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**Beijing and the Vietnam Peace Talks, 1965-68:
New Evidence from Chinese Sources**

**Qiang Zhai
Auburn University**

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**Beijing and the Vietnam Peace Talks, 1965-1968:
New Evidence from Chinese Sources**

**By Qiang Zhai
Auburn University**

The Johnson administration's escalation of the war in Vietnam in 1965 triggered strong domestic criticism. Responding to public pressure, President Johnson made a number of peace overtures to North Vietnam. The escalating conflict in Indochina also drew serious attention around the world. Efforts were made by various countries to promote a peaceful solution to the Indochina conflict. Thus, the war in Vietnam was intertwined with a series of peace initiatives made not only by Washington but also by Moscow, London, Paris, and a number of British commonwealth capitals. How did leaders in Beijing perceive these initiatives? Why were they so consistent and firm in opposing them? What were the repercussions of China's policy in the world? This paper uses newly released Chinese sources to answer these questions. It argues that China's opposition to Vietnam peace talks was linked to Mao's complex calculations of establishing Beijing's leadership position within the Third World national liberation movement, limiting Soviet influence in Indochina, and mobilizing domestic support for his social and political programs.

China's Objection to Peace Negotiations

Between 1965 and 1968, Beijing strongly opposed peace talks between Hanoi and Washington and rejected a number of international initiatives designed to promote a peaceful solution to the Vietnam conflict, including the Soviet proposal for an international conference on Vietnam, the British call for an international meeting on Cambodia that would provide an opportunity for "corridor contact" between the United States and the Communist powers on the Vietnam question, the Indian suggestion for a cease-fire along the 17th parallel supervised by an "Afro-Asian Force," the Ghanaian mission to mediate between Hanoi and Washington, the French "neutralization of Indochina" plan, and the Polish initiatives to bring the Democratic Republic of Vietnam

(DRV) and the United States to the negotiating table.

The collective Soviet leadership which succeeded Khrushchev was more forthcoming in support of North Vietnam. On 7-9 February 1965, Soviet Premier Aleksei Kosygin visited Hanoi, where he called for a total U.S. withdrawal from South Vietnam and promised Soviet material aid for the DRV.¹ While providing increased moral and material support for Hanoi,² the Soviet leadership was, however, more interested in a political settlement of the Indochina conflict. During his visit to Beijing on February 11 after his trip to Hanoi, Kosygin asked the Chinese to help the United States to "find a way out of Vietnam." By contrast, Chinese leaders warned the Russians not to use the Vietnam issue to bargain with the Americans.³ After returning to Moscow, Kosygin on February 16 proposed to the DRV and China an international conference on Indochina. The Chinese condemned the Soviet move, asserting that Moscow wanted to cut a deal with Washington on the Vietnam issue.⁴

In the wake of President Johnson's escalation of the U.S. military involvement in Vietnam, protest against the war was growing in the United States. The anti-war campaign built on and merged with both the civil rights and student movements in late 1964 and early 1965. Responding to the widespread domestic anxiety about Vietnam, Johnson on 25 March 1965 declared his willingness to "go anywhere at any time, and meet with anyone whenever there is promise of progress toward an honorable peace." In fact,

¹ R. B. Smith, *An International History of the Vietnam War: Volume III: The Making of a Limited War, 1965-66* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), p. 54.

² For a detailed description of Soviet assistance to Hanoi during the Vietnam War, see Ilya V. Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996).

³ Xie Yixian, ed., *Zhongguo waijiao shi: Zhonghua renmin gongheguo shiqi, 1949-1979* [A Diplomatic History of China: The Period of the People's Republic of China, 1949-1979] (Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 1988), p. 344.

⁴ Chinese Foreign Ministry memo, "A Conversation Outline: Refuting the Argument that 'China blocked the Soviet Aid to Vietnam,'" 1 April 1965. [Q]uanzhonghao 3124, [J]uanhao 235, [J]iangsu [P]rovincial [A]rchives, Nanjing. This memo was distributed by the Foreign Affairs Office of the State Council on 6 April 1965 to provincial foreign affairs committees as an explanation of China's position on the Vietnam question.

the president's statement was purely rhetoric, for none of his close aides had seriously considered either the form or the substance of the talks Johnson claimed to be prepared to conduct anywhere with anyone.⁵

By contrast, the British Labor government was eager to encourage peace talks on Vietnam. Three days after Johnson made his remarks, Prime Minister Harold Wilson sent Patrick Gordon Walker, a former foreign secretary, as his personal emissary to Southeast Asia to promote discussion of the Vietnam problem among the countries concerned. Both Beijing and Hanoi refused to receive Walker.⁶ In a meeting with Algerian President Ben Bella in Algiers on March 30, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai blamed the United States for the fighting in Vietnam and criticized the British effort at peacemaking. Zhou claimed that "the American invasion has prevented the realization of the peaceful unification of South and North Vietnam. At present the United States intends to intimidate Vietnam through expanding the war and to use bombing to force Vietnam to submit and agree to conduct 'peace negotiations.' The United States is promoting peace talks through such countries as the Soviet Union, Britain, and France. The United States wants to gain through peace talks what it has failed to gain on the battleground." The various peacemaking activities conducted by Britain, Zhou concluded, were "either directly or indirectly instigated by the United States."⁷

On April 1 and 2, the British Office of the Charge d'Affaires presented diplomatic notes twice to the Chinese Foreign Ministry with the suggestion that London send a special representative to Beijing to talk with the Chinese government about the Vietnam issue. In a reply on April 12, the Chinese Foreign Ministry claimed that it was

⁵ Marilyn B. Young, *The Vietnam Wars, 1945-1990*, (New York: HarperPerennial, 1991), p. 153.

⁶ According to a biographer of Harold Wilson, the Walker trip was designed "to distract attention from Britain's continuing support for the United States." The prime minister had a penchant for "activity" as opposed to real executive "action." Austen Morgan, *Harold Wilson* (London: Pluto Press, 1992), p. 277.

⁷ The Diplomatic History Research Office of the PRC Foreign Ministry, ed., *Zhou Enlai wajiao huodong dashiji, 1949-1975* (Chronology of Zhou Enlai's Diplomatic Activities, 1949-1975) (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 1993), p. 444.

“inappropriate and unwelcome” for the British government to send a special envoy to China to discuss the Indochina question. The Wilson government, the Chinese reply continued, had not condemned U.S. aggression in Vietnam and had thus betrayed its obligations as a co-chair of the 1954 Geneva Conference.⁸

Despite the refusal of Beijing and Hanoi to welcome him, Gordon Walker began his journey in mid-April. By this time, the thought of promoting an international conference on Cambodia preoccupied him. Prince Norodom Sihanouk had first shown interest in such a meeting in March 1965 after sponsoring the Indochinese Peoples’ Conference in Phnom Penh. He had proposed to reconvene the Geneva Conference of 1954 to allow the participants to reaffirm their guarantee of Cambodian neutrality and territorial integrity. The Soviets endorsed Sihanouk’s proposal in early April, as did the British who viewed it as a possible channel to promote informal discussions on Vietnam. Although U.S. officials were reluctant to be too closely linked with Gordon Walker’s initiatives, they expressed support for the conference, partly to avoid pushing Cambodia further into the arms of China and North Vietnam, and partly to demonstrate the sincerity of Washington’s commitment to peace in Indochina.⁹ Beijing supported an international conference on Cambodia but rejected any discussions at all on Vietnam. After a meeting with Zhou Enlai and DRI Premier Pham Van Dong on April 17-18 in Indonesia during the celebration of the Bandung Conference anniversary, Sihanouk announced that he would not participate in a gathering that was not restricted to discussion of Cambodia. Gordon Walker’s visit to Cambodia on April 26-27 therefore proved fruitless.¹⁰

⁸ Xie, *Zhongguo waijiao shi*, p. 340.

⁹ The U.S. was afraid of alienating the Thai government because of Thailand’s border dispute with Cambodia.

¹⁰ Smith, *An International History of the Vietnam War: Volume III: The Making of a Limited War, 1965-66*, pp. 60-61, 105-109; George C. Herring, ed., *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War: The Negotiating Volumes of the Pentagon Papers* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), p. 829. The idea of convening an international conference on Cambodia dated back to 1962; in the wake of the border dispute between Cambodia and Thailand, Sihanouk wanted such a conference to guarantee the borders of Cambodia as defined on French maps of the 19th century. While China supported Sihanouk’s proposal, the United States, Thailand, and South Vietnam opposed it. See

In a banquet in honor of a Ghanaian government delegation led by Foreign Minister Kojo Botsio in Beijing on April 29, Zhou Enlai praised Sihanouk for his "wisdom in seeing through the American plot regarding an international conference on Cambodia." The Chinese premier pointed out that the real reason for "the Johnson Administration's great interest in convening such a conference lies not in really guaranteeing the neutrality and territorial integrity of Cambodia but in continuing the plot of intimidating the Vietnamese people into submission."¹¹

To silence domestic and international criticism of U.S. escalation of the war, President Johnson delivered a much-publicized speech at Johns Hopkins University on April 7, in which he emphasized U.S. resolve to prevail in Vietnam, but he added his readiness to conduct "unconditional discussions" with Hanoi. Premier Pham Van Dong responded with his Four Points peace formula on April 8, which demanded that the United States withdraw its forces from Vietnam and cease its acts of war, called for neutralization of both Vietnams pending unification; proposed a settlement of the internal affairs of South Vietnam in accordance with the program of the National Liberation Front; and insisted that reunification must be arranged by the Vietnamese people without outside interference.¹²

Johnson's Johns Hopkins speech triggered renewed efforts at peacemaking by the Secretary General of the United Nations and the Indian government. U Thant, U.N. Secretary General, in early April stated that he wanted to visit China and the DRV to "explore the possibility of realizing a negotiated settlement in Vietnam."¹³ In an editorial

Michael Leifer, "Cambodia and China: Neutralism, 'Neutrality,' and National Security," in A. M. Halpern, ed., *Policies toward China: Views from Sin Continent* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), p. 345.

