CHAPTER - III

PEACEFUL-COEXISTENCE AND THE 24th CONGRESS OF CPSU:
THE VIETNAM WAR AND SOVIET - US RELATIONS
Khrushchev's aim at achieving a breakthrough in domestic and foreign policy ultimately resulted in utter frustration. Especially after the Cuban Missile crisis things did not go well for Khrushchev at home. His image got tarnished and his very competence was questioned. Ultimately he was thrown into oblivion. After Brezhnev's accession to power the Soviet Union emerged as a global power. This was a result of Soviet military parity with the U.S.A. and the expansion of its influence. This apparently enhanced the Soviet bargaining position vis-a-vis the U.S.A. This chapter seeks to examine the causes of Khrushchev's fall and the continuity and change in Brezhnev's policy towards the U.S.A., with a special reference to the Vietnam war, and thus provide a framework for Soviet policy towards the U.S.A. in the 1970's and 1980's.

Though Khrushchev wanted to liberalize politics within the given Soviet framework, the military repression in Hungary in 1956 and the reimposition of cultural curbs within the Soviet Union were in contradiction to his liberal posture. Interestingly, under Khrushchev a certain number of political arrests did not come to an end. But, surprisingly, Khrushchev himself resorted to Stalinist practices and "became the new dictator of the party, something of a functional equivalent of Stalin minus terror".

However, there was still a difference. "While Stalin executed his opponents, Khrushchev removed them from power and denounced them". 3

Khrushchev's Cuban Missile venture was not only a humiliating experience for the Soviet Union but was also in blatant contradiction with the policy of peaceful coexistence. With this, hope of achieving a breakthrough both in international and domestic politics also collapsed. 4 His reforms produced reaction within the party and consequently he faced a dangerous challenge. 5 Khrushchev held that, with the development of rocket-nuclear weaponry, large scale army, surface navies and fleet of bomber aircraft had become obsolete. Hence he sought to cut army appropriation but faced strong apposition. While the economy declined, Khrushchev, paradoxically, raised the expectations of Soviet consumers for rapid improvement in standard of living. 6 Obviously he was unable to resolve this dichotomy.

In fact, Khrushchev's policies were marked by "inconsistency and over-optimism". His record in foreign

affairs was full of setbacks": the Cuban Missile crisis; the dispute with China; and tension over the Berlin issue. It was his policies that led to the disintegration of the World Communist Movement. Khrushchev started the process of depoliticization and deideologization of Soviet society and policy. He had apparently reduced the CPSU to a mere instrument of economic management. In the long run this proved to be an irreversible and negative trend. Khrushchev had ignored the party's political-ideological work without which, his critics argued, the building of socialism was a remote possibility.

Evidently, Khrushchev's reforms created a new political climate and released certain forces which were apparently beyond his control. The disgruntled members had increased in the party. This virtually led to his downfall. The plans for his ouster were formulated when his popularity was at a low ebb. The entire top leadership was unanimous on this issue with the evident support of the military and the K.G.B. Khrushchev was over thrown. Thus his political dominance was brought to an end in October 1964. But his removal was projected as his desire to be released from the duties on grounds of old age which the CPSU granted. But in reality,

7. See, n.5, p.38


Khrushchev was overthrown.\textsuperscript{10} That is why he was made an unnamed target and was excluded for all time to come except for a brief news item when he died. Pravda made scathing attacks on him, for his half-baked decisions and hasty actions which it called "divorced from reality".\textsuperscript{11}

Admittedly, Khrushchev's ouster in 1964, like the death of Stalin, terminated a political era in the history of the Soviet Union. His greatest contribution, however, was his initiation of the de-Stalinization process. But he himself forgot, as Mikoyan put it, "the struggle for power can also be conducted under socialism". Of course the 20th CPSU congress was the fountain head of this process.\textsuperscript{12}

After the policy of glasnost was initiated, new light was cast on many episodes in Soviet political life - including the overthrow of Khrushchev. A number of interviews, memoirs and analyses of Khrushchev's fall - many to them by the very men involved - appeared in the Soviet Union. Soviet historians and political scientists with inside knowledge - such as Roy Medvedev and Fedor Burlatsky started a debate about Khrushchev's overthrow by writing detailed new versions of the coup that were published in the

\begin{quote}
10. Khrushchev, however, did not seem to believe that he was overthrown. To quote him, "Perhaps the most important thing I did was just this that they were able to get rid of me simply by voting", Se Medvedev and Medvedev, n.1, p.245.

