

A RE-EXAMINATION OF AMERICA'S INDOCHINA POLICY DURING THE FRENCH PRESENCE — ARMS TRANSFER FOR DIPLOMATIC LEVERAGE AND THE ROLE OF THE CATHOLICS -

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This paper purports to examine the major assumptions that have guided American foreign policy toward French Indochina during the postwar period. The representing terminology in describing US policy toward Indochina in the early postwar period, that is "liberal capitalism," should be at least modified for the advance of historical research. Economics could not fully support the ideology of US containment policy. Indeed, to consolidate the American "consensual hegemony," the superpower utilised its technical superiority over the European allies to lever them for multipurpose, making deals with the least financial support. Especially, the US arms transfer secured a footing for the US consensual hegemony for the years to come, specifically while it was dealing with the French in dire need of the enactment of the program to check up its traditional enemy, Germany.

On the other hand, more critically, to the Catholic Church, however, Vietnam was more than a mere stepping stone in America's fight against world communism. Because of this, Vietnam had to be "rescued" from the impending ideological chaos and military anarchy, which followed France's evacuation after WWII. Even more important to her, as a religious entity, was the rescue of Vietnam from Buddhism with which the catholic Church had fought for hundreds of years. This motivation had become one of the major factors that influenced the general conduct of the Catholic Church in its relationship with Vietnam, even before the Diem regime. The failure to recognise this factor became one of the major causes of the ultimate political and military disintegration of Vietnam, and of the final collapse of the US military effort itself.

Accordingly, factors of a political, ideological, economic and military nature played no meaning role in the unfolding of the war, but the religion of the Catholic Church was one of its main instigators. It is interesting to consider that the Vietnam War, in its origin, began as a religious conflict. Some important historical points show how America was manipulated into supporting Catholic oppression in Vietnam from the French presence till the end of the war.

I. INTRODUCTION

Foreign military intervention goes all the way back to the Pelopponesian Wars, when Athens and Sparta intervened in the civil wars and other internal political conflicts between democrats and oligarchs in other city- states. "It became a natural thing," according to Thucydides, "for anyone who wanted a change of government to call in help from outside"(Thucydides, 1954: 208). And as Hans Morgenthau characteristically points out, these outcomers were motivated by more than just altruism. ">From the time of the ancient Greeks to this day," writes Morgenthau, "some states have found it advantageous to intervene in the affairs of other states on behalf of their own interests"(Morgenthau, 1967: 425).

The amount of published material on the war in Vietnam is truly amazing, with scores of new books and articles being published every year. Most surprising, perhaps, is the fundamental nature of many of the current disagreements over the nature of and diplomatic instruments in the US support for the French in Vietnam. A number of very basic questions are hotly debated, and students of the war disagree over its very nature, debat-

ing whether it was an ideology of containment or pursuit of "liberal capitalism."

The debate over the third party engagement in the war, however, has made ordinary discourse about it very difficult. One's thinking about it is often a function of one's political views and biases rather than the factual information available. So, the nature of American objectives in Vietnam has also been a subject for debate.

According to Clausewitz, "the first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgement that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish... the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature." Determining the nature of a conflict is thus "the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive"(Von Clauswitz, 1976: 88-9).

In this sense, there need to be documented and clarified not only that the goals of American foreign policy during the postwar era have been highly patterned, but that American external policy has been governed more by continuity than discontinuity. This is the purpose of this article, in which we examine, respectively, the ends and means of American foreign policy in order to define areas of persistence and areas of variation. This examination identifies the major assumptions that have guided American foreign policy toward French Indochina during the postwar period and explores the means used to achieve the objectives under the same assumptions.

Looking back on the French presence in Vietnam and the US support for them, historians has long been debating the queries following. When the US irrevocably decided to intervene in Indochina? Is there any backgrounds to the American intervention different from the previous findings? Who constituted of major decision-makers then in Washington and who influenced them most? Having put the queries, the answers shall be postponed to the following sections because the roots of each three question is the various problems, which appears under the names of 'liberal capitalism,' 'consensual hegemony,' 'arms transfer,' and 'Roman Catholic or the Vatican.'

2. A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE AMERICAN IDEOLOGY OF "LIBERAL CAPITALISM"

Policy is the codification of politics to make consensus among the policy community essential to articulating and implementing a cohesive and consistent policy. This is particularly true in American foreign policy, given its significance and complexity. In the specific case, for example, of how America should deal with the phenomenon of Indochina region during the cold war era, consensus has been lacking among practitioners, academics, journalists and policy entrepreneurs.

In discussing US' containment policy and its pursuit of free world recovery, a mostly used ideological base has been the so called "liberal capitalism." The objectives were complementary: containment, properly implemented, would prevent communist encroachments on the non-communist world, and the economic revival of Western countries would make their inhabitants less susceptible to communist subversion or persuasion. Yet containment was a negative strategy; it defined what policymakers did not want, and it was not by itself adequate to restore prosperity and stability to those nations the US counted as its allies and best trading partners. The West also needed a program for recovery on its side of the containment barrier. Until mid-1949, American policymakers believed that this program should be based on a distinctly American ideology(Rotter

1987: 2).

