

UNA SOLUCIÓN PARA EL FINAL DE LA GUERRA DE VIETNAM: LA PETICIÓN DEL ACTIVISMO BUDISTA ẤN QUANG Y LA RETIRADA DE ESTADOS UNIDOS (1969-1972)*

A SOLUTION FOR THE END OF THE VIETNAM WAR: A PETITION OF ẤN QUANG BUDDHISM ACTIVISTS AND MILITARY WITHDRAWAL OF THE US (1969-1972)

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Resumen: Este artículo tiene como objetivo dilucidar las acciones y luchas de los activistas del budismo Ấn Quang desde 1969 hasta 1972 en Vietnam del Sur, basándose en fuentes confiables de documentos de archivo de la ex República de Vietnam. Las insurgencias de los activistas de Ấn Quang comenzaron después de que el colapso de la primera República de Vietnam alcanzara su punto máximo en el período de vietnamización. Este movimiento jugó un papel vital en la aceleración de la retirada de las tropas estadounidenses, así como en el debilitamiento del gobierno de Saigón. Este artículo explicó la esencia de esas actividades y demostró que los activistas de Ấn Quang se alejaron de los comunistas y también consideraron su contribución a la restauración de la paz durante la Guerra de Vietnam.

Palabras clave: budismo Ấn Quang, Guerra de Vietnam, vietnamización, RVN, retirada de EEUU

Abstract: This article aims to shed light on the actions and struggles of Ấn Quang Buddhism activists from 1969 to 1972 in South Vietnam based on reliable sources of archival documents of the former Republic of Vietnam. The insurgencies of Ấn Quang activists started after the collapse of the first Republic of Vietnam peaked in the Vietnamization period. These movements played a vital role in accelerating the U.S. troop withdrawal as well as weakening the Saigon government. This article explained the essence of those activities and proved that Ấn Quang activists drifted away from Communists as well as considering their contribution to peace restoration during the Vietnam War.

Keywords: Ấn Quang Buddhism, Vietnam War, Vietnamization, the RVN, the U.S. withdrawal

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INTRODUCTION

After the 1963 Buddhism crisis, the political situation in South Vietnam could not reach any consistency, and there were at least 14 incidents of coups occurring¹. The event of Thích Quảng Đức and the debacle of the First Republic of Vietnam under Ngô Đình Diệm led to the establishment of the Vietnam Buddhism Association², including Theravada Buddhism, Mahayana, and other scholars of Vietnamese Buddhism. These groups set up this organization in Saigon in 1964, and their headquarters was in Anquang Pagoda, Saigon Capital³. In 1965, Nguyễn Văn Thiệu and Nguyễn Cao Kỳ launched National Leadership Committee, and this event temporarily stabilized political turmoils in South Vietnam subsequent to Diệm's death⁴. However, the new government continuously confronted prolonged tensions and conflicts between the state and religious groups. The U.S. involvement and its allied forces triggered an outcry in South Vietnam and America. The effects of domestic anti-war led to a precarious situation for the new government in South Vietnam. The movement of students⁵ along with Buddhists was

truly a joint effort to continuously worsen the political issues of South Vietnam. At that time, South Vietnam's Buddhism ramified into two forces: *Việt Nam Quốc Tự* and *Ấn Quang*. *Ấn Quang* released its charter in 1966, and its leaders stated that the consistent objective of *Ấn Quang* was establishing a board alliance of various Buddhist groups in South Vietnam. Likewise, the mission of *Ấn Quang* was to serve Vietnam and the globe⁶. *Ấn Quang* activists stated that their mission was very beneficial to the existence of the world and nation. It is indicated that nationalistic features clearly defined their duty. Due to very left-wing nationalism in their movement, Thiệu had a penchant for *Việt Nam Quốc Tự* rather than this scholar. Throughout its struggles and the anti-war movement, *Ấn Quang* pressed on the disadvantages of Thiệu's government and the struggle for easing religious inequality and advocating genuine peace in Vietnam. Nguyễn Văn Thiệu, under the aegis of the U.S., organized a new civic regime for South Vietnam in 1967⁷. A civic government was expected to appease social conflicts, yet Buddhists were still dissatisfied with the new authority despite the new policies of the government. Because Thiệu had a misunderstanding that Buddhism was a Communists' force and supposed that the temptation of Communists and so-called "peace for Vietnam" would lead to subversive actions. As a result, the movement of Buddhism became prominent in peace demonstrations for peace restoration during the period of the Vietnam War.

¹ Karnow, Stanley, *Vietnam, A History*, New York, Penguin Books, 1997, pp. 398-400; Moyar, Mark "Political Monks: The Militant Buddhist Movement during the Vietnam War", *Modern Asian Studies*, 38/4 (2004), pp. 344-347, Tucker, Spencer C., *Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War*, ABC-CLIO, 2000, p. 299.

² Civic Education Service, *Two Viet Nams in War and Peace*, Washington, D.C., Civic Education Service, 1967; Dommen, Athur J., *The Indochinese Experience of the French and the Americans, Nationalism and Communism in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam*, Bloomington, IN, University of Indiana Press, 2001; Smith, Harvey et al., *Area Handbook for South Vietnam*, Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1967.

³ Vinh The Lam, *Bạch hóa Tài liệu mật của Hoa Kỳ về Việt Nam Cộng hòa*, Hamilton, ON, Hoai Viet, 2008, p. 190.

⁴ Vinh The Lam, *Bạch hóa Tài liệu mật của Hoa Kỳ về Việt Nam Cộng hòa*, Hamilton, ON, Hoai Viet, 2008, pp. 130-152; Vinh The Lam, *Nhóm tướng trẻ trong Quân lực Việt Nam Cộng hòa vào giai đoạn 1964 - 1965*, Hamilton, ON, Hoai Viet, 2008; Vinh TheLam, *Việt Nam Cộng Hòa, 1963-1967: những năm xáo trộn*, Hamilton, O.N., Hoai Viet, 2010, p. 58; Doan Them, *1965: việc từng ngày*, Los Alamitos, CA, Xuan Thu, 1989, pp. 35-36.

⁵ Le Cung, *Về phong trào đô thị miền Nam trong kháng chiến chống Mỹ (1954-1975)*, Ho Chi Minh City, Tong Hop, 2015; *Saigon Cho Lon Gia Dinh khang chien 1945-1975*, Ho Chi Minh City, Ho Chi Minh City Publishing House, 2011.

⁶ *Hiến chương Giáo hội Phật giáo Việt Nam Thống Nhất* được sửa đổi hai lần và được phê chuẩn bởi S.L.158-SL/CT, 14th May 1964; S.L. 05/66 26th February 1966; S.L. 23/67 18th July 1967, Saigon, PTTII, p. 1.

⁷ Thieu Nguyen Van, *Inaugural Address by President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu*, Washington D.C.: the Consulate of Republic of Vietnam in the U.S., 1968; Ngoc Huy Nguyen, *Political Parties in Vietnam*, Sài Gòn, The Vietnam Council on Foreign Relations, 1970; Ngoc Bich Nguyen, et al., *An Annotated Atlas of the Republic of Viet-Nam*, Washington, D.C., Embassy of Viet-Nam, 1972, Co Thuy Hoang, *Việt sử khảo luận*, Paris, Nam A, 2002; Do Mau, *Vietnam máu lửa quê hương tôi- hồi ký chính trị: bổ túc hồ sơ về sự sụp đổ của Việt Nam Cộng Hòa*, Mission Hills, C.A., Que Huong, 1987; Douglas Pike, *War, Peace, and the Viet Cong*, The MIT Press, the first edition, 1969; Hong Ha, Tien Tran, *Mặt trận dân tộc giải phóng miền Nam Việt Nam (1960-1977)*, Ho Chi Minh City, Tong Hop, 2010; Bach Dang Tran, *Chung một bóng cờ (Về Mặt trận Dân tộc giải phóng miền Nam Việt Nam)*, Hanoi, National Publishing House, 1993; Trond Gilberg, *Coalition Strategies of Marxist Parties*, Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 1989, p. 187.

After the fiasco of Lyndon Johnson's strategy in 1968⁸, social conflicts in the U.S. increased and put pressure on the new presidency of Richard Nixon in 1969. Before holding his new presidency, Nixon ensured the pullout of the U.S. troops and aimed to let local government self-determine their fate⁹. It might be an excellent opportunity to put a trial on local authority's power in preventing the country from Communists' influence. However, Nixon still had a desire to strengthen the non-communist stronghold in Southeast Asia, and he still nourished the South Vietnam government despite the U.S. removal. Nixon thus proclaimed Nixon Theory (Guam Theory)¹⁰. He presumed that Asian nations would

gain their freedom under the succor of the U.S.¹¹. The withdrawal of American troops in South Vietnam realized an era of De-Americanization in South Vietnam and Indochina for Richard Nixon. This contributed to appeasing the social conflicts and pressures in the domestic U.S. and vindicating actions of the U.S. in the world. Henceforth, RVN's army would become the key force patronized by the U.S. military aid¹².