11. For the charge's against Khrushchev see Medvedev and Medvedev, n.1, p.75.

\end{quote}
official press in 1988. The new information undermines the long-held interpretation that Suslov played the leading role or at least one of the leading roles in the plot. The latest version asserts that Suslov had little to do with it, that Brezhnev led the plot, along with Central Committee Secretaries, Podgorny and Shelepin and K.G.B. Chairman Vladimir Semichastniyy. One point on which there seems to be agreement is that Brezhnev's position was shaky at the start.

However, 1964 did not mark a sharp break in Soviet policy. In fact, there was a remarkable continuity in the policy of the new leadership. Brezhnev's leadership was only opposed to Khrushchev's manner not the substance. That is to say, the difference between the collective leadership and the man whom they had removed from power was primarily one of style or posture. For example, Khrushchev's policies were more flavoured with propaganda, while Brezhnev was more pragmatic in approach. The continuity could be seen in terms of Soviet domination in Eastern Europe, avoiding war with the West while restraining Western military power, containing Chinese influence and raising Soviet influence in the developing countries.


14. Tompson, 12.1101,16.

24TH CPSU CONGRESS AND STATUS OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

While the post Khrushchev leadership wanted to acquire military superiority, it also wanted to adhere to the principle of peaceful coexistence. There was considerable expansion of Soviet military power. Nevertheless, there was general military detente with the U.S. Perhaps for this reason, some Western analysts have interpreted the Cold War as one of the variants of the peaceful coexistence. 16 At the heart of peaceful coexistence was cooperation and detente two characteristics unattainable between antagonistic ideologies. In fact, the relationship of the struggle and cooperation was known as peaceful coexistence. The ambivalence of the Khrushchev period was replaced by a generally coexistence programme aimed at achieving detente and cooperation. 17 Brezhnev was able to achieve this objective in the 70's. Recognizing the interdependence between the two systems, he expressed the desire for greater cooperation.

The 24th Congress of the CPSU was the fifth consecutive party Congress to declare peaceful coexistence the prime


characteristic of Soviet foreign policy towards states with different systems. The 1971 Congress outlined a peace programme for international relations based on the belief that the prevailing situation demands the choice of cooperation over confrontation in "East-West affairs." The concept of Peaceful coexistence certainly provided opportunities for better relations between antagonistic states.

Peaceful coexistence as a concept implied that the global struggle between the rival social systems would be continued by peaceful ideological, political and economic but not military methods. It was considered to be just another form of struggle, a war against war. It really worked as a "shield for warding off a nuclear war". As Brezhnev put it "the policy of peaceful coexistence was pursued under the banner of struggle for the relaxation of tension". But in the ideological framework, peaceful coexistence was considered to be a strategy for the ultimate triumph of socialism. Both Khrushchev and Brezhnev cherished their wishful thinking and quite often talked


about the "eventual destruction of capitalism" and "inevitable victory of socialism". But in reality, the Soviet Union had long abandoned the dream that the international system as such could be overthrown by worldwide revolution and its ideology long ceased to be a motivating force in revolutionary sense. However, the Communist ideology provided a conceptual framework to make all their open and silent adjustments and revisions. Of course, the application of Communist ideology did not carry any radical content. It actually became an ideology of the status quo.

One of the reasons why the soviets favoured peaceful coexistence was that in their perception it imposed definite constraints on Western freedom of action. After Nixon and Brezhnev Summit meeting in 1972, a historic document entitled "Basic Principles of Relations between the USSR and the U.S.A." was signed. The two leaders agreed to conduct their relations, on the basis of peaceful coexistence - long sought goal of soviet foreign policy was achieved at least on paper. It was certainly an achievement from the Soviet point of view.


Though by definition peaceful coexistence should have eliminated the use of force in pursuit of foreign policy objectives, the reality turned out to be different; the arms race continued, armed intervention and armed conflict in the Third World continued to be a living reality. However, the Soviet Union had an explanation for its involvement in the arms race. As George F. Kennan put it, "The compulsion of Soviet military competition and military thinking were already too powerful. Especially after the U.2 episode and the Cuban Missile crisis the two great nuclear powers tended to believe that armed forces and armed forces alone would eventually determine the outcome of their difference. Militarization of the entire East-West relationship in concept, rhetoric and in assumption was the result of their belief in armed forces. It created an illusion of a total conflict of interest between the two societies. This was perpetuated by both Soviet Union and U.S.A."