It is difficult to label the ideology of American diplomacy because of its comprehensiveness. According to Andrew Rotter, its features are: (1) the belief that people have the right of self-determination; (2) the belief that no people truly exercising self-determination will choose communism or authoritarianism because all people desire representative political institutions; (3) the belief that economic progress and political freedom can exist only where the means of production are, for the most part, privately owned; (4) the idea that full trade among all nations — multilateralism — will keep the world prosperous; (5) the belief that economies should specialise in what they do best — developed nations should export manufactured goods and underdeveloped countries should sell food and raw materials; and (6) the idea that political and economic reforms, carefully guided by elected governments, are necessary for human progress and to blunt the sharp edges of the free market and are essential to prevent discontent that might lead to revolution. Behind these ideas are that America's moral rectitude is absolute and that American power is sufficient to persuade the unconvinced (Rotter, 1987: 3). As Rotter understands, these ideas are the basis of what Levin calls "liberal capitalism" (Levin, 1968). However, Rotter and Levin's application of the containment policy to Vietnam appears in retrospect, to some extent, misguided, despite the logical strength. The so-called communist bloc was torn by nationalist divisions from the outset and was never a monolith. And the international situation was never a zero-sum game (Herring, 1991: 110-2).¹

As is known, Franklin Roosevelt saw in Indochina, particularly in the three Vietnamese territories of Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina, the worst excesses of European colonial rule. He used to blame the aspect of Indochina with words of financial neglect, pre-war political repression and a near-feudal system of agriculture to condemn the French presence in Indochina. The stark contrast between Roosevelt's criticism toward French and the later American effort prop up French authority in the cold war struggle against Ho Chi Minh's Viet Minh coalition forces has nurtured the image of an opportunity lost. Far from becoming the destroyer of Vietnam, the US might have been its saviour. In fact, according to the recently declassified French and British documents, why the US supported French in spite of Roosevelt's dissatisfaction with French presence in Indochina at the time was largely to contain the route of war materials for Japan and British business interests in the region (Thomas, 1997: 137-8).

After WWII, the US clearly did need to take a more active role in international politics than it ever had before. Historically, the US had been a free rider in the British world system; now it would assume the privileges and its global hegemony. Some of the most hallowed concepts in the American foreign policy tradition had to be discarded or revised. Permanent neutrality was no longer an option. It would indeed be too late to start planning national security policy when an enemy nation had already upset the European balance of power. In the post war era, the US would have to open its markets to the goods of other nations if they sought market access in return.

¹What appeared to be a major victory for the Soviet Union in China in 1949, for example, turned out to be something quite different. The US most probably exaggerated the consequences of non-intervention and, by proclaiming Vietnam a test case of credibility, may have made the consequences of its fall much greater than they would have been otherwise. In applying containment to Vietnam, US officials drastically misjudged the internal dynamics of the conflict there. By rigidly adhering to a narrow, one-dimensional worldview, they placed themselves at the mercy of local forces they did not understand and in the final analysis could not control.

It had learned fundamental lessons from the great disasters of the recent past. From the Great Depression, it learned that the massive American economy — the leading industrial economy in the world — could only prosper in an open international economy. From WWII, it learned that its own American continent and regional sphere could only be secure if no single great power dominated the European continent. However, the US strategy to achieve these goals was the most sophisticated of all.

In addition to the need for bolstering the French role in the containment policy in Europe, America's Indochina policy began to be affected after 1948 by two other factors. The first of these was the American need to ensure Southeast Asia as an export/import market for Japan. With the adoption of National Security Council (hereafter NSC) Resolution 13/2 on 9 October 1948, the US formally accepted the conception that Japan should be treated less as a defeated enemy and more as a potential member of the "free world." To create the economic foundation for Japan's role as an ally capable of providing bases and industrial resources against the Soviet, the Truman administration regarded it as essential to provide as much access as possible to the raw materials and markets of Southeast Asia. As a means of facilitating Japan's re-emergence as a major industrial power, American interests thus pointed towards the stabilisation of Southeast Asia and preventing the area from falling into the communist hands (Umestu, 1997: 3-4; Chomsky, 1993: Ch.2).²

However, in economic sense of view, there revealed the limits of consensual American hegemony. "Consensual" can be used because European leaders accepted Washington's leadership in view of their needs for economic and security assistance. Hegemony derives from Washington's ability to establish policy guidelines binding on the West. Usually Washington did not have brutally to abort a series of promising socialist initiatives. Instead Washington more subtly rewarded a generation of centrist "Atlantic" oriented European leaders who found the American preferences rational and humane, while benefiting from some of the economic arrangements generated in wartime Europe and Japan.

