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Arms Race: The Influence of Vietnamese War on International Peace 1960-1975

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Abstract
This work focussed on the influence of Vietnamese War on International Peace. The era heralded the advent of the most destructive instruments in the annals of human's development – the Atomic Bomb and the Ballistic Missiles. The presence of these instruments in the midst of humanity, gave rational beings something to worry about. During this period, international peace was exposed to the danger of being violated. More worrisome but engaging is this notion has continued to survive in many accounts of the era. Obviously, the role of Cold War in perpetuating conflict or enhancing peace in the international political system needs to be re-examined. This paper, therefore, re-examines, the impact of the Cold War on international peace, with Vietnam as area of concentration. Measures taken by the lead actors – the United States and the Soviet Union respectively, and how the two super powers explore the era in order to protect their national and vital interest. The paper finds out that the Vietnamese War violated international peace and polarised the international system. The paper thus argues that the entire world populace must have a sense of commitment to the international system. This is attainable only when the international political apparatus is organised and managed in such a way that it will reflect the people's yearnings. To realise this, we need a competent and dynamic world body which will be capable of interpreting what constitutes the overall human interests into common interest. The paper is historical: hence, it adopts a qualitative method of analysis. Useful pieces of information were obtained from important relevant documents, and array of secondary sources.

Keywords: War, Peace, Vietnamese War, International, Peace

1. Introduction

The period of détente was not without localized conflict, but these did not directly jeopardize relations between the United States (US) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR). The most notable of these was the Vietnamese War, which hung heavily over the 1960s and early 1970s. it was part of the overall Cold War confrontation and the American struggle against the spread of Communism in the world, but did not involve a direct confrontation between the two superpowers. The US justified its military intervention in Vietnam by the domino theory, which stated that if one country fell under the influence of Communism, the surrounding countries would inevitably follow. The aim was to prevent Communist domination of South East Asia.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy, convinced that Communist China was actively supporting North Vietnam, approved a US military campaign in Vietnam to help the nationalist government stave off the Communist rebellion. His successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, who was keen to see peace in South-East Asia and to maintain America's economic and political interest in the region, stepped up his country's involvement, massively expanding the American presence from 23, 000 troops in 1965 to over 540, 000 in 1969. The Viet Cong Communist rebels, supported by the North Vietnamese Army, were supplied along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, which consisted of a network of paths, tunnels and bunker that the Americans tried in vain to destroy. This only led the USSR and China to intensify their assistance to the Communist National Liberation Front (NLF), which they supplied with arms and food; however, they did not intervene directly. in February 1965, the United States began bombing military and industrial targets in North Vietnam. This was followed by a protracted guerrilla war, despite some fruitless attempt at international mediation.

In January 1968, the Communist *Tet* (New Year) offensive caused the conflict to escalate, plunging into doubt the Americans who had long been confident of ultimate victory. The American public, shocked by the daily television coverage and the heavy loss of life, became increasingly hostile to the war, forcing the country to withdraw and cut its military expedition.

Following new carpet-bombing raids carried out by the US Air Force on the orders of President Nixon, peace negotiations began in Paris in May 1968. The Paris Agreement of 27 January 1973 finally provided the United States with an opportunity to pull out from the conflict. Their South Vietnamese ally would stand alone for only two years before falling to the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese. The fall of Saigon on 30 April 1975 marked the true end of the Vietnam War. The American military intervention in the Vietnamese quagmire weighed heavily on US policy and caused serious damage to the country's international standing, especially in Western Europe.

The major concern of this study is to analyses the influence of the Vietnamese War on International Peace. One reliable mean of measuring the influence of "Arms Race" between US and USSR is by observing their output. The period of coverage is a period in which the Arms Race was at it prime – 1960 – 1975. The questions therefore are, is what happened in Vietnam qualified to be used as a yardstick, in assessing the influence of Cold War on internal peace? Did the Arms race, a grandchild of Cold War, led to balance of terror in international system; thus balance, prevented third world war?

The paper is divided into six parts. The first part is introduction. The second section deals with the theoretical framework which was used as a tool of analysis. This is followed by the conceptual clarification in order to clarify some words or concepts which may seem quite ambiguous so as to enable readers to understand them. The fourth part discusses The Influence of Vietnamese War on International Peace. The Aftermaths of the Cold War skirmishes over Vietnam section looks at the impact the arms race made on Vietnamese War. The last part was the conclusion.

The argument is that the existing world body is preoccupied with the maintenance of the status quo – thus throwing the original aim of collective security over-board. The pre-world war II's constitution, and operation of international body – the League of Nations – suited the mood of that time. But since the advent of atomic weapon, the goal of international community and that of individual nation-states changed. The international system, as constituted during the Cold War era was defective. It was inflexible and rigid. This was manifested in its inability to diffuse and control conflict within it.