The West viewed the Soviet policy of peaceful coexistence as contradictory, because, they argued, the Soviets wanted to pursue peaceful coexistence with the U.S. while they simultaneously adhered to, advocated, and, indeed, carried out a policy of "revolution" and intervention in the Third World. For several other flaws, the West dismissed


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this as mere propaganda barrage and a time serving maneuver of Soviet Union. However, this was not for nothing. Mostly the Soviet literature on peaceful coexistence was essentially propagandist. Yet peaceful coexistence had attracted close attention of the political and scientific quarters of the West, early in 1970s. The term peaceful coexistence has been officially recorded in a number of major international documents of that period. This was nothing but an acceptance of peaceful coexistence as a principle in dealing with other states.

THE IMPACT OF STRATEGIC PARITY

By the 1960s, the entire course of development in the world arena underwent major changes. These changes were a result of a variety of factors like strategic parity, balance of power relation between super powers, establishment of systemic understanding, stability in Europe, development of NAM as a 'bloc' with bargaining methods and positions, independent growth and ideology of China and Chinese detente with the U.S.A., superpower intervention in regional conflicts of the Third World, and the growth of European peace movement. Of course, one of the most decisive factors was the consolidation of the Soviet position and their increasing political influence. There was change in the alignment of forces which reshaped the entire political map of the world, especially after the success of national liberation movement and the emergence of many new states resulting in profound changes in international power questions. This was certainly a favorable development from
the Soviet point of view. The Soviets saw the correlation of forces shifting in their favour.

The Cuban Missile crisis and the final break with China had forced the Soviet leadership to orient its policies. Now their sole aim was to catch-up with American superiority in both strategic nuclear and conventional weapons so that there is no defeat, no humiliation. Presumably this effort had begun with Khrushchev still in command. But the decision was confined and resource allocation increased by his successors. The result was huge arms build-up almost on par with the U.S.A. Now military was important not only from defense point of view but it was important in pursuit of foreign policy.

The soviet dream to become equal to America as a world power required massive diversion of resources. The military budget was increased. Thus they moved from gross inferiority to rough parity in the 1970s. The military build up had a very important political aspect in Soviet policy for they always had a clear conception of military power as an instrument of foreign policy. The central aim of "huge military built up" was understandably to secure world wide recognition as one of the two superpowers. With a capacity

27. According to Margot light the attainment of global power was based on policies that had been initiated by Khrushchev. See, "Restructuring Soviet Foreign Policy" in Ronald J. Hill and Ake Dellenbrant, Gorbachev and Perestroika (London: Edward Elgar, 1989), p.171.
equal to that of the U.S. to impress itself on the international order. The major purpose has been to achieve increased political influence so that Soviet interests could be asserted with more tenacity. The Soviet themselves have accepted it. But, ironically, when they came closer to achieving nuclear parity with the U.S.A., it become increasingly difficult to translate military power into political power.

Looking back at Soviet development, till 1960s, the Soviet Union was locked into strategic inferiority. Despite the Soviet development of an ICBM, the U.S. was still superior. Hence, to match its adversary, the Soviet Union developed much improved command control system and by the

28. Abba Eban, The New Diplomacy (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), pp.107-120. Richard Lovementhal, "Continuity and Change in Soviet Foreign Policy", Survival, vol.XIV, January/February 1972, p.2. "One of the highest priorities of the Soviet Union in dealing with the U.S. has been to gain recognition as an equal superpower and hence a country with a legitimate claim to have its say in the solution of all international problems. This recognition was essential to establish itself in the eyes of the world as alternate role to that represented by the U.S. so that it could shift the world balance of power in Soviet favour- a long term goal of its foreign policy". Richard Pipes, U.S. - Soviet Relation in the Era of Detente (Colorado: Westview Press, 1981), p.81. According to George F. Kennan the difference of aim and outlook between the Soviet Union and U.S. were indeed of such a nature that they could be resolved only by war or by the achievement of military superiority by one party or the other. The Cloud of Danger (London: Alutchison of London, 1978), pp. 166-7.

mid 1960s, they achieved a "second strike" deterrent force without any change in strategic doctrine Brezhnev assigned the primary role in Soviet defense policy to the strategic missile force. Though Brezhnev endorsed the policy of detente with the U.S., he maintained that it did not lessen the need for military strength. That is to say, without confronting with U.S., the Soviet Union shall remain prepared for any kind of eventuality. While the Soviet military build up was a by product of the Cold War, the Cold War itself was the result of several factors: Conflicting ideologies, mutually opposed economic systems; fear; suspicion; distrust; and conflicting political objectives in Europe and elsewhere. All these were reinforced by the possession of weapons of mass destruction which, in turn, provided a justification for further military build up and an unending arms race. A strong reaction against the arms race was shown by the growth of the European peace movement.

