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**THE PRESIDENT LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON'S  
POLICY IN VIETNAM**

**(American foreign policy 1964-1968)**

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## **DEDICATION**

**To the memory of my maternal grand mother**

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## **Abstract**

The thesis examines American foreign policy in Vietnam during the presidency of Lyndon Baines Johnson (1964-1968). It describes the American intervention in Vietnam through many attempts to solve the situation prevailing in Vietnam and keep South Vietnam independent non- Communist. This research attempts to explain and evaluate the escalation policy that was used during the presidency of Lyndon Johnson. Moreover President Johnson's decision to Americanize the war by taking the burden of fighting from the South Vietnamese and placing it in the hands of the U.S. military. Besides to that the failure of Lyndon Johnson in keeping South Vietnam independent non communist led to another war in America this so called 'the war at home'. Indeed hundred of thousands of people went in the street protesting against the war in Vietnam.

## ملخص

الأطروحة تدرس السياسة الخارجية الأميركية في الفيتنام خلال فترة رئاسة ليندون بينز جونسون (1964-1968) حيث تصف التدخل الأميركي في الفيتنام و محاولاته العديدة لتسوية الأوضاع وإبقاء جنوب الفيتنام مستقلة غير شيوعية. هذا البحث هو عبارة عن محاولات لتفسير وتقييم سياسة التصعيد التي تم استخدامها أثناء رئاسة ليندون جونسون. كذلك يتناول هذا البحث قرار الرئيس جونسون المتمثل في أمركة الحرب من خلال تولى مسؤولية الكفاح ضد الفيتناميين الجنوبيين ووضعه في أيدي الجيش الأمريكي. لكن الرئيس ليندون جونسون فشل في إبقاء الفيتنام الجنوبية مستقلة و غير الشيوعية و هذا ما أدى إلى اندلاع حرب أخرى في أميركا و التي سميت "الحرب في الداخل" اين خرج مئات الآلاف من الناس إلى الشوارع للاحتجاج على الحرب في الفيتنام

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## Résumé

La thèse examine la politique étrangère américaine au Vietnam pendant la présidence de Lyndon Baines Johnson (1964-1968). Il décrit l'intervention américaine au Vietnam à travers de nombreuses tentatives pour résoudre la situation dominante au Vietnam et en conserver le Sud-Vietnam indépendant et non-communiste. Cette recherche tente d'expliquer et d'évaluer la politique d'escalade qui a été utilisée pendant la présidence de Lyndon Johnson. En outre la décision du Président Johnson à américaniser la guerre en prenant la charge de la lutte contre les Vietnamiens du Sud et le placer dans les mains de l'armée américaine. D'ailleurs pour que l'échec de Lyndon Johnson en gardant le Sud-Vietnam communiste indépendant et non mené à une autre guerre en Amérique, ce qu'on appelle «la guerre à la maison». En effet des centaines de milliers de personnes sont allées dans la rue pour protester contre la guerre du Vietnam.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

<b>ARVN</b>	<b>Army Of The Republic Of Vietnam</b>
<b>CIA</b>	<b>Central Intelligence Agency</b>
<b>DRV</b>	<b>Democratic Republic Of Vietnam</b>
<b>GVN</b>	<b>Government Of Vietnam</b>
<b>JCS</b>	<b>Joint Chiefs of Staff</b>
<b>MAAG</b>	<b>Military Assistance Advisory Group</b>
<b>MACV</b>	<b>Military Assistance Command, Vietnam</b>
<b>NSAM</b>	<b>National Security Action Memorandum</b>
<b>NSC</b>	<b>National Security Council</b>
<b>NVA</b>	<b>North Vietnamese Army</b>
<b>PAVN</b>	<b>Peoples Army of Vietnam</b>
<b>RVN</b>	<b>Republic of Vietnam</b>
<b>RVNAF</b>	<b>Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces</b>
<b>SEATO</b>	<b>Southeast Asia Treaty Organization</b>
<b>VC</b>	<b>Viet Cong</b>
<b>PRC</b>	<b>People's Republic Of China</b>
<b>NSAM</b>	<b>National Security Action Memorandum</b>
<b>OPLAN</b>	<b>Open Public Local Access Network</b>

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# INTRODUCTION

It is impossible to consider American Foreign Policy during the presidency of Lyndon Johnson without thinking immediately of the Vietnam War. For all its importance, the war in Vietnam was essentially a dilemma, confronting the United States during the mid-1960s. For nearly a generation the United States was determined anywhere and anytime to defend territories against any radical challenges.

The Vietnam War between (1965- 1968) proved to be a crucial experience for American foreign policy, this is not because the Vietnam War was the longest War in America's history, but because it lent the place where many presidents could test their policies. Kennedy's presidential term (1961-1963), for instance was crucial for its contribution to the pictures of America's Vietnam policy.

But the most important period which put under concern is Johnson's two administrations (1964-1968). Indeed his administration has become questionable, as the Vietnam legacy which had been an acceptable issue for the Americans, suddenly became disasters. Yet while Johnson's presidential term is the focus of this study, continuance reference to previous years is to bring about more light on the question.

Dealing with the Vietnam problem does always require one to pay due consideration to the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations in order to reveal the ideological bases which stood at the roots of the Vietnam problem.

The study of military escalation can certainly be made from different angles as well as at various levels. However, in this paper the whole Americanization period (1965-1968) will be dealt basically in its political and military aspects. The possibility of referring to other aspects such as psychological or even tactical, may give a better understanding of the

problem. Yet in the context of foreign policy, the politico-military aspect offers a better analysis to the problem. This study will try to determine and evaluate the impact of these elements in the making of the escalation policy.

The main questions this dissertation deals with are: How did escalation come about in 1965? The second question, why did Johnson pursue the war knowing it would be hopeless? Why despite four years of effort did the war fail? To what extent did Lyndon Johnson see the Vietnam War different from his predecessors? However all answers and understanding will hopefully present the lessons that can be learned from the Vietnam experience.

In answering these questions an attempt has been made to rely on a combination of descriptive, argumentative approaches. Because of the nature of the topic this dissertation tries to study, description has been useful in showing the main aspects of escalation and arguments have been used to show how escalation came about and how Lyndon Johnson's foreign policy failed in Vietnam.

The research begins with an introductory chapter that traces the origins of the Vietnam War that traced back during the colonization of the French in Vietnam and after their defeat in Dien Bien Phu. The fall of Dien Bien Phu seriously worried American policy makers, who attempted was to gain congressional and public support for increasing aid to the French. The chapter examines the Cold War policies starting with 'The Truman Doctrine' and the Eisenhower 'the Domino Theory' they began to see Vietnam as an area of strategic importance meaning extremely important. According to U.S policy makers if Vietnam became Communist, all the rest of Indochina would be Communist since south East Asia has been linked to 'a set of dominoes'. The chapter ends with Kennedy's role and policies in Vietnam which were only a continuity of Eisenhower's foreign policy. However Kennedy dealt with the Vietnam problem in different way, the U.S would increase the military involvement in Vietnam through military advisors but not intervening with troops in Vietnam.

The purpose of the second chapter, explains the pre-escalation period after the assassination of Kennedy and the coming of Lyndon Baines Johnson. Johnson inherited a difficult problem from the previous administration, a deteriorating situation in South Vietnam. Moreover this chapter gives the details of the factors and the reasons behind escalation; it's not easy to explain Johnson's decision for war is, if anything hard to explain.

In November 1963 through the winter of 1965 he was confined to a certain course of action on Vietnam? He inherited a difficult Vietnam problem from Kennedy and his choices were few and difficult. Neither domestic nor international considerations obliged him to escalate the war. It is so evident that the American public paid attention at all , not hoping to lose in Vietnam but also not hoping to send America's young men to fight and die there.

The third chapter is entitled the stalemated war. President Johnson's decision to Americanize the war by taking the burden of fighting from the South Vietnamese and placing it in the hands of the U.S. military. Indeed Johnson Americanized the war and went deeply into the war putting in his mind that with the military force America would win the Vietnam War. This chapter attempts also to explain Johnson's strategies in the war which later these kinds of strategies did not bring success to the war; meaning that there was no real strategy to fight in Vietnam. The end of this chapter explains that in the late summer and early of 1967 Johnson looked for a way out of his difficult situation. With a majority of the public disapproving of his way of dealing with the Vietnam War he was eager to find a way to negotiate with North Vietnam.

In the last chapter an effort has been made to try to investigate the causes of the failure of Lyndon Johnson policies in keeping South Vietnam independent non Communist. Indeed the Tet offensive was a great shock to policy makers in which policy makers never thought that small guerrilla forces can defeat American forces. Moreover this chapter deals with a

period after the Tet called disillusionment at home and abroad, giving much more importance to the failure of Johnson Administration in dealing with Vietnam.

When conducting this research, great care has been taken to rely on primary sources whenever possible, these include official documents, speeches and announcement made by U.S presidents. The secondary sources utilized include a variety of books and articles.

# **Chapter I**

## **To the Crossroads in Vietnam**

### **Introduction**

The French colonized Indochina for a long time and put their heavy into Vietnam because it was an area of important strategy. However by the rise of the nationalist movement like Ho Chi Minh guerrilla forces, caused threat to the colonizer. The expansion of the Communist movements in Indochina led America to intervene in that region in their belief to stop the aggressor. Because of any study of foreign policy issue should preferably begin with some understanding of the way it comes, the chapter briefly dwells into America's past to help bring some light into Lyndon Johnson's policy in Vietnam.

### **I-1 France's Ejection from Vietnam and the Cold War Policies**

Although the French refused to leave Indochina, they offered political 'concessions' to Vietnam, the heavily populated, resource rich province of Indochina situated on the China South China Sea. France recognized the Democratic Republic of Vietnam as a free state within the newly formed French union, which also included Laos and Cambodia. Under the agreement, the French would be allowed to keep garrisons in Vietnam for five years for allowing the Vietnamese to determine there future. But in less than a year, the Vietminh, as the revolutionary league for independence of Vietnam was known, accused the French of violating the agreement, and open conflict started in 1946 between the two sides .The fighting after known as the first Vietnam War, lasted eight years.

The conflict was led on the Vietnamese side by Ho Chi Minh, the Vietnamese revolutionary who had organized the Vietminh during World War II. Further more HO sympathized with the Communism in the 1920's after his efforts to establish an independent and democratic state which was rejected by Western leaders at the Paris Peace Conference that followed the First World War. After the defeat of Japan, HO had reason to believe his nation's time had finally come. For the second time in less than three decades, he was disappointed by the lack of the support among the Western powers.

With Vietnam under siege, the French appointed Emperor Bao Dai, who had ruled the coastal region in the French government as a Vietnam's leader. The Vietminh escalated their campaign for independence, declaring themselves the true representatives of the Vietnamese's people. However Bao Dai, who spent much of his time with the French; was viewed as a French puppet who could not survive without French military aid. In the continuing civil war, Ho, like Mao Zedong in China, adopted a strategy of guerilla warfare that depended on control of the countryside and support among peasant. The French who generally centered in the cities were at disadvantages at the beginning. Besides to that most Vietnamese identified themselves with the Vietminh and saw the French as an illegal ruler in Vietnam. (Hook, 112-15)

President Harry Truman now applied a new idea to American foreign policy which is the containment of Communism<sup>1</sup> in Europe, and then in Asia. However the United States amended its approach to France's war in Indochina against Ho Chi Minh. Dean Rusk, deputy under Secretary of State at the time, announced that the resources of the United States would be deployed to reserve Indochina and south East Asia from further Communist expansion.

Official American spokesmen had been already convinced about the Domino Theory, warning that if Indochina fell to Communism, so would the other countries of South East Asia fall too. But while the French repeated that theme, they were primarily fighting in Indochina to preserve a colonial possession, and their goal was narrow. The United States, became more

determined than France to preserve Indochina. France repeatedly rejected U.S attempts to persuade them to conduct the war more effectively, rejected proposals for promoting credible Vietnamese Nationalists who might have countered the Communists ,and threatened to undermine America military program in western Europe unless the United States gave some help to Indochina

Specialists on Indochina were considerably less optimistic during the early days of the Truman Administration. When the Soviet government appeared to be supporting the post war regimes in Greece and Turkey, Dean Acheson warned that the Communists would contaminate Western Europe and the Middle East just as “bad apples in a barrel” infect the good ones. The president asked to Congress on March 12, 1947, for funds to support free people who are resisting threatened by armed minorities or by outside pressures.

With the Truman Doctrine<sup>2</sup>, the Cold War between the Soviet Union and America intensified. Later in 1947, the United States launched the Marshal Plan<sup>3</sup>, economic aid plan for Western Europe to weaken the Communist in France and Italy. When The Russians staged a Communist coup d'état in Czechoslovakia, then went to western access to Berlin, the United States began shaping the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as a plan against Moscow. (Davidson, 184-86)

To the extent that the Truman Administration contemplated Asia at all its attention was drawn to China, where Mao's Communists defeated Chiang Kai -sheik's nationalists in the final phase of a civil war .General Marshall, who had gone there in 1946 in attempts to mediate, recommended that the United States would not intervene since peace and stability must be achieved by the Chinese themselves. Soon afterward, as a Secretary of State , took a similar view of the situation in Vietnam, means that the American will not intervene “We are fully recognized France's sovereign position in that area ,he advised the American

Ambassador in Paris ,but concluded that it was matter for the French and the Vietminh to work out for themselves ‘’.(Davidson,187)

The United States ideally preferred Indochina to be a self governing nationalist’s state uncontaminated by Communism and closely associated with the West, particularly with France. France was waging a losing war, and could not withdraw nor could they negotiate with Ho Chi Minh, even though he was the strongest and perhaps the ablest figure in the region and his exclusion from any settlement.