Although the Alliance of National Democratic and Peaceful Forces of Vietnam (ANDPFVN) was established in 1968¹³, it still could not dissuade *Ấn Quang* Buddhism in their uphill struggle. The proclamation of ANDPFVN¹⁴ put stress on peaceful and middle-of-the-road points of view, and they recanted their connection with the NLF. Phạm Văn Đồng acknowledged that this organization existed with an upward tendency of the urban movement against the Saigon government¹⁵. It is explainable that this Front was a creation of the DRVN and the NLF to define themselves as nationalists and tempt South Vietnamese to join the NLF. Numerous Marxist historians supposed that the Front embodied the third force in the

⁸ John Schlight, *The war in South Vietnam, The Year of the Offensive 1965-1968*, Air Force History and Museums Program, 1999; Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam, a History*, 2nd rev. and updated ed., New York, Penguin Books, 1997, pp. 412–413; Lyndon B. Johnson, "Address to the Nation Announcing Steps to Limit the War in Vietnam and Reporting His Decision Not to Seek Reelection 31st March, 1968", *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1968–1969*, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1970; Kubiak J. J., "Vietnam War 1965–1968", in *War Narratives and the American National Will in War*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014; Van Giao Tran, *Miền Nam giữ vững thành đồng: Lược sử đồng bào miền Nam đấu tranh chống Mỹ và tay sai, Vol 5: Từ tổng tiến công và nổi dậy đồng loạt Tết Mậu Thân 1968 đến những bước đầu của chiến dịch*, Hanoi, Khoa Học, 1978; Ho Khang, *Tết Mậu Thân 1968 – bước ngoặt lớn của cuộc kháng chiến chống Mỹ cứu nước*, Hanoi, Chính trị Quốc gia, 2008.

⁹ Richard Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, New York, N.Y., Grosset & Dunlap, 1978; Richard Nixon, *No More Vietnams*, Westminster, C.A., Arbor House Publishing Company, 1985; S. Parmet, Herbert, *Richard Nixon and His America*, Boston, Little, Brown & Co, 1990; Reeves Richard, *President Nixon: Alone in the White House*, New York, Simon & Schuster, Langguth, 2001; A. J., *Our Vietnam: The War 1954–1975*, New York, N.Y., Simon and Schuster, 2004; Kissinger, Henry, *Ending the Vietnam War: a History of America's involvement and extrication from the Vietnam War*, New York, N.Y., Simon & Schuster, 2003.

¹⁰ Sue Thompson, The Nixon Doctrine and U.S. Policy on Regional Cooperation in Southeast Asia after the Second World War, *Journal of Cold War studies*, 23/1, 2021, pp. 152–161; Brown, Seyom,, *The Crises of Power: An Interpretation of United States Foreign Policy during the Kissinger Years*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1979, p. 6; Isaacson, Walter, *Kissinger*, New York, N.Y., Simon & Schuster, 1992, pp. 240–241; Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, New York, N.Y., Simon & Schuster, pp. 707–709; James H. Willbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam, How America left and South Vietnam*

lost its war, Lawrence, K.S., University Press of Kansas, 2008, pp. 34–37.

¹¹ Richard Nixon, "Informal Remarks in Guam with Newsmen", Gerhard Peters, 25 July 1969, in Woolley, John T., The American Presidency Project, available in <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/informal-remarks-guam-with-newsmen> [Consulted the 1st September 2021].

¹² F. Schemi, Davidtz, *Richard Nixon and the Vietnam War- the end of the American century*, Lanham, Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield, 2014, pp. 110–134; M. Boylan, Kevin, *Losing Binh Dinh: The Failure of Pacification and Vietnamization, 1969–1971*, Lawrence, K.S., University Press of Kansas, 2016.

¹³ Porter, Gareth, *A Peace Denied*, Bloomington, University of Indiana Press, 1976, p. 70; Pike, Douglas, *War, Peace and the Viet Cong*, Cambridge, Mass, MIT Press, 1969, pp. 30–31.

¹⁴ Turner, Robert *Vietnamese Communism: Its Origins and Development*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1975, pp. 444–450.

¹⁵ Dong Pham Van, *Selected Writings*, Hanoi, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1977, p. 250; Justus M. Van der Kroef, "What Are the Aims of the NLF?", *Vietnam Perspectives*, 3/2 (1967), pp. 3–20; Kelly, Francis John, *History of Special Forces in Vietnam, 1961–1971*, Washington, D.C., United States Army Center of Military History, 1989, p. 4; Nhu Tang, Truong, *A Vietcong Memoir: An Inside Account of the Vietnam War and Its Aftermath*, Random House, Toronto, 1985, See Chapter 7 on the forming of the Việt Cộng.

Vietnam War¹⁶. However, *Ấn Quang* activists should be declassified from those groups. It is questionable whether *Ấn Quang* Buddhism focused on recovering peace for Vietnam or implemented a political scheme to hold power based on their movement and populace support.

Specifically, in Vietnam, numerous historians stated that the Communists took advantage of Buddhism's forces to divert the people's attitude and thwart the pacifying policies of Nguyễn Văn Thiệu¹⁷. Communists supposed that *Ấn Quang* Buddhism would become the third force of revolutionary uprisings to collapse Thiệu's government. The term "Third force" arose in the 1960s, and it was prevalently used to insinuate people, including the intelligentsia, Buddhists, and students who were groups in conflict with Thiệu's policies¹⁸. Countless Vietnamese historians reached a consensus that the peak of the Buddhist movement in South Vietnam was in 1963 and strongly reaffirmed the role of this force in Vietnam's reunification and asserted they had a close liaison with the NLF¹⁹. Lê Cung - an

¹⁶ Decornoy, Jacques, "'Tombeur' de Diem et Ennemi de Thiệu", *Le Monde*, 27, 28th April, 1975; Greene, Graham, *The Quiet American*, New York, Penguin, 1977, pp. 17-36; Jean-Claude Pomonti, *La Rage d'Être Vietnamien*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1972, p. 242; Menras, André *How America Mocked the Ceasefire: Vietnam Since the Paris Agreement*, Bulletin of Concerned Asia Scholars, 1974, p. 25; Luce, Don & Sommers John, *Vietnam: The Unheard Voices*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1969, p. 123; Menzel, Paul *Moral Argument and the War in Vietnam*, Nashville, Aurora Publishers, 1971, p. 202; Ho Khang, *Lực lượng thứ ba trong Chiến tranh Việt Nam (1969-1975)*, unpublished; Hong Ha, Tien Tran, *Mặt trận dân tộc giải phóng miền nam Việt Nam (1960-1977)*, Ho Chi Minh City, Tong Hop, 2010; Duc Thanh Ngo, "Phong trào đô thị và lực lượng chính trị thứ ba với đàm phán và đấu tranh thi hành Hiệp định Paris", *Về phong trào đô thị miền Nam trong kháng chiến chống Mỹ cứu nước (1954-1975)*, Ho Chi Minh City, Tong Hop, pp. 35-45.

¹⁷ Hong Ha, *Phong trào chống phá bình định nông thôn Nam Bộ trong cuộc kháng chiến chống Mỹ cứu nước (1969-1972)*, Hanoi, Quan doi Nhan dan, 2000; Ho Khang, *Lực lượng thứ ba trong Chiến tranh Việt Nam (1969-1975)*, unpublished; Hong Ha, Tien Tran, *Mặt trận dân tộc giải phóng miền nam Việt Nam (1960-1977)*, Ho Chi Minh City, Tong Hop, 2010.

¹⁸ Jean-Claude Pomonti, *La Rage d'Être Vietnamien*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1972, p. 242.

