c. China Sees Creation of a Neutral Buffer Zone

Beyond Vietnam, the Chinese apparently believed that the final agreements would preclude the three Indochinese states from involvement in the American security system. When Chou communicated to Eden his concern about Laotian, Vietnamese, and Cambodian participation in a Southeast Asia treaty organization, the Foreign Secretary said he knew of no proposal for those States to join. The next day Eden told Molotov that a security pact in Southeast Asia was inevitable and completely in line with British policy; but he added that no consideration was being given to the inclusion of Cambodia and Laos (a comment which Smith regarded as a "mistake" inasmuch as the U.S. hoped to use the threat of their inclusion to get a better settlement). When the conference closed, the Chinese felt sufficiently assured about the matter, it would seem. On 23 July, a Chinese journalist confided: "We have won the first campaign for the neutralization of all Southeast Asia."

d. China's Domestic Economy is Protected

China, at this time, was greatly concerned with her own internal problems, and anxious to consolidate at home before moving further into Asia. The Korean War had exacerbated the pressing economic and political problems within China, as had the attempts by Peking to push an economic reconstruction beyond the limits of possibility. The Chinese were satisfied that the Indochina situation after Geneva allowed, at least, temporary assurance that a major effort could be turned inward without fear of repercussions along China's southwestern border.

e. U.S. Threat of Massive Intervention is Forestalled

The USSR and China had watched warily the sporadic attempts of the U.S.; first, to keep the Indochina problem out of Geneva, and second, to gather the Western nations into united action to prevent communist consolidation of Indochina. There was an element of unpredictability concerning U.S. action in Southeast Asia, fostered purposely to a great extent by the U.S. and UK (with calculated moves such as the bilateral military talks in Washington), but also emphasized by the inordinate number and wide variety of public statements on Indochina that were made by official and semi-official Washington during the months of June and July, while the Geneva Conference sat. Peking and Moscow, then, had some reason to believe that they had pre-empted U.S. military moves by diplomacy.

f. Prospects of Short-Run Stability Please the Russians

The Soviet government was not dedicated to the furtherance of Chinese goals in Southeast Asia, nor did the USSR want to see an increase in U.S. influence in this area. For these reasons, it was greatly in the interest of the Soviets to press for the withdrawal of French power from Indochina -- but in a way calculated to inhibit any major increase in U.S. or Chinese power to replace the French. The creation, therefore,
of a neutral state in Vietnam (or even the creation of two opposed half-states) met the immediate requirements of the USSR in the best manner possible under the circumstances -- and it was the short-range solution that the Soviets, as well as the other delegations, were seeking at Geneva. The future would take care of itself.

g. Russians See Influence on French View of EDC

Whether or not the cause and effect relationship can be proved with any accuracy, the fact remains that the French did not ratify the EDC agreements when these were presented to the French Assembly a month after Geneva. The reaction in the USSR was described as "jubilant," hail­ing the French rejection as "an important event in the political history of Europe." 2/ This event, following closely on the termination of the Geneva Convention, was seen by the Soviets as, at least in part, influenced by the communist strategy of letting the French off the hook in Geneva.

2. The Major Communist Powers Perceive Certain Losses

a. Communist Consolidation of All of Indochina is Not Achieved

At least for the immediate future, a communist consolidation of all of Indochina was out of the question. Regardless of how inevitable the surge of communist control into the area might seem, the move had come to a halt temporarily at the 17th parallel. In effect, the communists were not prepared to take the risks in pursuing their very real superiority, if not on the battlefield, then in the psyche. The communist assertion at Geneva that the Viet Minh controlled three quarters of the area of Vietnam was close to the truth. The decision to relinquish this local control throughout Vietnam must have been viewed as a loss.

b. U.S. Influence in Indochina is Not Prevented

A major political and military objective of China was the prevention of U.S. bases in Southeast Asia. This aim, paralleling the Soviet objective of blocking U.S. influence in Europe, was an important part of overall Chinese strategy at Geneva. But, if the Chinese Government considered the Geneva provisions a first step toward Southeast Asia's neutralization, this estimate was quickly disabused. The governments of Laos and Cambodia issued declarations on 21 July, which left room for the conclusion of alliances and the stationing of foreign forces on their territory. To ease the communist outcry, both countries vowed not to ally themselves in any manner "not in conformity with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations," nor to permit foreign bases while their security was not threatened. 6/ Nevertheless, their delegates indicated even before the Conference that U.S. protection of their countries against aggression was desirable. The two zones of Vietnam, in contrast, were categorically enjoined from permitting the establishment of foreign military bases and from adhering to military alliances (Article 19 of the armistice agreement). The Chinese, because they were unable to obtain
a U.S. guarantee of the Accords, could not prevent the U.S. from subsequently bringing Cambodia and Laos within the security perimeter of SEATO through the Protocol, a device broached by Under Secretary Smith at Geneva. Later, the U.S. spread this umbrella over SVN as well.

3. The DRV Views Its Gains and Losses

a. Advantages are Gained, but at a Price

In terms of advantages, the military accords signed 21 July by Ta Quang Buu, Vice-Minister of National Defense of the DRV, and Brigadier General Delteil, Commander of French Union Forces in Indochina, ceded the DRV full control of all Vietnamese territory north of the line set roughly at the 17th parallel. French attempts to acquire enclaves in the area of the bishoprics and around Haiphong had been rejected, and all French forces were to be withdrawn from Haiphong within 300 days. Moreover, the Final Declaration of the Conference specified that the demarcation line was provisional and, under Article 7, would be expunged by elections to be held in July, 1956. The DRV, therefore, could look forward to a possible legal victory at the ballot boxes within two years.