By late 1949, Acheson (an American statesman and lawyer) and other senior figures in the Truman Administration wanted to give help to French in Indochina through a foreign military aid program then being presented to Congress. Most of the aid was taken for the Western Europe, but the idea arose to provide the president with a 75 million to spend it in Asia, mainly against the Communist in China. A portion might be distributed for the French war against the Vietminh.

Truman did not actually sign the military aid legislation until July 26, 1950. But on June 28, three days after the Korean War broke out, and Acheson persuaded him to order an acceleration of assistance to the French. Day after that the military aid bill became law ,eight c-47 Cargo Aircraft flew across the Pacific to Indochina not only the United States was to act illegally in Vietnam .During the next four years ,the United States was to spend nearly 3billion to finance the French in Indochina.

By 1954 American funding approximately about 60 percent of the costs of the war. Moreover the French position in Vietnam began to deteriorate, especially after the Korean armistice was signed in August 1953<sup>4</sup>. Despite American warning against intervention, the People’s Republic of China shifted its pressure from Korea to Indochina and increased the assistance to the Vietminh’s a result Ho’s position grew stronger especially when he got aid from PRC. On March 13, 1954, Vietminh forces launched an attack against the strategic of



the French at Dien Bien Phu. With the French position in Northern Vietnam close to collapse, and it became clear that French can not resist without American intervention.

(Davidson, 190-92)

Dien Bien Phu was the moment of decision for the United States. President Eisenhower had declared Indochina to be an area of strategic importance to American security and had warned China against direct or indirect intervention. However China ignored these warning, so the United States of America had to react against China. When the relations between the United States and China began to deteriorate American leaders could not react. Furthermore the reason behind America inaction was clear: American public opinion might have been strongly anticommunist, but the nation was tired from the war in Korea. For that reason, Eisenhower had withdrawn from Korea, and now he was not in a good position to involve America in another war or conflict. Further more American did not intervene because of the split of the American troops in the world, so there was a lack of available troops.(Hook,117-18)

With these factors in mind, the Administration considered, two courses of action .The first was to rescue the French by attacking the Communist positions around Dien Bien Phu with air power, but this strategy was rejected because air strikes by themselves could not stop the Vietminh grounds advance .Air power had failed to stop the North Korean Army during the opening days of the Korean War, Forcing the commitment of U.S troops. The last solutions were to attack China with nuclear weapons. But the Administration did not follow its own Policy for one simple reason “to deliver the threat of massive retaliation to an opponent and quite another to have the opponent believe it” (Hook, 119)

Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, who guided Chinese foreign policy, had concluded by 1953 that France would sooner or later stop its commitment in Indochina. He estimated, however that the United States would menace China on its own doorstep. He favored

negotiated settlement with the United States to prevent it from intervening in Indochina, and he would work for such concept even at the expense of the Vietminh.

Nowhere did the drift toward negotiations raise more alarm than in Washington, where president Eisenhower's Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, saw the U.S policy of containment crumbling. In his view the Chinese Communists had only conceded to a truce in Korea in order to redirect their aggression against South East Asia. He therefore urged the French to delay making any diplomatic moves until they improved their military posture in Indochina and he pledged 500 million to sweeten his plea. The French took the money but rebuffed his advice even to the point of threatening of sabotage the projected European defense community unless he supported their efforts to achieve what Prime Minister Daniel had called an honorable settlement .(Hook, 124)

It was clear by late April as the battle raged at Dien Bien Phu, that neither the Americans nor anyone else could come to rescue the French. The battle field was too big for effective bombing “.Only a lunatic would have restored to atomic weapons, which in any case would have devastated the French troops” (Hook, 125)

In the end the French government decided to make the best situation by negotiating in Geneva, Switzerland, and end to the war. The French people were in difficult situation and in a second war in Algeria, during this period the French were very tired of Vietnam as the American public had been in Korea.

The conclusions at Geneva according to Deallan were to be misinterpreted, if not misunderstood, for years to come. The only documents signed were ceasefire accords ending the colonization in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. The agreement between France and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, as the Vietminh officially called itself, was not political settlement. It provided for the temporary division of Vietnam (North and South) pending a nationwide election to be held in the Summer of 1956. The French forces would meanwhile

withdraw from the North, and the Vietminh from the South. Except for the United States and the Saigon regime, the other participants “gave their oral endorsement to a final declaration noting the understandings”. (Hook, 126)

## **I-2 The Domino Theory and U.S Intervention**

Because the Geneva Agreement called for general election to be held in 1956, the Vietminh expected the unpopular regime in the South Vietnam to collapse. Leaders in Hanoi, the North Vietnamese capital, claimed that most of the twelve millions South Vietnamese would vote for Ho Chi Minh, who had led the nationalist struggle against the French. When those votes added to the great support in the North, the country after would be unified and under Communist control.

American leaders maintained a strong interest in preventing the Communist to control Vietnam, which was liberated from France. They believed the Seventeenth Eight Parallel dividing South and North Vietnam represented one of many crucial boundaries between the free world and the Communist Bloc. Just as these leaders decided to defend South Korea when North Korea crossed the Thirty Eight Parallel, so now they decided to rescue Vietnam .Furthermore the United States sought to prevent a Communist takeover Vietnam by supporting the new government of Ngo Dinh Diem. The Eisenhower Administration provided Diem with massive military and economic aid to stabilize the situation in Vietnam, a strategy that guaranteed the control of Vietnam.

Distance however was only one of the problems the United States faced .Vietnam was a divided society North against South, Buddhist against Catholics, lowlanders against Monsignors and peasants against urban dwellers. Moreover Loyalties were primary local, and hostility to the central government ran deep. , because as in most developing countries the

government historically had been that of the colonial power represented at the local level by the tax collector and recruiting Sergeant .Furthermore complicating the matter transportation and communication networks were primitive and industrial development nonexistent industrial development nonexistent. South Vietnam had no established political institutions and economic stability

Ho's popularity feared the United States and the new South Vietnamese governments opposed and prevent the 1956 elections which was promised in the Geneva Agreement. Moreover the United States wanted the seventeenth parallel to be accepted as the new frontier, and Diem the anticommunist wanted to stay in power whatever the Geneva Agreement said about elections. In the face of such strong opposition, Hanoi saw its chances for a peaceful in Vietnam too far. In 1959 the North Vietnamese begun to struggle to unify the country and the second Vietnam War started.

Despite the similarities between the Korean conflicts and the U.S involvement in Vietnam began quite differently. The Korean War begun with an attack aggressively that had confused the American public and united the principal of Western allies against any threat. By contrast, the French defeat in Dien Bien Phu in 1954 was a great moment in history, because it demonstrated that guerilla tactics can defeat any stronger and larger troops.

For the U.S government, the Vietnam conflict represented a test for the nations, and the United States had to maintain and control all the frontiers. Until the noncommunist countries in the region became more economically developed and possessed stable political system and military defences, the Asian States became more depend on the United States. Besides to that American leaders believed that they would control the frontiers of South East Asia and if any country fell into the hand of the Communism, the other countries would fellow falling and the containment strategy would fail. (Steven22-28)

With this logic in mind the American leaders advanced the Domino Theory that sought to justify intervention in Vietnam. In their view, the political and psychological impact would affect the global balance of power. Specifically if Vietnam collapsed that would make Communist challenge in Indochina, across Burma, and into the Indian subcontinent. As Eisenhower stated “you have a row of dominoes set up, you know over the first one and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go ever so quickly” .Steven assumed:

The assumption underlying this view point was that the Sino Soviet bloc was united, despite increasing evidence to the contrary. Signs of discord between the Soviet Union and China were gradually explained as tactical differences about how Communist world should wage its war against the United States War. (p31)

In truth, the Vietnam War weakened the containment policy and the intervention of war not South Vietnam, but the consensus within the U.S and the allies that had preferred containment

### **I-3 Kennedy's War**

John Fitzgerald Kennedy was elected in 1960; a time of crisis in the course of the Cold War. Between 1954 and 1960 American had supported the anticommunist government of South Vietnam under Diem as a part of the Policy of Containment which had begun under President Harry Truman. Kennedy's Administration faced many foreign issues like Berlin, Cuba, Laos, Vietnam and the continuing tensions with the Soviet Union. (Brown, 06)

President Kennedy did not challenge the idea that South Vietnam was vital to the security to the free world, and more particularly to the United States as a leader of the free world. In June 1956 telling his views about American role in Vietnam ,Senator Kennedy concluded that “since their role the American's in the creation of South Vietnam and their

presence and support at its birth had been so great that the little state was virtually their offspring ,they could not abandon it''(Brown,28) .President Kennedy's task was to define the Vietnam problem, should be it treated politically strategy or militarily? Obviously, in either case the answer was partly the Administration's personal view point and partly foreign pressures, especially those of Saigon.

Thus Foreign Policy was a major priority to the Kennedy Administration. As he emphasised in his inaugural address , Kennedy's warning to the Communist world was that "we would pay any price ,bear any burden ,meet any hardship, support any friend or oppose any foe in order to assure the survival and success of liberty."(Brown, 32) .In the summer of 1961, Kennedy met with Soviet Prime Minister Nikita Khrushchev to decide some matters like Vietnam. When Kennedy went back to Washington, Kennedy decided that the United States must draw a line to block the Communist, as he stated to a journalist "now its time, Vietnam is the place". (Brown, 33)

President Kennedy support for the South Vietnam came as a form of military and financial aid in the presence of thousands of American advisers in Vietnam. However these advisers should and must not engage in combat with the guerrilla force. President Kennedy's advisors made him aware of the harshness in Vietnam in which he saw a military is necessary, but he kept the reality of what was happening in Vietnam from the American people. (Brown,34)

Vietnam was one of the regions which Kennedy considered as a "a crucial link" in America's position, since he believed that "preventing a Communist victory in Vietnam was a vital interest". Moreover the best solution for the Kennedy's Administration in order to defend South Vietnam, was the strategy of "nation building" this means building South Vietnam politically, economically, and military troops. Kennedy wanted to strengthen the South Vietnam so that should not have to risk any American lives. A National Security

Council at 11 May 1961 defined to stop the Communist domination in South Vietnam as a national objective and it provided that the strategy was to create in that country a viable and increasing democratic society, even later in September 1963, Kennedy stated “we can help them, we can give them equipment, we can send our men as advisers, but they have to win it –the people of Vietnam against the Communist” (Brown, 36). However little by little the plan of the White House changed and suggested that what really happened in Vietnam was the American credibility.

If the United States schemes and models for development could not succeed in a place like South Vietnam, where they could obtain all feasible backing from the United States, they might well be defeated everywhere else. “Then again if Vietnam falls victim to any of that threatens its existence Communism, political Anarchy, poverty and the rest, then the United States, with some justification, will be held responsible and our prestige in Asia will sink to a new low” (Halper, 24)

In May Kennedy decided to increase American involvement. This happened just after the pressure from the State Department’s report which asked for an increase in American involvement. Besides to that the second important step was a report drafted by Taylor-Rostow’s mission in Saigon, which also called for the introduction of an American military force that “would conduct such combat operations as are necessary for self defense and for the security of the area in which they are stationed”(Kegly,95). Finally, after several Memorandums, they were decided to increase aid but not send combat troops to Vietnam. The final and decisive step was made from the summer 1963 on when Kennedy Administration, started to encourage a coup for overthrowing the South Vietnamese president Diem.

The contingency for a military policy towards Vietnam found in the same Taylor Rostow analysis of 1961. While his report gave the urgency of social reforms, it also called for

the enlargement of the America role in the army of South Vietnam .And his plan called for demanding 10,000 men to go to Saigon , and its conclusion that:

This programme would work only if infiltration from the North were stopped, and that therefore should this infiltration stopped, and that therefore should this consider a contingency policy of retaliation against the North, graduated to match the intensity of Hanoi aid to the Viet Kong. (Schlesinger, 29)

These suggestions did not get more importance to the troop intervention, and then President Kennedy did not like to act up on them at first .However the proposals in total were not buried and even materialised in Johnson’s escalation later on. A. Schlesinger also suggests that the Taylor Rostow report was established in a contingency plan. Moreover, Kennedy favoured the military solution made him approve an increase of American troops in South Vietnam, which rose from 1,364 in late 1961 to 15,000 in November 1963. What is important here is the fact that Kennedy’s approval was more a reason of reality than anticipation which was to characterise Johnson’s policies later on.

Although increasing military troops in Vietnam was a violation to the Geneva Agreements, Kennedy’s decision was not military that we can understand Johnson’s policy of escalation. Furthermore President Kennedy sought to avoid any responsibility in the Vietnam civil war, he even concluded that America engagement will not ensure victory over the Communists, because in this criticism, he added “the war in Vietnam could be won only so long as it was their war”. (Schlesinger,32-3). If this was really his reasoning, then President



Kennedy's approval of American troops increase in South Vietnam did not go with his own desire.