¹⁹ Le Cung, "Về phong trào đô thị miền Nam Việt Nam năm 1963", *Vietnam Journal of Historical Review*, 275 (1999), pp. 5-8; Le Cung, Huế - nơi mở đầu phong trào Phật giáo miền Nam năm 1963, *Vietnam Journal of Historical Review*, 8(2007), pp. 37-43; Le Cung, "Chính

authority in researching Peace Movement in South Vietnam, also considered Buddhism's movement as communism-tended uprisings from 1969 to 1973²⁰. It is high time to indicate that *Ấn Quang* Buddhists were strongly left-wing activists for nationalism in South Vietnam and did not support Communists in their movements

1. NON-COMMUNIST VIEWPOINT OF AN QUANG ACTIVISTS

Ấn Quang activists' consistent objective of the peace movement was the peace restoration for Vietnam. This opinion is clearly articulated at most conventions of *Ấn Quang* Buddhism at Hóa Đạo institute. Thích Trí Quang²¹ - a leader of *Ấn Quang* Buddhism, replied on *Saigon Daily News* on 11 April 1966 that *Ấn Quang* Buddhism was not anti-Americanism, or non-communism, while they opposed the involvement of the U.S., which impinged the sovereignty of Vietnam²². Also, *Ấn Quang* activists held a seminar for peace talks and advocated that the supreme duty of Buddhism was peace recovery for the Vietnamese people on 20 December 1969. At this conference, Thích Liễu Minh²³ accused Americans of triggering a massacre in Mỹ Lai (Quảng Ngãi province) in 1968²⁴. Thích Huyền Quang²⁵ also opined

sách của chính quyền Ngô Đình Diệm với miền Nam trên lĩnh vực kinh tế, văn hóa, giáo dục", *Vietnam Journal of Historical Review*, 305 (1999), pp. 31-40.

²⁰ Le Cung, *Về phong trào đô thị miền Nam trong kháng chiến chống Mỹ (1954-1975)*, Ho Chi Minh City, Tong Hop, 2015, p. 95.

²¹ Thích Trí Quang (1923-2019), was born in Quang Binh province. After the 1963 Buddhism crisis, he continued to fight for peace of Vietnam. He became a secretary for Tang Thong Institute of *Ấn Quang* Buddhism. He passed away in November, 2019 in Tu Dam pagoda, Hue, Vietnam.

²² Ton That Thien, Riding the Buddhist wave, *The Times of India*, New Delhi, 8th May 1966.

²³ Thích Liễu Minh (real name: Lê Văn Hiến), born in Nghĩa Binh province, Annam. He started his career at *Ấn Quang* Pagoda in 1965 and became a dynamic activist of *Ấn Quang* in Saigon from 1965 to 1975. He passed away in Tien Giang province, Vietnam, in 2015.

²⁴ Morocco, John, *Rain of Fire*, Boston, Boston, M.A., Publishing Company, 1985, p. 150.

²⁵ Thích Huyền Quang (1920-2008), real name is Lê Đình Nhân. He was born in Binh Dinh province. After the collapse of the First Republic of Vietnam (1963), he joined the establishment of United Association of Vietnam Buddhism in 1964. He was in charge of general secretary at Hoa Dao Institute from 1964 to 1975. He is a conflicting character toward new government of Vietnam. He died of aging in Vietnam in 2008.

that the RVN had to take full responsibility for the Sơn Mỹ and Mỹ Lai massacre²⁶. Americans only allocated money to South Vietnam to shield the Thiệu government and breach Vietnam's sovereignty. Minh stated the opinions of *Ấn Quang* that

"It was neither a political party nor a third force. It was all for Vietnamese people from the past to the present. Warmongers would bear an ignominious defeat and be repatriated with their coffins"²⁷.

Ấn Quang leaders sent a letter to Thiệu to require proper measurements for the Vietnam War. They hoped that Thiệu would have taken some particular actions to satisfy the requirements of the South Vietnamese people and placate the Youth Union's rebellions²⁸. Then, *Ấn Quang* leaders's message had overtones of the core values of nationalism and hoped that Thiệu relinquished his inappropriate policies to reclaim peace for the South Vietnamese people.

While Vietnamese historians considered *Ấn Quang* Buddhism a force that they could easily seduce for their revolts, Thích Liễu Minh disavowed the role of the Third Force for *Ấn Quang* activists. They did not have a proclivity for the Communists, and those people did not intend to consort with the Communists. In Minh's speech, he criticized the role of Huỳnh Văn Trọng²⁹ and

Vũ Ngọc Nhạ³⁰ because these two men became the go-for of Communists. Minh forcefully reasserted that:

"The political opinion of *Ấn Quang* Buddhism does not tend to be an exotic doctrine. Vietnamese people are the root of my objectives. We are not renegades"³¹.

This viewpoint indicated that *Ấn Quang* did not ally with the Communists to abolish the Saigon regime, despite the fact that they were discontented with this government. In another RVN's Department of National Security report, Minh ridiculed the U.S. actions. It was a frankly aggressive strategy in place of defending the world of peace and democracy³². The pivotal purpose of the U.S. was to be in opposition to both communists and the Communists in South Vietnam. The target was not deserving Vietnamese people, and they assumed that it might be deceptive propaganda to hypnotize South Vietnamese people. The report reveals that neither the Communists nor Thiệu benefited from *Ấn Quang* Buddhism³³. As a result, *Ấn Quang* Buddhism did not cooperate with the Communists as many scholars assumed.

In the 1970 New Year conference, Thích Huyền Quang claimed that *Ấn Quang* was prone to neither the RVN nor the Communists because freedom of religions in capitalist countries was minimal while Communism believed in Atheism³⁴.

Thiệu consistently condemned *Ấn Quang* Buddhism and presumed they were struggling to gain deceptive peace, while the Communists stayed behind to control their revolts. Thiệu delivered an inattentive speech in Dalat in 1966, which made monks and Buddhists irritated with the government. His blasphemous proclamations unintentionally encouraged other political forces who had a fondness for the Communists in South Vietnam to raise their movement, yet Thiệu

²⁶ PTtg-II 30583, *Phật giáo Ấn Quang tổ chức đại hội đầu năm mới*, Saigon, 19th January, 1970, p. 2.

²⁷ PTtg-II 30583, *Thuyết giảng Phật pháp Ấn Quang*, Saigon, 5th January, 1970, p. 1.

²⁸ Le Cung, *Về phong trào đô thị miền Nam trong kháng chiến chống Mỹ (1954-1975)*, Ho Chi Minh City, Tong Hop, 2015; Le Cung, *Sài Gòn Chợ Lớn Gia Định kháng chiến 1945-1975*, Ho Chi Minh City, Ho Chi Minh City Publishing House, 2011; Ly Phan Thi, *The support of urban movement in Saigon-Gia Dinh to the Provisional Revolution Government's viewpoint at the Paris Negotiation (1970-1971)*, *The Journal of Science & Technology Development-Social Sciences & Humanities*, 5/1 (2021), pp. 928-938.

²⁹ Huỳnh Văn Trọng (1926-2000), real name is Lê Hữu Thúy. He is a political espionage under Ngo Dinh Diem's regime and became Second Lieutenant of the Army Security Department in 1956. However, he was arrested in 1959 and joined the NLF in 1967. He actively provided Communists various clandestine information for Mau Than uprising in 1968. He was in custody in Con Dao island in 1969 and was released in 1973.

³⁰ Vũ Ngọc Nhạ (1928-2002), is one of the well-known espionages under Saigon regime. He played a reliable adviser for this regime and a key character of Case A22 in 1969. After 1973, he linked to the Third Force of Duong Van Minh and actively work as a public espionage until the fall of Saigon.

³¹ PTtg-II 30583, *Thuyết giảng Phật pháp Ấn Quang*, Saigon, 5th January 1970, p. 1.

³² PTtg-II 30583, *Hoạt động của Phật giáo Ấn Quang*, Saigon, 6th January 1970, p. 7.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ PTtg-II 30583, *Phật giáo Ấn Quang tổ chức đại hội đầu năm mới*, Saigon, 19th January 1970, p. 2.

always blamed it for acting in the direction of the Communists due to the political turmoils in his country. Thiệu pointed out:

“Whoever who is hoping for neutral South Vietnam is silly³⁵. People who are claiming peace are demagogues as well as secret Communists”³⁶.

Also, Thiệu’s presidential election platform was a “four nos” policy: no allied government, no land concessions to the Communists, no communist neutrality, no Communism was freely propagated, and the Communist Party was active in South Vietnam. He stated:

“The communists proclaim that ‘neutralism’ means non-alignment, whether with the Americans or the communists. The communists wanted South Vietnam to be neutral to remove the Americans’ primary rationale for being here”³⁷.

Owing to this speech, Thiệu did not win the South Vietnamese people’s hearts and mind while facilitating Communists to benefit from these words for distorted propaganda. *Ấn Quang* Buddhism also generalized the essence of the war in a brief speech:

“The war in Vietnam was a war of foreign forces, and Vietnamese people became the prey of that war. Millions of Vietnamese people died, and spiritual civilization collapsed. Law was invalid. Life is precarious. They are turmoil and tension. Buddhism escaped from the dictatorship of the first RVN, but they imposed the dictatorship of the second RVN”³⁸.