But, the disappointments to the Viet Minh must have weighed heavily also. National unity was specifically compromised by the creation of two zones divided by a demilitarized area at the 17th, rather than the 13th or 14th, parallel. A fast political solution in six months had to be bargained away as well; elections would not be held for two years, and even then under international, not strictly Vietnamese, supervision. Finally, the Viet Minh had been forced to yield completely on their claims advanced in support of the Pathet Lao and Free Khmer forces. In Laos and Cambodia, as in Vietnam, international rather than indigenous inspection teams were to be admitted. The so-called resistance forces would either have to be withdrawn (in Laos, following temporary regroupment) or demobilized (in Cambodia) on the spot. The Viet Minh could only salvage promises from the governments of Laos and Cambodia -- contained in their separate declarations of 21 July -- that "citizens" of the two countries would be able to participate as candidates or electors in elections to be held during 1955. The Viet Minh accepted these results even though they went well beyond compromise positions which they advanced through the talks.

b. The DRV is Insured of Territorial Consolidation

The Viet Minh had no desire to surrender their de facto control over considerable areas of Vietnam outside the Tonkin Delta. During June and July, according to CIA maps, Viet Minh forces held down the larger portion of Annam (excepting the major port cities) and significant pockets in the Cochin-China delta. Their consequent claim to all the territory north of a line running northwest from the 13th to the 14th parallel (from Tuy Hoa on the coast through Pleiku to the Cambodian border) was far more in keeping with the actual military situation than the French demand.
for location of the partition line at the 18th parallel. Yet, the French would never consent to admitting communist control on the borders of both Cambodia and Laos. The final decision to partition the country at the 17th parallel was, nevertheless, a success to the extent that it provided the DRV with absolute, unchallenged political control of half of Vietnam -- a situation which the Viet Minh began then to view as the first crucial step in the series of political moves that would achieve goals commensurate with their military power: the quick political conquest ("liberation") of the rest of the country.

c. Election Plans Point to Eventual DRV Domination

In keeping with their desire for haste in achieving an "all-Vietnamese" political settlement, the Viet Minh, while agreeing to partition, wanted it to be temporary and to be followed quickly by elections. The Viet Minh delegates, therefore, had argued that elections should be held six months after a cease-fire. But, the French retorted elections should be held 18 months after completion of the regroupment process, or between 22 and 23 months after the cease-fire. The compromise, urged by the USSR and China, accomplished what was in fact the most important aim of the election talks: the fixing of a date, thus providing insurance that the elections would take place. In a very real sense, though, the two year lag gave the GVN invaluable time, and communist strategy on this issue seemed to have backfired.

4. The DRV is Satisfied with the Geneva Outcome

The Viet Minh evidently believed -- and no French authority on the spot doubted this -- that it had the capability to eliminate the French from Tonkin with one major offensive, and to drive on for further gains in the South against a weakened, demoralized Franco-Vietnamese army. Fighting and talking simultaneously was pointed to with approval by the Viet Minh as a tactic capable of being pursued for two years (like the Chinese in Korea) in order to assure greater territorial control. Whether the Viet Minh ultimately envisaged the conquest of all Vietnam before reaching agreement with the French is not known; but, like the French, the Viet Minh probably regarded maximum control of territory and population as insurance against future elections. Reporters covering the Geneva Convention quoted bitter comments of the DRV delegation after the final meeting, when the agreements were made public. There is good reason to believe, however, that, in reality, the Viet Minh were satisfied with the results attained at Geneva. This satisfaction was based in part on certain miscalculations on the part of the DRV, which underestimated the future commitment of the U.S. to the South Vietnamese and which also underestimated the survivability of Diem and his government. It is apparent that the DRV felt that its losses at Geneva amounted merely to delays that would set back the time schedules in Indochina, but that such a payment in time was well worth the territorial gains and the prevention of Western united action in Vietnam. Unlike GVN and U.S. statements during and after Geneva, Viet Minh representatives publicly supported both the military agreements and the Final Declaration without qualification.
THE OUTCOME FOR THE WEST

1. U.K. Diplomacy is an Unqualified Success

   a. British Prestige is Heightened

   The diplomacy of the Geneva Conference can be viewed as a success for the co-chairmen -- the U.K. and the USSR. Although some have described Chou En-lai as the most influential delegate at Geneva, and though Molotov rightfully has been credited with a key role in the initiation of needed compromises, Anthony Eden's presence and leadership made a difference in the results of the conference and in Britain's world image. Eden repeatedly acted as an intermediary not only between the Communists and the West, but also among the U.S., France, and the GVN as well. He aided Molotov in seeing proposals for compromise through to agreements, but he was also capable of espousing and maintaining unyielding support for firm Western positions. In particular, he was able to keep the Soviets convinced that the U.K. would be at the side of the U.S. if Communist intransigence led to a stalemate at Geneva. One specific pay-off for the U.K. was Peking's agreement on 17 June (after four years of silence on the point) to exchange charges d'affaires with London.

   b. Danger of a Wider War is Averted

   Tensions at Geneva were high. The Viet Minh was forcing the initiative on the battlefield in Indochina, the French Government was unstable, and at that time it seemed to many that all of strategic Vietnam would fall into Communist hands. Convictions were strongly held by many that that fall was inevitable unless the West took some united military action, or unless the diplomacy of Geneva brought unsuspected agreement. The danger of a wider war was very real. The U.K. wanted to support France and the United States, but at the price of British troops and money. London's goal was to terminate the war and reduce international tensions -- to do all this without acceding to a Communist victory, and without adversely affecting British interests in that area of the world. The U.K. managed to steer a course close to its goals despite the fact that the British public was against U.K. military involvement in Indochina. In the end, Eden was able to help avert the risks of a wider war and to bring the U.K. into SEATO -- presumably to help protect British gains at Geneva.