¹¹ Diplomatic History Research Office of the PRC Foreign Ministry, ed, *Zhou Enlai wajiaohuodong dashiji, 1949-1975*, p. 450.

¹² Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, p. 46. Robert S. McNamara recalled that except for the third point the administration found Hanoi's terms acceptable. See Robert S. McNamara, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 1995), pp. 181-182.

¹³ Xie, *Zhongguo wajiaoshi*, pp. 338-339.

on April 12, 1965 the *Renmin ribao* (People's Daily) pointed out that the Vietnam question had nothing to do with the United Nations and that the 1954 Geneva Agreement was concluded outside the U.N. framework. The United Nations, the editorial went on, had never taken a just stand on Vietnam, had never condemned U.S. aggression, and thus had no authority to intervene in Indochina affairs.¹⁴

On April 24, Indian President Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan called for a termination of the bombing of North Vietnam, a cessation of the fighting in South Vietnam, and the deployment of an Afro-Asian police force along the border and at critical points in South Vietnam to supervise the cease-fire. While the United States considered the proposal favorably, China denounced it as a "plot."¹⁵

Although his Johns Hopkins address silenced his critics temporarily, Johnson soon realized that some additional conciliatory move was necessary. In May, the president decided to suspend the bombing of North Vietnam for a brief period of time both as a feeler to see if Hanoi had any interest in negotiations and as a gesture to his domestic and international critics. The bombing pause codenamed "MAYFLOWER."¹⁶ The Chinese asserted that the bombing pause was a "hoax" to lure the Vietnamese into "unconditional discussions" with the United States, and that by "unconditional discussions" Washington wanted Hanoi to recognize the U.S. occupation of South Vietnam.¹⁷

The failure of the Walker mission did not dampen Wilson's enthusiasm for activity on Vietnam. At the June 1965 Commonwealth conference, the prime minister, after consulting President Johnson, proposed a Commonwealth Peace Mission to include the

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 49, 831; Xie, *Zhongguo waijiao shi*, p.339.

¹⁶ Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, pp. 45-47.

¹⁷ Jin Qiu, "The Vietnamese People Do Not Believe in 'Nice Words' and Do Not Fear Intimidation," *Shijie zhishi* (World Knowledge), No. 11, (June 10, 1965), pp. 5-8. For Hanoi's response to the MAYFLOWER initiative, see Robert K. Brigham, "Vietnamese-American Peace Negotiations: The Failed 1965 Initiatives," *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 4 (Winter 1995), pp. 377-395.

leaders of Britain, Nigeria, Ghana, and Trinidad. President Nyerere of Tanzania refused to participate. The mission was instructed to bring an end to U.S. bombing of North Vietnam, to persuade Hanoi to stop sending men and materials to South Vietnam, and to work out a cease-fire in the South to pave the way for an international conference which would secure the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Vietnam and establish an international force to maintain peace. Washington supported the British initiative because it embodied most of the objectives the United States had been pursuing.¹⁸

On June 22, Xiong Xianghui, Chinese charge d'affaires to Britain, met in London with the President of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, who was selected to participate in the Commonwealth mission because of his good relationship with both Hanoi and Beijing. In accordance with the Chinese government's general policy of opposing peace talks, Xiong told Nkrumah that the British commonwealth peace mission would only be "beneficial to U.S. imperialism" and that China would not welcome it. Two days later, the Chinese Foreign Ministry approved Xiong's position.¹⁹ In a message to the British government on June 25, Beijing officially rejected the Commonwealth mission, claiming that the root of the Vietnam problem and tensions in Southeast Asia was the U.S. violation of the Geneva Agreement.²⁰

Despite his failure to persuade the Chinese to receive the mission, Nkrumah did not give up. He wanted to visit the DRV personally to promote peace. The North Vietnamese insisted that Nkrumah come to Hanoi not as a member of the Commonwealth mission, but as president of Ghana. Preoccupied with domestic economic problems, Nkrumah immediately dispatched a delegation headed by Kwesi Armah, Ghanaian

¹⁸ Xie, *Zhongguo waijiao shi*, pp. 340-341; Smith, *An International History of the Vietnam War: Volume III: The Making of a Limited War, 1965-66*, p. 154; Morgan, *Harold Wilson*, p. 277.

¹⁹ Xiong Xianghui, *Lishi de Zhujiao: Huiyi Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai ji Silaoshuai* [Historical Footnotes: Remembering Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai as well as Four Old Marshals] (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1995), pp. 151-157.

²⁰ Xie, *Zhongguo waijiao shi*, p. 341.

Minister of Overseas Trade, to Hanoi to try to prepare the way for negotiations.²¹

Chinese leaders opposed the mission sent by Nkrumah. They believed that "the proposal made by the Ghanaian mission to the Vietnamese represents the old plot of unconditional peace negotiations advanced several times in the past by the imperialists, revisionists, and reactionaries." They felt that the idea of using Afro-Asian countries as mediators was in reality intended to bypass the Geneva Accords to facilitate a direct negotiation between the Americans and the Vietnamese. The Chinese government notified the Vietnamese of Beijing's objection to the Ghanaian mission before its arrival in Hanoi.²²

During their mission to Vietnam, the Ghanaian visitors told Vietnamese officials that Ghana supported Hanoi's Four Points as well as the Five Points peace formula pronounced by the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (NLF) on 22 March 1965. Claiming that the current moment was the best time for peace negotiations because the position of the United States was not too different from that of North and South Vietnam, the Ghanaians proposed that Afro-Asian countries serve as mediators in American-Vietnamese talks. The Vietnamese leaders contended that they had a better understanding of their enemy than Ghana and that the Vietnamese people, determined to win a complete victory, "would not be taken in by Johnson's carrot" policy. The struggle of the Vietnamese people, they went on, constituted part of the anti-imperialist struggle waged by the Afro-Asian peoples, who should unite against imperialism. Ghana should mobilize Afro-Asian nations to force the United States to accept the demands made by the NLF rather than promote a conference between the United States and Vietnam.²³ Ho Chi Minh

²¹ W. Scott Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy, 1957-1966: Diplomacy, Ideology, and the New State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 409-411.

²² Chinese Foreign Ministry circular, "Talks between the Ghanaian Mission and the Vietnamese," 3 August 1965, Q 3124, J 123, JPA. This circular, along with two other circulars quoted later in the text, was distributed by the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee to its regional bureaus and provincial committees on 24 August 1965 as an instruction of China's position regarding peace negotiations over Vietnam.

²³ Chinese Foreign Ministry circular, "Talks between the Ghanaian Mission and the Vietnamese." The circular's summary of the Vietnamese position during the discussions with the Ghanaian mission was based on a Vietnamese report.

told the delegation that negotiations were irrelevant and undesirable because victory might arrive before the end of the rainy season, but that he would be pleased to receive Nkrumah. Ho then added that he worried about the safety of the Ghanaian president because of the American bombing of North Vietnam.²⁴ Ho's last point may be interpreted as a polite and indirect rejection of a visit by Nkrumah.

On July 10, a Chinese commentator wrote in *Shijie zhishi*, a bi-weekly journal reflecting the views of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, condemning Britain's peace initiatives on Vietnam: "an old colonial power is collaborating with a new colonial power. The [British] Labor Party is backing the United States' Vietnam policy in order to win American support for Malaysia, a neo-colonial product created by Britain." The commentary attributed Wilson's peacemaking effort to his desire to win votes before the British election and to please the Americans because London depended on Washington economically.²⁵

While condemning the British role in promoting peace talks, Chinese officials stressed that Washington was the real instigator behind the African peace initiatives. They believed that the Americans had two goals in their "peace hoax": first, to take advantage of the ignorance of African countries about the Vietnam issue and their fear of an expansion of war to drive a wedge into their relationship with China; second, to divide China and the DRV by emphasizing Beijing as the barrier to peace negotiations.²⁶

On July 19, French Minister of State Andre Malraux arrived in Beijing as a special envoy of President Charles de Gaulle. Among the topics covered in his discussions with Mao, Liu Shaoqi, and Zhou Enlai was Vietnam. Malraux proposed to Zhou a "neutralization of Indochina" plan, which would redraw the boundaries of Vietnam. According to the plan, Vietnam would be divided along the Truong Son Ra mountain. The area east of the mountain, including Saigon, would belong to the Democratic

²⁴ Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, p. 411.

²⁵ Yao Niangeng, "The British Labor Party: A Lackey in American Aggression against Vietnam," *Shijie zhishi*, No. 13 (10 July 1965), pp. 10-12.

²⁶ Chinese Foreign Ministry circular, "On 'Peace Talk' Activities over Vietnam," 19 August 1965, Q 3124, J 123, JPA.