Additionally, *Ấn Quang* activists directly accused Thiệu’s actions against the Vietnamese people’s greatest hope of peace. In a brief of Thích Thiện Hoa³⁹, he indicted Thiệu of being a dictator. Bu-

ddhist leaders required the government to release innocent prisoners and follow the South Vietnamese people’s wishes. Otherwise, the government would no longer belong to the people⁴⁰. Thích Thiện Hoa mentioned pressing problems of overseas Vietnamese people in Cambodia and solicited the government to resolve this matter in his speech.

Ấn Quang Buddhists organized a night prayer for Thích Quảng Đức and assumed Diệm and Thiệu unjustly performed and disdained Buddhists and monks. He believed that the war-ravaged the country and generated an aggressive government. As a result, the role of Buddhism was searching for a replacement. Besides, Thích Huyền Diệu disapproved of Thiệu ordering security forces to suppress *Ấn Quang* Buddhism’s event⁴¹. *Ấn Quang* activists vehemently opposed the nuclear weaponry to end the war in Vietnam by a petition sent to the Minister of Home Affairs. They stated that the Vietnam war only addressed political solutions and respected the right of humans⁴².

Reacting *Ấn Quang* Buddhism’s objectives, the Department of National Security supposed that:

“The *Ấn Quang* Buddhism was beyond their expectation in a struggle for peace rather than objectives of war termination, namely, the way of national reconciliation. As stated, all Vietnamese people must show off their power by quitting the intervention of foreign forces. Simultaneously, they must persuade warmongers (both communists and anti-communists) to turn down their intention of suzerainty in Vietnam. Vietnam war is stepping into a moribund status, and all belligerents are dumping into a quagmire; finally, the war will not have a winner, but victims will still be Vietnamese people”⁴³.

Buddhism was always an obstacle for the RVN. The long-lasting tension between the RVN and

Hoa was that Vietnamese people would live in a peace spring of their country.

³⁵ PTtg-II 30583, *Chánh đạo* newspaper, Saigon, 5th November 1968.

³⁶ PTtg-II 30583, *Chánh đạo* newspaper, Saigon, 26th August 1970.

³⁷ Original speech of President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu on *Vietnam Report*, 15th October 1967.

³⁸ PTtg-II 30583, *Quá trình tranh đấu của Phật giáo Ấn Quang*, Saigon, 5th June 1970, p. 1.

³⁹ Thích Thiện Hoa (1918-1973), was born in Can Tho. He cooperated with *Ấn Quang* Buddhism from 1953. In the third term of Hoa Dao institutes, Thích Thiện Hoa was in charge of the head until he passed away due to serious illness in 1973. The eventual wish of

⁴⁰ PTtg-II 30583, *Phật giáo Ấn Quang tuyên bố quan điểm chính trị của họ*, Saigon, 5th June 1970.

⁴¹ PTtg-II 30583, *Đêm cầu nguyện tại tu viện Quảng Đức*, Saigon, 11th June 1970, p. 2.

⁴² Ibid, pp. 2-3.

⁴³ PTtg-II 30583, *Bộ An ninh Quốc gia thông báo về chuyến thăm của Thích Thiện Minh tại Huế*, Saigon, 19th January 1970, p. 2.

Buddhism could appease well-meaning conversations between the president and the Buddhist force. The U.S. did not look forward to a solution with Thieu like the President of the First Republic of Vietnam. In this period, the Communists at least made a full recovery in their force in South Vietnam after the 1968 Mậu Thân offensive debacle, and they relentlessly struggled to maintain their role in South Vietnam's urban areas. The Communists depended on new intellectuals, singers, artists, students, and monks to be in competition with Thieu's government. While Thieu had a propensity toward *Việt Nam Quốc Tự*, who kindly opposed Thieu, *Ấn Quang* Buddhism became a counterweight. Thích Thiện Hoa announced:

“Vietnamese people are not imperialist's lackey. We are Vietnamese people and are preoccupied with our business. All Buddhists unanimously rescind hatred and division to strengthen our power to make great confidence in that mission. Peace talks must terminate the Vietnam war”⁴⁴.

Besides, *Ấn Quang* Buddhism made prophecies that the Vietnam War would lead to nothing because it could make an impairment for all belligerents⁴⁵. Next, an American delegation paid a visit to *Ấn Quang* pagoda on 8 July 1970. At this meeting, Thích Thiện Minh⁴⁶ supposed Americans should recover permanent peace for the Vietnamese people. He criticized that Americans were incomprehensible with regard to Vietnamese's people wishes and the soul of Easterners. An American member delegate questioned Minh over *Ấn Quang's* dynamic attitude regarding Communists taking over the country once the U.S. pullouts were conducted. Minh stated that a neutral government was necessary for the South Vietnamese people⁴⁷. This is a glaring illus-

tration that *Ấn Quang* Buddhism did not follow the Communists' line in South Vietnam, and the opinion that *Ấn Quang* Buddhism had an inclination toward Communists was unwarranted.

Ấn Quang activists were irresolute for a referendum with the Communists in a report released by the Saigon Capital Department of Security to elucidate this standpoint. They supposed that the Saigon government did not have well-trained cadre while Communists built a large number of loyal and professional cadre in rural areas of South Vietnam. Given that a referendum happened, the Communists would likely triumph over other forces, so *Ấn Quang* activists showed their anxiety about this potential result⁴⁸. *Ấn Quang* activists intended to support a non-communist force to shape a new régime in Vietnam.

The exhaustive review of *Ấn Quang* was expressed in Requiem and Speech at *Ấn Quang* pagoda on 17 July 1970. Thích Thiện Minh underscored that the peace movement could undergo three phases: (1) Lobby other religions, parties, and patriotists; (2) Convene Peace Conference; (3) Reconciliation for ending the war. Minh also divulged Reconciliation solutions:

“1. Complete ceasefire

Belligerents temporarily withdraw their troops in particular regions.

Both American troops and North Vietnamese troops withdrew from South Vietnam.

Establish a de jure government and conduct an election

A freedom election in the absence of imposition”⁴⁹.

That is the most comprehensive view of *Ấn Quang* Buddhism for a ceasefire in South Vietnam. Especially, *Ấn Quang* Buddhism required North Vietnamese people to withdraw their troops from the South. It is stated that *Ấn Quang* did not have the intention of allying with communists to establish a government. They might recognize the Communists as a political force in South Vietnam. They were entitled to stand for election in a new assembly, but actually, the

pp. 1-2.

⁴⁴ PTtg-II 30583, *Về quan điểm hòa bình của Phật giáo Ấn Quang*, Saigon, 19th October 1970, p. 1.

⁴⁵ PTtg-II 30583, *Tóm tắt: Về phái đoàn đa tôn giáo Hoa Kỳ viếng chùa Ấn Quang*, Saigon, 8th July 1970, p. 3.

⁴⁴ Le Cung, *Về phong trào đô thị miền Nam trong kháng chiến chống Mỹ (1954-1975)*, Ho Chi Minh City, Tong Hop, 2015, p. 56.

⁴⁵ PTtg-II 30583, *Phật giáo Ấn Quang chính thức tuyên bố phong trào mới của họ*, Saigon, 29th May 1970, p. 2.

⁴⁶ Thích Thiện Minh (1921-1973), real name: Đỗ Xuân Hàn, was born in Quang Tri Province. He went to pagoda in 1934 and fought for peace under the First Republic of Vietnam. He joined Hoa Dao Institute and became the director in 1973. After the Fall of Saigon, he was arrested in 1978 and died of persecution in this year.

⁴⁷ PTtg-II 30583, *Tóm tắt: Về phái đoàn đa tôn giáo Hoa Kỳ viếng chùa Ấn Quang*, Saigon, 8th July 1970, p. 3.

Communists in South Vietnam were under the influence of the North Vietnam government. Hence, they were still determined to ally with North Vietnam to subvert Thiệu's government and pose a threat to South Vietnam's politics. Therefore, *Ấn Quang* Buddhism did not support Communists.

Overall, *Ấn Quang* Buddhism is an independent political force in South Vietnam. They were only considered the third force by the Communists, but *Ấn Quang* activists were intrinsically drifting away from communist thoughts. The eventual objective of *Ấn Quang* Buddhist leaders was the Vietnamese people's pure peace.