2. For France, the Results are Better Than Expected

   a. France is Extricated without Dishonor

   The French, probably more than any other party to the conference, had cause for satisfaction. With cooperation from the other major powers, needless to say, the French found themselves a political beneficiary at
Geneva, despite France's unstable domestic politics and its poor military posture in Indochina. The settlements at Geneva were respectable enough for the French Government to stay in power. If anything, the results of Geneva provided a greater measure of internal political cohesion than France had enjoyed in a number of years. It would have been very difficult for any French Government to continue the actual fighting in Indochina -- especially when it appeared to many that France was losing.

b. France Retains a Significant Foothold in Indochina

The results at Geneva also allowed France to hold on to something very tangible -- most of Indochina itself. The Viet Minh forces and auxiliaries in Cambodia and Laos were shunted aside, preserving paramount French influence in Vientiane and Phnom Penh. Moreover, in South Vietnam the French maintained clear title to their military, cultural, and economic interests; in North Vietnam, they had some prospect of salvaging their investments.

As early as 26 June, France made it privately clear that its intention was to maintain a viable Vietnamese state in the south. Thus, when in late June the Franco-Viet Minh "underground" talks were elevated to direct discussions between Jean Chauvel and Pham Van Dong, the French gave as one of their objectives the hope of arriving at an equitable territorial settlement "which will assure the State of Vietnam a territory as solid as possible..." Although aware of possible violent GVN reaction against partition, the French considered that arrangement best for the GVN inasmuch as it would enable the country "to consolidate herself in such a fashion as to create in the face of the Viet Minh an authentically national and independent force." 2/ In agreeing to partition, the French Government, like Washington, was motivated in part by a desire to assure the State of Vietnam a defensible territory within which the Saigon regime could attempt to construct a stable authority competitive with the DRV.

3. GVN Achieves More Than Its Situation Warrants

Considering the fact that the newly independent State of Vietnam was still little more than a figurehead for French authority, that the French by far were carrying the burden of the fighting against the Viet Minh, and that the French and Vietnamese together were not doing well against the Viet Minh, the GVN received much more than they could have realistically expected from the Geneva Conference. Indeed, Geneva opened new opportunity to the GVN. Though territory had been lost, a way was gained for the establishment of governmental authority in the south. Only through consolidation of territory and regroupment of population could Bao Dai have hopes of being able to meet the challenges -- whether at the polls or militarily -- that the Viet Minh were sure to provide in the future. The GVN delegation at Geneva nonetheless took the view that the Accords were a sell-out to the Communists. While the Saigon Regime did not directly disavow these agreements in the sense that they
rejected them altogether, or hinted at their intention of ignoring them, it clearly put a special interpretation on the agreements. For example, the GVN made it plain from the beginning that it would not countenance unsupervised elections. Moreover, it refused to contemplate elections unless and until it could secure and govern all its territory. This position was advantageous for the GVN, because it gave the DRV incentive to avoid actions south of the 17th parallel which might disrupt the election time-table, or give the GVN an excuse for refusing to hold elections. Through the concessions of the Communist countries and the firmness of its Western Allies, the GVN had been given time to consolidate itself.

4. U.S. Attitude on Geneva is Mixed

a. Initial U.S. Public View is Cautious

The U.S. viewed the Conference results with mixed emotions. Publicly, the American position was that the Accords represented the best that could have been obtained from a bad situation. The President, at a 21 July news conference, declined to criticize the Accords. He said they contain "features which we do not like, but a great deal depends on how they work in practice." He announced the U.S. intention to establish permanent missions in Laos and Cambodia, and said the U.S. was actively "pursuing discussions with other free nations with a view to the rapid organization of a collective defense in Southeast Asia in order to prevent further direct or indirect Communist aggression in that general area." 3/ Under Secretary Smith took the same line two days later. Denying that Geneva was another "Munich," Smith said: "I am . . . convinced that the results are the best that we could possibly have obtained in the circumstances," adding that "diplomacy has rarely been able to gain at the conference table what cannot be gained or held on the battlefield." 4/ Finally, Secretary Dulles, also on 23 July, made a statement to the press oriented toward the future. Referring to "the loss in Northern Vietnam," Dulles expressed the hope that much would be learned from the experience toward preventing further Communist inroads in Asia. Two lessons could be culled, the Secretary observed. First, popular support was essential against Communist subversion; "the people should feel that they are defending their own national institutions." Second, collective defense should precede an aggressive enemy move rather than occur as a reaction to it. A collective security system in Southeast Asia, he concluded, would check both outright aggression and subversion. 5/

