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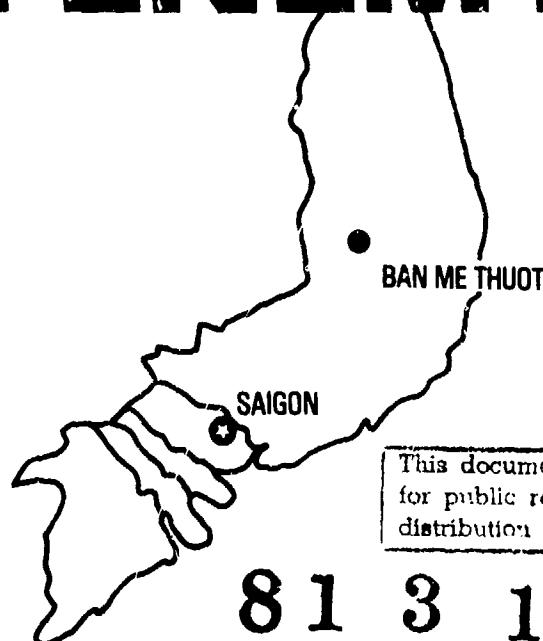
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*A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned  
in Vietnam*

# VOLUME I THE ENEMY



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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
US ARMY WAR COLLEGE  
STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE  
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF

AWCI


9 March 1981

SUBJECT: Declassification of the BDM Study, "The Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam"

Defense Technical Information Center  
ATTN: Ms. Betty Weatherholtz  
Cameron Station  
Alexandria, VA 22314

1. Your organization was on the distribution list for the BDM study, "The Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam." The study was assigned AD numbers B048632L through 641L.
2. In December 1980, the Army War College Security Office notified all recipients of the study by telephone that it contained classified information and should be secured.
3. BDM now has revised the appropriate pages of the study to delete all classified information and has conformed to all other requirements required by the clearance review.
4. A revised copy of the study which is unclassified and approved for public release is inclosed. DTIC Form 50's are inclosed for assignment of new AD numbers.

Incls  
as

  
ANDREW C. REMSON, JR.  
Colonel, CE  
Director, Strategic Studies Institute



⑨ Final repl.

7915 Jones Branch Drive  
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November 30, 1979

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⑮ DAHC-39-78-C-0120

⑥  
A STUDY OF STRATEGIC LESSONS  
LEARNED IN VIETNAM.  
VOLUME I.  
THE ENEMY.

This draft report is submitted to DAMO-SSP.

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## FOREWORD

This Study is a final draft submitted to DAMO-SSP in accordance with the provisions of Contract No. DAAF 39-78-C-0120.

The task is to identify and analyze lessons that should be learned from two decades of direct US involvement in the affairs of South Vietnam. This is Volume I of the study.

Volume I	The Enemy
Volume II	South Vietnam
Volume III	US Foreign Policy and Vietnam 1945-1975
Volume IV	US Domestic Factors Influencing Vietnam War Policy Making
Volume V	Planning the War
Volume VI	Conduct of the War
Volume VII	The Soldier
Volume VIII	Results of the War

NOTE: Throughout this study the following terms will be used when referring to Vietnamese Communist (or Communist Vietnamese) organizations: PAVN instead of NVA, PLAF instead of VC. The term Viet Minh is used to identify the organized indigenous forces in Vietnam that opposed the Japanese and then the French. See Glossary for further definition.

The views of the authors do not purport to reflect the positions of the Department of the Army or the Department of Defense.

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## PREFACE

### A. PERSPECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The BDM Corporation is honored to have been selected for a major role in this pioneering US Army Study on the Strategic Lessons of Vietnam. This massive study effort is very sensitive and complex, but its potential value is substantial.

The time has come for an introspective and objective analysis of the major decisions taken and the results which ensued during our protracted and costly struggle in Southeast Asia, while memories are still relatively fresh and key participants are still alive. It is entirely appropriate that this effort be undertaken by that institution which carried the heaviest burden during this struggle - the US Army.

The following remarks, made by MG DeWitt C. Smith, Jr. at the initial meeting of his Study Advisory Group (SAG), established the proper philosophical framework for this challenging enterprise:

Basically, as far as Vietnam is concerned, we won practically all the battles but, by any sensible definition of strategic objectives, we lost the war. This is a new experience--harrowing, sorrowful, but true. Thus it's absolutely imperative that we study how it is that you can win so frequently, and so well, in a war-fighting sense, and yet lose a war in a strategic or political sense. It's unique; and it's not something that we want to duplicate!

It appears that the Army established manageable limits on the scope and direction of this enormous task by concentrating the focus for the multiple analyses on the US Army (or military) perspective. This guideline is interpreted to mean that each of the sub-studies (chapters) must determine what significant impact the specific area under analysis had on the war effort and specifically on the US Military and vice versa.

The insights which resulted from the various topical analyses are derived from and related directly to America's twenty-five year involvement in Southeast Asia; they provide the essential basis for the lessons which

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were, or should be, learned from the war. To be useful to future civilian and military leaders, the "lessons learned" have to have application well beyond the unique situation that prevailed in Vietnam, and thus must be broad and quite general in nature. This approach to lessons, meshes well with General Smith's observations on the subject.

I would emphasize my belief that it is most useful if one gets a force ready for an uncertain future rather than a certain future. There is great danger in being too certain about what the future will bring, and there's much greater assurance in preparing for a future which you frankly admit you cannot precisely define. So I think the lessons of Vietnam ought to help us to move, not toward a rigid, final, unassailable doctrine, and certainly not a narrow doctrine, and not to assume that there's a point-to-point relationship between the lessons of Vietnam and what we would do "the next time," but toward an open, professionally stimulated and informed leadership corps, believing that anyone would be delinquent not to learn from all the blood of Vietnam and all the treasures spent there, and all the mistakes made, and all the good things that were done as well.

BDM does not pretend that the various studies provide finite and definite answers to the numerous complex and controversial issues raised by the US experience in Vietnam; however, the data, analyses, and insights/lessons in this study should prove to be of significant value to the US Army War College study effort. Those volumes submitted for review prior to the completion of the study are "working papers" subject to revision and refinement as research and analyses uncover additional data and insights.

Volume I describes those factors that influenced the Communist Vietnamese during the conflict. Volume II examines the key elements that shaped South Vietnam's response to the Communist threat, and Volumes III and IV examine the important international and domestic factors that influenced US decision and US decision makers. Together these four volumes are an examination of the key factors in the war. Volumes V and VI describe the planning and conduct of the war, and Volume VII examines the factors which influenced the US soldier during the war.

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Volume VIII examines the results of the war insofar as those results can be identified at this time.

### B. PURPOSE OF VOLUME I, THE ENEMY

Volume I examines the goals, characteristics, and organization of the Communist Vietnamese to define, on the basis of available information, the nature of the enemy the United States was facing. The volume also examines aspects of the communists' conduct of the war and the constraints under which they operated. During the war, the American actions were often predicated on inaccurate understanding of who the enemy was and what his motivation was. Often our matching of strategy to the objective situation proved to be inappropriate. Through analysis of the Communist Vietnamese organization, this volume lays a basis for examining of the discrepancies between US understanding of the enemy and his true nature. Later volumes of this study will describe and analyze the response of the United States to events in Southeast Asia. This volume examines the following topics:

- The long-range goals of the Communist Vietnamese, 1954-1975.
- The DRV leadership and the factors that influenced their character and will to continue their struggle for two decades to reach their objective.
- The civil and military organizations in North Vietnam, the communist structure in the South, and the relationships between Vietnamese Communist organizations.
- The Communist Vietnamese mobilization of the slender resources at their disposal to meet the challenges posed by the South Vietnamese government and the US
- The system of bases, sanctuaries, and lines of communication established to support war activities.
- The nature and extent of outside support the Communist Vietnamese received from their major allies.
- The major domestic and international constraints on DRV policies and courses of action, and the DRV's reaction to those constraints.

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### C. THEMES THAT EMERGE FROM VOLUME I: THE STUDY OF THE COMMUNIST VIETNAMESE

In all chapters of this volume five themes are evident. The first is the consistent goal the Communist Vietnamese had of unifying Vietnam under their rule. That goal was never compromised by any of the political and military initiatives of the communists, and they were implacable in their devotion to it. They met many severe setbacks in their progress toward ultimate victory, and they showed themselves flexible and willing to alter their strategies to reach their goal when those strategies proved ineffective or mistaken.

The second theme that emerges is the continuing tactic of the Hanoi leadership of depicting themselves as the rightful heirs to the anti-colonialist heritage and the nearly equally constant refusal of the majority of the people of South Vietnam to see the communists in that role. The communists sought to defeat the South Vietnamese and United States by marshalling the kind of xenophobic nationalism that drove the French out. They were unsuccessful in this effort and were unable to elicit a nationalist response from the South Vietnamese that would sustain the struggle to conquer South Vietnam.

The third theme is that the struggle in Vietnam was intensely political and military. From the beginning the communists understood that reality. The policies the United States and South Vietnamese followed were not always based on a complete and agreed recognition of this sophisticated mix of factors.

The fourth theme is the absolute dependence of the Communist Vietnamese on outside support to continue their struggle and the skill they exhibited in obtaining required support from their principal allies despite the Sino-Soviet split.

The final theme evident in this study is the careful management of manpower and other resources the Communist Vietnamese exercised throughout the War.

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### D. SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL EVENTS THAT AFFECTED THE COMMUNIST VIETNAMESE

Volume I analyzes aspects of communist activity in Vietnam without recounting the historical development of communist plans and programs. To provide a reference to that history, Figure I-1 indicates some of the significant events that occurred in Vietnam between the years 1945 and 1977. The support the Communist Vietnamese received from the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union was of immense importance to their war effort. As will be described in Chapter 6, the flow of that support was related to the deterioration of Chinese and Soviet relations that took place during the Vietnam conflict. To provide the historical context for that discussion, Figure I-1 also indicates significant and related events that occurred in China, the Soviet Union, Vietnam and the United States during that period.



YEAR	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960
US PRESIDENTS	TRUMAN									EISENHOWER						
SVN LEADERS	BAO DAI									NGO DINH DIEM						
NVN LEADERS	HO CHI MINH															
SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN NORTH AND SOUTH VIETNAM	JAPANESE OCCUPATION OF INDOCHINA TERMINATED FRENCH REOCCUPY VIETNAM US BEGINS AID THROUGH FRENCH VN ARMED FORCES FORMALLY CREATED FRANCE RECOGNIZES VIETNAM AS AN ASSOCIATED STATE DIEN BIEN PHU FALLS GENEVA CONFERENCE ON VIETNAM USG DECIDES NOT TO HELP FRENCH AT DIEN BIEN PHU SEATO TREATY SIGNED IN MANILA DRV CALLS FOR PREPARATIONS FOR 1956 ELECTIONS TO UNITE VIETNAM DRV 3-YR PLAN BEGINS ('58-'60) HANOI DECIDES TO EXPAND HO CHI MINH TRAIL VP NIXON VISITS RVN RVN CONSTITUTION PROMULGATED FRENCH HIGH COMMAND IN RVN ABOLISHED DIEM'S PARTY WINS PARLIAM ELECTIONS US SP TOY IN															
SIGNIFICANT SOCIO-POLIT. EVENTS IN AND AFFECTING THE PRC	US CONTINUES SUPPORT OF CHIANG KAI-SHEK MAO TSE TUNG DEFEATS CHIANG WHO FLEES TO TAIWAN. PRC ESTABLISHED. PRC ENTERS KOREAN WAR FIRST 5-YEAR PLAN APPROVED. SOVIET SUPPORT PROVIDED. BANDUNG CONFERENCE. CHINA SEEKS BROADER ANTI-IMPERIALISM POLICY KOREAN CEASEFIRE PRC RECOGNIZES THE DRV NATIONALISTS AND COMMUNISTS FAIL TO AGREE ON COALITION GOV'T. SECOND CIVIL WAR BEGINS PRC-USSR TENSION BEGINS QUOMOY CRISIS PRC BOM CLASHES WITH IN															
SIGNIFICANT SOCIO-POLIT. EVENTS IN AND AFFECTING THE USSR	TREATY WITH CHIANG'S NATIONALIST GOVERNMENT COLD WAR ERA BEGINS FALL OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA. BERLIN AIRLIFT. USSR RECOGNIZES THE DRV TREATY WITH PRC FOR MUTUAL ASSISTANCE 19th PARTY CONGRESS. "CAPITALIST ENCIRCLEMENT" DOCTRINE DRAWN UP USSR VETOES THAILAND'S REQUEST IN UN TO INVESTIGATE SITUATION IN LAOS USSR RETURNS PORT ARTHUR TO MAO. KHRUSHCHEV VISITS PEKING TENSIONS OVER W. BERLIN SOVIET A RECALL FROM P YALTA CONFERENCE. STALIN GAINS TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS IN PACIFIC FOR PROMISE TO ENTER WAR AGAINST JAPAN STALIN DIES. KHRUSHCHEV CONSOLIDATES POWER IN 1956. BEGINNING OF "DESTALININIZATION." SOVIET TROOPS ENTER E. GERMANY 20th CPSU CONGRESS. DE-STALINIZATION UNVEILED. HUNGARY INVADED EISENHOWER-KHRU CAMP DAVID MEET USSR-PRC NUCLEA PACT BROKEN OFF. SPUTNIK LANDING U.S. SH															
YEAR	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960

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Figure I-1. Significant Event Policy and the In

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## I-1. Significant Events Relating to US Foreign Policy and the Indochina Region

# THE BDM CORPORATION

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Chapter</u>		<u>Page</u>
	FOREWORD	iii
	PREFACE	v
	TABLE OF CONTENTS	xiii
	LIST OF FIGURES	xix
	LIST OF TABLES	xxi
	LIST OF MAPS	xxiii
	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	EX-1 to EX-11
1.	THE ENEMY'S GOALS	1-1 to 1-32
	A. Introduction	1-1
	B. The Relationship of Communist Vietnamese Goals and Strategies	1-2
	1. Communist Strategies 1954-1959	1-3
	2. Communist Strategies 1959-1963	1-8
	3. Formation of the National Liberation Front/Peoples Revolutionary Party (NLF/PRP)	1-10
	4. DRV Strategies 1964-1968	1-13
	5. The General Offensive and General Uprising Strategy, 1968	1-16
	6. DRV Strategies 1969-1972	1-19
	7. The 1972 Main Force Attack Strategy	1-21
	8. Communist Strategies 1973-1975	1-22
	C. Summary	1-23
	D. Analytical Summary and Insights	1-25
	E. Lessons	1-26
2.	CHARACTER AND WILL	2-1 to 2-26
	A. Introduction	2-1
	B. Identification of the DRV Leaders	2-2
	1. Characteristics of North Vietnamese Leadership	2-2
	2. Key DRV Leaders	2-5
	3. Leadership of the NLF	2-9

# THE BDM CORPORATION

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (CONTINUED)

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
C. Debates Within the Leadership	2-10
D. Elements Supporting the Tenacity of Communist Vietnamese Leaders	2-12
1. The Correct Solution	2-12
2. Understanding the Contradictions	2-13
3. Morale and Will of the Soldiers	2-14
4. Morale and Will of the North Vietnamese People	2-18
E. Analytical Summary: Insights	2-19
F. Lessons	2-21
3. ORGANIZATION OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM (DRV) AND THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (NLF)	3-1 to 3-49
A. Introduction and General Overview	3-2
B. Principles of Revolutionary Organization	3-3
1. Principles Governing the Party Control Apparatus	3-4
2. Mass Organization Strategy	3-7
3. The Military Organization	3-10
C. Historical Perspective	3-12
1. Party Development and the Front Organizations	3-12
2. Party Development and the Provisional Government	3-15
D. The Organization of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV)	3-16
1. Organization for the Dang Lao Dong Party	3-17
2. The Government Organization of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam	3-17
3. Organization of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam	3-20
4. Summary Analysis: A Triad System of Government	3-22
E. The Organization of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (NLF SVN)	3-22

# THE BDM CORPORATION

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (CONTINUED)

<u>Chapter</u>		<u>Page</u>
	1. The Party Organization in South Vietnam; the Core of the Struggle Movement	3-24
	2. The Organization of the National Liberation Front	3-26
	3. The Military Command Structure: The People's Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF), The People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) and Guerrilla Popular Army	3-28
	4. Summary Analysis: Organizational Relationships	3-29
	F. Provisional Revolutionary Government	3-34
	1. The Background	3-34
	2. The PRG Emerges	3-34
	G. Summary and Insights	3-35
	H. Lessons	3-38
4.	MOBILIZATION	4-1 to 4-36
	A. Introduction	4-1
	B. Communist Vietnamese Mobilization: Background	4-2
	C. Mobilization in the North	4-6
	1. Military Personnel Requirements	4-6
	2. Civilian Manpower Requirements in the North	4-7
	3. Impact of Mobilization on the North Vietnamese Economy	4-10
	4. Motivation Efforts in the North	4-15
	D. Mobilization in the South	4-17
	E. Analytical Summary--Insights	4-28
	F. Lesson	4-29
5.	BASES, SANCTUARIES, AND LOC	5-1 to 5-58
	A. Introduction	5-1
	B. Evolution of the Viet Minh Logistical Structures	5-2
	1. The World War II Years	5-2
	2. The First Indochina War	5-2
	3. Dien Bien Phu	5-8
	4. Significance of Early Viet Minh Logistics	5-9

TABLE OF CONTENTS (CONTINUED)

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
C. Consolidation 1954-1959	5-9
1. The Chinese Connection	5-9
2. The Soviet Connection	5-10
3. Viet Minh Strongholds in RVN	5-10
4. Logistical Preparations for Insurgency	5-10
5. Significance of the Consolidation Period	5-12
D. Logistics in the Revolutionary Struggle 1959-1964	5-12
1. The Fateful DRV Decision	5-12
2. Infiltration Routes	5-14
3. Logistics Organizations	5-16
4. Logistical Significance 1959-1964	5-23
E. PAVN/PLAF Logistics 1965-1975	5-25
1. The Buildup	5-25
2. Foreign Support	5-25
3. Expanding Lines of Communication and Base Areas	5-26
4. Synopsis of PAVN/PLAF Combat Operations	5-37
5. Significance of PAVN/PLAF Logistics 1965-1975	5-42
F. Strategic LOC 1965-1975	5-43
1. The Three Strategic LOC's	5-43
2. Vulnerabilities of the Strategic LOC	5-44
3. Assessing the Strategic LOC	5-46
G. Analytical Summary and Insights	5-46
H. Lessons	5-49
6. EXTERNAL SUPPORT	6-1 to 6-46
A. Introduction and Overview	6-1
B. Ideological/Political Support Provided by the People's Republic of China (PRC)	6-5
1. Background	6-5
2. Points of Agreement and Disagreement Between Peking and Hanoi	6-5
3. Support Provided to the NLF by the People's Republic of China	6-16

# THE BDM CORPORATION

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (CONTINUED)

<u>Chapter</u>		<u>Page</u>
	C. Ideological-Political Support Provided by the Soviet Union	6-17
	1. Background	6-17
	2. Sino and US Influences on Moscow's Aid to the DRV	6-19
	3. Ideological-Political Support Provided by the USSR to the NLF	6-24
	D. Actual Support (Military, Economic and Technical) Provided to the DRV-NLF by the Soviet Union, People's Republic of China and Others Sympathetic to the DRV-NLF Cause	6-25
	1. Introduction	6-25
	2. Economic and Technical Aid to the DRV/NLF	6-26
	3. Military Assistance Provided to the DRV/NLF	6-27
	E. Analytical Summary and Insights	6-27
	F. Lessons	6-31
	Appendix A	6-35
	Appendix B	6-37
	Appendix C	6-38
	Appendix D	6-39
7.	CONSTRAINTS ON POLICY	7-1 to 7-28
	A. Introduction	7-1
	B. Major Goals and Policies of the Leaderships of North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front	7-1
	C. Long-Standing International and Domestic Constraints on Policy	7-2
	1. International Constraints	7-2
	2. Domestic Constraints	7-4
	3. Military Constraints	7-8
	D. Major Changes in Constraints - Conflict Environment	7-10
	1. 1954-1956	7-10
	2. 1965	7-11
	3. 1968	7-12
	4. 1972	7-14
	5. 1973-1975 (final reversal)	7-16

# THE BDM CORPORATION

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (CONTINUED)

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
E. Summary	7-17
F. Summary Analysis and Insights	7-20
G. Lessons	7-21
BIBLIOGRAPHY	B-1 to B-21
GLOSSARY	G-1 to G-3



# THE BDM CORPORATION

## LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>		<u>Page</u>
I-1	Significant Events Relating to U.S. Foreign Policy and the Indochina Region	xi/xii
1-1	Illustration of DRV/NLF Goals	1-4
3-1	Communist Organizational Development/History in North and South Vietnam	3-13/14
3-2	Dang Lao Dong Party Organization	3-18
3-3	Government Organization of the DRV	3-19
3-4	DRV Military Organization	3-21
3-5	Elements of Party Control Over Civil and Military Organization in North Vietnam	3-23
3-6	PRP Party Committee Organization in South Vietnam	3-25
3-7	Civil Structure of National Headquarters NLFSVN	3-27
3-8	The Communist Military Forces in South Vietnam	3-30
3-9	Typical Structure--Interprovincial Level	3-31
3-10	Interrelationship of NLF/PRP Organizations	3-32
3-11	Method of Communist Control of Civil Organizations within the NLF	3-33
4-1	The Spectrum of Techniques of Repression	4-23
4-2	Communist Recruiting Methods	4-25
5-1	Auxiliary Service and Movement Tables	5-5
5-2	PAVN Logistics Structure	5-17
5-3	Representative Binh Trams	5-18

LIST OF FIGURES (CONTINUED)

<u>Figure</u>		<u>Page</u>
5-4	COSVN Logistics Organization	5-22
5-5	Guerrilla Logistics 1959-1964	5-24
6-1	Chronological Timeline of Important Events Influencing Support Provided to the DRV-NLF	6-3/4

# THE BDM CORPORATION

## LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>		<u>Page</u>
4-1	Personnel Change--An Illustration	4-6
4-2	PAVN Armed Forces 1970-1971	4-7
4-3	Percentage of DRV National Capacity Destroyed - Rolling Thunder	4-14
4-4	A Summary of Results of Linebacker II	4-16
4-5	The Spectrum of Techniques of Repression	4-23
4-6	Communist Recruiting Methods	4-25
5-1	PAVN Infiltration from North to South Vietnam 1959-1964 (Number of Individuals)	5-13
5-2	Chinese and Soviet Aid to North Vietnam 1954-1971	5-27
5-3	DRV Manpower Requirements	5-28
6-1	Chinese and Soviet Aid to North Vietnam, 1954-1971	6-13
6-2	Delegation Exchanges Between Peking, Hanoi and Moscow, 1964-1971	6-14
6-3	Estimates of Equipment Deliveries Received by the DRVN, 1965-June 1967	6-28

# THE BDM CORPORATION

## LIST OF MAPS

<u>Maps</u>		<u>Page</u>
5-1	Viet Minh Supply Routes 1950-1954	5-6
5-2	Viet Minh Strongholds in RVN 1954-1959	5-11
5-3	Infiltration Routes 1959-1964	5-15
5-4	The Ho Chi Minh and Sihanouk Trail Sytem	5-29
5-5	DRV Command Structure in RVN	5-32
5-6	Pipeline Systems	5-33
5-7	New Route 14 or Truong Son Corridor	5-35
5-8	The Enemy Base Area System and Additional Lines of Communication	5-36

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The chapters of this volume describe several key insights concerning the Communist Vietnamese in the period 1945-1975. These insights relate to decisions that were made and events that occurred, from which can be derived lessons concerning the Vietnam War. By their very nature, insights are specifically focused on the people, places, and historical events associated with Southeast Asia in general and, in this volume, particularly with the Communist Vietnamese. Lessons, on the other hand, must have a more general application if they are to be of value in the future.

The lessons from Vietnam are not new to warfare. In the main they are lessons from earlier conflicts that were forgotten, misunderstood, or misapplied. Not surprisingly, however, a few lessons were applied properly.

Because lessons are general in nature they usually appear to be platitudes. So, too, do the principles of war or the observations of von Clausewitz, or Napoleon, or Sun Tzu.

This executive summary sets forth some insights and lessons that emerge solely from this volume -- The Enemy.

INSIGHTS

Long-Range  
Goals:

- The Vietnamese Communists held steadfastly to their long-range goal of national unification under control of the North Vietnamese Lao Dong Party (Dang Lao Dong, or Vietnamese Worker's Party). That ultimate goal was never negotiable, but strategies for achieving that goal were altered, based on the changing internal and external realities.
- The Vietnamese Communists demonstrated flexibility in developing political-military strategies for meeting short-range objectives which could contribute to achieving the ultimate goal of national unification.
- The Vietnamese Communists recognized the importance of seemingly different goals for the range of organizations involved in the struggle against the Saigon government. The variety of goals allowed the communists to attract a wide international audience and to manipulate some South Vietnamese groups.
- The goals of the principal supporters of the DRV, the USSR and the PRC, shifted and diverged over time which created a delicate and potentially critical problem for the Lao Dong leadership.

LESSONS

The stated long-range goals of an enemy, actual or potential, and especially a communist enemy - may provide valuable clues as to the adversaries strategic, and even tactical, intentions. When the enemy has allies, their separate national goals may be widely divergent, thereby providing an opportunity for exploitation.

Even in a communist nation, the enduring aspirations of the people and their leaders will tend to be nationalistic; in some cases the influence of a nearby major communist power may prevent overt manifestations of nationalism within a small, dependent nation, but it is doubtful that the desire for freedom, as the indigenous population perceives freedom, can be erased.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### INSIGHTS

#### Character and Will:

- The character and determination of the communist Lao Dong Party leadership in North and South Vietnam were shaped by their common experience and philosophy and matured over an extended period.
- The Vietnamese Communists established a leadership system that largely overcame the Vietnamese national traits of internecine conflict and even loyalties to family and village. This system provided continuity of leadership through three decades of struggle.
- Until too late, some U.S. leaders seriously underestimated these critical characteristics, and particularly the strength and determination of the DRV/NLF leaders, and thus sometimes developed ineffective - and often counter-productive - policies and strategies.
- The fiercely nationalist character of the revolutionaries who comprised the leadership, and their exceptional ability to organize and discipline their followers in the face of massive bombardment and protracted warfare, were underestimated by President Johnson and his advisers when they formulated and implemented the strategy of gradual military escalation.

### LESSONS

Thorough and unbiased analyses of a people's history, society, politics, and leaders should produce useful insights into their national character and will. Without this knowledge, strategies and political "signals" are likely to be ineffective or even counterproductive.

The will of a people to resist an enemy and the ability to endure prolonged hardship and danger have a direct relationship to their perception of the justice of their cause and confidence in their leaders.

To destroy a people's will to resist requires that one or more of the following be accomplished:

- Threaten their national survival. This is construed to mean political and economic defeat as well as military defeat.
- Destroy their confidence in the "justice" of their cause and/or the quality and effectiveness of their leaders.
- Demonstrate the improbability of their achieving their objectives, assuming that this capability exists.

INSIGHTS

- Organization:
- Before and during their war with the French, the Lao Dong leadership developed effective political-military organizations which were based on general Leninist and Maoist principles, but modified to meet the unique history and environment of Vietnam; in 1960 they created a new organizational structure (NLF) in the South and refined it over time (PRP, PRG, etc.)
  - One of Ho Chi Minh's greatest skills was his ability to design, and to use effectively, organizations tailored for the existing - or predicted - environment.
  - The Vietnamese Communists established counter organizations that sought to oppose the South Vietnamese government at every societal level. Those organizations were designed to provide the people of South Vietnam with an apparently legitimate alternative to the Saigon government which the communists were working to discredit.
  - The Vietnamese Communists were aware that achieving their goal of unifying their country under communist leadership would be a long-term effort. They worked patiently to establish the base for the long struggle of attrition against their enemies.
  - The Vietnamese Communists established a complex command structure in the South that gave the appearance of having strong regional autonomy, thus gaining substantial international and indigenous noncommunist support. In fact, that structure was controlled from the North by the Communist Lao Dong Party.
  - The Vietnamese Communists manipulated their domestic and international support and opposition by seeming at times to advocate an independent, Southern-nationalist, political alternative to the existing South Vietnamese government.



LESSONS

In a revolutionary context, communist organizations invariably turn to "front" organizations as a means for capturing the support of other non-communist entities that share some common dissatisfaction; a knowledge and understanding of the indigenous situation and existing grievances provides an opportunity for infiltrating a front or exploiting or creating schisms between communist and non-communist elements within a front; however, the communists' organizational techniques are often so well developed that opportunities for exploitation may be rare and fleeting or may depend on an incumbent non-communist governmental apparatus making substantial changes to offer a better alternative than the communists appear to offer.

To defeat a Communist threat requires thorough understanding of the political-military organization, or infrastructure, which sustains and controls it, followed by the planning and coordination of appropriate "attacks" - political, psychological, economic, police, and military - on its points of vulnerability.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### INSIGHTS

- Mobilization:
- The psychological and organizational techniques and skills, tested under fire against the French, were refined and employed with success against the far stronger combination of the US and South Vietnam.
  - From their decision in 1959 to support the war of national liberation in the South until their final victory in 1975, the DRV leaders saw the struggle in the North and the South as one, undivided effort.
  - The Vietnamese Communist leadership capitalized on the US air attacks in the North as a means of developing and maintaining popular support for the mobilization effort in the North.
  - The Vietnamese Communists relied upon outside aid to supplement and complement their own production capacity in ways that permitted flexible response to US bombing initiatives.

### LESSON

The keys to effective mobilization of popular support in an insurgency situation lie in dedicated, intelligent leadership, effective organization from top to bottom, sound long-range goals, a "platform" that appeals to a broad segment of the population, and a military strategy that supports and reinforces political aims. Since neither opponent will be absolutely effective across the spectrum, the one which is relatively more experienced, unified, determined, realistic, and consistent will be more successful.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### INSIGHTS

#### Bases, Sanctuaries & LOC:

- The Vietnamese Communist logistics system was initiated during the Japanese occupation and was gradually but significantly expanded and refined in their struggle against the French. From 1949 on, China provided them with a secure sanctuary and a needed source of supply.
- Strong communist enclaves were established in South Vietnam during the First Indochina War against the French, and the inhabitants maintained strong Party ties with the DRV, thereby providing sanctuaries, safe havens, and operating bases in support of anti-GVN activities; the DRV became the "strong rear" to support the struggle in the South.
- The DRV's military high command, especially Giap and Dung, excelled in logistical planning and execution, particularly in using the sanctuaries of Laos and Cambodia in which they ultimately established all-weather roads and POL pipelines to support their combat forces in the South. Further, during most of the Second Indochina War the DRV made effective use of the Sekong River and RVN coastal waters, as well as the maritime lines of communication into Haiphong and Sihanoukville.
- The US government announced publicly and repeatedly that no invasion of North Vietnam was contemplated. Fear of possible PRC and USSR reaction combined with hopes for a negotiated settlement, however, led the president to self-imposed restrictions on US interdiction operation against the DRV homeland.
- Use of privileged sanctuaries generally enabled Communist units to avoid combat and limit attrition to their forces as it suited them, thereby making it possible for them to wage a protracted war.
- The closing of Sihanoukville to the DRV in 1970, and the mining of their harbors and waterways in 1972 exposed their near total dependence on, and the vulnerability of their external LOC.
- The Paris Agreements granted PAVN defacto permission to remain in their bases/sanctuaries in Cambodia, Laos, and even RVN as well as the opportunity to expand, vastly, their LOC to and within the RVN.

Bases, Sanctuaries & LOC:

### LESSONS

The nature, extent, and politico-military implications of an enemy's actual or potential sanctuaries must be studied, analyzed, and understood in order to be in a position to deny him the important advantages conferred by the existence of such sanctuaries.

Sanctuaries can consist of:

- Cooperative people, whether motivated by loyalty or fear
- Remote areas within a country that defy intrusion by opposition forces
- Havens in adjacent "neutral" countries that encourage, permit, or suffer the presence of revolutionary forces.

The initiative, and thus control of the pace of an armed struggle, often lies with a party making use of "privileged sanctuaries" (those areas gratuitously placed "off limits" by a protagonist).

"Privileged sanctuaries" are more likely to exist in a limited war than in a total war. In a limited-war situation a democratic power is likely to establish self-imposed constraints that may contribute to the existence of one or more sanctuaries. Conversely a totalitarian power is unlikely to impose on itself any limits.

Because of combat-power ratios and other important factors, revolutionary forces are usually dependent on sanctuaries, at least during early phases of their development, and on more sophisticated base areas and lines of communications as hostilities escalate.

In cases where an enemy's use of "privileged sanctuaries" figures prominently in the nature and duration of a war, appropriate politico-diplomatic, psychological, economic, and military means must be employed in concert to neutralize or restrict such sanctuaries.

INSIGHTS

Outside Support:

- Support from the PRC was a major factor in the shifting of the balance of forces in favor of the Viet Minh in the First Indochina War, but as magnitude and nature of war escalated in the Second Indochina War, DRV dependence on the USSR increased dramatically.
- In spite of the intensifying conflict between Peking and Moscow, the Vietnamese Communists were able to extract adequate military and economic aid in the appropriate mixes to meet the gradually escalating challenge posed by the US
- The US attempted to bring pressure to bear on North Vietnam through negotiations with both Peking and Moscow, while at the same time trying to establish detente with the two major powers. The Vietnamese proved capable of outmaneuvering US efforts and exploiting the Russian and Chinese rivalry to obtain their objectives.
- Though in military and economic terms the Vietnamese Communists were absolutely dependent on external support for accomplishing their objectives in the face of the US presence, their independence of action was not threatened until the following events occurred: The PRC drastically slowed the flow of Soviet materiel passing through China; Lon Nol seized control of Cambodia and closed the port of Sihanoukville to DRV shipments; and the US mined Haiphong and river LOCs.

LESSONS

Major communist powers such as the USSR and PRC have certain vested interests in supporting and ensuring the success of lesser communist nations; this suggests that an opponent of one of their surrogates would be advised not to elect a strategy of attrition unless there was a reasonable assurance of a quick victory or of influencing the external supply of resources and/or use of geographic sanctuaries over a long haul.

A locally based insurgency normally requires extensive external support to offset an adverse balance of military and economic power; this dependence may produce inherent contradictions which, if identified and understood, can present opportunities for exploitation.

INSIGHTS

Constraints  
on Policy:

- The Vietnamese Communists were able to overcome most of the significant domestic and international constraints on their activities through their strong leadership commitment to ultimate victory and the flexibility they demonstrated in their efforts to achieve that victory.
- The Vietnamese Communists were strongly aware of the constraints on their actions, and they showed themselves capable of reviewing and altering strategies in order to reach their ultimate objective.
- The Vietnamese Communists showed themselves to be keenly aware of the constraints on US and South Vietnamese actions and they attempted to manipulate those factors to obtain relative advantages on the battlefield, in the war for international public opinion, and at the peace table.
- The massive and essentially unconstrained bombing of North Vietnam in May-October and again in December, 1972, brought the DRV leaders to the peace table and was instrumental in enabling the US to achieve its principal contemporary goals of recovering US POWs and completing its military withdrawal from South Vietnam; that withdrawal ultimately removed the single most important constraint which had helped prevent communist military victories in 1972 and thereafter.
- After the 1973 "ceasefire" the constraints in the DRV's freedom of action were minimal, while those facing the South Vietnamese multiplied in every important aspect; by March 1975 both the GVN and the RVNAF in fact were "defeated" before the first shot of the final offensive was fired.

LESSON

All participants in a sustained political-military struggle are faced with a varying mix of internal and external constraints. Successful politicians/strategists develop ways and means to minimize or circumvent the restrictions on their freedom of action while exacerbating and exploiting those facing their opponent(s).

## THE BDM CORPORATION

The following summary lesson, while superficially obvious and simple, is one that has been - or should have been - relearned over and over again by political and military leaders throughout recorded history. In numerous cases it has been ignored or misapplied by the physically stronger opponent in a struggle with serious consequences.

### OVERALL LESSON

Incomplete, inaccurate, or untimely knowledge of one's enemies (his history, goals, organization, leadership, habits, strengths and weaknesses, and above all, his character and will) results in inferior policies and strategies; raises the cost in time, treasure, anguish and blood; and increases the possibility of the ultimate defeat of one's initial objectives.

**KNOW YOUR ENEMY!!!**

# THE BDM CORPORATION

## CHAPTER I THE ENEMY'S GOALS

Experience of other countries and of our national history shows us that: The American Revolution for national liberation was successful after eight years of struggle; the French Revolution lasted five years, the Russian Revolution six years and the Chinese Revolution fifteen years.

Our forefathers fought against foreign aggression for five years under the Tran dynasty and ten years under the Le dynasty before winning victory. Therefore, if France sincerely recognizes the unity and independence of our country, our Government and people are ready to cooperate with her, but if the French colonialists maintain their policy of strength and plot to divide us, we are resolved to continue the Resistance War until we win unity and independence.

Ho Chi Minh  
September 2, 1947  
Second Anniversary of Independence Day

### A. INTRODUCTION

Ho Chi Minh's speech in 1947 on the second anniversary of Independence Day reflected the tenacity that is characteristic of the leaders of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). That leadership persevered for nearly eight years against the French in the First Indochina War (1946-1954).<sup>1/</sup> After consolidating their victory, communist perseverance was again put to the test against the South Vietnamese and later the Americans in the Second Indochina War which ended in 1975; the beginning date is variously suggested as 1956, 1959, 1960, and later.<sup>2/</sup> For purposes of Volume I, the Second Indochina War is considered to have begun in 1961 when the newly formed, Hanoi-controlled, National Liberation Front (NLF) announced a guerrilla offensive against Diem's Government of South Vietnam (GVN) and when President Kennedy offered to join with the South Vietnamese "...in an intensified endeavor to win the struggle against communism..."<sup>3/</sup> The intervening period, 1955-1960, began quietly but soon spawned a well



## THE BDM CORPORATION

orchestrated insurgency. Both sides made serious mistakes, but the communists showed themselves to be resilient and persistent; they were able to admit their errors and develop new tactics to achieve their unchanging, long-term goal -- unification of Vietnam under the Communist Lao Dong Party.4/

The tenacity of Ho Chi Minh and his lieutenants was a major factor in the victory of the Communist Vietnamese. Extensive support from the Soviet Union and from the People's Republic of China contributed significantly to Ho Chi Minh's ability to wage war. Ousting the foreigners, first the French, then the Americans, provided an invaluable rallying point for the communists. The latter captured the anticolonial initiative, and successfully appealed to the nationalist pride of the Vietnamese people. Particularly effective, as well, was the ability of the communist leadership to rally support for their cause. This, they claimed, could only be accomplished under the Lao Dong Party.

### B. THE RELATIONSHIP OF COMMUNIST VIETNAMESE GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The classic Maoist guerrilla struggle program, modified by Vo Nguyen Giap, was divided into three distinct phases. The first was withdrawal to remote areas for the organization of popular support. On the base that was established in that phase of activity, the movement was supposed to shift over to assumption of the offensive in the second phase, using guerrilla methods, until superiority of strength had been achieved. The third phase was to be a general offensive by mobile units supported by a general uprising of the population to destroy the South Vietnamese government and its armed forces.

The Vietnam war did not follow the phases indicated in the program.5/ Nevertheless, communist propaganda continually presented the image of a gradually rising tide of popular opposition to the Saigon government. The ultimate and long-term goal of the Vietnamese Communists, reunification of north and South Vietnam under the Lao Dong Party leadership, remained constant. In the pursuit of that ultimate goal, short-range goals were

## THE BDM CORPORATION

identified in the periods of the war. Figure 1-1 outlines the evolution of Vietnamese Communist goals during the Vietnam War, the ultimate goal and the ostensible or tactical, short-range goals.

To achieve the short-range objectives and goals that they established in different periods of the war, the Communist Vietnamese leadership employed a range of strategies that included:

- Political struggle which meant not only political opposition but also small-scale terrorism to achieve political ends.
- Combinations of political struggle and armed struggle to meet the growing strength of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) and to frustrate efforts by the Saigon government to strengthen its political base in the rural areas.
- Armed struggle involved both "revolutionary guerrilla war" and also large unit war by forces associated with the National Liberation Front (NLF).
- Armed struggle also included the use of its North Vietnamese regular army, the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN). (Sometimes shown NVA).
- Negotiations and promises of negotiations were used to provide relief from Allied attacks and to allow regrouping of communist forces for the next stage of struggle.
- Diplomatic and international propaganda offensives were launched in conjunction with foreign allies to weaken the resolve of the United States and to isolate the South Vietnamese government.

The Vietnamese Communist leadership employed various combinations of these strategies to achieve their short-range purposes and to provide a basis for ultimately reaching their long-range goal of reunifying the North and South. This chapter examines the strategies that were employed by the communists and identifies lessons the United States can learn from examinations of that activity.

### 1. Communist Strategies 1954-1959

In South Vietnam, the period after Geneva was relatively peaceful for nearly three years. The communists believed that the national

	1954 - 1959	1959 - 1963	1964 - 1968	1969 - 1972	1972 - 1975
LONG-RANGE STRATEGIC GOALS OF THE LAO DONG PARTY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● REUNIFICATION OF VIETNAM UNDER LAO DONG PARTY RULE</li> <li>● ULTIMATELY, CONTROL OF (FORMER FRENCH) INDOCHINA</li> </ul>				
SHORT-RANGE TACTICAL GOALS OF THE LAO DONG PARTY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CONSOLIDATE NORTH VIETNAM</li> <li>● COLLECTIVE LAND</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● COMPLETE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION IN NORTH</li> <li>● EFFECTIVELY SUPPORT NLF IN SOUTH</li> <li>● EXPAND INTO LAOS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● STOP US BOMBING</li> <li>● INCREASE OUTSIDE SUPPORT</li> <li>● RE-ARM</li> <li>● DESTROY RVNAF &amp; US WILL</li> <li>● BUILD UP TO GENERAL OFFENSIVE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ACCELERATE US WITHDRAWAL</li> <li>● MODERNIZE PAVN</li> <li>● DISRUPT PACIFICATION &amp; VIETNAMIZATION</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ARMED STRUGGLE TO SEIZE RVN</li> <li>● ESTABLISH FRIENDLY GOVTS IN LAOS &amp; CAMBODIA</li> </ul>
GOALS OF THE STAY-BEHIND* VIET MINH CADRES (VIET CONG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CLANDESTINE ORGANIZATION</li> <li>● OUST DIEM</li> <li>● GAIN SUPPORT FROM DRV</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ARMED STRUGGLE</li> <li>● REVOLUTIONARY TAKEOVER OF RVN</li> </ul>			
GOALS OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (NLF)**		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● OUST DIEM</li> <li>● COALITION GOVERNMENT</li> <li>● REUNIFICATION WITH DRV</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● GENERAL UPRISING</li> <li>● ANNIHILATE RVNAF</li> <li>● CUPPLAAT GVN</li> <li>● REUNIFICATION</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● OUST US FORCES</li> <li>● DEFEAT RVNAF</li> <li>● ESTABLISH PRG</li> <li>● REUNIFICATION</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ARMED STRUGGLE TO SEIZE RVN</li> <li>● SHARE POWER WITH DRV***</li> </ul>

\*VIET MINH POLITICAL AND MILITARY CADRES WHO REMAINED IN SOUTH VIETNAM AFTER THE 1954 GENEVA ACCORDS. THESE CADRES WERE THE NUCLEUS FOR THE LIBERATION ARMY / OF THE NLF BEGINNING IN 1960, KNOWN AS THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMED FORCES (PLAF) AFTER 1965. PRESIDENT NGO DINH DIEM REFERRED TO THEM AND THEIR NLF PARENT ORGANIZATION AS THE VIET CONG (VC).

\*\*THE NLF INCLUDED SOME NONCOMMUNIST ELEMENTS BUT THE REAL POWER WAS HELD BY HARD CORE LAO DONG PARTY MEMBERS, PARTICULARLY AFTER 1962 WHEN THE PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (PRP) WAS ESTABLISHED, SUPPLANTING THE SOUTHERN BRANCH OF THE LAO DONG PARTY.

\*\*\*OF THE INDIGENOUS SOUTHERNERS WHO FOUGHT AGAINST THE GVN, ONLY MEMBERS OF THE LAO DONG PARTY HAVE RISEN TO IMPORTANT POSITIONS IN THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM (SRV - SINCE 1976).

NOTE: THIS CHART IS BASED ON BDM ANALYSIS OF CAPTURED DOCUMENTS AND SELECTED SECONDARY SOURCES, ALL OF WHICH ARE LISTED IN THE END NOTES TO THIS CHAPTER.