2. ẤN QUANG ACTIVISTS: PETITIONS AND MOVEMENT FOR PEACE AND NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE OF SOUTH VIETNAM

Domestically, *Ấn Quang* activists organized numerous challenging activities for the peace reclamation of South Vietnam. On 25 January 1969, thousands of monks took Relicts to *Ấn Quang* Pagoda in the Buddha Shakyamuni ceremony. This event quickly converted into a peaceful demonstration with the slogan: "Peace, independent," "Please reclaim our independent!" "Peace, peace!"⁵⁰. Next, leaders of *Ấn Quang* expressed their viewpoint about supporting and hoping countries that joined the Vietnam War would have to immediately cease the war in Vietnam in "Buddhism's petition 1969". Once Thiệu's government rejected an overture, monks supposed that if they wanted to recover peace, Nguyễn Văn Thiệu and Nguyễn Cao Kỳ's government needed replacing since they were not content with the goodwill of Thiệu-Kỳ in the negotiation.

"Thiệu-Kỳ-Hương government severely opposed bombing North Vietnam using stratagem to procrastinate the Paris peace talks and suppress the voice of peace. That government showed that they do not want absolute peace and will not ever gain peace. That government represented for nothing because monks have never admitted them"⁵¹.

⁵⁰ Le Cung, *Về phong trào đô thị miền Nam trong kháng chiến chống Mỹ (1954-1975)*, Ho Chi Minh City, Tong Hop, 2015, p. 14.

⁵¹ Le Cung, *Về phong trào đô thị miền Nam trong kháng chiến chống Mỹ (1954-1975)*, Ho Chi Minh City, Tong Hop, 2015, pp. 14-15.

Under the pressure of *Ấn Quang* in South Vietnam, the political situation of the Saigon regime became exacerbated. Hence the U.S. always urged Thiệu to concord with the North Vietnamese Army and Communists for the U.S. troop withdrawal⁵². In Saigon Capital, *Ấn Quang* self-perceived its role in recovering peace for the Vietnamese people and soothed the grief of the Vietnamese people in that war in the 1970 New Year conference. For example, Thích Thiện Minh assumed that warmongers who were enriched by the war must take accountability for history on 14 January 1970. The objective of *Ấn Quang* Buddhism was to ease social inequality, war termination, and peace recovery⁵³. Minh also proposed three measures to tackle the Vietnam War at Thích Thiện Lai's Requiem on 15 July 1970. First, they would like to bolster the power of the Vietnamese people to own a considerable influence in the world. Second, Minh postulated congregating intellectuals and politicians to seek the best way for the upcoming visit of Minh to Japan. Finally, Minh appealed to national and international solidarity⁵⁴. He petitioned the government, expanded domestic South Vietnamese and international support for his upcoming Japan visit.

In addition, *Ấn Quang* appealed for a hunger strike on 31 May 1970 at the Hóa Đạo Institute. It was estimated that approximately 2000 monks were participating in this event. This results from a well-prepared movement contingent upon Thích Tịnh Khiết's (1969) wish, "Mission of Buddhism for peace in Vietnam". *Ấn Quang* Buddhists reinforced their organization and built their bases nationwide. They persistently pleaded for the state's respect for the law, rejected religious

⁵² Richard Nixon, *No More Vietnams*, Westminster, C.A., Arbor House Publishing Company, 1985; S. Parmet, Herbert, *Richard Nixon and His America*, Boston, M.A., Little, Brown & Co, 1990; Reeves Richard, *President Nixon: Alone in the White House*, New York, N.Y., Simon & Schuster; Langguth, *Our Vietnam: The War 1954-1975*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 2004; Kissinger, Henry, *Ending the Vietnam War: a History of America's involvement and extrication from the Vietnam War*, New York, N.Y., Simon & Schuster, 2003; James H. Willbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam, How America left and South Vietnam lost its war*, Lawrence, K.S., University Press of Kansas, 2008, pp. 30-34.

⁵³ PTtg-II 30583, *Thông báo của Nha Cảnh sát Đô Thành về chuyển viếng thăm Huế của Thích Thiện Minh*, Saigon, 19th January 1970, p. 1.

⁵⁴ PTtg-II 30583, *Tóm tắt: Thỉnh nguyện và Bài phát biểu tại chùa Ấn Quang*, Saigon, 15th July 1970, p. 3.

discrimination, and had a desire for intellectual equality. They would like to embarrass Thiệu' efforts to abrogate the recession of Law 23/67, which aimed to suppress Buddhism.

According to the National Security Department, *Ấn Quang* Buddhism performed its protests and hunger strikes to be in opposition to Thiệu on 30th and 31st May 1970. Thích Huệ Thông cut his hand and blooden a letter to Thiệu stated that:

"I sincerely convey my wishes to you, Thiệu: terminate the war, solve impoverished people affairs, end the Buddhism crisis and rescind the Law 23/67"⁵⁵.

Also, the Women's movement closely linked to *Ấn Quang* aggravated the political situation of South Vietnam when their activities via the role of Huỳnh Liên Nun⁵⁶ joining and leading role of an advisor position on 2 August 1971. The movement petitioned the U.S. withdrawal and for the establishment of another government for South Vietnamese people⁵⁷. On 1 September 1971, over 15000 people made a demonstration because of Pham Hanh's death. The people converted the funeral procession into a huge demonstration accompanied by the slogan "American go home," "Thiệu is the war" "Bunker goes home" Although the police harshly suppressed, over 1000 students of Van Hanh university showed their perseverance and fervidly opposed the "militarized school" policy⁵⁸. On 17 May 1972, The Association of *Ấn Quang* Buddhists sent a letter to the Paris Conference to sign a truce for the Vietnam War through Buddha's Birthday celebration and conserve Buddhist heritage, including a system of pagodas, temples, and religious beliefs places⁵⁹.

The peace movement of *Ấn Quang* activists spread nationwide and directly attacked local authorities of South Vietnam. For instance, there were at least 300 people who joined this event on 29 May 1970 in Quang Tri province, which re-

⁵⁵ PTtg-II 30583, *Tóm tắt tình hình chính trị ngày 31/5/1970*, Saigon, 19th January 1970, p. 2.

⁵⁶ Huỳnh Liên (1923-1987), she was born in My Tho province. From 1960 to 1975, he actively struggled for peace of Vietnam. After the Fall of Saigon, she became a member of Reunited Vietnam delegation.

⁵⁷ Le Cung, *Về phong trào đô thị miền Nam trong kháng chiến chống Mỹ (1954-1975)*, Ho Chi Minh City, Tong Hop, 2015, p. 339.

⁵⁸ Ibid, pp. 68-70.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 70-71.

commended that the government handle issues of the impoverished, the disabled, and the intellectuals⁶⁰. Similarly, the movement coincidentally happened in Danang, and there were at least 300 monks flocking to the Province Association of Buddhism. They implemented protests and supported hunger strikes. In 1971, at least 1000 students and Buddhists organized a demonstration with the slogan "Anti-America," "Anti Nguyễn Văn, Thiệu," and "Anti-terrorism policies". On some occasions of demonstration, the movement enticed more than 4.000 people⁶¹.

At the center of the 1963 Buddhism crisis, Hue experienced dynamic days of *Ấn Quang* Buddhism protests. In May 1971, Thích Chơn Thể self-immolated at Tường Văn pagoda. Thể left a letter to the government and petitioned for an armistice and peace for the country⁶². More than 2000 Buddhists made a demonstration to reclaim peace for the Vietnamese and end the war on this occasion. On 28 July 1971, the fifth Congress of Buddhists took place in Hue consisting of hundreds of students at Van Hanh University, Thua Thien Hue People's Front for Peace, Hue Anti-Fraud election movement, Ethnic Minority Movement Thua Thien Hue, and the Women's Movement for the Right to Live⁶³. In Quang Ngai province, there were 70 hunger-striking monks protesting against the 23/67 directive in 1970. The movement also broadens its scope within Central Highlands and Mekong Delta⁶⁴. Under the influence of *Ấn Quang* Buddhism, the revolt of local Buddhists cast doubt on the national security of South Vietnam.

Not only domestic uprisings, but *Ấn Quang* activists also argued the peace in international forums. Thích Nhất Hạnh⁶⁵ established a repre-

⁶⁰ PTtg-II 30583, *Phong trào Phật giáo Ấn Quang*, Saigon, 5th June 1970, p. 3.

⁶¹ Le Cung, *Về phong trào đô thị miền Nam trong kháng chiến chống Mỹ (1954-1975)*, Ho Chi Minh City, Tong Hop, 2015, pp. 71-72.

⁶² Ibid., p. 73.

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 72-73.

⁶⁴ PTtg-II 30583, *Phong trào Phật giáo Ấn Quang*, Saigon, 5th June 1970, pp. 4-5.