b. Public and Private Reactions Vary

These initial public U.S. reactions to the Conference results were at considerable variance with what was being said within government councils. The fact that another piece of territory had been formally ceded to the Communists obviously weighed heavily on the Administration. When papers were drawn up for the National Security Council in August, the Geneva Conference was evaluated as a major defeat for Western
diplomacy and a potential disaster for U.S. security interests in the Far East. The Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) stated that the Final Declaration of the Conference "completed a major forward stride of Communism which may lead to the loss of Southeast Asia. It, therefore, recorded a drastic defeat of key policies in NSC 5405 and a serious loss for the free world, the psychological and political effects of which will be felt throughout the Far East and around the globe." In a separate report, the NSC was somewhat more specific concerning the extent of the damage: the Communists acquired "an advance salient" in Vietnam for use in military and non-military ways; the U.S. lost prestige as a leader in Asia capable of stemming Communist expansion; the Communist peace line gained at America's expense; Communist military and political prestige was enhanced as the result of their ability to exploit unstable situations in Southeast Asian countries without resort to armed attack.

c. U.S.-U.K. Seven-Point Program is Mostly Accomplished

The provisions of the Accords, however, should have furnished the U.S. grounds for some satisfaction. Comparing the U.S.-U.K. seven-point memorandum of 29 June with the final settlement nearly one month later, the Conference had very nearly satisfied the minimum U.S. objectives -- despite Washington's apprehension over faltering British or French support.

(1) The integrity and independence of Laos and Cambodia were preserved, and Viet Minh forces were, in the main, withdrawn from those two countries.

(2) Southern Vietnam was retained (although without an enclave in the North), and the partition line was drawn somewhat south of Dong Hoi.

(3) Laos, Cambodia, and "retained" Vietnam were not prevented from forming "non-Communist regimes" (in the case of Vietnam, within the two-year pre-election period); nor were they expressly forbidden "to maintain adequate forces for internal security." Vietnam's right to import arms and other war materiel was, however, restricted to piece-by-piece replacement, and a ceiling was fixed on foreign military personnel at the number in the country at the War's close.

(4-5) Recalling Dulles' interpretation of 7 July that elections should "be only held as long after cease-fire agreement as possible and in conditions free from intimidation to give democratic elements best chance," the Accords did not stipulate "political provisions which would risk loss of the retained area to Communist control..." or exclude the possibility of the ultimate reunification of Vietnam by peaceful means." Although both Dulles and Mendes-France preferred that no date be set for the elections, the compromise two-year hiatus gave the Americans, the French, and the South Vietnamese a significant breathing spell. The
U.S. priority in the aftermath was accorded to programs designed to "give democratic elements best chance" through economic assistance and political support for South Vietnam. Elections, as Dulles indicated during the Conference, and as the OCB concurred in August, were agreeable to the U.S.; but they were two years away, and the primary task in the interim was seen as "to maintain a friendly non-Communist South Vietnam." The corollary objective (stated by the NEC in August, 1954, and approved by the President) "to prevent a Communist victory through all-Vietnam elections," then did not connote U.S. determination to subvert the Accords; rather, it appears to have meant that U.S. influence would aim at assuring that the communists would not gain an electoral victory through force, deceit, or other undemocratic methods.

(6) The Accords expressly provided for the transfer of individuals desiring to move from one zone to another.

(7) The Accords did seem, at the time, to have basically fulfilled the precondition of providing "effective machinery for international supervision of the agreement." Although the machinery would be the ICC's rather than the UN's, Under Secretary Smith noted that the ICC would have a veto power on important questions, would be composed of one genuine neutral (India) and one pro-Western government (Canada), and would be permitted full freedom of movement into demilitarized zones and frontier and coastal areas. Smith, on 19 July, gave this assessment:

"Taking everything into consideration, I strongly feel this is satisfactory and much better than we were able to obtain in Korea. French feel, and Eden and I agree, that with such composition built-in veto will work to our advantage. This setup is best French or anybody else could get, and I feel it is within spirit of point 7." Smith States U.S. Position on Accords

The final statement by Under Secretary Smith, setting forth the U.S. position on the Accords, provides the only public measure of the U.S. commitment to them. At Smith's urging, Dulles agreed that the U.S. delegation could take note of the Final Declaration as well as of the military agreement. But, Smith was specifically instructed not to take note of paragraph 13 of the Final Declaration. That paragraph aimed at ensuring respect for the armistice accords in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam by declaring the conference agreement "to consult one another on any question which may be referred to them by the International Supervisory Commission..." Dulles felt that provision implied:

"a multilateral engagement with communists which would be inconsistent with our basic approach and which
subsequently might enable Communist China to charge us with alleged violations of agreement to which it might claim both governments became parties. \[13/\]

Aside from taking note of the three military armistice agreements and paragraphs 1 to 12 of the Final Declaration, Smith, in line with long-standing U.S. policy and his instructions of 16 July from Dulles, declared on the Government's behalf that the U.S. "will refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb" the Accords. Moreover, the U.S. "would view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the aforesaid agreements with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security." Finally, Smith reiterated a U.S. policy declaration of 29 June 1954 positing U.S. support of UN supervision of free elections designed to reunify countries "now divided against their will..." Smith mentioned on this point that the U.S. could not associate with any arrangement that would hinder "its traditional position that peoples are entitled to determine their own future..."
FOOTNOTES
(Section I, pp. 1-11)


2. In forwarding these conditions to the Embassy for transmittal to the French, Dulles noted that a prompt, favorable decision would be premature inasmuch as it might internationalize the war in a way offensive to the British, leaving the French with the difficult choice of internationalization or capitulation. Dulles "eyes only" tel. to Paris NIACT 4023, May 11, 1954 (TOP SECRET). The conditions are also cited in Jean Lacouture and Philippe Devillers, La fin d'une guerre: Indochine 1954 (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1960), pp. 176-77.