Evidently the Brezhnev era provided the economic base for a sustained arms competition with the West.

30. C.G. Jacobson, "Soviet Strategic Capability: The Superpower "Balance", Current History, vol.73, no.430, October 1977, p.98. Since the end of the Stalin era, the Soviet Union is believed to have been engaged in "systematic strategic deception". It has been a part of Soviet strategy to complicate the military planning of its opponents and mislead the West". When weak, feigning strength, when strong, feigning parity", See Michael Miholka, "Soviet Strategic Deception 1955-1981", Journal of Strategic Studies (London), Vol.5, no.1, March 1982, p.40.

In fact, the Soviet military was the only sector that was globally competitive. The U.S. officially estimated that about 11 to 13 percent of the Soviet Gross National Product went into national defense.\(^{32}\) In foreign trade, for example, the size of Soviet arms transfers as a percentage of total exports shows the importance given to military means in an effort to gain international influence.\(^{33}\) The magnitude of Soviet military spending only partially explain the trends in the superpower military relationship. The existing balance was the result of two processes: the U.S. diversion of enormous defense resources into the Vietnam War, and the simultaneously balanced incremental growth of Soviet defense spending. An estimated 250 billion U.S. defense dollars were sacrificed in the Vietnam War. This amount was the equivalent of many years worth of defense investment.\(^{34}\) One can hypothetically argue that, had there been no Vietnam War, it would have been difficult for the Soviet Union to achieve military parity.

32. William G. Hyland, "Brezhnev and Beyond", *Foreign Affairs*, vol.48, no. 1, Fall 1979, p.64.


34. Ibid.p.6.
It is believed that in the 1970s the Soviets were very much in a situation of having little to hope for and little to fear. It was only in the 1970s that the Soviets admitted that an armed retaliatory capacity for the Soviet Union had come about in the 1960s—actually, the late 1960s. Both America and the Soviet Union acknowledged that, while each side has certain areas of superiority, these balance out to yield an overall parity. Parity became a reality and this further become a basis for U.S.-Soviet relations. Military power of the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union was regarded as about equal. In the 70s, the Soviet Union was universally acknowledged to be a super power, militarily coequal with the U.S. its old adversary in the Cold War. Admittedly, the relationship between the two superpowers was both unique and ambivalent. 35

After the 24th Party Congress, strategic superiority was no longer an objective. Mutual deterrence, a balance, parity and equal security were advocated. Reaffirming the aim of deterrence policy, Brezhnev said, "the allegation that the Soviet Union is going beyond what is sufficient for defense, that it is striving for superiority—is absurd". However, he contended that... "the Soviet Union's defense potential must be sufficient to deter any one from disturbing

35. Edmonds, n.15, p. 10
our peaceful life”.\textsuperscript{36} The Soviets claimed that, due to the shift in the balance of forces, the West has realized the futility of war with the Soviet Union. But, at the same time, they believed that, so long as imperialism existed, the danger of war was going to persist. The single logical inference was: the Soviet Union must maintain constant preparedness.\textsuperscript{37} Nuclear preparedness was prescribed as a device for avoiding war. This dual insistence on the establishment of the principle of peaceful coexistence on the one hand, and all round development of the armed forces on the other presents a somewhat confusing picture. But then this is what Soviet strategy was all about.

The primary function of Soviet military power was supposed to neutralize Western military power and render it politically ineffectual. The military parity led to detente which in turn led to an institutionalized dialogue between the Soviet Union and U.S. It helped to regulate their strategic relationship but did halt arms race.

Indisputably, the super power arms race was not in Moscow’s interest. Economically, the Soviet Union could not afford it. Moreover, it realized that a moderate military posture would facilitate wider cooperation and interaction

\textsuperscript{36} Brezhnev cited in Leebaert, n. 33, p.106

\textsuperscript{37} Because the Soviet leadership viewed a military show down with the U.S. as the inevitable outcome of the ideological and political conflict between the two powers. Kennan, n.28, p.166. Although the Soviet Union abandoned the policy of direct confrontation with the U.S., it continued a major rearmament programme for possible World War III by projecting a peaceful image. Pipes, n.28, pp.102, 109 and 112.
with the West which would serve to solve pressing domestic problems. Of course, the strategic parity with the U.S., for a variety of reasons, improved prospects for an effort to reach a better understanding between themselves on all important issues. Detente was deepened and, as a result, there was remarkable reduction in tension between East and West. But still, according to the CIA sources, roughly 12-14 percent of the Soviet G.N.P. was spent on the military.\footnote{As quoted in Leebaert, n.33, p.18.} Obviously it had negative consequences for the Soviet economy.