Republic of Vietnam or the NLF; the area west of the mountain as well as Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand would be "neutralized." Malraux also asked the Chinese whether it would be possible to conduct negotiations if the United States "promised" to withdraw troops from Vietnam. Zhou immediately rejected Malraux's "neutralization" plan, claiming that the boundaries between the Indochinese countries had long been established and that the independence and neutrality of Cambodia and Laos should be respected on the basis of the Geneva Agreements. As to the intentions of Washington, the Chinese premier believed that the United States did not want to leave Vietnam. He told the French visitor that China would firmly support the Vietnamese struggle against the United States.²⁷

At the Vietnamese National Day reception given by Tran Tu Binh, the North Vietnamese ambassador to China, Zhou Enlai condemned what he viewed as U.S. "peace talks hoax": "The very aim of the peace talks plot hatched by the United States is to bring about negotiations by cajolery so as to consolidate its position in South Vietnam. As long as the United States does not withdraw its troops, it can carry on endless talks with you so that it may hang on there indefinitely."²⁸

During the 21st General Assembly of the United Nations in late September 1965, U.S. and Soviet officials discussed the Vietnam question with U Thant. The Chinese media immediately denounced this activity. *Renmin ribao* contended that the peace talk proposals by the United States and the Soviet Union in the United Nations demonstrated that Washington and Moscow had gone "a step further in their collusion over Vietnam" and that "the Soviet revisionist leading group" had taken "another step . . . in becoming

²⁷ Chinese Foreign Ministry circular, "Malraux's Visit to China," 12 August 1965. Q 3124, J 123, JPA. For Malraux's account of his visit to China in 1965, see Andre Malraux, *Anti-memoirs* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), pp. 325-380. But the book makes no mention of Malraux's suggestion of redividing Vietnam. In the words of French scholar Jean Lacouture, Malraux's proposal was "the most wildly improbable idea that ever emerged from the brain of a novelist." See Jean Lacouture, *Andre Malraux* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), p. 431.

²⁸ *Peking Review*, 3 September 1965, pp. 5-6.

an accomplice of U.S. imperialism."²⁹

While condemning what they described as the Soviet-American "peace talks hoax," Chinese officials applauded the actions of those countries which refused to serve as peace brokers in the Indochina conflict. This was clearly demonstrated in Beijing's attitude toward Sihanouk. On 22 September 1965, the Cambodian leader came to China to attend the October 1 National Day celebration. He first arrived in Chengdu, where Vice Premier Chen Yi accompanied him in sightseeing. Two days later, Zhou Enlai flew to Chongqing to meet Sihanouk with whom he traveled on the Yangtze River to Wuhan. On board the ship, Sihanouk told the Chinese premier that if the United States expanded the war to Cambodia, his people would evacuate from the cities and go to the countryside and forests to wage a guerrilla war. He also notified Zhou that he had received a letter from [Josip] Tito of Yugoslavia who, together with Lal Bahadur Shastri of India and [Egyptian Prime Minister] Gamal Abdul Nasser, urged him to promote negotiations between the United States and North Vietnam, and that he had rejected their proposal. Sihanouk criticized Washington's rigid position on Vietnam: "De Gaulle has shown the foresight of a statesman on the Algerian question, and he has advised the United States not to follow the old path of France but Johnson would not listen to him." The Chinese hosts were very impressed by Sihanouk's resolute position on Vietnam. When Sihanouk reached Beijing, both Mao and Liu Shaoqi met with him. Calling Cambodia "an anti-American country," Mao told Sihanouk: "You have not only rejected American aid and separated relations with the United States but also opposed American imperialism openly, not covertly. I once worried that after you had rejected American assistance you might not be able to pass the test." Sihanouk replied: "We rejected American aid the way we ended drug addiction. Just as Chairman Liu Shaoqi has put it, 'American aid is like opium. When you have developed an addiction, it is very difficult to stop using it at first. But after a few months of non-use, you are gradually back to normal conditions.' We have already gradually returned to normal conditions." Mao said: "That is very good. That is not an easy thing to do."³⁰

²⁹ Ibid., 30 September 1965, pp. 29-31.

As a public relations ploy, President Johnson initiated a bombing pause over the 1965 Christmas holiday. He also launched a well-publicized "peace offensive" by sending such aides as Averell Harriman and Vice President Hubert Humphrey across the globe to spread the message that the United States was ready to negotiate without conditions.³¹ In Warsaw, Harriman delivered a "14-Point Peace Plan" (including immediate face-to-face negotiations) to the Poles, requesting that it be forwarded to Hanoi. Jerzy Michalowski, a high-ranking official in the Polish Foreign Ministry, set off for the DRV. On his way to Hanoi, he stopped in Moscow and Beijing. In the Soviet Union, Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko voiced support for the mission but warned against China's objection. In Beijing, the Polish diplomat met with Deputy Foreign Minister Wang Bingnan, who denounced the notion of peace negotiations, insisted that the United States should be kept deeply involved in the war, and that any attempt to prevent Ho Chi Minh from achieving victory would be a betrayal of the Vietnamese cause.³²

In Hanoi, Pham Van Dong told Michalowski that the DRV was sure to win the war against the United States and that Johnson was aware of this, which was why he wanted negotiations—to try to win at the negotiating table what he had failed to win on the battleground. Dong concluded that peace talks would not be in the best interests of Hanoi, at least not at that moment.³³ It was possible that the Vietnamese leaders' own calculations of the military situation made them brush aside the suggestion of negotiation.

³⁰ Kang Daisha, "My Days in Cambodia," in Cheng Xiangjun, ed., *Nu waijiaoguan* [Women Diplomats] (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1995), pp. 477-478. Kang Daisha is the wife of Chen Shuliang, who was the Chinese ambassador to Cambodia from 1962-1967.

³¹ George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975* 2nd ed., (New York: McGraw and Hill, 1986), pp. 165-166.

³² Jerzy Michalowski, "Polish Secret Peace Initiatives in Vietnam," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* Issues 6-7 (Winter 1995-1996), pp. 241, 258-259; Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War* pp. 83-84; Janos Radvanyi, *Delusion and Reality: Gambits, Hoaxes, & Diplomatic One-Upmanship in Vietnam* (South Bend, Indiana: Gateway Editions, Limited, 1978), pp. 125-126.

³³ Radvanyi, *Delusion and Reality*, pp. 126-127.

It was also possible that Beijing's pressure forced Hanoi to reject negotiations.

Possibly as an effort to coordinate with the American "peace offensive," Soviet Politburo member Alexander Shelepin visited Hanoi in January 1966 and presumably discussed with North Vietnamese officials the question of negotiations with the United States. Like Michalowski, Shelepin failed (if he indeed tried) to persuade the North Vietnamese to accept the U.S. peace proposals.³⁴ Suspicious of Soviet intentions in the DRV, Chinese commentators referred to Shelepin's visit as "a new proof of the Soviet guilt in colluding with the Americans" and called the trip "not an accident" as it came right after the announcement of the U.S. 14-Point Peace Plan.³⁵

When Shelepin visited Beijing after his Hanoi tour, Mao only sent Li Xiannian, a deputy premier, to talk with him despite Shelepin's high position within the Soviet politburo. Mao purposefully gave Shelepin a cold reception to show his displeasure with the Soviet policy toward the United States.³⁶ Shelepin again proposed a Sino-Soviet united action to assist the DRV. Rejecting the proposal, Li asked the Soviet Union to put military pressure on the United States in Berlin and West Germany. Shelepin called the Chinese idea unrealistic.³⁷

³⁴ Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, p. 84. No details have been revealed from either the Russian or Vietnamese archives regarding Shelepin's talks with the North Vietnamese. On this issue, Janos Radvanyi wrote: "there was . . . complete agreement between the Soviet and Vietnamese negotiators regarding the American peace proposal. When this question came up during negotiations, Ho Chi Minh explained . . . that the military situation in the South was not yet considered favorable for a start of negotiations with the Americans. He did not discount the possibility of future negotiations: he viewed diplomatic maneuvering as but another form of revolutionary fighting . . . and he hinted that possibly in two or three years the DRV might be ready to . . . start negotiations. Shelepin made no attempt to modify the Vietnamese position. . . . he completely agreed with Ho." Radvanyi, *Delusion and Reality*, p. 165. Radvanyi based his account on reports by the Hungarian embassy in Hanoi as well as information Budapest received from Moscow through party channels.

³⁵ *Shijie zhishi*, Nos., 2-3, (10 February 1966), pp. 4-5.

³⁶ Wang Bingnan's speech at the National Conference on Foreign Affairs, 11 February 1966, Q 3124, J 270, JPA. Wang was a deputy foreign minister, who participated in the Li-Shelepin talks.

³⁷ Radvanyi, *Delusion and Reality*, p. 167.

The demand on Moscow to turn up the heat on the Americans in Europe in order to support the struggle in Vietnam was a consistent Chinese practice in their conversations with fraternal parties during this period. In the discussions with the Japanese Communist Party delegation in March, Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping urged the Soviet Union to "resort to brinkmanship" and create "greater tension in the west" to counter Washington's expansion of the Vietnam War while Peng Zhen, Mayor of Beijing, stated emphatically: "If the Soviet Union was really desiring to support Vietnam in the struggle, it would create a tenses situation in West Berlin, to stop the United States boldly withdrawing its troops from West Germany to send them to Vietnam. This would be more effective than missiles."³⁸

Throughout the summer and fall of 1966, third parties continued to search for a common ground for Vietnam peace talks. After shuttling between Hanoi and Saigon, the Polish diplomat Janusz Lewandowski put forward a ten-point proposal for settlement of the war. Although the Johnson Administration had serious reservations about some points in Lewandowski's draft, it decided to accept the plan as a basis for negotiations in order not to appear intransigent. At Lewandowski's request, Washington also drafted a two-track formula to respond to Hanoi's opposition to mutual de-escalation. The United States would terminate the air assaults in return for a confidential promise that the DRV would end infiltration into key areas of South Vietnam within a reasonable period. Once North Vietnam had moved, the United States would stop increasing its combat forces and peace negotiations could open. The Polish initiative was code-named MARIGOLD.³⁹

Between October and November 1966, in the middle of MARIGOLD, Le Duan visited Beijing and talked with Chinese leaders. Zhou Enlai urged North Vietnam to

³⁸ Masaru Kojima ed., *The Record of the Talks Between the Japanese Communist Party and the Communist Party of China: How Mao Zedong Scrapped the Joint Communiqué* (Tokyo: The Central Committee of the Japanese Communist Party, 1980), pp. 156-157. So far no Chinese material has been disclosed to shed light on the talks between the Chinese and Japanese Communist Party delegations in Beijing in early 1966.