3. Dulles' words are as paraphrased. In a State Department Memorandum of Conversation, May 11, 1954, of a White House conference May 10 attended by the President, Dulles, Wilson, Deputy Defense Secretary Anderson, Radford, Robert Bowie, and Douglas MacArthur II (TOP SECRET).

4. Dillon "eyes only" from Paris to the Under Secretary (for Dulles) No. 4383, May 14, 1954 (TOP SECRET).

5. Dillon commented: "I am certain that unless we can find some way to get around this requirement that the Vietnamese have the option of leaving the French Union, French will never ask for outside assistance." In ibid.

Dillon proposed that the real objection among Asians to the position of the Associated States rested not on the "purely juridical" problem of the right to leave the Union, but on Indochina's lack of powerful national armies. The Ambassador recommended that American training and equipping of the Vietnamese National Army (VNA), coupled with a French statement of intention to withdraw the Expeditionary Corps after theestablishment of peace and a national army, would significantly dampen Asian antagonism to the Bao Dai regime. (Dillon from Paris tel. NIACT 4402 to Dulles, May 17, 1954, TOP SECRET).

Why Dillon assumed Asians would significantly change their attitude toward French Indochina when, even with an American takeover of the training and equipping of the VNA, French forces would still be on Vietnamese territory for a lengthy period is not known.

6. Dulles "eyes only" to Paris (Dillon) tel. NIACT 4094, May 15, 1954 (TOP SECRET).

7. Dulles "eyes only" to Smith at Geneva tel. TEDUL 75, and to Dillon at Paris No. 4104, May 17, 1954 (TOP SECRET).


9. FEA, Annex on "Studies to be Undertaken Immediately within United States Government," attached to ibid., (TOP SECRET).

11. This conceptualization stemmed from discussions of the NSC Planning Board, and was part of a broader contingency study program. See the Board's statement in an enclosure to a memorandum for Robert Bowie (the Board's chairman), May 19, 1954 (TOP SECRET).


13. These conclusions were subsequently confirmed when, at the direction of General Ridgway, a technical team of seven officers representing the Engineer, Transportation, and Signal Corps went to Indochina on a covert mission to determine military and military-related resources available there in the event U.S. intervention was implemented. The team spent the period May 31-June 22 in the field. Their conclusions were, in general, that Indochina was devoid of the logistical, geographic, and related resources necessary to a substantial American ground effort such as Ridgway felt would be required for a success. The group's findings are in a report from Col. David W. Heiman, its leader, to Ridgway, July 12, 1954 (CONFIDENTIAL).

The Chiefs' conclusions were disputed, however, by Drumright (in a memorandum to MacArthur, May 24, 1954, TOP SECRET). He argued that if, as everyone agreed, Indochina was vital to American security, the U.S. should not consider more than a token ground troop commitment to be a serious diversion of our capabilities. While not arguing for a substantial troop commitment, Drumright suggested that the U.S. plan for that eventuality rather than count on defense with atomic weapons or non-nuclear strikes on Chinese territory. Somehow, however, Drumright's concern about the Chinese did not extend to the consideration that a massive U.S. troop commitment, which he stated elsewhere in the memorandum might prove necessary should token forces fail to do the job, risked bringing on the Chinese.


16. On April 28 French and Vietnamese representatives in Paris initialled separate treaties of independence and association. The treaties did not take effect, however, until June 4, when the French National Assembly finally approved the documents.


19. McClintock from Saigon No. 2468 to Dulles, May 19, 1954 (SECRET); Dillon from Paris "eyes only" for Dulles, Smith, and McClintock No. 4566, May 27, 1954 (TOP SECRET), reporting Trapnell-Ely talks. Ely and O'Daniel were still at odds, Dillon noted, over structural changes in the NVA, war strategy, and the role of U.S. advisors.


24. Eisenhower's unwavering attitude toward action in Asia only in concert with allies put him at odds with Dulles, who was prepared to act unilaterally at least in circumstances of overt aggression. When the issue of possible CPR air intervention came before the President, he is reported to have reacted sharply. Evidently supposing that conflict in the air would mean a Sino-U.S. war, the President said the United States would not intervene in China on any basis except united action. He would not be responsible for going into China alone unless a joint Congressional resolution ordered him to do so. The United States should in no event undertake alone to support French colonialism. Unilateral action by the United States in cases of this kind would destroy us. If we intervened alone in this case, we would be expected to intervene alone in other parts of the world. He made very plain that the need for united action as a condition of U.S. intervention was not related merely to the regional grouping for the defense of Southeast Asia but was also a necessity for U.S. intervention in response to Chinese Communist overt aggression.

