

Risoluzione di Tonchino: la guerra in Vietnam

Joint Resolution of Congress
H.J. RES 1145
August 7, 1964

Abstract

La guerra in Vietnam iniziò con una tragica menzogna: il 5 agosto 1964 il Presidente Johnson dichiarò al Congresso che una nave statunitense era stata attaccata da unità siluranti nel golfo del Tonchino. Ne seguì la "Gulf of Tonkin Resolution", con la quale il Presidente venne autorizzato a "prendere tutte le misure necessarie per respingere gli attacchi e prevenire future aggressioni".

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1. Introduzione¹

Per gli studiosi, i prodromi della guerra del Vietnam vanno probabilmente ricercati nella nascita della Lega per l'indipendenza del Vietnam (Viet Minh) che avvenne nel 1941. A questa fece seguito, il 2 settembre 1945, la dichiarazione d'indipendenza da parte di Ho Chi Minh, il quale godeva di un forte supporto di popolazione nelle regioni settentrionali. L'ostinazione della Francia a continuare a mantenere il controllo politico dell'Indocina portò alla guerra che, iniziata nel 1946, vide nel 1954 la disastrosa sconfitta delle truppe francesi nella battaglia di Dien Bien Fu e la conseguente separazione del Vietnam al 17° parallelo (Nord comunista e Sud anti-comunista) decisa alla conferenza di Ginevra dello stesso anno.

Ma il rifiuto di Ngo Dinh Diem (Capo del Governo sud vietnamita sostenuto economicamente e militarmente dagli Stati Uniti) di tenere le previste elezioni nel 1956 condusse Ho Chi Minh a decidere di iniziare una campagna di guerriglia che disseminò il territorio controllato da Saigon di una serie di attentati, imboscate e attacchi a sorpresa alle pur consistenti forze dell'armata sud vietnamita forte di 400.000 uomini, contro i 35.000 Viet Cong.

L'esercito americano, inizialmente impegnato con solo 900 consiglieri, già nel 1962 disponeva di 11.000 uomini inviati per cercare di contrastare il Fronte nazionale di liberazione del Vietnam nato nel 1960. Tra questi, inviati dal Presidente Kennedy, anche reparti speciali, in aperta violazione degli accordi di Ginevra. Ma non era ancora guerra dichiarata: infatti, lo stesso Presidente, con la pubblica opinione e il Congresso non ancora convinti della necessità dell'intervento in Vietnam, non potette far altro che autorizzare le forze americane a rispondere al fuoco nel caso in cui ne fossero state oggetto.

La guerra vera iniziò con una menzogna, una tragica menzogna. Il 2 agosto 1964 una nave da pattuglia nord vietnamita aprì il fuoco contro la USS Maddox. Era l'occasione che desiderava il Presidente Johnson, nel frattempo succeduto allo scomparso Kennedy, per scuotere l'orgoglioso spirito nazionalista americano.

La menzogna, rivelata solo sette anni dopo dal New York Times che resistette perfino alle pressioni di Nixon, fu presentata dal Presidente Johnson al Congresso il 5 agosto: un'altra nave statunitense era stata attaccata da unità siluranti nel golfo del Tonchino.

La bugia scosse i rappresentanti del popolo i quali, nella "Gulf of Tonkin Resolution" autorizzarono il Presidente a "prendere tutte le

¹ Tratta da: "La guerra in Vietnam tra verità e menzogne" di **Giovanni Bernardi**, 19 settembre 2000 (www.paginedifesa.it)

misure necessarie per respingere gli attacchi e prevenire future aggressioni". Di fatto, era l'autorizzazione a iniziare una campagna di guerra in larga scala. A giugno del 1965 le truppe americane in Vietnam arrivarono a 50.000 unità; 180.000 alla fine del '65; 390.000 nel '67; 540.000 nel '69.

Dopo quell'anno, però, la de-escalation iniziò ineluttabile a causa delle pressioni dell'opinione pubblica e della stampa libera per concludersi il 30 aprile 1975 con la capitolazione di Saigon, oggi Ho Chi Mihn. Il saldo finale: 58.000 soldati americani morti in azione o per altre cause; un numero imprecisato di combattenti e civili vietnamiti stimato in circa due milioni; 200 miliardi di dollari spesi dalle casse del Tesoro statunitense.

2. President Johnson's Message to Congress August 5, 1964

Last night I announced to the American people that the North Vietnamese regime had conducted further deliberate attacks against U.S. naval vessels operating in international waters, and I had therefore directed air action against gunboats and supporting facilities used in these hostile operations. This air action has now been carried out with substantial damage to the boats and facilities. Two U.S. aircraft were lost in the action.