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Figure 1-1. Illustration of DRV/NLF Goals

## THE BDM CORPORATION

referendum scheduled for 1956 would provide them with a mandate to reunify the country under their leadership. The communist forces that had been active in the South up to 1954 were generally withdrawn to the North and formed into special regroupment units (the 305<sup>th</sup>, 324<sup>th</sup>, 325<sup>th</sup>, 330<sup>th</sup>, and 338<sup>th</sup> Divisions of the North Vietnamese Army).<sup>6/</sup> Some dedicated, hard-core; cadres, estimated to number about 5,000 or 6,000, remained behind and maintained an underground network in the South.<sup>7/</sup> In the 1954-1957 period the objective of the communists in the South was defined in a Party policy paper as the consolidation and reformation of Party organisms and popular groups on a clandestine basis, based upon "vigilance and revolutionary procedures to safeguard our forces."<sup>8/</sup>

The hope that the 1956 referendum would hand South Vietnam over to the Lao Dong Party was dashed when President Ngo Dinh Diem, with American support, refused to participate in it on the grounds that "The regime of oppression" established by communist control of the North made free elections impossible.<sup>9/</sup> Between 1956 and 1958 the Vietnamese Communists were faced with the unexpected prospect of President Diem building a strong political base in the South and destroying their own political-military support. In May 1956 Diem announced a campaign to destroy communist influence in the South. In his ten-month campaign, more than 94,000 former Communist Party members "rallied" to the government, and 5,613 other cadres surrendered to government forces.<sup>10/</sup> The program was intensified in 1958 and 1959. In the province of An Xuyen alone, for instance, a five-week campaign was conducted in early 1959 that resulted in the surrender of 8,125 communist agents and the denunciation of 9,800 "other" agents and 29,978 sympathizers.<sup>11/</sup>

The impact of Diem's efforts was described in one of the more important and revealing documents captured during hostilities:

From 1957 to 1958 the situation gradually changed. The enemy persistently sabotaged the implementation of the Geneva Agreement, actively consolidated and strengthened the army, security service, and administrative apparatus from the central to the hamlet level, crudely assassinated the people, and truly and

## THE BDM CORPORATION

efficiently destroyed our Party. By relying on force the American-Diemist regime was temporarily able to stabilize the situation and increase the prestige of the counter revolutionaries. At this time the political struggle movement of the masses although not defeated was encountering increasing difficulty and increasing weakness; the Party bases although not completely destroyed were significantly weakened and in some areas quite seriously; the prestige of the masses and of the revolution was lessened.<sup>12/</sup>

Another document, captured in 1974, corroborated the difficulties outlined in the earlier document:

The revolutionary movement suffered heavy losses. Hundreds of thousands of cadres and people were arrested or massacred. The self-defense organizations in the countryside were broken up. The armed forces in the resistance bases had to be reduced. In particular, the resistance army of the religious sects dwindled into a mere token force...

Naturally, the more the people's self-defense organizations shrank, the more aggressive the cruel agents in the localities became and the bloodier the crimes they perpetrated. More and more cadres were arrested and many more revolutionary organizations in the villages and hamlets were broken up. The South Vietnamese people call this the "darkest period."<sup>13/</sup>

In the period between the summer of 1956 and the fall of 1957, it became apparent to the DRV leadership that the Geneva Agreements were not leading to reunification and that peaceful change offered only remote prospects for success. The DRV's strategies of the previous period were reassessed. The ultimate goal of reunification remained, but there was an intense debate in Hanoi as to the best means for achieving it. The Lao Dong Party set out to resolve this question and, in the process, concentrated its immediate efforts in achieving two essential goals which had been retained from the previous period:

- Economic and political consolidation of North Vietnam
- Increased economic assistance to North Vietnam from external allies, especially from the Soviet Union and China.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

By the summer of 1956, the leadership in Hanoi faced an internal crisis over its failure to achieve reunification along the line established by the Geneva Agreements. The DRV's Land Reform Campaign backfired with extremely serious consequences. An estimated 50,000 to 100,000 peasants and antiregime people were killed.<sup>14/</sup> The DRV entered the most vulnerable stage of its existence. The DRV leadership showed considerable pragmatism and removed Truong Chinh, who had directed the land reforms, and called off any further reforms. On August 18, 1956, Ho announced the successful completion of Land Reform and admitted to errors on behalf of the Lao Dong Party. In his announcement, Ho appealed for unity in the North:

Unity is our invincible force. In order to consolidate the North into a solid base for the struggle to reunify our country our entire people should be closely and widely united on the basis of the worker-peasant alliance in the Vietnam Fatherland Front.<sup>15/</sup>

In 1957, Ho recognized the importance of the Soviet and Chinese contribution to the consolidation of the North:

In completely liberated North Vietnam, power is in the hands of the people; this is a firm basis for the peaceful reunification of Vietnam, a task which receives ever-growing and generous help from the Soviet Union, China, and brother countries. Thanks to this assistance, the consolidation of the North has scored good results.<sup>16/</sup>

However, not all in the Lao Dong Party agreed with Ho's position on the importance of a "peaceful" reunification. For example, Le Duan, who later became Secretary General of the Lao Dong Party, advocated in 1956 the forcible overthrow of the Diem regime; he is reported to have been eager to invade South Vietnam and to feel that the time for armed struggle had arrived.<sup>17/</sup> As a leader of the communist elements in the South, Le Duan also advocated an immediate increase in North Vietnamese military supplies to the southern resistance forces.

Ho Chi Minh himself recognized that under certain circumstances the Vietnamese Communist leadership would have to resort to force to

## THE BDM CORPORATION

achieve its purposes. On April 24, 1956, Ho Chi Minh issued a statement in which he warned:

While recognizing that in certain countries the road to socialism may be a peaceful one, we should be aware of this fact: In countries where the machinery of state, the armed forces, and the police of the bourgeois class are still strong, the proletarian class still has to prepare for armed struggle.18/

This appears to have been a response to the Soviet position on "peaceful competition." Ho related his rebuttal to the "principal enemies" of Vietnam who were frustrating his goal of unification.

While recognizing the possibility of reunifying Vietnam by peaceful means, we should always remember that our people's principal enemies are the American imperialists and their agents who still occupy half our country and are preparing for war; therefore, we should firmly hold aloft the banner of peace and enhance our vigilance.19/

The consolidation of the economic position of North Vietnam and the challenge posed by Diem's aggressive attack on the communist position in the South dictated a change in strategy if the Lao Dong was going to be able to achieve its objective. By 1958 Party sentiment favored armed struggle:

The majority of the party members and cadres felt that it was necessary to launch immediately an armed struggle in order to preserve the movement and protect the forces. In several areas the party members on their own initiative had organized armed struggle against the enemy. (Yet at the same time, there were others who were hesitant to push the armed struggle)...These people did not fully appreciate the capabilities of the masses, of the Party and of the movement and therefore did not dare mobilize the masses in order to seek every means to oppose the enemy.20/

### 2. Communist Strategies 1959-1963

Interrogation of a communist infiltrator indicated that in late 1958 Le Duan returned to North Vietnam and reported his observations on the

## THE BDM CORPORATION

situation in the South. The Central Executive Committee of the Lao Dong Party in Hanoi convened a meeting and issued Resolution 15 in January 1959. That resolution included a determination to alter the line of struggle in the South to center on the establishment of a National Liberation Front under the communist leadership. (The organizations of this Front, its goals, and manner of operating will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of this volume). Most importantly Resolution "15" dictated that armed force would be used to support the political struggle movement.<sup>21/</sup>

One important captured document described the change in strategy that followed this decision.

In opposing such an enemy, simple political struggle was not possible. It was necessary to use additional armed struggle, but not merely low level armed struggle such as only armed propaganda which was used to support the political struggle. The enemy would not allow us any peace and in the face of the enemy operations and destructive pursuit, the armed propaganda teams, even if they wished to avoid losses, would never be able to engage the enemy in warfare and would never be able to become an actual revolutionary army. This is an essential fact of the movement and the actual movement in South Vietnam illustrates this fact. Therefore at the end of 1959 when we launched an additional armed struggle in coordination with the political struggle against the enemy it immediately took the form in South Vietnam of revolutionary warfare, a long range revolutionary warfare. Therefore according to some opinions at the beginning of 1959 we only used heavy armed propaganda and later developed "regional guerrillas."<sup>22/</sup>

For several years, from 1959 to the end of 1963, the communist leadership applied a combination of military and political pressures on the South Vietnamese government in an effort to bring down Diem.

An important goal of this period for the DRV was the expansion of its sphere of influence in Laos, including control over the territory adjacent to South Vietnam which contained the Ho Chi Minh trail. Although it was not until December 1960 that the DRV announced to foreign diplomats in Hanoi its decision to intervene in Laos, two battalions of regular North



Vietnamese troops had occupied Tchepone in 1958.<sup>23/</sup> The United Nations dispatched observers to Laos to monitor Vietnamese actions. The US responded by sending Special Forces "White Star" mobile training teams to train Laotian soldiers to counter the North Vietnamese effort. Construction of the Ho Chi Minh trail by North Vietnamese engineers of the 559th North Vietnamese Division, had begun in May 1959.<sup>24/</sup> The nature of the "trail", initially a combination of minor roads and footpaths, is described in detail in Chapter 5 of this volume.

The unstable situations in Laos and South Vietnam were among the major international problems that were to be discussed at the Summit Conference in May 1960, between the United States and the Soviet Union. The collapse of the conference and the subsequent chilling of relations between the United States and the Soviet Union were attributed to the U-2 incident and President Eisenhower's subsequent acceptance of full responsibility for having approved the reconnaissance overflights of the USSR.<sup>25/</sup>

3. Formation of the National Liberation Front/People's Revolutionary Party (NLF/PRP).

In early September, 1960, the Lao Dong Party passed a resolution which stressed the need for intensified struggle in the South. While endorsing "peaceful" reunification, attention was drawn to the need for "promoting to the highest degree the revolutionary fighting spirit."

The common task of the Vietnamese revolution at present is:

...to accelerate the socialist revolution in North Vietnam while at the same time stepping up the National People's Democratic Revolution in South Vietnam;...

During this process we must pay special attention to the work of organizing and educating the people... promoting to the highest degree the revolutionary fighting spirit of the various strata of our patriotic countrymen...<sup>26/</sup>

The Lao Dong resolution also called on the communist elements in South Vietnam, which later formed the People's Revolutionary Party of the

## THE BDM CORPORATION

National Liberation Front, to "bring into being a broad national united front directed against the U.S.-Diem clique."27/

As will be described in Chapter 3, the NLF was from its inception controlled by the communist leadership in Hanoi. However, the Front existed to promote and support widespread opposition to the Saigon government in South Vietnam and also to project an image of Southern Front autonomy to the world at large. This posture was dictated by the assertion that the war in South Vietnam was an indigenous expression of the South Vietnamese people to overthrow the Saigon government. Thus, throughout the war, the NLF propaganda statements were couched in language that projected an image of Southern autonomy.

In December of 1960, the NLF issued a Ten-Point Manifesto stating its goals and programs.28/ An examination of the Manifesto reveals that in place of the 1954-1960 goal of self-government in South Vietnam, the NLF presented itself in its propaganda as being willing to consider unification with the North given the requisite conditions, which would have the NLF sharing political authority with Hanoi.

Unification remained synonymous with the goal of internal political control throughout the 1960-1963 period. The "step-by-step" approach outlined in the 1961 NLF program was dependent upon the establishment of a "national democratic coalition administration" in South Vietnam.29/ In a Four-Point Manifesto issued on July 20, 1962, unification was not mentioned; instead, establishment of South Vietnamese authority "to solve their own internal affairs" was stressed.30/

The 1962 Manifesto is significant in light of the establishment of the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP) in January of that year. The PRP was explicitly the "Marxist-Leninist Party of South Vietnam" and was under the direct control of Hanoi. Its purpose was to enable the Lao Dong to maintain tight control over the NLF. According to a PRP training manual dated October 1965, the Party objective was to "...overthrow imperialism, colonialism, and feudalism, to build a life of peace, prosperity and happiness without oppression and extortion...Once independence is obtained, the next step is unification, constructed and consolidated in every way to make

## THE BDM CORPORATION

the country powerful and rich, a stronghold of peace."<sup>31/</sup> This objective conformed with Hanoi's policy in the South and omitted the earlier NLF goal of a "coalition government".

In the period between the autumn of 1960 and November 1963, DRV strategy was heavily influenced by the situation in Laos.

The tactical goal of a strengthened, well-organized and disciplined Southern resistance movement was pursued by "our people there" who established the PRP in January 1962. US willingness to accept a "neutralized" Laos, raised hopes briefly in Hanoi for a "neutralized" South Vietnam on the order of the Laotian model. The July 1962 Geneva Agreement for Laos, (1) called for the withdrawal of US military personnel; (2) left the Pathet Lao (Laotian communists), who had been trained, organized and guided by Hanoi, as members of a coalition government; (3) left the Pathet Lao in control of the strategically significant eastern portion of Laos where the Ho Chi Minh trail from North Vietnam to South Vietnam was located; and (4) removed SEATO as a vehicle for intervention in future Laotian developments.<sup>32/</sup>

When it became evident by mid-1963 that the United States would not agree to a neutralized South Vietnam, Hanoi once again intensified its attacks by the NLF in the South. Hoc Tap, North Vietnam's Party Journal, increased the severity of its criticism of "revisionism" (a reference to "peaceful" reunification) and stressed the superiority of armed struggle.<sup>33/</sup>

As 1963 drew to a close, two major events occurred ~~that~~ were to have impact on all of the protagonists. Ho was presented with renewed hope when the Diem regime was toppled, followed shortly by the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

In the months before the fall of Diem, the position of the communists in Vietnam was growing stronger and Diem's political base was being weakened, mainly by the Buddhist opposition and Ngo Dinh Nhu's brutal and counterproductive response to that opposition. During this time the scale of US aid and participation in the war was increasing. The build-up in American support forces began in December 1961 with the arrival of the

first helicopter units. There were soon five Army helicopter companies and one Squadron of Marine helicopters in South Vietnam which created a need for armed helicopters and increased air support.34/

By 1963 there were some 16,000 American forces in South Vietnam, and the United States Government had made a major military commitment to maintaining the independence of South Vietnam. The political crisis in South Vietnam in 1963 led several key figures in the US to question whether the war could be won under Diem's totalitarian leadership. The Kennedy Administration tried to increase verbal pressure on Diem, but in the absence of any effective US leverage he continued the policies that the Americans considered repressive. As a result, the US Government actively supported the generals' coup d'etat in which Diem and Nhu were killed.35/

4. DRV Strategies, 1964-1968

The assassination of Diem on November 2, 1963 created political disorder that the communists sought to exploit. For ten days, the Ninth Central Committee Plenum of the Lao Dong Party met in Hanoi to consider the opportunity that had been created by the removal of Diem. Three strategies were adopted:36/

- (1) To confine the war within the boundaries of the South,
- (2) To intensify aid from the North,
- (3) To adopt an offensive strategy on both the political and military fronts.

To increase the military activity Giap took three steps which were to influence the progress of the war: (1) efforts were made to standardize the weapons used in the South by the communist forces, (2) native Northerners were sent to fight in the South whereas previously the communist forces had been drawn from the regrouped who had gone north after the Geneva Accords were signed, and (3) terrorist activities were directed against US advisors and installations.37/

The changes in strategy that the communists adopted provoked not only the increase of the US military presence in the South but also the bombing of the North. The conflict was greatly expanded in 1964 and 1965, and the Vietnamese Communists considered carefully the changes that had

## THE BDM CORPORATION

taken place in order to determine which strategies were most appropriate for the circumstances. The communists sought to understand American terms used to define the phases of the war. The transcript of a 1966 talk by General Nguyen Van Vinh, Chief of Staff of the North Vietnamese High Command and Chairman of the Lao Dong's Reunification Department indicated the communist perception of the change.

The special war is just a type of limited war, but its scope is inferior to that of the limited war. And since the special war takes place in South Vietnam, it bears the character of a conflict between the two camps, gradually becomes a limited war, and will develop to a higher intensity and larger scope. It is now obvious that the war has become a limited war, since the enemy has increased the number of his troops to more than 200,000.<sup>38/</sup>

Thus, the communists referred to the 1961-1964 effort of the US as a "special war", and the 1964-1968 effort as a "limited war" to denote expansion of military activity.

In a letter written in 1966, Le Duan indicated the communist perception of the differences between the US effort and the French military activity. He wrote:

The special war or regional war is merely the U.S. imperialists' war of aggression along the pattern of neo-colonialism, but a noteworthy thing is the special war is a war of aggression in which the puppet administration and army, equipped and commanded by them, are used as a major tool to repress the national liberation movement...although the U.S. imperialists have sent U.S. expeditionary troops to participate directly in the war in South Vietnam, they continue to pursue the goals of neo-colonialism, and the "special" character of the war still exists and is still an important factor. In the war along the pattern of old colonialism, the major object for combat operations is expeditionary aggressive troops, but in the special war, the major object for combat operations is puppet troops. At present, although the U.S. imperialists have sent 200,000, 300,000, or 400,000 U.S. troops, their war of aggression in the south is still a neo-colonialist war because their political and military

objectives are not merely to invade South Vietnam, but to maintain a powerful puppet administration and army under the cloak of false independence serving as a shield for them.39/

Thus, Le Duan argued that the "special war" the United States was waging was different in kind from that of the French because of the place accorded the South Vietnamese. For Le Duan that difference exposed a weakness in the US plans. He argued that a defeat of the ARVN would result in the fall of the South Vietnamese government and eliminate the basis for US participation in the war. If the US sought to carry on the war without ARVN it would have been reduced to fighting the same kind of old colonial war as the French. Because of this perceived vulnerability Le Duan concluded:

That is why the object for combat operations of the southern armed forces and people is not mainly U.S. troops but both U.S. troops and puppet troops: We should not give light consideration to anyone of these forces.40/

General Vinh concurred with this argument. He observed:

To defeat the enemy in the South is to basically defeat the puppet army and to defeat part of the American troops, and, thereby, smash the Americans' aggressive will. If we fail to see the role of the puppet army and administration, we will fail to use our own forces to a certain extent to basically smash the puppet forces, and, thereby deprive the Americans of their military and political base. Likewise, without defeating an important part of the American forces we cannot crush their aggressive will. In reality, today the relations between fighting the Americans and fighting the puppets have become increasingly clearer. In the old colonialist period, only by defeating the aggressive army would the imperialists consent to being defeated. With neo-colonialism, after defeating a greater bulk of the puppet army and an important part of American troops, we can push the Americans out of South Vietnam by coordinating the political struggle with diplomacy.41/

General Vinh concluded that the ARVN forces were the main target of the communist attack and that at the same time, "a part" of the American forces should also be defeated.<sup>42/</sup> He asserted that when these conditions were realized, the stage would be set for the withdrawal of US forces and the reorganization of the government of South Vietnam.

5. The General Offensive and General Uprising Strategy, 1968

By mid-1967 allied firepower was wreaking havoc with PAVN and PLAF forces and their supplies. The National Liberation Front was suffering financial distress, its men were deserting in increasing numbers, and the village infrastructures were in disarray. The US bombing campaign continued to disrupt transportation and communication centers in North Vietnam. It was in this milieu that the DRV had to assume an increasingly greater burden of the fighting in South Vietnam. General Giap's response was the "1967-1968 Winter-Spring Campaign."<sup>43/</sup>

The DRV and NLF counted on a "General Uprising" in conjunction with a "General Offensive" to be the deciding blow in the 1967-1969 Winter-Spring campaign. Presumably, after having their revolutionary consciousness raised by selective terror or other motivating factors, the villagers of South Vietnam would rise en masse when PAVN and PLAF armed forces attacked throughout the countryside. This strategy was described in numerous captured documents including one dated 1963:

The common strategic task of our armed force in this all-people, all-sided war is to destroy the enemy military force, and in coordination with the political force, disintegrate the lackey Army, which is the main instrument of the enemy's regime, and create favorable conditions for our forces to launch the General Offensive and Uprising to over throw the reactionary government in South Vietnam.<sup>44/</sup>

Despite having suffered very heavy casualties in 1967, the communists claimed many significant victories over their enemies. A captured communist document detailed the kind of successes the communists were reporting.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

The following remarks are noted: We win great and continuous victories. We are in an offensive position and are launching continuous attacks against the enemy. The situation in Gia Lai promises many favorable developments this year. In Phu Yen, the recent difficulties are gone and 80% of the local population has been liberated. Our main forces now operate in the lowlands. The enemy is on the defensive. He has abandoned 70 strong points in Quang Nam and ten in Binh Dinh. Only about two Special Forces C's (companies) are left to protect the defensive positions. The political movement becomes stronger in all areas and is ready (possibly for uprising). Many successes have been obtained by the coordination of political and military activities conducted in towns and cities, such as in Loc Ninh and Ben Tre or in Saigon where we are the masters in many streets.45/

The purpose of the general uprising was to create mass confusion in the urban centers which were to be removed from the political control of the South Vietnamese government while mobile communist forces attacked ARVN units. The combination of popular revolt and military defeat was calculated to destroy the will and ability of the Saigon government to respond. Thereafter without GVN support the United States forces would be isolated and forced to withdraw from Vietnam. Captured documents indicated that the communists had long been planning this outcome of the war effort:

When the South Vietnam cities, particularly Saigon-Cholon, are able to rise up in coordination with the rural areas the South Vietnam revolution will have the capability of overthrowing the enemy through the means of a general uprising. At this time we are unable to affirm how the general uprising will evolve. But it is certain that it will be an uprising of the rural masses moving into the cities, composed of armed forces which have been organized and have been in combat for many years and of political forces of the rural and city masses which will at that time rise up in armed revolt with every type of weapon at their disposal.46/

The success of the plan depended on the acumen with which the communists predicted the spirit of the people of Vietnam. If they did not rise, the mobile communist units which had come out of hiding would be



## THE BDM CORPORATION

exposed to ARVN and US counterattacks. Captured documents indicate the confidence the leadership tried to develop in their forces that were committed to this enterprise on the basis of Party analysis of the political situation in South Vietnam. One document read:

Our victory is close at hand. The conditions are right. Our Party has carefully judged the situation. We must act and act fast. This is an opportunity to fulfill the aspirations of the entire people, of cadre, of each comrade, and of our families...

This opportunity is like an attack on an enemy post in which we have reached the last fence and the enemy puts up a fierce resistance. We only need to make a swift assault to secure the target and gain total victory.<sup>47/</sup>

A week before the 1968 Tet offensive began, RVNAF forces captured a high-ranking prisoner, the political commissar of the communists Military Region 6. That region, essentially comprising Binh Thuan Province, lies east of Saigon. The prisoner revealed that North Vietnam was switching its strategy from protracted warfare to general offensive - general uprising. Hanoi anticipated military success. The communists hoped to exploit "two strategic opportunities and one tactical advantage."<sup>48/</sup> The strategic opportunities were:

- The forthcoming US presidential elections in 1968 made the Johnson administration particularly sensitive to its domestic opposition
- A communist victory in Vietnam would make international and internal US opposition grow stronger and more widespread and ultimately might force the US to terminate its involvement in Vietnam.

The tactical advantage was the opportunity to achieve surprise by opening the offensive during the Tet holidays.

In spite of initial successes, the general offensive and general uprising strategy that was embodied in the 1968 Tet offensive resulted in a severe military defeat for the communist forces in South Vietnam. In most

cities the communists were forced to retire to the hinterlands with terrible losses. Details of the Tet offensive will be provided in Volume VI of this study. Ironically, with PAVN forces bloodied and PLAF forces and their political infrastructure decimated, the communists achieved a psychological coup, they "...still won the political victory in the United States."<sup>49/</sup> But to credit the DRV and NLF with having planned for such an outcome would be wrong. Their psychological victory was an unexpected fallout of an otherwise disastrous campaign.

6. DRV Strategies 1969-1972

The communist leadership in Vietnam sought to overcome the negative effects of the tactical defeat of their 1968 Tet offensive by these strategies:<sup>50/</sup>

- Denial that the strategy had been a failure. Through propaganda and altering organizational frameworks, the communists sought to project the notion that the offensive had achieved its purposes.
- Exploit the political vulnerability of the United States, which unexpectedly had been demonstrated by President Johnson's reaction to the antiwar sentiment that followed the Tet offensive.
- Use the promise of peace negotiations to weaken remaining US resolve to isolate South Vietnam internationally, and to develop the international anti-Vietnam War movement.
- Use the bombing halt to prepare for a new assault on South Vietnam when the United States' forces had been largely withdrawn.
- Use the bombing halt to rebuild the damaged economy of North Vietnam with Soviet and Chinese assistance.

The communists sought to create the impression that their offensive had created "new political realities" that had to be recognized with the creation of a Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) to govern the "liberated" areas of South Vietnam.<sup>51/</sup>

On May 23, 1969, the National Reunification Committee of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam National Assembly issued a report which stated that NLF goals with respect to unification were in harmony with Hanoi's. On June 6th-10th, members of the NLF, the PRP, the Alliance of

## THE BDM CORPORATION

National Democratic and Peace Forces of South Vietnam, and other revolutionary organizations, met to form the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam. With Hanoi's support, the PRG was established to "...create conditions for the formation of a provisional coalition government in order to organize free general elections, elect the National Assembly, promulgate the constitution, and designate the South Viet-Nam official government."<sup>52/</sup> During the period, the PRG was the tool of the Hanoi government to achieve their goal of political control in South Vietnam.

The events of 1968 led the US and the DRV to the peace talks in Paris. Unofficial discussions began soon after Tet, but the communists continued fighting in an effort to impede the military and civilian recovery of South Vietnam and to keep pressure on the Americans until the results of the elections in November of 1968 were known. The Nixon Administration announced its Vietnamization Program as an aspect of the so-called "Nixon Doctrine." Secretary of Defense Laird's public report on his visit to Saigon in 1969 led Hanoi to conclude that American troop withdrawals would begin in earnest. In the face of a diminishing US military presence, but with greatly accelerated delivery of military arms and equipment to the South Vietnamese armed forces, the DRV recognized the need to adjust its military and its political posture.

Saigon refused to accede to the formation of a coalition government, an interim step favored by both the DRV and its Southern voice, the PRP. On June 10, 1969 the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) of South Vietnam had been formed by the communists to place additional pressure on the US and to challenge the legitimacy of the Thieu government. The Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam was regarded as a temporary measure. However, it replaced the earlier short-term goal of participation in a coalition government.

During the period 1969-1971, the communist forces suffered a setback from the US/RVNAF attacks into Cambodia in 1970, but PAVN forces severely mauled the RVNAF attack towards Tchepone, Laos in LAMSON 719 in

1971. Otherwise, many PAVN forces withdrew to North Vietnam, where they refitted and retrained in preparation for the 1972 Easter offensive.

The GVN's Vietnamization and Pacification programs were improving, and the communists in the South were hard pressed. US combat forces had been reduced to two brigades by 1972; their role was to protect the withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam.<sup>53/</sup>

7. The 1972 Main Force Attack Strategy

In July 1969, the Central Office South Vietnam issued resolution Number 9, which was designed to provide guidance for the conduct of communist forces during the US withdrawal period and in the face of the Vietnamization effort. The resolution stated that there were five objectives: attacking American troops to crush US will to continue fighting; attacking the ARVN to force its collapse; building up political and military strength, especially in the cities where they had been demonstrably weak; attacking the civil administrative system of the South Vietnamese government; forcing the US to accept a political solution that involved recognition of an "independent, democratic, peaceful and neutral South Vietnam with a national, democratic coalition government working toward unifying Vietnam."<sup>54/</sup>

The massive losses suffered by the communists in the South and the successes that were scored by the Vietnamization effort had seriously weakened the communist forces in the South. In addition, it was evident that the strategy employed in Tet '68 was not workable. In order to achieve the objectives set out in the COSVN Resolution No. 9, the communist leadership had only one credible instrument, the regular North Vietnamese forces. To defeat the ARVN, the DRV leaders decided that the PAVN would have to be armed with the most sophisticated weapons available. In 1971 communist-bloc ships brought huge quantities of cargo to North Vietnam. The equipment included 130-mm long-range artillery and T-54 medium tanks.<sup>55/</sup> As a result of the Soviet's armament efforts, in overall amounts of heavy equipment at hand, Northern troops would have strong superiority.

The timing of the communist attack was dictated by the US troop withdrawal schedule. In the early months of 1972 it was evident that the

## THE BDM CORPORATION

US would not have significant ground fighting capability in Vietnam and at the same time a defeat of ARVN could expose remaining US troops to serious humiliating defeats.

Again, as in 1968, in spite of early successes, the communist attacks failed dramatically. A combination of US air strikes throughout Vietnam, the mining of Haiphong harbor, and, most importantly, the strong military showing of the ARVN, stopped the communist attack and rolled it back. The communist leadership in Hanoi would have to find new strategies to reach their objectives.

### 8. Communist Strategies 1973-1975

The struggle in Vietnam centered on diplomatic efforts in 1972 and 1973. In January 1973 the Paris Peace Accords were signed which terminated US participation in South Vietnamese military affairs. The communists used the peace accord's provisos to rebuild their strength and prepare for the final assault which would bring down the Saigon government. The attack by North Vietnamese main forces against ARVN began in January 1975 and culminated with the fall of Saigon in April of that year. In the attack the so-called "Southern insurgency" played no recognizable part, their "liberation forces" long since having been manned mainly by PAVN infiltrators. The ARVN was defeated by a better armed and perhaps better motivated force using classic large unit maneuver tactics. Ironically, the US had initially trained and equipped the RVNAF for defense against a conventional attack across the DMZ at a time when the principal threat in the South was from guerrilla forces. In that early period the GVN's counterinsurgency assets were not properly structured, and the GVN was unable to liquidate or control the insurgency. When the final assault was launched by the DRV, PAVN forces were better equipped, better supplied, and better supported. At this point the RVNAF faced the conventional threat for which they had initially been trained, but they were no longer up to the task.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### C. SUMMARY

Ho Chi Minh and his lieutenants had a clear vision of their ultimate goal. Whether representing the Indochinese Communist Party in the 1930's, the Viet Minh in the 1940's, or the Democratic Republic of Vietnam after 1945, these dedicated communists sought to "liberate" all of Vietnam under their leadership. They sought, also, to assure that friendly and cooperative communist governments were established in neighboring Laos and Cambodia. Their intent to rule Vietnam with at least suzerainty over the rest of Indochina appears never to have wavered.<sup>56/</sup> They made mistakes along the way. Those mistakes cost them significantly in terms of time, lives, and treasure.

The Viet Minh victory at Dien Bien Phu in May, 1954 brought an end to the First Indochina War. The French proposal for a demarcation line at the 17th parallel was finally accepted, but only after Chou En-lai and Molotov prevailed on DRV Prime Minister Pham Van Dong to accept the "temporary" partition with the assurance that general elections would take place in two years.<sup>57/</sup>

While waiting for nationwide elections to unify Vietnam, the DRV leaders embarked on what was ostensibly a land reform program. In actuality that program was designed to gain firm control over the population. The US and GVN failed to capitalize on the resulting serious unrest in the North and the DRV safely passed through its most vulnerable period.

The communists underestimated the leadership abilities of President Diem, whose aggressive police efforts made serious inroads on the clandestine apparatus established by the Viet Minh stay behinds. Further, Diem's refusal to permit general elections dashed any hopes for a peaceful takeover of South Vietnam.

The DRV began sending cadres and supplies South in 1959, probably to offset US aid to the GVN. Both sides escalated their activities. Direct military support was furnished to Diem by the US in the form of helicopter units and a greatly increased advisory effort. The DRV began deploying regular PAVN combat forces to RVN in 1964 while Southern guerrilla units

launched attacks against US personnel and installations. The communists seriously miscalculated the US reaction to these developments, particularly in view of the alarming weakness of the coup-ridden GVN at that time.

In 1968, confusing anti-American and anti-GVN sentiments with procommunism, the DRV gambled that the people of South Vietnam would respond to the call for a general uprising and assist the general offensive. The result was the destruction of much of the VC cadre strength that had been established over the space of a decade. In 1972 the Hanoi leadership again misjudged US capabilities and will when they launched their Easter offensive. The result was a costly and humiliating military defeat for the PAVN forces. In short, it would be a mistake to view the North Vietnamese military strategies as "brilliant" or "insightful."

Nevertheless, in the end the Vietnamese Communists were victorious. Unquestionably their greatest asset in achieving their victory was their persistence and astute perception of what it would take to win. That tenacity was rooted in their common dedication to a cause and was sustained by the collective leadership style that dominated North Vietnamese decisionmaking. It is most striking that in spite of the serious miscalculations and errors that sometimes marked the selection of strategies, the chief communist leaders remained seemingly immune from the kinds of purges found in other communist parties. Certainly when a given strategy failed, there must have been a weakening of power for whomever had espoused the strategy. But to their credit, the communists were exceptionally flexible and though they changed strategies they did not repeat unsuccessful strategies.

Serious differences of opinion did occur within the collective leadership of the DRV. Giap occasionally embarked on military operations that proved costly and likely drew censure from his colleagues. Le Duan urged direct intervention in the South long before the Politburo endorsed that approach. Truong Chinh was the scapegoat for the 1956 land reform fiasco, but he returned to power after a decent interval. The top-level leadership successfully controlled their disagreements and prevented any public airing of their disputes. Public admissions of incorrect policies, such as land

## THE BDM CORPORATION

reform were made -- when it suited the Central Committee's purpose. Low-level comrades with "erroneous thoughts" were arrested and deported to remote mines, according to the Hungarian Embassy in Hanoi, but there were no purges in the DRV's Politburo, which continued to maintain its extraordinary record of cohesion.<sup>58/</sup>

General Giap credits the final victory to the strategic leadership of the Lao Dong Party. Giap claims that the party correctly assessed the situation in 1974, seized the historic opportunity, made the strategic decision, and successfully consummated the "democratic revolution".<sup>59/</sup>

Clearly the organizational integrity of the Central Committee, the nationalist foundation on which the Lao Dong Party was based, the clear-cut goals espoused by the leaders and perceived by the rank and file, and the iron discipline demonstrated by the hard-core cadres were deciding factors in the conduct of the war and its final outcome.

### D. ANALYTICAL SUMMARY AND INSIGHTS

The Vietnamese Communists held steadfastly to their long-range goal of national unification under their Party Leadership -- initially the Indochinese Communist Party and finally the Lao Dong Party. That ultimate goal was never negotiable, but strategies for achieving that goal were altered, based on the changing internal and external realities.

The Vietnamese Communists demonstrated flexibility in developing political-military strategies for meeting short-range objectives which could contribute to achieving the ultimate goal of national unification; they studied their mistakes and did not repeat strategies that had proved unsuccessful.

The Vietnamese Communists recognized the importance of having seemingly different goals for the range of organizations involved in the struggle against the Saigon government. The variety of goals allowed the communists to attract a wide international audience and to manipulate some South Vietnamese groups.



## THE BDM CORPORATION

The goals of the DRV's principal supports, the USSR and the PRC, shifted and diverged over time, which created a delicate and potentially critical problem for the Lao Dong Party leadership; that leadership proved itself to be remarkably adept at retaining the support of both the Soviets and the Chinese throughout hostilities and until the DRV opted in favor of the Soviets after their 1975 victory in South Vietnam. (See Volume VIII for further discussion in this issue).

### E. LESSONS

The stated long-range goals of an enemy, actual or potential, and especially a communist enemy, may provide valuable clues as to the adversary's strategic, and even tactical intentions.

When an enemy has allies, their separate national goals may be widely divergent, thereby providing an opportunity for exploitation -- but only if the disparity is known to, and understood by, friendly leaders.

The leaders of any significant political-ideological movement must develop and articulate their professed or actual goals in such fashion as to harmonize with important needs and desires of their natural and potential constituencies if they are to gain widespread support and establish the base necessary for ultimate success.

Even in a communist nation, the enduring aspirations of the people and their leaders will tend to be nationalistic; in some cases the influence of a nearby major communist power may prevent overt manifestations of nationalism within a small, dependent nation, but it is doubtful that the desire for freedom, as the indigenous population perceives freedom, can be erased.

THE BDM CORPORATION

CHAPTER 1 ENDNOTES

1. Bernard B. Fall, Viet-Nam Witness (N.Y.: Frederick Praeger Publishers, 1966), p. 120. Sometimes referred to as the French-Vietminh (or Viet Minh) War.
2. The following documents refer to the Second Indochina War; the beginning date frequently differs: Southchay Vongsavanh, BG, RLA, RLG Military Operations and Activities in the Laotian Panhandle. Indochina Refugee Authored Monograph Program. Prepared for the Department of the Army, Office of Chief of Military History, by General Research Corporation, McLean, Va. February 1978, p. 9, and Marcus G. Raskin and Bernard B. Fall, eds., The Viet-Nam Reader (N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1965), p. 91, show 1956 as the beginning date for the Second Indochina War. Frances Fitzgerald, Fire in the Lake (Boston: Little, Brown and Co. 1972), p. 165, prefers 1960. U.S. Department of Defense United States-Vietnam Relations 1945-1967 (Book 2 of 12, IV. A.5. Tab 3) pp. 29-32 reflects 1959 as the year in which the Second Indochina War began. This is Book 2 of the official series popularly known as the Pentagon Papers. The Senator Gravel Edition, entitled The Pentagon Papers is a four-volume series. The New York Times published a single volume, also entitled The Pentagon Papers. Although much of the information is duplicated, none of these documents is completely subsumed by any of the other Pentagon Papers versions. The Department of Defense series will be cited hereafter as DOD-US/VN Relations Book No., Part No., Section No., Tab, and Page.
3. Whether or not the NLF was controlled by Hanoi may be argued by historians, but the authors of this volume found the extensive collection of captured documents on this subject to be persuasive. Radio Hanoi broadcast the results of the Third Congress of the Communist Lao Dong Party's Central Committee on September 5, 1960 in which Hanoi called for formation of the Front and clearly showed that the NLF was initiated by and would be controlled by the Lao Dong Party. Quoted in JUSPAO message No. 114, January 28, 1967, The quotation is from a letter of May 8, 1961 from President John F. Kennedy to President Ngo Dinh Diem.
4. Many sources reflect the willingness of key Party officials to admit errors. One such example is an article in Nhan Dan (The People), a Vietnamese-language newspaper, No. 3955, Hanoi, 28 January 1965, which mentioned that the Tenth Assembly of the Central Committee of the Lao Dong Party had discussed the errors in land reform and took corrective action.
5. The theoretical works of Truong Chinh, especially his "The Resistance Will Win" predated Giap's works and were the model followed by North Vietnam.

6. Interrogation of Le Van Thanh, Viet Cong signal platoon leader, who stated that from 1955 to 1959 these five new divisions were comprised of regroupees from Southern Viet Minh forces. In 1959 the DRV began enforcing the Military Service Law (Hanoi's draft) and by 1960 had replaced half of the Southerners with Northerners. The displaced Southerners either transferred to farms or infiltrated back to South Vietnam where they occupied command positions or filled political roles within the ranks of the staybehinds. This document is included in a set of translations of documents and interrogation reports held by the U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, Item No. 84. Hereafter reference to this category of translated captured documents or interrogation reports will cite the original document, unless it is identified in the text, and further identify the translation as DOS Historian, Item (No.).
7. The figures 5,000 to 6,000 can be found in U.S. Army Attache Situation Report, Saigon, July 1956, quoted in DOS Historian item 25, and Bernard B. Fall, "How the French Got Out of Viet-Nam", The Viet-Nam Letter, p. 88. In his book Honorable Men, (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1978) p. 142, William Colby, former Director of Central Intelligence (and CIA Deputy Chief of Station in Saigon in 1959) refers to 5,000 to 10,000 staybehind cadre and guerrillas. In Viet Cong, (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T Press, 1966) p. 5 fn., Douglas Pike finds the 10,000 figure to be probably correct. DOD-US/VN Relations, Book 2, IV.A.4 pp. 7-8 and IV.A.5. pp 16-17 settles on 5,000 armed and 3,000 political guerrillas.
8. Viet Minh Policy Paper on Post-Geneva Strategy, probably issued by the Central Committee of the Lao Dong Party to the Eastern Interzone of Nambo (South Vietnam) DOS Historian, Item 200.
9. Allan B. Cole (ed.) Conflict in Indochina and International Repurcussions: A Documentary History, 1946-1955 (N.Y.: Cornell University Press) pp. 226-228, and J. J. Zasloff. Origins of the Insurgency in South Vietnam 1954-1960: The Role of the Southern Vietminh Cadres. Rand Corp. RM 5163/2 ISA/ARPA May 1968, p. 7. Another factor to be considered in the DRV's refusal to give the International Control Commission (ICC) free access to North Vietnam to supervise any elections. For a detailed accounting of ICC activities in Indochina, see Anita Lauve Nutt Troika on Trial Vol.I September 1967, prepared under contract to Office of International Security Affairs, Department of Defense. This point was also made by another source, with the additional comment that the North Vietnamese leaders..." likely calculated that SVN would collapse after 1954."
10. King C. Chen, "Hanoi's Three Decisions and the Escalation of the Vietnam War" Political Science Quarterly, Volume 90, Number 2, Summer 1975, p. 243.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

11. Ibid.
12. The CRIMP Document. DOS Historian, Item 301, p. 9. The CRIMP Document is a 23,000-word review entitled "Experience of the South Viet-Nam Revolutionary Movement During the Past Several Years." The document, written in about 1963 by an unidentified communist cadre was captured by the U.S. 1st Infantry Division in January 1966 during Operation CRIMP in the Iron Triangle area near Saigon.
13. Ta Xuan Linh, "How Armed Struggle Began in South Viet Nam," Viet Nam Courier, No. 22, March 1974, p. 22.
14. Fall, Viet-Nam Witness, p. 24, indicates that 50,000 to 100,000 were killed. A wider spread of 50,000 to 200,000 is provided by the Office of Media Services, Bureau of Public Affairs, Department of State, in Viet-Nam Information Notes, No. 3, Revised May 1967.
15. DOD-US/VN Relations, Book 2, IV.A.5 Tab 3, p. 48.
16. Ibid.
17. Interrogation of a defector and at least two captured documents, circa 1956, describe Le Duan's eagerness to have the DRV invade South Vietnam, DOS Historian Items 18, 19, and 204. In the New York Times version of The Pentagon Papers (N.Y.: Bantam Books, 1971) p. 75, Neil Sheehan refers to Le Duan's return to Hanoi in 1957 and urging military pressure after a two-year stay in the South.
18. DOD-US/VN Relations, Book 2, IV.A.5 Tab 3, p. 46.
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20. DOS Historian, Item 301, (The CRIMP Document) p. 10.
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23. Vongsavanh, p. 38.
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34. John J. Tolson, LGen. Airmobility 1961-1971. Vietnam Studies. (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1973), pp. 1, 15-16, 20.
35. U.S. connivance in and support for the coup is treated in detail in Volume III. An authoritative and readable account is found in the New York Times version of The Pentagon Papers, pp. 191-233.
36. A talk by General Nguyen Van Vinh, Chief of Staff of the North Vietnamese High Command and Chairman of the Lao Dong Reunification Department, made before the Viet Cong Fourth Central Office (COSVN) in April 1966. (Document captured in early 1967.) DOS Historian, Item 303, p. 5.
37. Chen, p. 253.
38. Vinh talk, DOS Historian Item 313, p. 4.
39. Translation of a letter dated March 1966, presumably written by Le Duan, First Secretary of the Lao Dong Party Central Committee. Document captured in January 1967. DOS Historian, Item 302, pp. 11-12.
40. Ibid. p. 12.

# THE BDM CORPORATION

41. Vinh talk, DOS Historian, Item 303, p. 5.
42. Ibid.
43. Pike, War, Peace and the Viet Cong. pp. 111-118 and 124-127. According to Pike, Phase I of the offensive began in October 1967 and included the battles of Loc Ninh, Dak To, and Con Thien, ending in December. Phase II came in January, February and March and is more commonly known in the US as the Tet '68 offensive.
44. "The Viet-Nam Worker's Party 1963 Decision to Escalate the War in the South", 1963. DOS Historian, Item 96, p. 23.
45. "Final Phase of the Revolution at Hand," January 1968, p. 10. DOS Historian.
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## THE BDM CORPORATION

55. Ngo Quang Troung, LGen, ARVN. The Easter Offensive of 1972. Indochina Refugee Authored Monograph Program. Prepared for the Department of the Army, Office of Chief of Military History, by General Research Corporation, McLean Va., 31 August 1977. p. 8.
56. Former GVN Ambassador to the U.S., Bui Diem, pointed out that in the 1920's the name of Ho Chi Minh's "Indochinese Communist Party" (ICP) told the whole story -- Ho intended that the ICP (later the Dang Lao Dong) would control all of Indochina. BDM Interview with Ambassador Bui Diem in Washington, D.C. on June 8, 1979.
57. Interview with Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson at the BDM Corporation, September 13, 1978. Ambassador Johnson was a participant in the talks and personally observed the exchange between the key communists delegates.
58. Janos Radvanyi, Delusion and Reality (South Bend, Ind: Gateway Editions Ltd., 1978, p. 188.
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CHAPTER 2  
CHARACTER AND WILL

In turning away from two of the basic hypotheses of factional analysts--that factions would probably behave in "pro-Chinese" or "pro-Soviet" ways, and that factions could be "categorized" into opposing "pro-conquest" versus "pro-negotiations" groups--it is important to appreciate the amount of inconsistency and confusion that have accompanied this analytic approach.

John J. MacDougall 1/

Analysis of Vietnamization: North Vietnamese Leadership.

A. INTRODUCTION

The quotation above underlines the conflicting American understanding of the character and will involved in the decision-making process in North Vietnam. This confusion was directly related to the imprecise understanding of communism as an international movement. Some analysts saw key leaders as engaged in "factional struggles"; others argued that attempts to characterize such "factions" would lead to confusion. At the root of this disagreement was the absence of hard information. The published material had been carefully prepared so as to maintain the appearance of unity on the part of the collective leadership. The need for unity through collective consensus stemmed from many elements in the Vietnamese situation, but, in particular, from the clandestine character of Vietnamese politics.<sup>2/</sup> Clandestine political activity is a centuries-old tradition in Vietnam, nurtured by long periods of foreign domination, in which the penalty for political opposition to the central ruling authority could be prolonged imprisonment or death.

This chapter describes the character and will of political leadership groups in North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front. The character and will of the Vietnamese people who followed or were influenced by these leaders, and the political and military leadership at lower levels in the political hierarchy are discussed where appropriate to provide additional insights.