³⁹ Herring, *America's Longest War*, p. 184.

continue the war, at least until 1968. Although Le Duan, Secretary General of Vietnam's Worker's Party, made no promises to the Chinese Premier, he told him that Hanoi intended to end the conflict with "maximum advantages for itself."⁴⁰ MARIGOLD was a failure because several days before the planned opening of the negotiations, American aircraft bombed railway yards near Hanoi, inflicting heavy damages in civilian lives and properties. Insisting that they would not negotiate under pressure, the North Vietnamese quickly ended the contact.⁴¹

Reacting to international and, in the case of Washington, domestic pressures, both the DRV and the United States modified the rigid stances they had taken earlier. Hanoi dropped its demand for acceptance of its Four Points, including a total withdrawal of U.S. forces, as a precondition for talks, insisting merely that the bombing be stopped without condition. North Vietnam also softened its conditions for a settlement, pointing out, among other things, that reunification could happen over a long span of time. The United States no longer insisted that Hanoi must withdraw its forces from South Vietnam in return for termination of bombing, demanding only that additional infiltration must be ended.⁴²

The Beijing leadership expressed concern with the recent conciliatory moves made by Hanoi. During his talks with Pham Van Dong and Vo Nguyen Giap in Beijing in April 1967, Zhou Enlai warned his Vietnamese colleagues that the United States might expand the war in the near future. "The law of war," the Chinese Premier contended, "often does not follow the will of people. . . . Since war follows its own rule, the enemy would continue the fighting even if it wishes to end it. Therefore, for the sake of our future, we should be prepared for the continuation and expansion of the war. . . . The enemy may blockade the Vietnamese coast" Throughout the conversations, Zhou praised Hanoi's military performance and advised the North Vietnamese to carry the war to the

⁴⁰ Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, p. 109. The official chronicle of Zhou Enlai's diplomacy does not mention his talk with Le Duan in October-November 1966.

⁴¹ Herring, *America's Longest War*, pp. 184-185.

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 185.

end, giving not the slightest encouragement to a negotiated settlement. He also inveighed against the Soviet Union, claiming that Moscow would only jeopardize the cause of the DRV.⁴³

China's vehement hostility to peace talks sometimes inhibited potential third parties from proposing new peace proposals. In conversations with Polish Ambassador to the United States Jerzy Michalowski on 13-14 December 1967, Walter J. Stoessel, Jr., Acting Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, noted that "there might possibly be some attractiveness to considering negotiations in the framework of a renewed Geneva Conference." Michalowski expressed doubt about the idea, asserting that "this could only be feasible if agreement had been reached in advance by the United States and the principal interested parties. If this were not the case, a reconvened Geneva Conference would simply be a shambles in which the intransigent views of the Chinese would predominate."⁴⁴

Explaining China's Opposition to Peace Talks

Why was China so persistent in opposing peace talks in Vietnam? Beijing's objection to peace negotiations was related to Mao's complex calculations of preserving China's international position and mobilizing internal support for his radical social and economic programs at home. First of all, Mao and his associates wanted the North Vietnamese to wage a protracted war to tie the United States down in Vietnam. In their calculation, the continued conflict in Vietnam could not only serve as a model of national liberation war that, if successful, would prove the correctness of Beijing's militant approach, but also bog the United States down and drain American resources so that Washington would find it difficult to send troops to suppress liberation movements

⁴³ Zhou's talks with Pham Van Dong and Vo Nguyen Giap, 7, 10, and 11 April 1967, Diplomatic History Research Office of the PRC Foreign Ministry, ed., *Zhou Enlai wajijiao huodong dashiji, 1949-1975*, pp. 509-511.

⁴⁴ Memo of conversation between Stoessel and Michalowski, 13 and 14 December 1967, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968*, vol. 17, *Eastern Europe*, (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1996), pp. 359-360.

elsewhere. In a conversation with Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere on 4 June 1965, Zhou Enlai contended that "the more U.S. forces were tied down in Vietnam, the more beneficial it would be for national independence movements. China is willing to do its utmost to assist Vietnam on every front. The U.S. distraction in Vietnam is beneficial to the people of the world. Although the American power is great, it loses its strength when it is divided."⁴⁵

In addition to keeping the United States mired in Vietnam, Mao also desired to limit the influence of the Soviet Union in Southeast Asia. He reasoned that any peace meeting on Vietnam would be dominated by the two superpowers with a further isolation of China and that a compromise settlement in Vietnam would constitute a victory for Moscow. He feared that if Moscow and Washington succeeded in working together to achieve a settlement of the Vietnam conflict, they might be encouraged to cooperate to deal with other thorny issues in Asia, thus further diminishing China's influence in the region. The prospect of a joint Soviet-American rule of the world was Mao's strategic nightmare. Thus, the desire to preserve China's international position and to forestall what he perceived to be Soviet-American "collusion" against China may have been Mao's overriding concern in opposing Vietnam peace talks.⁴⁶

By 1965, the Sino-Soviet split had reached the point of no return. Mao believed that Khrushchev's successors in the Kremlin had no intention to change the policy of peaceful coexistence with the United States. By downplaying Soviet assistance to Hanoi and portraying the Soviet Union as an opportunist player seeking a bargain with the Americans at the expense of Vietnam, Mao hoped to discredit Moscow and strengthen Beijing's anti-imperialist credentials both within the international Communist movement and among Third World countries. Mao rejected a negotiated settlement because he

⁴⁵ Zhou's conversation with Nyerere, June 4, 1965, the Diplomatic History Research Office of the PRC Foreign Ministry, ed., Zhou Enlai wajiao huodong dashiji, 1949-1975, p. 460.

⁴⁶ For a discussion of Mao's fear of Soviet-American domination of the world between 1963-1969, see John Garver, "The Tet Offensive and Sino-Vietnamese Relations," in Marc Jason Gilbert and William Head, eds., The Tet Offensive (Westport: Praeger, 1996), pp. 55-59.

believed that the present course of the war validated his ideological position on "armed revolutionary struggle."

Throughout 1966 and 1967, Chinese leaders would seize every opportunity, whether in talks with foreign visitors or on the platforms of international meetings, to denounce Moscow's cooperation with the U.S. "peace talk scheme" in Vietnam. At a mass rally welcoming an Albanian delegation in Beijing on 30 April 1966, Zhou Enlai condemned the "counter-revolutionary dual tactics" of the Kremlin, which was following "Khrushchevism without Khrushchev" in its efforts to endorse a peace solution in Vietnam.⁴⁷ In 1967, the Chinese government accused the Permanent Secretariat of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization of succumbing to Soviet revisionism and of failing to criticize Soviet-American collaboration in Vietnam.⁴⁸

Finally, Mao found the continued confrontation in Southeast Asia useful in mobilizing domestic support for his social and political agendas. By branding American and Soviet peace proposals as "hoax" and "collusion" and emphasizing the danger of compromise with the enemy, Mao reminded the Chinese population that they should not slacken their vigilance on class struggle and that the Cultural Revolution was necessary to prevent China from turning revisionist.

⁴⁷ The Diplomatic History Research Office of the PRC Foreign Ministry, ed., Zhou Enlai wajiao huodong dashiji. 1949-1975, p. 493; Ronald Keith, The Diplomacy of Zhou Enlai (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. 158.

⁴⁸ Keith, The Diplomacy of Zhou Enlai, p. 157.

Sino-Vietnamese Differences over Peace Talks

While providing extensive assistance to the DRV in terms of weapons, equipment, and support troops,⁴⁹ Chinese leaders opposed Hanoi's strategy of fighting while negotiating. A clear gap developed between Beijing and Hanoi regarding the role of negotiations in the war.

Realizing that Vietnam was a small and underdeveloped country facing an industrialized foreign power and that the resistance could not end in a total military victory over the enemy, leaders in Hanoi had to accept negotiations with the enemy as a fact of life and an integral component of their struggle for national reunification. They needed periods of peace in which to consolidate military and political strength. To them, negotiations were an extension of warfare rather than an alternative to it. What they sought in direct negotiations with Washington was a way to improve its chance of winning the war, not a way of preventing or ending it. Negotiations served as a tactic of warfare.⁵⁰

Chinese leaders, however, failed to appreciate the importance of negotiations in Hanoi's strategy. In private communications, foreign ministry officials recognized the difference between Beijing's and Hanoi's approaches to peace talks. In an internal circular prepared on 19 August 1965, they wrote that "the Vietnamese practice on peace talks is different from ours. The DRV has never completely closed the door on peace negotiations, thus creating an opportunity for the imperialists, the revisionists, and the reactionaries and increasing their illusions about pressing Vietnam into peace talks."⁵¹

⁴⁹ For detailed discussions of China's assistance to Hanoi during the Vietnam War, see Qiang Zhai, "Beijing and the Vietnam Conflict, 1964-1965: New Chinese Evidence," in Cold War International History Project Bulletin, Issues 6-7 (Winter 1995-1996), pp. 233-250; Chen Jian, "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1965-1969," The China Quarterly, No. 142 (June 1995), pp. 357-387.