There was an objective need to end the arms race. Moreover, the quality of nuclear weapons had reached such a level that a further increase would have made no change. In Vienna on 18 June 1979, the Soviet Union and the USA issued a communique in which they pledged that they would not strive for military superiority, since that can only result in dangerous instability, generating higher loads of armaments with no benefit to the security of either side.\footnote{Vienna Summit, June 15-18, 1979 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, Selected documents no.13, 1979).}

After World War II the agenda before the Soviet leadership was to seek the prevention of a new war, to avoid wasteful expenditure arising from Cold War politics in order to attend to their own domestic problems which were affecting day to day life. In fact, no other country had put forward so many proposals directed at strengthening peace and ending
the arms race, as the Soviet did. The Soviet Union believed that the possibilities of further improving the relations with the Western States are far from exhausted. The belief was, of course, perfectly compatible with peaceful coexistence.

Even after acquiring the super power status, the Soviet Union had reservation with the concept of "superpower". They felt it put the Soviet Union on par with "imperialist U.S.". Dismissing the concept of the super powers, the Soviets argued, "at first sight, the 'superpower' concept seems to apply equally to the USA and the USSR, but in actual fact it is directed solely against the Soviet Union". Despite the Soviet reservation, the term 'superpower' has been used by academic and political analysts to refer to the USA and the Soviet Union, and had a wider acceptance.

The growth of Soviet military strength had negative consequences for the Soviet economy. Stagnation and declining growth rate was the price of the military build up. In the 1950s, the economy grew at five to six percent. In the 1960s, the growth rate dropped to four to five percent, and in the 1970s it continued to slide to around four percent.


41. For further explanation, see K. Brutents, "Soviet Union and the Newly Independent Countries", International Affairs, vol.4, 1979, p.11.
with ominous prediction of one to two percent in the 1980s.\(^2\) The declining growth rate had apparently disturbed the Soviet leaders. They wanted rapid economic growth to lay the material foundations for quicker "transition from Socialism to communism" and to increase the size and power of Soviet economy, because the Soviet Union had to show to the world the inherent superiority of the socialist system compared to the capitalist system.

Brezhnev did not abandon Khrushchev's conceptual formulations. He retained them as part of the ideological infrastructure but changed their functions to suit his pragmatic approach. While accepting Khrushchev's conceptual formulations of peaceful coexistence, Brezhnev sought to avoid excesses and errors by adopting a rationalistic, pragmatic and cautious approach.

The concept of the "the non-capitalist path of development" was repudiated. Thus, the concept no longer implied a prescription programme for rapid short cuts to socialism. Now, socialism was not just over the horizon, as Khrushchev had claimed.\(^3\) The Soviet Union was still in the stage of 'developed socialism'.


During the Brezhnev period, Soviet involvement in the Third World increased unprecedentedly. The rationale for its involvement in the Third World was based on the importance of the Third World as a major component in international politics. The national liberation movement was considered to be a part of the world revolutionary process. It was assumed that it will unite the socialist and international workers movement to bring down world capitalism. Khrushchev's long term commitment to expand Soviet interests in the Third World was not abandoned. Soviet military aid commitments continued at a steady flow into the Third World; economic or military assistance was used to establish, maintain and expand the Soviet presence in aid-receiving countries. This was considered to be an effective means to counter imperialism.

Escalation of War in Vietnam

In the 1960s the Vietnam war was a unique combination of two revolutionary streams - liberation struggle in the south and the socialist revolution in the North. The peaceful reunification of Vietnam, which did not fit in with the American plans in Asia, was what the war was all about.