It also had a striking precedent as far as how to conduct an alliance with a mighty lay companion, to fight the advance of a seemingly irresistible enemy. Since the end of WWI, communism was making rapid advances throughout the West. The existing democratic institutions seemed impotent to contain it. When, therefore, a forcible right wing movement appeared on the scene, declaring communism as its principal foe, other allies

²Noam Chomsky agreed to Cumings' critiques on it. Cumings observes, "as for Asia, the principles were first given a definitive form in an August 1949 draft of NSC 48." The basic principle it enunciated as "reciprocal exchange and mutual advantage." A corollary, again, is opposition to independent development: "none of (the Asian countries) alone has adequate resources as a base for general industrialisation." India, China, and Japan may "approximate that condition," but no more. A US survey mission concluded in 1950 that Japan's prospects were regarded as quite limited: it might produce "knick-knacks" and other products for the underdeveloped world, but nothing more. Such conclusions were not entirely unrealistic before the Korean War revived Japan's stagnating economy. "General industrialisation in individual countries could be achieved only at a high cost as a result of sacrificing production in fields of comparative advantage," the draft continued. The US must find ways of "exerting economic pressures" on countries that do not accept their role as suppliers of "strategic commodities and other basic materials," the germ of later policies of economic warfare, Cumings observes. However, this argument lacks some sequence, because US economic service toward the European allies was done through bilateral ways. In contrast, the US sought the way of military support not only by doing arms transfer but also by making efforts to establish collective security systems in seeking the "consensual hegemony."

would have allied themselves to it.

In case of Europe, the movement was Fascism. It stopped communism in Italy as well as in Germany with Nazism. The Vatican Fascist alliance had successfully prevented Soviet Russia from taking over Europe. Although it ended in disaster with the outbreak of WWII, nevertheless, its original policy of breaking the power of communism had succeeded (O'Carroll, 1980: 47-152; Martin, 1946). After WWII, for the Vatican, the urgency of the task was self-evident. Soviet Russia had emerged from the Nazi debacle, a more formidable enemy than ever before. It became a necessity for the Catholic Church, therefore, to forge an alliance with a lay partner, as it did after WWI. As will be shown, the US-Vatican partnership in Europe had successfully stopped a Communist take-over.

The problem in Asia of course was more complicated, more acute, and more dangerous. A direct confrontation was possible, not only on political grounds, but also on a military one. This was proved by the fact that the US had had to fight a true war in Korea. The lesson from the Korean War was not easily forgotten. The US saw to it that the vast unstable surrounding territories did not become the springboards from which another ideological or military attack could be launched to expand communism. When the situation in Vietnam started to deteriorate and the military inefficiency of the French became too apparent, the two partners determined to repeat in Southeast Asia the success of their first anti-Communist joint campaign.

Yet, one fact should be noted that the US could keep the French in Vietnam since the US levered the French with the diplomatic instrument said to be material and financial assistance before the French defeat in 1954. The instruments of the US diplomatic game toward the Western European powers, both military and economic, have not been clearly categorised but identified as one factor. However, in terms of quantity, quality, and the timing, the importance of the military assistance largely through arms transfers program should be distinguished from the others.

3. US ARMS TRANSFER AS LEVERAGE AGAINST EUROPEAN ALLIES

During the immediate postwar years the globalistic, hegemonic foreign policy of the US was revealed with its four major innovations. These were the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, the policy of containment, and the makings of alliances with countries all over Europe and Asia to establish a collective security system under the leadership of the US. The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan permitted the US to demonstrate its commitment to the defence of democratic nations everywhere against "direct or indirect aggression" and "subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressure" (Kellman and Barilleaux, 1990: 28-29). And that it was willing and able to help the rehabilitation of Europe from the devastation of battle by channelling billions of dollars into Europe, thus strengthening financial resistance to communism. By contributing to the national defence and economic revitalisation of the states through military and economic assistance, the US was successful in attaining a legitimate hegemony over the recipient states. However, this was not sufficient to secure the US' hegemony in the broadest sense.

The last two innovations, the policy of containment and the establishment of a collective security system on the axis of bilateral and multilateral alliances, further played a central role in consolidation and institutionalisation of the hegemonic status of the US (Gaddis, 1982). [POSR11] This meant that collective security, merged with the strategy

of containment, succeeded in securing consent from the states subscribing to US hegemonic status as well as US proponents of containment and collective security.

In institutionalising and consolidating the US hegemony in the earlier postwar era, arms transfers were major instruments of US decision-makers and a tested instrument for securing postwar objectives overseas (Martel, 1979; Peirre, 1979). Especially the Lend-Lease program, which followed between 1941 and 1945, taught Washington officials the value of arms transfer as an instrument of defence and diplomacy. Lend-Lease program marked a turn in US arms transfer policy by securing a footing for the US hegemony for years to come.

The Truman administration virtually halted lend-lease aid after the Japanese surrendered in 1945. The effects of lend-lease, however, lasted beyond the formal termination of the program. The widespread distribution of American arms as a result of lend-lease created pressures for continued military assistance. Based on the assessments of the role of arms aid during the war, American decisionmakers, especially those of the State-War-Navy Co-ordinating Committee, showed strong support for the continuation of arms transfers for postwar strategic and political objectives. In fact, the committee proposed in 1944 that military aid to France be used as leverage in French policy for a number of years (Pach Jr., 1981: 10-11).