⁶⁵ Thích Nhất Hạnh (born in 1926) in Thua Thien Hue province. He established School of Youth for Social Services in 1960s in Saigon. It is a philanthropy to build schools and help the homeless due to the war. He is a dynamic activist of peace for Vietnam. He made various speeches in the U.S. at Princeton University, Cornell University. He permanently lives in Dordogne, France in 1966 and established The Order of Interbeing monastery. He was assigned by *Ấn*

sentative office of *Ấn Quang* activists in Paris and performed his duty on being an observer to propagate *Ấn Quang*'s viewpoints at Paris Conference⁶⁶. *Ấn Quang* activists paid serious attention to the opinions of Nixon on the subject of South Vietnam's peace. They wished to understand the reactions of countries in the European Union to a warm visit of Richard Nixon to this region and looked forward to approaching a peaceful solution for Southeast Asian countries⁶⁷. In a televised recording on 7 October 1970, Nixon supposed that the U.S. never sought to expand the war; they sought to reinforce the peace, but then *Ấn Quang* activists expostulated that Nixon aimed to benefit from the mild support of the Republican Party and Vietnamese communists. Activists prophesied that a ceasefire was able to be determined after Christmas; at least, the U.S. would appease the domestic anti-war movement and prohibit an intensive conflict with the Communists⁶⁸.

Correspondingly, *Ấn Quang* activists no longer gave their credence to the government of Thiệu to bring a great deal of peace to the South Vietnamese people. They supposed that Thiệu crucially depended upon the U.S., so they continued to clash with the local government through international speeches. Resultantly, Thích Thiện Minh – a representative of *Ấn Quang* Buddhists, joined a peace conference at the World Buddhist Congress in Kyoto, Japan, on 20 October 1970. Minh willingly took advantage of this conference to propagate “6 solutions to stop the war and recover peace in Vietnam” of the *Ấn Quang* delegation. They fundamentally focused on the withdrawal of the U.S. troops, non-aligned government establishments, and the role of the Provisional Revolutionary Republic of South Vietnam (PRG) in South Vietnam. These petitions were pressing affairs that both political forces and the U.S. showed their conjectures for a peaceful South Vietnam. The spirit and hopes of South Vietnam Buddhism were congruous with South Vietnamese people.

“Article 1. Belligerents descend the war gradually to arrive at a complete ceasefire at 6 pm on the last day of Lunar 1970.

Quang Buddhism to update the situation of Paris Negotiation and transport news to South Vietnam.

⁶⁶ PTtg-II 032688, *Cuộc họp kín của Phật giáo Ấn Quang*, Saigon 14th October 1970, p. 2.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Article 2. The U.N. must appoint several neutral states such as France, India, Islam, and Sweden to establish an international control committee for this ceasefire at that time. A military officer of RVN and a military specialist from PRRVN will be represented on this Commission.

Article 3. RVN must release political prisoners such as students, intellectuals, monks, and those detained to fight for peace and national autonomy.

Article 4. The U.S. Government must end the current corruption, dictatorship, and helplessness in South Vietnam by allowing the Vietnamese to freely choose a government that can represent most of the population. They are of a national reconciliation nature, are not affiliated, and have the total capacity to: a) Negotiate with the U.S. Government on the timetable for the withdrawal of all U.S. military forces in Vietnam and on the diplomatic, cultural, and economic relations between the United States and Vietnam. b) Negotiate with the PRG on organizing general elections to represent all political trends in Vietnam. A genuinely free election under international scrutiny, in which all citizens of any political disposition can attend.

Article 5. By the Vietnamese people. The U.S., the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, and other relevant countries worked together to end the suffering of the Vietnamese people by supporting this proposal.

Article 6. The warring sides in Vietnam and the peace-loving people globally, the holy churches, and humanists promptly promote responsible nations for the Vietnam War. They are ending the war in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos⁶⁹.

These six salient solutions of South Vietnam Buddhism concretized the goodwill of Vietnamese Buddhists concerning a negotiating period, and a potential peace was recoverable in Vietnam. These proposals might support the Communists

⁶⁹ PTT-II 4316, *6 giải pháp ngăn chặn chiến tranh và lập lại hòa bình ở Việt Nam của Phật tử Ấn Quang do Thích Thiện Minh tuyên bố tại Kyoto*, Saigon, 20th October 1970, p. 3; Le Cung, *Tinh thần nhập thế của Phật giáo Việt Nam (1945-1975)*, Ho Chi Minh City, Tong Hop, 2019, p. 250.

and clerisy to re-establish a well-meaning government in the absence of the U.S. involvement. Especially in the fifth regulation of this petition, Buddhists solicited a quick withdrawal of foreign forces notwithstanding Communism, such as the Soviet Union and China. The kindness of peace revealed a long-lasting aspiration of the South Vietnamese people about peace after a three-decade unjust war. Simultaneously, these proposals also reclaimed human rights for religion, journalism, and other social classes in South Vietnam.

Additionally, *Ấn Quang* activists gained international support. Captured documents unveil that a British doctor John Durlas – a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Aid, paid a visit to *Ấn Quang* pagoda on 16 November 1970 to make a discussion on the British people's support for a Vietnamese-based peace. Durlas supposed that some prominent politicians met Richard Nixon, former Emperor Bảo Đại, Next-in-line Prince Bảo Long, Nguyễn Thị Bình, and France's President Pompidou to make a formal conversation seeking peace for Vietnam. Nixon promised to call a halt to the war within 1971. The mission of John Durlas was to make a nexus between well-intentioned characters of South Vietnam like *Ấn Quang* Buddhists and former General Dương Văn Minh to accelerate a peace reclamation for South Vietnam. He stated that all British people always physically and mentally supported Vietnam. At the formal meeting, Minh mentioned the determining solution for the peace of Vietnam. *Ấn Quang* activists were still determined to call for a ceasefire, the U.S. and alliance's extraction, and a fair election for South Vietnam⁷⁰. This implies that international activists paid much attention to well-intentioned parties in South Vietnam. The support of neutral countries indirectly led to the U.S. troop withdrawal and absolute peace of South Vietnam.

Besides, *Ấn Quang* activists expressed grave concern to Cambodia's overseas Buddhists when the Cambodian government vengefully caused a massacre. These critical solutions made a contribution to suggest

“That Khmer Republic (K.R.)'s killing, and encroaching property of overseas Vietnamese not only caused our Vietnamese peo-

⁷⁰ PTTg-II 30583, *Một cuộc gặp gỡ bí mật giữa các nhà hoạt động Ấn Quang: Thích Trí Quang và Thích Thiện Minh, và Bác sĩ John Durlas*, Saigon 16th November 1970, pp. 1-2.

ple to grieve, resent, but also the international public opinion is shocked. This means that the entire expulsion of overseas Vietnamese from K.R. without a plausible reason contradicts international law”⁷¹.

In the same year, Buddhists created a petition to the Saigon government. The content of that letter below

“As a Vietnamese citizen, I cannot ignore the threat of slaughter of more than half a million Vietnamese people in Cambodia. I strongly compete against the Vietnamese government's silent and pushy attitude towards the issue. Moreover, I think that the government is responsible for protecting their people, but unless that government protects the people, that government will take up its role”⁷².

At the end of 1970, *Ấn Quang* Buddhists tightened their activities to the Saigon Student Union in conjunction with other political groups in the capital. An International Student Congress took place in *Ấn Quang* Pagoda, University of Agriculture and Forest under the supervision of the Saigon Student Union on 10th and 11th July 1970⁷³. This event enchanted a vast number of students, Buddhists, and commoners. After this Congress, Saigon students created a massive protest to demonstrate against the war. They prepared a coffin and a dove as creative symbols to fight for peace and proceeded to the General Consulate of the U.S. in Saigon. *Ấn Quang* activists endeavored to increase the force in their activities to be in conflict with existing U.S. troops and the Thiệu government by linking with other social parties. By this method, *Ấn Quang* activists could associate with various non-communist and non-Thiệu members for their peace movements. *Ấn Quang* also periodized their activities into three phases. The first phase was completed: reorga-

⁷¹ Le Cung, *Về phong trào đô thị miền Nam trong kháng chiến chống Mỹ (1954-1975)*, Ho Chi Minh City, Tong Hop, 2015, pp. 72-73.

⁷² PTTg-II 4315, *Thích Thiện Ân và Thư gửi Chủ tịch và Hội đồng*, Saigon, 1st December, 1970, p. 1.

⁷³ Various authors, *Chúng ta đã đứng dậy, Vol 2: 1969-1975*, Ho Chi Minh City, Youth Publishing House, 2014, p. 263; Ly Phan Thi The support of urban movement in Saigon-Gia Dinh to the Provisional Revolution Government's viewpoint at the Paris Negotiation (1970-1971), *The Journal of Science & Technology Development- Social Sciences & Humanities*, 5/1 (2021), pp. 928-938.

nizing their structure and overtone their voice overseas. They intended to implement the second phase by holding a Diên Hồng Conference to propagate peace petitions, flyers, and political leaflets distribution. Lastly, they would make a peaceful uprising on Christmas occasions⁷⁴.