After consultation with the leaders of both parties in the Congress, I further announced a decision to ask the Congress for a resolution expressing the unity and determination of the United States in supporting freedom and in protecting peace in southeast Asia.

These latest actions of the North Vietnamese regime has given a new and grave turn to the already serious situation in southeast Asia. Our commitments in that area are well known to the Congress. They were first made in 1954 by President Eisenhower. They were further defined in the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty approved by the Senate in February 1955.

This treaty with its accompanying protocol obligates the United States and other members to act in accordance with their constitutional processes to meet Communist aggression against any of the parties or protocol states.

Our policy in southeast Asia has been consistent and unchanged since 1954. I summarized it on June 2 in four simple propositions:

America keeps her word. Here as elsewhere, we must and shall honor our commitments.

The issue is the future of southeast Asia as a whole. A threat to

any nation in that region is a threat to all, and a threat to us.

Our purpose is peace. We have no military, political, or territorial ambitions in the area.

This is not just a jungle war, but a struggle for freedom on every front of human activity. Our military and economic assistance to South Vietnam and Laos in particular has the purpose of helping these countries to repel aggression and strengthen their independence.

The threat to the free nations of southeast Asia has long been clear. The North Vietnamese regime has constantly sought to take over South Vietnam and Laos. This Communist regime has violated the Geneva accords for Vietnam. It has systematically conducted a campaign of subversion, which includes the direction, training, and supply of personnel and arms for the conduct of guerrilla warfare in South Vietnamese territory. In Laos, the North Vietnamese regime has maintained military forces, used Laotian territory for infiltration into South Vietnam, and most recently carried out combat operations - all in direct violation of the Geneva Agreements of 1962.

In recent months, the actions of the North Vietnamese regime have become steadily more threatening...

As President of the United States I have concluded that I should now ask the Congress, on its part, to join in affirming the national determination that all such attacks will be met, and that the United States will continue in its basic policy of assisting the free nations of the area to defend their freedom.

As I have repeatedly made clear, the United States intends no rashness, and seeks no wider war. We must make it clear to all that the United States is united in its determination to bring about the end of Communist subversion and aggression in the area. We seek the full and effective restoration of the international agreements signed in Geneva in 1954, with respect to South Vietnam, and again in Geneva in 1962, with respect to Laos...

3. Joint Resolution of Congress H.J. RES 1145 August 7, 1964

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

That the Congress approves and supports the determination of the President, as Commander in Chief, to take *all necessary measures* to

repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.

Section 2.

The United States regards as vital to its national interest and to world peace the maintenance of international peace and security in southeast Asia. Consonant with the Constitution of the United States and the Charter of the United Nations and in accordance with its obligations under the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, the United States is, therefore, prepared, as the President determines, to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom.

Section 3. This resolution shall expire when the President shall determine that the peace and security of the area is reasonably assured by international conditions created by action of the United Nations or otherwise, except that it may be terminated earlier by concurrent resolution of the Congress.

4. Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty (Manila Pact)

September 8, 1954(1)

The Parties to this Treaty,

Recognizing the sovereign equality of all the Parties,

Reiterating their faith in the purposes and principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and their desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments,

Reaffirming that, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, they uphold the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and declaring that they will earnestly strive by every peaceful means to promote self-government and to secure the independence of all countries whose peoples desire it and are able to undertake its responsibilities,

Desiring to strengthen the fabric of peace and freedom and to uphold the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law, and to promote the economic well-being and development of all peoples in the treaty area,

Intending to declare publicly and formally their sense of unity, so that any potential aggressor will appreciate that the Parties stand together in the area, and

Desiring further to coordinate their efforts for collective defense for the preservation of peace and security,

Therefore agree as follows:

ARTICLE I

The Parties undertake, as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, to settle any international disputes in which they may be involved by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security and justice are not endangered, and to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.

ARTICLE II

In order more effectively to achieve the objectives of this Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack and to prevent and counter subversive activities directed from without against their territorial integrity and political stability.

ARTICLE III

The Parties undertake to strengthen their free institutions and to cooperate with one another in the further development of economic measures, including technical assistance, designed both to promote economic progress and social well-being and to further the individual and collective efforts of governments toward these ends.

ARTICLE IV

1. Each Party recognizes that aggression by means of armed attack in the treaty area against any of the Parties or against any State or territory which the Parties by unanimous agreement may hereafter designate, would endanger its own peace and safety, and agrees that it will in that event act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes. Measures taken under this paragraph shall be immediately reported to the Security Council of the United Nations.