44. Ibid., pp.34 55. See also Christer Jonsson, "Foreign Policy Ideas and Groups in the Soviet Union, Kanet, n.26, p.16.

Among all Asian countries, Vietnam was the first country to achieve independence from the French domination. In 1945, on the basis of a popular nationalist movement, Vietnam was united from north to south. But the French opposed this unification and sought to reconquer by means of a new colonial war. In Washington this was regarded a component part of the global confrontation with "International Communism". By the late 1940s the US supported the French war effort, channeling funds to France through a secret fund. By 1954, 80 to 90 per cent of the French war was being financed by the US. 46

In 1954 France, realizing that war is unwinnable, concluded a settlement of defeat, known as the Geneva Agreement. According to the Agreement nationwide elections had to be held in 1956. Being afraid of Ho Chi Minh's popularity. The US decided to oppose the elections. The US provided the necessary support to the new regime in the south - the Ngo Dinh Diem regime- to enable Diem to refuse to participate in the elections. 47 Infact, the US was not afraid of Ho Chi Minh. But it was afraid of communism which they wanted to contain at all cost. Moreover, Vietnam had a strategic importance for the US. Hence communism had to be prevented from consolidating in the region. Anything that was anti-communist was justified. This is what the concept

47. Ibid.
of containment was all about. By all means, a barrier to the expansion of communism had to be created, because the US perceived it as a threat to the 'Grand Area'. Vietnam was considered "strategically necessary for world control". Guided by this perception, the Eisenhower Administration placed its support behind President Diem of South Vietnam. By the time of the Johnson Presidency in 1964, there were thousands of US advisors in south Vietnam. Johnson's foreign policy was clearly based upon over-simplified orthodoxies of the Cold War. He believed that the expansion of communism was essentially Moscow or Peking based


49. During World War II, extensive studies were conducted and extensive geopolitical analyses and plans were produced. The study was conducted by the "Council on Foreign Relations and the State Department" and "the War and Peace Study Group". American planners were well aware that the US was going to emerge as a power, in a position of hegemony. See Noam Chomsky, "Intervention in Vietnam and Central America: Parallels and Differences", Monthly Review, vol. 37, September 1985, p.3, for further in depth analysis of US motives, see "Blueprint for World Hegemony" Lawren H. Shoupe and William Minter, Imperial Brain Trust (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978), pp.11-56, 117-187, 223-253.

conspiracy and the US had the responsibility to contain it.\textsuperscript{51} Besides, it was becoming clear to the US that its dominance was impossible without military intervention. It seems this motivated them to move into Vietnam when the departure of the French army had created a power vacuum.\textsuperscript{52} This was very much akin to the concept of "escalation" that assumed great significance in the US foreign policy doctrine and this permitted a massive deployment of American armed forces in local conflicts aimed at achieving US global goals. Vietnam became the place for testing the viability of the doctrine.\textsuperscript{53}

It is in this context that the Soviet role in Vietnam war assumes a special significance. For, without the sustained Soviet economic and military support, it would have been very difficult to successfully resist the pressure and repression unleashed by the US. However, the dominant characteristic of Soviet behavior in Asia, over the last five decades, had been reaction, not action. The Soviet relations with Vietnam during the Khrushchev period were not as much as with the successive Soviet leadership after 1965. It seems, in his desire to illustrate the deep spirit of peaceful coexistence, Khrushchev did not champion the


\textsuperscript{52} The US ignored De Gaulle's warning that Vietnam would be "an entanglement without end". Admittedly, it was more intelligent for France to move out than for American to move in see Eban, n.28, p.43.

\textsuperscript{53} See A History of US Armed Intervention, n.45, p.92.
Vietnamese cause vigorously. Khrushchev consciously avoided any provocation and adopted a low profile so that there would be no adverse effect on their relations with the USA, although the US was undermining the peaceful coexistence. On March 4, 1964 Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko warned the U.S. that it would not leave Vietnam standing alone. 54

However, the Soviet Union held that the Vietnam War might escalate into World War. Hence the Soviet Union continued to advocate detente. Though it rendered necessary economic and military assistance to Vietnam to keep alive their struggle, at the same time it was quite conscious that the war in Vietnam should not have adverse effect on Soviet-U.S. detente. In sum, the Soviet policy towards Vietnam was somewhat ambivalent. Throughout the Vietnam War, the Vietnamese Communists maintained an ultra hardline; the capitalist world must be destroyed, which could be done only through revolutionary warfare. But the Soviet Union's position was that the world can be transformed through peaceful means and defensive violence can be used only in case of "acute struggle". In Hanoi the Soviet position was

perceived as placing the maintenance of world peace about the unification of Vietnam, and it meant that Soviet Union was not willing to support the Vietnamese because it did not wish to risk nuclear war. \(^5\) True, Moscow was staunchly in the forefront of the Vietnamese revolution.

