military and defense budget--on Indochina.[9] By the end of 1949, French casualties had reached the staggering total of 100,000.[10] These expenditures of men and money seriously handicapped France's ability to bear her share of European defense. As the war dragged on, France became less and less able to fulfill her NATO obligations, and less and less willing to ratify the European Defense Community (EDC), to which the United States had heavily committed herself.[11] Thus, first Truman and subsequently Eisenhower discovered that unless American aid to France was forthcoming in ever-increasing amounts, the French might jettison the EDC. Eden reports that during a three power meeting in May, 1952, the French

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[8]"Joint Franco-American Communiqué, June 18, 1952," Council on Foreign Relations, Documents of American Foreign Relations (New York, 1953), p. 284.

[9]The New York Times, January 28, 1950, p. 4.

[10]Denis Warner, The Last Confucian (New York, 1963), p. 37.

[11]The French were unwilling to participate in the European Defense Community as a junior partner to Germany, yet their preoccupation with Indochina prevented them from assuming a dominant role in the EDC.

made it known that unless the United States increased its support for the Indochinese War, the French might not ratify the EDC. "The implications of the Indochina problem now extended far beyond Southeast Asia. In view of the French anxiety to maintain military parity with Germany, the fate of the EDC was, in part, dependent on its solution."[12] Thus, it seems that the Indochinese War had an adverse effect on American policies in Europe, as well as in the Far East, because of the deleterious influence it was having on the French ratification of the EDC.

The Truman-Acheson policies toward Indochina contained at least two separate and distinct strands. On the one hand, the United States was determined to hold the line against communist expansion in Indochina. This was necessary if a cordon sanitaire within Asia was to be established and the power structure prevented from further deteriorating. The Indochinese conflict was viewed as an integral part of communistic expansion in Asia, an expansion which, in the view of the United States, had to be prevented.

> Soviet intentions in these countries are unmistakably clear ... The Kremlin has already reduced China to a satellite ... communist rebellion is raging in Indochina. In all these countries they are trying to exploit deep-seated economic difficulties, poverty, illiteracy and disease.[13]

On the other hand, the United States wanted to foster in Indochina social and economic institutions which would generate political stability. She also wanted to prove herself a friend of Indochinese nationalism. Truman, in August, 1950, testified to this dual purpose

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[12]Anthony Eden, Full Circle (Boston, 1960), p. 94.

[13]Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States. Harry S. Truman, 1951, p. 309.

of United States policies in a speech over Radio Free Europe. According to Truman, the purpose of United States economic and military aid was:

> to help the people achieve independence within the French Union. The United States Economic Assistance Program is designed to stimulate conditions under which the people of Indochina may develop institutions compatible with their religion and culture which will best serve the interests of the people.[14]

The negative aspect of Truman's policy was to keep Indochina within the French Union, so that France could help shoulder the burden of containing the communist movement in Southeast Asia. The positive aspect of this policy was to help Indochina develop institutions which would satisfy the aspirations of the people and thus reduce the danger of internal subversion.

The tragedy of United States policies toward Indochina was that these separate policy goals often proved incompatible. The instruments and policies needed to contain the communists conflicted with the policies necessary to demonstrate United States friendliness to Indochinese nationalism. Ho Chi Minh enjoyed the support of many Vietnamese who did not consider themselves communist, while Bao Dai commanded little popular support. Yet, the United States thought that in order to contain communism, she had to support the French and Bao Dai; in so doing, she alienated many true Vietnamese nationalists.

In addition, this positive aspect of United States policies was inappropriate to the Indochinese situation. Acheson himself had emphasized that in order for aid to be effective, certain conditions would have to exist within a country. The United States could not create

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[14] The New York Times, August 13, 1950, p. 14.

prosperous politically stable governments where many of the factors necessary for building a viable political system were lacking. It could supply only the "missing component". "The United States cannot furnish determination, it cannot furnish the will, and it cannot furnish the loyalty of a people to its government."[15] Where these factors existed, aid could be effective. Within Indochina, these other components were simply not present. The government of Bao Dai did not command popular support, while many of the Indochinese viewed the War as colonialist in nature and thus had little incentive to support the French or their own government. Although France made concessions to the Vietnamese desires for more independence, these concessions always seemed to be too little and too late to have any real effect on popular morale. Although Truman paid lip service to this positive aspect of American policy, during most of the War the United States concentrated on containing the communists and supporting the French. Thus, most of the support given to the French was to be used primarily for military purposes.

United States Aid to Indochina

In view of the fact that the primary interest of the United States in Indochina was to prevent a communist victory, most of the American aid had a military purpose. In July, 1950, Truman appointed a military aid mission headed by John Melby to make an on the spot study of French military needs in Indochina and to draft plans for a resident advisory military mission. The Griffin Mission had already recommended $23,500,000 in economic aid, of which $6,000,000 was to be allocated

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[15]Acheson, P. 111.

for public health projects. In late July, four American public health officials were sent to head antimalarial teams.[16] The Melby Mission completed its report in early August and recommended $100,000,000 in military aid, and soon after, members of the permanent military advisory mission began to arrive in Saigon. The function of this mission was to observe and advise on the use of American military equipment.[17] The first shipment of arms aid, consisting primarily of military vehicles, arrived on August 10, 1950, and was received with pomp and ceremony, though marred by the continued absence of Bao Dai from his country.[18] The French, however, were unhappy with the rate of deliveries and pressed for speedier shipments and additional supplies. At a three power meeting in September, the French brought pressure to bear on the United States and shortly thereafter, the United States announced that it was accelerating arms shipments to Indochina, to meet the threat of the anticipated October offensive.[19] Whether the United States was lagging in its deliveries or the French were trying to shift the major burden onto American shoulders is not clear, but in spite of the agreement produced at the three power meeting (Great Britian, France, and the United States), in mid September, the French defense minister flew to the United States to request accelerated shipments. As a result, Melby was again sent to Indochina to reassess French needs.[20] Subsequent

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[16] The New York Times, July 30, 1950, p. 9.

[17] Ibid., August 3, 1950, p. 2.

[18] Ibid., August 10, 1950, p. 1

[19] Ibid., September 21, 1950, p. 1.

[20] Ibid., September 30, 1950, p. 12.

to his journey, a Franco-American communiqué announced that France was to receive $2,400,000,000 in arms and equipment during 1951 for use in Europe and in Indochina. It is reported that the French originally requested a total of $3,170,000,000, of which $300,000,000 was to be earmarked for Indochina.[21] Although the communiqué did not specify how much of the total sum was to be used in Indochina, there is evidence to suggest that the total was around $200,000,000.[22]

The Question of Military Involvement

That the United States intended to furnish military and economic aid, but no men was emphasized on several occasions by American officials. In July, Melby asserted that there had been "no requests, suggestions, nor plans for sending United States military units to Indochina."[23] Again in October, Acheson announced that there was "no consideration of sending troops" to Indochina.[24] These remarks presaged the pattern of American aid to Indochina, for even after French "suggestions and requests" had been received, the United States continued to shun military involvement, and was always careful to make this clear. Although in late 1950, two United States B-26 bombers were sent to Indochina, along with four privateer patrol bombers, the crews were civilian rather than military personnel.

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[21]Ibid., October 13, 1950, p. 14.

[22]Ibid., September 19, 1951, p. 19.

[23]Ibid., July 1, 1950, p. 4.

[24]Ibid., September 19, 1951, p. 19.

The Chinese intervention in Korea resurrected French fears of outside communist intervention in Indochina and the French sought an American assurance of immediate action, in case China intervened in Indochina. In January, 1951, Prime Minister Pleven approached Truman directly on this subject. No American promise was forthcoming, however, and Pleven had to be contented with the promise of more and speedier aid.[25] Truman was never willing to commit himself to military support of the French, in spite of continued and increasing pressures on the subject from the French. The Truman Administration was only willing to furnish arms, military equipment, supplies, and economic aid. Any commitment to send American military forces --ground or air --was another question entirely.

The pattern of American commitments to the French in Indochina thus was rather consistent with the traditional pattern of American involvement in Asia. The United States wanted to contain the communists in Indochina, in order to prevent any further weakening in her power position in the Far East, but refused to commit herself militarily to the defense of these policies. She aided the French materially and financially, but continued to rely on the French to bear the major burden of the War. She continued to believe that France could play her historic role in Southeast Asia and that the United States could further her policies by reliance on indirect means.

In spite of the American assistance, the Vietminh continued to be a formidable force without any overt Chinese participation. Early in 1951, Hanson Baldwin reflected the pessimism felt by many in the United

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[25]Ibid., January 30, 1951, p. 18.

States when he questioned whether there was any chance of saving Indochina from the communists.[26] Throughout 1951, the military situation seemed critical and the United States continued to press the French to grant more independence to the Indochinese in order to rally the people in support of the War. The French, on their part, continued to look to the United States to save the situation. In September, 1951, General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny visited the United States and, along with a request for a speed-up in the delivery of aid, he asked for an American guarantee of immediate military action, if China intervened.[27] The United States again agreed to speed deliveries, but would make no promises on intervention. The furthest Truman was willing to go was to express "grave concern" if China should intervene. Chinese aggression in Southeast Asia would "be a matter of direct and grave concern which would require the most urgent and earnest consideration by the United Nations."[28]

United States aid to Indochina continued to mount. By January, 1952, the value of military equipment thus far delivered was estimated at $228,000,000.[29] The one hundredth shipload of American supplies arrived in Indochina, bringing the total of American supplies to 100,000 tons. By the end of fiscal year 1952, it was reported that aid totaling 300 million dollars had been granted to the French for fiscal

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[26]Hanson Baldwin, Ibid., January 5, 1951, p. 4.

[27]Miriam S. Farley, United States Relations with Southeast Asia, 1950-1955 (New York, 1955), p. 267.

[28]The New York Times, January 29, 1952, p. 1.

[29]Council on Foreign Relations, The United States in World Affairs, 1950 (New York, 1951), p. 201.

1952 alone. The tempo of three power discussions on Indochina also continued to increase. A three power military meeting was held in early January, but no communiqué was issued. Two days later, General Juin was in Washington to discuss again the possibility of Chinese intervention and to request American air and naval support in case of this eventuality. Juin later reported that he "was confident that he would get what was necessary if the Chinese should make war. But no commitments were made ..."[30] By mid 1952, it was reported that the United States was paying almost one-third of the total costs of all Indochinese operations and about forty percent of the costs of all material supplies in Indochina.[31]

Thus, by the close of the Truman Administration, the United States had heavily committed herself to a communist defeat in Indochina, yet without herself becoming militarily involved. She continued to rely on the French to stabilize internal conditions there and to contain the communists. In so doing, she may have failed to realize that a France which was unable to defend herself on the continent of Europe could hardly be expected to carry a major burden of checking the communists in Asia. Had China remained pro-western in its outlook, the United States might well have continued to regard the Indochinese War as essentially colonial in nature and of only local significance. With the scramble to contain communism, however, Indochina became part and parcel of United States efforts to re-establish a favorable Far Eastern balance of power.