2. If, in the opinion of any of the Parties, the inviolability or the integrity of the territory or the sovereignty or political independence of any Party in the treaty area or of any other State or territory to which the provisions of paragraph 1 of this Article from time to time apply is threatened in any way other than by armed attack or is affected or threatened by any fact or situation which might endanger the peace of the area, the Parties shall consult immediately in order to agree on the measures which should be taken for the common defense.

3. It is understood that no action on the territory of any State designated by unanimous agreement under paragraph 1 of this

Article or on any territory so designated shall be taken except at the invitation or with the consent of the government concerned.

ARTICLE V

The Parties hereby establish a Council, on which each of them shall be represented, to consider matters concerning the implementation of this Treaty. The Council shall provide for consultation with regard to military and any other planning as the situation obtaining in the treaty area may from time to time require. The Council shall be so organized as to be able to meet at any time.

ARTICLE VI

This Treaty does not affect and shall not be interpreted as affecting in any way the rights and obligations of any of the Parties under the Charter of the United Nations or the responsibility of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security. Each Party declares that none of the international engagements now in force between it and any other of the Parties or any third party is in conflict with the provisions of this Treaty, and undertakes not to enter into any international engagement in conflict with this Treaty.

ARTICLE VII

Any other State in a position to further the objectives of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the area may, by unanimous agreement of the Parties, be invited to accede to this Treaty. Any State so invited may become a Party to the Treaty by depositing its instrument of accession with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines. The Government of the Republic of the Philippines shall inform each of the Parties of the deposit of each such instrument of accession.

ARTICLE VIII

As used in this Treaty, the "treaty area" is the general area of Southeast Asia, including also the entire territories of the Asian Parties, and the general area of the Southwest Pacific not including the Pacific area north of 21 degrees 30 minutes north latitude. The Parties may, by unanimous agreement, amend this Article to include within the treaty area the territory of any State acceding to this Treaty in accordance with Article VII or otherwise to change the treaty area.

ARTICLE IX

1. This Treaty shall be deposited in the archives of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines. Duly certified copies thereof shall be transmitted by that government to the other signatories.

2. The Treaty shall be ratified and its provisions carried out by the Parties in accordance with their respective constitutional processes. The instruments of ratification shall be deposited as soon as possible

with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, which shall notify all of the other signatories of such deposit.(2)

3. The Treaty shall enter into force between the States which have ratified it as soon as the instruments of ratification of a majority of the signatories shall have been deposited, and shall come into effect with respect to each other State on the date of the deposit of its instrument of ratification.

ARTICLE X

This Treaty shall remain in force indefinitely, but any Party may cease to be a Party one year after its notice of denunciation has been given to the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, which shall inform the Governments of the other Parties of the deposit of each notice of denunciation.

ARTICLE XI

The English text of this Treaty is binding on the Parties, but when the Parties have agreed to the French text thereof and have so notified the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, the French text shall be equally authentic and binding on the Parties.

UNDERSTANDING OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The United States of America in executing the present Treaty does so with the understanding that its recognition of the effect of aggression and armed attack and its agreement with reference thereto in Article IV, paragraph 1, apply only to communist aggression but affirms that in the event of other aggression or armed attack it will consult under the provisions of Article IV, paragraph 2.

In witness whereof, the undersigned Plenipotentiaries have signed this Treaty.

Done at Manila, this eighth day of September, 1954.

(1) TIAS 3170; 6 UST 81-86. Ratification advised by the Senate Feb. 1, 1955; ratified by the President Feb. 4, 1955; entered into force Feb. 19, 1955.

(2) Thailand deposited its instrument of ratification Dec. 2, 1954; the remaining signatories (the United States, Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, and the United Kingdom) deposited their instruments Feb. 19, 1955.

4. Protocol to the Manila Pact, September 8, 1954 (1)

Designation of States and Territory as to which provisions of Article IV and Article III are to be applicable

The Parties to the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty unanimously designate for the purposes of Article IV of the Treaty the States of Cambodia and Laos and the free territory under the jurisdiction of the State of Vietnam.

The Parties further agree that the above mentioned states and territory shall be eligible in respect of the economic measures contemplated by Article III.

This Protocol shall enter into force simultaneously with the coming into force of the Treaty.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned Plenipotentiaries have signed this Protocol to the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty.

Done at Manila, this eighth day of September, 1954.

(1) TIAS 3170, 6 UST 87-89. Ratification advised by the Senate Feb. 1, 1955; ratified by the President Feb. 4, 1955; entered into force Feb. 19, 1955.