Condemning the Soviet position, the Chinese asserted that it was the result of the Soviet fear of the U.S. nuclear weapons. Peaceful coexistence, the Chinese maintained, was a betrayal of Marx and the revolutionary heritage and that it was self defeating. The Chinese asserted that the Vietnam War was a crusade that must be supported by Communist everywhere even if this meant war with the U.S. \(^6\) The U.S. entry into the War on a massive scale not only transformed Indo-China into a primary axis of the superpower rivalry but also intensified Sino-Soviet competition for influence with Hanoi. It is believed that competition with Peking was a greater factor drawing the Soviet Union into the conflict as an arms supplier than was competition with Washington. \(^7\) As Sino-Soviet dispute reached its peak, Khrushchev began to realize that China was his first enemy. Hence his initial response was to undercut the Chinese external position. Because China was all out to support the Vietnam war, the Soviet Union was also forced to increase its assistance to Vietnam. Observers maintained that the Soviet Union never

\(^{55}\) Pike, n.54, pp.56-57, 80

\(^{56}\) Ibid., pp.58, 65

\(^{57}\) Bruce D. Porter, The USSR in Third World Conflict (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.21
truly cared about Vietnam's Communist cause. It supported this cause for the wrong reasons because of its dispute with China.

After Khrushchev, the Soviet attitude towards Vietnam significantly changed. The new leadership indicated to Vietnam that Khrushchev's disengagement policy would be reversed. However, there was no quick plunge into new policy. 58 This was the beginning of Soviet military involvement in the Third World conflict. At the 23rd Congress in March 1966, Brezhnev committed Soviet support to national liberation movement. The Soviet Union had shown its willingness to provide material assistance even to military governments and conservative regimes in the Third World. From 1964 until the signing of the Paris peace agreements in 1972, the Soviet Union delivered over $3 billion worth of weaponry to North Vietnam. 59 The leaders of the South East Asian countries welcomed Soviet aid and trade because it provided them with an alternative to Western aid. 60

Post-Khrushchev policy towards Vietnam had three dimensions: first, it was decided that Hanoi would be provided with all the necessary military and economic assistance needed to pursue its war, but this would be the limit of Soviet involvement. Secondly, the Soviet Union

would continue to deal with the U.S. by using the strategy of detente, adjusting Vietnamese policy, if and when necessary. Third, the Soviet Union would place great emphasis on a negotiated settlement outcome of the war as the best insurance against being drawn further into it. 61

In February 1965, the day when Kosygin visited Hanoi, the U.S. began sustained bombings and air strikes in North Vietnam. 62 Following Kosygin's visit to Hanoi, Soviet military aid to North Vietnam increased massively. Actually, both Moscow and Peking had been supplying arms to North Vietnam for several years prior to 1965. 63 But when President Johnson began to greatly increase US ground forces in Vietnam, Soviet aid to North Vietnam increased dramatically. 64 President Richard M. Nixon, on May 9, 1972, said the Soviets must "choose between detente with the U.S. and the support to Hanoi's full-scale aggression in the South". Nixon apparently linked the Vietnam War with improved US-Soviet relations. In his view the Soviet Union should not be free to provide military assistance to the ally for the purpose of taking over a U.S. ally. The rule in big power game, Nixon asserted, was that big powers can help an

61. Pike, n.54, p.61
64. Porter, n.57, p.22
ally improve its defense but not to launch invasion. 65 Admittedly, the war served Moscow well in several respects. It verified the U.S. worldwide and badly tarnished its image and kept the U.S. occupied, making anti Soviet moves elsewhere less likely.

Evidently the U.S. failed to achieve its aim in Vietnam. They paid a heavy price and suffered great economic and human losses. They admitted that it was a mistake to intervene. It was more than a sheer miscalculation 66 on their part. It was imperial over stretch. The intervention proved to be a frustrating experience for them. They had never known the taste of military defeat. 67 Gradually, American intellectuals started attacking American involvement in Vietnam. Everyone, including the military, insisted that the problem was essentially political. 68

65. Pike, n.54, p.92


67. Eban, n.28 p.15. However, it took a long time to understand that military victory was unattainable and that the Vietnam question could only be solved by peaceful means. See Wilfred Burchett "The Paris Talks and the War in Vietnam", New Times, No.16, April 23, 1969, p.19.

By the time Nixon entered the White House, the issue was not whether American forces should be withdrawn, rather the question was how the U.S. could best disentangle itself.\(^{69}\) The Americans started realizing their limits.\(^{70}\) This culminated in the peace settlement in 1973.