The main obstacle for political victory was the policy makers, failed to understand the nature of the Vietnamese society and Diem's regime in particular. In his last interview on August, 1963 Diem said "Americans are breaking the Vietnamese psychology, and they don't even know what they are doing" (Ensly, 63). In that same interview, Diem who knew the Western life style added "...procedures applicable to one culture cannot be wholly transplanted to another culture" (Ensley, 65). Despite all these problems that could have caused the outbreak of war at any time, the Kennedy policy could be identified as a "middle course policy". He fought both for political reforms and increased American military involvement, in an attempt to accommodate political development of the sixties, with the American Vietnam policy pattern established in the fifties.

Kennedy's Vietnam policy, until his assassination showed the continuity of the previous administration's policy. The gradual military build up between 1961 and 1963 was clearly meant to support the Saigon regime just as Eisenhower had done. Furthermore the troops that Kennedy sent were not to be substituted for the Vietnamese. In this idea of continuity; President Kennedy intelligently justified the increase of American troops in Saigon. In 1962, when he sent American troops in Saigon, he said "we have increased our training mission and we are preventing a Communist takeover of Vietnam which in accordance with the policy which our government has followed for the last certainly since 1954" (Draper, 52). But this is by no means an agreement with contentions that Kennedy was trapped by the Eisenhower legacy.

To say President Johnson was not obliged to intervene in Vietnam like Kennedy had done. Returning from Saigon in 1961, Vice President Johnson not only gave his support to Diem, but also linked U.S prestige to the Vietnam cause. Furthermore in his Memorandum to

president Kennedy , Johnson concluded both “strength and determination must be joined to achieve success.”(Draper,53). Ironically he mentioned the two basic elements which characterised his Vietnam policy when he became president .Whereas “strength” guaranteed the Americanisation of the war “determination” would keep escalation going on.

Kennedy’s relationship with Johnson was high factor in the formulation of a policy of continuity a policy that reflected the spirit of continuity of both the Truman Doctrine and Eisenhower SEATO. To some extent that both Kennedy and Johnson as the war began were committed to maintaining Saigon security and favoured armed intervention as means to that end .Indeed the two men lived through the outbreak out the Cold War, and together suffered the loss of China, the crisis in West Berlin. So many common experiences were sufficient to produce their similar reactions. (Draper, 54-55)

The Kennedy legacy at the time of his assassination can be summarised in four main points. Firstly, the military strategy was given prior to the political strategy .Secondly a state of indecision characterised the Kennedy Administration and this apparent in Johnson Administration .Thirdly the situation in Saigon between hope and despair indicated a clear misunderstanding of the Vietnam policy at all levels. Last and most importantly, American prestige had become an inseparable part of the American’s Vietnam policy and it would certainly affect the means as well as the objectives of that policy.

## **CONCLUSION**

The French defeat in Dien Bien Phu came after a long suffering and determination from the national liberation movements in Indochina. After the withdrawal of the French, the fear from Communism in Indochina faced the Cold War Presidents. As a result of the Domino Theory the policy makers began to see Vietnam as an area of strategic importance in

South East Asia. Putting strongly in their mind if Vietnam fell into Communist, the other regions in south East Asia would fall too. Moreover with the coming of John Kennedy America only increased the degrees of its involvement in Vietnam as he gave the military strategy prior to the political strategy. Thus Kennedy's Vietnam policy, until his assassination showed only the continuity of the previous administration's policy; the increase of military assistants to Saigon between 1961 and 1963 was clearly meant to support the Saigon regime just as Eisenhower had done.

## I-4 Endnotes

1-Containment was a United States policy using military, economic, and diplomatic strategies to stop the spread of Communism, enhance America's security and influence abroad, and prevent a "domino effect". A component of the Cold War, the policy was a response to a series of moves by the Soviet Union to expand Communist influence in Eastern Europe, China, and Korea.

2- The Truman Doctrine is a set of principles of U.S. inland policy created on March 12, 1947 by President Harry S Truman. In his speech to Congress, Truman declared that the United States, as "leader of the free world", must support democracy worldwide and fight against communism. The approach was conceived with the help of George Marshall and Dean Acheson, two influential associates of Truman, which generalized his hopes for Greece and Turkey into a doctrine applicable throughout the world. The Soviet Union was clearly at the heart of Truman's thoughts, but it was never directly mentioned in his speech<sup>1</sup> Truman was attempting to solve Eastern Europe's instability while making sure that communism would not spread to nations like Greece and Turkey.

3-The Marshall Plan (from its enactment, officially the European Recovery Program, ERP) was the primary plan of the United States for rebuilding and creating a stronger foundation for the countries of Western Europe, and repelling communism after World War II. The initiative was named for Secretary of State George Marshall and was largely the creation of State Department officials, especially William L. Clayton and George F. Kennan. George Marshall spoke of the administration's desire to help European recovery in his address at Harvard University in June 1947.[1]

4- The Korean War is a war that started between North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea, DPRK) and South Korea (Republic of Korea, ROK) on 25 June 1950 and paused with an armistice signed 27 July, 1953. To date, the war has not been officially ended through treaty, and occasional skirmishes have been reported in the border region.

## **Chapter II**

### **The Transformation of the War (1963-1965)**

#### **Introduction:**

Lyndon Baines Johnson became president after the assassination of President Kennedy in November 1963, in which he immediately faced the problem in South Vietnam. Just three weeks before, political instability in Saigon causes the overthrow of Diem .Then President Lyndon Johnson had to decide a new way he could best deal with the Vietnam problem, it is to understand how this way developed and led finally to the Americanization of the War, that focus in this chapter will put the pre-1965 period in the making of that decision.

#### **II-1 The Gulf and Tonkin Incident**

In revenge, the North Vietnamese then conducted an ‘unprovoked attack’ on Maddox, which approximately 30 miles off the coast of North Vietnam. During the battle that followed, one North Vietnamese patrol boats was damaged by Maddox and two others were attacked and chased by US air support from the USS Ticonderoga.

On August 4, 1964 Maddox and USS C. Turner Joy reported a second attack, this one happened within 17hours of 34-alpha raids on North Vietnamese facilities at Cap Vinh Son and Cue Ron . On that day the National Security Agency had warned that an attack on Maddox appeared. An hour after NSA warning, Maddox claimed that it had established radar contact with three or four unidentified vessels approaching a high speed. During the next several hours, the ships reported more than 20 Torpedo attacks, the visual sighting of Torpedo wakes, searchlight, automatic weapons fire, and radar and sonar contact.

Despite the ‘recommendations’ of Captain John J. Herrick, the recently Senior Officer on board Maddox that the circumentances including darkness, stormy sea,

inexperienced crewmen justified “through investigation”. Secretary of Defense McNamara told Congress there was “unequivocal proof” of the second “unprovoked attack” on US ships. (Gibbons, 338-42)

Johnson and his senior advisers’ preoccupied with the presidential campaign, were confused by North Vietnamese behavior, and convinced that North Vietnam would not repeat a second attack. The president rejected to take any revenge attack but kept the Ticonderoga’s task force in the Gulf of Tonkin and sent the second destroyer to Turner Joy to join the Maddox. Besides to that on the evening of August 4 Captain John Herrick of the Maddox convinced that his and the other destroyer were under attack by Torpedo boats, ordered both ships to fire. Only in after the fire fight did Herrick and his crew, along with the pilots who had been circling overhead in jets at the time, have doubts about the whole incident. No one they realized had actually seen a Communist patrol boat. Within hours of McNamara discovering the event Congress passed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, and the United States went to the war. (Karnow, 387)

Before the executive session of the Senate Foreign Relations and armed services committee debating congressional support for the resolution, Senator Wayne Morse; who had already described the conflict “McNamara’s War “declared “

I am unalterably opposed to this course of action which in my judgment is an aggressive course of action on the part of the United States .I think you are kidding the world if you try to give the impression that when the South Vietnamese naval boats bombarded two islands a short distance off the coast of North Vietnam we were not implicated. (Karnow, 392)

In response McNamara denied any US naval involvement in South Vietnamese operation making sure that the DESOTO operations were neither support nor cover for 34plan raids . Torrison claimed on this issue “the Manropes (maritime operations) were not CIA supported South Vietnamese operations that the United States had no control over as former Secretary of Defense McNamara claimed” writes Torisson “these operations were under US control, not South Vietnamese” (p116)

On August ,1964,the Senate passed support for Tonkin Gulf Resolution 88-2 with Senators Morse and Earnest Gruening (D\_ Alaska) voting nay. The House voted 4160 in support. However Senator Morse argued by saying “I believe that within the next century, the future generations will look with dismay and great disappointment upon a Congress which is now about to make such a historic mistake”(Dallak,154)

The events surrounding the resolution and its passage to a tragedy failure in the U.S decision making system of the time .At a time crucial moment in history, US intelligence collection agencies had given a wrong information about the incident to the Administration and this kind of bad intelligence support to government leaders helped opened the door of US involvement in the Vietnam War. (Dallak, 156)

Although Johnson knew the facts surrounding the incident, he cited it to get a resolution through Congress that would free his hand military. With a major support in the Senate and house, LBJ convinced the chair of the Senate Foreign Relation committee J. William Fulbright (Democrat Arkansas) to push the legislature what come to be known the Gulf Tonkin Resolution. Fulbright portrayed the Resolution as a ‘moderate measure one’ calculated to prevent the spread of the war and lowing the fears of Liberal Democrats South Dakota assuring one of them that “a last thing we want to do it became involved in the war”(Dallak,158) .On August 7 only two Senator did not vote to the Gulf Tonkin Resolution,

and the house by all the vote gave their support for all measures the president believed necessary to help any number of SEATO that asked for help to defend its freedom.

Johnson was pleased, the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution; he remarked was like “grand mother night shirt-it covered everything” (Dallak, 166). In fact he viewed the resolution as a way in which to take the nation into a major undeclared war. Thinking in a short terms he saw it as a way to ensure the cooperation of Congress to stop his Republican opponent in the upcoming election, Senator Barry Goldwater (Republican Arizona), saw the Vietnam War as a campaign issue and showed American resolve leaders in Hanoi . So long as Vietnam remained an ‘advisory war’ with few American casualties, the Congress and the American people gave the president great freedom of action. (Dallak, 167)

In his recent book, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*<sup>1</sup>, McNamara admitted that the United States have provoked North Vietnamese response in the Tonkin Gulf .He maintained, however the “charges of a cloak of deception surrounding the Tonkin Gulf incident are unfounded. The idea that the Johnson Administration deliberately deceived Congress is fake” many disagree. On the very day McNamara was in Hanoi, American Veterans, historians and scholars met in Washington., DC for a conference sponsored by the Vietnam Veterans Institute .One of the conference many prominent guest speakers was Daniel Ellsberg, the former Johnson administration member who gave the Pentagon papers to the press. In his representation, Ellsberg addressed the question of whether the Johnson Administration deliberately misled Congress; he stated:

McNamara lied to congress in 1964? I can answer that question yes, he did lie, and I knew it at that time .I was working for John McNaughton, I was his special assistant, he was assistant Secretary of Defense for international security affairs . (Dallak, 172)



## II-2 The Theory of Escalation

By February 1964, the Strategic Hamlet Program<sup>2</sup> stopped, and the generals in Saigon challenge for a leadership. Such situation only confirmed the contradictory nature of optimistic reports which were received before. Moreover, analyses of the military state of affairs in South Vietnam which President Johnson studied in late 1963 concluded with the fact that deterioration in South Vietnam had been increased for several months. Actually Buddhist provided the right atmosphere for the Viet Cong to carry out their activities. Reporting on these political developments in South Vietnam, McNamara concluded in the late of December of 1963 “the situation is very disturbing, current trends unless reversed in the next two or three months, will lead to neutralization at best and more likely to a Communist controlled state” (Townsend, 24). In fact McNamara suggested that previous efforts were not enough and inefficient, and more involvement in Vietnam will be necessary.

However President Johnson did not seem dominated by the Vietnam question. Important issues like the Great Society or re-election were more important for him. He simply did not have time to look for a small war in South East Asia. All the President did in his first year in office was to continue Kennedy’s Vietnam Policy. Phillip Geyelin, who described Johnson’s policy makers said “the back stage Johnson was quite capable, one of the Senate told more serious student of foreign policy affairs that if we don’t stop the reds in South Vietnam, tomorrow they will be in Hawaii and next week they will be in San Francisco” (Townsend, 29). Effectively, President Johnson was not clear about following the policy of continuity. The Kennedy men in the Johnson Administration, both Hawks and Doves, kept on arguing for their different political views toward the Vietnam problem. But Johnson was determined to stay in the middle of the course means that neither stop the United States commitment in Vietnam nor involved in direct war.

Johnson listened more and more to the Hawks than the Doves. Yet his sympathy for a military situation did not mean always that he accepted the advice without critics. Furthermore, in 1964 when the pressures continued to build up, President Johnson simply rejected both extreme Hawkish and Doves like suggestions. As the state of affairs in Saigon started improving, the hawkish strategy to shape American Foreign Policy became dependent from Johnson Administration .David Habersham punted out the importance of selecting Johnson's aides , he said "Harriman, Hilsman , true hart, forestall and Katzenberg very quickly became non players,". (Gelb, 98). All these officials were political war strategists.