2. Theoretical Framework

Cold War is a research field that poses serious problem of choice in adopting a theoretical framework for its analysis. This is because of the abundance of contending frameworks. There are System Theory, Mutual Aid Theory, Conflict Resolution, Centre Periphery, Marxist and Game Theory. These theories can equally provide a perfect theoretical mound for the analysis of the impact of Arms Race on Vietnamese War.

It is my intention to use the Game Theory as a tool of analyses because; it seems to be most relevant to the topic under investigation. Though not without blemish, the game theory has universal applicability to international political system. In this work, the researcher intended to liken the actors of the Cold War to players of various kinds of "parlour games" – drought, chess, chicken, poker, scramble or bridge games. The games are prone to conflict decision – making and co-operation.[i]

Game theory is a mathematical discipline that is designed to deal with the question of optimum

behaviour of participants in games of strategy and to determine the resulting equilibrium. In game theory, each participant endeavours to maximise their advantage in situations where the outcome depends on their actions, and the nature. The interests of participants in the game theory, are often opposed and sometimes parallel, to one another. In other words, conflicting interest and possible cooperation among participants are likely to be there. There is also mutual suspicious among participants because, some of them can forecast with certainty the next action of others. The proponents of game theory are John Von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstem who published the book, "The Theory of Games and Economic Behaviour in 1944.[ii]

Games are described by specifying possible behaviour within the rules of the game. In a game, the rules are given by physical and legal environment within which an individual's actions may take place. In the game of international politics, each actor has been rational beings, who has definite objectives and having at their disposal, some resources with which to confront their opponents in conflicts. The actors are expected to act rationally. Game involves moves and countermoves, which tends to explain the unfolding of the moves, the state of information of the players, and the alternative choices available to each actor at each encounter. Each actor, unaware of the opponent's choices, chooses a single number that identifies a strategy from sets of strategies allowing for all contingencies.

In game theory, the player is also expected to have perfect knowledge of the strategies open to him in pursuit of his aims. The players should also be able to design a strategy that covers all contingencies and ensure minimum risks and maximum – pay-off. In all games there are outcomes – the pay-off. It is the relationship between player and the price of objective; they aim at – a win, a loss, or draw. In game theory, theorist is interested in analysing the strategies that will enable the players to maximise their outcomes, and the prospect being usually small in range, requires careful study of the alternative course of action. The rules of the game are simply the distribution of resources and the employment of these resources. In Cold War, players are expected to know that nuclear missiles are not to be used – they are not part of the rules of international game.[iii]

Alliances are often formed in international politics. In game theory context, alliances mean, the combination of resources for the best advantage of the players. This is an indication that the players are many. Consequently, those who have common objectives, pool their resources together to enable them achieve their objective interests. This co-operation among actors is known as the variable – sum game which assumes that two or more parties can gain more individually by co-operating, especially in the long run, for according to Isaak:

Rather than arguing over existing economic pie, it is more satisfying to co-operate and create more pies, for every one by means that individual parties would not have available, if they merely worked on their own.[iv]

Conversely, the Zero-sum game – a pure conflict game or situation assumes that "Whatever one party gains, the other party necessarily losses and that co-operation is, therefore, irrational".[v]

A more appropriate model in international relations, is the multiparty non-zero-sum game; for, as Zawodny reminds us, "We must recognise that some types of international conflict

today can be resolved only by situations in which neither side losses and in which sometime both sides may win".[vi]

3. Conceptual Clarification

The study engages a few words or concepts which may seem quite ambiguous. These concepts require some clarifications. It is my intention to define them in brief to enable readers to understand and digest the work without racking their brain.

Arms Race: This is a pattern of competitive acquisition of military capability between two or more countries. The term is often used quite loosely to refer to any military buildup or spending increases by a group of countries. The competitive nature of this buildup often reflects an adversarial relationship. An arms race occurs when two or more countries increases to gain military and political superiority over one another.

17th Parallel: The seventeenth parallel was the provisional military demarcation line between North and South Vietnam established by the Geneva Accords of 1954. The Vietnamese Demilitarized Zone was a demilitarized zone established as a dividing line between North and South Vietnam as a result of the First Indo-China War. During the Vietnam War, it became important as the battleground demarcation separating North from South Vietnamese territories.

Cold War: This is a state of intensive competition devoid of armed conflict between states – a policy of making mischief by all methods short of War between nations.