⁵⁰ For further discussions of Hanoi's approach to negotiations, see Gareth Porter, A Peace Denied: The United States, Vietnam, and the Paris Agreement (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), pp. 1-33; Allan E. Goodman, The Lost Peace: America's Search for a Negotiated Settlement of the Vietnam War (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1978), pp. 11-12.

⁵¹ Chinese Foreign Ministry circular, "On 'Peace Talk' Activities over Vietnam," August

Beijing kept urging the DRV to wage a protracted war against the United States. In a conversation with the DRV party and government delegation led by Pham Van Dong on 20 October 1965, Mao made clear his disapproval of negotiations and his conviction that the Vietnamese should continue their struggle against the Americans until the final victory:

In fact what will solve the problem is the war you are fighting. Of course you can conduct negotiations. In the past you held negotiations in Geneva. But the Americans did not honor their promise after the negotiations. . . . I have not noticed what issues you have negotiated with the United States. I only pay attention to how you fight the Americans and how you drive the Americans out. You can have negotiations at certain times, but you should not lower your tones. You should raise your tones a little higher. Be prepared that the enemy may deceive you. . . . We will support you until your final victory. The confidence in victory comes from the struggle you have made. For instance, one experience we have is that the Americans can be fought. We obtained this experience only after fighting the Americans. The Americans can be fought and can be defeated.⁵²

Clearly, Mao was suspicious of U.S. intentions in peace talks. Still fresh in his memory was the American refusal to comply with the Geneva Accords in 1956 when elections were supposed to be held in Vietnam.

The North Vietnamese leadership was divided on the issue of negotiations with the United States.⁵³ The Chinese were aware of the differences within the politburo of the Vietnam Workers' Party (VWP). During a conversation with the Japanese Communist Party delegation led by Miyamoto Kenji on 6 March 1966, Liu Shaoqi, Vice Chairman of the CCP Central Committee, said that the Central Committee of the VWP was divided

19, 1965, Q 3124, J 123, JPA.

⁵² The People's Republic of China Foreign Ministry and the Chinese Communist Party Central Documentary Research Department, eds., *Mao Zedong waijiao wenxuan* (Selected Diplomatic Works of Mao Zedong) (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe and Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 1994), pp. 570-573. Pham Van Dong came to Beijing after completing a visit to Moscow. It is possible that he had discussed with the Soviets the issue of negotiations and reported this discussion to Mao and other Chinese leaders.

⁵³ For a discussion of the internal debate within the North Vietnamese leadership on the question of war and peace, see Brigham, "Vietnamese-American Peace Negotiations."

into pro-war and pro-peace groups and that the Soviet Union supported the latter group. China, Liu went on, had made its position clear to comrades in Hanoi: "You may wage the boldest struggle against U.S. imperialism. You need not be afraid of the expansion of the war, its expansion into China. If the war expands to China, we will fight shoulder to shoulder with you."⁵⁴

On 3 April 1968, in response to Johnson's dramatic March 31 speech, Hanoi announced its readiness to send a delegation to talk with the Americans. According to Hoang Van Hoan, after hearing Hanoi's announcement, Zhou Enlai immediately asked Ho Chi Minh, who was in Beijing for medical treatment at the moment, about the VWP's decision. Stunned, Ho said that he knew nothing about it. In making the decision to begin negotiations with the United States, Le Duan had neither reported to Ho in Beijing nor consulted with the Chinese.⁵⁵ Clearly Le Duan now dominated the politburo of the VWP and Ho Chi Minh, because of his increasingly deteriorating health, was no longer involved in decision-making.

Between April 13 and 20, Pham Van Dong visited Beijing and held four discussions with Zhou Enlai.⁵⁶ While the contents of these talks are not known, it is very likely that the two sides exchanged views about the forthcoming negotiations between Hanoi and Washington. On May 7, Zhou discussed China's attitude toward the peace talks with Xuan Thuy, Minister of International Liaison of the VWP. Zhou said: "We feel that you have responded too quickly and too impatiently, perhaps giving the Americans a misperception that you are eager to negotiate. Comrade Mao Zedong has told Comrade

⁵⁴ Kojima, ed., The Record of the Talks Between the Japanese Communist Party and the Communist Party of China, p. 116.

⁵⁵ Hoang Van Hoan, Canghai yisu: Hoang Van Hoan geming huiyilu (A Drop in the Ocean: Hoang Van Hoan's Revolutionary Reminiscences) (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1987), p. 308.

⁵⁶ The Diplomatic History Research Office of the PRC Foreign Ministry, ed., Zhou Enlai wajiao huodong dashiji, 1949-1975, p. 523. This source only lists Zhou's four talks with Pham Van Dong but provides no detail about the discussions. According to this same volume, Pham Van Dong left Beijing on April 20 for the Soviet Union. He returned to Beijing on April 29, briefing Zhou Enlai about his trip to Moscow. Again no detail is given about this meeting. Ibid, pp. 523-524.

Pham Van Dong that negotiation is all right but you must assume a high posture." Contending that what counted most was victory on the battleground, Zhou advised the Vietnamese envoy that Hanoi should not let the Americans obtain through negotiations what they had failed to obtain in the battlefield.⁵⁷

The Chinese leaders were clearly unenthusiastic about the talks between the DRV and the United States. Between May and October 1968, the Chinese media remained silent about the Paris discussions. Chinese newspapers criticized France for providing a place for the talks.⁵⁸ Mao very reluctantly approved the talks in November 1968. He told Pham Van Dong in Beijing on November 17 that he was in favor of Hanoi's policy of fighting while negotiating. But he cautioned the Vietnamese that it would be difficult to get the United States to withdraw from Vietnam through negotiations and that the Americans did not keep their word.⁵⁹

Hanoi's unilateral decision to proceed with negotiations with the Americans demonstrated the decline of China's influence over the DRV. Clearly Beijing's relations with the DRV were strained with the opening of the Paris talks. Hanoi was moving closer to the Soviet Union in waging the war against the United States and the Saigon regime.

Effects of China's Actions

~~Without access to Vietnamese archives, it is difficult to judge the actual effects of~~

⁵⁷ Zhou's conversation with Xuan Thuy, May 7, 1968, in the Diplomatic History Research Office of the PRC Foreign Ministry, ed., Zhou Enlai wajiao huodong dashiji, 1949-1975, p. 524.

⁵⁸ During this same period, Hanoi censored China's references to the "peace talks fraud" and the "bombing halt hoax." See Jay Taylor, China and Southeast Asia: Peking's Relations with Revolutionary Movements, expanded and updated edition, (New York: Praeger, 1976), p. 61.

⁵⁹ The People's Republic of China Foreign Ministry and the Chinese Communist Party Central Documentary Research Department, eds., Mao Zedong wajiao wenxuan, pp 580-583.

Chinese policy on Hanoi's attitude toward peace talks. Given the existence of pro-war and pro-peace groups within the VWP's politburo, however, it is plausible to argue that Beijing's opposition to peace negotiations strengthened the hands of the pro-war group and alienated the pro-peace group.⁶⁰ After the DRV opened talks with Washington in 1968, according to Soviet sources, Beijing began to bypass Hanoi and increase contacts with the NLF, encouraging it to continue protracted guerrilla war. China also tried to organize units of the local Chinese population in South Vietnam to intensify military actions there.⁶¹

China's objection to peace talks complicated its relations with Hanoi. That the North Vietnamese had greater confidence in Moscow than in Beijing was suggested by Kissinger, who wrote in his memoirs that the Soviets "often flaunted their knowledge" of the secret talks between him and Le Duc Tho while Zhou Enlai "professed to be unaware of them."⁶²

China's uncompromising position on Vietnam peace talks contributed to the distrust of its foreign policy by countries in the "Two Intermediate Zones," which China was supposed to unite. Countries like Britain, France, India, Yugoslavia, Ghana, and Poland wanted to bring about a peaceful solution to the Vietnam conflict but found China's opposition frustrating and objectionable. Beijing's rejection of the United Nations in Indochinese affairs alienated small neutral countries who viewed the international organization as an important platform. The contradictions and rigidity in Chinese foreign policy served to undermine Mao's united front strategy, leaving China isolated throughout

⁶⁰According to Robert Brigham, the hard-liners within the VWP leadership included Nguyen Chi Thanh, a cadre from the South and almost everyone in the NLF supported his anti-negotiations position in 1965. See Brigham, "Vietnamese-American Peace Negotiations: The Failed 1965 Initiatives."

⁶¹ Gaiduk, The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War, p. 169.

⁶² Henry Kissinger, White House Years (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), p. 749. Between 1969-1972, Soviet diplomats in Paris met regularly with the DRV delegation to discuss developments in the peace negotiations. The North Vietnamese kept Moscow informed not only of the official sessions but also of private meetings between Xuan Thuy, Le Duc Tho, and Kissinger. Gaiduk, The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War, p. 221.

the second half of the 1960s.

China's rejection of the Soviet call for "joint action" in supporting Vietnam and its unrelenting attacks on the so-called Soviet revisionism confirmed the Kremlin's worst assumptions about the intentions of Chinese leaders and the impossibility of reviving past friendship. In 1966, Moscow began to deploy troops along both the Soviet and Mongolian borders with China. The Sino-Soviet relationship would eventually deteriorate to a direct military confrontation in 1969.