## THE BDM CORPORATION

In examining the character and will of the leaders of North Vietnam and of the National Liberation Front (NLF), this chapter will:

- (1) Identify the origins and formative experiences of the principal leaders, comparing their family background, education and training, associations and political development.
- (2) Examine the differences that existed among the Communist Vietnamese leadership.
- (3) Identify weaknesses that were demonstrated in the leadership group.
- (4) Identify external elements which strengthened the leaders' determination to continue fighting.

### B. IDENTIFICATION OF THE DRV LEADERS

Since 1946, when the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was declared independent by Ho Chi Minh, the Communist Party, officially called the Dang Lao Dong Viet Nam (Worker's Party of Vietnam), has dominated the political scene. The Party was more than a political constellation; it served as the government of the country, functioning as the source of law and power.<sup>3/</sup> The Party's most important and powerful body was, and remains, the Politburo. The eleven members of the Politburo shaped the policy of North Vietnam and supervised its execution. References to the "leadership" or "leaders" of North Vietnam, when made in this chapter, refer to the members of the Politburo. The North Vietnamese Politburo was the universally recognized locus of power of the Communist Vietnamese. Through the organization of the Peoples' Revolutionary Party (PRP) and NLF they extended their leadership into South Vietnam.

#### 1. Characteristics of North Vietnamese Leadership

The leadership of North Vietnam has evinced five principal characteristics:

- Stability
- Dedication to the goal of reunification of Vietnam;

## THE BDM CORPORATION

- Adherence to Marxist-Leninist principles;
- A high degree of education and training;
- Adherence to collective responsibility for decisions taken by the Politburo in accordance with the principle of democratic centralism.

What is most impressive is the stability of the Communist Vietnamese leadership. It has remained in power with only two changes (necessitated by death) for over thirty years since 1946, when the DRV was created. In contrast to other communist countries, the closest the North Vietnamese came to a purge in the Politburo was the demotion, in late 1956, of Truong Chinh, the Secretary-General of the Lao Dong Party, for "excesses" committed during the 1953-1956 Land Reform Campaign.<sup>4/</sup> But Truong Chinh remained a member of the Politburo and, since 1960, has been ranked third or even second within the Politburo by Western analysts.<sup>5/</sup>

An advantage which this stability of leadership conferred on the North Vietnamese was the opportunity to benefit from shared experience at the highest level of authority. The development of a sharp, detailed corporate memory was possible, and an enormous amount of time was devoted, at all levels of leadership, to examining past policies and actions in order to correct mistakes and improve future performance.

The presence of the remaining characteristics listed above can be attributed to the historical evolution of the Indochinese Communist Party (1930-1951) and its successor, the Lao Dong Party (formed in 1951). Both parties were inspired and shaped by the forceful leadership of Ho Chi Minh; most of the leaders on the Politburo had served with him in the Indochinese Communist Party. The political orientation of these leaders appears to have been as much Vietnamese nationalist as communist.<sup>6/</sup> The Politburo leaders were all active fighters for Vietnam's independence from France.

Truong Chinh, Pham Van Dong and Vo Nguyen Giap had been intimately associated with Ho since 1941.<sup>7/</sup> Although Le Duan did not share in this close working relationship with Ho, he had been a member of the party's Central Committee since at least 1939, was a leader of the southern resistance in 1946-1952 and again in 1956, before being selected by Ho as the First Secretary of the Lao Dong Party in 1959.<sup>8/</sup>

## THE BDM CORPORATION

By 1960, when the National Liberation Front was formed, Ho Chi Minh had already instituted a collective leadership in North Vietnam by dividing the bases of power in the government among his close associates on the Politburo.<sup>9/</sup> Le Duan was given control over the party; Truong Chinh control over the National Assembly and de facto control over the Viet Nam Fatherland Front; and Pham Van Dong was assigned control over the government machinery.<sup>10/</sup> In 1975 it was still the triumvirate of Le Duan, Truong Chinh, and Pham Van Dong which controlled the party and state government. This was a considerable achievement in terms of continuity of the leadership at the highest level.

The Vietnamese Communist Party elite has proven to be the most durable leadership group in the communist world, having ruled North Vietnam for three decades. The revolutionary leaders of the early Viet Minh, with only minor exceptions, became the rulers of the new Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Their balance of nationalism and ideological fervor with tight organizational control appears to have been a major reason for their successful performance.

The men named in 1960 as members of the Politburo formed a power elite that held power throughout the entire Vietnam War. Except for two members who died, Ho Chi Minh and Nguyen Chi Thanh, the structure went unchanged for twenty-five years. Thus, continuity can be claimed to be a major characteristic of North Vietnam's leadership.

A second characteristic was similar class background of the top communist leaders. The majority were not even from the middle class, but rather came from mandarin, gentry or intellectual/professional backgrounds. Ho Chi Minh came from a prominent family distantly related to Vietnamese royalty; Pham Van Dong came from a mandarin family; and Truong Chinh and Vo Nguyen Giap received far more education than most Vietnamese.<sup>11/</sup> The majority of the members of the Politburo had some formal education, and Pham Van Dong and General Giap had received university level training. Several leaders were educated in France, and others went to China or Hong Kong for their education. In addition, a number of the leaders received communist training in France, the Soviet

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Union, and Communist China. Among the members of the Politburo who received communist training in Moscow were Ho, Le Duan, and Hoang Van Huan (a specialist on foreign affairs). Truong Chinh and Nguyen Chi Thanh (who commanded the communist forces in the South until his death in 1967) received communist training in the Soviet Union and China.<sup>12/</sup>

The leaders of North Vietnam were remarkably similar in formative background and outlook. All were members of the Communist Party at an early age, and as a group they emerged as a tightly-knit leadership. Although they were probably affected by personal rivalries and ambitions, they maintained remarkable unity and common dedication to the independence, unification, and modernization of Vietnam. They were revolutionary leaders with determined character and will that reflected their fierce nationalism and belief in communist ideology as the scientific guide to the way in which independence should be achieved in Vietnam. Brief biographical summaries of DRV leaders illustrate these common characteristics.

### 2. Key DRV Leaders

#### a. Ho Chi Minh

Ho was born in 1890 in Nghe An Province, Central Vietnam. Information about his life tends to be sketchy and contradictory, partly in keeping with the Vietnamese tradition of clandestine politics.<sup>13/</sup> It is known that Ho's education and training included the study of communism in Paris, Moscow and later in Peking in the 1920's. He became an agent of the Comintern and was chiefly responsible for the creation of the Indochinese Communist Party in 1930. The most important factor in shaping the character and will of the man was his intense nationalist zeal for an independent Vietnam, free of foreign domination. He argued forcefully but unsuccessfully for the independence and self-determination of the Vietnamese people at the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919. He dedicated his life to the fulfillment of that goal.

As it became increasingly clear that an independent and unified Vietnam would not emerge without political and armed struggle, he became a violent, impassioned revolutionary, actively seeking the help of like-minded, nationalist Vietnamese to evict the existing foreign

occupation forces--the French, Chinese, British, Japanese, and Americans--and subvert the Government of South Vietnam, which he and the other members of the Politburo regarded as an American puppet regime.

Ho Chi Minh was a "first among equals" in the Politburo until his death in September 1969. There were rumors of poor health and senility several years earlier, which would imply that the leadership of North Vietnam fell increasingly to a group of other individuals in the Politburo shortly before his death.

b. Le Duan

Le Duan was second to Ho Chi Minh in the power hierarchy of the Politburo. According to one student of North Vietnamese politics, Phan Thien Chau, Le Duan became "first among equals" after Ho's death.

Le Duan was a founding member of the Indochinese Communist Party, but little is known about his background in part because he concerned himself primarily with sub rosa communist activity and internal party organizational matters. Le Duan was born in 1908 in Quang Tri Province, North Vietnam. He was a leader of the Viet Minh forces in southern Vietnam until 1951, when he was recalled to North Vietnam and evaded all publicity until the end of the war. When Ho removed Truong Chinh as Secretary-General of the Lao Dong Party, Le Duan performed those duties, though he was not formally appointed to the post until 1960 when his title was changed to First Secretary.<sup>14/</sup>

c. Truong Chinh

Truong Chinh was born in 1908 in Nam Dinh Province, North Vietnam.<sup>15/</sup> Truong Chinh, like Ho Chi Minh and Le Duan, was a founding member of the Indochinese Communist Party, although he did not rise to the top ranks of the party until 1941. Truong Chinh became familiar with Chinese communism through close contact with the many Chinese who assisted the resistance movement in Vietnam, and by reading Chinese political material which had been translated into Vietnamese. He was impressed enough with Truong Chinh's ability to appoint him Secretary-General of the Party. From 1953 to 1956, Truong Chinh presided over the notorious agrarian reform campaign to collectivize agriculture in North Vietnam,

## THE BDM CORPORATION

based on Chinese Communist methods and supervised by Chinese cadres. The purpose of the Land Reform programs, which occurred in two phases, was the liquidation of the landowning class and the subsequent establishment of a "dictatorship of the proletariat", which meant communal ownership of land and Communist Party control of local government.<sup>16/</sup> Initially, land was redistributed to the poor peasants. But within months, all of their private property was collectivized, which meant that the peasants owned no land of their own.

In the first phase of the Land Reform from 1953 to 1954, money, jewels and other precious objects were confiscated from the wealthy landlords: in the second phase, from 1954 to 1956, rich and middle-level peasants were forced to give up their land, houses, furniture and personal belongings.<sup>17/</sup> Landlords were killed by the thousands. M. Gerard Tangas, a French professor who remained in Hanoi up to 1959, claimed: "this indescribable butchery resulted in one hundred thousand deaths."<sup>18/</sup> The communists' maxim during the land reform was reportedly, "It is better to kill ten innocent people than to let one enemy escape."<sup>19/</sup> The reforms were implemented by North Vietnamese Communist Party cadres who had been secretly trained in China and who came to each village disguised as peasants.<sup>20/</sup> Eventually, outraged peasants rebelled throughout the country and even the loyalty of the militia was in doubt.<sup>21/</sup> Fearful of losing political control over North Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh forced Truong Chinh to resign his post of Secretary-General and to engage in public self-criticism.<sup>22/</sup>

The aggressive land-reform campaign exposed the ruthless character of the North Vietnamese leaders in their pursuit of goals--in this instance, the communist goal of collectivizing North Vietnamese agriculture. But, equally, Ho's subsequent action against Truong Chinh demonstrated the willingness of the North Vietnamese leadership to correct past errors and corrupt practices. It also demonstrated the flexibility and responsiveness of the leadership to political realities in the North, though admittedly out of necessity rather than design.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Truong Chinh's subsequent return to power was assured by the support he received from the Chinese, whose military and economic assistance North Vietnam courted. In 1960 he was placed in control of the National Assembly and the Vietnam Fatherland Front by Ho Chi Minh.

d. Pham Van Dong

Pham Van Dong was born in 1908 in Quang Ngai Province, Central Vietnam.<sup>23/</sup> Dong was a long-time associate of Ho Chi Minh. He was first introduced to communism by Ho in 1925. A former schoolteacher and journalist. Pham Van Dong played a prominent part in directing the party affairs of the Indochinese Communist Party in its early years, though after 1945 he focused on governmental matters and administration rather than on party activities. Pham is believed to have maintained outwardly friendly relations with all the other leaders on the Politburo, and was considered valuable for his diplomatic skills at bringing together other Politburo members who engaged more frequently in disputes over policy.<sup>24/</sup> Pham had a very balanced temperament, which was useful in a Politburo with characters as volatile as those of Truong Chinh and Vo Nguyen Giap.

e. Vo Nguyen Giap

Vo Nguyen Giap was born in 1912 in Quang Binh Province, North Vietnam. Giap became a history teacher after graduating in law from Hanoi University. It was Giap's study of history in his early life which gave him an abiding pride in Vietnam and the Vietnamese people, coupled with a deep resentment of his country's past suffering at the hands of the Chinese and, later, the French.<sup>25/</sup> Giap's resentment of the French turned to intense hatred when his wife and her sister died in a French prison after their arrest for political activities. During Ho's visit to France in 1956, Giap governed North Vietnam. As Commander of the Vietnamese People's Army, Giap's direction of the war against the French and his victory at Dien Bien Phu made him a hero in Vietnam, second in prestige and popularity only to Ho Chi Minh. But this popularity also seems to have produced opponents in the Politburo, who were determined to insure that he did not translate his popularity into lasting political power. The most formidable of these opponents appears to have been Truong Chinh.<sup>26/</sup>

3. Leadership of the NLF

The Communist Vietnamese leadership was faced with a particularly paradoxical challenge in assigning leadership roles in South Vietnam for the National Liberation Front (NLF), formed in 1960, and the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP), formed in 1962. On the one hand the DRV leaders sought to exercise close control of those groups and at the same time they were required by the force of their own propaganda posture to promote the organizations as independent and fully autonomous. The solution to the dilemma was twofold. First, dependable South Vietnamese were advanced to leadership positions. Trusted individuals were assigned key posts and from all documentary evidence remained loyal to the dictates of the Lao Dong Party in those capacities.<sup>27/</sup> Second, the identity of NLF and PRP leaders, like the organizational lines of those groups themselves, remained indistinct. An example of this kind of purposeful imprecision may be found in examining the identity of Tran Nam Trung. His name means "Loyal Southerner" and there was a running argument for years whether Tran Nam Trung was a person or a position. Some assert that it was a position occupied by no less than three individuals. In another instance, there was the question as to whether Trung and General Tran Van Tra were not one and the same.<sup>28/</sup> That particular argument was settled when they both appeared in Saigon at the end of the war.<sup>29/</sup> Biographical sketches of some of the key alleged leaders of the communist forces in the South are presented below.

a. Tran Nam Trung

Tran Nam Trung was an important but little-known leader in the National Liberation Front.<sup>30/</sup> He was born in 1913 in Quang Ngai province, Central Vietnam. His official biography states that he served as a militant revolutionary throughout the 1930's and 1940's, was jailed several times by the French, and served in the Viet Minh. He was not listed on any rosters of the NLF or PRP before 1964. Police officials for the South Vietnamese Government maintained that Tran Nam Trung spent the 1954-1963 period in the DRV as an officer in the North Vietnamese army. He later became a high-ranking military officer in the South, handling military affairs of the People's Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF) and performing liaison work with the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN).<sup>31/</sup>



## THE BDM CORPORATION

As the war escalated, the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) took control of the fighting, and Pham Hung assumed direction of military operations through the COSVN organizational structure. In that role he was directly responsible to Hanoi.32/

b. Pham Hung

Pham Hung was born in 1912 in Vinh Long province, South Vietnam.33/ He was a founder of the Indochinese Communist Party. Pham Hung was imprisoned by the French from 1931 to 1945 for complicity in the death of a French official. Upon release from prison, he began to rise both in the Party and in the government. During the Indochina War with the French, Pham served directly under Le Duan and Le Duc Tho, and, in 1951, became a member of the first Central Committee of the Lao Dong Party. In 1955, he was expelled from Saigon for allegedly using his diplomatic functions to promote political subversion. He returned to Hanoi. In 1958, he became deputy prime minister and, in 1961, served as acting prime minister in the North Vietnamese Government. In 1967, Pham replaced General Nguyen Chi Thanh as Commanding Officer in South Vietnam and he remained in that position until the final victory of the Communist forces in 1975.34/

c. Vo Chi Cong

Vo Chi Cong was born in 1912 in Quang Nam province, Central Vietnam.35/ He began clandestine revolutionary activity in South Vietnam in 1930, opposing the French throughout the 1930's and upon their return after World War II. He fought the Japanese during their occupation of Indochina. Unlike most Southerners, Vo Chi Cong stood for militancy in revolution. After joining the NLF in 1960, he organized the People's Revolutionary Party. He also served as vice-chairman and security chief of the NLF.

### C. DEBATES WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP

Chapter 1 examined the range of strategies open to the Communist Vietnamese leadership for accomplishing their purposes. There is only fragmentary evidence concerning the strategy debates conducted by the DRV leadership. Available evidence indicates that important Politburo debates

## THE BDM CORPORATION

focused on the concepts of protracted warfare and negotiated settlement. Despite the public appearance of unity in strategic thinking, there were three "points of view" within the Politburo on these subjects, though no "factions" can be positively identified since individual members of the Politburo changed their views at various times. The first point of view emphasized the use of regular military force, applied as quickly as possible in South Vietnam, in order to achieve unification. The most consistent advocates of this position were General Giap, General Van Tien Dung, Pham Van Dong, Ho Chi Minh, and Le Duan.<sup>36/</sup> They were joined by elements within the National Liberation Front, probably including Tran Nam Trung and Vo Chi Cong. Negotiations for tactical objectives were considered useful if they reduced the enemy's military advantages in firepower or manpower. Negotiations at the strategic level without victory on the battlefield were considered dangerous and unacceptable.<sup>37/</sup>

At the other end of the spectrum was a point of view which supported the "negotiated settlement strategy." Those expressing this point of view believed that protracted warfare could exhaust resources which should be spent on building socialism. It was argued that unification could only be achieved if socialism were first built up in the North.

The third viewpoint advocated revolutionary or neo-revolutionary warfare. The most consistent adherents of this opinion were Truong Chinh, Le Thanh Nghi, Pham Hung, possibly Le Duc Tho, and the few remaining NLF cadres.<sup>38/</sup> Truong Chinh was the leading strategic theoretician in this group, arguing strongly in favor of protracted conflict. Like the regular force strategists, the members of this school believed that the main burden of the struggle in South Vietnam must be borne by the military forces. However, they saw more value in the use of negotiations than the regular force strategists, and argued for a close integration of guerrilla warfare with diplomacy and the political struggle in the South.<sup>39/</sup>

The major policy debates within Hanoi were focused on how much emphasis should be accorded to political versus military forms of struggle (with the former including negotiations) and on which military form of struggle (regular-force or revolutionary-guerrilla warfare) would bring unification. The debates were not simply over protracted warfare versus

## THE BDM CORPORATION

negotiations. Negotiations could, in fact, be used in a tactical sense to support an overall strategy of protracted conflict.

There was no consistent support in the Politburo for negotiations, unless it could be shown that such negotiations would lead to the unification of Vietnam. The North Vietnamese leaders remembered the disastrous results they had experienced on unification during the 1954 negotiations in Geneva. They did not want to repeat that disaster. The abandonment in 1974-1975 of the negotiated settlement strategy in favor of a regular force strategy culminated in the collapse and defeat of the South Vietnamese forces and the unification of Vietnam demonstrated the effectiveness of their strategy and the strength of their will. As Pike explained in 1969,

Over the years the DRV leaders have evaluated each proposal for a political settlement--whether it came from U Thant, Pope Paul, or the U.S. State Department--in terms of their fundamental objective, namely unification. In effect, Ho Chi Minh has asked himself of each proposal or offer: Will it move us, even in a small way, toward unification? If the answer was yes, then he was interested, If the answer was no, as it was in most cases, then he was not interested.<sup>40/</sup>

### D. ELEMENTS SUPPORTING THE TENACITY OF COMMUNIST VIETNAMESE LEADERS

#### 1. The Correct Solution

The leaders of North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front persevered during the Vietnam conflict in the face of enormous difficulties. At the heart of North Vietnamese tenacity was the belief of its leadership in the justice and inevitable attainment of the goal of unification under Lao Dong control.<sup>41/</sup> This did not imply that victory would come without hard work. But there was a belief that for every problem a "correct" solution could be found by the creative application of Marxist-Leninist theory. Victory belonged to the organization that correctly understood this theory and applied it appropriately to the situation at hand.

Studies of the morale and will of the enemy, conducted by Konrad Kellen, indicate that the leadership in Hanoi saw the American attitude towards the war as lacking an entire dimension: "it deals seriously only

with weapons and strategies."42/ The leadership in Hanoi, on the other hand, appreciated the moral and political dimension. In Giap's words:

Our military science does not treat lightly the material and technical factors, but it pays great attention to the moral and political factors...Our military science not only pays attention to developing the strength of each force, of each form of struggle, and of each separate combat form, but it also pays great attention to developing the combined strength of forces and forms of struggle which are closely related to each other.43/

2. Understanding the Contradictions

The central concept in Marxist-Leninist theory is "dialectical materialism", which posits the existence of certain inevitable contradictions in capitalist society. These contradictions are inherent inconsistencies that work against the capitalists' ability to achieve their goals. The North Vietnamese leadership saw five main sets of contradictions which, if properly exploited, would eventually force the United States to withdraw from Vietnam.44/

a. Contradictions in the Imperialist Camp

The Vietnamese Communists noted the lack of cohesion in the Western camp, particularly in the multilateral organizations such as NATO, SEATO, and CENTO. They believed that the "imperialist blocs" would disintegrate and leave the US isolated and less able or willing to carry on the war.

b. Contradictions of the US Involvement

The Vietnamese Communists indoctrinated their people and military forces with the belief that they were fighting a "just war" while the US and GVN were fighting an "unjust war." The US effort was pictured as neo-colonialist. American technological superiority was considered to be a contradiction because the DRV viewed US forces as tactically inferior in terms of foot mobility and knowledge of the terrain. The DRV leadership considered that US bombing in the North was a desperation effort, and it tended to increase cohesion in the socialist bloc.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### c. Contradictions in American Society

The DRV leaders believed that the American people wanted peace and did not support the war. The communists recognized that the American public had a psychological aversion to protracted war. They further anticipated that the US government would be unable to sustain the war indefinitely as its cost in lives and money increased.

### d. Contradictions in US and GVN Relations

The GVN had been unable to consolidate a viable power base and was looked on as a lackey of the Americans. The massive US presence and foreign aid, without which the GVN could not survive, led to widespread corruption and economic dislocation within South Vietnam. That contradiction was expected to result in the collapse of the GVN and the ultimate withdrawal of US forces.

### e. Contradictions Between the US - GVN and the People

While recognizing that the US posed a major immediate military threat to them, the DRV leaders believed that American presence and apparent control of the GVN antagonized the people of South Vietnam.

## 3. Morale and Will of the Soldiers

The capacity of the leaderships of North Vietnam and of the NLF to sustain a high level of morale and motivation among their soldiers appears to have been a function of several factors. A senior South Vietnamese general concluded that the frugal existence and more difficult life made the northern people "harder." He described them in these terms:

Used to the perversity of nature and the frequent privation of insufficient food, the North Vietnamese have a quite different attitude toward life than we do in the South. They work harder, endure more, and know less of creature comfort. It is no wonder that they were able to fight so courageously and continuously over so many years while living an austere and cheerless existence.<sup>45/</sup>

Communist indoctrination played a major role in conditioning soldiers for the long, difficult struggle. The indoctrination program included an emphasis on criticism and self-improvement at all levels of the military and political organization, a systematic elimination of concerns over hardship and fear of death, and the soldiers' own belief in the

## THE BDM CORPORATION

justice and inevitable victory of the cause for which they were fighting.46/ There were almost daily criticism and self-improvement sessions, at which the soldiers' worries and guilt feelings were exposed and discussed.47/ This amounted to a system of group therapy that lent enormous resilience to the soldiers' morale. According to Kellen, who interviewed many prisoners and defectors for the RAND Corporation's "Motivation and Morale Project" in the mid-1960's:

Resilience, rather than more strength, describes the morale of the NVA and VC forces. The NVA soldiers have indeed learned to "bend like bamboo in the wind," as they like to put it.48/

The cadres appear to have been tireless in their attempts to root out fears of death among the soldiers, and to instill a fervent belief in their cause. Captured documents reveal notations by cadres to the effect that "he still fears death", and "I was still afraid of death," which indicate the importance attached to eradicating such fears.49/ NVA soldiers also revealed in interrogations that they saw themselves as fighting "defensively". According to Kellen:

There seems to be no doubt in the mind of NVA soldiers that the Americans are entirely at fault in this war and must be made to leave the country whatever it costs and however long it takes. To our objection that they invaded the South, they reply that North and South are one country, inhabited by one people, so how could they invade it? That is always the most important element in an army's high morale.50/

In spite of the real accomplishments of the cadres in developing martial enthusiasm among the communist forces fighting in the South, captured NLF documents, including diaries, personal letters and district memos indicate that will and morale were major problems especially when the communist forces were under US and ARVN pressure. The 23,000-word CRIMP document, "Experience of the South Vietnam Revolutionary Movement During the Past Several Years," written in about 1963 and captured in 1966, includes a letter that notes a growing "skepticism and non-confidence in

## THE BDM CORPORATION

the "orientation of the struggle" in 1963.<sup>51/</sup> A March 1966 district document urges both civilian and military groups neither to give in to fear of a protracted war nor to compare man-made capacities. Instead, these groups were to concentrate on attacking US and South Vietnamese holdings at every point. The statement urges creative attack and counterattack to frustrate all enemy movement.<sup>52/</sup>

As American involvement in the war increased, pressure on the communist soldiers and guerrillas increased. Large ground attacks in addition to constant bombing caused attrition of unit members and leaders. US military successes at times severely weakened confidence in the Party and belief in ultimate victory.

A captured communist decision directive categorizes most of the problems as passive disobedience; problems that were listed included soldiers failing to capitalize on opportunity, excessive complaints, and bureaucratic rather than sincere responses to cadre training.<sup>53/</sup> The memo speaks of a lack of a "sense of political responsibility". Other problems included excessive independence of Party members; and failing to put the needs of the Revolution before their own desires. Severe behavioral problems included "licentiousness" and "negligent self-critique."

A National Front for Liberation of SVN circular captured in October 1968 spelled out the case for weakened morale in much sharper language. The "regrettable errors" included:

Their unit members shirked combat activity, feared death and urged each other to escape (in large groups) from their units and go to Khe Sanh, to Tay Ninh, or other units (DK13 unit, for instance). Such cases were usually premeditated; the soldiers made secret preparations (plotting among themselves, reserving food, even trying to take weapons with them...). The commanders, if not alert, would never discover these plans to escape. When captured by the enemy (the members of these units) were unable to suffer tortures and supplied information to the enemy. In the latter cases, the faulty persons were considered traitors for they had committed a tremendous crime in that they provided information to the enemy who took advantage of it to sabotage our agencies and kill our compatriots and dear comrades.<sup>54/</sup>

## THE BDM CORPORATION

The problems are the problems of individuals or small groups of soldiers less loyal to the Party. For these farmers cum soldiers, the Revolutionary cause had ceased to be an absolute necessity. To this type of soldier, enemies looked like friends, Party propaganda looked doubtful, and the cost seemed too high for uncertain, impersonal outcome.

The circular goes on to blame this problem on ineffective leadership. Mass indoctrination, not programmed for the individual nor sustained within the unit, often led to poor performances and desertion. Following the Tet offensive; when massive numbers of field leaders were killed, large groups of soldiers were left without the consistent role-model they had been trained to follow. The field leaders were urged to:

Playdown the counter activities of the enemy's "psywar" scheme; counter the enemy's propaganda activities; and at the same time condemn the erroneous ideology of all soldiers ('loving to live and fearing to die') which leads them toward bad actions.55/

Advice to field leaders on the issue of strengthening their soldiers' will and morale was extensive. Indoctrination was the key. The soldier was to be drilled in the following areas: 1) Party strategy 2) ultimate victory 3) investment (fighting) for the future 4) unit pride and responsibility 5) class bigotry 6) goals of foreign oppression and 7) gallantry - to maintain silence if caught, at all costs.56/

In addition to these objectives of indoctrination, cadre commanders were specifically directed to train the troops to accept the realities of protracted war. Methods such as setting and meeting constant short-term objectives were used to encourage high morale within the unit. The Open Arms ("Chieu Hoi") program was also to be degraded as vicious enemy propaganda at every instance.57/

Morale problems among communist forces were indicated by increasing numbers of defections.

In April 1969 the effects of an intensified "Chieu Hoi" program were clearly being felt by the communists. One captured document states that problems in liberated areas were increasingly severe as the growing number of defectors could move about without restriction while maintaining



contact with friends and family. This "leave without authorization" caused the amount of weapons available in civilian communities to grow, which, in turn, substantially increased crime. All of which lessened the reduction of revolutionary bonds.58/

The cadre attempted to deal with the deserters. Those that they were able to find, however, often proved resistant to further indoctrination.

Due to fear of hardships, sacrifice, air and artillery fire, and protracted war, and the fear of dying without seeing their loved ones, they resolutely refused to join the army.59/

Because of the attrition suffered by the PLAF in the militarily abortive 1968 Tet Offensive and the GVN's success in the Vietnamization campaign, the communist leaderships increasingly had to rely on units of the North Vietnamese Army, the PAVN. Those units were better disciplined, trained, and equipped than their PLAF counterparts. Unlike the PLAF, the PAVN had not sustained particularly heavy casualties in the Tet Offensive. The combination of the discipline and the morale of those soldiers was one of the key elements in the defeat of the ARVN in 1975.

#### 4. Morale and Will of the North Vietnamese People

An additional factor which contributed to the perseverance of the leadership of North Vietnam was its sustained support from well-organized, carefully indoctrinated North Vietnamese people. Control of propaganda organs allowed the DRV leadership to encourage the North Vietnamese population to believe that victory was inevitable. Most of the population, particularly after the initiation of the American bombing of North Vietnam, regarded the United States as the aggressor that had to be defeated. This sentiment helps to explain why the concept of protracted conflict was not totally discouraging to the North Vietnamese. According to Kellen, "...to the extent that we know, the soldiers and people are resigned to fighting on as long as it takes against the Americans, due to their deep-seated view that the war is purely defensive."60/ As to whether alternative approaches

## THE BDM CORPORATION

in psychological warfare by the United States could have altered such a view, Kellen argues,

From the interrogations at hand, that would appear next to impossible; neither the psychological makeup of the NVA forces nor of the people in North Vietnam show any psywar vulnerabilities in the ordinary sense, i.e., while they do of course show the toll taken by the hardships inflicted upon them, they do not reveal any susceptibility to alternate appeals.61/

The contradictions believed to exist on the American side, the communist perception of the just nature of the North Vietnamese and NLF cause, and the high morale, motivation, and support of the North Vietnamese people and North Vietnamese and NLF soldiers, appear to have combined as specific elements which strengthened the will of the communist leadership to persevere in the Vietnam war.

### F. ANALYTICAL SUMMARY: INSIGHTS

The character and determination of the Lao Dong leaders in North and South Vietnam were shaped by their common experience and philosophy and matured over an extended period. They proved they were not puppets of either the Soviet or Chinese Communists, contrary to early assessments by some Western analysts.62/ Instead, Ho Chi Minh and his lieutenants demonstrated inflexible determination to achieve their agreed-upon nationalist goals.

The Vietnamese Communists established a leadership system that largely overcame the Vietnamese trait of internecine conflict. They motivated the peasants to support the central government, successfully overcoming the traditional Vietnamese loyalties to family and village that otherwise might have fractionalized their society, as it continued to divide the South. The Vietnamese peasants in the North and the Revolutionaries in the South were convinced that theirs was a "Just Cause," that the GVN was a puppet of the Americans, and that the latter were colonialists like the French had been.

DRV's Lao Dong Party leadership system provided continuity of leadership through three decades of struggle and survived the death of Ho Chi Minh without any apparent divisiveness.

The DRV/NLF leaders clearly identified their goals and unquestionably appreciated the costs involved in achieving those goals. They demonstrated their strength and determination by their implacable efforts to unify Vietnam in the face of great odds. Until too late, some US leaders seriously underestimated those characteristics, and this sometimes developed ineffective -- and often counter-productive -- policies and strategies. It was assumed, for example, that the United States could coerce the leadership of North Vietnam into abandoning its political and military struggle in South Vietnam by gradually escalating the conflict, militarily, until a breaking point was reached in the North Vietnamese leadership, at which point the leadership would sue for peace on US terms. The fiercely nationalist character of the revolutionaries who comprised the leadership, and their exceptional ability to organize and discipline their followers in the face of massive bombardment and protracted warfare, were underestimated by President Johnson and his advisers when they formulated and implemented the strategy of gradual military escalation.

Indeed, the North Vietnamese leadership believed that the United States, not North Vietnam, would reach a breaking point owing to the inherent contradictions in the "imperialist camp" and in the society of the United States. The course of events after the 1968 Tet Offensive supports the North Vietnamese interpretation; despite having inflicted a military defeat on the communist forces, American support for the war eroded precipitately, and in 1969 the US withdrawal began.

The US and GVN failed to compel the DRV to alter or modify its long-range goal of unification; the national survival of the DRV was never seriously threatened.<sup>63/</sup> The US failed to block the massive and increasingly sophisticated support provided to the DRV by the USSR and PRC. The civilian population of North Vietnam, as a whole, was never turned against its leaders, nor was their support of the war ever seriously eroded by US and GVN actions. Because of these factors and because the DRV leadership

## THE BDM CORPORATION

had prepared themselves and their people for a protracted struggle "in a just cause," the long-range goal of the Dang Lao Dong did not change -- and it appears to have been achieved.

### F. LESSONS

The character of a nation's people can be evaluated by studying and analyzing the history, society, politics, and leadership of that nation. Without this knowledge, strategies and political "signals" directed against an enemy are likely to be ineffective or even counterproductive.

The will of a people to resist an enemy and the ability to endure prolonged hardship and danger have a direct relationship to their perception of the justice of their cause and confidence in their leaders.

To destroy a people's will to resist requires that one or more of the following be accomplished:

- Threaten their national survival. This is construed to mean political and economic defeat as well as military defeat.
- Destroy their confidence in the "justice" of their cause and/or the quality and effectiveness of their leaders.
- Demonstrate the improbability of their achieving their objectives, assuming that this capability exists.

CHAPTER 2 - ENDNOTES

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## THE BDM CORPORATION

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17. Ibid, pp. 163-166.
18. Gerard Tongas L'enfer communiste du Nord Vietnam (Les Nouvelles Editions Debrass, Paris, 1960), p. 222, cited in Hoang Van Chi, op. cit., p. 166.
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27. COSVN Training Bulletin written in 1962 and captured in 1963. U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, Item 38 and "Working Paper on the North Vietnamese Role in the War in South Vietnam" Prepared by the U.S. Department of State, 1966. (Office of the Historian).

## THE BDM CORPORATION

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42. Konrad Kellen, "1971 and Beyond: The View From Hanoi," Indochina In Conflict: A Political Assessment ed. Joseph J. Zasloff and Allan E. Goodman (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Co., 1972), p. 102.
43. Vo Nguyen Giap, "The Party's Military Line is the Ever Victorious Banner of People's War in Our Country." Nhan Dan and Quan Doi Nhan Dan, 14-17 December 1969 (FBIS No. 31, 13 February 1970, supp, 5) cited in Kellen, op. cit.
44. The discussion of the five contradictions is based on Gurtov, "Hanoi on War and Peace" pp. 53-55 and Kellen, "1971 and Beyond: The View From Hanoi," pp. 101-102.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

45. Tran Van Don, Our Endless War (San Rafael, Calif: Presidio Press, 1978), p. 6. General Tran Van Don was one of the prime movers in organizing the November 1963 coup that overthrew President Diem.
46. Konrad Kellen, A View of the VC: Elements of Cohesion in the Enemy Camp (declassified) (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, October 1967), passim, based on interrogations of 86 prisoners and 85 defectors. Also John Paul Vann, an AID official and retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel, addressed a small audience of academicians at the University of Denver in October 1965 (sponsored by Dr. Vincent Davis). Vann stated that in over 200 interrogations of Chieu Hoi (ralliers) he had never found one who had rallied for a positive reason, i.e., to join the GVN and to fight the communists. They gave as their reasons fear of bombing and artillery, low VC pay, and separation from families and hardship. Vann's remarks were tape recorded by Professor Vincent Davis. The tapes were made available to BDM for purposes of this study.
47. Kellen, "1971 and Beyond," pp. 103-104. Also see Kellen, A view of the VC, passim.
48. Kellen, "1971 and Beyond," p. 104.
49. Ibid., p. 105. Similar concern is reflected in a captured document translated in U.S. Department of State, Viet Nam, Documents and Research Notes, "On Political and Ideological Indoctrination Against Desertion and Surrender," Document No. 46, October 1968.
50. Kellen, A View of the VC, p. 105.
51. The CRIMP Document, DOS Historian, Item 301, p. 2. See Endnote 11, Chapter 1 for elaboration.
52. Translation of a letter dated March 1966, presumably written by Le Duan, First Secretary of the Lao Dong Party Central Committee. Document captured in January 1967. DOS Historian, Item 302, p. 22.
53. Translation of a document captured by elements of III Marine Amphibious Force on July 20, 1966 in Quang Tri Province. DOS Historian, Item 66, p. 3.
54. National Front for Liberation of SVN, Doan Dong Nai Secret Circular of October 1968, "On Political and Ideological Indoctrination Against Desertion and Surrender," p. 3 in DOS Historian, Documents and Research Notes, Document No. 46, October 1968.
55. Ibid., p. 4.
56. Ibid., pp. 4-5.



## THE BDM CORPORATION

57. COSVN Directive #271/T3-1 (Flash) April 1969 DOS Historian, Documents and Research Notes, Document No. 55, A COSVN Directive for Eliminating Contacts with Puppet Personnel and Other "Complex Problems."
58. Ibid.
59. COSVN Unit H 207 "Report the Status of Deserters" dated April 1969. DOS Historian, Document and Research Notes, Document No. 56.
60. Kellen, "1971 and Beyond:" p. 108.
61. Ibid.
62. Another source commented that many analysts never held the simplistic view that the DRV leaders were puppets of either the USSR or the PRC, but that the analysts holding contrary views were ignored, particularly during the early period. The tendency by senior officials to self-delusion in this area squares with perceptive comments made during a BDM Senior Review Panel meeting. Former Assistant Secretary of State Thomas L. Hughes referred to the inability "to sell" the idea that a puny nation like North Vietnam could stand up to the US. There had to be a major enemy. The USSR, and more particularly the PRC, conveniently provided the image of that major enemy. BDM Senior Review Panel Meeting, February 14, 1979. Tape No. 6.
63. In a letter to The BDM Corporation, dated June 21, 1979, General Fred C. Weyand, US Army (Ret) and former COMUSMACV and later Chief of Staff of the Army, made the following comment:

As for lessons learned, I've concluded that the fatal flaw in our strategy was in failing to threaten the survival of the enemy and his system.

Some may argue that the Christmas bombing in 1972, "Linebacker II," seriously threatened the DRV's survival. In essence, perhaps it did, but by that point it was clear to the DRV leadership that the principal goal of the US was no longer to ensure a "free, viable, and independent South Vietnam," but rather to recover its prisoners and extricate its combat forces from RVN. The air campaign was designed to punish the DRV and force its hand.

Henry Kissinger provides selected insights into this aspect of the war in his White House Years (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), pp. 1452-1468.

CHAPTER 3  
ORGANIZATION OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM (DRV)  
AND THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (NLF)

The Revolutionary Organization is the highest one of the population; it aims at concentrating those people who are interested in the Revolution, and have a spirit of union with other people in their surroundings in order to collectively fight against the enemy and to resolutely overthrow the enemy. The people in this organization are considered as a force which conducts a daily struggle against the enemy with the various forms of a higher level of the Revolution; moreover, it's a key-force constituted by the people of the legal and semi-legal organizations.

People's Revolutionary Party Document<sup>1</sup>/

The battleground of Vietnam was the scene of confrontation between two, significantly different political philosophies. The Vietnamese Communist leadership saw their military and political operations as inextricably linked; for a number of years, the United States, operating within its historic traditions, saw political and military operations as separate, compartmented aspects of the Vietnam problem. The American approach was the product of a functional perspective that emphasized specialization and division-of-labor; the Vietnamese Communist approach was born of a political revolutionary perspective that took account of the peasant background of Vietnamese society, limitations in skills, and experience developed through several generations of conflict. While Vietnam represented the longest period of warfare in American experience, it was brief in comparison to the communist involvement in the conflict, which dated from the founding of the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) in 1930. By virtue of their Party organization, careful preparation, excellent timing, exploitation of the national united front, and possession of a firm resistance base, the Viet Minh took over the Vietnamese nationalist movement in the political vacuum that existed in Vietnam in 1945.<sup>2</sup> Thirty years later, after having fought the French, South Vietnamese,

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Americans, and other Free World forces, the Party accomplished its goal of unifying Vietnam.

### A. INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL OVERVIEW

The primary emphasis of the communist leadership of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam has been on the mobilization, indoctrination, and organization of the Vietnamese people for "revolutionary struggle". Over the years, the Lao Dong Party became the principal vehicle for institutionalizing the "struggle" through a combination of indoctrination, agitation, direction of resources, and political command-and-control. The leadership of the communist movement in the Democratic Republic utilized the Lao Dong Party to accomplish the following intermediate political-military objectives.<sup>3/</sup>

- Establish absolute unity of action, unity of structure, and unity of purpose.
- Create an effective administrative mechanism that tied together diverse civilian organizations.
- Infuse discipline and obedience into the decisions of Party leaders.
- Provide the flexibility essential for the successful prosecution of a protracted war.

While the history of the Lao Dong Party and the leadership of the DRV reflects occasional disputes over tactics and priorities, these differences were not permitted to weaken the élan and cohesion of the Party. Throughout its evolution, strict emphasis was placed on unity, hierarchy, centralism, faith, and dedication. In the end, the Party leadership achieved its primary goal, that of command over the human resources needed to conduct a lengthy and costly conflict in the South.

By contrast, hard-core communist leadership in South Vietnam was covert and the revolutionary organization less well-defined than in the DRV. The active presence of other antigovernment organizations not directly associated with the Communist Party added to the political instability of the area, as well as to uncertainty over political affiliations

## THE BDM CORPORATION

and loyalties. The material presented in this chapter sorts out these organizations and:

- Provides an understanding of the principles of communist political-military organization and Party control.
- Describes and analyzes the civic and military structure of the DRV in the conduct of the war.
- Identifies the several organizations involved in the insurgency in South Vietnam and evaluates meaningful differences in approach between North and South.
- Assesses the communist organizations and techniques in terms of their effectiveness in influencing the outcome of the war.

### B. PRINCIPLES OF REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATION

To appreciate communist organizational mechanisms in North and South Vietnam, the principles which governed their evolution must be understood. Prior to 1955, the DRV leadership was prepared to engage in what is referred to as "legal struggle," under the terms of the plebiscite called for by the Geneva Agreement of 1954. The leadership in the North was willing to rely temporarily on their interpretation and manipulation of the Geneva Accords to achieve control of the South.<sup>4/</sup> However when the leadership of South Vietnam, under Diem, refused to consider participation in the plebiscite, the DRV Politburo reverted to the approaches called for under the strategy of "dau tranh", a combination of political and armed struggle.<sup>5/</sup>

The DRV leadership was heavily influenced by its experience in defeating the French and, in particular, by its successful adaptation of Mao's Three Steps for revolutionary warfare.<sup>6/</sup> In Step One, a nucleus is positioned to establish bases for political and military action. The nucleus, or cadre, works from these bases to create its own political administration in adjacent areas, protected by its military or guerrilla forces which also act to ensure compliance with the political organization.

Step Two is to organize a political structure and conduct guerrilla operations throughout the countryside. Step Three is to transform guerrilla forces into regular forces for positional warfare, to destroy the existing government, and to defeat that government's armed forces. Geographically, Mao had put the phases as "first the mountains, then the countryside, then the cities." The North Vietnamese leadership had added an extra dimension to Mao's strategy when fighting the French: undermine the enemy's home base. Antiwar sentiment in metropolitan France had led to a stridently antiwar campaign by the French press, students, and political spokesmen. Ultimately, the French government fell because of the issue concerning the further prosecution of the war.<sup>7/</sup> The later experience of the French government in Algeria which led to domestic turmoil and the collapse of the Fourth French Republic in 1958 merely reinforced the DRV conviction that their struggle should be pursued on many fronts, including the international.

Step One was ready for initiation in 1955 by communist cadres who had remained in South Vietnam despite the provisions of the Geneva cease-fire agreement, signed in 1954. Caches of arms and ammunition had also been established in the South. As early as 1955, selected regroupees in the North were trained as cadres and infiltrated back to South Vietnam.<sup>8/</sup> By the time the National Liberation Front was formed in December 1960, enough progress had been made to initiate Step Two. As 1964 ended, large units of regular forces were put into the field for conventional warfare.<sup>9/</sup> A new family of weapons was introduced, using one caliber of ammunition, to replace the heterogeneous guerrilla assortment, and more modern support weapons were issued. Step Three appeared to be underway. The arrival of US combat forces frustrated and blunted the successful implementation of Step Three strategy, for a time.

1. Principles Governing the Party Control Apparatus

The Communist Lao Dong Party (Dang Lao Dong) was, and is today, the core of political-military organizations in North and South Vietnam. To maintain its control, the Party developed an organizational structure based on classic communist strategy. These principles included democratic

## THE BDM CORPORATION

centralism, reverse representation, cellular hierarchy, the party cell, and the individual cadre.<sup>10/</sup>

### a. Democratic Centralism

The concept known as "democratic centralism" is applied at all levels of military, governmental and party organization. Essentially, democratic centralism means that decisions are made at committee meetings by majority vote. Various communist documents describe this process in these terms: "...minority should yield to the majority; lower echelons should comply with higher echelons, the whole Party shall obey the Central Committee."<sup>11/</sup> The most important aspect of this process is participation. Meetings are organized and members freely participate in group discussions but once a majority decision is reached, it is binding on all participants. Of course, the skillful cadre directs the discussion to achieve the desired result. This process occurs on all levels of organization and is extremely important for maintaining party unity.