It became somehow unrealistic to rely on political means to strengthen the Saigon government .Actually either withdrawal from or neutralization of South Vietnam as it supported by the Doves like Senator Mansfield or Robert Kennedy whom had been condemned by the Laos experience in 1954, when General Khan's government showing signs of disintegration and wanted from the Americans to go North against Hanoi caused the Taylor-McNamara mission to calculate the situation in Saigon. Ironically in "their report of March 16, 1963(NSAH288) Taylor and McNamara rejected Khan's 'march North' idea, by arguing "that plans be developed to allow the initiation of graduated American military pressure against North Vietnam." (Gelb, 104). Yet Khan would call for the extension of the war to the North once again in early August in the Tonkin incident. Here it is interesting to know that NSAM288 used as a justification for hawkish recommendations for air campaigns as well as for dismissing Dove like suggestions.

Throughout most of Johnson's first year in the Administration, nearly all his advisors favored differing the application of direct pressure s against the North and that only the JCS, Lodge and Rostow had promoted it. In August 1964, Taylor repeated his thesis of attacking the North as the source of insurgency which he had suggested earlier in 1961 to Kennedy. At the same time Lodge's 'carrot and stick' tactic proposed both attacking at, and pretending the

quest for negotiations with North Vietnam. The applications of both recommendations leads one to believe and think that 1964 was a period of planning and tactics and waiting only the right moment to achieve it.

Although Johnson's differing of escalation 1964, he hesitated about the right choice for saving Vietnam; Johnson's intention to Americanize the war seems to be essential in making that decision. As early as November 1963 President Johnson is quoted as saying "I am not going to be the first president who saw South East Asia go the way China went." (Gelb, 108). He was known the most national minded since Franklin .D. Roosevelt and he was known the master of Domestic Policy without doubt his long experience in national government. Thus both his high level political experience and his nationalism made him determined not only to be successful in Foreign Policy but also to shape the support of all American people and politicians. Furthermore President Johnson remembered Truman's error was going to the defense in Korea in 1950 were his failure to ask Congress for its backing. Therefore, that 1964 being an election year and it would be a period where Johnson should shape the nation mood and not his advisors. In another way Johnson's waiting for support and consensus was an essential element in his decisions on America's Vietnam Policy.

Throughout 1964, the theory of escalation was planned very well, not only it had been supported for a long time but it was indefering its application, it seemed to get a quick solution to the Vietnam problem .Policy critics like Ball and Mansfield who were opposed escalation proved to be acting on Johnson's orders . Similarly, to a certain degree, the need to show the same opinion, that is to oppose Communism, in a large domestic pressure. As argued by Hofstadter Americans have known only victory and suffered the "illusion of American omnipotence" in U.S Foreign Policy. Under such pressure was not a new idea, Americanization of the Vietnam War was not an impossible implication in Hawkish recommendation for going North. Gelb argues that in 1954, Admiral Arthur rat ford sought to

bring the United States and China to war before China would become strong enough to threaten the U.S interests in the future (Gelb, 106-11)

Throughout spring into July of 1964, the Buddhists Catholic intensified to a point was seven governments succeeded to power throughout the year. The Joint Chiefs of Staff in Saigon suggested that the Vietcong successes end with particular result in the Tonkin incident which offered Hawks in the Johnson Administration the opportunity to prove they were not “paper tigers”

the crunch in this incident is its implication that Hanoi dared provoke the U.S giant and that it would do it frequently. As well as this astonishingly reveals how easy the incident apparently frightened the Administration to unite over the Tonkin resolution which Senator Sam Ervin qualified clearly a declaration of the war. (Schlesinger, 180)

Tom Wicker’s reaffirmed that President Johnson had taken the resolution in his pocket for weeks waiting the incident, the fact that Washington proveque against North Vietnam after Johnson came to power, was clearly an indication of Johnson’s Vietnam Policy style.(Drapper, 62)

Many who signed the Tonkin resolution ignored how the crisis happened as well as how the situation will follow, especially after the resolution promised retaliation to any aggression on U.S rights. President Johnson’s Policy of continuity which enjoyed a great support in the Administration and Congress was a policy in which covert military actions covered by NSAM52 and OPLAN34 and Sub-Rosa destructive operations against North Vietnam. It is important to note here that these covert actions and others like DESOTO were completely accepted by the president. However until August 1964, this mini-escalation was

not approved to the Eisenhower and Kennedy principles of limiting America responsibility in Vietnam. As a matter of fact NSAM 52 was a Kennedy creation having in operation since 1961. Also the part behind Johnson's strategy was still "to convince the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and leadership that they should cease to support insurgent activities in the Republic South Vietnam and Laos" (Drapper, 66). In other words until late 1964 Vietnam was still considered a civil war and changes in this thinking came later.

This is not true that Lyndon Johnson had no originality of thinking or action. "he inherited a commitment of undefined limits and his task centered on limiting this resolve to save Vietnam" (Drapper, 67). Unfortunately, the bad situation in Saigon made him difficult to choose the best way for saving Vietnam. Drapper argued what make Johnson really failed to think was the political "blackmail" being played in Saigon that Kennedy had avoided successfully. Indeed, Johnson misunderstood or ignored the fact that the more he is intervening the less Saigon can be stable. There is no convincing evidence that Johnson sought to make limits to that commitment since increased involvement in 1964 and in 1965.(p67)

Developments in America's Vietnam Policy made Johnson's decision-making style. From 1964 and in to 1965, U.S Vietnam policy was made by a small group, especially after Johnson put away the Doves from his Administration. Furthermore Johnson always wanted to keep his Vietnam Policy secret for example as argued by Geld, the different plans which were not succeeded during 1964 were never made in public. The fact that during this period the arrangement of planning shifted staffs in White House later on. Indeed it hints that Johnson's known passion for consensus was of a special type, even suggests the possibility of glossing over inconvenient truths when necessary. (Kearns, 199)

Kearns expressed this view when he said, “the politician, Johnson’s experience had taught him, could make promises without keeping them. Words spoken in public had little relation to the political conduct of daily life” (p 200)

Thus, the escalation materialized in late 1964. Although different sources disagree over the timing of the decision to bomb. The decision of bombing the North have been reached during the strategy debates of September 1964. In those debates President Johnson rejected more extreme proposals in favor of more moderate ‘tit-for-tat’ military strategy. This strategy would allow escalation, and that would be successful to put the blame on Hanoi. In August and September 1964, WP. Bundy was asked whether the United States was going to take supply routes in North Vietnam, and he confirmed the possibility of an escalation. James Reston from the New York Times reported on October 2, 1964 “it is difficult to understand why prominent officials a few weeks before a national election should be talking so openly about expanding the war, and not only advocating it but almost lobbying for such course of action” (Drapper, 71)

Meanwhile, Johnson who was focusing for re-election surprisingly avoided discussing the Vietnam problem, despite its importance in the election campaign. Yet he prepared to make Barry Gold Water less important by appearing to be the ‘man of peace’. In effect, theoretically President Lyndon Johnson would never send American boys to do the fighting that Asian boys should do to themselves. On May 25, 1964 Lodge told Rusk “it is vitally important to avoid Security Council action which in any way encourages convening of Geneva Conference. Such a conference would be a body blow to the will to win and would probably have some catastrophe results.” (Gelb, 114). What emerged from Johnson efforts was simply a pragmatic method of timing that gathered Americans thinking accordance with the president’s ideas.

The decision making process throughout 1964 was not objective. The Tonkin Resolution that granted Johnson unqualified power against North Vietnam was merely a bipartisan denouncement of the Vietcong aggression and not a grant of Congress war declatory powers as the president understood it. Also the Tonkin incident came three weeks after Saigon which was in worse situation and political instability had claimed escalation of South Vietnamese commando raids on Northern territory. Gelb argues that “in subsequent years come disillusioned critics would cite Tonkin Gulf as a trumped up crisis designed by the Administration to provide a pretext for escalation” (p115). In the fact that Johnson did not retaliate to the Bien Hao attack as suggested in the resolution, but used it get from his policy.

Although these facts confirm doubts about Johnson sincerity, influences which came into play throughout 1964 should not be omitted. Furthermore the military leaders favored more intervention and more pressure on North Vietnam as the only means to weaken the Vietcong. Basing their proposals on NSAM 288, they sought to stop the VietCong infiltration to the South and destroy Vietnam to continue support of the Viet Cong guerrillas. Clearly this view came from the Joint Chief of Staff. What seemed to be their opponents were the state officials and civilians in the Defense Department who favored more gradual troops in Vietnam. In fact the later view was inherent in the ‘tit-for-tat’ strategy. But both strategies were planned to punish North Vietnam for its action. As summer approached Hanoi exploited the political collapse in South Vietnam and moved according to the Joint Chief reports from guerrilla warfare to a more conventional general offensive. In late 1964 informed the Administration that the communists appeared to be winning the war, by the number of battles won as well as by the territory they secured. In a Memorandum of January 27, 1965, Bundy openly urged “current policy could lead only to disastrous defeat” even as late as 1969, Taylor asserted that “Kennedy would probably have moved earlier and faster than Johnson did” (Brown, 185)

Equally important Gelb stated that the fact that the present ‘reprisal raids’ strategy known as Flaming Dart applied in ‘tit- for- tat’ tactics was inefficient. This ‘tit-for-tat’ strategy was in fact an agreement over bombing the North Vietnam, but neither its objective nor its results were considered . In the late of 24 of November, 1964, the NSC principals who did not succeed for the bombing strategy were still did not decide about the option to choose among the three developed for bombing the ‘North’. They were firstly a continuation of the present limited operations and covert actions, secondly, an augmentation of the present policy by putting pressure on the North, and finally a progressive escalation of the war against the North .Although the final decision was reached only in 1965, Johnson remained hesitating towards the course of limited bombing option.

There was an ambiguity in Johnson’s choice for the middle course. Forming the two phase bombing strategy, this option consisted of limiting bombing namely the Second Phase and it was made to reduce the military activities of the VietCong. As a matter of fact, earlier experiences of limited bombing like SIGMA II or OPLAN 34A, with which president was familiar demonstrated that this tactic will achieve little. His choice raises the question, why did he choose inefficient strategy? Was it an attempt to avoid escalation? Put another way did he finally aim at achieving an intensive all out escalation, as the situation by late 1965 and the following years might suggest.

Until a satisfactory answer can be provided, there is clear indication that Johnson’s policy of continuity defined his contribution to the Vietnam legacy from continuing of a particular time. Indeed he put U.S commitment and he has adopted an open ended limitation policy in consequence. Moreover for Johnson middle course option linked U.S military aggression to Hanoi’s initiatives. While air strikes were meant to match the Vietcong level of aggression, the increase of U.S troops in Saigon from 16.000 to 23.000 during 1964 was intended to meet the Vietcong infiltration. The open ended commitment this time could not



help America and which was avoided by Johnson predecessors. Unlike, the Johnson Administration wanted to meet in direct way the Vietcong challenge. In consequence all action reaction between Hanoi and Washington made one to believe that it was American Vietnamese conflict rather than Vietnamese civil war. (Gelb, 108-120)

Absolutely, so many influences on the decision making process did not allow Lyndon Johnson to exercise his political course of action. Yet all these pressures came together and became a big trap for him. The collapse of Saigon confirmed the belief that Communism was behind the scene, and made the confirmation of the 'Domino Theory' question of time not power. However this is the same belief of the American mentality. Americans would never accept the fall of Saigon, but also they were promised not to fight the Asian war. Then the problem became how not to withdraw but how not to go into the war. Dean Rusk expressed this difficulty in early 1965. He said "the consequences of both escalation and withdrawal were so bad that we simply must find a way of making our present policy work" (Gelb, 123). In effect there was no choice but only to follow the policy and wait a way for saving the situation.

It can be argued that the early 1965, the Theory of Escalation was partly imposed and partly controlled but it was applied any way. This conclusion not only reduced the chances for withdrawal but also promised full involvement. As a matter of fact, Johnson's first year in the Administration solved the problem of being hesitating about the choice of the policy, in return it led the problem of changing political strategies. Moreover Johnson's Second Administration was a period of trial, where arrangement and details for the Americanization of the war would be the main objective. A period of confusion indeed.

## **Conclusion**

The decisions of 1964-1965 proved a larger and deeper failure as well. Throughout this period U.S. policymakers worked hard to create a non-communist regime in South Vietnam. For many years and at great effort and costs, Washington wanted hardly to achieve political stability and in Saigon. Despite these efforts, South Vietnam's political instability deepened, until, in 1965, America intervened with massive military force to help South Vietnam.

Like Kennedy before him, Johnson was caught, in the making of his policy in Vietnam, between those who wanted him to expand the air power over Vietnam quickly to help stabilise the new Saigon government and others who wanted to apply a gradual military pressure but limited and selected bombings. However circumstances cleared the way for Johnson. As a result of the NLF's attacks on two U.S army installations, Johnson ordered a massive bombing mission on North Vietnam.