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[30] The New York Times, January 14, 1952, p. 1.

[31] Ibid., July 13, 1952, p. 1.

Eisenhower-Dulles Policies

The Republican Administration during its first year in office adhered to the basic policies established by its predecessor. Policy statements continued to stress the total Asiatic significance of the War and emphasized that Indochina was a major obstacle to the Soviet design of conquest in Asia. The United States continued to give the French military assistance, technical aid, and moral support.

However, beginning in late 1953 and continuing into 1954, some attempt seems to have been made to use Indochina as the catalyst for a far more ambitious American policy in Asia. Policies were verbalized warning China of dire consequences should she intervene in Indochina. There was talk of the need to structure around Indochina the nucleus of a new organization which would deter Soviet and Chinese expansion in the Asian area. The assumption was that the United States ought to take the initiative in respect to communist expansionistic thrusts; she ought not simply react to such thrusts, but rather she should try to deter them. This might be done by taking a firm stand with the communists, and by structuring a new defense alliance in Asia. This defense alliance might restore the balance of power. It was intended to serve as a counter-weight to Sino-Soviet power in Asia and to cast an umbrella of protection over all of the developing nations which were too weak to resist the communists individually. It could serve to restore the balance of power, relieve the United States of some of the responsibility for the region, and perhaps, stabilize the Asian situation more favorably to the interests of the United States. Whereas Truman responded to attempts to disturb the status quo, the Republicans wanted to pursue policies that would deter any such attempts before they got underway.

A power bloc created around Indochina, supported by some of the new nations of Asia, and backed by Great Britain, France, and the United States might do this.

However, serious inconsistencies seem to exist between the policies advocated in this respect and those actually acted upon. Verbally, the United States threatened the communists with massive retaliation, called for the rolling back of communism, and opposed yielding one more Asian country to communist ambitions. Yet the actual record of policies pursued during these two years of the Eisenhower Administration shows great continuity between the Eisenhower policies and the Truman policy of containment. Eisenhower and Dulles continued to rely on France--a weak instrument at best--to contain the communists in Indochina and to prevent any further deterioration in the Asian power structure. The United States did not involve herself directly in the War, nor did she succeed in establishing a defense alliance, before Indochina was partitioned. In spite of her concern with the Far Eastern power structure and her desire to re-establish a favorable balance of power, she would not commit her military arsenal to accomplish these goals. This unwillingness to assume direct involvement suggests great continuity between the traditional policies of the United States in Asia and those pursued in Indochina.

The Nature of Republican Interest in Indochina

The attitude that Indochina was crucial to the power relations in the Far East and that any policy for Indochina must be part of an overall Asian policy was a major theme in the addresses and writings of many key members of the Eisenhower Administration. Even before he

became Secretary of State, Dulles had viewed the War in Indochina as a critical "test" between the Soviet Union and the United States. He believed that many of the new nations were closely observing the developments in Indochina, and for this reason, among others, the West could not afford to fail; failure in this critical contest could lead to defeat in all of Southeast Asia. By recognizing the Bao Dai regime shortly after the Soviet recognition of the regime of Ho Chi Minh, the United States had set the stage for a test of influence in Asia. Dulles commented: "...we must help the nation we back. Its defeat, coming after the reverses suffered by the Nationalist Government of China, would have serious repercussions on the whole situation in Asia and the Pacific."[32] Here was the crux of the problem--the juxtaposition of a defeat in Indochina on the defeat of the American-supported government in China could have a bandwagon effect on all of the remaining countries of Asia and could signal an irresistable tide against the West in the Far East. Such a defeat, it was thought, could force the United States to completely withdraw from the Orient. To Dulles, the defeat of the Kuomintang had seriously crippled the United States position in Asia. "That disaster would be compounded if there were added to it the loss of ... Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands."[33]

In the eyes of Eisenhower and Dulles, Indochina was the key to all of Southeast Asia; lose Indochina and you lose Southeast Asia. To illustrate this position, Eisenhower introduced the notion of the falling domino. "You have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the

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[32]John Foster Dulles, War or Peace (New York, 1950), p. 231.

[33]Ibid., p. 232.

first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly..."[34] Indochina was the first in the row of dominoes, the rest being the various countries of Southeast Asia.

> If Indochina falls, Thailand is put in an almost impossible position. The same is true of Malaya with its rubber and tin. The same is true of Indonesia. If this whole part of Southeast Asia goes under Communist dominion or Communist influence, Japan, who trades and must trade with this area in order to exist must inevitably be oriented towards a Communist regime. That indicates why it is vitally important that Indochina not go behind the Iron Curtain.[35]

So vital was Indochina to American interests in Asia and the Pacific that Dulles asserted that a communist takeover in Indochina would carry a grave threat to the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand,[36] and Eisenhower stated that it would turn the island defensive chain of Japan, Formosa, and the Philippines southward.[37]

Thus, the United States believed that the loss of Indochina contained within it a multiplier effect which could disrupt the status quo within Asia and lead to a permanent communist hegemony in the region. Analyzed in this way, Indochina became the last bastion for the preservation of the power relations in the Far East, for if the United States wanted to prevent communist expansion anywhere in Asia, she had to prevent it in Indochina. "Whither goes Indochina, so goes Asia," or so went American thinking during the critical years of the

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[34] Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States. Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954, p. 382.

[35] Richard Nixon, "Address on T.V. and Radio, December 23, 1953," United States Department of State, Bulletin, XXX (January 4, 1954), p. 12.

[36] John F. Dulles, "The Threat of a Red Asia," United States Department of State, Bulletin, XXX (April 12, 1954), p. 540.

[37] Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States. Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954, p. 382.

Indochinese War.

Indochina was also considered to be of great significance economically to the United States and to the West. As Truman had realized, Southeast Asia had great agricultural importance, because of its surpluses of rice. If Indochina was the key to all of Southeast Asia, politically it was also the key to the rice surpluses in this region, surpluses which were so vital to many nations of Asia. This could have a two-pronged significance. On the one hand, it was important to see to it that the "free nations" of Asia continued to have access to this rice; on the other hand, it could be equally as important to see to it that food-starved China was deprived of these badly needed supplies. The loss--to the West--of these food supplies could be a double loss--a loss to the nations which needed the rice, plus a setback to the West because China acquired the rice. Because of its economic resources, Indochina was important to the power structure in the Far East.[38]

In essence, Indochina was believed to have great significance for overall power relationships within all of Asia. That simplistic cause-effect relationships were predicated for events in Asia can best be understood in the spirit of the times. Everywhere Americans were seeking such simple relationships. The rise of the Cold War was explained by the sellouts of the Democrats at Yalta and at Potsdam. The loss of atomic monopoly was the fault of the spies like the Rosenbergs. The communists took over in China because a few State Department officials had sold out Chiang Kai-shek. Everywhere complex problems were seen as having simple causes. It is in this context, it must be remembered,

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[38]Dulles, "The Threat of a Red Asia," p. 539-542.

that Indochina was viewed as the last remaining Maginot line in Asia.

It must also be remembered that the Republicans had promised to prevent future communist expansion anywhere in the world and had lambasted the Democrats for their failure in China. No Republican Administration could countenance disinterest in Indochina, nor could the Administration not pledge all-out support to the French. The campaign slogans which carried the Republicans into power would be remembered long after the War in Indochina had ended; the Republicans could not afford politically to turn their backs on their own promises.

The United States had a more positive interest in Indochina as well. Indochina had critical importance for the "New Look" that Dulles had promised to give to American foreign policy. For he had long argued that the United States ought to prevent communist expansion from ever getting underway in Asia, rather than simply resisting it after it initiates its assault. Dulles was seeking to re-establish a balance of power in Asia that would be favorable to American interests. Indochina was of crucial importance to this more ambitious policy. As early as 1950, Dulles had suggested the creation of a new organization in Southeast Asia, one which would serve as a counterweight to Sino-Soviet power. Indochina was the fulcrum of this new organization. Dulles had argued that the United States should:

> help establish a permanent association of the free nations of Asia and the Pacific. It would not, at least in the beginning, be an essentially military alliance, as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization turned out to be ... (It would start) as a consultative council of those who have a common concern for national independence and human freedom.[39]

This organization became one of the personal cause celebre's of Dulles

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[39]Dulles, War or Peace, p. 229-230.

and received new attention in the early months of 1954 when the situation in Indochina became critical. He reintroduced his idea in a speech before the National Press Club in March, 1954, by calling for united action in Indochina.[40] Eisenhower, elaborating on what Dulles had in mind, said it would constitute "the establishment of a new grouping or coalition composed of nations which have a vital concern in the checking of communist expansion in the area."[41] What Dulles wanted was more than an ad hoc grouping of nations to bolster the French position in Indochina, for he sought a new permanent organization for collective security in Asia which would provide for defense against communist subversion, as well as defense against the expansion of communist states.[42] This new organization--to consist of the United States, Great Britain, France, the Associated States of Indochina, the Philippines, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, and possibly others--would cast a protective umbrella over the free states of Asia. Its purpose was to allow them to develop politically and economically without being plagued by

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[40]Dulles, "The Threat of a Red Asia," p. 540.

[41]Letter, Dwight D. Eisenhower to Winston Churchill, April 4, 1964, in Dwight D. Eisenhower, Mandate for Change (New York, 1963), p. 346.