Yet, when reminded by his Special Assistant, Robert Cutler, of NSC 5405's position that U.S. unilateral action could not be ruled out in the event of overt Chinese aggression against Thailand, Burma, or Malaya, and of Dulles' September 2, 1953 warning to China of a direct U.S. response to Chinese aggression in Indochina, the President stated that no difference existed between himself and Dulles. (Memorandum of conversation between Eisenhower and Cutler, June 1, 1954, TOP SECRET)
The next day, June 2, the President directly confronted Dulles on this matter. Dulles distinguished between U.S. involvement in a collective grouping, which could only come about on satisfaction of the preconditions, and action in response to overt Chinese aggression. The Secretary's view was that in the latter case, the U.S. should act unilaterally upon authorization by Congress, citing prior statements by himself and the President that had warned China of the consequences of overt aggression. The President responded, according to Cutler's report, that direct Chinese aggression would force him to go all the way with naval and air power (including "new weapons") directed at air bases and ports in mainland China. He would therefore have to have much more than Congressional authorization in view of the likely public reaction to a Presidential request of Congress for war acts against China. Even though the Thais, Filipinos, French, and Indochinese would likely support such action, other countries, such as Australia, had to be brought along as well. The President, in short, was as concerned about the politics as the logic of getting involved in a conflict with China. (Memorandum of conference in the President's office, June 2, 1954, involving the President, Dulles, Anderson, Radford, MacArthur, and Cutler, TOP SECRET.) At its 200th meeting on 3 June, the NSC received, considered, and agreed upon the President's views.

Following this important Presidential determination, Dulles called in the Australian and New Zealand ambassadors on the question of overt Chinese aggression in Southeast Asia. He explained that direct Chinese action was unlikely, but that the French had been pressing for assurance of a U.S. reply to Chinese air intervention in the delta. He reported the U.S. position that Chinese aggression required a collective response and a UN appeal, and distinguished this procedure from the united action concept of March 29. A brief memorandum was suggested by the Secretary by which the ANZUS powers would pledge, in the event of overt CPR aggression, to request approval of their parliaments for the use of armed forces, support a UN appeal by the attacked party, and seek to persuade other free nations to join in acting against China. The ambassadors, however, merely asked questions and, apparently, the proposed memorandum was not agreed upon by any of the Allies during the course of the Geneva Conference. See Dulles priority tel. to American Embassy - Canberra No. 238, June 5, 1954 (TOP SECRET).


26. Dillon tel. to Dulles No. 4766, June 9, 1954 (TOP SECRET). Also, Dulles tel. to American Embassy - Paris No. 4286, May 27, 1954 (TOP SECRET); here, the American position was that French forces would be maintained during united action except for normal troop rotation, replacement by native forces as the military situation permits, and consultation with allies engaged in the united action.

28. Murphy (acting Secretary) "eyes only" tel. to American Embassy - Paris (Dillon), No. 4508, June 10, 1954 (TOP SECRET).

29. Dulles "eyes only" priority to American Embassy - Paris No. 4579, June 14, 1954 (TOP SECRET).

30. Dulles priority to American Consul - Geneva (Smith) TEDUL 197, June 14, 1954 (TOP SECRET).

31. Dillon "eyes only" from Paris to Dulles No. 4841, June 14, 1954 (TOP SECRET).

32. See, e.g., Schumann's remarks to Dillon in the latter's cable from Paris No. 4766, June 9, 1954 (TOP SECRET).

33. Dulles to American Consul - Geneva (Smith) TEDUL 208, June 16, 1954 (TOP SECRET).

34. Smith "eyes only" for the Secretary from Geneva DULTE 164, June 9, 1954 (TOP SECRET).

35. Dillon priority telegram to Dulles No. 4424, May 18, 1954. Cf. Dulles' comment of June 7 in a cable to Geneva (priority TEDUL 169, TOP SECRET): "I have long felt and still feel that the French are not treating our proposal seriously but toying with it just enough to use it as a talking point at Geneva."

36. Dulles priority tel. to American Consul - Geneva TEDUL 175, June 8, 1954 (TOP SECRET).
FOOTNOTES  
(Section II, pp. 12-20)

6. Dulles "eyes only" tel. TEDUL 222 to Smith at Geneva, June 18, 1954 (TOP SECRET).
14. Ibid.
16. Dulles to American Embassy - Paris tel. No. 77, July 7, 1954 (SECRET). Regarding the U.S. view of a Ho Chi Minh electoral victory, we not only have the well-known comment of Eisenhower that Ho, at least in 1954, would have garnered 80 per cent of the vote, but also the privately expressed view of Livingston Merchant (Dept. of State) that Ho would be the likely winner. See the latter in Dept. of State Memorandum of Conversation of May 31, 1954, at which Merchant reportedly "felt their [the Associated States'] status was sufficiently independent so that they could freely express their will on a point of this type, although he recognized the possibility that in Viet Nam Ho might win a plebiscite, if held today." (TOP SECRET).


25. Ibid.


27. In a talk between Huang Hua (of the CPR delegation) and Seymour Topping of the New York Times, as reported in Smith's tel. SECTO 661 from Geneva, July 19, 1954 (TOP SECRET).


29. This threat was transmitted through Seymour Topping by Huang Hua near the end of the conference. See Smith's tel. SECTO 639 from Geneva, July 18, 1954 (TOP SECRET).
FOOTNOTES
(Section III, pp. 21-32)


7. The U.S. objection was based on long-standing opposition to any move that would accord China the status of a major power equivalent to the fifth member of a "Big Five." See, e.g., Dulles to American Embassy - Canberra tel. No. 158, April 1, 1954 (TOP SECRET).