## II-3 Endnotes

1-McNamara, Secretary of Defense from 1961 to 1967 under both Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, has remained silent about U.S. policy toward Vietnam until now. This book reveals a decent, loyal, and able man who struggled to remain loyal to the president and yet to get the United States out of Vietnam. When McNamara left office, 15,979 Americans had been killed in Viet Nam; by the time the United States left Vietnam, the number stood at over 58,000. McNamara's recollections are put to rigorous testing by his junior author, Van Demark, who checked them against the now-declassified written and taped records of the period. Publicly perceived as a "hawk," McNamara documents his attempts from 1966 on to find a way for the United States to exit from the war. The culmination of his effort is a May 19, 1967 memorandum to LBJ, calling for U.S. withdrawal. President Johnson never sent a reply. McNamara reveals that "I do not know to this day, whether I quit or was fired." At any rate, McNamara left the Pentagon to begin a successful ten-year term as president of the World Bank. In looking back, he holds that "we sought to do the right thing...but in my judgment hindsight proved us wrong." McNamara's unpretentious, genuine, and touching memoir should contribute further to healing the wounds of the Vietnam experience; it belongs in all public and academic libraries. James Rhodes, Luther Coll.,

2-In 1961, U.S. advisors in South Vietnam, along with the Diem regime, began the implementation of a plan attempted to isolate rural peasants from contact with and influence by the National Liberation Front (NLF). The Strategic Hamlet Program, along with its predecessor, the Rural Community Development Program, played an important role in the shaping of events in South Vietnam during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Both of these programs attempted to separate rural peasants from Communist insurgents by creating "fortified villages". The program backfired drastically and ultimately led to a decrease in support for Diem's regime and an increase in sympathy for Communist efforts.

## **Chapter III**

### **The Stalemate of the War (1965-1967)**

#### **Introduction:**

In 1965, the United States under Lyndon Johnson entered large scale war in Vietnam. Already in spring of 1964 Johnson administration had agreed that the actual policy which reduced American involvement to funding and advising the South Vietnamese did not bring a chance for victory or success. Moreover the absence of more active American intervention for instance, naval, attacks on North Vietnam, Communist forces would take over in South Vietnam.

#### **III-1 The Experience of Escalation Policy**

Johnson's second year in the Administration was largely focused on the Foreign Policy. He surely would not to turn it so urgently but the situation in Vietnam necessitated that worry. Yet he responding to it by an escalation policy, not only confirmed U.S readiness to intervene, but also suggested the quick which was to characterize Johnson's Vietnam Policy style.

The policy of escalation seems to have developed in very small, but logical way. Indeed, Johnson's decision of increasing attack on February 1965 was encouraged by the Pleiku attack<sup>1</sup>. Similarly the introduction of U.S ground troops the following March was an answer to the infiltration of the 325<sup>th</sup> division of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) from

North to South Vietnam from 1964-1965. But where these and similar decisions are going to change in the nature of the war, they apparently had never meant a change in a long term objectives until then namely containment of Communism. More to the point despite being the essential steps in the Americanization of the Vietnam civil war, both decisions appeared so justified that the opinion of both the public and many officials looked as not important for Johnson to consider at that time. (Morgenthau, 102)

Even some who opposed the Americanization in 1965 did not reject it for its nature but for its bad results. Rolling Thunder (an escalating campaign against the North, which constituted the Second Phase in the expansion of the war) it was inefficient to stop the North Vietnamese infiltration .Also it was an opportunity for critics to interpret it that the Administration soft with Communism, no matter what the achievement of bombing the North .In effect throughout 1964, studies concluded that inefficiency of all limited bombing tactics made the war unlimited. But Hans Morgenthau suggests “the experience of the Second World War and the Korean War cast serious doubt upon the effectiveness of even unlimited bombing as an instrument of political warfare”.(Morgenthau ,104). The landing of the U.S troops in North Vietnam was a failure strategy to stop the Vietcong, North Vietnamese infiltration. These facts were unknown by the Administration.

What bothered Johnson’s either in 1965 or later was getting a national consensus for all political and military ‘contingencies’. As a popular president, the real threat for Johnson was losing the consensus. Vice President Humphrey, warned Johnson against the tactics of ‘Rolling Thunder’ on public opinion .He said “it is the first year we can face the Vietnam problem without being preoccupied with the political repercussions from the Republican right our political problems are likely to come from new and deferent sources (Democratic Liberals, independents Labor....) ( Gelb,118). The policy of escalation promised to bring success and opposing domestic forces. In that context civilian and military political, in

addition to Hanoi's pressure evolved from 1965 on into three fight over America's Vietnam Policy formulation

There was actually much time left for Johnson to abolish such popular decision. The Vietcong successes were proved only the urgent of large scale of U.S intervention in Vietnam. However, until June 1965 the U.S leader still standing in the middle of the Rubicon in Gelb words. The final push came only in July, after the South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) was nearly succeeding in a number of defeats. It was this situation which caused General Westmoreland to start demanding more troops in order to cover his failure in three phase plan. Further more in the light of collapsing ARVN ,he saw “no course of action open to us except to reinforce our efforts in South Vietnam with additional US or third country forces as rapidly as is predictable during the critical weeks ahead.”(Gelb, 120). It is interesting to note here that Westmoreland policy was essentially meant to weaken and demoralize the VC/NVN before defeating them military. Thus US troops were the first who started getting in the fight.

President Johnson argued in February 1965 that escalation had been delayed for months only in the hope that the Saigon government would achieve some political stability. But when these hopes were gone, America responsible in South Vietnam became inevitable. It is important to say here that this conception of inevitability was an important element in the formulation of the Administration's Vietnam Policy. Indeed when Thieu and Key came to power, the coup tradition stopped, but also called the confusion theory of Personalism.

This is not to say that the policy makers ignored the mistakes of an escalation policy. Since early in 1965, both decisions were neither regular nor consistent. Landing US troops was made to meet an enclave strategy<sup>2</sup>. Yet less than one month later the National Act Memorandum-NSAM suddenly punished their use in a ground combat role. As the Pentagon papers say “NSAM328 is a pivotal document .It marks the acceptance by the President of the United States of the concept that US troops would engage in offensive ground actions

against Asian insurgents” (Morgenthau, 106). In that context, the enclave strategy ended in June 1965 in a failure strategy named search and destroy operations.

Similarly the decision to cover a continuing strategy was not meant to win; rather it was intended to influence the course of the struggle. But demands for unlimited bombing strategy throughout 1965 were so repeated by the Joint Chiefs of Staff as to suggest the absence of any precise goals and means. Moreover Johnson claimed to the Joint Chief of Staff when he observed that “the Generals know only two words, spend and bomb” (Warnke, 139). So they only created Johnson’s mistrust in the policy makers suggestions, and made him as an indecisive in critical situations. General Maxwell –Taylor a top Architect of the present flexible retaliation policy protested against the privacy of such decisions. He told the President “I was not asked to concur in this massive visitation. For your information I don’t concur” and he also added that “French tried to adapt their forces to this situation ground troops combat and failed .I doubt that US forces could do much better” (Warnker, 140). To that Taylor changed his mind many times later his recommendations led in buildup of half million troops throughout the war. Despite three year bankrupt war, the American public opinion in 1968 that 62%of the respondents felt that the United States should fight until they ensure that the Communist would not gain control of South Vietnam. (Warnker, 141)

In deed Johnson reflected on the man of the war abroad and the man of peace at home. Jim Heath has argued that in those early days of celebrated war in poverty optimism reflected in the office and the Administration that the struggle could be won by 1976, there was no reason for loosing Vietnam. It actually went with Westmoreland’s optimism, which according to his three phase plan, the war could be won in 1967. (Heath, 28)

Optimism which really caused the Americanization of the Vietnam civil war came from officials and not from the public. .With the exception of critics of the Mansfield type, the Vietnam policy makers believed like their president, that they had got the power to meet

NFL's insurgencies very easily. As Schandler said "in Honolulu on February 7-8, 1966 president Johnson indicated that he expected to see results from these programs related to increasing ground troops build up to see coonskins on the wall" (Heath,30). Clearly investment of dollars and manpower was expected to show US capabilities. Whereas soon great power made the impossible of withdrawal.

It is sure that opponents in the Administration favored a bipolarization on the policy makers. Indeed escalation raised the question of how far could be a military one? What seems new in the situation was Johnson's reaction to these opponent .policy makers like Humphrey or McNamara and ball who favored for a complete military course soon characterize Johnson as a bad temper.

Part of the legacy was an underestimation of the North Vietnamese capacities .The reason behind a full intervention in Vietnam was that the war could be very easy and limited one .The air force claim that they can stop Hanoi aggression in a month .Westmoreland too had thought the same of the US army before he learnt that 97.5% of the Vietcong weapons were US weapons .Further more Westmoreland did not know Mao's guerrilla theory for his plan was failed to defeat the Vietcong. (Schandler, 32)

President Johnson relied heavily on public confidence, but he told the public very little .He relied on small group but even then kept most of information from individual members of that group. Not only did he send US boys to fight an Asian War, but also denied any change of mission .Furthermore even the information that were given to the public about the war were rarely true and contradictory. Where events were always half truths the alleged 325 the NVA Division remained a fiction. Joseph buttinger wrote that "Rusk's claim that a whole division was infiltrated before February 1965 was untrue and was soon denounced by the opposition to the war as international deception of the American public" (Schandler, 36). More to the fact that the Vietcong were never reported to the American public as a strong



guerilla army. Just as Rusk claim of the infiltration of the NVA Division, by denying the Vietcong ability to maintain themselves in a conventional fight. Among these ambiguities a women keep questioning of US presence in Vietnam. She wrote to Johnson “I have a son in Vietnam it is something I don’t understand why” (Schandler, 36). May be the answer was that the Vietnam War required men.

Although escalation was usually justified as ‘continuity’ .The escalation of aims followed escalation of war. There could be no explanation for raising the cost of the war. Put another way, why should the U.S troops build up from 184.000 men in the fall of 1965 to 525.000 by the Tet crisis in 1968? Especially as the future of escalation was not totally unknown. (Schandler, 38)

There was no doubt that increasing of money and troops resulted a failure of strategy, and not the illusion about victory at every one more step. Similarly there was no a good choice as the peace offensive of April 1965 “a concession for the peace ‘shop’ in the Administration and the peace ‘bloc’ in Congress showed that the Communists favored to answer Johnson’s ‘stick’ instead of his ‘carrot’”. Evans argued to the end of the 1965 phase. He wrote “clearly the military victory the president wanted so badly was almost as distant in November 1965 as it had been in July. Although there was no chance of defeat on the battle field as there had been early in the year, there was little chance of victory either and the enemy still showed the slightest interest in negotiations”(p39)

### **III-2 Illusions of Victory**

In the late summer and early of 1967 Johnson looked for a way out of his worse situation. With 67 percent with the public disapproving of his way of his dealing with the Vietnam War, he was eager to find a way to negotiate with North Vietnam. Once again, third party contacts rejected any talks until all acts of war against North Vietnam were

unconditionally ended. As stated by Dallak “the problem Johnson observed is not one of communication. The problem is that Ho wants South Vietnam” (p481). Frustrated in his dealing with North Vietnam, Johnson hoped that development in South Vietnam strengthen his will in future negotiations. Earlier in the year a ‘constituent assembly’ had met in Saigon and made a new constitution along American aims. KY and Thieu recognising the importance their American supporters placed on political reform and confident that they and their allies in the military would keep controlling, accepted the new document. After a long time debate, they agreed to a ‘combined ticket’ with Thieu as the presidential candidate and KY as a Vice President. In an early September election in which 80 percent of the registered voters voted in the election, they won with a disappointing 35 percent of the vote. Johnson and his advisors chose to view the election as a good sign for South Vietnam’s progress for political stability.

Dallak assumed that despite his desire for peace the president was not prepared to question the doubtless on whom US policy rested. . In August, when McNamara told a Senate subcommittee that continued bombing would not take North Vietnam to the peace table. Johnson was mad at his open opposition from administration policy. On September 12, he received a secret Memorandum from CIA director Helms, arguing that the United States could withdraw from South Vietnam without any lasting injury to its national security. The Director had concluded that the Domino Theory was not valid in South East Asia. The President did not respond to Helms Memorandum or show it to his other senior advisors.