This concept formed the basis for a layered organizational structure with the highest authority at the national level, the Central Committee of the Lao Dong Party in North Vietnam, and the Central Committee of the National Liberation Front People's Revolutionary Party (PRP) in South Vietnam. Party policies initiated at these levels were transmitted to Central Committees on lower levels from the interprovincial to the village central committees.<sup>12/</sup>

### b. Reverse Representation

As a corollary to the principle of "democratic centralism," reverse representation requires that the leader at each level assure compliance with party policies and directives. In brief, the leader serves as virtual delegate from the next higher level in the structure; his main responsibility is to assure higher authorities that their wishes are being obeyed. Communist control of Party members is maintained by strict surveillance through a system of inspectorates at various command levels. The inspecting teams have full authority to intervene in the conduct of any local program.<sup>13/</sup> Careful attention is paid to security and counterintelligence.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

This system of checks was maintained through the delegation of responsibility to the heads of committees on the lower levels who were, in turn, responsible to each other depending on their position in the hierarchical structure (i.e., responsibility at the provincial level was directed from the interprovincial committee, the provincial committee to the district committee and so forth). As a result authority and initiative were centralized (limited to the national headquarters) while responsibility was decentralized. 14/

### c. The Cellular Hierarchy and The Party Cell

Application of the principles of democratic centralism and reverse representation resulted in a cellular hierarchy with multiple channels of communication from higher to lower echelons and vice versa. At the base of this structure was the Party cell. The cell, usually consisting of three members, was used to establish a brotherhood among Party members. All activities of the member's life were conducted within the cell. The cell provided the framework by which intellectual, physical and emotional commitment were ensured. The concept of the cell in its political and military application was described in a captured PRP document dated 1970:

Political and ideological fields: The three-man cell is based on the solidarity of the ((working)) class and the mutual affection among comrades. The cell members should help one another. They should primarily help one another to heighten their political and ideological awareness, increase their fighting spirit, promote their working zeal, and maintain the good qualities, ethics, and behavior of revolutionary cadre and soldiers. They should take care of one another's mental and physical lives. The three-man cell should maintain the unity of thought and action for its members, develop collective initiative, and provide each member with assistance to overcome all difficulties. It should make them thoroughly understand one another's situations when they are to work independently, under advantageous or disadvantageous conditions, so that they can successfully carry out their assigned missions.

In the military ((field)): The three-man cell is an organization suitable to meet the requirements of applying all the types of tactics of our army. Every combat and tactical

## THE BDM CORPORATION

initiative can be cleverly and skillfully applied through the three-man cell. Therefore, in combat it is instrumental in making every squad, platoon, or company able to fully develop its combat effectiveness, mobility, resourcefulness, flexibility, and determination to successfully carry out every combat mission.15/

### d. The Cadre 16/

The cadre was the essential human element to successful Party organization-building. The cadre acted as a recruiting device for local Party members. Usually operating among the rural population, the cadre was required to endure whatever privations were necessary to be totally committed to Party ideology, and follow without question all Party directives. The principal function of the cadre was to imbue people with revolutionary ardor, a willingness to make significant personal sacrifices in the cause of the revolution, and to subordinate themselves to the guidance and discipline of the Party leadership. The cadre was repeatedly directed to provide propaganda to the people in order to bolster their martial spirit and to intensify their resentment against "the enemy." The process was viewed as a constant one, which had to unfold over a lengthy period of time rather than be initiated "at the last moment."

### 2. Mass Organization Strategy 17/

The civil structure, particularly in South Vietnam, was used as a means to enlist popular support for the movement and establish a base that provided legitimacy to the party organization. The civil organization was not viable as a separate unit. Party control was maintained through a system of parallel hierarchies on all levels of the civil structure. Thus, popular support was obtained through the guise of civil representation but was controlled by the Party element within it.

### a. The Front Organizations 18/

Every party to a revolutionary war wants and needs "popular support" in the form of men, political allegiance, material goods, and services. The purpose of the popular front is mobilization (i.e., the raising of required political and economic support from the people). Mobilization begins by drawing on volunteers and contributions from diverse groups; when these are exhausted, the political art of co-optation begins. In



## THE BDM CORPORATION

Vietnam the Popular Front strategy was used by the Communist Party leadership ostensibly to unite all nationalists against a common enemy, that is, foreign "imperialists". The official party line on the Front states:

...the essential factor in the realization of such unity is the consolidation of the National United Front. The policy of the party must be flexible... if we persist in retaining the title Communist, a certain number of landed proprietors and adepts of religious sects would refuse to follow us.<sup>19/</sup>

It was this flexibility which led to a series of subsequent policies specifically designed to enlist the support of religious sects (Cao Dai and Hoa Hao), minority groups (Catholics and Montagnards) and the intellectuals and bourgeoisie. Once this coalition was formed and firmly anchored, the Party leadership worked from within to establish itself as the guiding force. Throughout, however, the Communist Party leadership continued to maintain a low public profile to sustain the appearance of a spontaneous, general nationalist effort. The DRV used the popular front strategy on several occasions.<sup>20/</sup>

b. Mass Organizations: People's Liberation Committees/  
Liberation Associations

The popular front strategy emerged in South Vietnam in the guise of the various People's Liberation Associations. Disaffected professional, intellectual, labor or special interest groups are recruited and subjected to the discipline of democratic centralism. Typical of this discipline were the precepts of The Liberated Labor Association:<sup>21/</sup>

- Every member is given the right to discuss "democratically" and decide unanimously.
- However, the individual must yield to the will of the collectivity.
- Lower echelons must obey the decisions of higher echelons.
- Regional committees must obey the dictates of the Central Committee.

In a typical "liberated" village, the Liberation Associations were functional organizations which appealed to specific special

## THE BDM CORPORATION

interest groups. These were loosely controlled with no real hierarchical chain of command.

On the other hand, the People's Liberation Committees were administrative bodies composed of Party and non-Party members. The Liberation Committee governed the village and was tightly controlled with a vertical line of command to the NLF/PRP Central Committee. This tight control was maintained throughout the war; upon formation of the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) in 1969, these committees were renamed Revolutionary Committees. The table below summarizes the role of each organization. 22/

<u>People's Liberation Committees*</u>	<u>Liberation Associations</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• administrative function; governing body in village</li><li>• tight hierarchy with vertical command link to NLF/PRP headquarters</li><li>• small in membership with perhaps 3 Party and 10 non-Party members</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• socio-political organizations grouped by special interest</li><li>• loose control. Horizontal communication with People's Liberation Committee or lower levels. National level organization was insignificant</li><li>• mass membership: farmers, women, youth, students, intellectuals, etc.</li></ul>

\* With the formation of the PRG in 1968, these became Revolutionary Committees.

This permitted the Party to maintain a vertical as well as a horizontal line of communication, with the NLF/PRP Central Committee serving as the highest authority.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### c. The Provisional Government

Establishment of an interim government is one of the classic hallmarks in the strategy of nationalist or revolutionary movements. The DRV followed this convention in South Vietnam as well. However, certain conditions had to be met prior to the establishment of such a government, - notably, the primacy of the Communist Party had to be assured, the political and military position of the enemy had to be at low ebb, and popular opinion had to be disposed to recognize these realities and to accept the provisional government as the only viable alternative. In 1969 these conditions were met and the Party leadership concluded that a provisional revolutionary government should be established.<sup>23/</sup>

### 3. The Military Organization

The military forces of the NLF were modeled after the Chinese Revolutionary Armed Forces. They were composed of: the main force of well-trained full-time soldiers, and the paramilitary force comprised of regional or territorial guerrillas at provincial level and local guerrillas at district level. These elements supported each other. The main force provided combat-experienced veterans in support of guerrilla harassment activities; the guerrilla force provided an available manpower reserve and local logistical support.<sup>24/</sup>

#### a. The Political Goals of the Military Organization

The prime objective of communist forces, guerrilla and conventional, was political in nature -- to destroy public confidence in the capacities and legitimacy of the government in Saigon. Armed struggle, as pointed out earlier, was to attain the political objective of Communist Party supremacy throughout a united Vietnam. While the military served as the cutting edge, its purpose was not necessarily to annihilate enemy forces but to confuse their leaders, reduce morale and undermine confidence in the purposes and staying power of the leadership in Saigon, and to Liberate the South.<sup>25/</sup>

#### b. The Buildup of Military Forces

The Party's revolutionary goals underscored the need to fashion a military force led and supported by highly motivated and fully

## THE BDM CORPORATION

indoctrinated personnel. To achieve this, the Party organized its insurgency forces slowly and with careful attention to the political outlook and dedication of leadership cadres. In its time-phased approach the Party emphasized the following: 26/

- Formation of armed propaganda teams in the countryside.
- Recruitment and conscription (after indoctrination) of additional personnel to form regional units.
- Organization of workers (on a mass basis where possible) who, in turn, activate part-time village militia.
- Formation of main operational forces from seasoned regional units.
- "Promotion" of village personnel into regional forces to maintain regional strength levels.

The tactical and command-and-control advantages of this approach are obvious. Each phase is under constant scrutiny by the leadership. As cadres develop and experience grows, so the level of assigned responsibility mounts. The cycle begins with the local "activist" who is ultimately transformed into the professional political soldier, one conditioned by the stress of battle and exposure to plans and objectives that can be met through training, dedication and support from an all-wise Party leadership. 27/

### c. The Party Control Mechanism

The Party controlled and directed all military operations. Each command level was responsible to its headquarters element which, in turn, was responsible to the respective Party committee. This arrangement was reinforced by the existence of Party cells which promoted the political awareness of the soldier. 28/

On the national level, Party control is maintained through two known channels: dual membership in high Party and military offices and a central control committee within the Party organization specifically authorized to direct military activities. The latter will be examined in detail as it applies to DRV/NLF organization.

C. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Figure 3-1 charts the organizational evolution in North and South Vietnam. Several aspects of this development are worthy of note, specifically those which apply to the principles discussed previously.

1. Party Development and the Front Organizations

Since its inception in 1930, the Communist Party in Vietnam, then known as the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP), had one primary objective, the establishment of a government in Vietnam under the control of the Party. Figure 3-1 traces the manipulation process using the popular front strategy to consolidate non-communist nationalist factions. The consolidation process was particularly effective during the early years with the formation of the Viet Minh Independence League. Although it came to have a larger meaning during the war against the French, it was a front organization conceived and directed by the ICP. To maintain a low profile, the ICP was dissolved in November 1945 only to reemerge in 1951 as the Vietnamese Workers Party or the Dang Lao Dong. In 1976, the final goal of unification was achieved under the Vietnamese Communist Party. From 1946 to 1951, the Party not only increased in size but perfected the strategy of control from within the popular front, the Lien Viet, after having seemingly disbanded itself.

After the reappearance of the Communist Party in 1951, the Dang Lao Dong, the popular front took on new meaning. With the Party in power, front organizations became a means of mass movement control. The Party also felt a need to expand the front to enlist the religious sects and political parties which had previously opposed the Communists.<sup>29/</sup> Ultimately the North Vietnamese Fatherland Front was created (in 1955) replacing the Lien Viet in the mass organization effort.

The front movement in South Vietnam paralleled that of the North with one notable addition - it was initiated and controlled by the Lao Dong Party in the North. The National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (NLF) was officially proclaimed on December 20, 1960 as the "only genuine representative of the South Vietnamese people."<sup>30/</sup> Like the Viet Minh

YEAR	PARTY ORGANIZATION	POPULAR FRONT ORGANIZATION	MILITARY ORGANIZATION	GOVERNMENT (FRONT) ORGANIZATION
THE FORMATIVE YEARS				
1930	INDOCHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY (ICP) ESTABLISHED BY HO CHI MINH			
1941		VIET MINH INDEPENDENCE LEAGUE CREATED INCLUDING NON-COMMUNIST AND ICP MEMBERS.	GIAP ORGANIZES GUERRILLA BANDS WHICH BECAME 1st INDIGENOUS MILITARY FORCE.	
1945	ICP DISSOLVED TO MAIN (AIN) IMAGE OF NATIONALIST FRONT (NOVEMBER)	"COMMITTEE FOR THE LIBERATION OF THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE" PROCLAIMED WITH HO AS PRESIDENT.	"NATIONAL LIBERATION ARMY" FORMALLY ESTABLISHED UNDER VO NGUYEN GIAP.	DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM (DRVN) ESTABLISHED AS A PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT (SEPT. 2, 1945)
THE END OF COLONIALISM				
1946		LIEN VIET FORMED (MAY) IN AN EFFORT TO CONSOLIDATE NATIONALIST GROUPS AGAINST FRENCH INTERVENTION	VIETNAM PEOPLE'S ARMY (VPA) OFFICIALLY FORMED	
1951	DANG LAO DONG (VIETNAMESE WORKERS PARTY) (OLD) PUBLICLY DECLARED (3 MARCH).	INCORPORATION OF NON-COMMUNIST VIET MINH WITHIN THE LIEN VIET. VIET MINH, AS AN ORGANIZATION IN ITSELF, WAS ESSENTIALLY DISBANDED.		
CONSOLIDATING THE NORTH				
1955		ESTABLISHMENT OF "NORTH VIETNAMESE FATHERLAND FRONT" TO COORDINATE "MASS" WORK AND POPULAR DRIVES FOR HANOI PARTY AUTHORITY. ESSENTIALLY REPLACES LIEN VIET.	AFTER FALL OF DIEN BIEU PHU MAY 7, 1954, A "REGULARIZATION" PROCESS TOOK PLACE AIMED AT OVERALL IMPROVEMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL & POLITICAL CONTROL (I.E. FORMATION OF DIVISIONS AND SUPPORT UNITS FROM GUERRILLA FORCES)	
THE SOUTHERN INSURGENCY BEGINS				
1960		NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT OF SOUTH VIETNAM (NLFV) FORMED (DECEMBER 20)	IN SOUTH (1960) FORMATION OF "MAI" FORCE INDIGENOUS UNITS INTO PLATOON SIZE UNITS FROM PROVINCIAL ARMS ELEMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM. AUGMENTATION OF NLF ARMY BY INFILTRATION OF NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY PERSONNEL. INTERPROVINCIAL INDIGENOUS UNITS HAD BEEN FORMED INTO COMPANY SIZE UNITS	
1962	PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (PRP) ESTABLISHED IN SOUTH VIET.			

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Figure 3-1. Communist Organizations in North and South Viet

1955	ESTABLISHMENT OF "NORTH VIETNAMESE FATHERLAND FRONT" TO COORDINATE "MASS" WORK AND POPULAR DRIVES FOR HANOI PARTY AUTHORITY. ESSENTIALLY REPLACES LIEN VIET.	MAY 7, 1954, A "REORGANIZATION" PROCESS TOOK PLACE AIMED AT OVERALL IMPROVEMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL & POLITICAL CONTROL (I.E. FORMATION OF DIVISIONS AND SUPPORT UNITS FROM GUERRILLA FORCES)	
THE SOUTHERN INSURGENCY BEGINS			
1960	NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT OF SOUTH VIETNAM (NLFV) FORMED (DECEMBER 20)	IN SOUTH (1962) FORMATION OF MAIN-FORCE INDIGENOUS UNITS INTO PLATOON SIZE UNITS FROM PROVINCIAL ARMED ELEMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM. AUG. MENTATION OF NLF ARMY BY IN-FILTRATION OF NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY PERSONNEL. INTERPROVINCIAL INDIGENOUS UNITS HAD BEEN FORMED INTO COMPANY SIZE UNITS	NATIONAL REDUPLICATION COMMITTEE ANNEXED TO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF DRV (NAY)
1962	PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (PRP) ESTABLISHED IN SOUTH VIET NAM (1/1/62). LATER BECAME KNOWN AS THE LAO DONG PARTY IN THE SOUTH.  CENTRAL OFFICE FOR SOUTH VIET NAM (COSVN) BECOMES OPERATIONAL AS LAO DONG PARTY HEADQUARTERS IN THE SOUTH (MARCH, 1962)		
1963			
INSURGENCY AND GENERAL OFFENSIVES			
1955		INTRODUCTION OF NORTH VIETNAMESE REGIMENTAL SIZE THROOPS (PAVN) INTO SOUTH VIETNAM UNDER DIRECT CONTROL OF HANOI.	
1956		LIBERATION ARMY (NLF) OFFICIALLY DESIGNATED AS THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMED FORCE (PLAF)	
1958	FIRST PUBLIC RECOGNITION OF "THE ALLIANCE OF NATIONAL AND DEMOCRATIC PEACE FORCES OF VIETNAM" AS AN OUTGROWTH OF THE TET OFFENSIVE. THE ALLIANCE PUBLICLY PORTRAYS ITSELF AS A ROH. COMMUNIST POLITICAL FORCE IN SOUTH VIETNAM		
1969			PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH VIETNAM (PRGVS) OFFICIALLY CREATED UNDER NLF LEADERSHIP.
A UNIFIED VIETNAM			
1976	VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST PARTY FORMED		SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM (SRV) ESTABLISHED

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Independence League which had organized anti-French factions, the NLF united nationalist groups opposing the Diem regime and US support for the Diem government.32/

The Party control apparatus was reinforced in 1962 with the formation of the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP). In the early period after its creation PRP propaganda minimized its Hanoi connection, referring to itself as the Marxist-Leninist Party of South Vietnam, the heart of the National Liberation Front, and the engine of struggle against Diem. While acknowledging a connection with the Lao Dong Party, it referred to the latter as a fraternal organization. Nevertheless, the PRP continued to use the same channels of communication and liaison net, and employed the same chain of command.33/

The final phase of front development in South Vietnam was the establishment of the Alliance of the National Democratic Peace Forces of Vietnam. The Alliance, as it was sometimes known, grew out of the factions which surfaced during the winter-spring offensive of 1967-1968 which culminated in the '68 Tet offensive. Alliance propaganda portrayed a non-communist coalition of various divergent groups with the purpose of negotiating with the Saigon regime to bring peace to Vietnam. This stance was contrary to that of the NLF which continuously fought to overthrow the Thieu government. According to an interrogation report dated 1968, the Alliance was a front organization conceived and directed by the NLF 34/ in keeping with the strategy of the popular front, thus creating a front within a front.

### 2. Party Development and the Provisional Government

After World War II, the country entered into a political void with the evacuation of the Japanese, the temporary occupation by an allied force and the expected return of the French. Circumstances provided the perfect opportunity for Ho Chi Minh and the ICP. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) was proclaimed as a provisional government on September 2, 1945. That action established the ICP's claim to legitimate political power.



The August (1945) Revolution was a successful undertaking for the communists, whose historians later attributed the outcome to several factors. In particular, their success was predicated on: (a) proper timing on the part of a patient Party leadership; (b) detailed advanced planning; (c) a disciplined resistance base to fall back on, which added to the confidence of the participants; (d) selection of the right instrument, the National United Front, which "harnessed the energies of the people and raised their revolutionary consciousness"; and (e) precedent-making use of psychological warfare tactics, such as the binh van ("action among the military"), which was in effect a proselyting effort.

In the South, the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam (PRGRSVN or, simply, the PRG) was announced on June 10, 1969. Unlike the DRV, which had been formed under nearly ideal circumstances, the PRG came into being when Party primacy was not assured and the combined US/GVN military forces were at peak strength. Furthermore, the indigenous communist apparatus in the South had suffered severe setbacks in the Tet offensive of 1968. Some observers have concluded that the PRG served primarily as a cabinet with a small staff, one that functioned independently from the revolutionary committees in liberated areas.<sup>35/</sup> The evidence is inconclusive on this question. However, it was clear that the PRG did present a direct challenge to the government at Saigon and was used by the North as a diplomatic wedge within the international community.<sup>36/</sup>

D. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM (DRV)

The governing process in the DRV followed the communist principle of decision-by-committee guided by a sound leadership. That collective decision-making process extends from the national to the local level organization. At the core of the structure was the Party and the Party committee system.

1. Organization for the Lao Dong Party

Figure 3-2 illustrates the organizational structure and function of the high-level party organization in the DRV. The hierarchy and functions of each body are listed as described in the DRV constitution. However, close study of Party practices reveals a divergence from constitutional power.

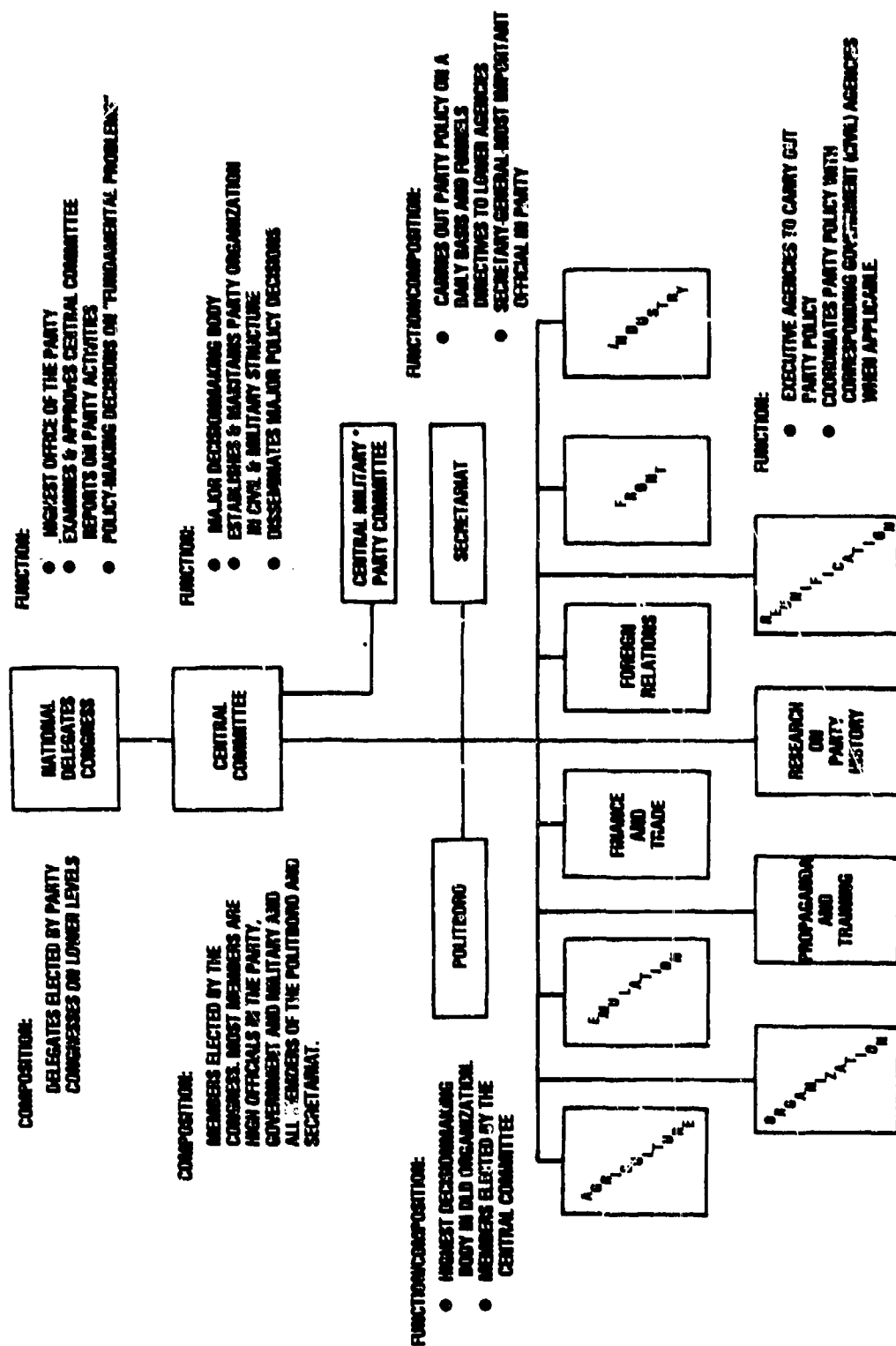
One such difference was the role of the National Delegates Congress. In theory, the Congress was the highest authority in the system, upholding the principle of democratic centralism and the will of the collective majority. In practice, however, major decision-making powers rested in the Politburo on the advice of the Central Committee. The Secretariat translated these decisions into policy directives and transmitted them to lower offices.

Below the national level, Party offices were similarly structured. On the provincial, municipal and autonomous 38/ levels, the Party committee includes a central committee, a standing committee, a separate control committee and a Party secretary. The structure on the district level and below resembles that of the provincial, municipal and autonomous with one addition, the Party Chapter. The Party Chapter is usually a very small unit designed to implement party policies within the population.

2. The Government Organization of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam

Figure 3-3 graphically displays the civil organization of the DRV. In many respects, the hierarchy and functions of civil offices paralleled those of the Party. Close interaction between functionally similar agencies within these two organizations did exist.

The National Assembly is constitutionally vested with legislative powers. But, like the National Delegates Congress, that is merely a facade to project a democratic image. The true legislative power rests in the Standing Committee whose chairman and vice-chairman are normally high-ranking Politburo members. Although the 1960 constitution defines the powers of the presidency, there is little evidence that these presidential powers were actually exercised during the term of Ho Chi Minh.40/ Since his death, the office has been largely ceremonial. The Council of

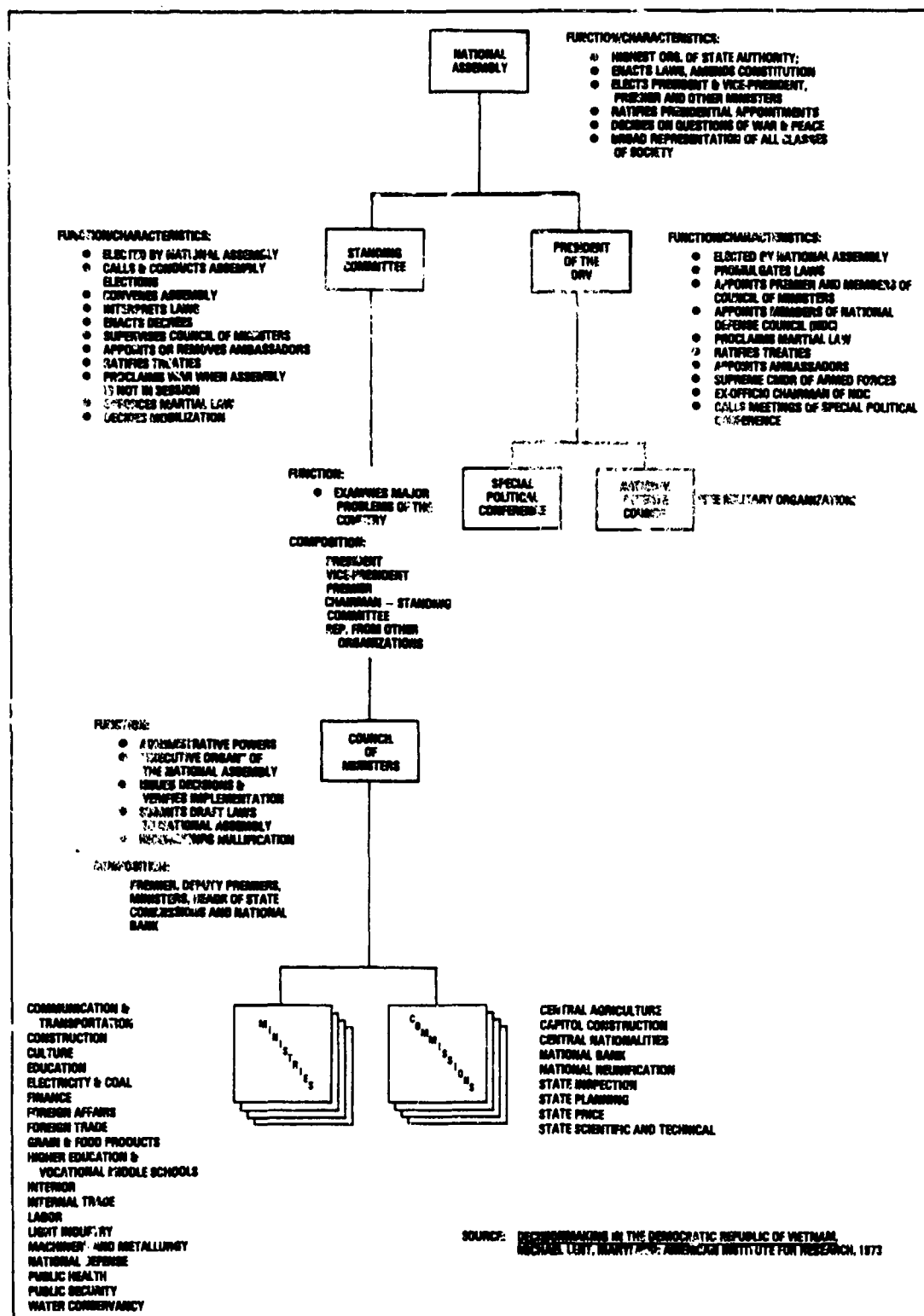


• SEE MILITARY ORGANIZATION.

SOURCE: DECEMBER 1971 IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM  
MICHAEL LEST, MARYLAND; AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH, 1972.

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**Figure 3-2. Dang Lao Dong Party Organization 38/**



464/78W

Figure 3-3. Government Organization of the DRV 39/

Ministers and its respective ministries and commissions perform the major administrative tasks within the organization. Although many positions were held by non-Politburo members, the two most important ministries, Foreign Affairs and National Defense, were invariably headed by Politburo members. In any event, all ministries were responsive to Party control.

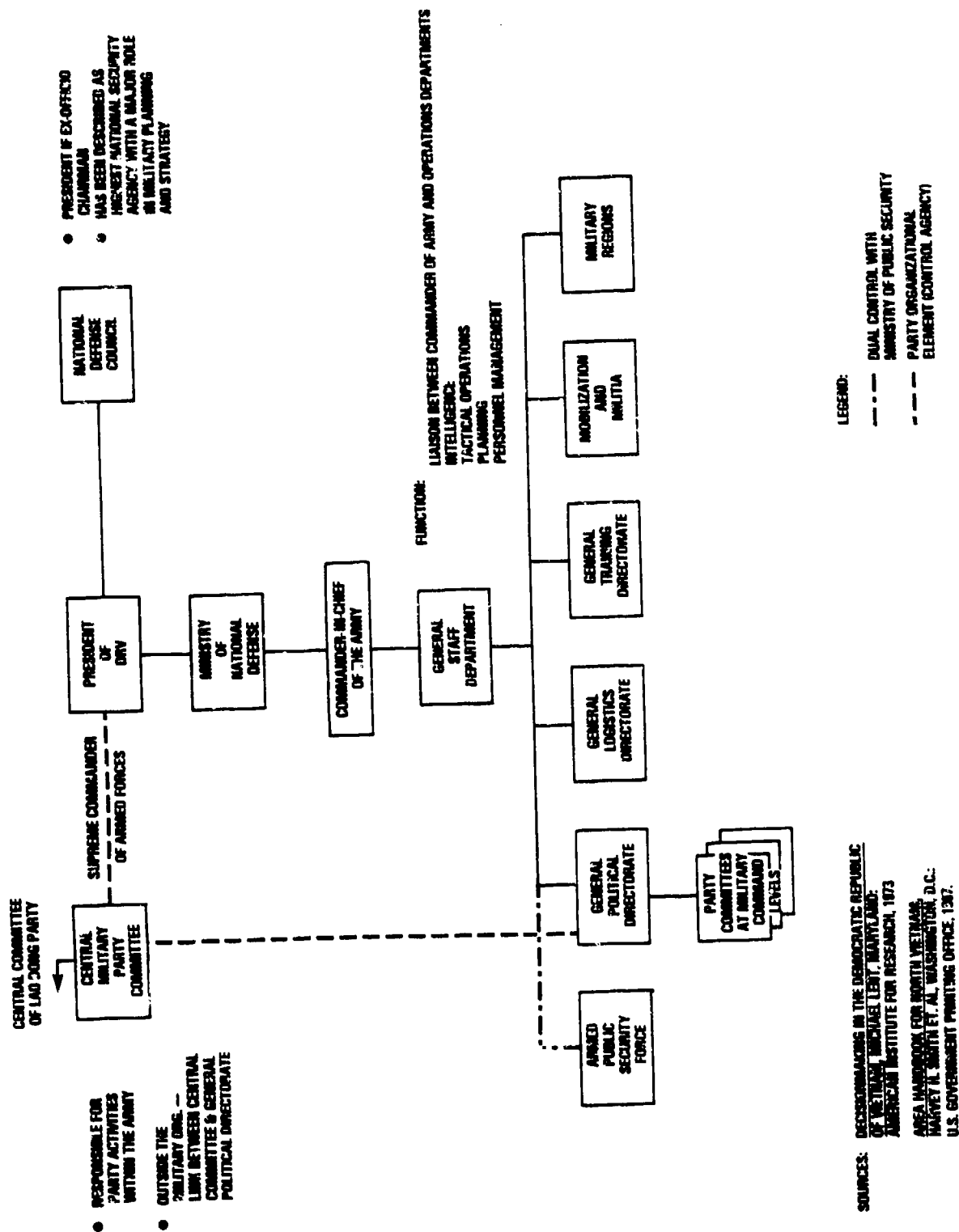
3. Organization of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam

Control of the military apparatus was of utmost importance to the Party. The nature of the Indochinese war and, later, the Southern insurgency required strict political supervision of military operations. General Vo Nguyen Giap, commander-in-chief of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) recognized the need for an integrated political and military struggle. In 1967 he described the people's war in these terms:

Another outstanding success of our Party consisted in creating and developing to a very high level the combined strength of people's war, of revolutionary war, using military attacks by mobile strategic army columns as main striking forces, combining military attacks with popular uprisings, combining military struggle with political struggle and agitation among enemy troops, wiping out and disbanding large enemy units, completely liberating large strategic regions in the mountainous, rural and urban areas, and winning total victory by means of a general offensive and uprising right in the "capital city" of the puppet administration.<sup>41/</sup>

Figure 3-4 shows the command structure of the DRV military organization. Particularly noteworthy was the means of Party control of the organization. The Central Military Party Committee (CMPC) acted as the intermediary between the Central Committee of the Lao Dong Party and the General Political Directorate of the General Staff Department. Although the CMPC was outside the military organization (see Party organization), it directed the Party activities within the armed forces. Members of the CMPC were high-ranking military (all Party members) and Politburo officials.

The CMPC's operational subordinate, the General Political Directorate, was a military office. The General Political Directorate directed



**SOURCES:** DISSEMINATIONS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM; MICHAEL LEIT, BANGKOK; AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH, 1973; AREA HANDBOOK FOR NORTH VIETNAM; HARVEY H. SMITH ET AL. WASHINGTON, D.C.; U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE, 1967.

**LEGEND:**

- DUAL CONTROL WITH MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SECURITY
- PARTY ORGANIZATIONAL ELEMENT (CONTROL AGENCY)

Figure 3-4. DRV Military Organization 42/

45441/78W

the activities of the Party committees which were attached to all subordinate levels of the military command.

4. Summary Analysis: A Triad System of Government 43/

The Democratic Republic of (North) Vietnam functioned in a cellular structure of three parallel organizations. Each was integrated with the Party serving as the central, controlling organization. Figure 3-5 summarizes the Party control mechanisms within the civil, or governmental, and military organizations.

The structure of each parallel organization encompassed the basic principles of communist revolutionary organization: democratic centralism in the committee-based process of decision-making, reverse representation in the functional Party committee on the lower levels and the Party cell as the basic organizational unit.

E. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT OF SOUTH VIETNAM (NLFSVN)

The organization of the Southern insurgency was of critical importance to Hanoi's political objectives. In order to survive the daily strains of protracted war, it had to possess several qualities:

- Ability to recruit sufficient personnel to fill the rank and file.
- Ability to survive the organizational constraints caused by the heavy casualties sustained in a guerrilla conflict.
- Ability to exercise complete operational control of the rank and file membership from higher headquarters through decentralized responsibility.
- Ability to function in a hostile and clandestine environment.
- Ability to organize the masses into a unified whole and subjugate the will of the individual to the will and "good" of the socialized community.

These activities were always present in the Southern struggle. In addition, the concept of a people's war in a protracted conflict offered exceptional organizational requirements. The enemy's literature repeatedly

HIGH PARTY OFFICIALS HOLD KEY GOVERNMENT POSITION (E. CHAIRMAN, VICE-CHAIRMAN, ETC.)	CIVIL GOVERNMENT	ELECTION OF KEY OFFICIALS IS CONTROLLED BY THE PARTY.
FOREIGN POLICY IS CONDUCTED BY THE PARTY AND UNDER ITS CONTROL.		STANDING COMMITTEE: CHAIRMAN AND SENIOR VICE CHAIRMAN ARE POLITBUREO MEMBERS.
PRESIDENT IS SUPREME COMMANDER OF ARMED FORCES AND EX OFFICIO CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL DEFENSE COUNCIL.	MILITARY ORGANIZATION	PURPOSE OF PARTY STRUCTURE WITHIN VPA: "TO ENFORCE THE ABSOLUTE, DIRECT AND TOTAL LEADERSHIP OF THE PARTY OVER THE ARMY."
PARALLEL POLITICAL HIERARCHY WITHIN THE MILITARY ORGANIZATION: CENTRAL MILITARY PARTY COMMITTEE (OUTSIDE THE MILITARY ORGANIZATION) IS DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE LAO DONG PARTY.		
GENERAL POLITICAL DIRECTORATE IS POLITICAL ELEMENT OF CONTROL WITHIN THE GENERAL STAFF AND DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE TO CENTRAL MILITARY PARTY COMMITTEE.		

SOURCE: DECISION MAKING IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, MICHAEL LENT, MARYLAND: AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH, 1971

4541/78W

Figure 3-5. Elements of Party Control Over Civil and Military Organization in North Vietnam 44/



called for a "general uprising" on the part of the urban and rural population in support of the communist insurgency.<sup>45/</sup> That kind of offensive called for a graduated response extending over a prolonged period, and therefore, required complete loyalty and dedication from the rank and file.

1. The Party Organization in South Vietnam; the Core of the Struggle Movement

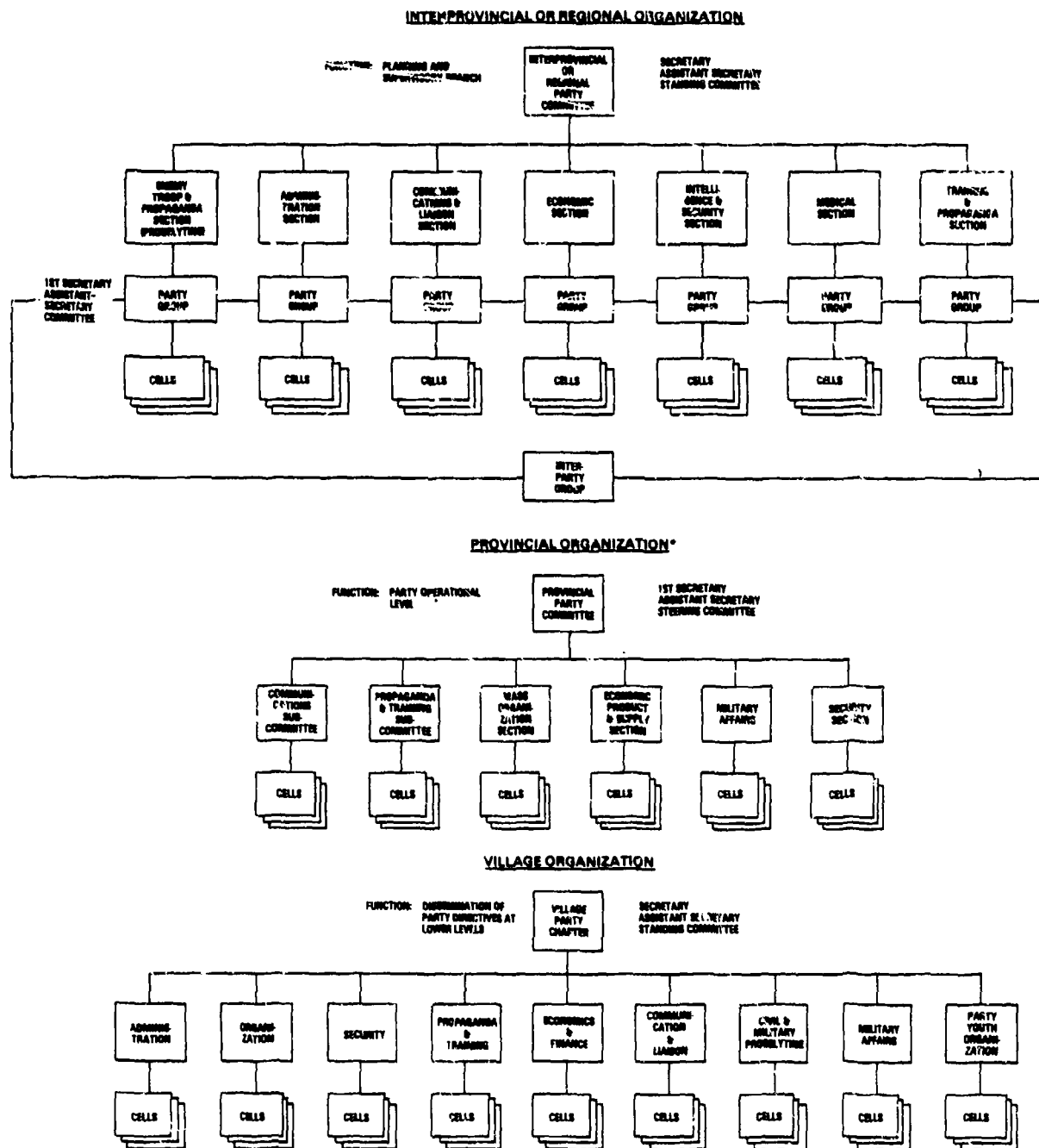
As pointed out earlier, the Lao Dong Party "is organized on the concept of democratic centralism. Its discipline is very strict for the purpose of maintaining within the Party a unity of thoughts and actions, eliminating opportunist and partial tendencies from its ranks".<sup>46/</sup> This unity of purpose was the basis for the Communist Party structure in South Vietnam.

Various intelligence reports and defector interrogations leave little doubt that the PRP was merely an organizational change manipulated by the North. One such document states: "there is only one Communist Party in Vietnam. The Lao Dong Party serves both North and South Vietnam."<sup>47/</sup> The PRP, as the Southern branch of the Lao Dong Party, was created for the purpose of organizing the South under Northern direction with the ultimate goal of unification and domination by the Lao Dong Party.

The structure of the Party was based on a hierarchy of committees at the interprovincial or regional, provincial, district and village levels. At the base of this structure were the Party cells under the Secretariat or Central Committee within the NLF/PRP headquarters. Figure 3-6 outlines the function and structure of the local committees.

The Party cell was the basic unit in each structure designed to maintain the Party's unity of purpose. Within the cell, "criticism--self-criticism" sessions were a general practice. Members were encouraged to admit weaknesses (i.e., individual ambitions, fear of the enemy, etc.) while their comrades were enjoined to offer additional criticisms based on the performance of their duties. This practice strengthened the bond of discipline and absolute obedience to the Party and furthered unquestioning support for Party policies and goals.

# THE BDM CORPORATION



\*IN MANY CASES, DISTRICT ORGANIZATION RESEMBLED THE STRUCTURE AT THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL.

SOURCE: THE COMPTON REPORT ON INFRASTRUCTURE  
IN SOUTH VIETNAM, A STUDY  
CONDUCTED BY THE COMPTON REPORT, MICHAEL COMLEY.