Additionally, the objective of *Ấn Quang* activists earned the support of Nguyễn Long's Democratic Front of People because this group gathered numerous intellectuals, laborers, and religious practitioners. Next, *Ấn Quang* activists actively lobbied Professor Minh Tâm and Trần Cao Tấn to ally with *Ấn Quang* in their activities. Trần Cao Tấn was assigned to convince party members of *Phong Trào Cấp Tiến* of Nguyễn Văn Bồng and the *Đại Việt* party of Nguyễn Tôn Hoàn. Minh Tâm took the responsibility of implicating the Salvation Front and Veteran Association of An Khe⁷⁵. It is indicated that *Ấn Quang* activists played a decisive role in gathering elite and neutral parties to forge a relationship for a truce and permanent peace in their country. On 29 December 1970, the Congress of Buddhists took place in Dalat. In this Congress, they published the declaration accusing America and the Saigon Government, and coerced Americans into respecting Vietnam's independence and Vietnam's sovereignty. This event remarked the breakthrough in the peaceful progress under the role of Buddhism. *Ấn Quang* activists decided to hold the day of Buddhism and international peace on the 3rd and 4th January 1971. They expressed that Vietnamese people were looking forward to a respite and would seize political opportunities to avoid death and devastation. Also, *Ấn Quang* activists expressed their honor to nations, religions, and international delegates who consistently supported the peace movement of *Ấn Quang* Buddhism. They appreciated their support for reviving peace in Vietnam and rebuilding the country⁷⁶.

Generally, the *Ấn Quang* school had a wide range of peace movements in South Vietnam, and their enthusiastic soul gathered a lot of South Vietnamese people to cause a large-scale uprising in critical urban areas of South Vietnam. There is no denying that *Ấn Quang* was a non-communist

movement. The thirst of the *Ấn Quang* school was political power holding but not building a Buddhism-based politics in South Vietnam. They fought for a just government in the absence of war, aggression, and fraud. Furthermore, both Thiệu and the Communists caught other activists of *Ấn Quang* Buddhism off guard, and they strived to reclaim peace for the South Vietnamese people. Despite freedom demonstration of Saigon politics, Thiệu always kept peace activists under surveillance and suppressed them if he deemed it necessary, provided protesters acted severely. In 1967, Buddhism was divided into two fields in Saigon: *Ấn Quang* Buddhism and *Việt Nam Quốc Tự* Buddhism. Thiệu supposed that *Ấn Quang* Buddhism was a Communists puppet, but all the strongest evidence from source materials proves the opposite hypothesis. Communists fully perceived Buddhism's role on account of their left-wing Nationalism, so they distorted all the statements of *Ấn Quang* activists, yet *Ấn Quang* proved that they were communism-free activists. The movement of *Ấn Quang* activists directly stimulated the U.S. troops' swift removal from South Vietnam.

3. PEACE MOVEMENT OF *ẤN QUANG* ACTIVISTS- GENERAL ASSESSMENTS

The causes and effects of the *Ấn Quang* movement originated from its political and religious context. *Ấn Quang* played a critical role in unveiling the truth of the Vietnam War, Vietnamization, and some weaknesses of the Thiệu government. The Vietnamization of the U.S. was still a continued effort to maintain strong influences of the U.S. in Southeast Asia and South Vietnam. At the same time, the expansion of the pacification strategy of the ARVN, as well as the illegal presence of North Vietnamese divisions in South Vietnam, shook South Vietnamese belief in a bright vista of South Vietnam. As a result, *Ấn Quang* anti-war movement indirectly led the U.S. strategy to failure via their opinions, movement, and verbal statements in the international forum of Buddhism. Likewise, *Ấn Quang* activists stated that the Thiệu government showed uncertainty for the South Vietnamese people. They effectively took advantage of the contradiction of diplomatic relations between South Vietnam and the U.S. to advocate a genuine democracy for the South Vietnamese people. In fact, the 1963 crisis transparently proved that both Ngô Đình Diệm and Nguyễn Văn Thiệu's governments had a tendency toward Anti-Communist goals rather than building a real democracy. In addition, the

⁷⁴ PTTg-II 30583, *Một cuộc gặp gỡ bí mật giữa các nhà hoạt động Ấn Quang: Thích Trí Quang và Thích Thiện Minh, và Bác sĩ Jone Durlas*, Saigon, 16th November 1970, pp. 1-2.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ PTTg-II 30583, *Nội dung bài phát biểu của Thích Thiện Hoa đọc nhân dịp Phật đản 2514*, Saigon, 3rd January 1971, pp. 1-2.

direct intervention of the U.S. and allied troops in the Vietnam War discouraged the efforts of Thiệu to build a full democracy for the South Vietnamese people. Due to various difficulties in South Vietnam's politics, both the DRVN and PRG posed a hindrance to the democratic way of the South Vietnamese people. The overreacting actions of Thiệu towards opposing parties implied that his government fell awkward to build a steadfast ally with *Ấn Quang* and other parties to suppress the revolts of Communists. Thereby the patience of *Ấn Quang* activists can be seen as an attempt for foreign troops to pullout and intercept the rising movement controlled by Communists in major cities of South Vietnam. The peace movement of *Ấn Quang* activists prepared for a real ceasefire accompanied by a rational termination of the war in Vietnam. These movement played a vital role in assisting peace talks in Paris associated with the RVN's opinions throughout conference sessions.

Besides, the role of *Ấn Quang* activists concentrated on reviving the role of Buddhism in the political affairs of South Vietnam because they were fully cognizant of the role of Buddhism in national movement, and there was a close linkage between national liberation, Nationalism, and Buddhism in history. The majority of proclamations of *Ấn Quang* activists built a sense of the correlation between Buddhism and the nation. Vietnamese Buddhists assumed that Vietnamese Buddhism was a critical element of Vietnamese people's spiritual life⁷⁷. Buddhism partnered with the national personality and built an independent national culture for Vietnamese people's history. In the French colonial period, the French actively took benefits from Vietnamese Buddhism to win people's hearts and minds. Also, communists seduced Buddhists under a social and political association named *Cứu Quốc* (national salvation) against the French and feudal system Vietnam. Typically, Vietminh benefited from Cao Dai and Hoa Hao Buddhism in the Mekong Delta after 1945, but these groups always exhibited contradicting opinions toward the revolutionary policies of the Vietminh, and they became a political opposition group of communists during the course of the First Indochina War (1946-1954). After an unfavorable period of being disfavorable under the French rule and Ngô Đình Diệm's dictatorship, the NLF continued to allude to some Buddhism groups in their mo-

⁷⁷ Nhat Hanh, Thich, *Đạo Phật hiện đại hóa*, Saigon, La Boi Publishing House, 1972, p. 7.

vement and considered religious groups as a critical force of liberation. Thereby it was high time *Ấn Quang* Buddhism would float an idea to recover South Vietnam's religious freedom and territorial sacrosanct as well as the political implication of other parties in South Vietnam. However, there was no other way but to participate in raising their voice domestically and internationally and engender internal strength for peace. Pure nationalism is a consistent objective of *Ấn Quang* activists, and the political intervention of this group was instrumental in reviving religions and reclaiming peace for their country⁷⁸. More importantly, *Ấn Quang* Buddhists forged a relationship with other social groups with contradicting perspectives concerning the policies of Nguyễn Văn Thiệu. On 25 June 1970, *Ấn Quang*, in cooperation with other associations, especially with the Young Student Union, went on strike in Saigon to require the government to satisfy the peaceful wishes of the South Vietnamese people⁷⁹. Simultaneously, *Ấn Quang* Buddhists encouraged Van Hanh University, patronized by the Vietnam Buddhism Association, to demonstrate to fight for South Vietnam's peace. Internationally, the movement of *Ấn Quang* Buddhism was also supposed to link with the American home peace movement because the identical features of these movements aimed to oppose international and domestic conflicts and decline the number of casualties due to an unjust war.

The thoughts of *Ấn Quang* activists are appropriate to Buddhism's principles regarding the correlation between peace and war. Hence peace activists publicly harangued South Vietnamese people and opposed the bellicosity of the Thiệu government. The struggling objective of *Ấn Quang* was to gain permanent peace rather than a temporary peace that would be strikingly unstable and fragile. According to Theresa Der-lan Yeh, such instability would not be a way to gain positive peace⁸⁰. The concept for peace from *Ấn Quang* activists may have a provenance of consistent Buddhist philosophy, supposing that the

⁷⁸ Thich Nhat Hanh stated that Buddhism was a critical factor and its power needed exploiting to defend and build countries of South East Asia. See at Nhat Hanh, Thich, *Đạo Phật...* op. cit., p. 9.