In the context of fostering a stable, peaceful world with the US at the centre that was conducive to US ideological and practical goals such as national security, economic prosperity, and individual freedom, piecemeal arms transfers began with supplies of US munitions to Western European nations, especially France. Immediately after its inauguration, the Truman administration showed particular concern about the provision of military assistance to France. Decisionmakers in the administration thought that the US should assist France to regain its strength and influence. They believed that a strong and stable France could contain not only communist challenges from within but also thwart German power that might be resurgent. During the next two years, the Truman government provided France with some \$116 million in military and naval equipment almost free of charge. The significance of this assistance to France was to establish a key post of US hegemonic system in Europe, which was able to "serve as a bulwark of democracy on the continent of Europe and ... to assume an increasing share of responsibility in the occupation of Germany and in maintaining the peace" (Wall, 1991: 188-231; Pach Jr., 1981: 21-22).

Coinciding with the proclamation of independence by Viet Minh, led by Ho Chi Minh, on 2 September 1945, Chinese troops entered Indochina from the north and British forces arrived in the south. Beginning as early as October 1945, US ships and crews in increasing numbers transported French troops to Saigon. By the time the last British units had left Vietnam in March 1946, a total of some 65,000 French soldiers had been allocated into the southern half of Vietnam. Under the aegis of Kuomintang military power, the French were also allowed to take over from the Chinese the garrisoning of Hanoi and all but one of the other major cities and towns in northern Vietnam. The US itself made a massive material contribution to the French effort to reconquer Indochina. With the withdrawal of British and Chinese troops in the spring of 1946, the French were allowed to keep US lend-lease war material which had been earlier supplied on the expectation that it would be used in the invasion of Japan (Umetsu 1997: 2-3). To make certain France's cooperation for the defence of Western Europe, the US left the French to handle the Indochina question in their own way. This policy posture had kept until the end of

1949(Osgood, 1970: 36).³

In May 1950, a month before the outbreak of hostilities in Korea, Secretary of State Dean Acheson announced the first increment of American aid to France for the Indochina war. The bitter recriminations in the US over "Who lost China?" produced a compelling domestic incentive for the Truman administration to do what it could to prevent a communist victory in Indochina. The Korean conflict amplified the concern of American policy makers about what communist advances in Asia, persuading them that "world communism" was bent on dominating that portion of the world.⁴

The outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 strengthened American resolve to underwrite French efforts to suppress Ho Chi Minh. One of the main reasons was America's growing need for the reactivation of West German forces and a consequent need for enlisting French support for the rearmament of the former enemy. The French were unwilling to see the creation of a new German national army. In order to make unpopular German rearmament acceptable to the French public, the French government wanted the development of a German army to be undertaken only as part of an international force through creating European Defence Community (EDC) established on 27 May 1952.

However, the French eroded its support for EDC because of growing sense of self-doubt and continuing apprehension over Germany.⁵ Furthermore, at the time the French forces were deployed to colonies in North Africa and Indochina, so that these circumstances raised the possibility that West Germany would ultimately gain the ascendancy in EDC (Shipway, 1996: 222-246). The US clearly recognised that France was unable to increase its full efforts in Indochina while at the same time participating in EDC, and that as long as France did more in Indochina, it would have fewer resources on the European Continent to counterbalance German forces (Umetsu, 1997: 7).

To facilitate a grand plan for a European military build-up and to prevent France from diluting its NATO obligations in Europe, the US assumed an increasing share of the burden of the war in Indochina (Nordell Jr., 1988: 64-73). In 1951, America's economic and technical aid to the Associated States (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos) reached at \$21.8 million, while military aid at least \$425.7 million. In 1952, economic and technical aid

³At the Potsdam Conference, Chinese claims for occupation rights over North Vietnam were honored, and Nationalist troops occupied the region in 1945 after the Japanese withdrawal. The Chinese civil war weakened the ability of the Nationalists to maintain their treaty rights, especially in the face of popular nationalism organized by Ho Chi Minh. American contacts in the period were with Ho Chi Minh. In 1946, war had broken out between Viet Minh and France determined to reestablish control over its colonies in Indochina. From the outset, the war posed a serious dilemma for the US. The Truman administration was reluctant to support French colonialism at a time when nationalism was in the ascendant throughout the world. On the other hand, eager to secure French backing for its cold war policies in Europe, the US found it increasingly difficult to resist French appeals for help in Vietnam. And the communist ties of Ho and his Viet Minh made it impossible in a cold war setting for the US to support the Viet Minh revolution. Thus, from 1946 to 1950 the US claimed to be neutral but in fact pursued a neutrality heavily skewed in France's favor. For the detail, refer to (Wall 1991: Ch.7-8).

⁴As Robert Osgood points out: "If Vietnam has a significance that goes beyond the issue or method, if it has an importance that transcends the war itself, it must be seen in the policy — and outlook — that made Vietnam an ever-present possibility. That policy and outlook are not simply the work of the Johnson administration, as some critics appear to believe The essential elements of America's present Asian policy were determined in the course of the war in Korea."(Osgood 1970: 40-42)

⁵The French had regarded their neighbour to the east as a perennial enemy since 1870, and French public simply did not consider Russia to be a threat, preferring that Germany should be weak and helpless, but not strong enough to serve as an effective barrier to a possible Russian invasion.

increased to \$24.6 million, while military aid \$520 million. This constituted about 40 per cent of the total aid to the French(US DOD: 184, 204).