Beijing's support for Hanoi's war against the United States and its denunciation of various peace proposals reinforced the American image of China as an irresponsible, aggressive, and dangerous player in international politics. Although Mao's diplomatic initiatives in the Afro-Asian world suffered major setbacks in 1965, policy-makers in Washington concentrated only on what they perceived as Beijing's expansionist intentions and belligerent rhetoric. China's encouragement of violent revolution frightened many moderate African and Asian governments, leading a number of them to sever diplomatic relations with the PRC. In June, Ben Bella was overthrown, leading the Afro-Asian movement to lean in a more pro-Soviet direction due to the influence of India and Yugoslavia. The fall of Ben Bella frustrated Mao's bid for leadership in the Afro-Asian world through the holding of the "second Bandung" conference. In September, a war broke out between India and Pakistan, a Chinese ally, over the territory of Kashmir. China's effort to deter India's advance failed and New Delhi won its conflict with Pakistan. The net result, strategically, was a gain for Moscow and a loss for Beijing. On September 30, Indonesian leader Sukarno was toppled in a right-wing counter coup, derailing Mao's plan to maintain a militant "Beijing-Jakarta axis."⁶³

Top officials in the Johnson administration, however, failed to attach importance to these setbacks in China's diplomacy. As Robert McNamara recently noted in his memoirs, "[i]n retrospect, one can see the events of autumn 1965 as clear setbacks for China, which contributed to its turn inward and the Cultural Revolution the following year. . . . But,

⁶³ For further discussions of the Chinese foreign policy setbacks in 1965 and their impact on China's internal development, see John W. Garver, Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1993), pp. 152-157.

blinded by our assumptions and preoccupied with a rapidly growing war, we—like most other Western leaders—continued to view China as a serious threat in Southeast Asia and the rest of the world.”⁶⁴ That misperception, in turn, may have constituted a missed opportunity to re-evaluate prior assumptions about the consequences of a US defeat in Vietnam for the rest of Southeast Asia (i.e., the Domino Theory)—and thus to reconsider the American commitment to “pay any price” to assure the survival of a non-communist South Vietnam.

⁶⁴ McNamara, In Retrospect, pp. 214-215.

Appendix

Documents on China and Vietnam Peace Talks⁶⁴**Documents 1: Chinese Foreign Ministry Circular, "Talks Between the Ghanaian Mission and the DRV," August 3, 1965.⁶⁵**

The Ghanaian mission has concluded its visit to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) on July 30. The mission has failed in its effort on behalf of the Anglo-American "peace talk" plot to lobby the DRV.

1. The following is a description of the Ghanaian-Vietnamese talks as provided by the DRV:

The Ghanaian mission stated that Ghana supported the Four-Point Proposal of the DRV⁶⁶ and the Five-Point Formula of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (NLF)⁶⁷ and was interested in the NLF's proposal to establish a National Coalition

⁶⁴ Translated by Qiang Zhai

⁶⁵ This circular was dispatched to Chinese embassies abroad on August 3, 1965. The Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CC CCP) on August 24, 1965 sent this document to its regional bureaus, provincial committees as well as the ministries of the State Council and the General Political Department of the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

⁶⁶ On April 8, 1965, Pham Van Dong announced the DRV's Four-Point Proposal, which demanded that the United States withdraw its forces from Vietnam and cease its acts of war; called for neutralization of both Vietnams pending unification; proposed a settlement of the internal affairs of South Vietnam in accordance with the program of the NLF; and insisted that reunification must be arranged by the Vietnamese people without outside interference.

⁶⁷ The NLF's Five-Point Formula was set forth on March 22, 1965. Among other things, it called for implementation of the Geneva Accords, withdrawal of U.S. troops, and the unification of the two Vietnams. For the text of the NLF's March 22, 1965, proclamation, with annotations indicating how the DRV moderated the tone of the original statement broadcast over Liberation Radio, see Marcus G. Raskin and Bernard B. Fall, eds., The Viet-Nam Reader, rev. ed., (New York: Random House, 1967), pp. 232-252. See also

Government and implement peace and neutrality. The purpose of Nkrumah⁶⁸'s participation in the British Commonwealth "peace mission" was to serve the interests of the Vietnamese people. The condition for his participation was the recognition of the NLF as the representative of South Vietnam. Ghana was no longer associated with this mission now. At present, the American position was not much different from the positions of South and North Vietnam. The United States was willing to implement the Geneva Accords and withdraw its forces from South Vietnam. The United States believed that the unification of Vietnam should be decided by the Vietnamese people themselves. Where the United States differed from North Vietnam and the NLF was just the demand on neutralization of entire Vietnam. The current moment was the best time to begin peace talks. Ghana suggested that Afro-Asian countries serve as mediators to promote peace talks. It was the hope of Afro-Asian countries to restore peace in Vietnam. The DRV must unite with Afro-Asian countries in order to realize its goals. Disunity meant weakness.

The Vietnamese side exposed the American 'peace talk' plot. It maintained that Ghana was far away from Vietnam geographically and that the DRV had a better understanding of its rival. The Vietnamese people were determined to fight until final victory and would not be taken in by Johnson's carrot. Armed struggle would not necessarily pay a higher price than political struggle. The struggle of the Vietnamese people constituted part of the anti-imperialist struggle of the Afro-Asian peoples, who should unite against imperialism. Ghana should mobilize Afro-Asian countries to carry out struggle, forcing U.S. imperialism to accept the demands of the NLF. Ghana should not attend a conference that pitted the United States against Afro-Asian countries. The DRV could not receive the visit of Nkrumah as a member of the British Commonwealth "peace mission." Even if Nkrumah planned to visit the DRV not as a member of the British Commonwealth "peace mission," the current moment was not appropriate because the DRV could not guarantee his safety.

Herring, ed., The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War, p. 832.

⁶⁸ Kwame Nkrumah was President of Ghana.

2. The proposal made by the Ghanaian mission to the Vietnamese represents the old plot of unconditional peace negotiations advanced several times in the past by the imperialists, revisionists, and reactionaries. The idea that "Afro-Asian countries served as mediators" is designed in reality to bypass the Geneva Accords to get the United States and the DRV into direct talks while countries like Ghana help the United States by pressuring the DRV. Before the visit of the Ghanaian mission to Hanoi, we had notified the DRV of our position on the attempts of Nkrumah and the mission to visit China. After this contact, the DRV concluded that a large gap existed between the DRV and Ghana and that the DRV would not benefit from the visit. Therefore, the DRV rejected the Ghanaian proposal and postponed the visit of Nkrumah to the DRV.

Imperialism, revisionism, and reactionaries are hatching new peace talk plots. But the contradiction between the DRV and American imperialism is irreconcilable. Both the NLF and the DRV are fighting extremely well. Imperialism, revisionism, and reactionaries will further serve as negative teachers. It can be predicted that new peace talk plots will be bound to failure.

3. There have been numerous reports and speculations in the world about the visit of the Ghanaian mission to the DRV. The Vietnamese reply to the mission mentioned above is excellent. You (embassies) should handle the case according to the following principles:

(1). In talking with socialist countries, primarily Romania and other left fraternal socialist countries, you might inform them of the Ghanaian mission's visit to the DRV in accordance with the reply of the DRV.

(2). In talking with friendly Afro-Asian countries, if you are asked (about the Ghanaian mission), you should explain properly in accordance with the DRV reply so that those countries will have a correct understanding of the current situation in Vietnam.

(3). In talking with left elements and friends who show concern about Vietnam, if you are asked (about the Ghanaian mission), you might also inform them of the DRV reply.

4. When the Ghanaian mission stopped in Beijing on July 30 on its way home, we only provided transit assistance. Neither did they propose to talk about any issues, nor did

we. As to Nkrumah's request to visit China, Premier Zhou will reply shortly to decline the request. The contents of this reply will be in agreement with the DRV reply to the Ghanaian mission.

August 3, 1965.

Source: [Q]uanzonghao (Record Group) 3124, [D]uanqi (Short-term), [J]uanhao (File) 123, [J]iangsu [P]rovincial [A]rchives, Nanjing.⁶⁹

Document 2: Chinese Foreign Ministry Circular, "Malraux's Visit to China," August 12, 1965.⁷⁰

Between July 19 and August 6 [1965], French Minister of State [Andre] Malraux visited China as special envoy of de Gaulle. At first, the French government indicated that Malraux would come to China as a private visitor. It did so for three reasons: to protect France's prestige as a "big power" and not to appear that it needed our help; to prevent the prospect that we would reject Malraux's visit because he served as a peace broker on Vietnam; and not to irritate the United States. After Malraux's arrival in China, the French government worried that our leaders would not receive him. As a result, it stressed that de Gaulle wanted to conduct talks with our leaders, and that Malraux was making an official visit. But in public statements the French government still insisted that Malraux was making a private trip. We expressed our dissatisfaction with the unclear identity of Malraux and the trick played by the French government. Later, the French government delivered a letter of introduction from de Gaulle to Chairman Liu [Shaoqi], authorizing Malraux to "thoroughly exchange views" with China on "significant issues

⁶⁹ Q 3124 contains the collection of the Foreign Affairs Office of the Jiangsu Provincial People's Government. The collection is divided into three categories: Yongjiu (permanent), Changqi (long-term), and Duanqi (short-term).