10. Lacouture and Devillers, p. 123, n. 3.


12. Ibid., p. 187.


15. Lacouture and Devillers, p. 234.

16. French insistence on the 18th parallel originated in the recommendation of General Navarre, who was asked several questions by the French delegation at Geneva regarding the likely impact of the then-existing military situation on the French negotiatory position. Navarre's responses were sent April 21. On the demarcation line, Navarre said that the 18th parallel would leave "us" the ancient political capital of Hue and Tourane (Da Nang), and permit the retention of militarily valuable terrain. See General Ely's Memoires: l'Indochina dans la Tourmente (Paris: Plan, 1964), p. 112, and Lacouture and Devillers, p. 126.

17. Ibid., pp. 235-36.

19. I.C. Restricted/5, p. 16 (C). Records of the Restricted Sessions are summaries rather than word-for-word quotations, for the most part.

20. I.C. Restricted/6, p. 16 (C).


22. U.S. VerbMin/7, p. 344.


24. CIA Report CS-42198, July 14, 1954, from Saigon (SECRET). Lacouture and Devillers hold that Diem was stupefied when he learned of partition for the first time from Ambassador Heath via a personal letter from Eisenhower, July 12 (pp. 256-57).


31. Ibid., p. 355.


33. Dulles to Smith at Geneva priority tel. TREDUC 212, June 17, 1954 (TOP SECRET).

34. Smith from Geneva priority DULTE 195, June 18, 1954 (SECRET). In an aide-memoire delivered by Henri Bonnet, the French ambassador to Washington, to Dulles and Eden on June 26, the French government urged the U.S. not to encourage an adverse Vietnamese reaction to partition. The U.S. was also asked "to intervene with the Vietnamese to counsel upon them wisdom and self-control and to dissuade them from refusing an agreement which, if it is reached, is dictated not by the spirit of abandoning them, but on the contrary by the desire to save in Indochina all that can possibly be saved, and to give the Vietnamese
state, under peaceful conditions, opportunities which have not always been possible heretofore because of the war." See Dulles' tel. No. 4852 to American Embassy - Paris, June 28, 1954 (TOP SECRET).

FOOTNOTES
(Section IV, pp. 33-39)

1. U.S. VerbMin/8, 355
2. U.S. VerbMin/3, 104-105
3. I.C. Restricted/6, 16.
4. I.C. Restricted/7, 13
5. I.C. Restricted/8, 8-9
6. U.S. VerbMin/7, 344
7. I.C. Restricted/14, 26
8. SECTO 633, July 17, 1954 (SECRET)
9. SECTO 654, July 18, 1954 (CONFIDENTIAL)
10. SECTO 673, July 19, 1954 (SECRET)
FOOTNOTES
(Section V, pp. 40-49)

1. CIA Study 0017/66, "Asian Communist Employment of Negotiations as a Political Tactic" (S), p. 42.

2. CIA Study 0017/66 (S), p. 43.


4. Ibid., pp. 65-66.

5. After Dien Bien Phu and the withdrawal of most French forces to the Tonkin Delta, Viet Minh strength in and around the Delta was reported as 94 infantry battalions, 1 artillery division, 110 district companies, and from 40,000 to 50,000 militia. French-Vietnamese strength stood at 109 battalions (of which some 60 percent was VNA) and about 80,000 auxiliary troops and militia. Despite this manpower advantage for the French Union forces, an intelligence estimate for the period said they faced possible defections on a mounting scale which could become very large if the Viet Minh scored major victories or if the French were believed about to abandon Hanoi and portions of the Delta. See NIE-63-4-54, "Probable Military and Political Developments in Indochina over the Next 30 Days (15 June-15 July)," June 15, 1954 (SECRET). In General Valluy's report to the five-power military staff conference on June 4, moreover, he stated there were no southern Vietnamese who could oppose northern Vietnamese once the Tonkin Delta was lost and defense of the South became necessary. See Dulles' tel. TEDUL 171 to the American Consul - Geneva, June 7, 1954 (TOP SECRET).


7. IC Restricted/1 (C), p. 8.

8. CIA Study 0017/66 (S), p. 43.


11. CIA Study 0017/66 (S), p. 44.

12. IC Restricted/14 (C), pp. 18-19.

13. IC Restricted/14 (C), p. 9; CIA Study 0017/66 (S), p. 45.

14. IC Restricted/15 (C), p. 16.

15. IC Restricted/6 (C), p. 7.

16. DULTE 187, Geneva to SecState, 16 June 1954 (TOP SECRET)
17. SECTO 489, translation of aide memoire, Bonnet to State, 28 June 1954 (TOP SECRET).

18. SECTO 557, Geneva to State, 3 July 1954 (TOP SECRET).

19. SECTO 560, Geneva to State, 6 July 1954 (TOP SECRET).


22. Lacouture and Devillers, p. 284.


25. CIA Study 0017/66 (S), p. 49.
FOOTNOTES
(Section VI, pp. 50-58)

1. J. H. Mackintosh, Strategy and Tactics of Soviet Foreign Policy

2. In a talk with Nong Kimny, Cambodian Foreign Minister, July 14;

3. In a talk with Mendes-France, June 24; in Dillon tel. from Paris
   priority No. 5035, June 24, 1954 (TOP SECRET).

4. Ibid. and Johnson priority tel. SECTO 517, June 24, 1954, from Geneva
   (SECRET), reporting Mendes-France's conversation with Chou in Berne.
   Chou qualified this somewhat by urging that the resistance elements
   in the two countries be provided suitable means of re-integration into
   their respective societies.