[42]Dulles' lack of concern with the immediate crisis in Indochina is illustrated by a conversation that occured between Dulles and Ély. While Ély attempted to impress on Dulles the seriousness of the French situation at Dien Bien Phu, Dulles was not interested; instead he elaborated on his thesis that a Southeast Asian organization must be formed to stop the expansion of the communists. "... le secretaire d'Etat etait surtout visiblement preoccupé des conditions politiques auxquelles devrait subordonnée une plus large participation americane à la defense du Sud-Est asiatique ... C'etait une allusion au pacte politique couvrant tout le Sud-Est asiatique que le secretaire d'Etat entrevoyait et dont il souhaitait la conclusion." in Paul Ély, Mémoirs (Paris, 1964), p. 66.

communist threats. It would add a new power dimension to Asian affairs--a power bloc designed to counterbalance Russia and China. This organization would also make clear to the Soviet Union the likely consequences of any possible aggression, for it was Dulles' belief that aggression could be deterred by threats of reprisal. "If aggressive events are likely which will in fact lead us to fight, let us make clear our intention in advance, then we shall probably not have to fight."[43] Thus, a collective security organization would warn against aggression or subversion and by so doing, hopefully would forestall it. In essence, it would strengthen the overall position of the United States in Asia. Indochina, considered to be the key to Southeast Asia, was the focal point of this organization. Once such an organization was established, Dulles thought the United States would be in a position to implement "his long standing foreign policy goal of rolling back communism in all of Southeast Asia."[44]

That Dulles sought to establish a collective security organization in Asia and viewed it as being capable of altering the balance of power more in favor of the United States was consistent with his attitude toward the policy of containment. He detested containment as "negative, futile, and immoral."[45] His argument was that all of American energies, all of American sacrifices and spending were going not toward defeating communism, but toward enabling the United States to live with communism.

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[43]John F. Dulles, "Address Before the American Legion," United States Department of State, Bulletin, XXIX (September 14, 1953), p. 339.

[44]Farley, p. 275.

[45]The New York Times, October 15, 1952, p. 2.

> We are not working, sacrificing, and spending in order to live without this peril, but to be able to live with it, presumably forever. (Containment represented) treadmill policies which, at best, might perhaps keep us in the same place until we drop exhausted.[46]

What Dulles had emphasized was that the United States ought to devote itself to eliminating the communist menace rather than trying to live with it. His longstanding interest in developing a collective defense alliance structure in Southeast Asia constituted a first step.

Finally, the Eisenhower Administration was concerned with the effect the Indochinese War was having on its European policies. The French continued to temporize on whether to ratify the European Defense Community. By 1954, many American officials feared that the French might reject the EDC, if they could secure a Soviet promise to help end the Indochinese War. Fear existed that Moscow, in order to disrupt the Western Alliance, might take the initiative in offering the French some kind of settlement in Indochina, in exchange for the refusal of the French to join the European Defense Community.[47] So interwoven were the issues of the EDC and Indochina that shortly before leaving for the Berlin Conference, the French let it be known publicly that the Government had agreed to make no deals with the Soviets in respect to the EDC in return for an "illusory" promise of peace in Indochina.[48]

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[46]Ibid., p. 2.

[47]Ibid., January 24, 1954, p. 2.

[48]Harold Callendar, The New York Times, January 21, 1954, p. 1.

The Navarre Plan

Based on the considerations which have been set forth, the Eisenhower Administration continued to support the French in Indochina. Speaking to the nation in July, 1953, Dulles announced that Indochina was the second largest cost item in the Mutual Security Program budget.[49]

The French were unable to hold their own in Indochina, however, and by 1953 were militarily in a worse position than they had been in 1947. The Vietminh continued to escalate the level of military activities and, in early 1953, invaded Laos. As the situation deteriorated, the Mayer Government fell, to be followed in May, 1953, by the Laniel Government. Henri Navarre was soon thereafter appointed to head the Indochinese Command and was given instructions to work out a plan to bring the War to a satisfactory conclusion.

Navarre proposed that French military operations be divided into two distinct phases. During the campaign of 1953-1954, the French were to concentrate on "mopping up" operations in southern and central Vietnam, in order to avoid a general battle with the full forces of the Vietminh, especially in the north. In the north during this period, the French should maintain the defensive. During the campaign of 1954-1955, the French were to assume the offensive in the north and to engage the

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[49] John F. Dulles, "Report to the Nation," United States Department of State, Press Releases (July 17, 1953), #387.

Vietminh in a decisive battle.[50]

The United States registered satisfaction with this new plan in the fall of 1953, by announcing that she would give France an additional 385 million dollars to support it. Much of this additional aid was to be used to train and equip the Vietnamese Army and to cover the costs of temporarily increasing French troop levels.[51] The United States, however, seemed to believe the Navarre Plan promised total victory in Indochina, a victory which might indeed lead to negotiations, but negotiations in which France would impose a victor's peace on the Vietminh. Thus, at the Four Power Ministerial Conference at Berlin in February, 1954, Dulles was dismayed to find the French earnestly talking about a negotiated settlement that would accomplish much less than this. Dulles believed the Navarre Plan could still achieve a military victory and that negotiations with the communists, at this time, were both futile and unnecessary.[52] Bator reports that to convince the French to make an allout effort under the Navarre Plan, Dulles told the French the United States would supply all necessary military equipment, assume almost the entire financial burden, and would train the Vietnamese army, if they would push for victory.[53] As late as April, 1954, he described

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[50]Navarre himself denies, however, that this was his plan and states that it was the plan of his predecessor Salan. "Cette idée était la bases du plan que le général Salan m'avait laissé en héritage. Elle devint celle du mien." Whether he actually conceived it or adopted it from Salan, he presented the plan to the French government and thereafter it was called the "Navarre Plan," Henri Navarre, Agonie de l'Indochine (Paris, 1964), p. 81.

[51]"Joint United States-French Communiqué, September 30, 1953," United States Department of State, Bulletin, XXIX (October 12, 1953), p. 486.

[52]John Robinson Beal, John Foster Dulles (New York, 1957), p. 111.

[53]Viktor Bator, Vietnam: A Diplomatic Tragedy (New York, 1965), p. 17.

the Plan as one to break up organized communist activity and reduce the War to small-scale guerrilla operations by late 1955. In testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, he asserted "There is no reason to question the essential soundness of the Navarre Plan ... Nothing has happened to change the basic estimate of relative military power for 1955."[54] Ély reported that he could not convince Dulles that the Navarre Plan was neither designed to bring about a military solution nor was it capable of doing so. He suggested that the Americans had been mistaken in thinking the Plan contemplated total victory.[55]

The French interpreted the Navarre Plan differently. Subsequent to the close of the Indochinese War, they argued that the Navarre Plan was never designed to bring about a final military victory, but rather to place the French in a position of military strength, so that they might then negotiate to end the War with the Vietminh. Navarre wrote that he believed his mission was to create military conditions conducive to an honorable political settlement and that he never promised victory in Indochina.[56] Ély substantiated this and asserted that Navarre's instructions had been only to create military conditions conducive to a favorable political sclution.[57]

Which is to be taken as correct--the French interpretation or the American one? A time element may constitute a problem in answering the question. The French, when they first presented the Plan to the

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[54]John F. Dulles, "Not One of the United States Alone," United States Department of State, Bulletin, XXX (April 19, 1954), p. 582.

[55]Ély, p. 25 and 78.

[56]Navarre, p. 72.

[57]Ély, p. 24.

United States in the fall of 1953, may well have presented it as designed to bring about a French military victory in Indochina. It seems likely that the United States would not, at that point, have been willing to grant an additional 385 million dollars to the French for a plan that promised less than victory. It seems unlikely that the French would have made clear at that time that victory was not foreseen, in view of their desire to obtain additional aid from the United States and their knowledge that the Administration was opposed to any compromise with the communists. Thus, although in the fall of 1953, the Administration may well have wanted to believe victory possible, and would have read this into any plan, it is likely that the French would not have disabused them of this notion.

At the same time, it is unlikely that the French themselves seriously anticipated total victory. The War had grown increasingly unpopular in France, was regarded by many as la sale guerre, and was politically a great liability. It was obvious by then that no matter what happened in Indochina, Indochina would not be returned to her pre-World War II status as a French colony. Whereas the French had entered the War to preserve their Empire, they had been compelled to acquiesce in more and more autonomy for the Indochinese and consequently lost most of their original motivation for fighting. The French thought that if the United States was so interested in containing communism in Indochina, she ought to share the military burden with them by committing American troops.

By March, 1954, the French were explicitly telling their American ally that victory was not possible, but the United States seemed unwilling to believe this. Several factors may be involved here. If the

French negotiated with the communists, they would probably have to make some concessions. Yet, domestically, the United States had commited herself to a policy of no concessions to the communists. In addition, the Navarre Plan, if successful, would prevent the expansion of communism; thus, the Administration continued to advocate adherence to the Plan, even after it was evident that the French were unwilling or unable to fight on.

The Nature of the War

Interwoven with the policy of containing the communists in Indochina was the insistence of Eisenhower and Dulles that the United States have no part in a colonialist or neo-colonialist war. This was a dominant policy theme of the Eisenhower Administration, one which embroiled it in periodic difficulties with the French. The United States continually pressed France to "perfect" the independence of the Indochinese so as to remove any question as to the true nature of the War. Dulles believed that the "United States must be very careful to allay suspicions in these countries and not make them think of the United States as imperialist. This what the Soviets play on. (Any American policy) should reinforce not undermine the independence of the new nations."[58] The United States must prove herself a friend to nations struggling for independence, prove that she who had fought her own War for Independence understood and sympathized with the aspirations of people throughout the world for political freedom. Throughout the War, pressures were exerted on the French to make it a "real" war of independence. When the French

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[58]Dulles, War or Peace, p. 229.

announced, in July, 1953, their decision to grant full independence to the Associated States, the United States quickly congratulated the French on their decision.[59] The United States, however, continued to worry about the nature of the War and its implications for American policies in Southeast Asia. As late as September, 1953, Dulles asserted:

> There has been danger that resistance to communist aggression might collapse with resulting jeopardy to our vital interests in the West Pacific. Many of the people of Indochina had been persuaded that their choice was between colonialism and communism. A choice between two forms of subjection never gives rise to much enthusiasm or much willingness to sacrifice and die. Now, the French, by Declaration of July 3, have made clear their intention to grant full independence to the Associated States as these states desire it ... Thus, the character of the war becomes transformed and the United States, can in good conscience, contribute substantially ... to the successful conclusion of the War. It has become genuinely a "war for independence" and the aggressive character of the communist warfare now stands exposed.[60]

Implicit in this statement is the American belief that prior to July, 1953, a legitimate question existed as to the "true" nature of the War. These doubts plagued the Administration continuously even after the French Declaration. When in May, 1954, the question of American military intervention in Indochina arose, both Dulles and Eisenhower emphasized that one of the preconditions for such intervention was a French promise to grant the Indochinese full independence.[61] This agitation lest she appear in the role of a colonialist power also influenced the United States in its decision as to whether she ought to intervene

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[59]Bator, p. 200.

[60]John F. Dulles, "Address Before the New York Herald Tribune Forum," United States Department of State, Bulletin, XXIX (November 2, 1953), p. 588.