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Figure 3-6. PRP Party Committee Organization in South Vietnam 48/

2. The Organization of The National Liberation Front

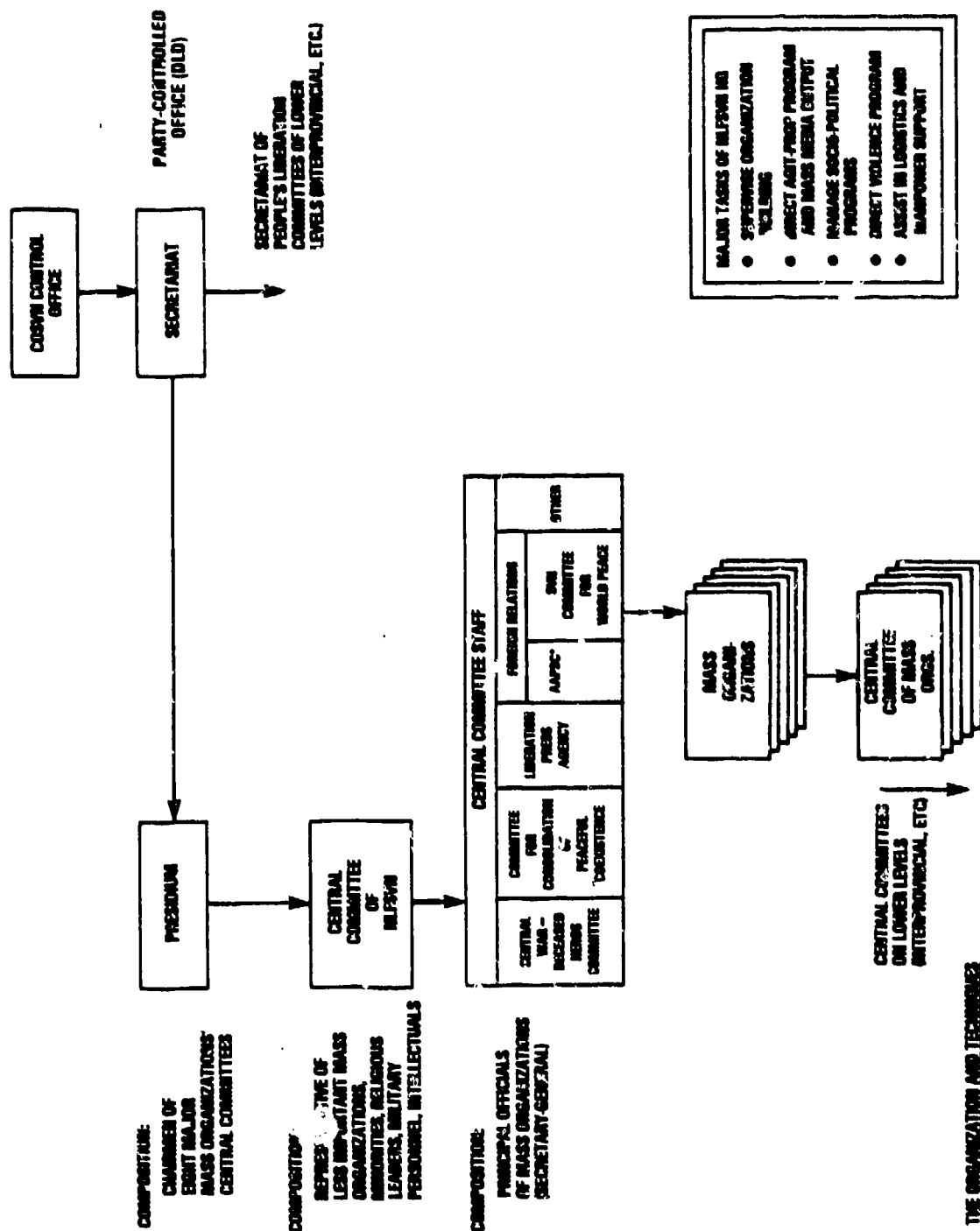
The National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (NLF) as it was originally formed in December 1960, was a front organization established by Hanoi for the purpose of creating a federation of popular associations under a democratic front banner.<sup>47/</sup> Understanding the true purpose and role of the NLF is crucial in answering the key question posed in the introduction to this volume: was the war in South Vietnam a bona fide civil war? Undeniably, some popular factions in South Vietnam were prepared to revolt against the Diem regime or several successor governments. In that sense they were revolutionaries. Most of those factions, however, were not pro-communist; indeed, many were as violently anticommunist as they were anti-Diem. The NLF was created to marshal the full range of opposition to Diem into a force that could be directed by Hanoi. The communists later described their clever tactics in these terms:

On the basis of keeping firm in strategy, our Party cleverly applied its tactics: on the one hand, it cleverly took advantage of the regional and temporary contradictions of the enemy to sow division among him. On the other hand, it united with anyone who could be united, won over anyone who could be won over, neutralized anyone who should be neutralized, completely isolated the imperialists and their most dangerous lackeys, and concentrated the spearheads of the attacks on them to overthrow them.<sup>50/</sup>

Throughout most of the NLF's history, the nationalist cause provided strategic cover for communist objectives in the South. Figure 3-7 outlines the organization of the headquarters element of the NLF. Central direction of the NLF was conducted by the Central Committee of the Lao Dong Party through the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN), their operatives in the South. COSVN was the top Communist command headquarters for the war in the South. With an established command link to the Politburo in the North, COSVN received directives and implemented policies in accordance with the tactical situation.

COSVN's history dates back to 1951, when it was a six-man office with Le Duan as First Secretary and Le Duc Tho as his deputy. Both men

# THE BDM CORPORATION



SOURCE: THE ORGANIZATION AND TECHNIQUES  
OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT  
OF SOUTH VIETNAM, HOUSSEAU, PAUL,  
CHAMBERNE, BERNARD AND LONDON, ENGLAND;  
THE MILIT. PRESS, 1968.

\*AFRO-ASIAN PEOPLE'S SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE

Figure 3-7. Civil Structure of National Headquarters NLFSVN 51/

4541/78W

were high-ranking members of the Politburo.<sup>52/</sup> After the war against the French, COSVN was phased out and replaced by the Nam-Bo Regional Committee composed of seasoned Viet Minh cadres.

In 1961, COSVN was re-established as the "central organ for the Southern branch of the Lao Dong Party."<sup>53/</sup> COSVN directed the policies and actions of the NLF/PRP through an interlacing organization structure and common leadership. Furthermore, a former political officer of COSVN who defected in 1968 stated: "there is no such organization as a PRP with a Central Committee, a Standing Committee, etc., this organization only exists in name."<sup>54/</sup>

The organization on the interprovincial, provincial, district and village levels paralleled those of the party. Mass Liberation Associations were organized into a Central Committee with a corresponding Secretariat and Current Affairs Section. While the Central Committee maintained a semblance of a democratic front (i.e., its members were elected from within the mass organizations), the Secretariat and Current Affairs Office were Party-dominated. Each respective secretariat received direction from the echelon above, the initial directives having emanated from COSVN or the Central Committee of the Lao Dong Party.

3. The Military Command Structure: The People's Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF), The People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) and Guerilla Popular Army

Unlike other popular front organizations in the history of North and South Vietnam, the NLF had its own indigenous armed force element, the People's Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF), previously known as the Liberation Army. The PLAF subscribed to fundamental party doctrine in its organizational makeup:

- Organization must be in line with political goals.
- Democratic centralism must be strictly observed, that is, discipline must be maintained with subordinates obeying superior's commands.
- Unity of purpose must be sustained between the army and the people.

For the PLAF, political success was more important than military victory.

Figure 3-8 describes the characteristics of the communist military forces in South Vietnam as they were structured during most of the period of US involvement.<sup>55/</sup> The people's army consisted of three different elements, each with different functions and control channels. The PLAF included the Main Force and the Paramilitary Forces comprised of Regional Forces and the Guerrilla Popular Army. Within each element a Party control unit was implanted to direct the political activities of each unit and assure its compliance with Party directives.

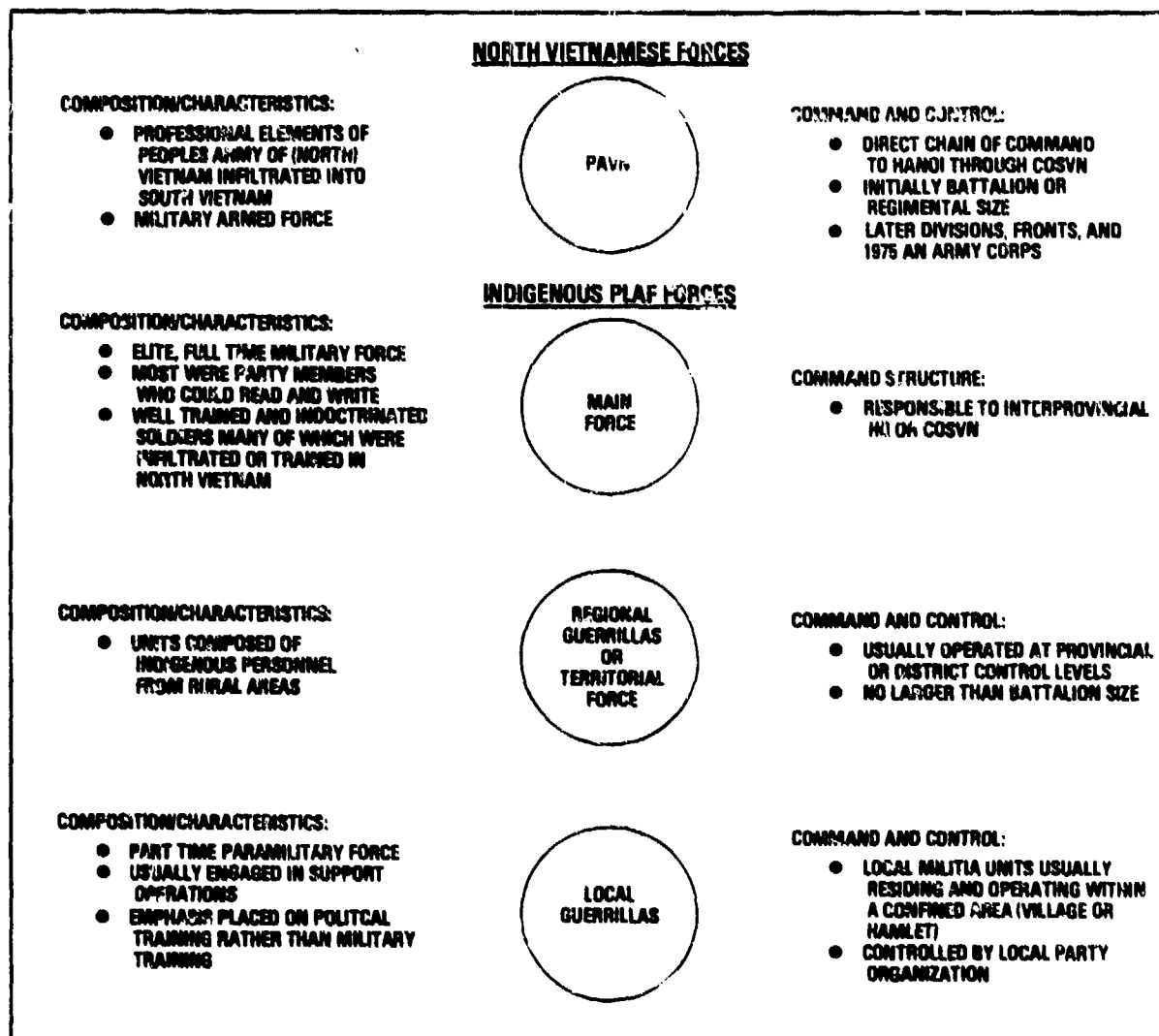
The PAVN, on the other hand, consisted of North Vietnamese units with a direct communication channel to Hanoi. These elements were completely independent of the NLF organization. In the early stages of the insurgency, circa 1965-67, personnel from Main Forces and Regional Units were often used as fillers for PAVN units. After Tet 1968 the reverse was true and PAVN personnel frequently had to fill the depleted ranks of indigenous units.

The command and staff organization incorporated the Party principle of decision by committee. Figure 3-9 shows a typical structure on the interprovincial level. This illustrates the direct relationship between the local Party committee and the military command. On the lower levels, the Party control apparatus corresponded to those of the military staff via overlapping control agencies.

#### 4. Summary Analysis: Organizational Relationships

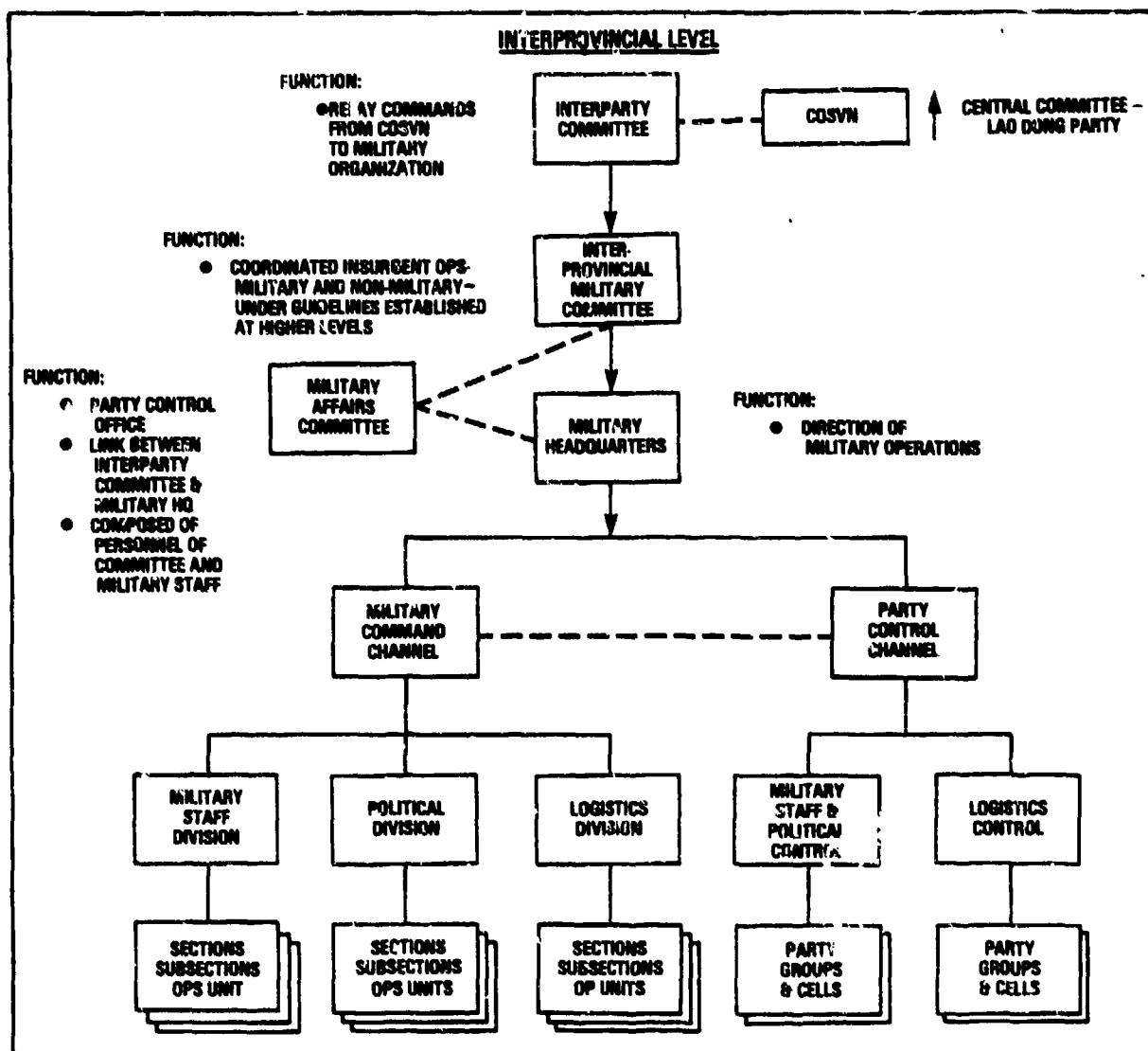
This section has dealt with each important component of the southern organization. The intricate communist system comes into focus only when viewed as a totally integrated system. Figure 3-10 shows the horizontal and vertical command and control links between the civil, Party and military organizations in South Vietnam. It also demonstrates the ultimate purpose of the southern organization.

Figure 3-11 depicts the manner in which the popular movement was controlled through associations within the NLF structure. The communists paid close attention to all elements of South Vietnamese society--intellectual, professional, labor, youth and minority groups. The liberation



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Figure 3-8. The Communist Military Forces in South Vietnam 56/

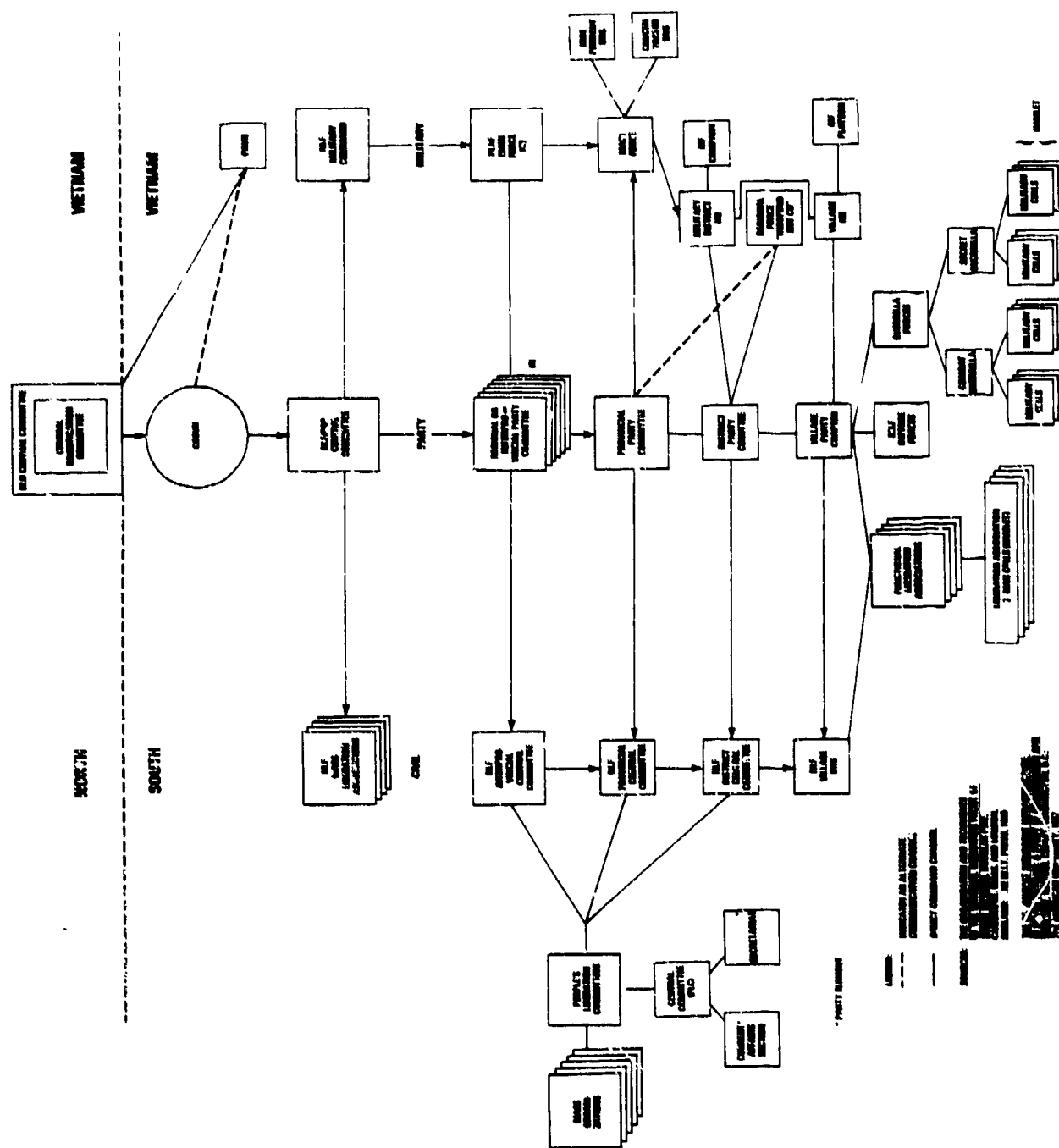


THE COMMUNIST INSURGENT INFRASTRUCTURE IN SOUTH VIETNAM: A STUDY OF ORGANIZATION AND STRATEGY.  
MICHAEL CONLEY, WASHINGTON, DC: THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY, 1967.

4R44/7BW

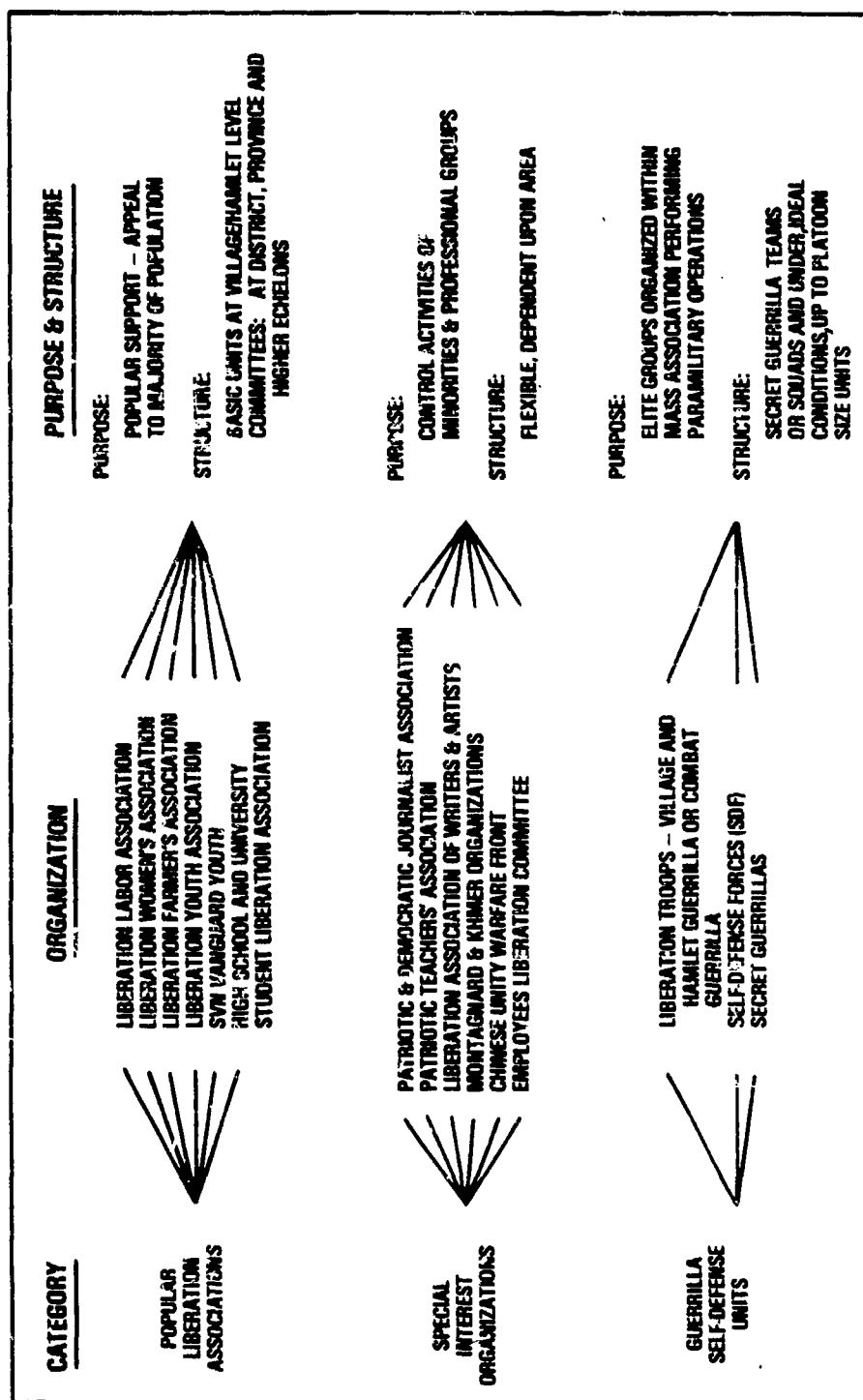
Figure 3-9. Typical Structure - Interprovincial Level 57/





**Figure 3-10. Interrelationship of (NLF/PRP) Organizations**

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4541/78W

Figure 3-11. Method of Communist Control of Civil Organization within the NLF 61/

association concept highlights the political appeal of the NLF as a counterforce in South Vietnam; the Party control mechanism depicts the ultimate strategy of the NLF and capitalized on that appeal. Finally the addition of the guerrilla forces combined the political struggle with the armed struggle, the latter in support of the former.

F. PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT

1. The Background

As early as 1966 COSVN had directed the PRP to concentrate on improving its organization. In the aftermath of the 1968 Tet offensive, it appeared desirable for COSVN to establish "democratically elected" local governments to consolidate territorial gains made during Tet and help prepare for future operations. In March 1968, COSVN directed that People's Liberation Councils be established in liberated rural and urban areas with the ultimate objective of broadening the liberation structure and establishing a coalition government at the top.<sup>58/</sup>

Such a coalition government was to be only a step on the way to total Lao Dong Party control of Vietnam; this is suggested by the lecture notes (circa 1967 - pre-Tet) of an important Viet Cong cadre:

...the National Democratic Coalition Government which is the immediate goal of our struggle is not a type of coalition government which is bought at any cost. It must be a coalition government established under the following conditions:

1. The U.S. aggressors must withdraw their troops.
2. The coalition government must have the NLFSVN as the core.<sup>59/</sup>

2. The PRG Emerges

On June 10, 1969 the clandestine Liberation Radio announced that a Provisional Revolutionary Government had been formed at a "Congress of National Delegates of South Viet-Nam."<sup>62/</sup> Ostensibly, after holding discussions with the Central Committee of the NLF, the PRG decided to replace the NLF delegation to the Paris Conference on Vietnam and to designate

Madame Nguyen Thi Binh, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the PRG, as head of that delegation.<sup>63/</sup> The DRV Party Journal, Hoc Tap, was quick to state the DRV's recognition of the PRG as a "legal" government.<sup>64/</sup>

An urgent COSVN circular issued in June 1969 described the strategic significance of the PRG in terms of a political campaign in coordination with military operations and a diplomatic offensive.<sup>65/</sup> The PRG gave a semblance of legitimacy to communist claims that they controlled large areas in the South and that local elected officials in "liberated areas" were represented by the PRG. In fact, the Provisional Revolutionary Government was nothing more than another front organization.<sup>66/</sup>

Although the PRG "took over" the Paris negotiations from the NLF, the change was cosmetic rather than substantive. The Lao Dong Party pulled all of the strings, but the Provisional Revolutionary Government continued to serve a useful purpose for the DRV for two years after the Paris accords were signed and US forces withdrew from RVN. After the DRV's victory in April 1975, the process of unification began in earnest.<sup>67/</sup> By the summer of 1976, the organizations that had proved useful as Southern entities ceased to exist. The PRG was absorbed into the new Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the NLF merged into the Fatherland Front, and the PLAF was drawn into the PAVN.<sup>68/</sup> Seldom has the communist "front tactic" been more clearly at work than it was in Vietnam, and rarely has such organizational skill been demonstrated as was shown by Ho Chi Minh and his lieutenants.

#### G. SUMMARY AND INSIGHTS

This chapter addresses the complexity and durability of the communist organizations in North and South Vietnam. In reviewing the nature of these organizations and the obstacles which they overcame, (i.e., protracted warfare, heavy attrition and traditional, societal standards), one can derive several meaningful insights:

- The communist organization in Vietnam was by no means unique. It subscribed to the Marxist-Leninist principles of revolutionary organization and the Maoist application of guerrilla warfare.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

- The Vietnamese Communists devoted 16 years (1930-1946) to organizing a loyal, disciplined, united, and thoroughly reliable Party apparatus before committing their forces in open combat against the French, thereby acquiring remarkable cohesiveness and singleness of purpose which made them an exceptionally formidable enemy.
- Hanoi and its Southern cadres devoted six years (1954-1960) to remodel the stay-behind Viet Minh apparatus in the South before seriously taking up armed action against the GVN.
- The DRV devoted two years (1973-1975) to reorganizing its professional army, the PAVN, without materially improving or strengthening the indigenous Southern political or military apparatus, preparatory to the final assault on the RVNAF: clearly a deliberate move to ensure the take-over of the GVN militarily by Northern forces without having to share power with any Southern element.
- Serious differences of opinion surfaced over the years within the Party Central Committee, but the organizational principle of "democratic centralism" was strictly adhered to, and differences were resolved internally without exposing the North Vietnamese leadership to public disharmony.
- The People's Revolutionary Party in the South was tightly organized and rigorously disciplined, enabling the Party to manipulate the larger NLF organization in line with Politburo directives without revealing their direct ties to Hanoi.
- DRV leaders were long-time students and practitioners of communist dialectics and organization.
- Communist organizational development in North and South Vietnam reflected the fundamental principles of revolutionary development, thus the organizational techniques and Party tactics should have been no surprise to US and GVN authorities.
- The sequential buildup in South Vietnam of the Party and the Front was designed and directed to achieve the DRV's goals.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

- Differences between the communist organs in North and South Vietnam were more apparent than real; for propaganda purposes the Southern faction carefully avoided any open signs of subservience to the North.
- Initially, the noncommunist anti-Diem factions that comprised a large part of the NLF's manpower participated in the Presidium, the Central Committee, and the subordinate staffs and mass organizations of the NLF; at that time, at least until 1965 and possibly later, there may have existed the opportunity for the US/GVN to exploit the noncommunist elements of the front, but that was not done.
- The goals of the communist leaders in the North and the South coincided; the goals of antigovernment noncommunist factions differed.
- The main objective of the Communist Party in Vietnam was political power through a combination of internal organizational manipulation and armed struggle. The US/GVN response relied mainly on application of military power until relatively successful Pacification/Vietnamization programs were introduced in about 1969. (See Chapter 5, Volume V).
- After Tet, the existence of a Southern-directed insurgency was clearly no more than a pretext.

The Communist Vietnamese were masters of organization. Redundant lines of command and control reached from Hanoi down to three-man cells in the Delta of South Vietnam. Organization was vital to the survival and ultimately the success of the DRV's drive for unification. But organization only provided a means for success. Motivation was also required. The DRV needed a popular cause: they had one in nationalism and anticolonialism. The DRV also needed correct policies and dedicated and intelligent leaders at all levels; apparently they had a greater share than did the Republic of Vietnam. These latter factors were examined in Chapters 1 and 2 of this volume and in Volume II.

H. LESSONS

- In a revolutionary context, communist organizations invariably turn to "front" organizations as a means for capturing the support of other non-communist entities that share some common dissatisfaction; a knowledge and understanding of the indigenous situation and existing grievances provides an opportunity for infiltrating a front or exploiting or creating schisms between communist and non-communist elements within a front. However, the communists' organizational techniques are often so well developed that opportunities for exploitation may be rare and fleeting or may depend on an incumbent non-communist governmental apparatus making substantial changes to offer a better alternative than the communists appear to offer.
- To defeat a communist threat requires thorough understanding of the political-military organization, or infrastructure, which sustains and controls it, followed by the planning and coordination of appropriate "attacks" - political, psychological, economic, police, and military on its points of vulnerability.

# THE BDM CORPORATION

## VOLUME I CHAPTER 3 ENDNOTES

1. Essay on the Five Steps in the Operation of a Revolution, as reprinted in Michael Conley, The Communist Insurgent Infrastructure in South Vietnam: A Study of Organization and Strategy (Washington, D. C.: The American University, 1967), p. 339.
2. For a description of the World War II period and its immediate aftermath see Joseph Buttinger, Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), Volume I "From Colonialism to The Vietminh," pp. 227-372. Buttinger describes the August 1945 nationalist revolution in these terms, "Although prepared since the beginning of the century by thousands of patriots of all possible shades of nationalism, it was in the end made and won by a determined minority group - the Communists at the head of the Vietminh." Also see Alexander B. Woodside, Community and Revolution in Modern Vietnam. East Asian Research Center, Howard University, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1976), pp. 225-234.
3. These objectives were derived by BDM analysts from a series of documents on this subject. One source of interest is the "Declaration of The Policy of The Provisional Coalition Government (January 1, 1946)" in Ho Chi Minh On Revolution, ed., Bernard B. Fall (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publ., 1967), pp. 160-161.
4. U.S. Department of State, Working Paper on the North Vietnamese Role in the War in South Vietnam, 1966, p. 2.
5. Allan B. Cole, ed., Conflict in Indochina and International Repercussions: A Documentary History, 1946-1955 (New York: Cornell University Press), pp. 226-228.
6. Mao's three steps are described in Buttinger, Volume II, pp. 1041-1043 (fn. 18 of chapter IX). Buttinger also provides several other sources that deal with Giap's use of Mao's writings. Also see Walter Laqueur Guerrilla (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1976), pp. 267-275.
7. Buttinger, Volume II, pp. 797-799, 1071-1073. He cites Jean Lacouture and Philippe Devillers, La Fin d'une Guerre: Indochine 1954, p. 42, and reference to a French public opinion survey that showed 65% of the persons questioned (in 1953) favored an end to the war and 19% were for outright withdrawal. Department of Defense U.S.-Vietnam Relations 1945-1967 (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1971), 12 Books. Book 1, III, C.1. p. C-9 describes the Lanier government as "... cracking at the seams," in May-June 1953 which enabled the DRV to take a harder line at Geneva. Hereafter DOD US/VN Relations.
8. Interagency study, "The North Vietnamese Role in the Origin, Direction, and Support of the War in South Vietnam," referred to in DOD US/VN



## THE BDM CORPORATION

Solutions, Book 2, IV. A.5. Tab 3. p. 34. Early infiltration was on a small scale involving only a few hundred persons. Significant numbers of regroupees did not travel south until 1959 and thereafter.

9. Commander in Chief Pacific and Commander US Military Assistance Command Vietnam, Report on the War in Vietnam (As of 30 June 1968) (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1969), p. 95, and William C. Westmoreland, A Soldier Reports (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), p. 126. Also see the papers of Joseph A. McChristian, MG US Army (Ret.) at the Military History Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pa., Box 3, 3-ring notebook, p. 17 which describes the movement of the 95th Regiment into Laos in December 1963 and its return to North Vietnam in April 1964 where it underwent pre-infiltration training. Finally in November 1964 the regiment accompanied the 32nd and 101st Regiments of the 325th Division into RVN. Eight additional regiments infiltrated into RVN during 1965.
10. Professor William Lewis, described the principles of Party organization to the BDM study team on 1 March 1979.
11. "Regulations of the Communist Party and Communist Youth Organizations in South Vietnam" as reprinted in Michael Conley, The Communist Infrastructure in South Vietnam: A Study of Organization and Strategy (Washington, D.C.: The American University, 1967), p. 242. Also see Douglas Pike, Viet Cong (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1968), p. 149. To the description Pike adds, "There is one shout and a thousand echoes . . ." In short, democratic centralism means participation in decision making, followed by obedience to the decisions made, even though those decisions may have been steered by a skillful cadre.
12. Doug Pike, History of Vietnamese Communism, 1925-1976 (Stanford, Ca.: Hoover Institution Press, 1978), pp. 120-127. Also see United States Mission, Vietnam, Vietnam Documents and Research Notes, Document No. 101, "The PRGRSV" Part I, "Preparing to Form the PRG," pp. 1-11. Hereafter US Mission, Vietnam material is referred to as Vietnam Documents and Research Notes.
13. Conley, pp. 47, 53-57.
14. Ibid.
15. "Guidance on Strengthening the Organization and Activities of the Three-Man Cell," translation of a PRP document dated 1970. Document No. 5 in Vietnam Documents and Research Notes, Document No. 102, "The PRPSVN-Part II, COSVN's attempt to revitalize the PRP."
16. For various descriptions of the communist cadres see: Dennis J. Duncanson, Government and Revolution in Vietnam (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 168-170; and Vietnam Documents and Research Notes. "North Vietnam's Role in the South," Document Nos.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

36-37 dated June 1968. Pike, History of Vietnamese Communism, pp. 67-71 provides a succinct description of the Party cadre. He states that the "Party cadre quality was at its zenith during the Viet Minh war and has gone downhill steadily ever since." But "... the cadre system does work." (p. 71).

17. "Essay on the Five Steps in the Operations of a Revolution" document E-5, reprinted in Conley, pp. 333-347.
18. Andrew P. O'Meara, Jr., Major US Army, Infrastructure and the Marxist Power Seizure: An Anyalysis of the Communist Models of Revolution (New York: Vantage Press, 1973), pp. 91-99. Conley, pp. 77-116, offers a detailed treatment of the strategic utility of civil mass work under the conditions of protracted guerrilla warfare, communist control of mass organizations, and communist strategy of fronts in insurgency operations.
19. Translation of a communist document captured in South Vietnam and dated November 1951. The document has been accurately translated and it appears authentic. Its exact origin and addresses are unknown, US Department of State, Office of the Historian, Item 2, paragraph C.1. Hereafter items in the State Department Collection will be cited DOS Historian. Also see George K. Tanham, Communist Revolutionary Warfare (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1967), pp. 126-135.
20. For an interesting discussion of The National Liberation Front (NLF) see Bernard B. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1963), pp. 356-366.
21. "Liberated Labor Association's Program and Statute," presented to the 2nd Congress of The NFLSVN. Appendix D, Document D-2, in Conley, p. 278.
22. "Policies on the Organization and Working Procedures of the People's Liberation Committees at Various Levels," Section III of Vietnam Documents and Research Notes, Document No. 101, "The PRGRSV" -Part I "Preparing to Form the PRG," pp. 23-33. Format for the table was suggested by Myrna Pike, who also made available to The BDM study team numerous original documents from the Pike's personal library. The PRG is discussed briefly in Section F of this chapter.
23. Ibid., Document No. 101, Part II, "The Founding Conference of the PRG," January 1972, pp. 11-18.
24. Conley describes the military structure somewhat differently. In addition to the professional forces of the People's Army of (North) Vietnam, PAVN, he describes the (NLF) structure as consisting of the main force units, the territorial armies, and the local guerrilla units, pp. 117. Douglas Pike in Viet Cong, pp. 232-240 describes the NLF's military structure also, but he uses the term Guerrilla Popular Army

## THE BDM CORPORATION

which should not be used in the later stages of hostilities, as Pike himself pointed out.

25. Pike, Viet Cong, p. 234 quotes indoctrination work by the NLF that depicts the main duty of PAVN (circa 1966) as defending the territory of The North, the safe base, whereas the main duty of the Liberation Army was liberation of The South.
26. Conley, p. 119.
27. Gerard Tongas, a French ex-communist, contends that for the Vietnamese Communists. "... the words culture, education, and teaching have only one meaning, namely indoctrination." Quoted in Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, p. 183.
28. U.S. Department of State, "Working Paper on the North Vietnamese Role in the War in South Viet-Nam." Released in May 1968. Vietnam Documents and Research Notes, Document No. 37. Published as Document Nos. 36-37. Also see Pike, History of Vietnamese Communism, pp. 134-147.
29. Interrogation in 1958 of a prisoner who had been active in the resistance since 1945. The prisoner was captured by GVN forces in 1956. DOS Historian, Item 12.
30. Douglas Pike, War, Peace and the Viet Cong (Cambridge, MA.: The M.I.T. Press, 1969), p. 5.
31. Figure 3-1 is based on BDM study team analysis of the documentation reflected in the endnotes to this chapter.
32. A former high-ranking official reviewed a copy of an earlier text of this volume at the request of the Strategic Studies Institute. In his nine-page "Comments on 'A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned in Viet Nam - Volume I The Enemy,'" he takes exception with the earlier draft, commenting that a misunderstanding of the true relationship between the Vietnamese Communist Party (DLD or Dang Lao Dong) and its instruments for carrying on the war in the South adversely affects the analysis in the first four chapters. He goes on to say:

The National Liberation Front was not, as the study suggests, a viable, autonomous organization with a life of its own; it was a facade, a myth, a "front," by means of which the DLD sought to mobilize the people in the south to accomplish its ends, and to garner international sympathy and support. The DLD party -- through its "southern branch" created and directed the NLF, and acted in its name while sustaining the myth of the Front's existence as a non-Communist, southern liberation movement functioning independently of Hanoi's control. It had no structure of its own in an operational sense, no armed forces of its own; it existed largely only on paper.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Upon receipt of a copy of the foregoing comments, BDM asked Ambassador William Colby, former Director of Central Intelligence, to review them. Ambassador Colby did so on September 8, 1979 and, without further written comment, noted that the nine-page document was "An excellent paper." Myrna Pike, an authority in her own right on the communist apparatus in Vietnam, was asked for her evaluation of the NLF. She responded:

Two schools of thought exist on the character of the NLF. Was it a viable organization, a social phenomenon with a life of its own, albeit conceived and directed by the Dang Lao Dong? Or was it a paper facade, meaningless and therefore unworthy of consideration in strategic thinking as well as unworthy of retrospective study? . . . No student of social science could or would discount the effectiveness, the viability of an entity which is seen to exist by those whom it was meant to influence. Like all front organizations, the NLF was a tool. It existed in South Vietnam; it was effective; it was, in fact, the tool until big unit war came to dominate the scene. It is hard to see, from a social science viewpoint, why this brilliant execution of the front concept cannot be viewed as a viable entity and a tool manipulated by Hanoi at one and the same time. . . One thing is certain: the NLF was no myth. To disregard it as unreal would be to disregard the quintessential element in mobilizing the southern insurgency, that is, social organization.

This view is borne out by the noted Bernard B. Fall in The Two Viet Nams. Fall points out that during World War II the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) so completely controlled the French Resistance that De Gaulle could not land a single agent in occupied France without British permission, and then could only communicate with them using British-controlled codes. Yet once back on his native soil, despite his total dependence on British and American supplies, De Gaulle steered his own political course. Bernard Fall likens that situation to the one in Vietnam. He states:

In other words, then, the real test of the NLF as a political entity should not be whether, in the sixth or eighth (depending on when one considers the insurgency to have begun) year of its struggle, it must draw on Chinese ammunition or PAVN divisions to stay alive, but whether or not it is willing and able to steer a "Southern" course. There was some solid evidence in 1964 and 1965 that the latter was the case then, as the NLF

## THE BDM CORPORATION

changed secretaries-general three times and offered a five-point negotiation program that not only differed from Hanoi's Four Points but actually was changed in thirty-nine different places when Hanoi rebroadcast it. (pp. 359-360).

For a list of the 39 changes see "National Liberation Front on U.S. Escalation of War," March 26, 1965 with "Notes on NFLSV Central Committee Statement" in The Viet-Nam Reader, Marcus G. Raskin and Bernard B. Fall, eds. (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), pp. 232- 252.

33. Public announcement of the formation of the PRP was made in early 1962. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, Office of Media Services Vietnam Information Notes, Number 3, Revised May 1967, p. 3 presents a very brief description of the PRP and the COSVN, NLF, PRP chain of command. A Senior Lieutenant in the North Vietnamese Navy, captured in The Gulf of Tonkin in 1966, stated that the PRP . . . "is nothing but the South Vietnamese branch of the LD (Lao Dong) Party." He believed, correctly it turns out, that once South Vietnam had been liberated, the NFLSVN and PRP would disappear; See DOS Historian, Item 42.
34. NIC Field Exploitation Team, National Alliance Democratic and Peace Forces (Saigon: National Chieu Hoi Center, 1968), p. 2.
35. Pike, History of Vietnamese Communism, p. 125.
36. The Viet Cong Political Infrastructure in South Vietnam, a SEATO Short Paper - 55 (Bangkok: The Research Office South-East Asia Treaty Organization, 1972), pp. 30-40. This SEATO paper points out that the PRG was an NLF effort to create an alternative apparatus to Thieu's government, to provide a rallying point for wavering elements of the NLF by providing a sign that a communist victory was at hand, and to enhance communist prestige internally and externally while establishing an apparently legitimate basis for equal status with the GVN in any coalition government. Paper made available by the History of the Vietnam War on Microfilm, the extensive library maintained by Douglas and Myrna Pike.
37. Autonomous zones are, by definition, self-governing areas. However, this arrangement was merely a ploy on the part of the Party to enlist the support of the highland tribes.
38. Michael Lent, Decisionmaking in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (Maryland: American Institute for Research, 1973), *passim*.
39. *Ibid.*

## THE BDM CORPORATION

40. Ibid., p. 22.
41. General Vo Nguyen Giap and General Van Tien Dung, How We Won the War (Philadelphia: Recon Publications, 1976), p. 40.
42. Harvey H. Smith, et. al., Area Handbook for North Vietnam (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1967) and Lent, op. cit.
43. The term "Troika" is often used instead of Triad. Troika, an association of three in authority, comes from the example of the Russian vehicle drawn by three horses. For an interesting description of the Troika and its political application see Anita Lauve Nutt. Troika on Trial: Control or Compromise, a three-volume work prepared in September 1967 under contract number SD-220 for the Office of International Security Affairs, Department of Defense. The author, now Anita Lauve Richardson, was a foreign service officer in Vietnam and later a Rand Corporation consultant.
44. Lent, passim.
45. See for example Vo Nguyen Giap, People's War, People's Army (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961). Several captured documents reflected in Vietnam Documents and Research Notes also refer to the "general offensive-general uprising." See Document No. 28-29 "The Decisive Hours: Two Directives for Tet," dated April 1968; Document No. 45, "The Process of Revolution and The General Uprising," dated October 1968; Document No. 64, "Summer 1969: A Viet Cong Study of the Situation and Prospects"; and COSVN Resolution No. 9 of July 1969.
46. "Regulations of the Communist Party and Communist Youth Organization in South Vietnam," reproduced in Conley, pp. 239-240, supra note 11.
47. Intelligence report on command relationships between the Lao Dong Party and COSVN, based on interrogation of an intellectual proselyting cadre arrested in Spring, 1967. DOS Historian, Item 207.
48. Conley, passim.
49. On January 29, 1961 Hanoi announced that the NLF had been formed the previous month, (on 20 December, 1960).
50. Hanoi, Hoc Tap, September 1966. Hoc Tap is a Lao Dong Party Journal that parrots the official Party position and propaganda.
51. Pike, Viet Cong, passim and Conley, p. 111. These two authors use different terms (translations) for some of the organizations, such as Conley's staff agency "Invalids and Heros" is Pike's "Central War-Deceased Heros Committee."

## THE BDM CORPORATION

52. A biographic summary issued in 1961, based on agents' reports compiled during First Indochina War, 1946-1954. DOS Historian, Item 11.
53. Albert E. Palmerlee, The Central Office of South Viet-Nam (Saigon: US Mission, August 1968). Vietnam Documents and Research Notes, Document No. 40. This excellent document traces the evolution of COSVN from its inception in 1951 when it replaced the Nam Bo (South Vietnam) Regional Committee, through its dissolution in 1954 after the Geneva Accords were signed and its functional existence once again as the Nam Bo Committee, and finally its reemergence as COSVN in 1961. Thereafter COSVN became the Central Committee of the PRP, in short, the Southern Branch of Hanoi's Lao Dong Party. 1a1
54. US Mission in Vietnam, Hanoi's Central Office for South Vietnam (Saigon, July 1969), p. 2.
55. The retired official, supra note 31, who reviewed an earlier draft of this volume contends that:

There was no simple distinction between PAVN and PLAF forces and military commands. Most "PAVN" units operated under commands controlled directly by Hanoi; most so-called PLAF units operated under the military command of COSVN; but this distinction was not clearcut. Indeed, most units which were initially "southern" were northernized after 1968, and local units operating in areas into which major PAVN forces were introduced came under control of PAVN regional commands. All forces in the south -- including PAVN -- were encompassed in the term "People's Liberation Armed Forces" as used by the Communists.