In 1954 Dulles' policy did not aim at containment. Its avowed purpose was to defeat Ho Chi Minh by military victory and to roll back the communist camp to the northern border of Indochina. The military campaign would be fought by the French and South Vietnamese ground forces, with the support, if necessary, of US aerial units and token auxiliaries from Asiatic allies and Britain.

Nevertheless, the crisis in 1954 was the result of the reappraisal by the Eisenhower-Dulles administration of the relationship of the US to Britain. In January 1953, Eisenhower entered office facing two separate, but interconnected problems. Both issues were inherited from Truman and involved long-standing conflicts. First, as staff planners to the military representatives to the Australia-New Zealand-US (ANZUS) Agreement Council noted in November 1952, strategically, the US primary difficulty in Southeast Asia was the situation in Indochina. The defence of the status quo centred on the Tonkin Delta in Vietnam. Although Southeast Asia was important, the US could not accept the commitment of US ground forces to the defence of this area. As Richard Immerman has noted, Eisenhower clearly accepted the Truman administration's "estimate of America's stake in Indochina." Again, as with the Truman administration, nearly all Southeast Asian problems during the Eisenhower years must be viewed with the Indochinese crisis in mind. The Eisenhower government tried to prop up the French in Indochina. His NSC went so far as to note that if Indochina fell to the Communists "the successful defence of Tonkin is the keystone of the defence of mainland Asia except possibly Malaya." Britain also viewed Indochina as the key to the region (Immerman, 1990).

"The agonising reappraisal" of the relationship to France, threatened by Dulles in a speech at the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Paris, on December 14, 1953 (Bator, 1965: 19), had received prime political and historical publicity ever since, though it remained one of those crash and shock utterances of Dulles such as 'liberation,' 'roll back,' and 'instant retaliation.' Furthermore, even though the ANZUS Treaty between the US, Australia, and New Zealand was concluded prior to the take-over of administration by Eisenhower, it is generally believed that exclusion of Britain from it, strongly resented by Churchill and Eden, as Dulles' idea and that Eisenhower played a major part in bringing it about (Adams, 1962: 58).

This all means that the US could not allow its policies in Asia to be dictated by its European allies. Indeed, Eisenhower was deeply annoyed by the hesitancy of the British and the French to join with the Americans in making a bold and unified stand against the 'Red Chinese.' Eisenhower showed than some willingness to pull away from the traditional partnership with the British and the French (Bator, 1965: 19-22). Now, the US government could not be arbitrator among nations and had no power to settle conflict as it would do in domestic politics. It has one possible stand and policy, that is, to use its power for its own interest.

This posture was possible because the essential element in the situation was the far greater development of the offensive power of atomic warfare than of the counter-measures against it. This is partly a matter of technology; that is, the technological problem of producing atomic bombs and their carriers had proved easier than the production of an effective active and passive defence system(Blackett, 1962).

In sum, as Gabriel Kolko placed the specific in its proper and general research framework for backgrounds of US support for French in Indochina, the US involvement in

Vietnam, from 1944 onward, is discussed from the US' global — and particularly European — foreign policy needs and objectives. The US began assisting the French in Vietnam in order to enable France to play a more meaningful role in the US' NATO, by leveraging with arms transfer program and material assistance to keep for the French fighting (Kolko, 1969: Ch.4). The major instrument to lever the European partners was the arms transfer program of Lend-Lease.

IV. THE VATICAN AS A READILY AVAILABLE US PARTNER

It has frequently been asked what induced the US to be caught in the quicksand of Asian commitments, with particular regards to the Vietnamese imbroglio. Explanations have been many, diverse and contradictory. Yet the part played by religion is usually relegated to the background. Being an intangible force, it is generally disregarded in the context of contemporary problems, where the focus is confined almost exclusively to economic and military belligerency. Certain historical activities carried out by the Catholic Church contributed to US drive into Vietnam. Since the end of WWII and the annihilation of European Fascism, Vatican adopted the US as its lay partner. This was prompted by the grim reality of the appearance of world Bolshevism and the growing military presence of Soviet Russia after WWII.

The Vatican's intervention in the growing anarchy of the Indochinese peninsula passed almost unnoticed by the international community. This gave the church a favourable start to its almost intangible operations in the region. The silent promotions of her force operated through the Catholic lobby in the US. The importance of the Catholic lobby in American external policies has often been greatly minimised, when not ignored altogether. Yet it has often steered the US external affairs to a degree seldom imagined by anyone not consonant with such matters.

In the beginning of WWII, French Indochina was barely two generations old, the historic divisions of the territory — Tonkin, Annam, Cochinchina — had distinctive personalities. Many Vietnamese had adopted Catholicism, but the country's more typical faiths were a number of clan-like religious sects, especially in the South.