[61]Chalmers M. Roberts, The Washington Post, June 7, 1954, p. 17.

militarily over Dien Bien Phu. The United States insisted that she would not respond alone to the French plea, lest she incur criticism as a colonialist, "The strongest reason for all for the United States refusal to respond by itself to French pleas was our tradition of anti-colonialism."[62] If Eisenhower's statement is to be taken at face value, then one of the major policies of the United States during the Indochinese War was to avoid any taint of neo-colonialism. So overriding was this concern that it might have influenced a decision to let the military situation in Indochina collapse rather than take the risk of being accused of being a colonialist state.

In all probability, the "colonial" issue was a convenient pretext which served the policy goals of the United States at this time. For the United States had supported the French with military aid and financial support, even though she seemed to think the war was colonialist in nature. When a French defeat appeared imminent at Dien Bien Phu, it hardly seems credible that the United States would not intervene, simply out of fear of being labelled a colonialist power. However, anti-colonialism was a position long propounded in American policies in Asia, starting from the time when the United States insisted on the preservation of the independence and territorial integrity of China. In this respect, the application of this position on colonialism to the Indochinese situation indicates a continuation of a traditional Far Eastern policy.

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[62]Eisenhower, Mandate for Change, p. 373.

The Question of Chinese Intervention in Indochina

Although during 1953, Eisenhower adhered to most of the policies laid down during Truman's Administration, the Republicans took a stronger position on the question of Chinese intervention. Throughout the period of the armistice negotiations in Korea, the French were fearful that an armistice in Korea might free Chinese forces for direct intervention in Indochina. The French Governments repeatedly sought to obtain American assurances that if China intervened directly, the United States would come to the immediate aid of the French. As has been pointed out, Truman was loathe to make any direct commitments on this score, and the furthest the United States had gone was to state in the United Nations that she would be gravely concerned should China intervene. Hopes for an armistice in Korea were increased in 1953, and with these hopes went more concern, on the part of the French, of direct Chinese involvement in Indochina. Dulles was willing to give such guarantees and to give them publicly, because of his belief that warning a potential aggressor deters aggression. Dulles consistently emphasized that:

> The Korean War began in a way in which wars often begin--a potential aggressor miscalculated. From that we learn a lesson which we expect to apply in the interests of future peace. The lesson is this: If events are likely which will in fact lead us to fight, let us make clear our intention in advance; then we shall probably not have to fight...[63]

During a visit by President Auriol to Washington in March, 1953, the United States announced that if China took advantage of an armistice in Korea to pursue war in Indochina, this would have "serious consequences for the efforts to bring about peace in the world and would conflict

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[63]Dulles, "Address Before the American Legion," p. 339 & 341.

directly with the undertaking on which any armistice in Korea would rest."[64] Shortly thereafter, Dulles explained that this statement "was part of our effort to anticipate what may happen rather than to catch up with what has happened."[65]

These warnings were reiterated on several occasions. In September, Dulles told the American Legion that:

> There is the risk that, as in Korea, Red China might send its own army into Indochina. The Chinese Communist regime should realize that such a second aggression could not occur without grave consequences which might not be confined to Indochina. I say this soberly in the interests of peace and in the hope of preventing another aggressor from miscalculating.[66]

Dulles later elaborated on some of the possible consequences to China, should she intervene in Indochina. Testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in March, 1954, Dulles explained that "the best way to deter aggression is to make the aggressor know in advance that he will suffer damage outweighing what he can hope to gain."[67]

The means the United States would rely on in the event of such overt Chinese aggression were never made clear. The Republicans had promised a tougher policy toward communism, but at the same time, had promised cutbacks in military expenditures. Thus, it was necessary to devise means to reconcile these two opposing promises. Finally, in January, 1954, Dulles expounded on the "New Look" of Republican foreign policy, specifically relating his comments to the situation in

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[64]United States Department of State, Press Releases 1953 (March 28, 1953), #160.

[65]Ibid., (April 18, 1953), #200.

[66]Underlined by the author of this thesis for emphasis. Dulles, "Address Before The American Legion," p. 342.

[67]The New York Times, March 25, 1954, p. 1.

Indochina.

> Local defense will always be important ... it must be reinforced (however) by the further deterrent of massive retaliatory power ... The way to deter aggression is for the free community to be willing and able to respond vigorously at places and with means of its own choosing.[68]

In effect, the Chinese were warned that the nuclear arsenal of the United States would rain down on them in the event of their direct intervention in Indochina. Here was the more ambitious policy that the Republicans had been formulating. But an immediate outcry against such a policy was raised in Congress and by United States allies. Subsequent to Dulles' speech, an Administration spokesman had to concede that the "New Look" would not be an appropriate way of dealing with the situation in Indochina.[69] Thus, although Americans continued to threaten against Chinese intervention, conflicting statements emanated from the Administration as to what means would be used against such intervention.

In any event, the Chinese did not intervene directly in Indochina, although during late 1953 and early 1954, they stepped up their aid.[70] Soon the problem confronting the United States was not what to do if China intervened, but what to do against the Vietminh to prevent the complete collapse of the French in Indochina.

A question may be raised as to whether Dulles, by his policy statements, intended to commit the United States to direct military involvement, should China intervene directly. On the surface, this is what his statements indicated. Yet, the striking feature of Dulles' warlike

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[68]Text in The New York Times, January 13, 1954, p. 1.

[69]Defense Secretary Charles E. Wilson, reported in The New York Times, February 9, 1954, p. 1.

[70]Hammer, p. 135.

statements is that he himself continually emphasized that the mere warning of China would suffice; that if China were warned not to intervene, she would heed such warnings, and hence would not involve the United States in war. In each and every instance where China was publicly warned against intervention, Dulles also emphasized that we would probably NOT have to involve our military there, because the warnings would deter Chinese aggression. Dulles may have emphasized the unlikelihood of American involvement to soothe public fears; or he may have been so convinced that threats of reprisal deter aggression, that he believed the eventuality where the United States might have to intervene would never arise. Thus, one cannot necessarily conclude that Dulles' statements were the expression of a firm United States policy to intervene in Indochina should China do so. The United States, in fact, may not have had a real policy commitment relating to the contingency of Chinese action. Both admirers and critics of Dulles have suggested that his words could not always be taken at face value and they were often more complicated than a surface examination indicated.

The Question of Political Settlement

The early months of 1954 found the French in a worse position militarily than they had been since the War began. The Vietminh were preparing for a large scale offensive, the one thing Navarre had planned to avoid in the 1953-1954 campaign. The French had earlier entrenched themselves at Dien Bien Phu, an isolated fortress in northern Vietnam, accessible only by air, especially if attacked; there were growing indications that the Vietminh intended to lay siege to Dien Bien Phu. The French people were tired of the War and urgently wanted peace. At

the Three Power Ministerial Conference held in Berlin in early 1954, both the British and the French sought to include Indochina on the Agenda of an international conference to discuss Korea. The United States opposed seeking a negotiated settlement. She still believed in the efficacy of the Navarre Plan and thought that victory was possible, if the French would give their full backing to the Plan. Dulles was convinced that scheduling a political conference on Indochina would only lead the communists to step up the pace of their military activities.[71] Further, Dulles believed that if Indochina were scheduled on the Geneva Agenda, compromises would have to be made with the communists. Also, the United States may have feared that the French would sacrifice the EDC, in order to get a satisfactory political solution in Indochina. Another thought that might have concerned the United States was that since France had very little to offer the communists, the United States might be called upon to make concessions, either in the form of an American recognition of the regime of Mao Tse-tung or in the form of permitting Communist China to occupy the Chinese seat in the United Nations. Dulles' position was that if the Chinese displayed a willingness to stop their agression in Korea, <u>then</u> the time might be ripe for discussions on Indochina, but not before.

> I do not think that I have ever said that these political talks would necessarily be limited exclusively to Korea. We have said that the conference, as originally set up, in our opinion, should be limited to Korea. But also I think I have made it clear that, if matters at the conference go well, and the Chinese Communists show a disposition to

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[71]Beal, p. 111.

> settle in a reasonable way such a question as Indochina, we would not, just on technical grounds, say 'No' ...[72]

Thus, at Berlin, strong pressures had to be exerted on Dulles to convince him that talks should be scheduled. Eden reports that Dulles' opposition to talks was one of the major stumbling blocks to scheduling them.[73] Dulles may have been warned that unless the Laniel Government could hold out some hope of peace in Indochina, it would fall, and a new government committed to a unilateral withdrawal might take office.[74] The French insisted that if the United States considered Indochina vital to her national interest and opposed a negotiated settlement, she ought to aid the French more extensively and more directly. France ought not to be expected to bear the entire military burden for containing the communists in Indochina.

The British were committed also to a political settlement in Indochina. Eden's position was:

> We fully share United States desires to see Indochina preserved from communism and agree that, so long as there is any hope of success, the French should be urged to maintain their present effort. But after earnest study of military and political factors, we feel that it would be unrealistic not to face the possibility that the conditions for a favorable solution in Indochina no longer exist ...[75]

The United States was, thus, in an anomolous position with respect to a negotiated settlement. France, who had been bearing the major burden of the War and who the United States insisted bore the primary

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[72]John F. Dulles, "Press Conference," United States Department of State, Bulletin, XXIX (September 14, 1953), p. 342.

[73]Eden, p. 98.

[74]Beal, p. 111.

[75]Eden, p. 110.

responsibility for the War, was no longer willing to fight alone. The British were convinced that a military solution by the French was no longer tenable and thus were pressing for a conference on Indochina. If the United States continued to refuse to discuss Indochina with the communists, she risked a major split with her allies, which could be detrimental to her overall foreign policy. In addition, a refusal to go along with the Laniel-Bidault Government might cause the fall of that Government and its replacement by a pacifist government. The new government might not support the EDC, as Laniel had. Yet agreeing to place Indochina on the Conference Agenda was bound to lead to domestic repercussions and cries of "sellout", "Yalta", and "appeasement". The only other alternative for the United States seemed to be to go to the direct military aid of the French.