Instead Johnson authorised for more bombing of North Vietnam escalating Rolling Thunder in an effort to stop Rail and Road traffic from China , isolate Hanoi from its Port City of Haiphong , and separate the Hanoi –Haiphong area from ‘logistical bases’ in the Southern part of North Vietnam. Now US warplanes attacked many targets near Hanoi and Haiphong. Within a month the JSC were convinced that the bombing had finally fragmented North Vietnam’s logistical system. (Dallak, 482-486)

On autumn a fighting broke in the borders of South Vietnam. At Con Thieu, one of six strong points on the DMZ, Marines surrounded a long siege that was finally broken by massive strikes from 'Lang range', four engine bombers (B-52). At Dak to a Special Forces camp located in a 'Valley' in the central Highlands near the Cambodian and Laotian borders , the NVA had constructed positions on many in the jungles covered 'peaks and ridges' surrounding it, forcing American units to attack its hidden 'bunker complexes' . The fighting was costly on the both sides. In the end American forces defeated; by the hand of the NVA, but the twelve American 'rifle' companies involved in the battle suffered 51 percent losses in just one month. Few Americans could believe Westmoreland's evaluation on the war: "I think it's the beginning of a great defeat for the enemy."(Edward, 328)

As the war went on and American deaths in combat rise about 1,369 in 1965, 5,008 in 1966, and 9,377 in 1967 an increasing number of American felt a disappointed about the fighting and some antiwar protesters turned to more active forms of resistance .. On October 21 nearly 100,000 demonstrators marched on the pentagon, And polls showed that only 28 percent of the public approved of the Administration's Vietnam policies, while 57 percent disapproved. Johnson was shocked by the huge number of protestors. After viewing Dustin Hoffman in the graduate, he asked his biographer Doris Kearns:

how in the hell can that creepy gay be a hero to you? All I needed was to see ten minutes of that gay floating like a big lump in a pool, moving like an elephant in that women's bed , riding up and down the California coast polluting the atmosphere, to know that I would not trust him for one minute with anything that really mattered to me.(p323)

In the Congress, too, no matter what position representatives took on the war, they were increasingly dissatisfied with the Administration policies. The division of ‘moderate’ previously pre-war Democrats particularly upset Johnson. In September representative Tip O’ Neill of Massachusetts a prominent House Democrat, concluded that “the war could be won and that our involvement there was wrong”. “an anxious president told his advisors that “we have got to do something about public opinion” (Dallak, 485)

On November 1 the president received a pessimistic Memorandum from his Secretary of Defence. If the actual policies continued, McNamara warned casualties would double and public support would be reduced. He argued “a policy of stabilisation including decreasing ground forces and stop the bombing of North Vietnam , and give more responsibility to the South Vietnamese government”(Dallak, 485). In effect McNamara remembers telling Johnson “that we could not achieve our objective should seek a lesser political objective in Vietnam through any reasonable military means, and we therefore should seek a lesser political objective through negotiations “ (Dallak, 488). Clearly angry about the division of one of his closest advisers, at the end of November Johnson announced that McNamara would leave office early in the new year to become president of the World Bank.

Despite the assurances from his advisers, the president felt a growing sense of urgency about the war. He wanted more reliable information of the conflict and wanted the South Vietnamese to move more of the fighting. But he remained determined to continue the war and force the enemy to give up “iam not “ he remarked “going to be the first American President to lose a war” (Dallak, 489)

In November Johnson did a campaign to sell the war more effectively to the Congress and the American people. Its peace was the return of Westmorland and Banker to Washington on November 16. in his most optimistic remarks on the war to date, Westmoreland told the National Press club that it had entered a new phase . When the end begins to come into view a

few days later during an appearance on the Sunday morning 'talk show' meet the press, the General was more precise, stating that it was "conceivable that within two years or less the enemy will be so weakened that the Vietnamese will be able to cope with a greater share of war burden " (Dallak, 491). Phase four the withdrawal of American ground combat forces was coming into view.

While the president 'credibility' had fallen, most Americans still admired Westmoreland. But his authorities 'pronouncements', should not that they were wrong, meaning bringing a bad violation reaction against the administration's conduct of the war. (Dallak, 492)

## **Conclusion**

Leaders in Washington preoccupied with the Cold War and fearful from Communist expansion into south East Asia too often viewed the conflict in Vietnam as an abstraction, even they had committed a number of men and materials to it many were insensitive to the local circumstances of the war underestimating the Communist revolutionaries and overestimating the ability of our Vietnamese allies to govern and American forces to fight effectively. The reason behind Johnson's choice deepening American involvement in Vietnam was that, he thought that America the greatest super power can win a quickly small easy war. However his thought after did not come true when he started looking for a new way to get out from Vietnam, because many Americans disappointed from his way in dealing with Vietnam and because he started to lose the control of the situation in South Vietnam.

### **III-3 Endnotes**

1-The Viet Cong attack on Pleiku airbase (aka Camp Holloway Airfield) occurred on the night of February 6, 1965. The attack left eight Americans dead and 128 wounded,[1] and it prompted the United States to launch Operation Flaming Dart against North Vietnam in retaliation. The Pleiku attack and an attack on positions the same day at Qui Nhon were used by the Johnson Administration as justification for committing combat troops to South Vietnam, ostensibly to provide security for U.S. installations.[1]

2-Military Strategy briefly adopted by the United States in March of 1965. American combat forces were limited to protecting a number of heavily populated coastal regions and military bases, enclaves, while South Vietnam forces took offensive in the country side. With American protecting crucial areas, South Vietnam can focus their attack on the offensive.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Johnson's End and Disillusionment**

#### **Introduction:**

It is clear now that by the fall of 1967, the war appeared to be different from what had been expected during the planning period of 1964-1965. Even worse the Johnson Administration found it had substituted Washington for Saigon as a result of increasing US political and military interventionism.

#### **IV-1 Tet Offensive: A Turning Point in the Vietnam War**

According to Steve Vietcong guerrilla fighters violated the temporary Treaty in the New Year celebrations and begun surrounding into more than one hundred towns and cities, including Saigon. Changing the war for the first time from its rural base into the new field of South Vietnam. It shook US imperialism lasting effect on US public opinion.

It was a campaign that had been in preparation since a study which was made by General Giap in September 1967 had concluded that the war had reached a worse situation and that something needed to be done. Moreover out of this report arose the plans for The Tet Offensive .Vietcong leaders did a 'propaganda' campaign in order to prepare their forces. Ho Chi Minh put large troops in this battle in 1968. Giap had made the campaign's minimum and maximum objectives, as a minimum the start of the Tet would force Arial bombardment of North Vietnam to stop and force the Americans to negotiations. As a maximum the Tet Offensive could lead the Americans to go out of Vietnam all together and Vietnam after will be reunified. (Steve, 12-14)

Although the Tet Offensive did not bring its major objectives, the Tet Offensive did have a lasting effect on the course of the war it was a turning point according to US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger<sup>1</sup> “henceforth no matter how effective our action the prevalent strategy could no longer achieve its objectives within a period or within force levels politically acceptable to the American people” (Steve, 22).

Vietcong soldiers attacked the highland towns of Banmethout, Kontum and Pleiku, they then invaded 13 of the 16 Provincial Capitals of the heavily populated Mekong Delta. The attack shocked US President Lyndon Johnson and proved to be also a shock in the attitudes of the American people towards the war for the first time. In a major war, television played a crucial role was shown across the screens of fifty million Americans. As argued by Stanley “dead bodies lay amid the rubble and rattle of automatic gunfire as dazed American soldiers and civilians ran back and forth, trying to flush out the assailants. Americans at home saw the carnage wrought by the offensive” (p 02).

That attacks were also launched at the HQs of the US and South Vietnamese armies as well as the US and South Vietnamese armies as well as the massive US army base at Bienhoa, North of Saigon Airport. The 14 commandos who had attacked the main Saigon radio station were trapped inside for 18 hours before blowing the entire building with themselves inside (Stanly, 03). Besides to that US public opinion was probably most affected by the catastrophe incident at Mylai, where American soldiers slaughtered one hundred peasants, women and children among them. Myron Harington, Commander of the U.S marines that he retook the City observed on first entering:

my first impression was of desolation. There were burnt  
out tanks and overturned automobiles still smouldering  
bodies lay everywhere, most of them civilians. The smoke



and stench blended, like in some kind of horror movie-  
that it lacked weird music.(Stanly, 06)

Clearly this catastrophe massacre of Mylai was just because a reaction of the American troops to take a revenge of the Tet Offensive.

By early March there had been a large number of casualties on both sides .The US and South Vietnamese had lost 6000 men while the North Vietnamese lost 50.000 and in the operation had found the destruction of their organisation command structure in the South. One of the major objectives was to separate the Americans forces. Moreover the Embassy attack was aimed at showing the weaknesses of the American forces. The Vietcong had hoped that their liberation of towns and cities would lead to confusion within the Americans. They Believed that the South were ready to join the struggle .However this only occurred on a separate basis.

However the analogy with Dien Bien Phu as stated by Stanly that was not the same, the US was in far stronger position than the French were in 54. In operation Niagara the Americans used their 52b bombers Ariel firepower the greatest in military history, the Vietcong suffered huge losses as many as 10.000 dead while only 500US marines were killed. (Stanly, 06-10)

Westmoreland and most of the U.S high command was convinced that the Vietcong Were desperately trying repeat Dien Bien Phu. But it was actually a ‘brilliant piece’ of strategy to put Americans away from the big population centres and leave them open assault 1968. CIA report concluded that “the intensity coordination and timing of the attacks were not fully anticipated adding another major unexpected point was the ability of the Vietcong to hit so many targets simultaneously” (Stanly, 11)

Tet was the final disaster for the Administration of Lyndon Johnson .In 1963, when he came to power in the wake of the assassination John Kennedy, his approval reached 80

Percent, but by 1967 it was down to 40percent .But then came TET “ his rating reduced as if Vietnam were a burning fuse that had suddenly ignited an explosion of dissent” (Stanley,12) Americans at home had been even less prepared for the Tet offensive, having trapped by Westmoreland’s optimistic evaluation for the war, they expressed shock over the fact that this enemy had attacked anywhere in South Vietnam it wished to attack the American Embassy .Their shock of Tet were bringing by press and television coverage, which focused on the drama of the fighting in the cities, and crying women and children. Minor street actions looked like too large on the small screen, and television commentators, misunderstanding military aspects of the war portrayed Tet as a disaster for the United States and its South Vietnamese allies. They also ignored facts that did not go to their image such as the courage of the ARVN soldiers or confused and frightened the enemy units who lost their way or stopping their fire. Few in the Media believed Westmoreland that the Tet assaults were a diversion for the main enemy thrust against khe Sanh. The ‘syndicated Columnist Art Buchwald’ portrayed General George Armstrong “the battle of little big Horn had just turned the corner and that the Sioux were on the run” (Karnow, 560)

In the Congress the Tet offensive reinforced the opinions of those who were disappointed with the war. Senator Edward Kennedy (Democrats Massachusetts) declared that the success the attacks was a result of the “Deadly apathy” of the South Vietnamese people while the new Senate Majority Whip, Robert Byrd (Democrat, West Virginia) a man who had supported Johnson’s Vietnam policy told the President that “we had a poor intelligence were not prepared for these attacks, we underestimated the morale and vitality of the Vietcong and we overestimated the support of the South Vietnamese government in its people something is wrong over there” (Karnow, 561)

Outside the Congress, public opinion intellectual who had been in opposition to express their doubts about the war. Walter Cronkite<sup>3</sup>, after reading the early reports describing

the Vietcong attack on the American Embassy remarked to an associate “what the hell is going on? I thought we were winning the war ”.After a quick trip to South Vietnam to gain a firsthand impression ,Cronkite told nearly 20 million American television viewers that “it seemed more certain than ever that the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a stalemate”(Zaffari,573)

The President and his advisors also had been unprepared for the shock of the attacks. they had believed Westmoreland ‘s reports from Vietnam and had never imagined the enemy forces could confuse the Administration policies .Even secretary of state Rusk a long time Hawk now released that time was gone for the Administration policies .while Harry McPherson ,a White House speech writer and presidential confidant , called the power of the television images that he saw:

I watched the invasion of the American Embassy compound and the terrible sight of general Loan killing the Vietcong captive you got a sense of the awfulness ,the endless, of the war and though it sounds naïve, the unethical quality of a war which a prisoner is shot at point blank range I was fed up with the optimism that seemed to flow without stopping from Saigon.  
(Zaffari, 575)

At a Press Conference, February, President Johnson announced that the Tet Offensive had come as no surprise and that a military campaign “it had been a complete failure, he instructed Senior officials in Washington and General Westmorland and ambassador Bunker in Saigon to reassure the American people about progress in Vietnam”(Zaffari,576) .Johnson did not . However made a great effort to lead the public or

explain to the American people that Tet had pushed the United States into a new phase of the war. Confronted with disillusionment at home and growing divisions even among his closest advisers LBJ alone and confused was again uncertain how to respond to the changing events of the war. (Steve, 23)

Steve asserted that by the beginning of March Johnson popularity dropped towards 30 percent more dramatically .His ‘credibility’ was gone then came the ‘humiliation’ of the NEW Hampshire Democratic Primacy where he got only 300votes more than Eugene McCarthy, an unknown standing on anti war ticket .this was never happened to the president who would usually go for re-election without obstacles .The result burned the nation and intensified the anti war protest. (p 24)

#### **IV-2 Reassessment in Washington**

The president and his senior advisers were shocked. They did not a military disaster in South Vietnam; neither did they want adding more troops in Vietnam. Faced with such unattractive choices, Johnson got time, directing his new Secretary of Defense, Clark M. Clifford, to gather the forces “give me the lesser of evils. Give me your recommendations” (Dallak, 508)

A long time Washington insider and advisor to Democratic Presidents, Clifford had defended Johnson’s policies in Vietnam. He found however that the members of his task force deeply divided: some wished to approve the troop demand; others wanted a less costly strategy. After consulting with members of the Congress and give up the JSC, Clifford developed doubts about the war. His meeting with the JSC turned into a tense question and answer session. Clifford asked “what is the plan for victory?” The JSC responded that “there

is no plan, because of the restrictions imposed on American forces.’”(Dallas, 510). Nor would they pretend on how long time can take to defeat the enemy.