6. Ibid. See also Johnson priority tel. SECTO 517, June 24, 1954, from
   Geneva (SECRET).

7. These views were presented, e.g., to Seymour Topping by Huang Hua at
   a meeting described by Topping as deadly serious and devoid of propa­
   gandistic remarks. "When Huang spoke of possibility American bases in
   Indochina or anti-communist pact in Southeast Asia, he became very
   agitated, his hands shook, and his usually excellent English broke
   down, forcing him to work through interpreter." See Smith's tel.
   SECTO 661 from Geneva, July 19, 1954 (TOP SECRET). See also Johnson
   priority tel. SECTO 517 from Geneva, June 24, 1954 (SECRET); Smith
   priority tel. SECTO 463 from Geneva, June 17, 1954 (SECRET); and Smith

8. Smith tel. SECTO 635 from Geneva, July 17, 1954 (SECRET). Interestingly,
   at this same conference, Chou indicated it would be acceptable for the
   Cambodians to have French or British military instructors, but not Ameri­
   cans.

   of Negotiations as a Political Tactic, RSS No. 0017/66, p. 40 (SECRET/
   No Foreign Dis/Controlled Dis.).


12. CIA Memorandum RS 0017/66 (cited previously), p. 39 (SECRET/No Foreign
    Dis/Controlled Dis.).

13. Ibid., p. 41.

15. Ibid., pp. 239-40.

16. CIA Memo: "Asian Communist Employment of Negotiations as a Political Tactic" (SECRET), RSS 0017/66.


22. Ibid.


25. See, e.g., Lacouture and Devillers, p. 213.


27. This was the demand made by the Viet Minh in secret talks with the French. Reported in Smith's priority tel. from Geneva DULTE 187, June 16, 1954 (TOP SECRET).


30. In a talk with Smith June 19, Molotov discussed the Laos and Cambodia resistance movements and said he saw the possibility of agreement so long as neither side (i.e., the French or the Viet Minh) "adopted one-sided views or put forward extreme pretensions." Molotov said about 50 percent of Lao territory was not controlled by the royal government (a curious way of putting it), with a much smaller movement in Cambodia. The tone of Smith's report on this conversation suggests that Molotov saw no obstacles to Viet Minh withdrawal of its "volunteers." Smith tel. DULTE 202 from Geneva, June 19, 1954 (TOP SECRET).


32. See e.g., Smith from Geneva priority tel. SECTO 637, July 17, 1954 (SECRET).


4. CIA Memorandum RSS 0017/66, p. 46 (SECRET/NoForDis/Controlled Dis).

5. Mackintosh, pp. 84-85.


7. In a talk with the Cambodian Foreign Minister Sam Sary, Philip Bonsal suggested that it would not be possible to guarantee Cambodia's security by a Conference mechanism subject to communist veto. Bonsal said, however, that once a satisfactory cease-fire were concluded, one that did not prevent Cambodia from cooperating with other non-communist states in defense matters, "he was confident U.S. and other interested countries looked forward to discussing with Cambodian Government the security problem." (Johnson priority tel. SECTO 627 from Geneva, July 16, 1954, SECRET.) When Sam Sary called a few days later on Smith in the company of Nong Kimny (Ambassador to Washington), the Under Secretary recommended that Phnom Penh, at the Conference, state its intention not to have foreign bases on its territory and not to enter into military alliances. At the same time, though, Cambodia would be free to import arms and to employ French military instructors and technicians. While Cambodia would thus perhaps not be free to join the contemplated SEATO, she might still benefit from it. Smith "assured the Cambodian Foreign Minister that, in our view, any aggression overt or covert against Cambodian territory would bring pact into operation even though Cambodia not a member. I took position that French Union membership afforded Cambodia adequate desirable means of securing through France necessary arms, some of which would be American, as well as necessary instructors and technicians, some of which might well be American trained." Nong Kimny "limited himself to statement that Cambodia relies heavily on U.S. for eventual protection against aggression and that Cambodia desires to emerge from current conference with maximum freedom of action re measures Cambodia may take to assure defense." Smith tel. SECTO 650 from Geneva, July 18, 1954 (CONFIDENTIAL).


FOOTNOTES
(Section VIII, pp. 64-69)


2. Aide-memoire delivered by Bonnet to Dulles and Eden June 26, in Dulles' Tel No. 1852 to American Embassy - Paris, 28 June 1954 (TOP SECRET)


5. Department of State press release No. 400, 23 July 1954

6. OCB, Progress Report on United States Objectives and Courses of Action With Respect to Southeast Asia (NSC 5405), 6 August 1954 (TOP SECRET)

7. NSC, Review of U.S. Policy in the Far East (NSC 5429), 4 August 1954 (TOP SECRET)

8. Dulles to American Embassy, Paris, Tel No. 77, 7 July 1954 (SECRET)

9. In its Progress Report of 6 August, OCB said there was need for "political action" to build a strong foundation in free Asia for the continued orientation of the countries there toward the Free World. "A test of such political action and orientation will be the elections in Laos and Cambodia during 1955, and in North and South Vietnam during 1956."

10. This objective, stated in NSC 5429/1, was approved by the President. See NSC, Review of U.S. Policy in the Far East, 12 August 1954 (TOP SECRET)

11. Ibid.

12. Smith from Geneva Tel SECTO 666, 19 July 1954 (TOP SECRET)

13. Dulles to Smith at Geneva, Tel TOSEC 576 NIACI, 19 July 1954 (TOP SECRET)