However, the Administration had had occasion to measure congressional support for involving American troops in Indochina and had found Congress very unsympathetic. Sometime in late January or early February, in response to a French plea for help, the United States had sent 40 B-26 bombers, along with two hundred American mechanics, to aid the French at Dien Bien Phu. An uproar resulted in Congress, and Mike Mansfield demanded to know if there were any plans for sending American troops or atomic weapons to Indochina.[76] Shortly thereafter, possibly to silence congressional criticism, Eisenhower announced that he had sent the mechanics to maintain the planes, because there were not sufficient skilled mechanics in Indochina, and that he saw no opportunity

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[76]Reported in The New York Times, February 9, 1954, p. 1.

of these mechanics becoming involved in any hostilities.[77] When queried on congressional unrest as to possible military involvement in Indochina, Eisenhower stated "... I cannot conceive of a greater tragedy for America than to get heavily involved now in an all-out war in any of those regions ..."[78] Thus, had the Administration been considering the possibility of military involvement, the minor incident with the mechanics convinced it that such involvement would not have congressional backing.

Dulles, thus, had little choice at Berlin, but to agree to the placing of Indochina on the Geneva Agenda; he had nothing else to offer to the French. Cognizant, however, that his agreement might touch off a barrage of criticism at home, he insisted that although Communist China would be present at the conference, she would not be an "inviting party" and that in no way would the United States meeting with China be construed as implying recognition of the Communist regime. Dulles reported that he specifically told Molotov that he would not meet the Chinese unless it was specifically agreed in advance that no United States recognition would be involved.[79] The position of the United States was that the West was meeting with China to make her account before the bar of world opinion for her aggressions in Indochina and in Korea.[80]

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[77] The Public Papers of the Presidents, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953, p. 250.

[78] Ibid., p. 250.

[79] John F. Dulles, "Press Conference," United States Department of State, Bulletin, XXX (March 8, 1954), p. 346.

[80] Ibid., p. 346.

As Dulles had feared, upon his return to the United States, he was greeted with an onslaught of criticism, especially by members of Congress who thought that the meeting would in effect grant de facto recognition to the Chinese Communist regime. Members of the President's own party were among the most vocal of critics, with Senator Knowland, the majority leader, publicly criticizing Dulles and the Administration.[81] Dulles was compelled to "explain himself" to Congress and the American public in a radio broadcast and to promise again and again that the United States would not recognize Red China in return for a settlement in Indochina. And long after it was obvious that negotiations were inevitable, Dulles and Eisenhower continued to express doubts as to the wisdom of negotiating. They continued to hold out hope that military victory might well make these negotiations unnecessary.

Crisis Over Intervention

However, soon after the Berlin Conference, the United States faced a far more crucial policy question. March, 1954, brought with it the portent of a French military disaster in Indochina and involved the United States in the making of a vital policy decision as to whether to intervene directly in Indochina, in order to prevent this disaster. The French were faced with a critical military situation. Navarre, in spite of his earlier decision to avoid a major confrontation with the Vietminh in 1953-1954, had taken up a position at Dien Bien Phu, and by early February, 1954, it was evident that the Vietminh were preparing for a massive assault upon the fortress. Navarre decided to meet this

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[81] The New York Times, February 9, 1954, p. 1.

assault rather than abandon Dien Bien Phu. On March 13, the Vietminh launched a major attack upon the fortress and within two hours, two fortified outposts fell. French efforts at counterattack were totally foiled and by March 15, the fortress was under siege. The heavy artillery attacks prevented planes from landing and made impossible the supplying of the outpost. Within forty-eight hours, Navarre had cabled Paris that the situation was serious and requested American aerial intervention to raise the siege.[82]

On March 19, in response to an invitation from General Radford, Chairman of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Ély, French Chief of Staff, arrived in the United States for talks on the situation in Indochina. Ély bore several messages. He had been ordered to request additional American aid, to inform the Administration that the French no longer hoped for a favorable military solution, and to obtain an American guarantee of immediate air support if the Chinese intervened in the air over Dien Bien Phu. In addition, he conveyed a request from Navarre for a United States aerial attack on the Vietminh positions to raise the siege at Dien Bien Phu.[83]

For the first time, the Administration was confronted with a request for military action not against the Chinese but against the Vietminh. Ély's request presented the Administration with its most crucial policy decision to date on the Indochinese War. Intervention bore several dangers. It could embroil the United States in war with China; it could possibly activate the Sino-Soviet Alliance and lead to general

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[82]Navarre, p. 102.

[83]Ély, p. 16.

war. Non-intervention, on the other hand, could result in a resounding defeat for the French at Dien Bien Phu, with such disastrous psychological effects on French morale as to cause a complete withdrawal from Indochina. It could also force France to enter Geneva as a suppliant at Canossa. It would make inevitable a negotiated settlement and even perhaps the loss of much of Indochina.

But Ély's request was not official and policy decisions are not made on the request of a general. Radford, however, told Ély that if the French Government formally requested American air intervention at Dien Bien Phu, the United States Government would give serious consideration to this request. In fact, according to Ély, Radford took the initiative with him, and made this statement even before Ély had formally requested such aid. Preliminary plans for an American aerial attack were discussed at this time. A plan was worked out which contemplated use of American B-29 bombers based in the Philippines, along with planes from aircraft carriers attached to the Seventh Fleet. A number of raids, in the course of one or several consecutive nights, were to be made on the Vietminh positions at Dien Bien Phu, in order to break up the attack. The opperation was dubbed Vautour.[84]

When Radford and Ély parted, Ély understood that if the French Government formally requested American air intervention, Radford would strongly support and recommend this to the President. According to Ély, Radford "quite visibly" expected to obtain Eisenhower's approval of this plan. It was also understood that the plan would be a "one-shot" affair which would not involve the United States in war in Indochina,

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[84]Ibid., p. 38

but would be a form of "increased aid" to the French, aid which would stave off military disaster and allow the French to enter the Geneva Conference undefeated in the battlefield. Élý has reported that Radford was so confident of Eisenhower's approval that he expressed more concern as to whether the French would request such aid than he did over whether the United States would grant it.[85] Radford's estimate may have been based, in part, on the fact that Eisenhower, during a meeting with Radford and Élý, had ordered Radford to do everything possible to aid the French at Dien Bien Phu.[86] When Élý expressed fears that Dulles might not support this plan, he received the <u>impression</u> from Radford that Eisenhower and Dulles might not see eye to eye on this issue.[87]

Subsequent to Élý's departure and before the French formally requested American air intervention, it seems the Administration gave serious consideration to this plan for intervening in the air over Dien Bien Phu. Between March 25 and April 4, the date on which the French formally requested this aid, it seems that a number of high level discussions took place and that the Administration tentatively decided to adopt some plan for intervention. Many indications exist to support this hypothesis. On April 29, Dulles in a speech before the Overseas

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[85]Ibid., p. 39.

[86]Ibid., p. 25.

[87]Élý reports that he expressed his concern to Admiral Radford that Dulles did not seem to realize or appreciate the French plight at Dien Bien Phu. He also expressed fears that Dulles might not favor the Radford-Élý Plan. Élý does not report Radford's response, but he does say that Radford gave him the <u>impression</u> (and he (Élý) may have misinterpreted but he thought) that Radford's expressed opinion that Eisenhower might authorize American intervention, even though Dulles did not favor it. Élý emphasizes, however, that this was only an impression he received from Radford.

Press Club of America, stressed the importance the United States attached to Indochina and asserted that:

> Under the conditions of today, the imposition on Southeast Asia of the political system of Communist Russia and its Chinese Communist ally, by whatever means, would be a grave threat to the whole free community. The United States feels that that possibility should not be passively accepted.[88]

Up until this time, possible United States action had always been predicated on the direct intervention of the Chinese. Here, for the first time, the United States stated that regardless of how it was to be accomplished, the United States should not stand by and watch the communists take over in Indochina. Implicit was the assertion that if the Vietminh threatened to drive the French from Indochina, the United States would intervene to prevent this. On March 30, James Reston reported in the New York Times that the United States had taken a fundamental policy decision to use its air force over Dien Bien Phu to raise the siege and that Dulles was supposed to lay the political groundwork for this intervention.[89] Also, Eisenhower, in a strong message to the President of France on March 28, asserted that the soldiers at Dien Bien Phu were defending the cause of human freedom and were exemplifying the qualities vital to the survival of the free world.[90]

Bator lends support to this hypothesis in asserting that prior to April 3, the National Security Council met and decided on American

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[88]Underlined by the author of this thesis for emphasis. Dulles, "The Threat of a Red Asia," p. 540.

[89]James Reston, The New York Times, March 30, 1954, p. 26.

[90]Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Tribute to the Commander and Men of Dien Bien Phu Garrison," United States Department of State, Bulletin, XXX (April 12, 1954), p. 542.

intervention over Dien Bien Phu.[91] Chalmers Roberts also maintains that between March 25 and April 3, the National Security Council had met and thrashed out the problem, agreeing finally that intervention ought to be supported.[92] Reportedly, it was decided to use two hundred carrier based aircraft, from the aircraft carriers Essex and Boxer, along with Philippine based planes, in a single strike over Dien Bien Phu. In any case, some meeting must have been held and a tentative decision must have been taken, for on April 3, a secret meeting was held with key congressmen to discuss such intervention.

Although a decision seems to have been made to intervene in Indochina, Eisenhower appears to have been unwilling to assume sole responsibility for American action and wanted congressional support. On April 3, Dulles, Radford, Undersecretary of Defense Roger Kyes, Navy Secretary Robert B. Anderson, and Thurston B. Morton met in a secret session with five Senators and three Representatives in accordance with Eisenhower's desire that these leaders be sounded out on the possibility of a joint congressional resolution authorizing or supporting the use of air and naval power at Dien Bien Phu. At this point, the tide was turned. The Congressmen expressed strong misgivings and asked Dulles if America's allies had been sounded out and would participate in such a strike. Dulles answered in the negative. Radford, in response to questioning, admitted that the plan did not have the backing of the other chiefs of staff. At the end of the meeting, the Congressmen declined to support a congressional resolution and suggested that before

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[91]Bator, p. 49.

[92]Roberts, p. 17.

doing anything, Dulles ought to search for allies and consider making any intervention a joint allied venture.[93] The next day, Radford and Dulles met with Eisenhower in a late meeting in the upstairs study of the White House and decided that the United States would grant aerial aid to the French, but on the condition that it was a joint venture supported by Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and possibly the Philippines and Thailand, and further that France promise to see the War through to a satisfactory conclusion and grant full independence to the Associated States.[94]

This writer suggests that, contrary to appearances, there were in fact two distinct plans on the drawing board. The first--discussed between Radford and Ély and sponsored by Radford was a plan for a unilateral American air and naval attack, confined to the area of Dien Bien Phu. It was this plan which received the attention of the National Security Council and which was presented during the April 3 meeting for congressional approval. This plan envisaged a carefully limited and circumscribed American intervention, executed quickly and "quietly", for the sole purpose of preventing the fall of Dien Bien Phu. The second plan, supported by Dulles, had a much more long range objective. It was a plan which represented Dulles' longstanding interest in establishing an organization for collective security in Southeast Asia. As has been pointed out earlier, Dulles, as early as 1950, was making references to and supporting such an organization. This second plan seems to have originated even before Dulles learned from Ély that the French position

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[93]Bator, p. 50. Also Roberts, p. 17.