Balance of Power: This is a theory of international relations which according to Isaak, "Balance of Power system is an equilibrium made up of approximately equal power or nations set against each other so that no one power can predominate".[vii]

International System: In the words of Stanley Hoffmann, "is a pattern of relations between the basic units of world politics, who is characterised by the scope of the objectives pursued by these units and of the tasks performed among them, as well as by the means used in order to achieve those goals and perform these tasks".[viii]

Deterrence: Deterrence "is persuading an enemy that attacking you will not be worth any potential gain".[ix]

Balance of Terror: Is a state of equilibrium in the possession of nuclear weapons by which both
Ideological powers could destroy each other.

Western Powers: The term western power is used to indicate the capitalist nations of Europe led by the United States.

The Influence of Vietnamese War on International Peace

Vietnam, by the end of Second World War, was a French colony. The Vietnamese problem can be traced to the past – war nationalist fervours amongst developing nations. This was given impetus by the Japanese occupation of Indo – China and their latter defeat in 1945. The De Gaulle regime, on arriving in Indo – China found Ho' Democratic Republic of Vietnam was recognised as a free state within the Indo – Chinese federation and to the French Union.

Negotiations between leaders of newly established Vietnam (Southern country) and French soon ran into difficulties. The Vietnamese insisted on both complete independence and unity, by which they meant unity with their ethnic kin in Tonkin and Cochin China. France refused to grant either and, in November 1946, fighting escalated as Haiphong was bombarded by the French, killing over 10,000 (Ten Thousand). The leaders and the Vietnam militias resorted to guerrilla war in Hanoi, on December 19, 1946. As from that day, the war began in earnest. Vietnam forces carrying on a guerrilla operation, controlled the rural areas and the French controlled the cities and the main lines of communications.

To bolster their position, the French set up a rival regime headed by Bao Dai in July 1949. Wart contended that "Vietnam had, by 1950, become another pawn in the Cold War".[x] Soon the Cold War actors became involved, with the Chinese and American furnishing aids to Ho – Chi – Minh's and France respectively. To this John Stipp et al, asserted thus:

The fighting went on, with France (generously supported by United States dollars and other aid) winning many battles, but steadily alienating the peasant population. After the communist victory in China, in 1949, Vietnam was supplied by them with arms and aid of many kinds.[xi]

Communist China and the Soviet Union extended recognition to the Republic of Vietminh in January 1950, and in February, the United States and Britain recognised Bao Dai's government. The wind of change blew against the French who were forced to fall upon Red River Delta in 1951. In early 1953, Vietminh launched offensive against Laos but retreated soon after. The retreat was attributed to Moscow's peace offensive. This implies that the Kremlin was not interested in influencing events in Vietnam and consequently the French position deteriorated and her causes became hopeless when she suffered a complete defeat at Dien Bien Phu in May, 1954, and France was forced to negotiate a settlement, aided by the great powers at Geneva, where the conference were held. According to Wart:

A conference of the great powers, then in session at Geneva Managed to salvage a modicum of French prestige by dividing Vietnam near the 17th parallel and on July 17, 1954, an armistice brought the military phase of the eight – years' conflict to a halt. As a launching site for a global war, Indo – China followed orean yielding the art of diplomacy.[xii]

Another significant aftermath of the conference was the recognition of the existing governments of Cambodia and law and the formation of an international armistice supervisory commission consisting of India, Poland, and Canada. France recognised the armistice in July, 1954, and in 1955, Bao Dai's rule ended and, in its stead, an anti – communist in South Vietnam and a pro – American named Ngo Dihn – Diem became prime Minister of South Vietnam and Ho – Chi – Minh was installed as the president of North Vietnam.

The Geneva Agreement was later dashed by its rejection by America on July, 1954, Mr. Walter Bedell Smith, President Eisenhower's special ambassador, dissociated the United States from the Geneva Agreements but he renounced any resort to force on them. This was followed by Mr. Dulle's initiation of South East Asia Defense Treaty later known as South East Asia Treaty Organisation, which Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Thailand and the

Philippines pledge to take counter communist aggression through collective effort. America, then took the training and financing of the South Vietnamese forces from the departing French. On Senator Mansfield's recommendation, Eisenhower flooded aid to Vietnam in order to retain Mr. Diem in office. In law, the United States virtually shouldered the expenses of the civil service and army.