Conley, on the other hand, refers to the "... four indistinguishable elements of the Communist insurgent military potential in South Vietnam: (1) the professional forces of the People's Army of (North) Vietnam (PAVN); (2) the main force units; (3) the territorial armies; and (4) the local guerrilla units." (p. 117). In Viet Cong, Pike describes the structure of the armed forces in functional terms, and he considers that the (Guerrilla) Popular Army consisted of the village guerrilla (du kich xa) and the combat guerrilla (du kich chien dau). Pike cautions that the term "full military" or Main Force is likely to mislead since these units thought and fought like guerrillas. He divides the full military arm of the NLF into two basic entities: the Regionals or Territorials and the Main Force or "hard hats." (pp. 233-240). With respect to chains of command, Pike states in his History of Vietnamese Communism (p. 125) that throughout the war the PAVN chain of command went directly to Hanoi and did not go through the PRP system beyond nominal liaison. The Australian communist-sympathizer, Alfred G. Burchett, Vietnam, Inside Story of the Guerilla (sic) War (New York: International Publishers, 1965), p. 188 refers to

## THE BDM CORPORATION

the Front's armed forces as being of three types: "self-defense guerillas, regional guerillas, and regular army.."

56. This figure is based mainly on Conley, pp. 117-119 and Pike, pp. 233-240.
57. Conley, *passim*.
58. Vietnam Documents and Research Notes, "The People's Revolutionary Councils in Rural Areas," Document No. 35.
59. Vietnam Documents and Research Notes "The Process of Revolution and the General Uprising." Document No. 45.
60. Figure 3-10 was derived from textual material mainly in Pike, Viet Cong and Conley, *passim*.
61. *Ibid.* Figure 3-11 provides a simple, general view of the organization and structure of civil operations within the NLF, illustrating how they were controlled by the communists.
62. Vietnam Documents and Research Notes, "The Founding Conference of the PRG." Part II, Document No. 101, "The PRGRSV," p. 1.
63. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.
64. Hoc Tap, Hanoi, June 1969, reprinted in Vietnam Documents and Research Notes, Document No. 101, pp. 70-71.
65. COSVN Circular 99/CTNT, June 1969, "Activation of the Provisional Revolutionary Government to the Republic of South Viet-Nam." (Classified by the Vietnamese as Urgent - To be kept absolutely secret). Document 2, pp. 19-25, in Vietnam Documents and Research Notes, The "PRGRSV," The First Nine Months of the PRG," Document No. 101, Part III.
66. The retired official previously cited, *supra* notes 31 and 54, describes the apparatus in these terms:

... the PRP never existed as an autonomous southern Communist party, nor did the PRG exist as a viable autonomous governmental entity with an apparatus of its own. The so-called NLF, PRP and PRG were called into their amorphous being when it suited Hanoi's interests to do so: the NLF to provide an apparent (but mythical) nationalist, non-Communist aura for the beginning of the armed struggle against Diem in 1959; the PRP to assuage the concerns of some southern Communists about the North's dominant role in the insurgency; and the PRG to conjure up a "government" which could balance the corner opposite



## THE BDM CORPORATION

the GVN at the peace table when negotiations began in Paris. There was one enemy political-military apparatus in the south, created and largely staffed by the DLD, and responsive to Hanoi's direction through the DLD party entity initially called COSVN.

It must be noted that at least two authorities on the Southern communist apparatus (Fall and Pike) credit the NLF with having had some organic political initiative apart from its admitted ties to Hanoi, at least into the mid 1960s. Supra endnote 31. The PRG, on the other hand, was created to present the facade of an "elected" government that might ultimately claim its share in a coalition government -- as an interim step on the road to unification. The PRG was not a government; rather it was a small staff directly responsive to the Central Committee of the Lao Dong Party in Hanoi. Day-to-day politico-military operations in RVN were directed by the Party apparatus either directly from Hanoi (for PAVN) or through COSVN (for PLAF). Later, in 1966-1968, counterparts to COSVN were established to provide tighter control over operations in the northern half of South Vietnam. Hanoi directed operations north of Hai Van Pass through Military Region Tri-Thien-Hue; the coastal areas north of Cam Ranh Bay through their Military Region 5; and the Central Highlands through their B-3 Front. See USMACV, Combined Intelligence Command, Vietnam (CICV) study ST 70-05.

67. Generals Vo Nguyen Giap and Van Tien Dung, How We Won the War. It is interesting to note that these victorious generals give no credit to the NLF, PRP, or PRG; rather they refer to people's support or uprising only in general terms and obviously laud the accomplishments of the PAVN. The appendices to this small book purport to be PLAF policies in liberated areas, but of the two documents cited, one is dated April, 1975 and the second appears to be dated April 30, 1975, claiming credit for a PLAF general offensive into Saigon. Little was heard from the PRG thereafter.
68. Pike, History of Vietnamese Communism, p. 134. The sparse treatment given the PRG by key figures is illustrated to some degree by these authors:

Henry Kissinger refers to the PRG only once in his 1500-page book. White House Years (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1979), p. 281. Similarly Nguyen Cao Ky, Twenty Years and Twenty Days (New York: Stein and Day, 1976), p. 191 makes only one comment about the PRG:

I was not deluded into believing that the Paris accord would bring permanent peace. By the time of the cease-fire agreement in January 1973, the NLF had already restyled itself the Provisional Revolutionary Government. Our foreign minister, Tran Van Lam, signed agreements

## THE BDM CORPORATION

only with North Vietnam's negotiator, Xuan Thuy, but there was a further session later in the day at which a modified agreement mentioning the PRG was signed by the Americans, the North Vietnamese, and Mme. Binh, foreign minister of the PRG. We refused to accept copies of that text, but there was no doubt that the NLF had won its biggest victory.

And Guenter Lewy, America In Vietnam (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 214-215, neatly sums up the Lao Dong Party's strategy and organizational imperatives:

Minh, who was sworn in as president on 28 April, to the last hoped to be able to negotiate a coalition government with the PRG as provided under the Paris accords, but the North Vietnamese had no intention of sharing power with anyone, including the PRG, whose propagandistic usefulness had now come to an end. On 30 April, 1975, as North Vietnamese tanks entered Saigon, Minh announced the unconditional surrender of the government of the Republic of Vietnam.

CHAPTER 4  
MOBILIZATION

To conduct a people's war, it is necessary to mobilize the entire people. .... Since our Party's birth, the method of its revolutionary campaign has been to direct propaganda, to organize and lead the masses to struggle, from the lower to the upper levels, and to motivate them to rise up and regain administrative power through revolutionary violence. Because of the widespread mobilization and organization of the masses to fight vigorously in the 1930-31 revolutionary movement, in the 1936-39 democratic campaign period, and in the 1940-45 national liberation campaign period, the great forces of the entire people were able to rise up to fight aggression during the August Revolution as well as during the anti-French resistance and the present anti-U.S. resistance.1/

Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap

A. INTRODUCTION

Revolutionary and guerrilla wars have been fought throughout history. Unconventional tactics have been used by weaker peoples against invading or occupying armies, by regular soldiers in rearguard actions and by groups rising against unpopular landholders or government. Indeed, such tactics were used in the American War of Independence. Nevertheless, the popular notion persists that unconventional war is a 20th century phenomenon.

Marxist-Leninist philosophers quickly recognized the important role played by a revolutionary elite in mobilizing the masses for such revolutionary or guerrilla struggles. It followed that emphasis had to be placed on the use of propaganda to promote the mobilization, and close attention had to be paid to the organization of both material and manpower resources, a task that was performed with remarkable success by the communist cadres. Because of severe resource limitations, establishing effective mobilization techniques loomed large in the Communist Vietnamese strategy and therefore, warrants close attention.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

This chapter examines the system that was developed by the Communist Vietnamese to accomplish their overall goal of reunifying their country under communist leadership. Their effort required extraordinary commitment for four reasons:

- The resources of Vietnam as a whole and the North in particular were limited.
- It was important to establish a strong mobilization system to support political-military objectives not only in the relatively secure North but also in the South, in the face of the enemy.
- The struggle in which they were engaged consumed more than three decades; and even toward its conclusion, there was no apparent end in sight.
- It was necessary to adapt mobilization efforts to meet circumstances that were dictated by US intervention in the war. This included both the need to adapt to air strikes and the need to meet manpower and materiel requirements for the fighting in the South.

### B. COMMUNIST VIETNAMESE MOBILIZATION: BACKGROUND

For several centuries, the actual fighting of wars (in Europe) was largely the preserve of the professional soldier, with civilians being left to foot the bill through taxes, confiscation, billeting, and pillaging.

The French Revolution altered the traditional separation of civilians and soldiers by involving all the people in the defense of the Revolution and the nation. Through the levee en masse, all Frenchmen were liable to be called up to defend the nation, and those not serving in the military forces were expected to contribute indirectly to the success of the armies through sacrifices of labor, money, and luxuries at home.<sup>2/</sup>

In the twentieth century, the traditions of "total war", war involving all strata of society and every aspect of economic life, grew. During World War I, most nations involved in the conflict were mobilized to meet the demands of total war. Through this process the meaning of mobilization

## THE BDM CORPORATION

extended from its original narrow reference to calling up reserves and preparing them for immediate combat to include the notion of focusing all the political and economic assets of a nation on accomplishing wartime goals. For that effort, marshalling and maintaining the enthusiastic support of all elements in the society has proven to be crucial. Convincing the general populace that their lives are directly threatened by the enemy contributes directly to the success of that effort.

There are two major components in a total war mobilization effort. The first of those components is meeting manpower requirements and maintaining the morale of the people involved in the mobilization effort. The second is finding the material resources to fight the war. At the front, the first component takes the shape of military forces who are directly committed to the war effort. Behind the lines, personnel requirements include providing a work force that is appropriate for maintaining agricultural and industrial production levels to support the military effort. The second component also has both front line and home front aspects. Arms sufficient to accomplish the military objectives must be supplied to the fighting forces, and at the same time, the requisite materials for maintaining agricultural and industrial production must be found and transported.

In the development of their mobilization doctrine, the Communist Vietnamese had the advantage of using both the example and writings of the Chinese Communists. In addition, the Vietnamese had the opportunity during the Viet Minh war against the French to refine their adaptation of Chinese doctrine. Some maintain that the Vietnamese succeeded in extending and refining the Maoist strategy of people's war.<sup>3/</sup> The principal manifestations of the Vietnamese model were terrorist activities like assassinations and kidnappings; armed struggle, including guerrilla and main force warfare; and intensive organizational and motivational efforts among Vietnamese.<sup>4/</sup> The Vietnam War demanded that this intensive organizational and motivational effort extend all the way from villages in the South to cities in the North. Taken together, this effort defined the scope of the Communist Vietnamese mobilization effort.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

In addition to whatever influence the French example of levee en masse may have had, the communists in Vietnam took inspiration in their mobilization effort from Lenin. He had written:

To wage war properly, it is necessary to possess a firmly organized rear base area.5/

The mobilization doctrine that the Vietnamese developed on this basis pictured North Vietnam as the "Rear", producing for and supplying the "Front," South Vietnam, where the actual fighting occurred.6/ The Communist Vietnamese extended this doctrinal base beyond its narrow military meaning to include intense political activity. In setting out the general mobilization objectives for the rear, General Giap wrote:

As far as the revolutionary war is concerned, in the process of building our strongholds and rear bases by starting from nothing, the creation of the first strongholds is only an initial success. To strengthen and develop this success, to help strongholds and rear bases stand fast against all challenges and to develop ever more strongly their impact toward the war, it is absolutely necessary to strengthen constantly and comprehensively our strongholds and rear bases.

According to the viewpoint of people's war, the strengthening of the strongholds and rear bases primarily depends on political, economic, military, and geographical factors, of which the most important are the political and human factors and the nature of the social regime. Therefore, the building of the rear bases must be comprehensive and must include the various political, economic, military, and cultural aspects.

It is first necessary to build a sound political position, to strengthen the political and moral consensus among the people; to strive constantly to develop the supremacy of the new social regime in various aspects--political, economic, and cultural; to achieve democratic reforms gradually and actively; to improve the material and spiritual life of the people; and to develop constantly the latent potentials of the rear bases, with which they will be able to defend themselves and, at the same time, develop comprehensively their great contributions toward the war. The strongholds and rear bases of people's war pose a constant threat to the enemy, and thus are the objectives of the enemy's repeated and violent attacks.7/

Thus, the communist leadership viewed the struggle in Vietnam as one extended conflict with two aspects. The mobilization effort extended through both the rear in the North and the front in the South.

The challenges presented in the front and the rear, however, were very different. In the South, the objective was to maintain the cohesiveness of the organization, described in Chapter 3, in the face of a determined and sophisticated enemy, the United States and the South Vietnamese government. The challenge provided strong motivation for the communist forces in the South to carry on. The relative security of the North, however, demanded special efforts to motivate the people to continue their protracted struggle. This difference between the front and the rear illustrates an important distinction between the mobilization efforts of the Viet Minh war and the conflict of the 1960's and 1970's.

In the Viet Minh war (1946-1954) the communists developed their techniques for organizing and motivating the civilian population. Ho Chi Minh's mobilization order issued in 1946 was simple and straightforward. It read:

Regardless of sex and age, religious creed, party or nationality, if you are Vietnamese, stand up and fight the French colonialists to save the fatherland. He who has a gun uses a gun; he who has a sword, uses a sword, or if he does not have a sword, uses a hoe, shovel, or bamboo stick. Everybody must strive to fight the colonialists to save the country.

Spontaneous popular opinion had supported the Viet Minh attack on the French. In the Vietnam War, support for the communist goals was a more contrived and carefully organized expression in both the North and the South. The key element for the Party in both parts of the country was to present the US and ARVN forces as threatening the livelihood of all Vietnamese. In the South the communists were attempting to convince the population that they were the saviors from Allied brutality who would overthrow the corrupt, puppet regime. The 1965-1968 and 1972 US bombings provided a focus for communist motivational propaganda, but through most of the war the North, or the "rear area" of the conflict, was relatively secure from destruction.<sup>9/</sup> The relative protection enjoyed by the rear area in the

1960's and 1970's was distinctly different from the Viet Minh War experience when French military forces occupied strategic locations throughout the country. This chapter will describe the methods that were used by the communists to take advantage of this difference and to offset motivational problems that were associated with living and working in a relatively secure area far from the front.

### C. MOBILIZATION IN THE NORTH

#### 1. Military Personnel Requirements

The demands on the communist leadership to meet personnel requirements shifted in the course of the war. Initially, war fighting demands in the South were met by the 90,000 Southerners who had gone to the North for regrouping after the Viet Minh war.<sup>10/</sup> Gradually, through the early 1960's, the numbers of Southerners returning to fight in the South declined and their contribution to the total effort of the NLF shrank accordingly. As an example of the changes that were taking place, an NLF document detailing personnel strengths in Quang Tri province (South Vietnam) illustrated the shifting percentages of personnel contribution:

TABLE 4-1. PERSONNEL CHANGE - AN ILLUSTRATION

<u>Type of Personnel</u>	<u>Percentages</u>		
	1961	1962	1963
Conscripts from North Vietnam	--	5	50
North Vietnamese Army soldiers	1	5	20
Returnees from regroupment	99	90	30

In the 1968 Tet Offensive, it was primarily the NLF units that were decimated. The percentages of Southern "returnees" were further reduced and the NLF filled its ranks with Northerners, many of whom were draftees. As a consequence, the continuation of the struggle depended on the North's ability not only to provide fighting men for the war in the South, but also to provide personnel to fill the places of the workers who were being inducted into the armed forces.<sup>12/</sup>



## THE BDM CORPORATION

Of a total population of about 18 million in the DRV, there were approximately four million men between the ages of 15 and 49. Of those, two million men were fit for military service. Each year, approximately 175,000 men reached military conscription age, but only about 100,000 of those were considered fit for military service.<sup>13/</sup> In 1970, the armed forces of the DRV were estimated to be disposed as follows:

TABLE 4-2. PAVN ARMED FORCES 1970-1971.<sup>14/</sup>

Total Armed Forces:	432,750
Army:	223,000 in North Vietnam
	85,000 in South Vietnam
	67,000 in Laos
	<u>40,000</u> in Cambodia.
TOTAL	425,000

On the basis of these figures it was estimated by the US Defense Department that about 90,000 men would be available to deploy to the South in units or as replacements or fillers should that number be needed.<sup>15/</sup>

The communist forces in the South maintained their strength because of this ability to replenish the PLAF/DRV units after each offensive. In addition, to some extent through their ability to choose when and where to engage US forces, the communists were able to exercise a degree of control over their casualty rates. As a consequence, they could generally limit their losses to what they were willing to suffer.<sup>16/</sup> The ability of the communist forces to meet their military manpower requirements for their protracted war meant that the Allies would not be able to win a war of attrition by eliminating communist military forces in the South faster than they could be replaced.<sup>17/</sup>

### 2. Civilian Manpower Requirements in The North

While the communist military personnel requirements in the South could be met, there was the belief that US bombing could seriously weaken the rear base, and thus, the support for the war. This goal could be accomplished if the bombing destroyed the economic base of the North, or if

## THE BDM CORPORATION

it seriously weakened the morale of the North Vietnamese. The DRV government sought to frustrate these two threats and to turn them to its advantage. This effort required the total mobilization of the people and resources of the North.18/

There were two elements to the manpower squeeze that was being exerted on the North. First, there was the problem of compensating for the drain of workers moving to fight in the South. Second, there was the problem of overcoming the impact of the bombing on the economy.19/

The direct drain of manpower caused by the war did not itself create a serious problem for the Northern economy. In 1967, after more than two years of heavy American troop involvement in the war, the number of PAVN troops in the South was less than two percent of the North Vietnamese male labor force, and less than three percent of the male agriculture force. (By comparison, the US forces in Southeast Asia at the time amounted to about one percent of the U.S. male civilian labor force).20/

At the same time, there was the problem of meeting manpower requirements in the agricultural and industrial sectors. There was a tendency in US military circles to overestimate the impact of our bombing on the North's economy. In Congressional testimony, Admiral Ulysses S. G. Sharp, Commander in Chief of U.S. Forces in the Pacific, stated in 1967:

As a result of the increased weight and efficiency of our attacks, the Hanoi regime faces mounting logistic, management, and morale problems. Repair, reconstruction, and dispersal programs are consuming increasing human and material resources which otherwise would contribute to the Communist's combat capability in South Vietnam. We believe about 500,000 men have been diverted to such activities. As a matter of fact, the latest estimate that I have seen is 500,000 to 600,000. The extensive defense programs are heavy users of manpower. The drawdown on farm labor has reduced food production, and large amounts of food now have to be imported. The ports are congested by an almost four-fold expansion of sea imports necessitated by disruption or destruction of domestic sources of cement, steel, and other bulky materials. Ship unloading time is believed to have tripled since March.21/

At the time of that statement, another analysis downplayed the impact that the bombing was having on the North. A Rand Corporation study

## THE BDM CORPORATION

completed in December 1966 estimated that as much as 15 to 20 percent of the agricultural labor force may have been diverted to other tasks, but the men were replaced by even more women.22/

The introduction of women in large numbers to the labor force served not only the immediate goal of meeting labor requirements in agriculture and industry both, but it also provided a means for accomplishing the long-term objective of changing the social role of Vietnamese women. In the spring of 1965, when the mobilization of every element of Vietnamese society was advancing rapidly, the Party issued a general directive giving each woman three responsibilities:

- (1) Replace the men who were called from the fields and factories for combat duties.
- (2) Take charge of their families, so that husbands could leave for the front, knowing that the family would be well taken care of.
- (3) Join militia units to take part in combat when necessary.23/

In spite of male resistance, women began to take a more active role in the economy. Most women in the labor force remained on the farms. In 1967 it was estimated that about 70 percent of the 6,500,000 farm workers were women. By 1967, some 1,290,000 women were working in non-farm jobs.24/ Thus, the women presented a pool of labor that could more than make up for the drain of manpower on the North Vietnamese economy being caused by the war effort.

Additional labor to maintain the economy came directly from China. It is estimated that in 1966, 40,000 Chinese were working on the railroads.25/ They played a vital role in keeping the flow of goods coming into North Vietnam from its communist allies.

The aid provided by the communist states, particularly the USSR and the PRC, served indirectly to meet Vietnamese industrial manpower needs. As plants and factories were bombed, the labor forces associated with those facilities were freed for other work. The economy continued to function as long as the goods were supplied from outside. Thus, even though, as Admiral Sharp indicated above, a half-million men were engaged in meeting problems that arose from the US bombings, in fact the Vietnamese

economy continued to operate. Mr. McNamara recognized that fact in his Congressional testimony:

North Vietnam is a nation of 18.5 million people, and the diversion of 500,000 from agricultural pursuits to the defense, dispersal, and repair of the lines of communication I do not believe is a severe penalty. It simply requires that their outside sources of supply increase their support by the equivalent of 500,000 man-years, and very clearly the Soviets and Chinese are capable of this, and as a matter of fact have acted to so increase their support.26/

3. Impact of Mobilization on the North Vietnamese Economy

The mobilization effort accelerated the communist economic program in North Vietnam. In the late 1950's there was considerable underemployment of the labor force, and the repressive effort led by Truong Chinh to collectivize North Vietnamese farming had caused enormous dissatisfaction among the peasants. Thousands of people were killed in the turmoil that accompanied the effort, and a rebellion broke out toward the end of 1956. In 1958 the government undertook a new drive to gather the farming population first into cooperatives, and then into communes. Individual farmers found it nearly impossible to continue their work outside the cooperatives.27/ US bombing caused the North Vietnamese leaders to embark on an integrated three-way assault on the problems of flood control, transportation, and agriculture. In effect, the bombings necessitated massive reorganization of the North Vietnamese countryside, an effort that brought the country under closer control by the Party. It was assumed by the DRV government that eventually US bombs would be directed toward the dams, dikes, and irrigation systems on which North Vietnamese agriculture production depended.

There were two distinct periods of US bombing of the DRV: 28/

- "Rolling Thunder," March 1965 to October 1968, punctuated by frequent bombing halts, and
- "Linebacker I" May to October 1972 and "Linebacker II" in December 1972.

Rolling Thunder was designed by the Johnson Administration to raise morale in the South and convince the North Vietnamese to halt their

## THE BDM CORPORATION

aggression against the South.<sup>29/</sup> In February 1965, when the systematic kolling Thunder bombings started, the transportation and communications systems were the principal targets. A vast campaign was organized to meet not only the immediate threat to the transportation network, but also to face the less immediate threat of attack on the agricultural system. The answer to both of these threats was the creation of secondary and tertiary dike and irrigation systems.<sup>30/</sup> The earth and rock removed from the dikes and canals were used to provide a new raised road system, especially in the vulnerable Red River Delta. In the same process, fields were leveled out to make the irrigation systems more efficient. The countryside was changed from the traditional terraces bordering tiny rice fields, to big rectangular fields bordered by massive road-topped dikes.<sup>31/</sup> The bigger fields resulted in more efficient cultivation. North Vietnamese propaganda stated that the per-acre yields steadily increased. Thus, for instance, rice production for 1967 was said to be 11 percent higher than in 1966 and two percent higher than in 1965.

The industrial section of North Vietnam's economy was similarly affected by the bombings. The preliminary plans to build a developed economy around industrial output based on a Stalinist model was set aside because of the vulnerability of the large plants to bombings. According to the communist-journalist Wilfred Burchett, orders for heavy-industrial equipment were canceled, and the government led the way in decentralizing industry to create many small plants with the goal of making every province and every district as economically self-supporting as possible.<sup>32/</sup> The US bombers destroyed the main centralized industries, but there were scores of smaller plants turning out war and consumer goods in each province. In effect a sizeable portion of the DRV's small, war-essential manufacturing capacity was beyond the effective reach of any but the most indiscriminate and inefficient air attacks.<sup>33/</sup>

Oleg Hoeffding suggests that the growing dependence upon outside support for supply of goods vital to the economy also helped to increase

government control over the economy and hence to extend Party control over North Vietnamese society. He wrote:

"...war creates new lines of dependence on the established authorities for goods and services essential to survival (rationed food, civil defense, medical care, and so on). Ability to supply or withhold them becomes an important instrument of control. Even when a government becomes unable to meet these needs adequately or effectively this instrument may be strengthened rather than weakened. If the government controls whatever supply remains available it can offer the consumers an easy choice between not enough or nothing. In an acute shortage situation the government acquires the additional instrument of discriminatory distribution, favoring those who are loyal, cooperative, and useful and depriving those who are uncooperative and nonessential. The siege of Leningrad provides a classic example of the exercise of potency of these control devices.

Even in an economy like North Vietnam's, where the great majority of consumers grow their own food and are close to decentralized traditional sources of other essentials, there should be important lines of dependence by the rural population on centrally controlled resources, and a substantial part of the population is fully dependent on them.

Should North Vietnam become increasingly dependent on foreign aid for essential consumer's goods -- because of food shortage and industry bombing -- the exercise of these control instruments would become easier and more effective, because government imports are the most heavily centralized of all sources of supply and are most easily controlled by an efficient government.34/

During the period of the Rolling Thunder operations, North Vietnamese vulnerability to air attack was not a critical feature. The DRV's industrial-agricultural-transportation infrastructure was comparatively simple. Because it lacked sophistication, that infrastructure was easily decentralized and it continued to perform its necessary functions despite the bombing. The US inventory of air-to-ground weapons in that period (1965-1968) did not include "smart bombs." Consequently, bombing was not essentially accurate, and even to interdict a bridge in daylight required

## THE BDM CORPORATION

hundreds of sorties. It was not until guided air-to-ground munitions became available in the 1970's that precision bombing became possible.35/

In 1965, when Rolling Thunder began, the North Vietnamese air defense system was primitive. By the summer of 1966, that system was expanded greatly, with Soviet help, and included the combination of fighters, surface-to-air missiles, antiaircraft artillery, radars, and an effective command and control system.36/

Despite the growing North Vietnamese air defense system and the Presidentially imposed restrictions under which US airpower had to operate, considerable damage was suffered by the enemy in the North. Table 4-3 presents data on the accomplishments of the Rolling Thunder campaign as of 15 July 1967.37/ It should be noted that bombing halts gave the communist forces time to repair damage.38/

In short, the Rolling Thunder bombing campaign created difficulties for the DRV and greatly increased their dependence on their communist allies. However, the North was still able to continue its own efforts.

In contrast to the Rolling Thunder campaign, the effects of the 1972 Linebacker bombings upon North Vietnam and specifically upon its capability to mobilize, were far more devastating. In a sense, the North had built up a resistance to the Rolling Thunder style of US air war.39/ Despite reports that 30% of the war materiel supplied to the North had been destroyed en route to Hanoi during Rolling Thunder, the North managed to mobilize masses of laborers in efforts to repair damaged facilities rapidly.40/ Further, the North Vietnamese adjusted well to the air war by moving essential POL supplies and munitions to areas in which US bombing was restricted, and by moving supplies at night in order to avoid detection.

The communist's Easter Offensive of 1972 was met by Linebacker I, a sudden and devastating air interdiction program that used guided bombs. When the US unilaterally halted the operation in October, the DRV quickly mobilized the necessary labor force and began to repair the damage to lines of communication and installations. Linebacker II was initiated in December to bring the DRV to the negotiating table and to assure the GVN of continuing support.41/ Navy and Air Force aircraft and B-52s from the

TABLE 4-3. PERCENTAGE OF DRV NATIONAL CAPACITY DESTROYED - ROLLING THUNDER

<u>TARGET SYSTEM</u>	<u>PERCENT DESTROYED (AT LEAST TEMPORARILY)</u>
MILITARY BARRACKS	26
AMMUNITION DEPOTS	76
FUEL STORAGE	87
SUPPLY DEPOTS	18
POWER PLANTS	78
MARITIME PORTS	12
RAILROAD YARDS	36
RAILROAD SHOPS	22
EXPLOSIVE PLANTS	100
IRON AND STEEL PLANTS	100
CEMENT PLANT	90
AIRFIELDS	23
NAVAL BASES	20
COMMUNICATIONS INSTALLATIONS	20
BRIDGES TARGETED	56



## THE BDM CORPORATION

Strategic Air Command struck North Vietnam with devastating results in an 11-day air campaign.

The air strikes focused on transport systems and military supplies in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas. An interested observer in Hoa Lo Prison in Hanoi, Cdr. James B. Stockdale USN, (now VAdm Stockdale) described the impact of Linebacker II on enemy morale and will, which translated into enemy capacity to mobilize its people:

A totally contrasting atmosphere swept the city on that December night in 1972 when the air raids didn't last 10 minutes but went on and on - when the B-52 columns rolled in, and the big bombs impacted and kept on impacting in the distance - when the ground shook, and the plaster fell from the ceiling, and the prisoners cheered wildly, and the guards cowered in the lee of the walls...42/

Linebacker II was a tremendous assault on North Vietnamese will: it resulted in the large-scale destruction of principal war-making facilities of the country. The selection of targets was accomplished in Saigon by senior US military officers and not by officials in Washington who were responding solely to political arguments and restraints.43/ Table 4-4 presents data from Admiral Sharp's account of the extent of the physical damage to the DRV. Linebacker II brought the Northern war effort to a halt, and in January 1973 the DRV came to the peace table. So, too, did the GVN.

#### 4. Motivation Efforts in The North

Maintaining enthusiasm among the general population for mobilization and its sacrifices has presented problems for all governments at war. There is a direct relationship between that enthusiasm and the threat that is perceived to people's lives. In North Vietnam, before the systematic bombings began in 1965, the war was experienced most directly through the government propaganda machine. The beginning of the bombings coincided with the increase in the numbers of Northern soldiers moving to fight in the South.44/ The DRV government moved to turn the people's heightened sense of crisis to its benefit through a carefully orchestrated propaganda campaign. The mobilization order that was issued to characterize the campaign read:

TABLE 4-4. A SUMMARY OF RESULTS OF LINEBACKER II

<u>TARGET</u>	<u>DAMAGE ASSESSMENT</u>
RAILROAD SYSTEM	ENTIRE RAIL COMPLEX OF COUNTRY WAS CRIPPLED
SUPPLY STORAGE AREAS	NINE MAJOR AREAS STRUCK
VEHICLE REPAIR FACILITIES	CONSIDERABLE DAMAGE
PORTS AND WATERWAYS	ALL NINE TARGETS ON STRIKE LIST - CONSIDERABLE DAMAGE
NVN ELECTRIC POWER GRID	SHARPLY COMPROMISED AS HANOI TRANSFORMER STATION WAS INOPERATIVE AND THREE LARGE POWER PLANTS WERE SUCCESSFULLY STRUCK.
HANOI RADIO COMMUNICATIONS CENTER	MAIN CONTROL BUILDINGS WHERE TRANSMITTERS LOCATED - DAMAGED
AIRFIELDS AND SAM SITES	TEN PRINCIPAL FIELDS IN HANOI AREA WERE STRUCK TO ENSURE THAT AIRCRAFT OPERATIONS FROM THESE FIELDS WOULD BE INTERDICTED, AND A NUMBER OF SAM SITES WERE PUT OUT OF COMMISSION

## THE BDM CORPORATION

"Everybody is against the enemy, each citizen is a soldier, each village, street, plant is a fortress, each party branch a command post on the national salvation anti-American battle front. Build up the rear zone into a self-exerting spiritual source, a source of material for the frontline."45/

To bring home the threat to each citizen, the following activities were recommended:

- (1) Shooting at planes with rifles.
- (2) Capturing downed American pilots.
- (3) Assisting antiaircraft gunners and replacing them when necessary.
- (4) Maintaining a vigilant eye for spies and commandos sent north by the United States and South Vietnam.
- (5) Building fortifications to protect against invasion.
- (6) Drawing up detailed battle plans to counter such invasions.
- (7) Keeping the lines of communication and transportation open.46/

The propaganda campaign with its attendant abuse of US pilots, "witch hunts" for suspected traitors and spies, and massive pep rallies succeeded from 1965 to 1968 in raising the war fervor of the North Vietnamese people.47/ From 1968 to 1972, between the bombing attacks, that motivational factor was absent. The 1972 bombings, especially the December attacks, so paralyzed the North that there was little possibility of turning the bombings to domestic propaganda advantage. See Table 4-4 for a summary of the December 1972 Linebacker II campaign.48/

### D. MOBILIZATION IN THE SOUTH

The South was viewed by the Vietnamese communists as the "front area of this struggle. Because they were in the midst of their enemies, the communists in the South required different types of support from the populace than was needed in the North, or "rear area."

Mobilizing materiel support in South Vietnam was not particularly difficult for the communists. There were occasional interruptions in supply and serious temporary shortages of materiel and ammunition, but on balance, the needs of the PLAF, and later the PAVN, were accommodated.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

In Cochinchina, the communist veterans of the French-Viet Minh war had long maintained power centers in Camau, the Plain of Reeds, the mouths of the Bassac and Mekong rivers, and in War Zones C and D north of Saigon.<sup>49/</sup> Thus, a series of logistic-supported bases and safe havens existed from which military and political activities could be launched. Residual communist sympathy could be found in Annam, but it was not until experienced cadres were infiltrated in from the North that communist proselyting began there in earnest.<sup>50/</sup>

The bases in the South that were mobilized for the support of the war effort consisted of five types of villages and towns. The roles assigned to the towns were dictated by the perceived loyalty of the people in those areas. In the first category were the villages and towns that had been the Viet Minh bases against the Japanese and French. Some of those areas had strong, long-established ties with the communists. Those base areas served vital roles as dependable supply, intelligence-gathering, and recruiting centers.

After the villages and towns that were unquestionably under the control of the communists, came the population centers and rural areas that provided limited support. In those areas, some individuals consistently supported the NLF, and their presence was tolerated by the other people. Nevertheless, strong support could not be expected from the village or area as a whole.

The third category consisted of villages and towns where dependable followers were scattered and where South Vietnamese government efforts were concentrated. In these areas "taxes" and assessments of all kinds including recruits could be maintained only through repeated threats of violence.

The fourth type of village or population center included those that were firmly in the control of elements opposed to the communist cause. Here the most resistant villages proved to be those with strong Catholic ties. These villages were hardly immune from attack and intimidations. Thus, while transitory support might be obtained through violence or threat of violence, these areas were the least dependable for the communist forces.<sup>51/</sup>

## THE BDM CORPORATION

The fifth area included the towns and urban centers that were in South Vietnamese government control. Through the operation of cadre cells in the towns, financial and material support was obtainable from individuals and groups, either willingly provided or obtained through short or long-term threats. These centers also provided vital sources of intelligence about Allied intentions and capabilities. They also provided recruits for the communist forces.

From these five categories, or zones of loyalty, the population could provide essential services and goods for the communist forces. Mobilizing these assets, especially in the face of their fluctuating nature, created special challenges for the communists. The most easily obtainable and first tapped support from all the population areas was money. The next source of support was food or materials valuable in the war effort. These goods were of great importance in reducing the demands on the transportation system that was funneling supplies from the North. "Taxes" in money and kind were assessed in "liberated" areas and areas that were only temporarily in communist control or threatened by communist attacks. In those areas, percentages of harvests were exacted as well as percentages of aid received from the government or the US. Thus, for instance, a certain portion of cement provided for a village irrigation system might be handed over to communist "tax officials" for use in tunnelling operations.

Secure villages could serve as centers for communist forces, especially the guerrilla units of the PLAF. The activities of the village were a vital camouflage for guerrilla operations, and the peasants could aid the guerrillas through building booby-traps and providing storage areas for arms and other requisite supplies.

The dependable population could also serve as a vital link between the guerrilla forces and the isolated garrisons of the South Vietnamese government troops who were willing to "buy" immunity from attack. Through the peasants, the government forces could provide a regular supply of ammunition and arms to the communists.

These services were of course limited in scope and were appropriate for meeting the demands of small units, especially guerrilla units. They

were far less effective in maintaining and supporting the needs of large units of the North Vietnamese Army after they began to appear in the South in late 1964.

Mobilizing communist fighting forces in the South proved to be a difficult task from the outset. In 1954, the anti-colonialism and unification themes voiced by the DRV had little appeal in the South where the Party organization was comparatively weak and where the new status under Ngo Dinh Diem, and ostensibly Bao Dai, seemed an improvement over Japanese and French occupation. The ranks of the communist guerrilla and political cadres were reduced substantially by Diem's anti-VC campaigns, although many of the non-communists among the former Viet Minh might have allied themselves with the Diem government had it been more selective in targeting the Viet Minh.<sup>52/</sup> By 1955, all of the Viet Minh were called the Viet Cong, regardless of the actual political inclinations of the men who had fought against the French.

The combination of attrition from Diem's anti-VC efforts and the endemic shortage of skilled, technically trained cadres, and company and battalion-level leaders, caused the Lao Cong Party's Central Committee to take steps to augment the Southern cadres. Nearly half of the estimated 90,000 regroupees who had gone North in 1954 were infiltrated back to the South between 1959 and 1964.<sup>53/</sup> They often operated in the villages from which they had migrated, an important factor in establishing their bona fides and gaining them access to local populace. Many disbanded Binh Xuyen and Hoa Hao personnel joined the communist ranks which seemed to promise more than did their arch enemy, President Diem. The old Asia-hand, Dennis J. Duncanson, described a key feature that made it possible for the communists to enlist the support of entire villages without disrupting the everyday lives of their new adherents: "...the essential feature of the Viet Cong adaptation of the revolutionary method was that they did not set up a zone apart from government territory this time; as a result, supporting them entailed no definite and irrevocable act like taking to the hills 'to join the resistance'."<sup>54/</sup> In this fashion, the villager could play both sides of the street. He did not appear to oppose the government,

while at the same time he avoided the enmity or reprisal of the communists. Later, when the fighting became widespread, his choices were generally limited to choosing one side or the other.

From 1961 to 1964, the NLF recruiting cadres coerced, or shamed, young men to join their ranks. The GVN recruiting drives became more difficult in 1964; the NLF cadres offered the same limited three-year period of obligated service that was offered by the government. "Finally, since 1965 -- sporadically in earlier years -- the Viet Cong have secured recruits by pressganging, those already tied to the guerrilla force having no compunction about visiting the same fate on others in a midnight swoop on an adjacent village."55/

As the nature and tempo of operations increased in the South, the Central Office of South Vietnam (COSVN) was reestablished. That office had succeeded the Nam Bo (South Vietnam) Regional Committee in 1951, and directed Southern operations until it disbanded at the end of the first Indochina War. The new COSVN directed the mobilization of materiel and personnel and the overt and clandestine operations throughout RVN.56/ In performing these tasks, COSVN used a wide range of separate para-military and political-civilian elements. For example, the guerrilla popular army, a group of organizations "tied to the village or hamlet area and directly controlled by the local party chapter," and groups from the Central Research Agencies," an intelligence and secret policy organization well versed in the use of terrorism" participated in the unconventional side of the war.57/

By 1964, in conjunction with the December 1963 Lao Dong Party decision to expand political and military activities in the South, a comprehensive party-conceived insurgent offensive was underway. A plan drafted by the Kien Giang province party committee for August, September and October 1965, demonstrates the intended direction of insurgent actions in the South.

- (1) The development of heightened ideological convictions among party members, soldiers, and the civil population.
- (2) The conduct of attrition against the enemy to destroy his military forces and "New Rural Life Hamlet," combined with the building of insurgent combat villages and the expansion of the insurgent base area.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

- (3) The intensification of political struggle to be implemented via civil mass organizations and to include, "each month at least twenty minor incidents, including terrorism."
- (4) Utilizing the dependents of soldiers in the ranks of the insurgent armed forces to carry out military proselytizing to penetrate hostile security units and break morale.
- (5) The building up of the insurgents' military forces, the recruitment of youths, and the thwarting of the conscription policies of the Republic of Vietnam.
- (6) The strengthening of insurgent rural areas, the sale of troop support bonds, improved security, the protection of crops, personal economy, and the frustration of American economic policies.58/

It was intended that such activity would lead to the full mobilization of the South, occurring initially in the countryside and then in the cities. This was called the General Offensive - General Uprising.

In accomplishing this task, the Vietnamese Communist forces employed a range of techniques including the use of repression, propaganda dissemination, and proselytizing designed to persuade, and coerce the masses in the South to support their goals. Table 4-5 presents the spectrum of techniques used to accomplish this purpose. The idea of the "people's war" entailed eliciting peasant support for the war effort by presenting the communist objectives so that they appeared to be a nationalistic redistribution of money and power. The ideological concepts behind the strategy of 'people's war' were enforced with constant propaganda and terrorism. Acts of terror or repression were focused on anyone or any system that might dissuade the village from assisting the communist forces. Terrorism was directed especially at teachers, leaders on all levels, social workers, and all government employees. The communist cadres worked to pull the peasant into greater party involvement by intensive indoctrination and by recruiting him into various local party organizations (e.g., Liberation Labor Association, Liberation Women's Association, Liberation Farmer Association, Liberation Youth Association, South Vietnam Vanguard Youth, High School and University Liberation Student Associations.59/). These associations and other similar interest groups enabled the Vietnamese Communists



TABLE 4-5. THE SPECTRUM OF TECHNIQUES OF REPRESSION\*

PRELIMINARY ACTIONS	SUPPRESSION	SEVERE PUNISHMENT
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. PROSELYTIZING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. DIRECTED AT RVNAF AND CIVILIANS.</li> <li>. USE OF HARD-CORE CADRES</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. BLACKLISTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. COMPRISED OF INDIVIDUALS MARKED AS OPPONENTS OF REVOLUTION.</li> <li>. INTERROGATION USED IN COLLECTING BLACKLIST DATA</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. WARNINGS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. ISSUED TO GVN SUPPORTERS.</li> <li>. INCLUDES PUBLIC CONFESSION BY OFFICIAL.</li> <li>. FAMILY IS ALSO HELD RESPONSIBLE.</li> <li>. DELIVERED IN LETTER FORM, PUBLIC POSTERS OR PERSONALLY BY LOCAL CADRE OR RELATIVES OF THE ACCUSED.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ARREST AND INTERROGATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. PRELUDE TO MORE SEVERE REPRESSION.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. IN-PLACE REFORM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. VILLAGE INDOCTRINATION CLASSES 3-7 DAYS (PUPILS CONFESS CRIME AND PROMISE SUPPORT TO COMMUNISTS).</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. HOME SURVEILLANCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. INDIVIDUALS CONFINED TO VILLAGE.</li> <li>. ATTENDANCE IN REFORM CLASS.</li> <li>. REQUIRED TO CONFESS CRIMES IN PUBLIC.</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. REDUCTION IN PRESTIGE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. USUALLY FOR OFFICIALS FORCED TO CONFESS CRIMES AND TO DETERMINE WHETHER MORE PUNISHMENT IS NECESSARY.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ARREST AND INTERROGATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. INCLUDES USE OF TORTURE.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. ABDUCTION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. PRELUDE TO ALL SEVERE PUNISHMENTS.</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. THOUGHT REFORM CAMPS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. FORCED LABOR AND INDOCTRINATION.</li> <li>. USUALLY IN REMOTE, HEAVILY GUARDED AREAS.</li> <li>. USUALLY NOT USED FOR ARVN PRISONERS (SEPARATE FACILITIES).</li> <li>. PRISONERS - SUSPECTED OR KNOWN MEMBERS OF GVN - UNCOOPERATIVE CIVILIANS.</li> <li>. HIGH MORTALITY RATE DUE TO POOR CONDITIONS, TORTURE.</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. EXECUTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. INDIVIDUALS WHO COMMITTED SEVERE CRIMES (ESPIONAGE, DEFECTION, GVN LEADERSHIP).</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

\*BASED ON LITERATURE DESCRIBED IN ENDNOTES TO THIS CHAPTER.

to concentrate their indoctrination activities in order to eliminate any popular opposition to the communist party. Guenter Lewy, in his book America in Vietnam, points out that VC violence was directed against the best and the worst government officials, the former to weaken the GVN and the latter to appear like Robin Hood to the peasants suffering under those corrupt officials.60/ Others describe communist coercion in these terms:

When the populace of an area is under the disciplined control of the party, it is expected to repay its "liberators," not merely with sympathy, but with positive support in the form of food, shelter, intelligence, work parties, and sons for the army.61/

Often, the Party would set terrorism quotas for local cadres to fulfill, literally demanding a certain number of warnings, incidents and executions. Anyone connected with local, district or state leaderships, any officers of his family, and any other person suspected of operating against the interests of the Party, was to be punished. Indictment by a local cadre was a guilty sentence, because innocence was rarely a part of the judicial system.62/

In addition to the use of terror to exact support from the population of the South, the communists conducted political indoctrination of the masses and recruitment of young people who could serve as new cadres or guerrillas. The methods of recruitment employed by the PRP cadres ranged from persuasive to coercive. Three basic recruitment systems were used and Table 4-6 illustrates the variety of techniques available to the communist forces.63/ Recruitment of new cadres was a serious requirement to the continuation of the war and often the Party assigned quotas of recruits to the communist cadres.