[94]Bator, p. 51.

at Dien Bien Phu was critical and was designed to do much more than ward off a French disaster at Dien Bien Phu. In fact, Dulles seems to have opposed the Radford-Ély plan on the grounds that aerial intervention would not suffice, ground forces would be inevitably necessary, and further that the President did not have the constitutional authority to order such intervention.[95] The Dulles Plan involved the establishment of a collective security agency in Southeast Asia, the groundwork for which would be laid by a joint Anglo-American military intercession in Indochina. This organization would ensure, he thought, an eventual French victory in Indochina. It would, he thought, vitiate the necessity for political settlement at Geneva, or, minimally, strengthen the negotiating position of the French at Geneva, so that a very favorable political settlement could be obtained from the communists. It would provide protection against communist subversion as well as against communist aggression from without for each country involved. Potentially, he thought it might do for Asia what NATO had accomplished in Europe: deter communist expansion. In essence, he seems to have thought that such an organization had the potential to restructure the power relations in Asia, and to establish a balance of power that would be favorable to United States interests.

There is evidence to support this two-plan hypothesis. Ély understood the plan was a one shot affair involving only the United States. He also recognized that Radford and Dulles did not see eye to eye, because while Radford supported American intervention, Ély found that he could not even get Dulles to listen to the seriousness of the French

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[95]Beal, p.

situation at Dien Bien Phu, because Dulles was more interested in talking about a possible Southeast Asian organization for collective defense. The plan which was conveyed to the Congressional leaders could not have envisaged allied action because this was precisely one of the major objections voiced by the Congressmen: that the allies of the United States had not been consulted and included. Had Radford or the National Security Council, at that time, contemplated joint action, Dulles would have reassured the Congressmen that this was the original intent. Thus, there are indications that one plan envisaged only American action limited to Dien Bien Phu. This certainly was the understanding of the French when they requested American aid, because when they learned that such aid was conditional on British support, the French were taken aback and dismayed.[96]

Evidence also exists to support the position that Dulles sponsored an alternative plan. Even before the time element allowed Dulles to know of the seriousness of the Dien Bien Phu situation, he asserted that:

> The cornerstone of security for the free nations must be a collective system of defense. They clearly cannot achieve security separately ... The threat we face is not one that can be adequately dealt with on an emergency basis. It is a threat that may long persist. Our policies must be adopted to this basic fact.[97]

Dulles went on to warn the Chinese against intervention in Indochina. Thus, before Ély's visit to the United States, Dulles seems to have been laying the groundwork for some new organization of collective defense

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[96]Ély, p. 72.

[97]John F. Dulles, "Policy for Peace and Security," United States Department of State, Bulletin, XXX (March 29, 1954), p. 459-460.

in Southeast Asia. These statements made shortly before the formal French request for intervention reflect on Dulles' state of mind. They suggest that he opposed emergency, short-range actions, and that he sought to lay the basis for a comprehensive attack on the problems of Southeast Asia in the organization of collective defense. Next, on March 19, speaking before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Dulles again made reference to the need for collective defense in Southeast Asia.[98] Again, on March 29, in his Overseas Press Club Speech, he indicated that the communist threat to Indochina should be met by united action.[99]

Thus, if the National Security Council decided, or tentatively decided, between March 25 and April 3, to intervene in Indochina, this decision must not have been predicated on a joint allied venture. Otherwise, Dulles would have made this clear on April 3 to the leaders of Congress. And if the National Security Council did make some such decision, then in all probability, Dulles, when he spoke on April 29 on the need for collective action was expressing his own views, based on his own plan.

These events suggest that up until April 3, two plans were being considered: the one sponsored by Radford, the other by Dulles. The Radford Plan was easily realizable and addressed to the specific problem of Dien Bien Phu. It seems to have had some approval from Eisenhower, since Eisenhower wanted Dulles to sound out congressional feelings on such a plan. However, Eisenhower's very decision to consult with

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[98]Farley, p. 10.

[99]Dulles, "The Threat of a Red Asia," p. 539-542.

Congress, a decision perhaps motivated by Dulles' conviction that Eisenhower did not have the constitutional authority to order intervention without congressional approval, spelled the death of the plan. As Chalmers Roberts had put it, April 3 may have been the day the United States did not go to war, because the leaders of Congress had qualms. Dulles may not have argued convincingly with them for a plan he did not support personally, especially when the alternative suggested by the congressmen was very much in keeping with the plan Dulles had in mind. Also, Radford had to admit to the congressmen that Ridgeway did not support the plan nor the other Chiefs of Staff. The meeting ended with congressional insistence that the United States seek allied support. The congressional qualms, Dulles' opposition, General Ridgeway's belief that an air attack would not suffice and that the commitment of ground forces would be necessary (which would inevitably involve the United States in another Korea-type war), convinced Eisenhower to abandon the Radford Plan. After April 3, it was no longer seriously considered.

At a White House meeting on April 4, the Dulles plan emerged in outline form. It was agreed by Eisenhower, Radford, and Dulles that the United States would support the French, provided it were a joint Anglo-American venture, as a minimum requirement, and provided that the French would agree to certain conditions, one of which was to see the War through to victory. Immediately after the meeting, Eisenhower wrote Churchill to request that Dulles fly to London to discuss plans for a joint allied intervention in Indochina; he offered a proposal for the establishment of a new grouping of states in Southeast Asia to contain the

communists.[100] That Dulles was anxious to intervene in Indochina to save the situation is not in doubt, but he contemplated a different kind of intervention than Radford had--a far-sighted, long-range operation.

The existence of two distinct plans for intervention is of considerable significance. The Radford Plan was designed to help the French out of an immediate military crisis, to avert disaster at Dien Bien Phu, and to stabilize conditions in Indochina, so that France could go to Geneva undefeated and able to get a satisfactory political settlement. Its political implications were overshadowed by the military ones. The Dulles Plan was primarily political. It envisioned an allied venture into Indochina and the establishment of a collective security organization for Southeast Asia. It was not confined to getting the French out of the Dien Bien Phu predicament. By marshalling the "free world" forces against the Vietminh, it might perhaps cause the Chinese to lose face and perhaps make them unwilling to negotiate at Geneva; they might feel a necessity to continue the war until they could get a more satisfactory settlement. Both the French and the British, who opposed the Plan, thought that instead of creating conditions favorable to a political settlement, it could escalate the conflict and nullify the chance for a political settlement.

On the other hand, Dulles had opposed negotiations from the beginning and believed that allied intervention might make negotiations both unnecessary and impossible. Dulles' plan would internationalize the conflict, making it clearly a case of communist aggression against

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[100]Letter, Dwight D. Eisenhower to Winston Churchill, April 4, 1964 in Dwight D. Eisenhower, Mandate for Change, p. 346.

the "free world" and would dissipate, once and for all, the colonialist aura which hung over the Indochinese War. Dulles could also satisfy domestic critics who were charging him with appeasement. His plan might have made possible a change in the command structure in Indochina, with the United States taking over the direction of the war. This possibly would have been welcomed by the United States because the Administration had been extremely critical of the French conduct of military operations.

This plan also had more general implications which were related to Dulles' desire to "roll back" communism and to structure a new balance of power in Asia, one favorable to the United States. If Indochina provided the impetus for a collective security organization, many weak wills and nations would be replaced by a strong collectivity, concerned not only with acts of external aggression, but also with internal subversion. Hopefully, it would provide the new nations of Asia with security necessary for current plans of development. Dulles thought this organization could force the communists to cease their expansionistic efforts in Asia and would relieve the United States of the exclusive burden for the containment of the communists.

However, the plan was never realized. After April 3, talk of American intervention did not cease and the Dulles plan was pushed and brandished for many months, but it never had very much of a chance to be implemented. Both the French and the British, on whom the success of the plan depended, were opposed to allied intervention. On April 4, the French officially requested American support and on April 6, the American answer was "no", under the conditions originally specified. But, the United States did assert that if it were a joint venture and the French agreed to continue to fight to victory, the United States

would be willing to intervene.[101] The French were dismayed by these new conditions, especially since they thought this new plan would only prolong the war and prevent a negotiated settlement at Geneva. The British too were unhappy. They were not pleased to receive Eisenhower's letter nor Dulles' plan. Dulles wrote to suggest that the United States, Great Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, the Philippines, and the Associated States issue quickly a warning to China to the effect that they were ready to act against aggression in Indochina and concurrently that they begin to organize a collective defense pact in Southeast Asia. Dulles further proposed that they should join in naval and air action against the Vietminh in Indochina. The British, though not enthusiastic about the proposal, accepted Dulles' request to come to London.[102]

Eden thought that aerial bombardment would be no more effective in Indochina than it had been in Korea and that it might precipitate a world war. It would also harden Indian opinion, and Eden was counting on the Indians to use their good offices to bring about a settlement at Geneva. The British were not opposed, on principle, to the formation of a collective security agency for Asia; however, they opposed doing anything which would jeopardize the chances for political settlement in Indochina. To them, this meant China ought not to be threatened, that there ought to be no allied venture into Indochina, and that the new organization should be postponed until after the Geneva Conference.

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[101]Ely, p. 72.

[102]Eden, p. 103.

Talks were held between Dulles and the British from April 11 to April 13. After Dulles realized that the British opposed any warning to China, he modified his plan and concentrated on trying to get a collective security organization formed prior to Geneva.[103] Meanwhile, in the United States, Eisenhower stressed the critical danger at Dien Bien Phu and expressed doubts as to the chances of a settlement at Geneva. This all may have been by way of preparation of public opinion for a joint allied intervention in Indochina.

It is almost impossible to unravel the conflicting stories of the Eden-Dulles talks. Dulles returned to the United States and announced he had British (and French) approval to work toward the establishment of a Southeast Asian organization. He went ahead and called a meeting for April 20 to discuss this new organization. The British exploded. Eden insisted that all they had agreed to was to enter into very preliminary discussions, privately, on a bilateral basis, concerning the possibility of setting up an organization. The question of membership was to be left upon, and no formal meeting was to be called thereby inviting certain participants and excluding others i.e. India. Eden cabled the British Ambassador not to attend any meeting. Dulles was forced to convert the meeting into one concerned with NATO. A rain of criticism fell on Dulles' head, with one congressman accusing him of being a liar or Eden a doublecrosser.[104] Eden was furious and believed that Dulles had deliberately tried to present the British with a fait accompli. At this point Anglo-American relations reached their lowest

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[103]Ibid., p. 106.