⁷⁰ The CC CCP on August 24, 1965 sent this circular to its regional bureaus, provincial committees as well as the ministries of the State Council and the General Political Department of the PLA.

concerning both China and France as well as the future of the world." It also expressed apologies to us. To exploit Franco-American contradictions and to woo de Gaulle, Chairman Mao, Chairman Liu, Premier Zhou, and Deputy Premier Chen (Yi) all received Malraux and discussed with him the following issues:

(1) Vietnam and Indochina

The Vietnam question was a primary issue that Malraux wanted to discuss. Rather than raising the issue directly, he chose to sound us out indirectly. Deputy Premier Chen asked Malraux whether he carried any specific proposals on Vietnam from de Gaulle, he replied no, saying that France would not initiate any proposal without obtaining China's agreement. During his meeting with Premier (Zhou), Malraux indirectly advanced the "Indochina neutralization" plan: to divide Vietnam along the Truong Son Ra mountain. The area east of the mountain, including Saigon, would belong to the DRV or the NLF; the area west of the mountain as well as Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand would be "neutralized." Malraux also asked whether it was possible to open negotiations when the United States "promised" to withdraw troops. Premier immediately repudiated Malraux's plan, pointing out that the boundaries in Indochina had long been established and that what needed to be discussed at the moment was the respect for the independence and neutrality of Cambodia and Laos on the basis of the Geneva Accords. Premier also explained our position on Vietnam and expressed our firm support for the anti-American patriotic struggle of the Vietnamese people. He contended that the United States, rather than seeking to preserve its prestige and disengage, desired to stay in Vietnam.

(2) Opposing American-Soviet Hegemony (not translated).

(3) Reform of the United Nations (not translated).

(4) Sino-French Relations (not translated).

(5) Chinese Domestic Issues (not translated).

August 12, 1965.

Source: Q 3124, D, J123, JPA.

**Document 3: Chinese Foreign Ministry Circular, "Vietnam 'Peace Talk' Activities,"
August 19, 1965.⁷¹**

On the question of Vietnam, in order to extract itself politically from the predicament and to win breathing time militarily, the United States has made a number of "peace" gestures recently, actively promoting peace talk activities from all sides. This time, the peace talk activities are covering broader aspects and the conditions proposed for peace talks are more deceptive. The situation is very complex and we must pay attention to it.

Johnson sent [Averell] Harriman to the Soviet Union to conduct strategic reconnaissance and to find out the Soviet position. Johnson might even receive intelligence about the DRV intentions from the Soviet Union. On July 28, drawing on Harriman's report of his talks with Soviet leaders and the results of [Robert] McNamara's on-the-spot survey of South Vietnam, Johnson, while announcing that the United States would send more troops to South Vietnam, increase military spending on Vietnam, and continue to bomb North Vietnam, said that the United States was ready to "discuss Hanoi's proposals" and that the issue of the NLF's participation in negotiations "is not an unresolvable difficulty." Johnson also officially requested the intervention of the United Nations in the Vietnam question.⁷² After returning home and reporting to Johnson, Harriman further announced that the DRV's Four Points Formula "can become the basis of United States-North Vietnam negotiations."

Because of the American gesture and encouragement, activities to promote peace

⁷¹ The CC CCP on August 24, 1965 sent this circular to its regional bureaus, provincial committees as well as the ministries of the State Council and the General Political Department of the PLA.

⁷² President Johnson made this speech at a news conference at the White House on July 28, 1965. For the text of Johnson's speech, see The Department of State Bulletin, Vol. 53, No. 1364 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, August 16, 1965), pp. 262-265. There is, however, no such sentence as the issue of the NLF's participation in negotiations "is not an unresolvable difficulty" in the original statement.

talks from all sides have immediately become active. Despite being turned down by the DRV, Nkrumah has continued to pester, requesting a visit to the DRV and China. This is the continuation of the peace talk activities by the British Commonwealth "peace mission." Directed by Harriman, India and Yugoslavia have conducted discussions and are at present actively establishing contact with other non-aligned countries, particularly the United Arab Republic, Guinea, Uganda and other African countries. Zambia has asked Ethiopia to join in its appeal to China, the United States, and the Soviet Union for a peaceful settlement of the Vietnam question. Zambia has also indicated that it wants to take the issue to the African Summit Meeting. De Gaulle has sent Malraux to visit China to examine our position. Although the Soviet revisionists dare not openly participate in peace talk activities, the Soviet government has privately colluded with the United States. The Soviet media is openly echoing the American peace talk plots. The activities of India and Yugoslavia have obviously received the promotion and blessing of the Soviet revisionists.

In comparison with the "Seventeen-Country Appeal," the first round of peace talk activities after the announcement of the American "unconditional discussions" proposal, and the second round of peace talk activities in the wake of the formation of the British Commonwealth "peace mission," this round of peace talk activities has the following unusual characteristics:

(1) Conditions for Peace Talks Are More Deceptive.

After the United States has made the gesture of "lowering" its conditions for peace talks, countries interested in promoting peace talks have advanced many plans, such as the call for a suspension of the bombardment of North Vietnam and a ceasefire, the inclusion of the NLF in negotiations, the settlement of the Vietnam issue on the basis of the 1954 Geneva Accords. These proposals can be traced to the same origins of the American gesture. On the surface, they appear to offer more compromises to the DRV and ask the United States to make concessions first.

(2) The Modes of Peace Talk Activities Are More Diversified with the Purpose of Creating an Atmosphere and Pressing the DRV into Peace Talks.

The number of countries involved in this round of peace talk activities has

increased from the previous two rounds. The motivations for these countries vary. Some countries work for the United States in order to receive American aid. Some are afraid of war. Some combine both of these considerations. Others want to cut a deal with the United States over Vietnam and still others desire to weaken American influence in Southeast Asia. The mode of peace talk activities this time also vary. Some countries operate on their own while others work collectively. Some act openly while others function secretly. It is to be expected that in the various international meetings forthcoming in the next few months, such as the United Nations, the African Summit Meeting, the Afro-Asian Conference, the Vietnam question will be discussed officially or unofficially.

It is especially notable that the United States this time is striving, through India and Yugoslavia, to encourage some African countries to make initiatives. By doing so, the United States is exploiting the ignorance and the fear of war expansion on the part of the African countries. A more important consideration behind the U.S. effort is the American desire to take advantage of the recent anti-China movement by right-wing states in Africa to drive a wedge between China and African countries.

(3) (The United States) Is Even More Flagrantly Sowing Discord Between China and the DRV.

The United States is on the one hand forcing the DRV into peace talks through blackmail and deception and on the other flagrantly sowing dissension between China and the DRV. It claims that the DRV's position on peace negotiations has moderated and that China represents the only obstacle. On this score, the Soviet revisionists, India, Yugoslavia, and other reactionaries are collaborating closely with the United States.

A fundamental fact is that the DRV's struggle against the United States is resolute and that it will not stop its fight to liberate the South. But on the treatment of Soviet revisionism, the DRV's position differs from ours. On the issue of peace talks, the DRV's practice also diverges from ours. The DRV has never completely closed the door on peace talks, thus creating an opportunity for imperialism, revisionism, and reactionaries and increasing their illusions to pressure the DRV to open peace negotiations.

Judging by the developments mentioned above, the peace talk activities this time

are complicated and the struggle to oppose peace talk hoaxes will be more arduous. Although the United States has made some gestures, none of them includes any substantive concession. This reality will become clear to all countries in the world after the peace talk activities have progressed for a period of time.

In contact with foreigners, if circumstances are necessary, you can cite our government's statement of August 7 and the points made in the recent editorials and commentaries in the People's Daily to lay bare the American policy of real expansion of war and sham gestures of peace talks, expose the Soviet revisionist collaboration with the United States, and express our determination to support the Vietnamese struggle through to the end. But you do not need to initiate conversations on Vietnam peace talks unnecessarily. In this regard, bear in mind that we are cooperating with the Vietnamese comrades. Do not appear over enthusiastic and do not take the Vietnamese job into our hands. Do not highlight our role. Especially in talking with the Vietnamese comrades, be careful not to give the impression that we are imposing our views on them.

August 19, 1965.

Source: Q 3124, D, J 123, JPA.

Document 4: Zhou Enlai's Talk with E. H. K. Mudenda, Agricultural Minister of Zambia, in Beijing, August 20, 1965.

The U.S. proposal for "unconditional discussions" is a plot. Conducting negotiations at this moment is nothing but a betrayal of the Vietnamese people, who have insisted on U.S. withdrawal of troops from Vietnam as the first step toward the settlement of the Vietnam problem. If the war continues in the present manner, the Vietnamese people can hold to their position. The war may not expand into a world war, but that probability will not be totally decided by the wish of people. If the United States wants war with China, it will not win over China. China will not ask other countries to participate in the war. Our position boils down to four sentences: (1) China will not

initiate war; (2) the Chinese mean what they say; (3) China is prepared; (4) if the war breaks out, there will be no boundaries.

Source: The Diplomatic History Research Office of the People's Republic of China Foreign Ministry, ed., Zhou Enlai waijiao huodong dashiji, 1949-1975 (Chronology of Zhou Enlai's Diplomatic Activities, 1949-1975) (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 1993), p. 474.

Document 5: Zhou Enlai's Talk with Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Romania, in Beijing, October 5, 1966.

1. On the issue of Vietnam, the Chinese and Soviet positions are absolutely opposite and united action is out of the question. 2. In time negotiations will be inevitably held on the Vietnam question, but the key issues are on what conditions and at what time should negotiations be conducted, and who decides the terms and timing of negotiations. The decision on negotiations lies in the DRV. 3. For those people who were asked by the Soviet Union and the United States to go to the DRV to exert pressure, we have allowed them to pass through China so long as the DRV has extended them invitations. But there is one exception: if U Thant wants to go to the DRV, we will think about whether to let him pass through China. As to the passage of aid-Vietnam materials through China, we will act according to agreements. On this issue there is no possibility of united action.

Source: Ibid., p. 505.

Document 6: Zhou Enlai's Talk with Pham Van Dong and Vo Nguyen Giap in Beijing, April 10, 1967.