Clifford’s task agreed on a ‘compromise’, recommending that the President sent 22.000 more troops to South Vietnam and limiting sending others in the near future. In fact however the new Secretary of Defense already had concluded that the war was worse and that the time had come to begin decreasing the American presence in South Vietnam. As he told Johnson “‘as we build up our forces, they build up theirs we seem to have gotten caught in a sinkhole.’”(Dallak, 511)

Dallak asserted that on March 10, shortly after Clifford’s recommendation, the New York Times reported that Westmoreland had made an emergency demand for 206.000 more troops. With no mention of Westmoreland ‘contingency’ plan for offensive operation, the first page article portrayed him as near desperation. The story became attractive by Tet, suggesting that the war a ‘bottomless pit’, and Westmoreland’s critics, who now wondered how in the world he could pretend that Tet as an American victory and in the same time request a massive troop increase. They had no way of knowing that Westmoreland was confused as they by the article. (p512)

In mid March the Johnson Administration also faced a serious economic crisis. In previous years the president had avoided giving the public and Congress evident figures on the cost of the war, which have mounted to 3.6 billion a year. ‘Expenditures’ on the war , added to heavy spending on Great Society programs raised the inflation , increased the balance of payments deficit , and weakened the Dollar, as many currency speculators sold their dollars and caused a run on the gold markets . Secretary of Treasury Henry Fowler warned the President that the “‘adoption of the military ‘s proposal for 206.000 additional troops would cost 2.5 billion in 1968 and 10 billion, adding to the balance of payments deficit and forcing a major tax to increase as well as cuts in domestic spending’”. Now many

business leaders were feared about the cost of the war and its impact on the American and world economy. (Davidson, 514)

Faced with a divided Administration an economic crisis and a disappointed public, Johnson continued to ‘vacillate’ in his approach to the war. Davidson claimed in this point that Johnson was attracted to Rusk’s proposal to stop the bombing of most of North Vietnam in order to give the enemy the chance to come on conference table. But he also wished to convince Hanoi that the United States was prepared for a long time war, declaring in mid march that “we shall and we are going to win ” (Davidson, 516). Clearly the president searched for a way to lead the nation out of the ‘Vietnam quagmire’.

Johnson was also troubled by the actual political situation. The public approval of his dealing with the war had fallen to an all time low. By the fall of 1967, a “ Dump Johnson” movement had emerged within a party. In November Senator Eugene J. McCarthy (Democrat Minnesota) encouraged by the Vocal Antiwar Democrats, had announced his candidacy for the Nomination. Moreover McCarthy did not seem a serious threat to Johnson’s renomination, but the Tet Offensive changed the mood of the nation and that of the Democratic Party. On March 12 Johnson’s weakness was emerged in the New Hampshire primary, where McCarthy only narrowly lost to the president, 49 to 42. Worse still, four days later the president Robert Kennedy, finally entered the race for Democratic Nomination. As Johnson recalled:

the thing I feared from the first day of any presidency  
was actually coming true Robert Kennedy had openly  
announced his intention to give back the memory of his  
brother. And the American people were dancing in the  
streets. The whole situation was unbearable for me.  
something more than being left alone in the middle of

the plain, chased by stampedes on every side” (Dallack, 524)

Toward the end of March, Johnson made a meeting of the so called wise men, the Senior Members of the Foreign Policy establishment. As late November 1967 this group had supported the war; now many of its numbers had turned against it. After a day a former National Security Adviser, summed up the conclusions of the majority of the group: “there is a very significant shift in our position. When we last met we saw reason for hope. We hoped then there would be slow but steady progress. Last night and today the picture is not so hopeful particularly in the country side” (Dallack, 525). Dean Acheson summed up the majority feeling when he said that “we can no longer do the job we set out to do in the time we have left and we must begin to take steps to disengage”(Berman, 196)

The change of the views in Johnson Administration confirmed the president’s conviction that his policies in Vietnam had to change. Johnson knew that to follow the advice of his advisors would bother his Administration and risk an even more severe domestic crisis. The Tet Offensive and the reaction to it had finally forced him to rethink his policies.

Before Tet, Johnson had thought for retiring from the Presidency. Emotionally hated, fearful of suffering another term, he had suffered a severe one in the summer of 1955 and realizing that he would face a fight for renomination and reelection. On March 31 LBJ spoke to the nation. In an Address devoted to “ steps to limit the war in Vietnam” the president announced to the bombing of North Vietnam from one side, except in the area directly north of the DMZ. Hoping that an end to the bombing would encourage the North Vietnam to begin negotiations, he named W. Averell Harriman as his personal representative in any peace talks. Then, at the conclusion of his address, Johnson announced “I shall not seek, and i will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your president “ (Berman, 197)

Johnson had already decided for not being another president of the United States, but he got a bad reputation in the history of the United States that he had suffered and he was confused by the degree of opposition to his policies. “ how it is possible” he asked in retrospect, “that all these people could be so ungrateful to me after i had given them so much” (Berman, 199). Clearly less than four years after his great victory, he had become one of the most unpopular presidents in American history.

### **IV-3 Disillusionment:**

It is clear now that by the fall of 1967, the war appeared to be deferent from what had been expected during the planning period of 1964-1965. Even worse the Johnson administration found it had substituted Washington for Saigon as a result of increasing US political and military interventionism. As a matter of fact US ground troops by that time were still not adapted to the new war and even outnumbered by the Viet North Vietnamese (VC/NVN) who became more convinced they were fighting the United States. Furthermore the initial objectives were then matched by US prestige, which quick involvement put in practice. Referring to this change in aims Chester Cooper argued in late 1965 “the American troops in Vietnam were now a hostage, they represented too large a force to pull out without a tremendous loss of prestige .Yet there were too small a combat force to take over the burden of the fighting.”(Gelb, 124). The Communists seemed to have started their war only from then on. For the war of a Socialist Hanoi against the leader of Capitalism soon put the ‘Communist bloc’.

Since the beginning of the sixties the Domino Theory appeared an absolute fact. It became clear therefore for US policy makers that after ‘ Tet case’ South East Asia was lost



forever. Furthermore is the fact that by 1966 there was sufficient certainty about Russia's of the first attack capability by developing ABM systems. In that context the rise of any National Liberation Front despite its defeat as in the case of Indonesia in 1965 was a psychological victory for Communism. This concept applied strongly to Vietnam where US prestige had become identified with US Leadership of Democracy. So the most important thing of the matter between 1966 and 1968 remained essential, the same for US foreign policy. Senator R. Russell argued on the Vietnam question in 1965 and in 1967, how the American leaders were hesitating about the Americanization and they finally perused it. he said "whether or not the initial decision was a mistake is now moot ,the flag is there ,United States honor and prestige are there and most important of all ,the United States soldiers are there".(Drapper ,154)

As a matter of fact Drapper assumed that the Vietcong resistance was not the work of Hanoi alone, but also that of 'DjAKARTA\_HANOI PEKIN-PYONG YANG AXIS', in the president's thinking and words . From the beginning of escalation not only did the US combination of air ground strategy proved a mistake but it also cause the Communist bloc to' recoup Continuously Hanoi's losses'. By February 1967 an American source estimate that "there was no doubt that the Soviet Union was the primary supplier of goods even though rival China loudly disputed that fact" (Drapper, 138) .What is interesting here, is that the Communist Bloc never thought that Vietnam deserved an intervention.

As it can be said here that, there was no doubt about the confidence the 'Communist axis' helped the Vietcong. In fact Hanoi soon affected to the' White Man's War' and prevented the Joint Chiefs of Staff from changing the war into a clean war. How ironic it was that Johnson's insistence for the introduction of US troops in April 1965 was met by the 'refinement process' from 1966 and after. Indeed throughout 1966 the Viet Cong threat was so successful that it caused General Westmoreland to raise his third phase and his last offensive plan from its initial plan of 375000to 425000 men. It was possible that he justified

his action on the grounds that the Communist build up was doubled the one he had expected earlier. Put another way the air strategy only encouraged the Communists infiltration. (Drapper, 139)

That was the perspective that led McNamara to change his plan from offensive to defensive strategy. In addition he expressed his pessimism to President Johnson .His letter of December 1966 “I see no reasonable way to bring the war to an end soon.....we must improve our position by getting ourselves into a military posture that we credibly would maintain indefinitely.”(Gelb, 147).Clearly his offensive only meant the need for de-escalation; his letter expressed his doubts about U.S capability to make the escalation policy effective.

Actually in this war, despite defending the free world, Americans were questionable alone to bear its expenses. Thus not only did US prestige develop as a risk in this dirty war but it also became difficult to provide the ‘cannon fodder’ for saving face. Indeed the Viet Cong depending on the Communist Axis was not met by the same support from the world democracies .Rather some like France quickly criticized Washington for escalation. It was shocking for Clark Clifford McNamara’s successor by the end of 1967 to see his efforts for contribution in soldiers from the far east countries to meet with no success. Furthermore at the same time the ChiCom (Chinese Communist) were pressing Hanoi to reject the most hopeful attempt for negotiation –SUNFLOWER-in favor of this worse war (Gelb, 149). So the absence of help from the allies for balancing the powers at war made doubts about America capabilities. Furthermore it provided a basis for questioning the justice of escalation.

However the worst element in this situation was the fact that the South Vietnamese people for whom the war was being fought remained closer to the Communists than the Americans i.e. when they did not follow the Viet Cong. For the South Vietnamese people neither saw why they should fight nor did they see what they could gain. For them life under

KY was better than under the Communists. The New York Times reported on September that “even KY told the reporter (James Reston) that the’ Communists were closer to the people’s yearning for social justice and independent life than his own government was” (Gerraci, 09). In other words the Johnson Administration committed the American Nation to defend the South Vietnamese people who could find no Democratic principle which encouraged them to fight.

But these criticisms were not as harsh as those which the Buddhists offered. The later became critical to the extent that their position to the Saigon government resulted in anti-Americanism. It is true that they identified Ky’s tyranny and inefficiency with American support .In effect the disaster of political and social program went and the pacification programme the only occupation for the South Vietnamese Army was added to the ‘burden’ to the American troops. Neil Sheehan in the New York Times Magazine of October 9, 1966 wrote: “we shall, iam afraid have to put up with the Vietnamese mandarin allies .we shall not be able to reform them and it is unlikely that we shall be able to find any to her Vietnamese to cooperate with us” (Drapper, 167). Clearly this statement reflects how US hopes began to turn into disappointment. More importantly those policy makers who changed their minds in consequence, while widening the division among the Administration’s personnel, implicitly, the defense conceptions they had of the Vietnam problem.

There is actually little doubt that the chief’s offensive strategies were not based on the theory that they were fighting a Communist ‘monolithic’ bloc; instead of a North Vietnamese Army. Their plans for instance either in 1965or later did, generally expressed indirectly (when they did not open talk about them) the intention of defeating Peking not Hanoi. As McNamara defensive strategies “evoked above suggests in 1966or even later the Secretary of Defense was still thinking in pre escalation ideological as much as strategic terms” (Drapper, 168)

This view of deferring perceptions of the Vietnam question within the Administration is clearly supported by Franz Schurman. He argues that in 1964 McNamara who was speaking for the Administration informed General Khan that the use of US forces was to be conditioned by two strategies. Firstly it was to be used as supplementary not as substitution .Secondly it was not intended to take Communist control in Hanoi. Yet Schurmann continues that on the contrary the Joint Chief's view was that the use objectives were not simply in South Vietnam, not even Hanoi, but in South East Asia in general. (P488)

This kind of thinking and of policy making seems to have continued through out the whole of Americanization. More to the point is the fact that the Viet cong chiefs often made their plan with no civilian supervision, and the Defense Department's work became increasingly secondary and limited. This excessive military kind of the Administration's Vietnam Policy was expressed in Gelb's argument. He holds that through out 1967 the biggest job of Ambassador William Sullivan had been to keep Westmoreland's Paws of Laos (p167). From that time it was evident that the whole story of the 'credibility gap' found roots in this conflicting perception and approaches of the Vietnam problem''. In another way the whole American policy on such contradictory concepts not only created mistrust ,among the policy makers but have to extended to the public .If this announced an inefficient 'bureaucracy', it indicated equally just a pretend policy.