[104]Bator, p. 64.

ebb since the Second World War. Eden wrote:

> Americans may think the time past when they need to consider the feelings or difficulties of their allies. It is our conviction that this tendency becomes more pronounced every week and is creating mounting difficulties for everyone in this country who wants to maintain close Anglo-American relations.[105]

Dulles believed that the British had either gone back on their word, in response to pressures from Nehru, or that Eden had misunderstood him. Eisenhower maintained, then and subsequently, that a misunderstanding had occured. It may be that Dulles, imitating Hay's response to the conditions imposed on his Open Door Policy, hoped to force the hand of the British and to compel them to act. The controversy is almost impossible to disentangle, since each of the principal participants blames the other, more or less. Eisenhower, Dulles, even Sherman Adams, as well as Dulles' biographers, insist that Eden misunderstood. Eden insists that any misunderstanding was Dulles'.

Dulles, however, continued to promote his plan. At a NATO meeting in Paris on April 22, he once again sought to convince Eden to agree to discussions before Geneva. Again Eden refused. On the evening of April 23, Dulles showed Eden a telegram from Navarre saying that all would be lost at Dien Bien Phu, unless, within 72 hours, aid were forthcoming. The French General Staff informed the British that the United States had offered sixty B-29 bombers, based at Manila, to make several sorties over Dien Bien Phu and that Dulles had promised to recommend that Eisenhower ask Congress for war powers to move troops, if the British would act with the United States. The British insisted that it was no longer possible to save Dien Bien Phu and such action would

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[105]Eden, p. 110.

only jeopardize the Geneva Conference. Dulles in turn told Eden that he was convinced the French would collapse, if some immediate aid were not forthcoming. He finally agreed that there was not sufficient time for the United States to participate in the Dien Bien Phu battle, but he asked that the British send some R. A. F. units into Tonkin and said the United States would do something, otherwise the entire French military effort would collapse. Eden disagreed again, and said he did not believe the French would stop fighting; he insisted that air power would be insufficient, and that such action might activate the Sino-Soviet Alliance. Finally, however, Eden agreed to go immediately to London to discuss Dulles' proposition with the Cabinet.[106]

Again, however, the British rejected Dulles' proposition. Meanwhile, after Eden left Paris, Dulles conferred with the French and told them that if they would turn over the strategic command of the War to the United States and would convince the British to issue a joint declaration in support of United States intervention, the United States Air Force would go into action over Dien Bien Phu.[107] This latest proposal was communicated to the British not by the American Ambassador but by the French, and as a result a second cabinet meeting was held in London, on April 25. The new proposal was that the United States, the United Kingdom, France, the Associated States, and the Philippines pledge their common will to contain the communists in Southeast Asia. If the British agreed, Dulles would request approval for American intervention and on April 28, the Navy would go into action at Dien Bien Phu.

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[106] Eden, p. 115-117.

[107] Ély, p. 95.

Again, however, the British rejected Dulles' proposal.[108]

The question of United States intervention still did not die. It has been reported that Eisenhower tried once more to muster congressional support for unilateral action.[109] Dulles spoke with Eden again on April 30, to try to sway him in favor of joint action. For a time, it appears the United States considered intervening with its allies, but without the British.[110] As late as May 31, the British Ambassador in Paris reported that the United States had almost reached an agreement with the French on United States intervention.[111] And even after the fall of the Laniel Government, Eisenhower indicated to President Auriol that the United States was still willing to enter discussions with the new French government on the question of American intervention.[112]

The brief but significant flurry over American intervention in Indochina had several consequences. It led to a serious split between the United States and her allies, especially the British. It provoked a congressional storm, and cast a pall over the Geneva Convention. In the end, intervention was not forthcoming. The United States policies at this time seem to have been the product of conflicting and incompatible tendencies. On the maximal level, the United States wanted to deal the communists a resounding defeat in Indochina and establish for the region a defense alliance. On the minimal level, the United

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[108]Eden, p. 115-117.

[109]Farley, p. 15.

[110]Ibid., p. 11.

[111]Eden, p. 143.

[112]Letter, Dwight D. Eisenhower to President Auriol of France, June 18, 1954, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, p. 583.

States wanted to prevent the fall of Dien Bien Phu. At the same time, however, the United States did not want to intervene alone. She wanted only to act as part of a coalition. The United States was unable to reach agreement with her allies; therefore, she could not realize her larger goals with respect to Indochina. She had aided the French with financial and material aid; she had given advice; but she had depended on France to bear the major burden of the War. Now that she no longer thought France willing or able to bear the direct military burden of containing the communists in Southeast Asia, she was yet unwilling to do it herself. The history of American involvement in Asia was characterized, with few exceptions, by this dependency on the power of others to secure policy goals; in Indochina, the United States was not willing to go beyond her traditional mode of operations to secure what she considered vital policy goals. Eisenhower and Dulles were the victims of their own facile campaign promises of rolling back communism, yet "keeping the boys at home and out of Asian wars." Their denouncement of "presidential wars" and land wars in Asia had not prepared either the Congress or the public to look with favor on an American venture into Indochina. That Eisenhower's hands may have been tied reflects less on the British or the Congress than it does on an Administration which sold itself on one platform and later found itself without the necessary flexibility of action. Eisenhower and Dulles had tied a Gordian knot and then, in a moment of crisis, had gone in search of an ally to untie it. No scapegoat could be found. In the final analysis, domestic political considerations prevailed over international concerns.

The Coup de Grâce - Geneva

As should be clear, the United States opposed holding political discussions on Indochina. Although she had nothing to offer the French by way of an alternative, she continued to press them to give up the idea of a negotiated settlement. At the Geneva Conference, the United States delegation did not try to facilitate discussions on Indochina. Various tactics seem to have been employed to impede the discussions. At one point during the discussions, no high-level American official was present. Dulles had gone home and with him Undersecretary of State Bedell Smith. The Administration announced that neither would return. It was only in response to the urgent entreaties of the British and the French that Dulles consented to go to Paris to discuss the question of United States representation at Geneva. In Paris, Dulles asserted that the United States did not want to be represented at Geneva, because if the French made concessions which the United States could not support, an open rift in Franco-American relations might develop. Dulles believed that Mendes-France, who had taken office after the fall of the Laniel Government and had promised to bring about a political settlement within four weeks or resign, might possibly "sell-out" to the communists. He told both Eden and Mendes-France that the United States had certain minimal demands for a satisfactory political settlement and he feared the French would have to concede more than the United States thought desirable. He said that the memorandum, worked out earlier between the British and the United States, represented the minimal demands of the

United States for a favorable political settlement.[113] If the French went beyond this memorandum, the United States, if represented at Geneva, would have to disassociate herself from the settlement. Mendes-France, however, convinced Dulles that there would be no compromise on the demands of the United States, and agreed that if the United States returned to Geneva, she would not be expected to guarantee any settlement which resulted, nor would she be expected to give de jure recognition to the settlement.[114] It has also been reported that part of the bargain was that the French and British would join a collective defense organization for Southeast Asia.[115] Dulles compromised by agreeing to allow Bedell Smith to return to Geneva. The United States, however, continued to impede the conference proceedings, even after Smith returned to Geneva, possibly because the Conference was creating a diplomatically awkward situation for her. Throughout the Conference, Smith refused to meet with the Chinese representative, out of fear, perhaps, that this would imply American recognition of the Chinese Communist regime. Eden reported that he was compelled to run back and forth between the French, Americans, and the Chinese, carrying proposals and counterproposals. The Conference made little progress in open session so it was agreed to hold closed sessions. After only two days in

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[113]Allegedly, included in this Memorandum were the stipulations that (1) the maintenance of non-communist governments in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos; (2) if partition occurs, it must be near the eighteenth parallel; (3) if possible, Hanoi and Haiphong are to be included in the French sector; (4) all Vietminh troops south of the eighteenth parallel must be withdrawn; (5) populations must be allowed to migrate south. Reported in The New York Times, July 14, 1954, p. 19.

[114]Eden, p. 160.

[115]Bator, p. 190.

closed session, when it appeared that some small progress might be made, Smith moved to return to open sessions, much to the consternation of the British.[116]

In part, American uncooperativeness may have stemmed from the personal animosity existing between Dulles and Eden at the time, because of the British refusal to implement Dulles' plan. The Administration also may have feared the domestic repercussions of agreeing to a compromise settlement at Geneva. Fear existed that the Chinese might make political propaganda out of their presence at Geneva, and might claim United States recognition of the Chinese regime. In any event, the United States actions at Geneva appear to have done little to facilitate a settlement.

Dulles, during a news conference on June 8, reflected upon the American position in reference to any final settlement. He stated that the primary responsibility lay with the French and that the United States was present at Geneva only as a friend who gives advice when asked.[117] Thurston B. Morton, stated:

> The United States will not become a party to any agreement which smacks of appeasement. Nor will we acknowledge the legitimacy of Communist control of any segment of Southeast Asia any more than we have recognized the Communist control of North Korea.[118]

The most the United States would do, once a settlement was reached, was to agree not to use force to disturb the final settlement. When it came

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[116]Eden, p. 165.

[117]John F. Dulles, "Press Conference," United States Department of State, Bulletin, XXX (June 8, 1954), p. 365.

[118]Thurston B. Morton, "Address Before the Colgate University Conference on American Foreign Policy," United States Department of State, Bulletin, XXXI (July 26, 1954), p. 121.

time to sign the final agreements, the United States refused to sign or to directly associate herself with them. As a result, the Chinese refused to sign the settlement, and it was necessary for Eden to work out a compromise whereby no participant except the military leaders of France and the Vietminh would sign the conventions. Thus, the names of each participant country were only listed at the top of the document.[119]

At the end of the Conference, the United States took note of the final agreements and issued a unilateral declaration that she would refrain from the use of force to disturb the agreements and would view the renewal of communist aggression in Vietnam with grave concern.[120] In reference to the provision calling for elections in Vietnam by 1956, the United States set the stage for its later objections to the elections by saying "we shall continue to seek to achieve unity through free elections supervised by the United Nations to insure that they are conducted fairly."[121] The President stated that the United States was not a belligerent in the War and that therefore the primary responsibility for settlement rested with those nations who had participated in the fighting.[122] For this reason, according to Eisenhower, the United States was not called on to be a party to the settlement. However, this reason might also have been adopted by the Russians, Chinese, and British, none of whom were "direct" parties to the War.