The dilemma confronting non-communists in Vietnam after 1947 was a poignant one. If the non-communists continued to seek a compromise with the French, their nationalism became suspect. Yet many of them were not prepared to undergo the physical rigors and personal sacrifice involved in fighting with the resistance in the countryside, and some, especially the influential Catholic minority, saw communism as a threat to Vietnam even more despicable than French rule. This led to the emergence of a large middle group of *attentistes*, among them Ngo Dinh Diem, who waited in France, in the US, and in the French-controlled cities of Vietnam for a more opportune moment to act. The *attentistes* kept their personal credentials unsullied, but they failed to contribute to the growth of a rival force during a critical period in which the Viet Minh was solidifying its position and broadening its nationalist acceptance (Harrison, 1978: 100).

Historically the Catholic Church was the first "Christian" church to operate in the Indochinese peninsula as far back as three hundred or so years ago. Vietnam was the spearhead of her penetration from the very beginning of the foundation of the *Societe des Missions Etrangeres* de Paris in the mid 17th century. As a result of such intensive religious colonial pressure, in no time the French colonial administration had been trans-

formed into a ruthless conversion tool of the Catholic Church, over the mounting protests of the liberal religious and political sections of metropolitan France. After more than half of a century of this massive ecclesiastical and cultural colonisation, the native and French Catholics practically monopolised the entire civil and military administration. From there sprang a Catholic elite stubbornly committed to the Catholicisation of the whole country. This elite passed the torch of the Church from generation to generation down to President Diem and his brothers. (Carver, 1965: 387-408).⁶ It is true that Catholicism was closely associated with colonialism in Vietnam and Catholic missionaries were the advance guard of French rule (Fall, 1966: 7-8).⁷

At Japan's defeat in August 1945, the Vietnamese were now in control of most of Vietnam. The Vietnamese, although dominated by communists, realised that solid minority of the country were Catholics. Recognising that most of the Catholics had supported their fight against both the French and the Japanese, the Communists elicited their support by appointing several prominent Catholics to their new government. Religious liberty was assured to all. The achievements of the Viet Minh were so popular that in September 40,000 Catholics demonstrated in support of Ho Chi Minh in Hanoi. Four Catholic bishops even appealed directly to the Vatican asking it to support the new independent Vietnam under new rulers (Manhattan, 1982b: Ch.1).

The Vatican is a formidable diplomatic and ideological centre, because it has at its disposal the religious machinery of the Church. During the cold war, it used such machinery with a skill unmatched by any other church. Pope Pius XII was a firm believer in the inevitability of WWII.⁸ To that effect he worked incessantly in the diplomatic field, chiefly with the US, with the co-operation of the powerful Catholic lobby in Washington, D.C. This was possible because Pope Pius XII had succeeded in conditioning millions of Catholics, both in Europe and in the US, to accept the inevitability of such war (Manhattan, 1982b: Ch.3).

In 1947, the cold war began. Hatred against Communist Russia was promoted, headed by the Vatican which sent a statue of our Lady of Fatima, with her "message" on a "pilgrimage" around the world. She was sent from country to country to arouse anti-Russian odium. Within a few years, as the cold war mounted, the East-West split continued to widen. In 1948, the frightful American-Russian atomic race started. In 1949, Pius XII, to strengthen the anti-Russian front, excommunicated any voter supporting the communists. Soon afterwards American theologians told the US that it was her duty to use

⁶Carver also claims that despite US support of Roman Catholicism under the silent diplomatic coordination between the Vatican and Washington, Diem was not pro-French and the US mistook this anti-French sentiment for a legitimate Vietnamese nationalism. However, Diem was too Roman Catholic to be truly representative of the aspirations of the millions of Vietnamese Buddhists, animists and others for whom he claimed to speak.

⁷Out of a total of some 900,000 Vietnamese who came to south after 1954, an estimated 750,000 were Catholics. As political scientist Huntington has observed (Huntington 1968: 646-7), the relationship between communalism and governmental authority in South Vietnam was the complete opposite of what it was in neighbouring Southeast Asian countries, in which the central government was cast as the defender of nationalism against disaffected minorities. In Thailand, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, and Malaysia, ethnic, sectional, and religious minorities have provided the principal sources of opposition to the political system. But in South Vietnam, "the religious and ethnic minorities are centres of support for the system, and the relatively unorganized rural majority — the ethnic Vietnamese with Confucian, Buddhist and animist religious beliefs — is the principal source of alienation and disaffection."

⁸For the Vatican's diplomatic role against the communists expansionism and Pius ideological orientation, see (Graham 1996).

atomic bombs against the Russian expansionism at some point of the front line(Manhattan, 1982b: Ch.4).⁹

In that same year, Catholic James Forrestal, American Secretary of Defence, helped Pope Pius XII to win the elections in Italy by sending American dollars. Forrestal was in very frequent contact with the Vatican and with Cardinal Spellman; so, he knew better than anybody else did what was going on in certain Catholic and American quarters. After his death, his successors continued with Forrestal's obsession with communism, going so far as to ask for "an American atomic preventive war." Vatican's meddling in Southeast Asia, although not directly involved, nevertheless, helped to escalate the ideological conflict there and therefore, the military escalation of the region(Manhattan, 1982b: Ch.4).¹⁰

In June, 1949, Francis Matthews, another fanatical Catholic was appointed to another important post of the US government, Secretary of the Navy. He also soon afterwards began active contacts with other prominent American Catholics. The culmination of all these activities was a speech delivered in Boston on August 25, 1950 by Matthews. He called upon the US to launch an attack upon Soviet Russia in order to make the American people "the first aggressors for peace." "As the initiators of a war of aggression," he added, "it would win for us a proud and popular title: we would become the first aggressors for peace." The speech created a sensation, both in the US and in Europe. France and Britain declared that they would not take part in any aggressive war, since a preventive war would liberate nothing but the ruins and the graveyards of the civilisation(The Times, August 28 1951).

