

# Towards vietnam

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In 1961, under the President-ship of Kennedy, America took the middle path as considered to be the most conducive policy to solve crises in Vietnam. This middle path included sending of machinery and advisors instead of large-scale troops as was suggested in White Paper or as was being recommended by his advocators on a negotiation table. This decision proved futile as it accorded the increase in the chances of success of NLF.

As more and more news began to pour in, tension arose in Kennedy's government machinery and they escalated upon a plan of providing " Safe Hamlets" to the villagers developed by GVN. The main purpose was to segregate them from NLF, but this strategy too did not head to in any direction, as this resulted in alienating villagers further from the Saigon regime. This policy though helped GVN in reaching countryside yet ironically produced more cadres for the NLF. The years of war between 1963- 1968 in Vietnam were considered to be the years of Escalation and Americanization.

In 1963, as NLF was heading towards victory, Diem's brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, attacked Buddhist pagodas of South Vietnam; this resulted in massive protests on the streets of Saigon, and several Buddhist monks committed self-immolation. This made Kennedy to send in coup in the same year. But some of the Diem's own generals in the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) approached Kennedy seeking request to overthrow Diem and on 1st November 1963, Deim and his brother was arrested and then later killed.

But after three weeks, President Kennedy too was assassinated at Dallas. At the time of his assassination, there were 16, 000 advisors. Though Kennedy's policy was not much successful yet he was able to continue his war with very little military intervention, but as soon as new president, Lyndon Baines

Johnson took over, his conviction and policy made him to show world, the military might of America. He took the firm stand and urged for attaining more powers after the raid of DAV on two of US ships in the Gulf of Tonkin shook him.

But looking at the strategies being adopted by Communists parties creating hindrances in the war as well as in the political efforts of United States, the Johnson administration too advocated what they termed as “ cold blood” strategy- a war but with very little resources and little effect on their own nation. But this also proved futile, as this war created an adverse effect on their domestic front to the extent that Mr. Johnson was forced to think on the domestic consequences of his every major decision.

In 1964, Washington had made all the plans to send all military strengths as retaliation to Tonkin Gulf incident. By 1968, situation became worse when DRV and the NLF led unified attacks on the most important southern cities, which were known as Tet offensive in the West; its main purpose was to coax Johnson to sit on for negotiations. Though communists were defeated in battle yet it was psychological victory for them. As Johnson was totally burdened by the heavy weight of war and secondly opposition from his home front made him take a decision that made all the exercises of previous Presidents futile.

He decided not to support re-nomination of Democratic Party for president and was ready to go in for negotiations with communists to put an end to war. In 1968, secret negotiations were started to end the war but soon Republican challenger Nixon took over the charge of President-ship who professed to have a secret plan to put an end to war. But this secret plan

was nothing else then the strategic moves of Lyndon Johnson. He began what was termed as process of “Vietnamization” to bring to the ears of his own force that no Vietnamese was fighting in jungles of Southeast Asia and dying there.

This made the substitution of air wars over the American troops who returned home. Nixon increased the air attacks over DRV and for ground battle sent, ARVN. He also attacked Laos and Cambodia to put a barrier and an end to the communists supply routes and their safe sanctuaries. This was violation of the international rights of these countries. The air war had a little or no effect on Communists, but they continued with their efforts to make more and more demands in Paris. Though Nixon’s approach made critics quite but his repeated attacks as a protective cover for the retreat of American troops irritated U.

S citizens and paved the path for the U. S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and DRV representatives Xuan Thuy and Le Duc to think on peaceful lines of Paris. Many owe the strategic failure to President Lyndon Johnson’s policies, as it was during his tenure that America saw most of casualties. But according to Jeffrey Kimball, President Nixon was responsible for these states of affairs. He wrote in his much thought provoking book “Nixon's Vietnam War 1998”, that President Nixon must be held, responsible and accountable, for the failure.

It was quite true that America made wrong assessment of the strong folds of North Vietnamese in their soil and tried to resolve the problem with military strength, which was in itself a wrong move. Kimball argued that when Nixon took over the office, he was aware of the fact that this war could not be won

militarily yet he resorted for war because only by showing their might, they could force Hanoi into negotiations favorable to Nixon's view of honorable peace. His statement was based on the United States interest at the international level and on owing to his reelection. 4 Accordingly they wanted to endorse the President-ship of Thieu.

This device was a strategy to take America out of Vietnam on certain terms, but there were many uncertain in-linking parts like risk from China, several schemes of negotiations, effect on societies and Vietnamization etc, and all did not prove to be as effective as was supposed to be. He believed his political success to be based on the mad man theory: the efforts to make his enemies think that his opposition for communism was so strong that he could go to any extent like put in maximum force that would not only be accordingly disproportionate in size but also extremely dangerous.

5 Along with this, there was certain element of uncertainty, a policy forcing enemies to think on multitude lines on one subject to confuse them. The years, 1962 to 1969 were the years of great dissatisfaction and American's strategic misnomers on the Vietnam soils. Vietnam passing through the strategic influence of three American regimes only retaliated harsher. Though the Nixon policy also could not be considered as full success yet his strategy at least paved the path for both himself and Kissinger think that the best they could have done was to promise Thieu government a "decent interval" 6 of security once Americans would leave Vietnam.

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