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[119]Eden, p. 170.

[120]Walter B. Smith, "United States Declaration on Geneva," United States Department of State, Bulletin, XXXI (August 2, 1954), p. 162.

[121]Ibid., p. 162.

[122]Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States. Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954, p. 641.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

By 1950, the United States found herself in a difficult situation in the Far East. The growing influence of communist-oriented forces along with the political instability prevalent in many of the newer nations of the Far East posed serious problems for United States policies. During the Second World War, the United States had attempted to lay the basis for a favorable postwar power structure in the Far East, anticipating that China would become a strong power which would cooperate with her in realizing American interests. The conclusion of that War found Japan thoroughly defeated and China weakened by civil war. A serious power vacuum, in the view of the United States, resulted which, by 1950, was filled by the Soviet Union in alliance with Communist China. The traditional balance of power which the United States had been dependent upon had ceased to exist. The North Korean invasion of South Korea in June, 1950 served as a catalyst for a re-examination of American policies toward the Far East.

This re-examination resulted in a new policy aimed at preventing further damage to American interests by the establishment of a long-range American military commitment in South Korea and Japan, and by aiding the French against the communists in Indochina. Essentially, the United States pursued a policy designed to contain communist forces in Indochina and the Far East.

This thesis is concerned primarily with the policies adopted by the United States in an effort to provide a counterforce to Sino-Soviet power in Southeast Asia during the period 1950 to 1954. The United States decision to aid the French was based, in part, on the belief that communist forces allied with China were seeking to gain control of Southeast Asia. Indochina was viewed as a barrier to the communist objective; thus, the United States sought to prevent the Vietminh from taking over in Indochina. A communist victory in Indochina would provide them with a stepping-stone to the rest of Southeast Asia; even if physical conquest did not materialize, such a victory would perhaps render other countries of the region more susceptible to communist influence.

This study hypothesized that during the last four years of the Indochinese War, the United States attempted a continuation of its traditional policies in the Far East. Her policies in respect to Indochina suggest that she was concerned with the power structure in the Far East and wanted to preserve the prevailing power structure in order to prevent further communist inroads which would endanger American interests. Since the success of the Vietminh threatened to upset the power structure, it became necessary to prevent this success.

Diplomatically, an effort was made to encourage, if not force, an Allied power, namely France, to assume the major burden of achieving the United States objective. The United States was willing to involve herself to the extent of granting military and economic aid, but refused to assume the responsibility of an active military partnership with the French. Thus, although the question was frequently raised in American circles as to whether or not the United States would send troops to

Indochina, the American response was always "no". So unwilling was Truman to involve the military personnel of the United States in Indochina that he would not promise American military intervention even in the event that China intervened. Although both Eisenhower and Dulles strongly warned China against intervention, when the French were threatened with imminent defeat at Dien Bien Phu, the United States refused to initiate military action unless her allies participated.

A marked relationship exists between these policies pursued in Indochina and those traditionally pursued by the United States in the Far East where the United States had attempted to preserve a power structure that served her interests. Traditionally, the United States tried to insure that no nation would become powerful enough to establish its own Pax Asiatica and thereby threaten the strategic and commercial interests of the United States in the Pacific and in Asia. American concern with the Far Eastern balance of power was highlighted by Roosevelt's attitude toward the Russo-Japanese War, the American response to Japan's "Twenty one Demands", the participation of American troops in the Allied intervention in Siberia, and even the United States willingness to cooperate with the League of Nations in the investigation of Japanese aggression against China. Although the United States tried to preserve the balance of power, she relied mostly on diplomatic, rather than military instruments and depended on the willingness of other nations to employ their military forces in maintaining the balance. Generally, although there were exceptions, the United States did not commit her own military arsenal. Thus, a study of the traditional foreign policies of the United States in the Far East along with the policies pursued by the United States in Indochina from 1950 to 1954

suggests a marked continuity in American policies.

This thesis also investigated a second and related hypothesis which asserts that the Eisenhower Administration sought through diplomatic means to create a new power structure in the Far East, using Indochina as a fulcrum. The Republican commitment to rolling back communism suggests a commitment to strengthen the position of the United States in the Far East. Dulles attempted to establish a regional defense organization in Southeast Asia, which would focus on Indochina as the most immediate problem. He strongly believed that the United States had to regain the initiative, and he emphasized the need for long-term planning as opposed to ad hoc responses to problems as they arose. In his view, a regional organization could restore some of the initiative to the West. This new organization was to consist not only of the nations of Southeast Asia, but also of the United States, Great Britain, and France. One of its first tasks would be to undertake a united military effort in Indochina to defeat the Vietminh. Under these circumstances the United States seemed to be prepared to engage its military forces in the region. He believed that this organization would be able to deal successfully with problems of internal subversion as well as external aggression. The role he attributed to this proposed organization, as well as its proposed membership and its anticipated intervention in Indochina suggests that Dulles regarded this organization as a counterweight to Sino-Soviet power in the Far East. The creation of a counterweight could provide the basis for a new balance of power in the region, while at the same time, relieve the United States of the need to assume the burden alone for containing the communists.

Although Far Eastern events were critical in determining United States policies toward Indochina, European considerations also had their effect on United States policies. The French involvement in Indochina weakened France's ability to participate in European defense and thus adversely affected United States plans for the containment of the communists in Europe. The United States supported the establishment of the European Defense Community as a means for allowing Germany to rearm and contribute to NATO, while quieting the anxieties of the French about a rearmed Germany. But the French Assembly procrastinated and finally did not ratify the EDC. The United States feared that so long as France was burdened with the Indochinese War and was unable to assume a position of leadership in the EDC, she would not join the organization. The French frequently applied pressure on the United States to increase her aid to Indochina, and implied that such aid was related to the willingness of France to ratify the EDC. Thus, for the United States there seemed little alternative but to support the French in Indochina, if she wanted French ratification of the EDC.

The impact of American European concerns and European politics on the United States Asian policies should not be ever-stated, however. In the last few months of the War, the United States would not militarily intervene in Indochina, or willingly support a negotiated settlement, even though her failure to do these things jeopardized Anglo-American relations and perhaps the French willingness to join the EDC.

Domestic politics also influenced United States policies in Indochina. The Republican victory in 1952 suggested, in part, that many Americans supported a "harder line" vis à vis the communist forces. The Republicans had promised that communism would be rolled-back and

had argued that containment was a defeatist policy. Thus, the Administration was in a position politically where it had to "do something" to support the French in Indochina. In addition, to have advocated a compromise solution would have resulted in accusations of appeasement from conservative Republicans.

It should also be remembered that although the United States was vitally interested in the outcome of the Indochinese War, she had considerable interest in other areas of the Far East. The United States had a firm military commitment in South Korea. She was both vitally interested and significantly involved in the Philippines and had both bases and considerable influence in Japan. Thus, at the same time that Dulles was seeking to use Indochina as a fulcrum for a Southeast Asian organization which might lay the basis for a new balance of power in the Far East, the United States was also seeking, in other areas of the Far East to consolidate her position and perhaps to encircle communist forces in the region. Thus, United States policies in the Far East during the period 1950 to 1954 did not center exclusively on Indochina. United States policies in Indochina must thus be viewed in the context of other American interests in the Far East, and as having European, as well as Asian, domestic as well as international sources.

In analyzing the success of American policies it must be concluded that the United States did not realize its goals in Southeast Asia. The French negotiated an agreement with the communists which gave them a substantial part of Vietnam and which anticipated, in reality, the eventual control of all of Vietnam. Also, Dulles was unsuccessful in establishing a truly powerful regional defense organization. The Southeast Asian Treaty Organization that was established came into being

after the Indochinese War was ended at Geneva in 1954. Not until 1954 did the United States recognize and accept the fact that France was ill-equipped to serve as an effective instrument for United States policies. France was no longer the great power she had been and was unable to defend herself, let alone her Empire in Indochina. It seems that the United States did not realistically accept the implications of French weakness until France was militarily forced to negotiate in 1954.

The Vietnamese supporters of the French were also not an effective instrument for containing the Vietminh. The War in Indochina began as a colonial war on the part of France to preserve her Empire. As the War progressed, she acquiesced in increasing amounts of independence for the people of Indochina, however, always grudgingly and with qualifications. So long as independence was a promise rather than a reality, the Vietnamese had little will to fight on behalf of the French. The communists, on the other hand, had successfully become the champions of Vietnamese nationalism. The French were never able to establish a nationalist leadership that could successfully compete with the communists for nationalist support.

United States policies were further troubled by the lack of identity between the French and the American goals in Indochina. The primary concern of France was to preserve at least part of Indochina within the French community. The primary concern of the United States was to prevent the communists from coming to power in Indochina. The United States, however, would not intervene militarily in Indochina to contain the Vietminh; at the same time, she opposed negotiations which might leave part of Indochina in communist hands but would free the French for greater involvement in European affairs. She urged the

French to greater efforts in order to contain the communists, and insisted that complete independence be granted to the Indochinese peoples. These were American NOT French goals. Thus, the United States failed to establish a community of interest with France in Indochina, yet she tried to rely on the French for the purpose of realizing American interests.

The United States also failed to establish a hierarchy of interests in Indochina. If her primary concern was to contain the communists in Indochina, then American intervention appears to have been necessary. If the primary concern was to free France of the Indochinese burden, then American military intervention or support for a negotiated settlement was perhaps called for. There was no determination of which policy goal was to receive priority.

At the same time, domestic politics seemed to militate against an American military involvement in Indochina. Eisenhower had promised to keep the United States out of Asian land wars; military experts believed that aerial intervention would not be sufficient and it would then be necessary to intervene on the ground. Having promised both to contain the communists in the Far East and eventually to roll them back, yet without committing American troops, the Administration was the victim of contradictory promises. For similar reasons, a compromise solution was not acceptable.

In evaluating United States policies toward Indochina during this period, there is, perhaps, a more fundamental issue which must be raised: given the situation within Indochina, indeed within all of the Far East, could the status quo be preserved? Could communist influence have been prevented from spreading, even had the United States

intervened militarily, assuming such intervention would take the form of conventional warfare? In short, the Vietminh had made many inroads into Indochina and had successfully stalemated the War; the Vietminh already controlled significant areas of the countryside. Throughout Asia, communist forces had taken the initiative. The United States, perhaps, overestimated the extent to which she could influence Far Eastern affairs without complete military domination in crucial areas such as Indochina.

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