However the president's thinking remains the most, remarkable in this battle of Concepts. Johnson greatly escaped extremist position and managed to be at least sometimes Dove like and hawkish 'recommendations' by playing at dove hawk him self. He gave the military their war but also wanted to hold unconditional negotiations. Similarly he accepted the suggestions for pressing Hanoi to the negotiating table but never accepted putting the economy on a war going which were the only means for that end. Furthermore this policy of

resisting, while in contrast to his unlimited commitment to save Vietnam was ‘A buying time technique’. It is in fact only a long losing war. Thus unlike his predecessors who proved decisive in crisis like Korea or Cuba. Johnson left the war with no precise goal or aim, a war he could not control in the end. Referring to the weakness of the Johnson ‘bureaucracy’, Gelb argued how the Administration became guideless, when he wrote: “July 1965 in fact was one of the last instances in high level consideration of US objectives in depth, until reassessment of policy in 1968 after the Tet Offensive.”(P124)

Where Johnson’s weakness in Foreign Policy was clear, his formulation of his contradictory policies was less so. Johnson’s pessimism about the war was less known in his ‘Inner cycle’ but he sided with the military for ‘prosecution’, instead of reduction. Yet even when the policy had largely become one of continuity, Johnson wanted it to be looked, still as the ‘policy of continuity’ which can be, to a certain extent, excused. But the crucial contradiction is the fact that the members of the ‘shop peace’ who have helped the president look honestly at the reality were often silent to Johnson’s acceptance. Some people of the National Security Council said that “disagreement really bothers this president and he does what you dislike anyway” (Schlesinger, 18). In that respect, while the executive power seems to be of a particular meaning to Johnson, the president only eroded the efficacy of his advisors.

But Johnson’s policy making style becomes clearer when applied to his public. In the context of having their consensus Johnson felt obliged to make the war successful at least ‘rhetorically’. This kind of thinking despite being known to be destructive and bad was reinforced as the Americanization grew expensive and Johnson takes it as a policy of ‘continuity’ remained in the background. Clearly that has become too original, in the policy so that any change can be achieved. Commenting on this point, Daniel Ellsberg reached the conclusion that lying to the public was an other necessity especially in the case of Johnson

where every thing was secret or only the half truth (p111). Yet, the irony with Johnson is that he did not even check how far his critics believed him.

According to Evans it became harder in Congress to accept the Administrations optimism, especially when this optimism necessitated adding troops or giving money to finance the war this would make an increasing inflation. Worse still, Congress men could not forget that they were financing a bankrupt war which they had not declared and of course was absolutely unknown to them. However violent reaction for Johnson's Administration was criticism that came from 'peace bloc'. Indeed Fulbright's insistence to expose the catastrophic mistakes that comes from the Administration, concepts and techniques, from the non-traditional principle, gave bad reputation to the Democratic Party (p28)

Although Johnson had often, if not always decided under pressure from the Republican, Conservatives or the Liberal Democrats to the American people, the president was responsible for destruction the Great Society promises. Actually by imposing the Americanization, Johnson obliged the congressmen to cut the funds of the legislative program. Heath argues that the Great Society failed because the cost of the war was so high, but his argument, seen differently s. He wrote "the soaring costs of the Vietnam War made any major spending programs extremely unlikely if not quite impossible."(p257). Nevertheless Johnson lost his public only by the time his "war on poverty " turned into more taxation to finance the war.

But by 1968 Johnson apparently did not understand the importance of Fulbright's 'Camera', nor did he relate between the presses attack on his Administration and the victory of Rpublicans in the Congressional election, of 1966. Despite the fact that his popularity fell below 50 percent since 1966, Johnson was shown on the screen by the Tet crisis. It was the highest point in Johnson's celebrity, when after four years of secret and optimism, the

President suddenly show to the nation his style of saving Vietnam an indiscriminate destruction of the Vietnamese land and people.

Yet even with the Tet shock it was good that people became more realistic than Westmoreland, like Clifford could bring Johnson to believe and see the end of his policy, his Administration and Containment in to the negotiation in the war. Furthermore, the Joint Chiefs of Staff still argued (by Tet) that the Viet Cong offensive was a psychological victory, indicating that they forgot it had been their own means to defeat the enemy. It was ironical that by the time Tet came, Johnson asking how to pay his tax bills, while the public still ignored why they fought and why they lost. (Heath, 258)

### **Conclusion:**

The failure of Lyndon Johnson policy in Vietnam appeared only after Tet offensive. Indeed policy makers never calculated the shock of the Tet, because they thought that small guerilla forces can never break American forces in Vietnam. Moreover it became clear after the Tet that Johnson misunderstood and miscalculated the situation in Vietnam, and he brought only to the United States tensions and crisis. Thousands of American people went into street to demonstrate; it's just a confirmation that Johnson had put the United States into greedy war. A war that costs America half millions troops and billions of dollars as well as it gave the end to the program of the "Great Society".

#### **IV-4 Endnotes:**

1-Henry Alfred Kissinger (born May 27, 1923) pronounced, is a German-born American political scientist, diplomat, and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. He served as National Security Advisor and later concurrently as Secretary of State in the Nixon Administration. Kissinger is criticized and even accused of war crimes for the policies he promoted during the Vietnam war and for his role in the establishment of dictatorial regimes in Latin America (see chapters on Vietnam, Chile, Argentina and Accusations of War Crimes).

2-The My Lai Massacre was the mass murder conducted by a unit of the U.S. Army on March 16, 1968 of 347 to 504 unarmed citizens in South Vietnam, all of whom were civilians and a majority of whom were women, children, and elderly people. Many of the victims were sexually abused, beaten, tortured, and some of the bodies were found mutilated.[2] The massacre took place in the hamlets of Mỹ Lai and My Khe of Sơn Mỹ village during the Vietnam War.[3][4] While 26 US soldiers were initially charged with criminal offenses for their actions at My Lai, only William Calley was convicted. He served only three years of an original life sentence, while on house arrest.

3-Walter Leland Cronkite, Jr. (November 4, 1916 – July 17, 2009)[2][3][4] was an American broadcast journalist, best known as anchorman for the CBS Evening News for 19 years (1962–81). During the heyday of CBS News in the 1960s and 1970s, he was often cited as "the most trusted man in America" after being so named in an opinion poll.[5][6][7] Although he reported many events from 1937 to 1981, including bombing in World War II, the Nuremberg trials, combat in the Vietnam War,[8] the death of President John F. Kennedy, Watergate, and the Iran Hostage Crisis, he was known for extensive TV coverage of the U.S. space program, from Project Mercury to the Moon landings (with co-host Wally Shirra), to the Space Shuttle. He was the only non-NASA recipient of a Moon-rock award. The Beatles' first American TV broadcast was with Walter Cronkite.



# CONCLUSION

The Vietnam experience as it shown by Tet in 1968 raised questions which make Americans troubled. How the war had come about? Why it had been pursued? Equally important was a third question which deals with the two previous ones. Why despite four years of efforts did the war fail? The answers to these questions are important only as far as they bring new lessons that can be concluded from the Vietnam experience.

In the Post War years, it had become important for most of the American presidents to think and act in terms of Cold War principles. This not to say that these presidents were looking to bipolarise the world nor that they accepted such facts. Instead it was the desire to save those nations who wanted democracy not they would be suffered by Communist regimes. The Cold War Presidents in general and Johnson in particular were aware of the problems that would result from putting their principles into practice. Indeed all the restrictions that were applied on the military programs in the Post War period were basically a reflection of such considerations and calculations. But American presidents found themselves in difficult challenge. They were sure that if they go back not only would this upset the world balance of power and also create problems at home, and in the rest of the free world would be catastrophic. In this situation of pressures the best solution seemed without any doubt just to meet the Communist challenges rather than accept defeats without fight.

While these concepts had always formed the background of Johnson's Vietnam Policy, different elements affected the policy. By 1964 despite his ignorance of foreign policy, Johnson was careful of his reputation as a domestic reformer and a political manipulator. His methods were demonstrated by the passing of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965. Perhaps his success and popularity encouraged Johnson to put his ambitions in

practice. In this respect why would Johnson not try to be successful in foreign policy by fighting a quick, secret and limited war?

However the strongest pressure that caused the escalation was that coming from the Hawks who made Johnson failed in keeping south Vietnam independent non Communist. No doubt the policy makers who Johnson took it from Kennedy were stronger Cold Warriors than he was. The evidence available here is the Joint chief's perception of the Vietnam problem and their arguments to encourage Johnson to go deeply into the war. Indeed these policy makers did not act according to some political strategies but also dealing with the Vietnam War with the military strategies.

These factors which led to the Americanisation of the war were not less effective encouraged the continuation of the war. They were only disappointed in stronger factors at every phase of the war. It is clear that much confidence pushed the escalation until late in 1966 when disillusionment towards Vietnam began.

But at that time 1966 the Administration simply could not accept de- escalation. For the policy makers the war had just begun and the military plans will be successful. Further more, US military appeared to be more capable to deal with the Viet Cong. The false escalation that was applied in Vietnam was only because the Americans or Johnson administrations believed that America is a super power and no one could defeat it.

However and more important that the reason above was the fact that from 1966 , the Administration in Washington and the military planning groups in Saigon grew increasingly separated from each other. As argued in this paper the 'credibility gap' was not simply out of phase with reality but also destruction among civilian and military war strategists. Such a situation did not help the Administration's perception of the Vietnam approach. Besides to that the lack of precision in ways and means in the conduct of war caused a total defeat in the war. These deficiencies were linked by the absence of reality in his decision making. Johnson

obsession to do what others do not like is clear in his policy. Indeed “while those in the inner circle” had to acquiesce reluctantly those outside it were dealt with through the famous treatment”. From that time Johnson’s exercise of power was a defeat on American political life.

Johnson sent the military supplies to Saigon, and dominated his advisors ‘thinking’. But what is more interesting in Johnson’s interpretation of the SEATO as imposed the Americanisation of the Vietnam civil war, despite Congressional opinion of the Vietnam War. Similarly Johnson’s thinking of evaluating policies made him believe that Vietnam was important to the United States security. But he could not apply it to Indonesia which was richer more strategic and more democratic than Vietnam.

Yet the reason behind the Americanisation was an attempt to save US prestige. Johnson’s escalation was essentially based on the fact that fighting Communism in Vietnam could save him by fighting it in Thailand or the Philippines. But in its calculation the Administration did not expect the possibility that it could lose more money and materials in Vietnam. Furthermore when US prestige was caught in Johnson’s investment trap the policy makers were not totally short of ideas. If Johnson was more of a realist he could have relied on his advisors to find and correct his errors one way or another. Descalation for instance as advocated by the mid 1966 period could have been the quickest and best way for the vietnamisation of the war. It could equally save US prestige without losing Vietnam to the Communists.

Although such mistake made the Americanisation failure,. Johnson indecision throughout the war was destructive. It is interesting to note here that this indecision was not that of whether he should fight or not, as was the case in 1964. Johnson indecision was mainly about how far he could permit the war to escalate, since he knew he could not reach certain limits. Indeed Johnson promised to meet the Joint Chiefs of Staff military needs, but never did

make it, destroying the soldiers morale as a consequence. Similarly Johnson's indecision to make the nation feel they were in war, only favoured the press to attack his policies. On the contrary had Johnson been clearer about his intentions and what the situation really was, the war might have been more acceptable to the public.

But Johnson's indecision was not clear, for his understanding of foreign policy is once again, largely accountable for his actions. The point was that Johnson had the dullesian view of 'one Communist Bloc' in mind, as can be seen from his famous 'Djakarta Hanoi Peeking Pyong Yang axes'. But the policy of controlling self which he imposed personally and indirectly was not enough, limited means for unlimited concept of Communism. Thus Johnson was a Dove in terms of fighting the war, but a Hawk in terms of its objectives. So that, there was priorities between the goals and the means.

The Americans did not fail because of the military weaknesses. Psychologically the Vietnam War was practically in favour of the Vietcong. The Johnson Administration committed the nation to a revolutionary Civil War that had been going on for the Viet Cong at least since 1945. So where the U.S troops saw a few years involvement in danger, the Viet Cong became more determined not to lose the war. Actually, the Administration tried hard to give the war as new psychological framework. They considered it a foreign aggression of North against South Vietnam instead a civil war. As well they insisted to make it a clean war, not a dirty war. But in both cases the Administration only betrayed U.S troops who never became convinced from 1966 and after that it was the opposite. In the battlefield, however, the American defeat in the war only confirmed to Americans that the war was wrong on every level. Thus the psychological defeat of the Joint Chiefs objectives for winning the war and American troops was confirmed after the Tet offensive in 1968.

Despite this entire crisis in the Vietnam tragedy, the Vietnam failure however brought the nation to believe the collapse of America's Vietnam Policy and learn some lessons in

consequence. It was evident that America's Vietnam policy failed because Johnson started from the non-principale traditions. Similarly the war failed because Johnson lacked the skills of Eisenhower who had been right when he did not intervene in Dien Bien Phu.

Eisenhower decided against U.S military intervention in Dien Bien Phu, because he had expected it would not be successful as long as the French could not develop nationalist feelings in South Vietnam. Indeed unless France gave the South Vietnamese people independence, the later would always favour Communism, and defeating them in Dien Bien Phu would not necessarily ensure final victory. Put another way, Eisenhower had understood what Johnson's did not, that a military policy was not the right means to solve problems nor to ensure victory on Vietnam. Furthermore he suggested that a successful policy is one that contained both political and military strategies.

In fact, this and other questions are only confirmation of the fact that foreign policy decision making and formulation require the idea of Pragmatism. For the execution of policies in expected terms (as under Johnson) would simply weakened' the functioning of governmental politics was exaggerating and destroying the reality. It is quite clear, therefore, that had the Vietcong been regarded as nationalists, instead of Peking's puppets, and the Vietnam been seen as an independent domino, like jug Slovakia, U.S credibility would not have been used in the wrong place.

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