In spite of the extensive organization of the communist insurgent offensive in the South, there is evidence that COSVN and later the PRP had encountered serious problems in the pursuit of the communist goals. This information is gathered from examination of such reports as the CRIMP document, speeches delivered by North Vietnamese officials, and captured cadre notebooks and interrogation reports. The principal problems addressed were the following:64/

TABLE 4-6. COMMUNIST RECRUITING METHODS 65/

COMMUNIST RECRUITING METHODS

PERSUASIVE METHODS

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. NATIONALISM     | THE GVN IS A US LACKEY  |
| 2. REVENGE         | THE RICH URBANITES, LANDOWNERS AND FOREIGNERS WERE PORTRAYED AS DENYING TO THE PEASANTS LIVELIHOOD AND LEGITIMATE RIGHTS TO ADVANCEMENT |
| 3. GROUP PRESSURE  | EVERYONE IS DOING IT, HOW CAN YOU REFUSE?   |
| 4. ADVANCEMENT     | HELP THE PARTY AND THE NEW SYSTEM WILL REGARD YOU WITH EQUALITY.  |
| 5. MATERIAL ENVY   | WITH COMMUNISM THE ENTIRE COUNTRY WILL HAVE TECHNOLOGICAL AND MATERIAL ADVANCEMENT, LIKE THE REST OF THE WORLD.                         |
| 6. FAMILY PRESSURE | (TO THE PARENTS OF THE POTENTIAL RECRUIT) IN RETURN FOR LAND, YOUR SONS MUST FIGHT FOR THE CAUSE.                                       |

THE VOLUNTEER

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 1. FAMILY     | ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE FAMILY JOINED AND HE IS FOLLOWING SUIT.          |
| 2. PROPAGANDA | PERSONAL AND MEDIA PROMISES ARE BELIEVED                               |
| 3. GVN ERRORS | ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE GVN ARE SAID TO BE ILLOGICAL OR TO HAVE BACKFIRED |

IMPRESSMENT

- |                            |                    |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. KIDNAPPING              |                    |
| 2. SELECTIVE ASSASSINATION |                    |
| 3. EXTORTION               | (SELF EXPLANATORY) |
| 4. COERCION                |                    |

## THE BDM CORPORATION

- Insufficient number of new recruits and inadequate civilian proselytizing
- Shortcomings of individual cadre members
- Low morale among guerrilla/cadre forces
- Economic problems
- 'Loose' leadership of Party chapter committee members
- Adverse impacts on communist activities from Allied presence in the South.

Vietnamese Communist failures to meet specific recruitment quotas were a matter of serious concern to the Party by 1967. Further, US military analysts were noting a drop in country-wide recruits in mid-1967. In order to compensate for this reduction, a trend was noted toward the introduction of North Vietnamese troops as replacements in VC units which formerly were manned by Southerners. In completing reporting requirements on the status of local recruiting efforts, Vietnamese Communist province headquarters noted that many districts were failing to meet recruitment tasks.

The cadre's civilian proselytizing efforts were also subject to criticism. In the mid-to-late 1960s, there was criticism of the cadre's approach to and attitude toward his work.

The fact was that the civilian proselytizing task has not been properly carried out yet. Poor organization was not as prejudicial as the cadres' dissociation from the masses and the cadres' lofty and imperial attitude toward them.66/

On another occasion the notebook of a communist recruiter revealed that the cadre had been criticized for failing to recognize the true importance of the proselytizing operation to the larger Party goal. Emphasizing the requirement for the simultaneous advance of the political and military communist arms in the South, civilian proselytizing was "an important and indispensable operation in South Vietnam."67/ Thus, the shortcomings of individual cadre members and their inability to relate to the masses became a serious threat to the overall mobilization effort of which political mobilization was a part.

Guerrilla and cadre force morale were of concern to the Party leaders. Desertion among guerrilla units was a constant problem. Poor morale and

desertion resulted in "fear of hardships, sacrifice, air and artillery fire, and protracted war, and the fear of dying without seeing their loved ones..."68/ The communist explanation for those individuals who had become fearful of sacrifices and who were demoralized was to identify them as having 'rightist and passive tendencies'. Further it was noted that some insurgents had become too individualistic, by placing their own interests above those of the Party and Revolution.69/

Not only were the communists beset with manpower problems, but there were considerable fiscal, food and supply concerns that had to be faced particularly in the 1966-1968 period and after the 1968 Tet offensive. With the increase in Allied activity in South Vietnam, the relocation of citizens to more secure areas and the flight of people from Allied military action, the former communist tax base in the South was diminished. It is also likely that the flight of some of the people occurred in order to escape burdensome communist taxation.70/ Related problems include the adverse effects of the US/GVN military action upon communist food supply, procurement centers and supply routes. The communists also had difficulty in recruiting sufficient laborers to maintain their highly labor-intensive logistical operations in the South.71/

Closely related to those problems were problems of leadership. Often the shortcomings of the guerrillas and cadres were attributed to inadequate, "loose" leadership of the Party Committee authorities. "In many municipalities and provincial towns, Party Committee authorities did not pay enough attention to the assignment of cadres responsible for providing leadership to the people's movement in support of the general offensive-general uprising."72/ In a speech attributed to the late North Vietnamese Senior General Nguyen Chi Thanh, head of COSVN between 1965 and 1967, the importance of good leadership is stressed.

Combat activities are efficient whenever and wherever there is the presence of the Party Chapter Committee members. Guerrilla forces are in need of leadership. Therefore, the Party Chapter committee members must be in close coordination with the guerrillas. In some localities, 95% of the guerrillas have proven inefficient. This is due to the lack of leadership of the Party Chapter Committee members.73/

Finally, the Allied military presence posed many problems for the Vietnamese Communists. There are numerous references in the captured communist documents to Party members' lack of self-confidence and tendencies to overestimate the enemy in the face of the US economic, military and technological might.74/

E. ANALYTICAL SUMMARY -- INSIGHTS

From the beginning of the war, the Vietnamese Communists saw their struggle as a unified effort, geographically, militarily, and politically. It was a struggle for control of the population more than for territory and materiel. Organization of, and coordination between, the various segments of the overall struggle were considered extremely important, and refinements of organizational and psychological techniques, tested under fire against the French, were continuously and successfully executed.

Psychological warfare was aimed at maintaining and strengthening resolve in the North and improving and spreading support in the South. The American bombing of the North aided the former. Careful organization, a persuasion campaign backed by coercion, and the advantages conferred by the 'home court' (at least vis à vis the Americans) aided the latter.

Personnel mobilization was accomplished with remarkable effectiveness by the Lao Dong Party apparatus, despite American bombing in the North and almost insuperable odds in the South. Their success appears to stem from their extraordinary organizational efficiency and the fact that their cadres included a high percentage of loyal, dedicated, and extremely competent middle-grade leaders and technicians. Of equal importance, was their ability to "capture" the nationalist cause, a factor that mobilized substantial international support in their behalf in addition to its appeal to the rank and file Vietnamese, both North and South, particularly after the introduction of American ground combat forces.

The Vietnamese Communist leadership was able to minimize the damage done to their industrial and agricultural mobilization capabilities by the American bombing, though Linebacker II in particular inflicted significant

## THE BDM CORPORATION

setbacks. The decentralized nature of industry and war-support activities in an underdeveloped country like North Vietnam meant that limited bombing of limited areas could be only partially effective at best. In addition, the bombing, or threat of bombing, accelerated the decentralization of the North Vietnamese economy and strengthened Party control over the country. Further, supplies that were lost in the bombings were largely replaced by imports from the USSR and PRC, and new transportation and communication lines had already been developed or were established during bombing halts. Thus, while the bombing did unquestionable damage, it did not prove to be the coup de grace, militarily or psychologically, that had been hoped for or predicted.

Thus, though it suffered reverses in both the North and South, the North Vietnamese mobilization effort remained organized and flexible on its many fronts.

### F. LESSON

The keys to effective mobilization of popular support in an insurgency situation lie in dedicated, intelligent leadership, effective organization from top to bottom, sound long-range goals, a "platform" that appeals to a broad segment of the population, and a military strategy that supports and reinforces political aims. Since neither opponent will be absolutely effective across the spectrum, the one which is relatively more experienced, unified, determined, realistic, and consistent, will be more successful.

CHAPTER 4 ENDNOTES

1. Vo Nguyen Giap, Banner of People's War, The Party's Military Zone (London: Pall Mall Press, 1970), p. 26, 27.
2. Lynn Montross, War Through the Ages (N.Y.: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1946) Revised and enlarged edition, pp. 450-458. The author discusses "France's Levy en Masse" and the triumph of the French Revolution. He describes August 23, 1793 as one of the most memorable dates in the chronicles of war when the revolutionary committee on Public Safety issued a decree announcing universal conscription for the first time in modern history. The proclamation stated:

The young men shall fight; the married men shall forge weapons and transport supplies; the women will make tents and serve in the hospitals; the children will make up old linen into lint; the old men will have themselves carried into the public squares to rouse the courage of the fighting men, and to preach hatred of kings and the unity of the Republic. The public buildings shall be turned into barracks, the public squares into munitions factories; the earthen floors of cellars shall be treated with lye to extract saltpetre. All suitable firearms shall be turned over to the troops; the interior shall be policed with fowling pieces and with cold steel. All saddle horses shall be seized for the cavalry; all draft horses not employed in cultivation will draw the artillery and supply wagons. (p. 452)

The French levee en masse is referred to here because it was the first modern mobilization and therefore provided a model for other nations faced with the need to mobilize all of their human and material resources. The Vietnamese, who were strongly influenced by French culture and education, could hardly have been unaware of that historic event and the importance to their cause of effective mobilization.

3. Douglas Pike, History of Vietnamese Communism, 1925-1976, (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1978), p. 76.
4. Ibid.
5. Nikolai Lenin, Collected Works, XXVII, pp. 54-55, quoted in Giap, p. 42.
6. Jon M. VanDyke, North Vietnam's Strategy for Survival, (Palo Alto, California: Pacific Books, Publishers, 1972), p. 89.
7. Giap, p. 49
8. Van Dyke, p. 79.



9. Air operations against North Vietnam are presented in Chapter 6, Book 1, Volume VI of this study. "Rolling Thunder," the slow-squeeze policy, or escalating air campaign, against targets in the North began in March 1965 and terminated in October 1968. Air Force historian Bernard C. Nalty "The air war against North Vietnam," The Vietnam War (N.Y.: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1975) pp. 88-95 attributes the failure of Rolling Thunder to underestimation of North Vietnam's determination and overestimation of their vulnerability, the lack of worthwhile strategic targets, and the US self-imposed restrictions against closing Haiphong and other ports and severing the rail links with China. In this sense, the North was not subject to destruction until 1972 when the "Linebacker I and II" air campaigns were initiated.
10. In 1954, when an estimated 90,000 Viet Minh fighting men (regroupees) left South Vietnam to resettle in the North, some 5,000 to 10,000 hard-core political cadre and guerrillas remained in the South. These staybehinds were decimated by Ngo Dinh Diem's anti-VC campaigns by 1959. Their political and military ranks had to be augmented to reconstitute an effective politico-military capability. Accordingly, the DRV directed the infiltration to South Vietnam of about half of the re-groupees, an effort that spanned the years 1959-1964. Also, see Endnote 6, Chapter 1 and Chapter 5.
11. It estimated that in 1972, only 20 percent of the NLF/PLAF forces were veteran guerrilla fighters. The rest were North Vietnamese troops--many of them posted to traditional PLAF units. Thomas C. Thayer, "We Could Not Win the War of Attrition We Tried to Fight," in The Lessons of Vietnam, ed. W. Scott Thompson and Donaldson D. Frizzel (N.Y.: Crane, Russak, 1977), p. 86f. It should be noted that Quang Tri is not presented as a representative province, only as an illustration of the changing nature of the communist presence in South Vietnam.
12. Interrogation of Le Van Thanh, Viet Cong signal platoon leader who stated that the DRV began enforcing the Military Service Law in 1959. This was a compulsory military service program for all able-bodied males from 16 to 45 years of age. DOS Historian, Item No. 84.
13. Area handbook for North Vietnam, 1967, pp. 409-410.
14. Military Balance, The Institute for Strategic Studies. (London: Adlard and Son Ltd, 1970), pp. 69-70.
15. LTC Lance J. Burton, USA, North Vietnam's Military Logistics System: Its Contribution to the War, 1961-1969, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: US Army Command and General Staff College, 1977), pp. 27-39. Burton's statistics, drawn from RAC Technical Paper TP-251 and Smith, Area Handbook for North Vietnam, differ slightly from those shown in this text. He shows a total population for the North, Circa 1966, at 17 million with an annual growth of 350,000 of whom 150,000 would be eligible for induction. This would enable the DRV to send 90,000 men South each year.

16. Robert L. Gallucci, Neither Peace Nor Honor: The Politics of American Military Policy in Viet Nam (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), pp 121-122, points out that a DOD analysis of engagements in 1966 concluded that it was the enemy who chose to engage US forces in 80 percent of the cases. A similar statistic was used by a USAID official (and former US Army advisor in Vietnam) John Paul Vann, in a seminar at the University of Denver on 27 and 28 November 1967, but he put it in a different way - 80 percent of the enemy's casualties resulted from actions they initiated against US forces. Contained in Prof. Vincent Davis's tapes, made available to BDM for purposes of this study. Also see Thayer, p. 86F.
  17. It was not until after Tet 1968 that US field operations began to focus on population security rather than "search and destroy" operations that were essentially attrition-oriented.
  18. John Gerassi, "U.S. Bombs Cannot Demoralize the Vietnamese People," They Have Been in North Vietnam (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1968), p. 112, a US journalist and professor of social science, New York University, made a two-week visit to North Vietnam. This article, while obviously communist-inspired propaganda, includes a statement that appears to be reasonably accurate, "with every bomb dropped on Viet Nam, the Vietnamese people, already firmly dedicated to fight any and all aggressions - as they have done for centuries - become firmer and even more dedicated."
- A Senate staff study concluded that the North Vietnamese were successful in using the bombing issue to extract larger commitments of economic, military and financial assistance from the Russians and Chinese. In addition, some 33,000 factory workers and 48,000 women were made available for work on roads and bridges in the countryside because of the destruction of industry and evacuation from cities. Bombing as a Policy Tool in Vietnam: Effectiveness. A staff study based on The Pentagon Papers...for the Committee on Foreign Relations, US Senate (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1972), October 12, 1972, pp. 6,9.
19. The United States Strategic Bombing Survey, 316 Vols., (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1945-47) provides an assessment of allied bombing during World War II. The survey provides data which in some cases suggests that allied air power was decisive and in other cases indicates that German industrial production increased during the war until overrun on the ground. See Gallucci, Neither Peace Nor Honor, pp. 162-163 (notes).
  20. US Congress, Senate, Hearings Before the Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services. Part 1, 90th Cong., 1st sess., August 9 and 10, 1967 (Washington D. C.: US Government Printing Office, 1967), p. 6. Hereafter referred to as Senate Hearings.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

21. Van Dyke, p. 95.
22. Ibid., pp. 95-96. Also see endnote 18.
23. Ibid., p. 96.
24. Oleg Hoeffding, Bombing North Vietnam: An Appraisal of Economic and Political Effects, Memorandum RM-5213-1-ISA. (Santa Monica, California: The Rand Corporation, 1966). pp. 16.
25. Van Dyke, p. 98.
26. Ibid., p. 177.
27. Wilfred Burchett, "The Vietnam War: Past, Present, Future," New World Review, Spring, 1968, p. 5. Harvard Professor Alexander B. Woodside Community and Revolution in Modern Vietnam (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1976), pp. 251-260 provides an interesting discussion of the origin and evolution of the cooperatives in North Vietnam. He reports that by the end of 1968, 95 percent of all farm families in the North had become members of cooperatives with 80% of the 22,360 farm cooperatives considered to be "high category" or fully socialistic. (p. 251).
28. See Chapter 8, Book 2, Volume VI for a more detailed discussion of air operations against the DRV. One of the more readable and well illustrated books on this subject is Carl Berger, ed. The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia 1961-1973 (Washington: Office of Air Force History, 1977).
29. Raising GVN morale and dissuading the DRV's aggression were cited by Ambassador Maxwell D. Taylor and Deputy Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson as the principal reasons for their recommending air strikes against the North. Interrupting the Southward flow of men and supplies ranked third in priority. Interviews with Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson September 13, 1978 and January 9, 1979 at BDM and with General (former Ambassador) Maxwell D. Taylor July 11, 1979, by BDM analysts at General Taylor's home in Washington, D. C.
30. Burchett, p. 6.
31. Van Dyke, p. 164.
32. Burchett, p. 5. Also see Statistisches Bundesamt, North-Vietnam 1973 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1973), p. 5, which shows that important industrial installations were moved to the countryside and some of the urban population was also relocated. Translated at BDM by Dr. John Tashjean. Also Woodside, pp. 260-267, describes the origins in 1955 of North Vietnam's industrialization drive. He states, "Nothing distinguishes northern Vietnam more from its neighboring Southeast Asian states than its intense dedication to the goal of industrialization..." (p. 261)

## THE BDM CORPORATION

33. Hoeffding, pp. 16-17.
34. Ibid., pp. 20-21.
35. General John W. Vogt, USAF (Ret), comment during BDM Senior Review Panel meeting on Volume I, Study of Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam, February 13, 1979. General Vogt served in a variety of positions during the Vietnam War, on the DOD and NSC staffs, as J-3 and Director of The Joint Staff and finally as DEPCOMUSMACV and Commander 7th Air Force. In response to the question, "Did air action impact on their ability to mobilize troops and fight a war?" General Vogt commented that (During Rolling Thunder) the North Vietnamese "...weren't as vulnerable as we thought." He added that they were not sophisticated at that time, but had become very sophisticated, and therefore more vulnerable, by the time Linebacker I was launched in May 1972.
36. General William W. Momyer, USAF (Ret.) Airpower in Three Wars (Washington: Department of The Air Force, 1978), pp 118-125.
37. Senate Hearings, p. 25.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., p. 257.
40. Ibid., p. 163.
41. General Vogt, then DEPCOMUS and Commander 7th Air Force, stated that the GVN leadership needed assurances that the US would place sanctions on the North. SRP Tape 4.
42. Senate Hearings, p. 258.
43. During President Johnson's tenure the final decision on target selection and sortie numbers was made by The President at the weekly Tuesday luncheon attended by The Secretaries of State and Defense, the Presidential Assistant (Walt Rostow) and the Press Secretary. Described in Admiral U.S. Grant Sharp, Strategy for Defeat (San Rafael, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1978), pp. 86-87.
44. Van Dyke, p. 80.
45. Ibid.
46. Senate Hearings, pp. 253-254.
47. Van Dyke, p. 80.
48. The DRV publicized the capture of several American airmen and paraded them through the streets of Hanoi, probably as much to bolster North Vietnamese morale as to provide evidence of US air attacks. The

## THE BDM CORPORATION

leadership threatened to try captured pilots as war criminals. After considerable US and international pressure, Ho Chi Minh, responding to questions submitted by a representative of The Columbia Broadcasting System, stated that there was "... no trial in view." New York Times 25 July 1966, p. 1. Thereafter, the prospects of such war crimes trials subsided.

49. Dennis J. Duncanson Government and Revolution in Vietnam (London: Oxford University Press, 1968) Issued under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, pp. 301-302.
50. Ibid., p. 302.
51. Dennis J. Duncanson, "How--and Why - The Viet Cong Holds Out," in Vietnam: Anatomy of a Conflict, ed. Wesley R. Fishel, (Itasca, Illinois: F. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc., 1968), p. 427-428.
52. Bernard B. Fall Viet-Nam Witness 1953-66 (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1966), pp. 137-139 provides a scathing analysis of American foreign policy vis a vis Vietnam for the years 1954 to 1966 and points out that President Diem's police state methods drove anyone disagreeing with his policies into self-imposed exile, total silence, or armed resistance.
53. United States - Vietnam Relations 1945-1967 (Washington, D. C.: Department of Defense (GPO), 1971), Book 2 of 12, (Pentagon Papers). Part II Section A. 5. Tab 3 p. 36.
54. Duncanson, Government and Revolution in Vietnam p. 297.
55. Ibid., p. 298.
56. Albert E. Palmerlee, "The Central Office of South Vietnam" Vietnam Documents and Research Notes, Document No. 40, August 1968.
57. Michael Charles Conley, The Communist Insurgent Infrastructure in South Vietnam: A Study of Organization and Strategy. Processed for Defense Documentation Center, Defense Supply Agency. (Washington, D.C.: American University, 1967), p. 163.
58. Ibid., p. 169.
59. Douglas Pike, The Viet Cong Strategy of Terror (Monograph prepared in Saigon for the United States Mission, Vietnam, February 1970). pp. 18-20, 25-35, describes the use of systematic terror by the communists.
60. Guenter Lewy, America In Vietnam (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 273.
61. Hammond Rolph, Vietnamese Communism and the Protracted War, (American Bar Association, 1972), p. 41.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

62. S. T. Hosmer, Viet Cong Repression and its Implications for the Future (Lexington, MA: Heath Lexington Books, 1970), p. 15.
63. Figure 4-1 is based on material contained in Pike, The Viet Cong Strategy of Terror pp. 29-80 and Douglas S. Blaufarb The Counter-insurgency Era (London: Collier Mac Millen Publishers, 1977), pp 28-74.
64. Based on analysis of captured documents set forth in United States Mission in Vietnam, "Captured Documents Point to Viet Cong Recruitment Problems," Mission Press Release, December 21, 1967; The CRIMP Document "Experience of the South Viet-Nam Revolutionary Movement During the Past Several Years," DOS Historian, Item 301.
65. Figure 4-6 is based on material contained in Pike, Viet Cong (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1966), pp 109-194; and Blaufarb, pp. 28-74.
66. Translation of a notebook belonging to a COSVN cadre captured by elements of the US 101st Airborne Division in January 1967, apparently based on a speech given by the late North Vietnamese Senior General Nguyen Chi Thanh, head of COSVN 1965-1967. DOS Historian, Item 65.
67. Interrogation of a Viet Cong recruiter who was captured by ARVN forces in 1964 in Hau Nghia Province, DOS Historian, Item 37, p. 3.
68. COSVN Unit H 207 "Report The Status of Deserters" April 1969. Vietnam Documents and Research Notes. "It Is Better to Return Home and Cultivate the Land Than to Join the Revolutionary Army." Document No. 56-57, p. 3.
69. Translation of a document captured by elements of III MAF in July 1966 in Quang Tri Province, DOS Historian, Item 66, p.3.
70. Viet Cong Economic Problems. A compilation of selected data., February 1968, p. 1. DOS Historian.
71. Ibid.
72. Captured document, author unknown, which provides the orthodox theoretical basis for instructions for coordinating the politico-military struggle. Documents and Research Notes, "The Processes of Revolution and the General Uprising," October 1968. DOS Historian, Document 45.
73. Translation, DOS Historian, Item 65.
74. Translation, DOS Historian, Item 66.

CHAPTER 5  
BASES, SANCTUARIES AND LOC

There is general agreement with the JCS statement, "The enemy, by the type action he adopts, has the predominant share in determining enemy attrition rates." Three fourths of the battles are at the enemy's choice of time, place, type and duration....With his safe havens in Laos and Cambodia and with carefully chosen tactics, the enemy has been able during the last four years to double his combat forces, double the level of infiltration and increase the scale and intensity of the main force war even while bearing heavy casualties.

National Security Study Memorandum 1  
February 1969

A. INTRODUCTION

Inspired by Ho Chi Minh and led by General Vo Nguyen Giap, the Viet Minh survived Japanese occupation in World War II and defeated and evicted the French colonialists. Subsequently, the Communist Vietnamese leadership outlasted America's eight-year effort in Southeast Asia, and finally reunited Vietnam by force of arms. A major factor contributing to their success was the remarkable logistical support structure they created in an integrated network of bases, sanctuaries and lines of communication. Indeed, the sanctuaries gave them a trump card that enabled them to fight a protracted war and outlast the United States' commitment to the Republic of Vietnam.

Logistical management by the North Vietnamese proved to be one of the keys to their success against the French and the Americans. After US withdrawal from Vietnam, the bases and sanctuaries that Giap had established during the war gave the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) forces a superior geostrategic position which enabled them to defeat the South Vietnamese military forces.

B. EVOLUTION OF THE VIET MINH LOGISTICAL STRUCTURES

1. The World War II Years

The Viet Minh guerrilla forces commanded by Giap during World War II conducted some anti-Japanese operations and provided valuable intelligence services for the US and allies. The Viet Minh also assisted downed allied aviators to evade the Japanese and facilitated their return to friendly areas. For that assistance the US parachuted in small quantities of food, arms, and ammunition, funneling its support through OSS detachments in Indochina.

In their battles against the Japanese the Viet Minh established themselves in secure "liberated" areas. One of the principal strongholds for Giap's forces was created in the Viet Bac Autonomous Region, in the northern highlands. By 1944 Viet Bac had been well organized as a training and operating base.<sup>1/</sup> (See Map 5-1 on page 5-6) Ho Chi Minh, Pham Van Dong, and Vo Nguyen Giap were associated with a second major base area near Cao Bang.<sup>2/</sup> Operations against the Japanese were directed from that headquarters; later, the Viet Bac Autonomous Region served as the main communist bastion in their war to oust the French.

At the time the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was proclaimed in August 1945, Vietnamese armed forces were reported to number about 40,000, with sufficient weapons to arm 75% of the force.<sup>3/</sup> Most of those weapons had been captured from the Japanese earlier in the war and not gratuitously provided by the Japanese after they disarmed the Vichy French in Indochina during March 1945 as some claim.<sup>4/</sup> Other stores had been bought from the Nationalist Chinese.<sup>5/</sup> During the next three years some arms were shipped in from Thailand and the Philippines.

2. The First Indochina War

Open warfare broke out between the French and the Viet Minh in 1946. Initially the Viet Minh lacked outside help and it became necessary for them to develop a rudimentary system for producing weapons and ammunition.



## THE BDM CORPORATION

### a. Viet Minh Factories

Small factories were established in "liberated" areas, each employing up to 500 men to turn out small arms, cartridges, rocket launchers, grenades, and mines. In contested areas smaller shops were set up to meet local needs. Those small shops generally were manned only by 10 to 15 men who relied mainly on manpower, although occasionally they were equipped with an old automobile engine or similar power source. Their limited assets made it easy for them to relocate and avoid advancing French forces. Working with primitive equipment in small, scattered shops throughout the country the Vietnamese were able to produce astonishing amounts of arms and ammunition. The shops in one intersector reportedly produced within six months, 38,000 grenades, 30,000 rifle cartridges, 8,000 cartridges for light machine guns, 60 rounds for a bazooka (rocket launcher) and 100 mines.6/

Rocket launchers were manufactured solely in Tonkin, where the heaviest fighting took place. Factories in the South, mainly in the Plaine des Jongs and near Ampil, Cambodia, produced grenades and mines for use against the French in guerrilla attacks and ambushes. The Viet Minh also established a price list reflecting the bounties in national land that they would pay for weapons, ammunition, and other military stores.

### b. Gaining Chinese Support

Beginning in January 1950, Viet Minh and French battalions fought each other for control of the French border posts abutting the People's Republic of China. The Vietnamese opened their campaign in the northwest near the Red River and spread eastward along the frontier. Four Viet Minh battalions which had been training at Ching-hsi in China, departed their sanctuary and converged on a French battalion-sized outpost near Cao Bang. The French lost that post for two days in May; they lost it permanently five months later. The struggle for the border posts ended in October 1950, leaving the Viet Minh in control of most of the northern half of North Vietnam.7/ The DRV had gained direct access to PRC logistics support, which began as a trickle of only 10-20 tons per month in 1950 and increased to about 4,000 tons per month in 1954.8/ It is important to note

that the PRC had been in existence for only a few months when their supply support to the DRV began -- before PRC entry into the Korean War.

c. Early Supply Transport

Chinese deliveries generally stopped at border stations, requiring the Viet Minh to provide on-going transportation. Clearly their vehicular inventory was insufficient to move the massive tonnages required. Accordingly, the high command organized an "auxiliary service" comprised of coolies to man-pack supplies from storage areas to forward supply dumps or troop units.

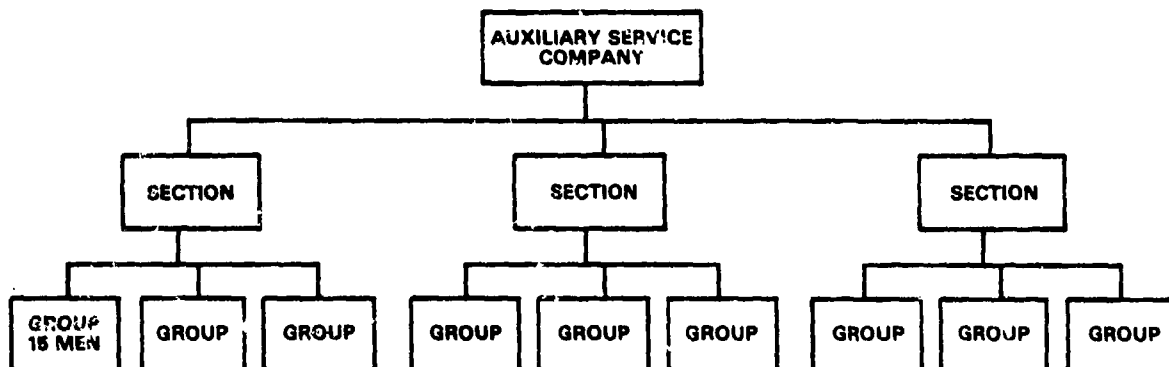
The coolies were essentially a local labor force operating within prescribed geographical areas. Auxiliary service companies were responsive to orders only from the General Staff, the General Directorate of Food, interzone commands, and other high echelons.<sup>9/</sup> Figure 5-1 depicts the organization and prescribed movement tables for the coolie units.

Fifteen-man groups of supply coolies could move virtually undetected through the hinterland, successfully avoiding attacks by the French Air Force. The coolies' journeys began near Lang Son and Cao Bang in the northeast and occasionally at Lao Cai or Ban Nam Coum in the northwest. See Map 5-1. Supplies entering from the northeast usually moved southward through Bac Kan to Thai Nguyen and then west to the Viet Minh redoubts, skirting the French-held Red River delta. Vast quantities of American guns and equipment captured by the Chinese Communists from the Chinese Nationalist forces entered North Vietnam in that way. The contraband was then carried, pushed or pulled and sometimes driven along back country trails, foot paths, and dirt roads until it reached supply dumps in the liberated areas of North Vietnam.

The French Air Force intermittently attempted to interdict Viet Minh supply efforts, principally by bombing bridges and by armed reconnaissance strikes along lines of communication. Their aircraft were hard pressed to find and attack the 15-man groups of coolies that padded through familiar terrain. Damaging or destroying bridges also failed to interrupt the logistics flow. Underwater bridges were constructed to span water barriers, or bamboo rafts were concealed near river banks so that the

## AUXILIARY SERVICE

(PRIOR TO 1953)



3 SECTIONS PER COMPANY  
3 GROUPS PER SECTION  
15 COOLIES PER GROUP  
APPROXIMATELY 140 MEN PER CO.

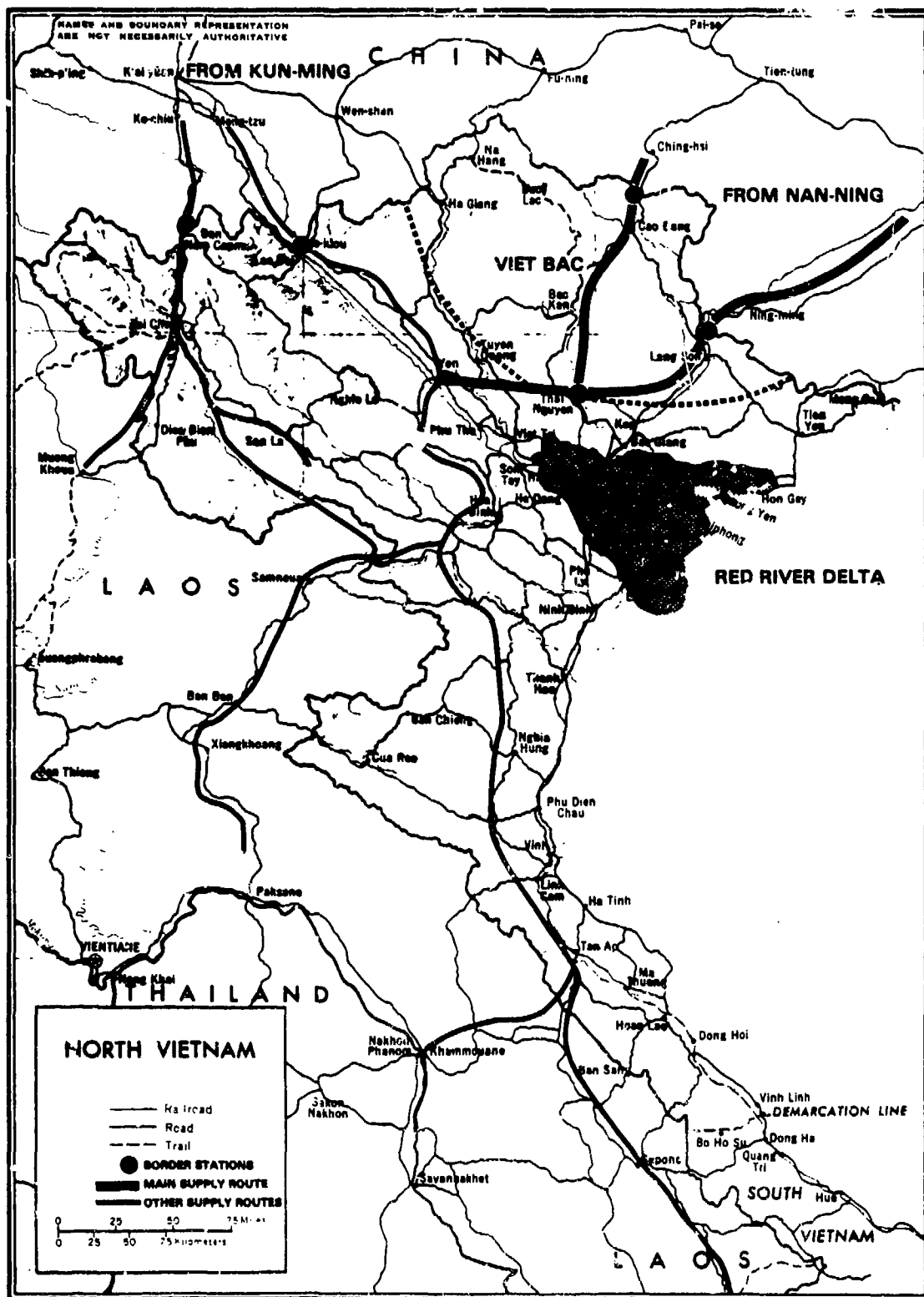
## TYPICAL VIETMINH PORTER (COOLIE) TRANSPORT COMPANY

TYPE CONVEYANCE	TERRAIN	MILES PER 24HR PERIOD	WEIGHT CARRIED	SUPPLY MOVED
COOLIE	PLAINS, LEVEL LAND, MINIMAL OBSTACLES	15.5 DAY 12.4 NIGHT	55 LBS	RICE
			33 TO 44 LBS	ARMS
COOLIE	MOUNTAINS	9 DAY 7.5 NIGHT	28.6 LBS	RICE
			22 TO 33 LBS	ARMS
BUFFALO CART	ALL PASSABLE AREAS	7.5	770 LBS	RICE & ARMS
HORSE CART	ALL PASSABLE AREAS	12.4	473 LBS	RICE & ARMS

BASED ON GEORGE K. TANHAM, COMMUNIST REVOLUTIONARY WARFARE  
PP 69-70.

4541/75W

Figure 5-1. Auxiliary Service and Movement Tables



4841/76W

Map 5-1. Viet Minh Supply Routes 1950-1954

coolies could move without interruption. Supplies were moved from sector to sector with little difficulty. It should be noted that 2,000 miles to the northeast, Chinese and North Korean forces were using identical means in another war; and they, too, successfully countered an aerial interdiction effort aimed at their rear area.

d. Origin of the Ho Chi Minh Trail

Viet Minh forces operated throughout the country, with the major clashes taking place in the Red River Delta in the North and the Mekong Delta in the South. Providing replacements, arms, and ammunition to their units in South Vietnam (Cochin China) presented a unique challenge at the outset. Movement by sea was difficult because French naval activity denied them effective use of coastal waters and French ground forces controlled most of the coastal highway. The alternative was to make use of back country paths, trails, and dirt roads in eastern Laos and Cambodia. By adopting that alternative the Viet Minh were able to provide some logistical support to their southern cadres and to establish an important degree of control over strategically important areas in Laos and Cambodia. Those areas soon became known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail.<sup>12/</sup>

The Ho Chi Minh Trail remained a primitive transportation system throughout the Viet Minh War, but it was adequate to meet the needs of the insurgency. Small-sized troop replacement units made the 50-to-100-day journey south on foot, while coolies walked supply-laden bicycles or drove creaking animal carts down separate narrow paths. Former ARVN Major General Nguyen Duy Hinh described the foot path system as having kept the Viet Minh resistance in South Vietnam alive with fresh troops, weapons and ammunition.<sup>13/</sup> The Trail network provided the Viet Minh with the following advantages:

- The needed courier routes were established in safe areas
- The logistical linkage between PAVN and VC was created
- The insurgency in South Vietnam received essential support
- The logistical concept was tried and proven successful
- The physical structure of the Trail network was established

- The North Vietnamese domination of parts of Laos and Cambodia was cemented.

3. Dien Bien Phu

The decisive siege of Dien Bien Phu ended on May 8, 1954. That brief campaign illustrated the remarkable logistical system which Giap had engineered. Four Viet Minh divisions were committed in that battle, supported by over 70,000 Vietnamese coolies of the auxiliary service and at least 20,000 Chinese army personnel.<sup>14/</sup> A 30-mile long road was carved mainly by coolie labor through the hills from Tuan Giao to heights overlooking the 15,000-man French garrison at Dien Bien Phu. American artillery pieces that had been captured in Korea were hauled along the new road and placed in firing positions bearing directly on the French defenses. Coolies carried food and ammunition to the Viet Minh fighters in sufficient quantities to sustain them in their 55-day siege.

While effectively using their own main supply routes, the Viet Minh struck at the French supply system. Truck convoys enroute from the port of Haiphong to Hanoi were under daily attack, disrupting the major logistical effort upon which several large units depended. Viet Minh infiltrators entered Haiphong's Cat Bi airport through the sewage system and daringly blew up 38 cargo aircraft that were desperately needed to resupply the remote and gravely threatened frontier post at Dien Bien Phu.<sup>15/</sup>

During late 1953 - early 1954, the official French view showed the Red River delta to be reasonably secure. The Viet Minh were credited with controlling only four small pockets south of the Hanoi-Haiphong main supply route. The French believed, or so they stated publicly, that they exerted more than 50% control over about a third of the delta and up to 30% control over all but the acknowledged Viet Minh pockets of resistance. The real situation became apparent when Dien Bien Phu fell and 40,000 Viet Minh soldiers were freed for an all-out attack on the Hanoi-Haiphong lifeline. The French quickly abandoned the entire southern part of the delta including the Catholic bishoprics of Bui Chu and Phat Diem.<sup>16/</sup> Within two-and-a-half months North Vietnam belonged to the DRV.

4. Significance of Early Viet Minh Logistics

The remarkable ability of the Viet Minh to procure armaments and distribute them to combat units in significant quantities reflects their appreciation of the importance of logistics. Reliance on small, mobile shops to manufacture arms and ammunition to meet specific local needs throughout Viet Nam attests to their ingenuity and determination.

The Viet Minh moved supplies long distances over rugged terrain in the face of French aerial reconnaissance and armed attack. That experience would prove vitally important in the Second Indochina War.

Strategic supply routes from the People's Republic of China were opened. Soviet trucks appeared in the DRV's inventory in the early 1950s. They could only have been delivered overland through China, suggesting that the USSR was at least mildly interested at that time in establishing links with the North Vietnamese. The precedents for USSR/PRC military and economic aid were established. Within North Vietnam, embryonic logistical mechanisms for receiving and handling outside support were established, as were the commo-liaison routes that would be needed later to support the southern cadres.

C. CONSOLIDATION 1954-1959

Vo Nguyen Giap has generally been recognized as a master logistician and a sometimes successful tactician. In his writings, Giap has often stressed the importance of a strong rear, pointing out that it is always a decisive factor in revolutionary warfare.<sup>17/</sup> The first step for the newly victorious Viet Minh after ousting the French was to build the strong rear they would need later. Outside support was essential, particularly after the Bao Dai regime in South Vietnam closed the border to trade.

1. The Chinese Connection

Throughout the Korean War, the Chinese Communist People's Liberation Army had funneled captured American arms back to mainland China and thence to North Vietnam.<sup>18/</sup> That supply relationship continued after the

two wars ended, the Korean in July 1953 and the First Indochina War in July 1954. With the French gone and Haiphong open to international shipping, the Chinese were no longer restricted solely to road and rail deliveries through the southern provinces of China. Ships could now offload at berths in the port city and Chinese military and economic aid to the DRV increased steadily during the period.

## 2. The Soviet Connection

The Lao Dong Party leadership moved toward closer ties with Moscow in 1957, partly because additional aid was sorely needed to bolster a weak economy, and partly because the Soviets were far to the north, not looking over their shoulder as was the case with their Chinese neighbor. Soviet Marshal Voroshilov visited Hanoi in May 1957. Within a year the USSR replaced China as the principal source of economic aid.<sup>19/</sup>

## 3. Viet Minh Strongholds in RVN

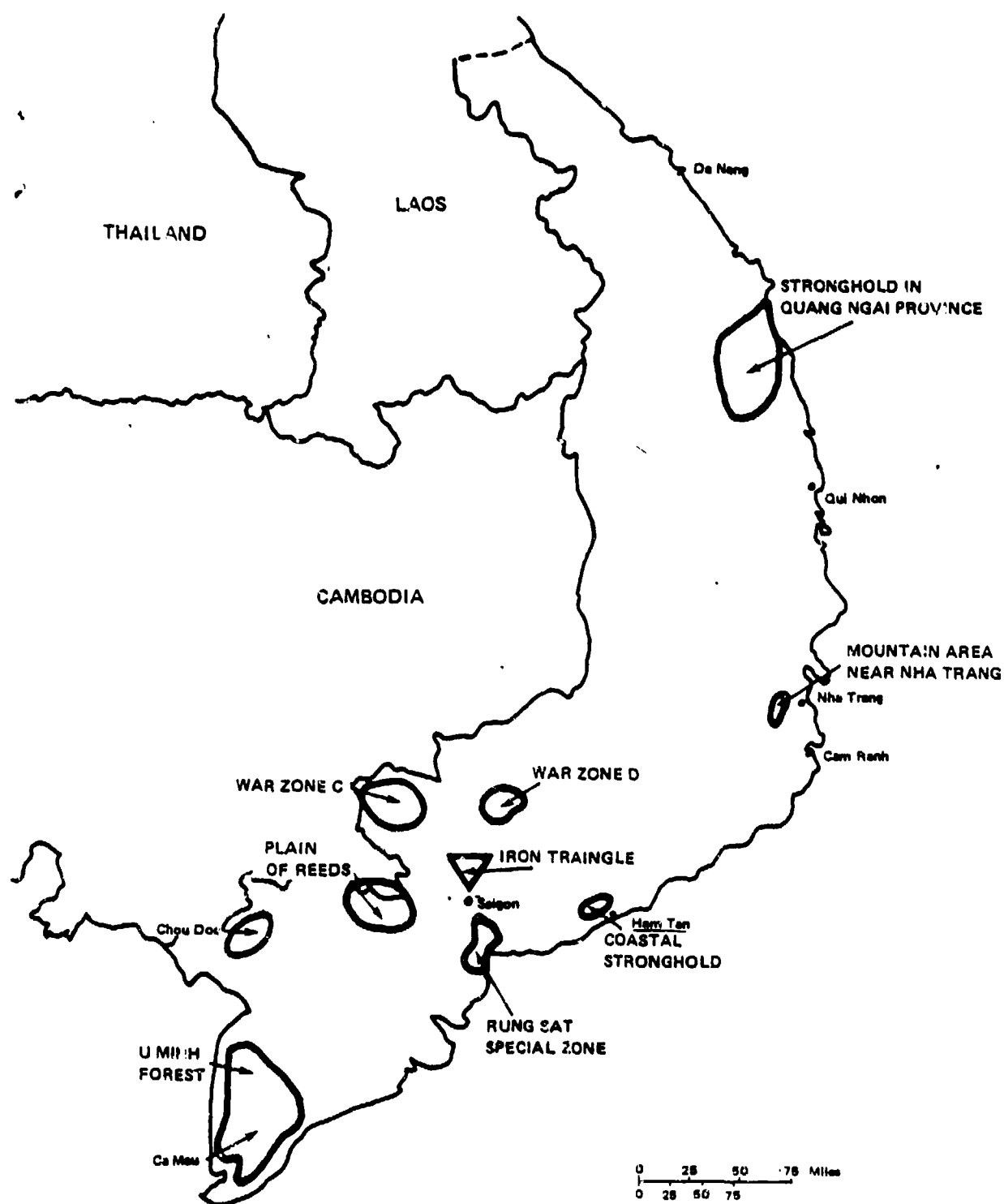
In the South, President Diem undertook a strong anti-Viet Minh campaign to eliminate a significant threat to his government. Communist and noncommunist Viet Minh who had stayed behind in 1954 were arrested, and some were executed. Hardcore communists were driven to take refuge in Viet Minh strongholds such as the Plain of Reeds, U Minh Forest, and Rung Sat in the Delta; War Zones C and D north of Saigon; Quang Ngai and Binh Dinh Provinces; the mountains near Nha Trang; the northern part of Tay Ninh Province; and smaller scattered coastal or mountain redoubts.<sup>20/</sup> (See Map 5-2).

## 4. Logistical Preparations for Insurgency

The Viet Minh War ended on July 21, 1954. French and Vietnamese troops loyal to them together with nearly a million northern refugees boarded American ships and sailed for Saigon. Most of the Viet Minh soldiers and their families south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) sailed north in Polish and French ships.