Soviet policy during the Vietnam war was an equal mixture of pragmatic international politics and judicious commitment. Doubtlessly, the Soviet Union managed its affairs well without causing a confrontation with the U.S. For Moscow the arrangement proved ideal, it funded a war against the U.S. and remained only an adversary, not an enemy. The Soviet Union wanted the U.S. to be bogged down in a land war in Asia, and it wanted detente. It got both. It is interesting to note that during this period super power relationship was more amicable than either before the war or after.\(^{71}\) Despite tension and hot war in Asia, the policy of peaceful coexistence remained stable.

However, some critics have questioned the Soviet Union’s anti-imperialist credentials. They blamed the Soviet


\(^{71}\) Pike, n.54, p.160.
Union for having had a tacit understanding with the USA. Particularly when President Nixon was being welcomed in Moscow, Vietnam was being bombed and blockaded in Hanoi and Haiphong, Kissinger's proposal for improved relations were being favourably considered while democratically elected Allende government was subverted by the CIA. Obviously Soviet policy vis-a-vis the USA was a mixture of pressure and compromise.

CONCLUSION:

Khrushchev seems to have started a self contradictory process; he attempted to liberalise the rigid political process and projected himself more democratic, but at the same time he did not give up Stalinist practices. The bloody repression of Hungarian uprising simply torn asunder his liberal posture. Contradicting his won policy of peaceful coexistence, he deployed missiles in Cuba. And then he had to retreat. He raised the expectations of Soviet consumers when the economy itself was on decline. But he could not fulfill the raising expectations of the masses as was expected. His record in foreign affairs was full of setbacks. His policy led to the disintegration of the World Communist Movement. His downfall was inevitable as he had released the forces which he could not contain, and ultimately became the victim of the same forces. In October 1964, Khrushchev's eleven year old political dominance was brought to an end.

However, 1964 did not mark a sharp break in Soviet policy. There was a remarkable continuity albeit with e
special thrust on military power. A general tendency toward military detente with the U.S. was the main feature of post Khrushchev era. Despite their belief in the eventual destruction of capitalism and inevitable victory of socialism, they expressed the desire for greater cooperation between the two antagonistic systems. Yet the nuclear preparedness was prescribed as a device for avoiding war. Actually the compulsion of military competition and military thinking was so strong that it continued to assume importance in pursuit of Soviet foreign policy objective. Although peaceful coexistence by definition should have eliminated or at least lessened its role.

In the 1960s, the Soviet Union strove to catch-up with American military/strategic superiority. The major purpose of Soviet military built-up was to achieve increased political influence, to gain recognition as an equal superpower. The Soviet military was the only sector that was globally competitive. The Soviet military built-up was a direct outcome of the Cold War. The Cold War itself is said to have been a variant of peaceful coexistence.

In the 1970s when the Soviet Union achieved rough parity it was universally acknowledged as super power. This parity was the result of two processes. First, the Soviet Union had spent huge amount on military budget, while an enormous diversion of the U.S. resources went into Vietnam. The military parity increased Soviet political, influence. It also became a basis for Soviet-U.S. relations. The strategic parity with the U.S., for a variety of reasons,
improved prospects for an effort to reach a better understanding between themselves on important issues.

But it did not take long to realize that the arms race was a great economic burden on the Soviet Union. The price of massive military strength was economic stagnation and declining growth rate. Evidently there was an objective need to end the arms race, and the Soviet proposals for strengthening peace and ending the arms race were testimony to this fact.

The reason why Khrushchev did not champion the Vietnamese cause was his deep desire to demonstrate his commitment to peaceful coexistence and fear that it might escalate into world war. Their ambivalence was obvious. The Soviets were conscious that the war in Vietnam should not have adverse effect on Soviet-U.S. detente. It was only when the Chinese asserted that Vietnam War was a crusade that must be supported by Communist everywhere, that the Soviet Union increased its assistance to Vietnam. Brezhnev's leadership provided all necessary military and economic assistance needed to pursue the Vietnam War, but they did not go beyond that. The Brezhnev leadership placed great emphasis on a negotiated settlement.

One can safely conclude that the Soviet policy during the Vietnam War was a success. It was a success in avoiding any direct confrontation with the U.S.; it funded war against the U.S. yet remained only an adversary, not an enemy. Peaceful coexistence remained stable and the superpower relationship during the period had been much more amicable.