⁷⁹ *Tin Sáng*, 26th June 1970, all publications of Saigon Young Student Union analyzed political situation, military force, culture, education and society, released in *Tự Quyết*, 3, 3rd October 1970.

⁸⁰ Theresa Der-lan Yeh, "The way to peace: A Buddhist perspective", *International Journal of Peace Studies*, 11/1 (Spring/Summer 2006), p. 94.

cause of violence and conflicts originated from the external, the internal, and the root⁸¹. Leaders took collective interests for granted while stimulating their benefits such as relationships, international support, and economic as well as political advantages. The more avaricious desires leaders have, the more likely war and conflicts have their occurrence. This definition is accurate for the case of *Ấn Quang* activists when they fervently protested against Thiệu and for the absolute peace of the South Vietnamese people. In fact, Thiệu and peace activists possessed very different thoughts on an explanation of peace. Thiệu unintentionally equated all opposing people who desired peace with their tightened benefits with the Communists and North Vietnamese communists. Meanwhile, *Ấn Quang* activists scarcely paid heed to contradicting political opposition because of the fact that they predominately valued the core values of Vietnamese people's peace rather than their political rights. Otherwise, they only had a strong desire for political benefit once a new politics was established, which would be in the absence of belligerents and totalitarianism.

Besides, the view of peace of *Ấn Quang* activists represented some fundamental points of Vietnamese nationalism in the contemporary history of Vietnam. Historically, the penetration of Buddhism doctrines directed Vietnamese people's thought so that this religion predominates over other religions in Vietnam, and its deep-rooted norms are congruous with an agricultural society like Vietnam. The autonomous feature of pagoda systems has a strong correlation with the autonomous features of Vietnamese villages and there is a close link between religion and state in Vietnamese history. The soul of freedom within Buddhism contributed to buttressing the traditional national characteristics of the Vietnamese. As a result, the movement of *Ấn Quang* Buddhism was intrinsically supportive of the national movement of most South Vietnamese people. It is very conspicuous that *Ấn Quang* activists usually mentioned the chronic grounds of the Vietnam War as being the cupidity of contradicting groups in South Vietnam, including Communists, North Vietnamese Communists, Thiệu's government, and the U.S. Hence, they remons-

trated that all aggressive forces were wrong to take their involvement in a pointless conflict which caused a severely devastating situation for them based on their statements in cited archival documents. The supreme target of peace for Vietnam and *Ấn Quang* activists aims for human rights along with social, political equality and the economic development of the country. Significantly, the eventual aim of *Ấn Quang* activists was the Vietnamese people's right to self-determination rather than unconditional support for any opposing parties in their country. Unfortunately, the majority of Marxists Vietnamese historians attributed *Ấn Quang* activists to a Communists-supported force, and this point of view is inaccurate⁸². The vigorous activities of *Ấn Quang* proved there is a strong correlation between the Vietnam state and the religion of Buddhism in their history, and Buddhism functioned as a role of pacifists in the course of their national war. By all circumstances, Buddhism activists always triggered a considerable influence on the nation's determination, and they made a peacemaking endeavor to preserve the pure nationalism of the state. Together with David S. Meyer, Sam Marullo presumed that the State makes wars, often opposed by the people within them. Citizens' struggles against war have as long a history as the practice of war. People see the potential benefits of violent conflict outweighed by the costs and risks of thinking and preparing to fight wars⁸³. This definition, together with the opinion concerning the internal cause of the conflicts and war, stated that the internal mind of people or leaders is a critical factor to cause war for any place in the war.

Unfortunately, the internal of *Ấn Quang* activists is not solid because of debates among members following this religious scholar. This may be a shortcoming of *Ấn Quang* Buddhism because its leaders did not reach a homogeneous agreement in fighting for the peace of Vietnam. It was a challenge to harmonize Mahayana and Theravada and appease a contradicting opinion with regards to methods of struggle: violent or non-violent movement. *Ấn Quang* activists could not elect a leader for their activities due to those conflicting viewpoints in their movement. The

⁸¹ Shih Yi n-shun, "Fofa yu renlei heping (Dharma and Human Peace)", In *Fojiao yu zhengzhi (Buddhism and Politics)*, Taipei, Dasheng wenhua, 1980. Also see at Sivaraksa, Sulak, *Seeds of Peace: A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society*, Berkeley, Parallax Press, 2002.

⁸² Le Cung, *Về phong trào đô thị miền Nam trong kháng chiến chống Mỹ (1954-1975)*, Ho Chi Minh City, Tong Hop, 2015, p. 341.

⁸³ Marullo, Sam, S. Meyer, David, "Antiwar and Peace Movement", *The blackwell companion to social movement*, Cornwall, Blackwell, 2004, p. 640.

division of the internal forces of *Ấn Quang* easily resulted in impairment, which was beneficial to other political groups after 1971. Despite the fact that *Ấn Quang* activists dynamically held numerous caucuses, demonstrations, and hunger strikes, they were unable to achieve a notable triumph over the incumbent government and the Communists. Since the Paris Agreement in 1973, *Ấn Quang* activists felt a sense of oneness with other political groups for seeking an alignment government for the South Vietnamese people. It is indicated that *Ấn Quang* activists should have been well-organized to recoil from the sabotage of opposing forces as well as precluding the influence of the Communists after the 1973 Paris Accord.

CONCLUSION

The peace movement of *Ấn Quang* activists were the protracted movement of South Vietnamese Buddhism since the 1963 crisis. This academic topic has still earned a modicum of scholarly attention from historians because numerous people supposed that *Ấn Quang* was under the influence of Communism. However, captured documents reveal that the movement of Buddhism and other social classes in South Vietnam after 1963 was against Communism. The movement of *Ấn Quang* activists reached a peak in the period 1969-to 1971 and made a continued effort to reclaim peace for the South Vietnamese people. The analyzed detections of this article imply some salient points of *Ấn Quang* activists' peace movement in this phase

First and foremost, *Ấn Quang* activists were Nationalists who wished to build a democracy for the South Vietnamese people and protect the rights of religious freedom for several religious groups in South Vietnam. All articles and research papers that assumed that *Ấn Quang* activists were cronies of the Communists were inaccurate, and they need reanalyzing depending on reliable source materials. *Ấn Quang* activists opposed all belligerents who participated in an unjust war in Vietnam, and they delivered all their wishes via petitions and messages which aroused the sympathy of South Vietnamese people, mainly in some oppositional political groups. Thus, *Ấn Quang* activists' actions caused political turbulence for the Saigon government. Once Vietnamization symbolized a prolonged war and potential civil war for the Vietnamese people, the peace movement of *Ấn Quang* Buddhism would represent Vietnamese Nationalism.

In addition, the philosophy underlying *Ấn Quang* activists' action was a firm grasp of a Buddhism-Nation relationship. *Ấn Quang* activists presumed that Buddhism was in concordance with the peaceful soul of Vietnamese people in comparison with other religions in Vietnam. Doctrines of Buddhism were compatible with the spiritual life of Vietnamese people, so their movement was capable of attracting hundreds of participants. In fact, the movement of *Ấn Quang* activists was eager to stimulate the U.S. troop withdrawal from South Vietnam. The peace movement under the patronage of *Ấn Quang* Buddhism gained widespread popularity among South Vietnamese people, and its movement laid the groundwork for peace for South Vietnamese people. The prevalence of the *Ấn Quang* movement in major urban areas contributed to gathering the considerable force of other alliances to support *Ấn Quang* activists with their genuine wishes for peace for the South Vietnamese people. Not only did they organize an array of domestic movements, but *Ấn Quang* activists also had a piecemeal approach to international forums to exhibit their potent arguments for the avidity of peace for the South Vietnamese people.

Summing up the arguments in this paper, Vietnamization was a fiasco of the U.S. in an attempt to nourish a non-communist government. However, the U.S. was unable to gain growing support from the South Vietnamese people, and inappropriate policies that put emphasis on the role of military strength were ineffective. As a result, *Ấn Quang* peace movement played a vital role in thwarting the Vietnamization of the U.S. and showing the seeming proliferation of a South Vietnam with its citizen's self-determination, freedom of human rights, and religious equality. The combination of the domestic national movement and the support of the world helped *Ấn Quang* activists gain people's hearts and become a typical example of the international peace movement. It is very crucial that there should be more further articles and research papers to elucidate other aspects of the *Ấn Quang* activists and their movement in the Vietnam War.

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