Ho Chi – Minh nursed private, nationalist and communist ambitions right from the 1930's, of uniting the three countries of French Indo – China under Vietnamese communist rule. But the United States interests and Diem's stubbornness deprive, then of outright success and consequently, an insurrection, engendered by Lao Dong party was launched in 1958 and in 1961 January, Hanoi's National front for the liberation of South Vietnam was inaugurated in the South to direct operation and enlist the support of anti – Diem element. Following the communist upsurge, General Maxwell Taylor recommended an increasingly American military aid to South Vietnam and called on Diem to liberates his regime,

Soon Ho sent Vietminh fighters south of the dividing line to rally the countryside against Diem. In 1964, the United States government fearful that Ho – Chi – Minh would succeed in establishing communist rule throughout the whole land, increased its support of the Southern regime. Within two years, it had sent a third of a million soldiers to South Vietnam and had bombed various section of North Vietnam. Thus, in South East Asia, the Cold War had turned into a shooting war, which threatened to develop into a conflict.[xiii]

The American power met the most fanatical and nationalistic opposition. The anti-American feeling was so acute that America applied drastic and inhuman methods of countering it. She resorted to blanket bombing of the Vietnamese. The casually rate mounted to millions. This was inflated by the Massacre in Mailai. American influence however, continued dwindling while that of the Vietnamese communist won a major victory. Crozier, opined that,

In 1960's the American have been undergoing to their surprise, the unpleasant experience the French had had ten years earlier. Despite the superiority of the South Vietnamese forces in numbers and equipment and the presence of 16, 000 United States troops, the communists, controlled about two – thirds of the countryside and were still gaining strength in mid – 1964.[xiv]

The Vietcong's success rested virtually on the fact that Diem's regime had been repressive and unpopular and the incoherent of its military successor. Again, Diem was overthrown in November 1963. His successor's allies were foreign imperialists while that of Vietcong were Vietnamese. The Vietnamese war would have developed into World War, if not for Soviet Union's lack of enthusiasm in the era, for according to Crozier.

The Soviet Union has come to give the highest priority to the avoidance of war with the United States. To the extent that South East Asia is a possible flash point or series of flashpoints for a new World War, Soviet diplomacy has an interest in restraining Chinese policies where these seem likely to lead to hostilities between China and the United States.[xv]

The Aftermaths of the Cold War Skirmishes over Vietnam

Having patiently gone through the issues at stake in Vietnam

during the Cold War, it will be worthy outline its lasting effects on international peace. Chukwu opined that the Cold War affected international peace, so much, that it balkanised the world against itself.[xvi] Vietnam was divided along the 17th parallel with the communist occupying the North, while the capitalist occupies the South.

Another significance of the Cold War in relation to these countries was the violation of international peace. In Vietnam crisis, wars and disputes rocked the international system from 1950 to 1974, when serious efforts were made to save mankind from extermination.

The greatest impact of these skirmishes was the preservation of international peace. Men invented the instrument for exterminating one another, but the fear of the aftermath of their usage was so great that none is eager to precipitate the action that will lead to their usage. Thus, international peace was preserved.[xvii]

4. Conclusion

This paper has tried to examine the actual influences of the arms race between the Eastern and Western bloc-nations in Vietnamese War and how it affected international peace, and also find out the extent the brain-child of second World War (Cold War) had encroached on the peaceful coexistence of actors in international political system. The game theory helped so much in dispelling the mist that beclouded the Cold War and my understanding of its obvious impacts on international peace.[xviii] During the course of this research, the analysis showed that the protagonists of the Cold War, behaved in a typical player's manner. The researcher used the Cold War skirmishes over Vietnam in inferring the influence of the Cold War on international peace. After what is pass for exhaustive analyses, the work concluded, from the findings, that the Cold War violated international peace and polarised the international system. Paradoxically, the Cold War which gave birth to the nuclear arms race also preserved international peace because the destructiveness of nuclear equipment – to be precise, prevent global war, knowing that its usage will herald the extermination of all lives on earth including the deployer of such dreaded instrument. This was shared by Essan Gala:

It is considered likely by many that the system of security which is inherent in the strategic relationship between the superpowers based as it is on a balance of terror, has discouraged them for over three decades from initiating military conflicts directly with each other. It is also assumed that it has prevented regional conflicts in which either side might be involved to escalate to lobal conflict.[xix]

In the final analysis, these fracases threatened international peace in the sense that if what happened in Vietnam is to be used as a yardstick, in assessing the influence of Cold War on international peace; one will then posit that the Cold War violated international peace.

The international system, as constituted during the Cold War era was defective. It was inflexible and rigid. This was manifested in its inability to diffuse and control conflicts within it. The second weakness of international system was its vulnerability to manipulation by international actors, thus making it a mere spring board for the realisation of their selfish ends. The international system stopped serving its originally intended functions of promoting the welfare and stability of international community. The standard of executing international affairs fall short of the desired end, for according to Fleming,

The new United Nations pushed aside by the Cold War, with Truman Doctrine forbidding all future revolutions, least they might turn Red, and proclaiming the "containment" of both the Soviet Union and communism everywhere.[xx]

5. Endnotes

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