Pope Pius XII had been kept well informed about the whole process long before Matthews' Boston speech. The evidence is that he was one of its main tacit instigators. The continuous visit of top US military leaders to the Pope, the frequent secret audiences with Spellman, the unofficial contacts with the Knights of Columbus¹¹ — all indicated that Pius XII knew very well what was afoot(Manhattan, 1966: Ch.1). Pius objective was a logical one. Once he had made sure that Matthews' war seeds had sunk well into the minds of political and military leaders, he gave himself the task of implanting them with equal effectiveness in the minds of millions of the Catholic, not via politics or propaganda, but directly via religion.

In the meantime, in February 1950, the US recognised the Bao Dai government. Almost simultaneously France asked for military help. Soon afterwards, in May, Washington announced aid for the French, with a \$10,000,000 grant. The US had agreed

⁹Interview with Father Edmund Walsh, the former Vice President of Georgetown University.

¹⁰James Forrestal, US Secretary of Defence, was one of the most highly placed victims of the cold war. Pope Pius XII skilfully exploited Stalin's ruthless intransigence and the West's fear of communism. This he did with the use of religion and the unscrupulous promotion of the Fatima cult. The cult's paramount prophecy: Orthodox Russia would become Catholic. The prophecy's fulfilment implied the military invasion and occupation by the West of Russia. Forrestal, methodically briefed by the Vatican on the Communist menace, was convinced that an US-Russian atomic showdown was inevitable. Forrestal was killed in May, 1949, when he jumped from a 16th floor window of the Bethesda Naval Hospital.

¹¹The Knights of Columbus was founded in 1882 by a 29-year-old parish priest, Father Michael J. McGivney, in the basement of St. Mary's Church in New Haven, Connecticut. Today, the Knights of Columbus has become the largest lay organization in the Catholic Church. The Order has been called "the strong right arm of the Church," and has been "praised by popes, presidents and other world leaders," for support of the Church, programs of evangelization and Catholic education, civic involvement and aid to those in need. For the detail, visit <http://www.kofc.org/kofc/knights/knights.htm>.

to let France deal with Vietnam while the US was engaged in a war in Korea(Rotter, 1987: 159-61; Duncanson, 1968: 186).

The Catholic Church had watched the advances of communism in Indochina with a greater concern than the US did. It had more at stake than anyone else, including the French. Seen from Rome, the rapid expansion of world communism had become more terrifying. The Vatican had witnessed whole nations, those of Eastern Europe swallowed up by Soviet Russia, with millions of Catholics passing under communist rule. In addition, traditional Catholic countries like Italy and France were harbouring growing Communist parties. According to Manhattan, therefore, for the Vatican, it was even more imperative than for the US to prosecute a policy directed at stopping communism wherever it could be stopped(Manhattan, 1966: Ch.2). It became inevitable that the Vatican and the US should come together to stop the expansion of communism. The two having soon formulated a common strategy turned themselves into veritable partners.

Pius XII and his friends in the US set to work in the more practical fields of open and secret diplomacy and politics. From 1870 to 1984, the United States did not have diplomatic relations with the Holy See. Several presidents, however, designated personal envoys to visit the Holy see periodically for discussions of international and political issues. Myron C. Taylor was the first of these representatives, serving from 1939 to 1950, despite, by the time, the American Constitution's article of Separation of Church and State had strictly forbidden.

In the late 1951, George Kennan was appointed American ambassador to Moscow. He was more than the head of the Free Russia Committee set up to promote the liberation of Russia from communism, while Dulles appealed to the world to speed up a powerful atomic striking force "to deter the threat of Russian aggression by a decisive counter-stroke." At the same time with these events, the head of all the American and European armed forces, General Eisenhower, had arrived in the Holy City, preceded and followed by the foreign, economic and war ministers of twelve European nations, meeting in Rome to organise the "anti-Russian military front." General Eisenhower informed the war ministers of the twelve nations that they had met to rearm the West as fast as possible. Now the reality of the situation was that the Vatican was communicating with its most active agents, as well as with some of the members of the US CIA, ready to combine their efforts for the forthcoming "liberation" of Russia and other communist countries(Manhattan, 1966: Ch.3).

Pope Pius XII was the religious pivot upon which the Catholic crusade against communism revolved. Cardinal Spellman, as Pius "spokesman" in the US, greatly influenced American politicians and public opinion giving an almost mystical interpretation to the anti-Russian policies of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. Through Spellman, Pope Pius XII attempted to steer the US military power against communism in Korea and Vietnam. John Foster Dulles was the centre of powerful anti-Communist groups and anti-Russian lobbies. One of his chief objectives was in harmony with that of the Vatican. Furthermore, McCarthyism gave an unprecedented impetus to the US anti-Communist strategy. It was in the interest of Vatican to see such strident anti-communism is maintained at home, and at the same time to influence the US to carry on a similar aggressive anti-Communist policy abroad.