In considering the prospect of the war, we should include two or three possibilities. One possibility is that the war will continue and expand. The law of war is

often not decided by the will of people, neither by our will nor by the enemy's will. War has its own law. Even if the enemy wants to stop the war, it may not be able to do so. Therefore, for the sake of the future, we must prepare for the continuation and expansion of the war. Another possibility is that the enemy will blockade your coast. If the enemy wages a total blockade, then it is very likely that it intends to expand the hostilities into a total war. If the enemy just wants to force you into compromise by blockading your coast and if you refuse to compromise, then what will the enemy do? The enemy must have a follow-up plan. A total blockade of the coast will not be a simple matter. It will involve the deployment of many fleets. It will be a major operation. It will strain the enemy's relations with other countries. A third possibility is what the two of you have just mentioned: the crucial moment will be the dry season next year. You may defeat the enemy, forcing it to admit its failure and withdraw from Vietnam. As to the likelihood that the war will neither end nor expand but simply wear on, that is inconceivable. The war will end inevitably and the question is when. It is impossible that the war will wear on forever without a result. Concerning the issue of political struggle, it is without doubt that political struggle should be carried out at any time. War is the highest form of the development of political struggle. It is impossible that war will not involve political struggle. Things like strengthening international propaganda, winning sympathy, weakening and dividing enemies, and exploiting contradictions between them all fall into the category of political struggle. You have done those things in the past and you must continue doing so in the future.

Source: Ibid., p. 510.

Document 7: Zhou Enlai's Talk with Pham Van Dong and Vo Nguyen Giap in Beijing, April 11, 1967.

China has a popular saying: the 90-mile mark is the half point of a 100-mile journey. It means that a traveler has walked 90 miles and has 10 miles to finish. The

remaining 10 miles are the most difficult for the traveler. The same thing is true in climbing mountains. Take the climbing of the Himalayas for instance, the last stretch of the climbing is the most difficult. We believe that you will surely win the final victory. We will mobilize the people of the whole world to support you to achieve victory. The Soviet Union, however, surely wants you to stop halfway. It has done such a thing during the Stalin period. After the surrender of Japan in 1945, the United States supported Chiang Kai-shek. At that time, the Soviet Union had suffered a great deal in the war. It concluded the Yalta agreement, dividing spheres of influence with the United States. The Yalta agreement is wrong. As a tactic, the agreement is all right; but as a policy, it is incorrect. The explosion of the two atomic bombs in particular shocked the Soviet Union. The Soviets were eager to sign an agreement with Chiang Kai-shek, recognizing the fact that the United States enjoyed the greatest sphere of influence in China. The Soviet Union in return wanted to maintain Russian special interests in the Northeast and Xinjiang and keep the People's Republic of Mongolia. At the time, Stalin fired off a cable to Comrade Mao Zedong stating that the Chinese Communist Party should cooperate with Guomindang instead of starting a civil war and that if the Chinese Communist Party launched a civil war, the Chinese nation would be destroyed. Clearly the Soviet Union had been intimidated by the atomic bomb. We say that Stalin was still worthy of being a Marxist-Leninist because he was capable of recognizing his own errors. After the liberation of Shanghai, Liu Shaoqi went to Moscow, where Stalin implicitly made a self-criticism. He asked whether the telegram he sent to Comrade Mao Zedong in August 1945 had undermined the progress of China's liberation war. Liu Shaoqi replied that it had not. Certainly it did not. Once during a banquet, Stalin offered a toast, claiming that he was old and very afraid that after his death those comrades (referring to Voroshilov, Molotov, Khrushchev, and others who were present) would be scared by imperialism. Now we can see that Stalin's predictions have proved true.

Source: Ibid., pp. 510-511.

Document 8: Zhou Enlai's Talk with Xuan Thuy, Director of the International Liaison Department of the VWP, in Beijing, May 7, 1968.

The conditions of the Korean [armistice] negotiations at that time are different from your conditions now. The Korean talks then concerned only half of Korea while you are now dealing with the unification of Vietnam. The issue of half Vietnam was discussed fourteen years ago. Comrade Mao Zedong told Chairman Ho Chi Minh last time that the Geneva Accords at that time might have been signed erroneously. After the conclusion of the Accords, many soldiers in South Vietnam were withdrawn to the North. At the time, the United States was unwilling to sign the Accords. We also had reasons not to sign the Accords. Chairman Ho said that the conclusion of the Accords had its advantages. The South Vietnamese went through a difficult period of arrest, incarceration, and suppression by Ngo Dinh Diem and suffered over two hundred thousand deaths. With this bitter lesson, the people in South Vietnam have risen up spontaneously to make revolution and achieve the situation they have today. Therefore, the situation of the Korean negotiations was similar to the situation of the 1954 Geneva Conference. The Korean negotiations were conducted on the battle ground. The war lasted for nearly three years and the negotiations two years. But when the 1954 Geneva Conference began to discuss the Korean question, nothing was achieved because the war had ended. No matter what we argued, they (the Americans) would not listen. As a result, the Korean negotiations only achieved an armistice agreement but failed to reach any political settlement. It [the United States] refused to discuss the issue of troop withdrawal. When we withdrew our troops in 1958, [the United States] refused to withdraw its forces. This time you encounter a different situation. You are beginning talks with the United States in stages. It is all right to do so. Watch while you are proceeding. But the fundamental issue is this: no matter what happens, you should not let the enemy gain from negotiations what it has failed to gain in the battlefield. It was because of the battle of Dien Bien Phu that the Geneva Conference was able to reach a result and settle on the Seventeenth Parallel. When he returned home, Comrade Pham Van Dong may have already informed you of our attitude. We feel that you have responded too quickly and too impatiently, perhaps giving the

Americans a misperception that you are eager to negotiate. Comrade Mao Zedong has told Comrade Pham Van Dong that negotiations are all right but you must assume a high posture. Secondly, the United States, the vassal countries, and South Vietnam at present have a force of one million. Without breaking their backbones or cutting five to six of their ten fingers, they will not acknowledge their defeat and withdraw.

Source: Ibid, p. 524.

Document 9: Zhou Enlai's Talk with Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Romania, in Beijing, September 7, 1969.⁷³

Although we have different views, it is helpful to exchange opinions. As to the Vietnam question, whether the DRV continues the resistance war or conducts the Paris talks, it is the business of the Vietnamese Party themselves. When we exchange views with the Vietnamese comrades, we primarily discuss the conditions of the anti-American war in Vietnam. We want to support them and learn from their experience in carrying out the people's war. With regard to the Paris talks, we have never intervened partly because the DRV makes decisions and partly because the Soviet Union has intervened. (Because of the Soviet factor), We are even more unwilling to intervene. We have not paid attention to the progress of the talks. The Soviet Union is using the Vietnam issue, the Middle East issue, the West Berlin issue, and the China issue as trump cards in its bargaining with the United States. All these issues have been subordinated to their foreign policies. Their international policies are nothing but the unity of the two superpowers to dominate the world.

Source: Ibid, pp. 538-539.

⁷³ Maurer was leading a Romanian Party and government delegation to attend Ho Chi Minh's funeral in Hanoi. He made a stopover in Beijing on September 7, 1969.

Document 10: Zhou Enlai's Talk with Xuan Thuy, Director of the International Liaison Department of the VWP and Head of the DRV Delegation to the Paris Talks, in Beijing, July 7, 1972.

Xuan Thuy: The DRV is prepared for two possibilities: on the one hand to be ready for the continuation of the war and on the other hand not to miss any opportunity to achieve a negotiated settlement on a reasonable basis.

Zhou: Whether the Vietnam War will continue or end in a negotiated settlement because of the concessions from the United States, the four months from July to October this year will be a crucial period.

Source: Ibid, p. 636.

Document 11: Zhou Enlai's Talk with Le Duc Tho, Politburo Member of the VWP and Special Adviser to Xuan Thuy at the Paris Talks, in Beijing, July 12, 1972.

In 1945 Chairman Mao went to Chongqing to negotiate with Chiang Kai-shek. Before his departure, he asked the liberation areas to prepare for war and not to worry about his safety. At that time, many of our comrades in the liberation areas disapproved Chairman Mao's trip because they were afraid that Chiang Kai-shek would imprison Chairman Mao. Stalin sent us a telegram and Chairman Ho was aware of this matter. Stalin said that we must go to Chongqing to negotiate; otherwise the Chinese nation faced the danger of being destroyed. He was frightened by the two atomic bombs of the United States. The telegram was not signed with Stalin's name. In the end, both Chairman Mao and I went. Chairman Mao told me that we must be ready to be imprisoned and that imprisonment would give us time to read books. We cabled the liberation areas that if Chiang Kai-shek attacked you, you should resist him resolutely. While we were negotiating, our forces annihilated one division of Chiang Kai-shek's troops in North

China. As a result, Chairman Mao returned to Yanan safely.

Source: Ibid, p. 637.

Document 12: Zhou Enlai's Talk with Truong Chinh, Politburo Member of the VWP and Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly of the DRV, in Beijing, December 31, 1972.

Nixon does intend to disengage. Therefore this time you should approach negotiations sincerely in order to achieve results. Of course, the negotiations might fail and there might be setbacks in the talks.

Source: Ibid, p. 659.

Document 13: Zhou Enlai's Talk with Le Duc Tho, Politburo Member of the VWP and Special Adviser to Xuan Thuy at the Paris Talks, in Beijing, January 3, 1973.

The U. S. effort to exert pressure through bombing has failed. Nixon is facing many international and domestic problems. It seems that he intends to retreat from Vietnam and Indochina. During the negotiations, you should both adhere to principles and show necessary flexibility. Let the Americans leave as quickly as possible. In half a year or one year the situation will change.

Source: Ibid, p. 660.

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