The background to the oncoming Vietnamese War could not have been more sombre. It was constant with the fast deteriorating situation in Indochina. The US had started to support the French forces by sending them even larger consignments of war materials.¹² This

compromise, however, had been reached without taking into account the reality of joint long range Asian strategy of the two major anti-Communist partners, the US and the Vatican, which they had already set in motion behind the scenes. Their joint strategy as already indicated had been inspired and promoted by religious and ideological interests, which transcended any localised conflict, no matter how strategically important.

Therefore, when the Vietnam problem came increasingly to the fore, the chief formulators of the US strategy were Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in the diplomatic field, and Cardinal Spellman in the ecclesiastical. One of other Catholic individuals played an important part was John F. Kennedy. He was speaking as the political exponent of the powerful Catholic lobby in Washington. Their demands were reflected in Chairman of JCS Admiral Arthur Radford's request that the US intervene directly in Vietnam, as had done John Foster Dulles himself. This logic was supported by similar requests from the Vatican wanting to help the French in order to prevent Vietnam from becoming Communist. After the French failed, however, the Vatican and the US changed the policy toward Indochina. They concurrently determined to prevent South Vietnam from holding the promised elections, in accordance with the Geneva Declaration (Nixon, 1978: 151).¹³

When the French started to crumble under the relentless blows of the Communists of Indochina, the Catholic Church welcomed the US intervention, hopefully expecting that the American presence would help expedite the conquest of Indochina. The Church already had been in the field combating a retroactive campaign against the Communists expansionism. The military and ideological success of the Viet Minh, and the increasing popularity of their cause, upset the Vatican's hopes. It led to something, which the Vatican had always opposed, namely the division of Vietnam into two halves. While rejecting the split of the country, however, the Vatican continued to co-operate and to encourage an even deeper intervention of the US. Hoping ultimate the Church would rule supreme in Vietnam once the war had been won, the Vatican employed American economic and military strength to carry on with the promotion of a unified Vietnam.

V. CONCLUSION

One can hardly discuss the nature of the US policy toward Indochina during the French

¹²Within a relatively short period American aid had become more than substantial. From 1950 to 1954, in fact, the US had dispatched to the French in Vietnam more than 400,000 tons of war material, 150,000 firearms, 340 airplanes and 350 warships. Notwithstanding all this, however, the French were finally routed. There followed the Geneva Agreement, when the 17th Parallel was defined as the "provisional" demarcation line between the Vietnam of the North and the Vietnam of the South. For the details, see (Gibbons, 1986: Ch.2-3) and NSC Memo for NSC, 2 March 1954, NSC Series, Policy Papers Sub-series, Box 10, WHO File, DDE Library in (Choi, 1995).

¹³The Chairman of the JCS, Admiral Radford, suggested an air strike, if necessary with nuclear weapons, on the Viet Minh positions around Dien Bien Phu. The question of US military intervention raised by the Special Committee on Indochina and by the JCS was discussed at some length at the regular NSC meeting on March 25 1954. Although Eisenhower continued to criticise the military judgement and appears to have rejected any thought of using US forces in that battle, he also seems to have been increasingly more determined to prevent the fall of Indochina. Eisenhower even told the Republican congressional leaders that if the military situation at Dien Bien Phu became desperate, he would consider the use of diversionary tactics: possibly a landing by Chiang Kai Shek's Nationalist forces on China's Hainan Island, naval blockade of the Chinese mainland or introduction of a South Korean combat division. See (Kahin, 1987: 42).

presence, without becoming involved in some kind of controversy. Particularly apparent in much of the writing is the unwillingness of many Americans, both those who served in the government and those having served in the military, to admit error. Thus, much of what is said about is more apology than analysis, more myth than history.

The representing terminology in describing US policy toward Indochina in the early postwar period, that is "liberal capitalism," should be at least modified for the advance of historical research. Economics could not fully support the ideology of US containment policy. Indeed, to consolidate the American "consensual hegemony," the superpower utilised its technical superiority over the European allies to lever them for multipurpose, making deals with the least financial support. Especially, toward France, the US fully employed the room made by the Lend-Lease program, which was a real backer of the US diplomatic game and was officially terminated in 1945. The US arms transfer secured a footing for the US consensual hegemony for the years to come, specifically while it was dealing with the French in dire need of the enactment of the program to check up its traditional enemy, Germany.

Both the Vatican and the US were determined to defeat an aggressive brand of Asian communism, yet they had diametrically opposite reasons for intervening in Indochina. To the US, Vietnam became a military conflict, part of a policy focused on the two Euro-Asian centres of global communism: Peking with one thousand million Chinese only recently regimented into Marxism by Mao, and Moscow, the Mecca of Western Bolshevism. To the Catholic Church, however, Vietnam was more than a mere stepping stone in America's fight against world communism. Because of this, Vietnam had to be "rescued" from the impending ideological chaos and military anarchy, which followed France's evacuation after WWII.

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