A hardcore of dedicated Communist Viet Minh remained in the South. Those elite guerrillas buried large quantities of well-greased Viet Minh weapons, ammunition, radios, and other military equipment -- just





Map 5-2. Viet Minh Strongholds in RVN 1948-1959

## THE BDM CORPORATION

case they had to fight another day, and just in case the promised 1960 elections did not go their way.

The Ho Chi Minh Trail fell into disuse. Except for a few secret couriers who might have passed along its tortuous trails between the two Vietnams, the trail was abandoned from 1954 until 1959.<sup>22/</sup>

### 5. Significance of the Consolidation Period

The DRV acquired substantial military and economic aid from the USSR and PRC. A strong rear was being formed. The DRV's repressive population control efforts, carried out under the guise of land reform, provided them with an obedient population in the North. Unification remained the principal communist objective, but there does not appear to have been any significant logistics support from the DRV to southern cadres in the now truncated southern branch of Lao Dong Party during the 1954-1959 period because the Party program called for political rather than military action in the South. Political and administrative control of the Party membership in the South was maintained, however, by the Lao Dong Party in Hanoi.<sup>23/</sup>

## D. LOGISTICS IN THE REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE (1959-1964)

### 1. The Fateful DRV Decision

The Lao Dong Party's Central Committee met in Hanoi in May 1959, and the Politburo approved launching a "People's War" in the South to topple President Diem and seize the government. The Party had at its disposal about 90,000 politically indoctrinated former Viet Minh soldiers, "regroupees", and their families who had chosen to move North in 1954.<sup>24/</sup>

Regroupees designated to return South to augment and provide leadership to the "staybehinds" were first sent to special training centers for further political indoctrination. Following their training, they were formed into infiltration units and moved into the Republic of Vietnam by the REAR Services Department. An estimate of the magnitude of the infiltration during this period is in Table 5-1.

TABLE 5-1. PAVN INFILTRATION FROM NORTH TO SOUTH VIETNAM  
1959-1964 (NUMBERS OF INDIVIDUALS)

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>CONFIRMED (1)</u>	<u>PROBABLE (2)</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
1959-60	4556	26	4582
1961	4118	2177	6295
1962	5362	7495	12857
1963	4726	3180	7906
1964	<u>9316</u>	<u>3108</u>	<u>12424</u>
	28,078	15,986	44,064

(1) A confirmed unit/group is one which is determined to exist on the basis of accepted direct information from a minimum of two prisoners, returnees or captured documents (any combination, in addition to indirect evidence).

(2) A probable infiltration unit/group is one believed to exist on the basis of accepted direct information from one captive, returnee, or captured document, in addition to indirect evidence.

Extract from United States Vietnam Relations 1945-1967, Study Prepared by the Department of Defense. Book 2 of 12 (Pentagon Papers), (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1971), Part II Section A5 Tab 3, p.36.

## 2. Infiltration Routes

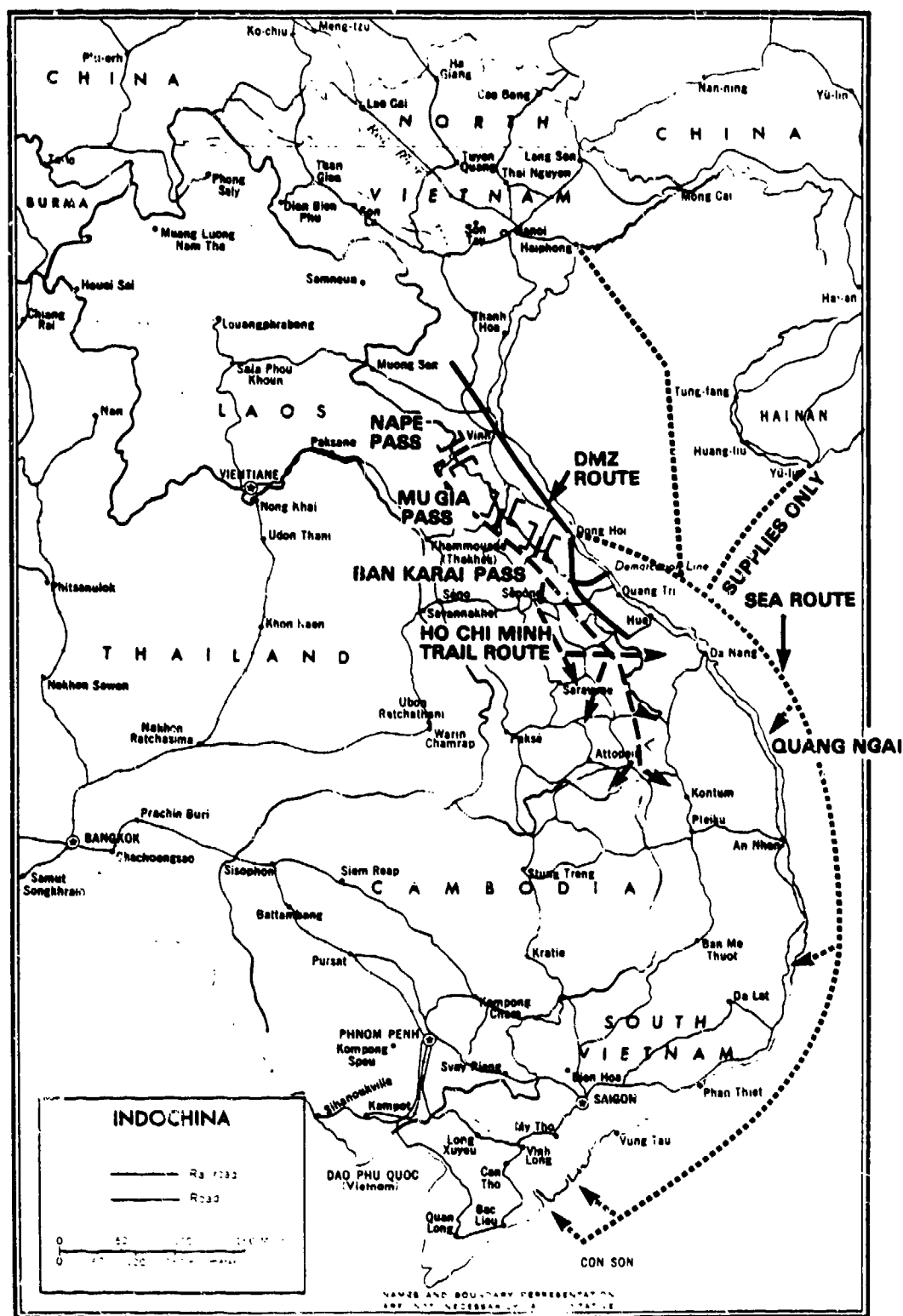
In 1959 three routes were available for deploying troops and supplies to South Vietnam: (See Map 5-3)

- The sea route, generally embarking at or near Haiphong
- The route from Vinh to Dong Hoi, then through the western portion of the DMZ and southward along the Annamite Chain within RVN.
- The primitive route through Laos, abandoned in 1954, which soon came to be known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail; the point of origin for this LOC was also Vinh.

The sea route was believed to carry 70% of the supplies bound from the DRV to cadres in the South prior to 1965.<sup>25/</sup> Quang Ngai province contained the only suitable communist-controlled landing beaches and secure reception areas along the central coast, some 250 miles south of the DMZ. Additional landing sites were available in the Mekong Delta Region. The Republic of Vietnam's small but growing naval strength gradually increased the hazard of moving by sea, although maritime infiltration continued sporadically throughout the war. The US Navy established routine patrols along the coast in 1964, significantly reducing routine DRV junk traffic. The DRV responded by exercising tighter control over seaborne infiltration and by employing heavier craft in the 100-ton displacement category which enabled them to cruise in international waters enroute to their destinations.<sup>26/</sup> Other smaller craft blended in with the thousands of South Vietnamese sampans and fishing boats and often passed through the patrols without detection.

The route through the DMZ became increasingly more difficult for the movement of large troop units as additional ARVN forces were assigned to protect the northern reaches of the South Vietnam, but a CIA intelligence memorandum showed that infiltration through the DMZ was still being accomplished in 1967 when an estimated 6,000 to 10,000 NVA (PAVN) replacements passed through the zone.<sup>27/</sup>

Finally, there was the long-unused network of foot paths and secondary roads in Laos that had been used by the Viet Minh during their



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Map 5-3. Infiltration Routes 1959-1964

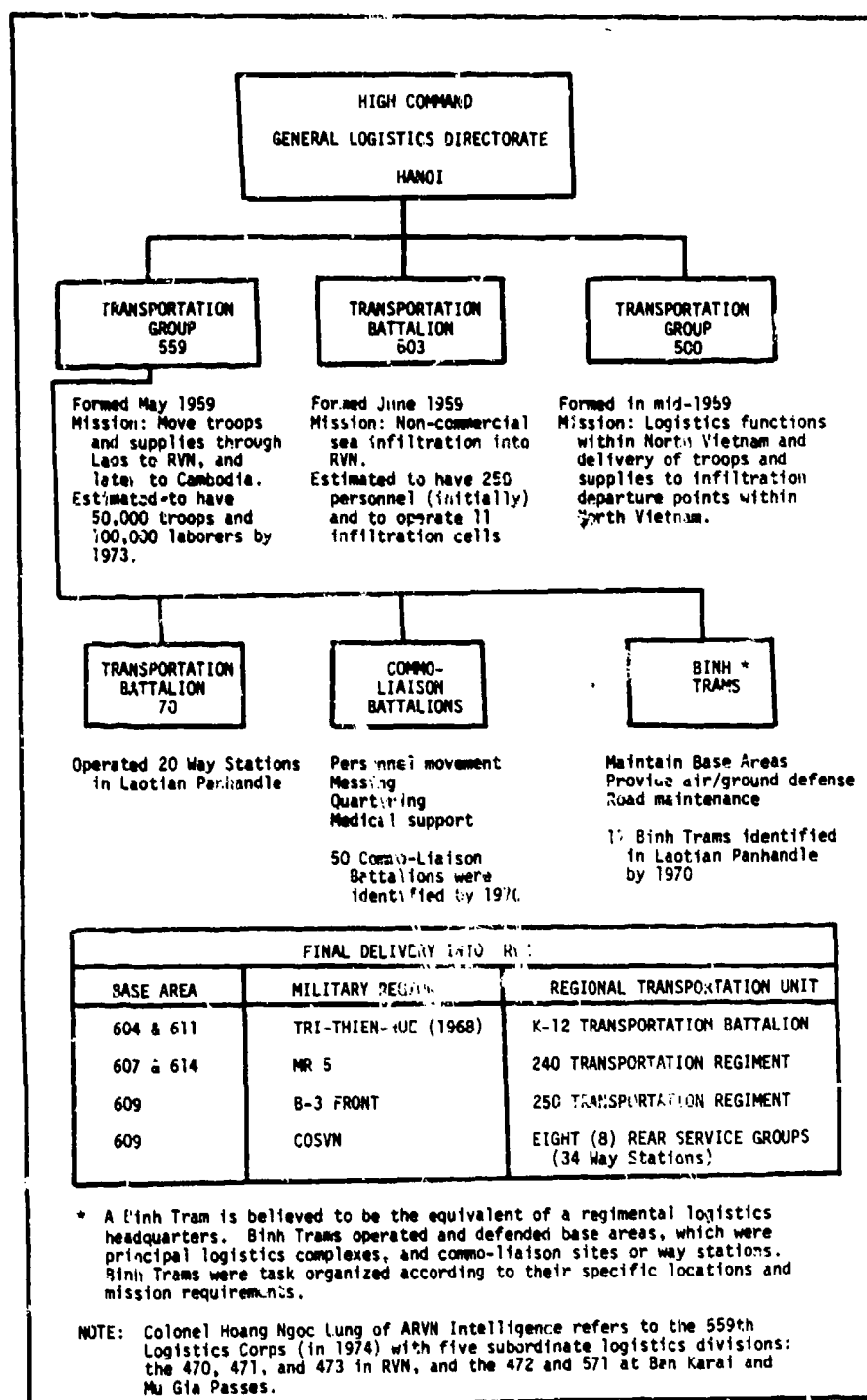
war against the French. Significant improvements were required to accommodate the anticipated flow of personnel and materiel along that trail system. Interrogation of several prisoners of war revealed that as early as 1958 selected personnel were trained in the techniques of establishing way stations and guide systems in Laos and South Vietnam.<sup>29/</sup> In 1959, at about the time of the Central Committee meeting, a transportation group was established to direct and control the total infiltration effort and to improve and maintain the lines of communication passing through Laos.

### 3. Logistics Organizations

The basic logistics structure that was to provide service throughout the Second Indochina War was created mainly in the 1959-1964 period, although considerable improvements and refinements were made in later periods. The 559th Transportation Group was formed on May 5, 1959, directly subordinate to the General Logistics Directorate. The subordinate 70th battalion was created almost immediately and sent to southern Laos where it was responsible for manning 20 way stations for infiltration into and evacuation from Thua Thien province. The 603rd Battalion, formed in June, was responsible for maritime infiltration (See Figure 5-2). Additional transportation units were added as the main supply route through Laos was expanded.

A second Transportation Group, the 500th, was formed later in 1959. Its responsibilities included logistical support of units in North Vietnam and transportation for personnel and supplies moving through North Vietnam to infiltration departure points on the coast or in Laos (See Figure 5-2).

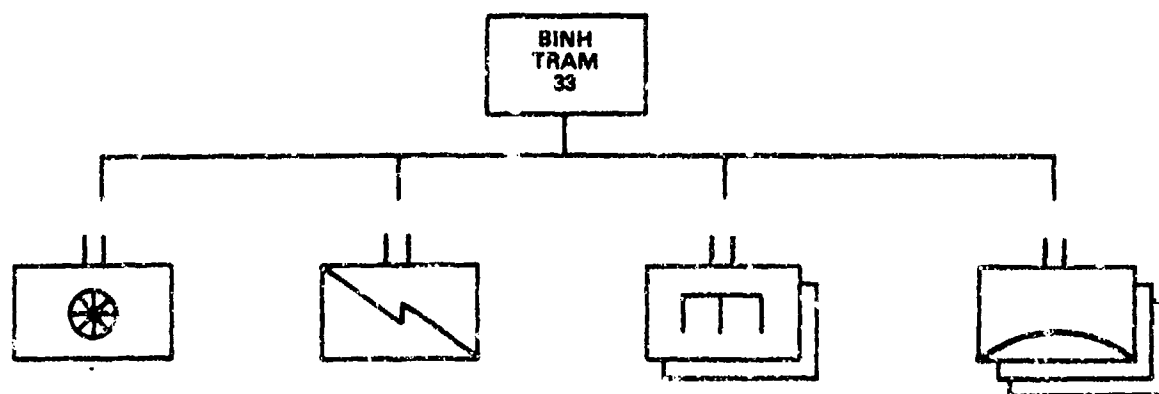
The task of establishing, maintaining, and defending logistical base areas and commo-liaison sites or way stations was assigned to several Binh Trams. A Binh Tram was roughly equivalent to a logistics regimental headquarters. The number and types of battalions assigned to a Binh Tram depended on its location and mission. See Figure 5-3. Those units were generally referred to by name by the Communist Vietnamese. US and ARVN intelligence designated the Binh Trams according to an arbitrary numbering system. By 1970 the US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (USMACV) had



454/78W

Figure 5-2. PAVN Logistics Structure

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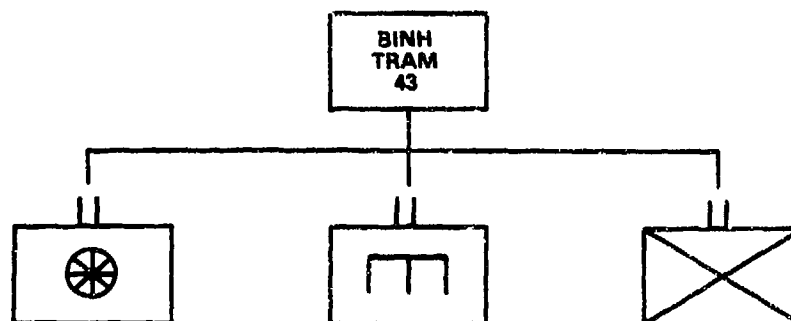


## ORGANIZATION

- BINH TRAM HEADQUARTERS
- TRANSPORTATION BATTALION
- SIGNAL BATTALION
- TWO ENGINEER BATTALIONS
- THREE ANTI-AIRCRAFT ARTILLERY BATTALIONS

**LOCATION:** DEPLOYED NEAR ROUTE 9 IN THE VICINITY OF TCHEPONE, LAOS.

**MISSION:** PROVIDE SERVICE SUPPORT TO TROOPS MOVING EAST IN QUANG TRI AND THUA THIEN PROVINCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM.



## ORGANIZATION

- BINH TRAM HEADQUARTERS
- TRANSPORTATION BATTALION
- ENGINEER BATTALION
- INFANTRY BATTALION

**LOCATION:** DEPLOYED IN LAOS NEAR THE A SHAU VALLEY.

**MISSION:** OPERATE BASE AREA 807

4541/78W

Figure 5-3. Representative Binh Trams



identified eleven Binh Trams in Laos subordinate to the 559th Transportation Group, in addition to numerous other Binh Trams in Cambodia and RVN, subordinate to COSVN initially. Beginning in 1966 the Binh Trams and base areas in the northern half of RVN were assigned to three new field headquarters that reported directly to the High Command's Logistics Directorate.

Communist base areas shared certain common features. The bases were normally established near a populated area but in heavy jungle which afforded overhead screening against aerial reconnaissance. Invariably the bases were located on a stream and were serviced by a single road or trail, which was protected by mines or booty traps. Secret exits were elaborately prepared, and numerous tunnels provided secure egress in the event of a major attack. Subterranean chambers were used as storage areas, hospitals, classrooms, and barracks.<sup>32/</sup> Base areas such as the "Iron Triangle" north of Saigon often covered 40 or more square miles of caves, tunnels, and fortifications and accommodated several thousand personnel, particularly when regular units were being hosted while in transit.<sup>32/</sup>

Antiaircraft artillery began to appear along the Ho Chi Minh Trail as early as 1965. Heavy concentrations of antiaircraft discouraged air attacks on Mu Gia and Ban Kua Passes. After the 1973 cease fire, PAVN quickly established SA-2 surface-to-air missiles at Khe Sanh. Other radar-controlled antiaircraft weapons, such as 37mm and 57mm guns, were deployed south where they covered much of the Central Highlands and virtually all of MR-3, which included Saigon.

a. PAVN Logistical Structure in Laos

In 1959 the 70th Battalion of the 559th Transportation Group began development of troop shelters in Laos in the various way stations which were located at intervals of about 50 kilometers or one day's march along existing footpaths, trails, and secondary roads. The roads leading through the mountain passes into Laos were improved during 1961 and 1962 under DRV aid agreements with the Royal Laotian Government.<sup>34/</sup> Roads in the southern panhandle, however, traversed an area which received 120 to 140 inches of rainfall annually -- the wettest part of Laos; those roads

needed extensive maintenance and many new roads had to be built.<sup>36/</sup> Traffic along the trail was heaviest during the northeast monsoon, October to May, when Laos was comparatively dry. It must be noted that the trail system included rivers, such as the Sekong running from A Shau through Attapeu and into Cambodia where it joins the Mekong near Stung Treng.

During the 1959-1964 period, the Ho Chi Minh Trail system remained close to the Laos-Vietnam border, an area so remote that the Lao government made no effort to control it; the French had also ignored that area. By the end of 1964 the Ho Chi Minh Trail was believed by US intelligence analysts to comprise approximately 200 miles of roads within Laos, extending to the tri-border area opposite Kontum in the Vietnamese Central Highlands.<sup>37/</sup> No Pathet Lao units were authorized to operate within the infiltration corridor. Even local tribes were excluded from the area.

In October 1964 the Royal Laos Air Force (RLAF) began a desultory and ineffective air interdiction effort against the Ho Chi Minh Trail using T-28 aircraft. Within five years even that small effort was called off because of the effectiveness of PAVN antiaircraft artillery defenses of the Trail.<sup>38/</sup> US air interdiction of the Trail network is discussed in a following section.

b. PAVN Logistical Structure in Cambodia

As early as 1962, PAVN forces began to infiltrate into the tri-border area and the northern border provinces of Cambodia.<sup>39/</sup> By the end of 1964, three regular PAVN regiments were in or near the Central Highlands of South Vietnam, and more were on the way. In all, eight North Vietnamese army regiments made their presence known in RVN by November 1965.<sup>40/</sup> Significantly, a network of caves and underground installations already existed on both sides of the Cambodian-South Vietnamese border, a legacy from the Viet Minh and the basis for PAVN's logistical infrastructure.

It was not until after 1965 that an elaborate supply system was developed in the eastern half of Cambodia, one that remained virtually immune from outside interference for five years.

c. PLAF(VC) Logistics in RVN

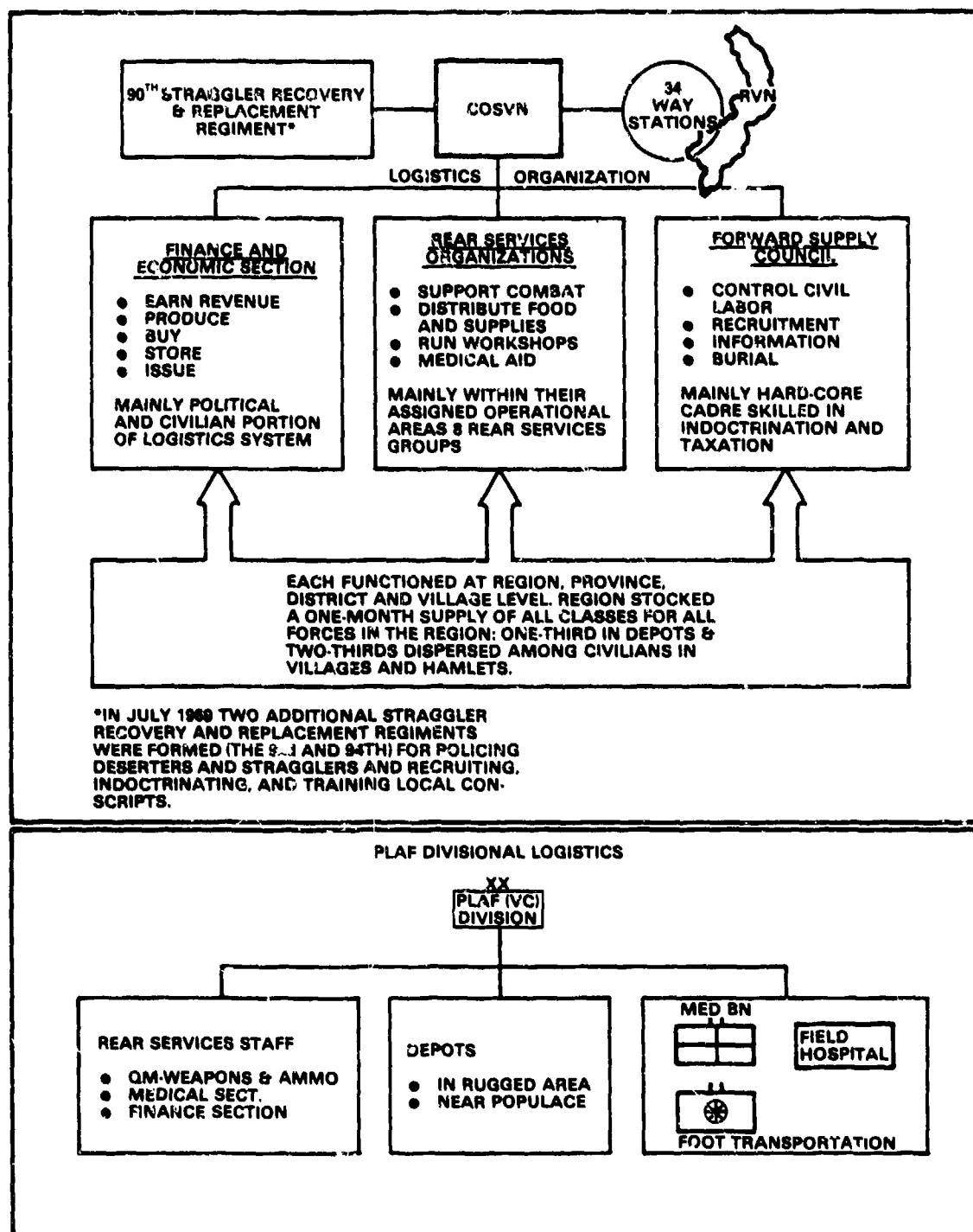
The People's Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF, but often colloquially known as the Viet Cong or VC) sought the support of the civilian populace in South Vietnam for a wide variety of direct and indirect support. Former Viet Minh strongholds provided sanctuary, and arms caches yielded weapons and ammunition. Rural settlements were taxed in money, food, or goods, and the people were repeatedly called for working parties to dig tunnels, prepare fortifications, carry supplies, and evacuate the killed and wounded. Effective mobilization of the people, whether on a cooperative basis or through coercion, gave the PLAF a uniquely responsive logistical system. More than three-fourths of the logistics support appeared to come from the civilian population.<sup>40/</sup>

1) Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN)

In 1951, just after the Lao Dong Party was created, the Southern communist apparatus known as the Nam Bo Regional Committee was dissolved and replaced by COSVN, which served as the top command post under the Lao Dong Party for all communist activities in South Vietnam.<sup>41/</sup> The six original members of the COSVN Party Committee included Le Duan as Secretary and Le Duc Tho as Deputy Secretary.<sup>42/</sup> COSVN disbanded in 1954, but was reestablished in 1961. The headquarters was located in Cambodia initially, but it deployed to the Ca Mau Peninsula of South Vietnam and in the 1960's was reported to be in War Zone D, next in War Zone C in Tay Ninh Province, and finally, after US operation Cedar Falls-Junction City, the COSVN headquarters together with bases, hospitals, training centers and supply depots returned to Cambodia.<sup>43/</sup> As tactical and logistical requirements increased beyond the command capabilities of a single headquarters, COSVN's area of tactical and logistical responsibility was shared by three new major headquarters. During the period 1962-1964, however, COSVN established the increasingly sophisticated logistics system that supported insurgency in the South. See Figure 5-4.

2) Guerrilla Logistics

COSVN's logistics role was principally to support PAVN and main force PLAF units. The irregulars, or guerrillas, often had to



4541/78W

Figure 5-4. COSVN Logistics Organization

## THE BDM CORPORATION

fend for themselves, stealing or capturing their own weapons and ammunition. Local guerrilla militia were not usually armed.<sup>45/</sup> Their weapons were sticks or an occasional grenade. They were not consumers of insurgent logistics; rather they were guides, guardians, and providers. See Figure 5-5. Guerrillas were required to salvage expended cartridge casings for reloading at one of the local weapons work sites. The work sites also fabricated mines, booby traps and grenades, and they repaired weapons.

### 4. Logistical Significance 1959-1964

In May 1959, the Lao Dong Central Committee publicly announced its decision to transform their political efforts in the South into a combination of political and military activities. Concomitantly, the logistical infrastructure necessary to sustain such a major insurgency began to evolve. Former Viet Minh enclaves became PLAF and guerrilla base areas within South Vietnam, increasing the internal threat. The rapidly growing logistics system in Laos and Cambodia presaged the development of the external threat. Bases, sanctuaries, and improved lines of communication endowed the insurgents with a powerful weapon -- sustainability. The sanctuary aspects of Laos and Cambodia were reinforced during this period by the following events:

- The 1962 Geneva Agreement on Laos established the neutrality of Laos, a status that would seriously hamper US/GVN operations and which the DRV would ignore.
- Prince Norodom Sihanouk declared the neutrality of Cambodia in 1955 after the Bandung Conference, thereby effectively renouncing the protection gratuitously proffered in a protocol to the 1954 Manila Pact that created the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). The Prince broke off diplomatic relations with Saigon in August 1963, and with the US in May 1965.

The serious potential threat posed by the embryonic bases, sanctuaries and LOCs was noted by several informed individuals including Brigadier General Edward G. Lansdale USAF. In January 1961 General Lansdale reported to the

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## GUERRILLA LOGISTICS

### STRUCTURE/FUNCTIONS

- DISTRICT/PROVINCE GUERRILLAS
  - FULL-TIME INDEPENDENT PLATOONS AND COMPANIES
  - PROVIDE SECURITY FOR LOC
  - RECEIVE SUPPLY SUPPORT FROM LOCAL REAR SERVICE ORGANIZATION
- HAMLET/VILLAGE GUERRILLAS
  - PART-TIME LOCAL GUARDS PROVIDE WARNING
  - FULL-TIME PERSONNEL FORM SQUADS AND PLATOONS
  - ESTIMATED THAT ONLY 1 OUT OF 5 ARE ARMED
  - GENERALLY SELF-SUPPORTING LOGISTICALLY
  - PROVIDE INTELLIGENCE AND SCREENING
- MILITIA/SELF DEFENSE FORCES
  - PROVIDE SECURITY AND POLICE FUNCTIONS
  - FARM DURING THE DAY, GUARD AND SPREAD PROPAGANDA AT NIGHT
  - SOMETIMES ARMED WITH GRENADES, SELDOM WITH RIFLES
- SECRET GUERRILLAS
  - IN CITIES AND CONTESTED VILLAGES
  - LOGISTICALLY SELF-SUPPORTING
- AFTER AN INITIAL ISSUE OF A RIFLE AND SMALL AMOUNT OF AMMUNITION, THE GUERRILLA MAY BE RESPONSIBLE THEREAFTER FOR BUYING, STEALING, OR CAPTURING ANY ADDITIONAL SUPPLIES
- DURING THE EARLY YEARS OF THE INSURGENCY, GUERRILLAS WERE REQUIRED TO RECOVER EMPTY CARTRIDGE CASING SO THAT THEY COULD BE RELOADED
- FULL-TIME GUERRILLAS COULD DRAW ON THE COSVN SUPPLY SYSTEM BY REQUESTING SPECIFIC SUPPLY SUPPORT THROUGH THE RESIDENT COMMO-LIAISON AGENTS. THE AGENTS, IN TURN, REQUISITIONED THE SUPPLIES FROM THE DISTRICT MILITARY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE WHICH SUPERVISED WEAPONS WORK SITES

### SUPPLY MANAGEMENT

- NONFOOD SUPPLY
  - COSVN REAR SERVICES GROUP 83 WAS BELIEVED BY US INTELLIGENCE TO PURCHASE VIRTUALLY ALL PLAF (VC) NONFOOD REQUIREMENTS, MAINLY IN THE SAIGON-CHOLON AREA. SUPPLIES WERE MOVED WITHIN THE CITY BY BICYCLE AND FROM THE CITY BY WATERCRAFT.
- FOOD SUPPLY
  - QUOTAS WERE ESTABLISHED TO MEET PROJECTED NEEDS AT VILLAGE, DISTRICT, PROVINCE AND REGIONAL LEVELS
  - STORAGE REQUIREMENTS WERE CALCULATED AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND STOCKAGE LEVELS WERE ASSIGNED
  - FOOD WAS OBTAINED BY FARMING, TAXATION, FUND DRIVES, AND PURCHASE
  - AVERAGE STOCKAGE LEVELS APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN:
    - oo SOLDIER: TWO DAYS ROASTED RICE, FIVE DAYS NORMAL RICE
    - oo REGIMENTS: 10 TO 13 DAYS SUPPLY, REPLENISH AT HALF LEVEL
    - oo DIVISIONS: 30 DAYS SUPPLY
  - FOOD SUPPLY WAS RARELY A PROBLEM AND THEN ONLY BECAUSE OF SOME UNEXPECTED CIRCUMSTANCE THAT DEVIATED FROM THE PLAN

RATIONS	INFANTRY	MOUNTAINS		LOWLANDS	
		BIVOUAC	COMBAT	BIVOUAC	COMBAT
	GRAMS RICE/DAY	500	750	700	750
	GRAMS SEASONING/DAY	500	750	700	750
	GRAMS VEGETABLES/DAY	300	300	300	300
	KILOGRAMS MEAT/MONTH	2	2	2	2

- ORDNANCE
  - ORDNANCE SHOPS AND WORKSITES ABUNDED
  - UNEXPLODED RVNAF ORDNANCE PROVIDED EXPLOSIVES
  - SHOPS RANGED FROM HAND LABOR TO MODERN MACHINE SHOPS
  - RESUPPLY WAS GENERALLY NOT A PROBLEM BECAUSE TROOPS WERE INSTRUCTED TO SAVE ENOUGH AMMUNITION TO COVER WITHDRAWALS

### TRANSPORTATION\*

- MILITARY REGION I....PORTERS, SOME SAMPAKS AND ELEPHANTS
- MILITARY REGION II....PORTERS, SOME OXCARTS AND SAMPAKS
- MILITARY REGION III....MORE THAN HALF BY SAMPAN AND OXCART, SOME PORTERS
- MILITARY REGION IV....WATERCRAFT, SOME PORTERS AND OXCARTS
- PORTERS WERE USUALLY ESCORTED BY ARMED CADRES
- COASTAL SHIPPING, PARTICULARLY CHINESE CRAFT, WERE DISGUISED AS FISHING BOATS AND THEY COULD BE UNLOADED AT NIGHT IN A FEW MINUTES BY PREARRANGED LABOR BATTALIONS

\* PACK BICYCLES WERE IN WIDESPREAD USE BOTH ALONG THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL AND WITHIN THE FOUR RVN MILITARY REGIONS. DURING THE RAINY SEASON, TRAILS AND SECONDARY ROADS WERE OFTEN PASSABLE ONLY TO PORTERS AND ANIMALS.

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Figure 5-5. Guerrilla Logistics 1959-1964

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Secretary of Defense on the infiltration of regular PAVN personnel via Laos and Cambodia.<sup>47/</sup> Later, the threat would increase markedly and in the end would contribute to bringing down the Republic of Vietnam.

### E. PAVN/PLAF LOGISTICS 1955 - 1975

For purposes of this study, guerrilla logistics are considered to have been subsumed by the COSVN logistical apparatus after 1965. In any event, the relative importance of self-supporting guerrillas was minimal when compared to the burgeoning logistical organization created by COSVN to support PAVN and main force PLAF units in Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam.

#### 1. The Buildup

Viet Minh regroupes comprised the bulk of the infiltrators who passed from North Vietnam into the southern Republic from 1959 to 1964. More US advisors, and helicopter and naval support to the South Vietnamese military impelled the Lao Dong Party to begin deploying regular PAVN regiments and divisions to RVN beginning late in 1964.<sup>48/</sup>

#### 2. Foreign Support

The DRV required foreign support for war materiel and food supplies. As previously mentioned, the Soviet Union surpassed the People's Republic of China in 1958 as the principal supplier of economic and military aid. Until the US committed ground combat forces in RVN, most supplies from the USSR came from Black Sea ports through the Suez Canal and thence to Haiphong. In 1966 the Cambodian port of Sihanoukville (Kompong Som) began to accept North Vietnamese-chartered vessels and Chinese, Soviet and bloc cargoes destined for PAVN forces in eastern Cambodia and the southern half of South Vietnam. By that time the Sihanouk Trail had been completed as an extension of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and a labyrinth of trails and roads serviced the border sanctuaries in Cambodia.<sup>49/</sup>

The Arab-Israeli Six-Day War in 1967 interrupted Soviet deliveries when the Suez Canal was closed. According to Professor Richard Thornton of George Washington University, the Soviets had no viable alternative to shipping from Black Sea ports, through the Mediterranean and

around the African Cape. The earlier split with the PRC had caused the Soviets to build up military forces along the Sino-Soviet border, fully committing the Trans-Siberian Railroad to that buildup and the resupply of the 40-odd divisions along the border.<sup>50/</sup> Department of State statistics reflected in Table 5-2 reflect a decline in military aid flowing to the DRV from both the USSR and PRC. If these data are accurate, that shortfall may be attributed to the acrimonious relationship which had developed between the two giants and the PRC's dilatory tactics concerning transshipment of Soviet supplies bound for North Vietnam via overland routes through mainland China. The communist buildup for Tet 68 and for the 1972 Easter offensive suggest that the data on foreign aid to the DRV for this period should be reevaluated.

From 1967 to 1970 Sihanoukville and Haiphong shared the honors as receiving ports. Supplies coming into Haiphong or over Chinese road and rail nets from the North were used to support PAVN forces in North Vietnam, Laos, and RVN's Military Regions I and II. Sihanoukville provided most of the logistical needs for PAVN and PLAF forces in the southern provinces of RVN's Military Region II and in MR's III and IV until its use was denied to the communists in 1970. In his recent book Decent Interval, former CIA agent Frank Snepp referred to the discovery by the CIA and the Pentagon that 80% of the supplies for the southern half of South Vietnam flowed through Sihanoukville during that period.<sup>51/</sup>

American military authorities suspected that materiel was being delivered to PAVN/PLAF via Sihanoukville as early as 1967, but the magnitude of that supply effort was not appreciated until after Prince Sihanouk was deposed and official Cambodian records became available to U.S. intelligence.

### 3. Expanding Lines of Communication and Base Areas

The Ho Chi Minh Trail system initially extended only to the southern tip of the Lao Panhandle. In 1965 the North Vietnamese began building the Sihanouk Trail as an extension of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The Sihanouk Trail ran south from Attapeu along the strategic Bolovens Plateau and met the newly emerging road and trail network in eastern Cambodia.



TABLE 5-2 CHINESE AND SOVIET AID TO NORTH VIETNAM, 1954-1971.  
(IN MILLIONS US \$)

	1954-1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971
SOVIET AID	365	225	510	705	530	370	420	415
(MILITARY)		(210)	(360)	(505)	(290)	(120)	( 75)	(100)
(ECONOMIC)		( 85)	(150)	(200)	(240)	(250)	(345)	(315)
CHINESE AID	670	110	170	225	200	195	150	175
(MILITARY)		( 60)	( 95)	(145)	(100)	(105)	( 90)	( 75)
(ECONOMIC)		( 50)	( 75)	( 80)	(100)	( 90)	( 60)	(100)

(1) THE FIGURES FROM 1954 TO 1964 ARE KING C. CHEN'S ESTIMATES.  
(2) THE FIGURES FROM 1965 TO 1971 ARE ESTIMATES OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT, APRIL 1972.

SOURCE: King C Chen, "Hanoi vs. Peking: Policies and Relations -- A Survey,"  
Asian Survey Vol. XII, No. 9, Sept. 1972, pp. 806-17.

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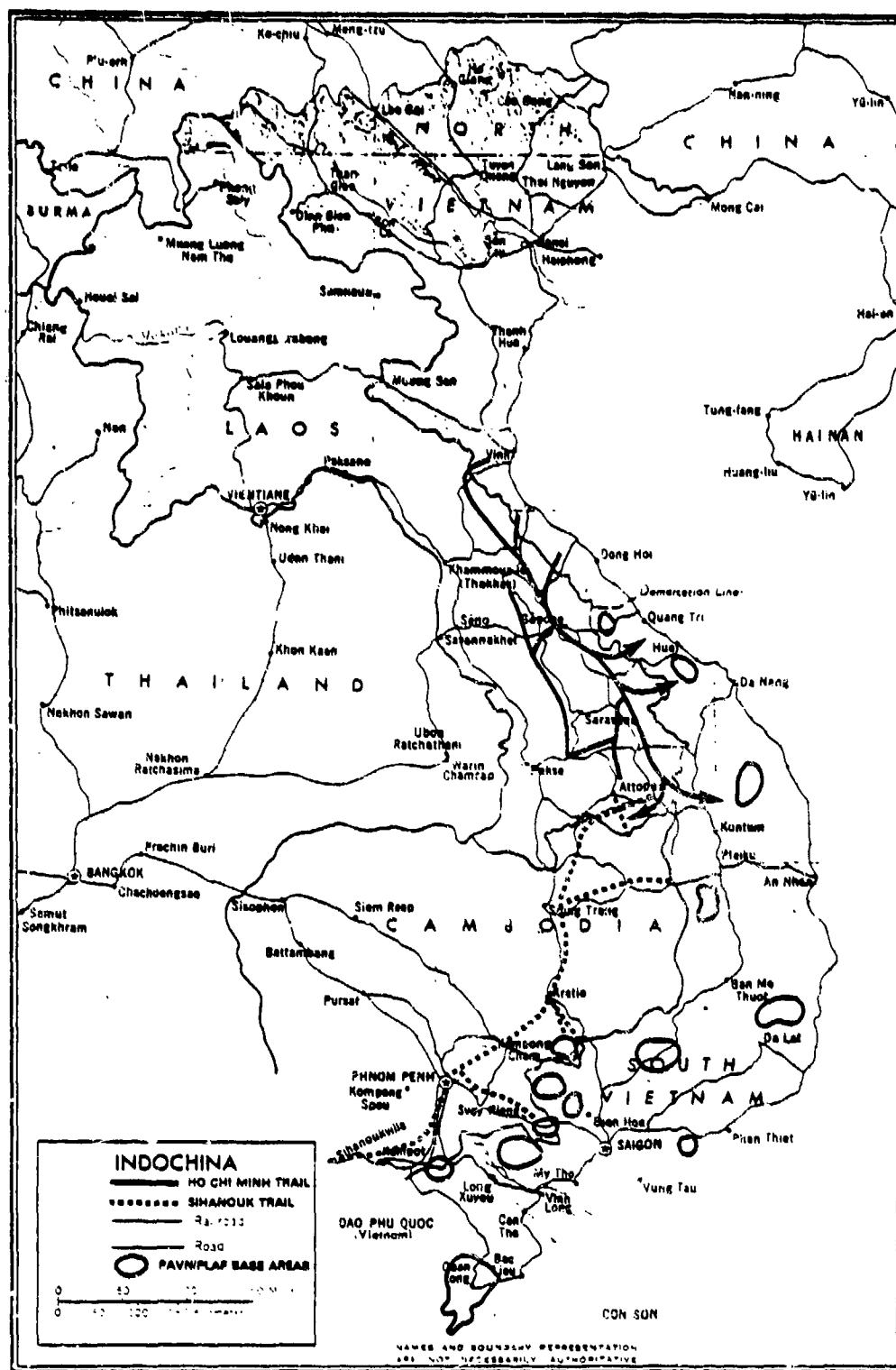
(See Map 5-4). The trail opened in May 1966 and PAVN troops and supplies flowed in increasing numbers to Cambodia. Motorboats carried supplies down the Sekong River to augment the road system. According to Brigadier General Soutchay Vongsavanh, formerly of the Royal Lao Army, rice was encased in plastic sacks and floated down the river day and night, hardly a lucrative target for aerial interdiction, but a simple and effective way to deliver supplies.<sup>53/</sup> It was an equally effective way to deliver sealed drums of POL.

The North Vietnamese had substantial manpower requirements for repairing, maintaining, and protecting the vital land LOCs both within the DRV and along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The Central Intelligence Agency's Office of Current Intelligence estimated in December 1967 that several hundred thousand personnel were engaged in those activities:

TABLE 5-3 - DRV Manpower Requirements <sup>54/</sup>

TASK	THOUSANDS OF PERSONS	
	FULL TIME	PART TIME
LOC repair/construction	72	100-200
Transport/dispersal	100-200	25
Civil defense	-	150
Air defense	83	25-30
Coast defense	20-25	-
TOTAL	275 300	300-405

The Commander in Chief, Pacific, Admiral U.S. Grant Sharp testified before the Senate Committee of the Armed Services on August 9, 1967 and referred to a then recent intelligence estimate which reflected that 500,000 to 600,000 North Vietnamese had been diverted to repair, reconstruction and dispersal programs, thus tending to confirm the data in Table 5-3.<sup>56/</sup>



4841/78W Map 5-4. The Ho Chi Minh and Sihanouk Trail System

## THE BDM CORPORATION

The DRV also received manpower assistance from the People's Republic of China. Some 34,000 Chinese engineer troops and 16,000 air defense personnel deployed to North Vietnam in 1966 to repair and protect the bridges and rail lines that connected with the Chinese rail system.<sup>57/</sup>

US air interdiction of the DRV's logistics network began in March 1965 when Operation Rolling Thunder commenced.<sup>58/</sup> As the intensity of air attacks by Air Force fixed-wing aircraft and Army helicopter gunships increased and spilled over into the Ho Chi Minh Trail area, that tangle of roads and trails began to edge to the west. When B-52 bombers were unleashed to attack the Trail networks in Laos and Cambodia in March 1969, the DRV began to shift the LOCs even farther west to the Bolovens Plateau and the Mekong Delta near dense populations to inhibit the air strikes.<sup>60/</sup> Ultimately the Trail penetrated up to 50 miles into Laos and Cambodia. Roads were hacked out of the jungle, but the overhead canopy was retained to provide concealment. Some sections of road ran along shallow river bottoms. Off-road revelements were often provided. Repair facilities were established within key base areas.

By January 1968 the logistics system, then supporting nearly 200 PAVN and PLAF combat battalions in South Vietnam, was at the peak of its efficiency. The stage was set for the late-January Tet offensive. The Central Intelligence Agency warned of evidence suggesting attacks on provincial and district seats and key urban areas such as Hue, Pleiku and Saigon, but the simultaneous assaults on over three-fourths of the provincial capitals and major cities were not anticipated and could not have been determined based on the intelligence available.<sup>61/</sup>

Even though it backfired militarily for the PAVN and particularly for the PLAF, the 1968 Tet Offensive demonstrated a well-developed logistical capability. Substantial amounts of food and ammunition had been introduced in the base areas ringing RVN's border to support the 84,000-man assault forces. Sufficient materiel and supplies remained to support a number of sporadic attacks later during 1968.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

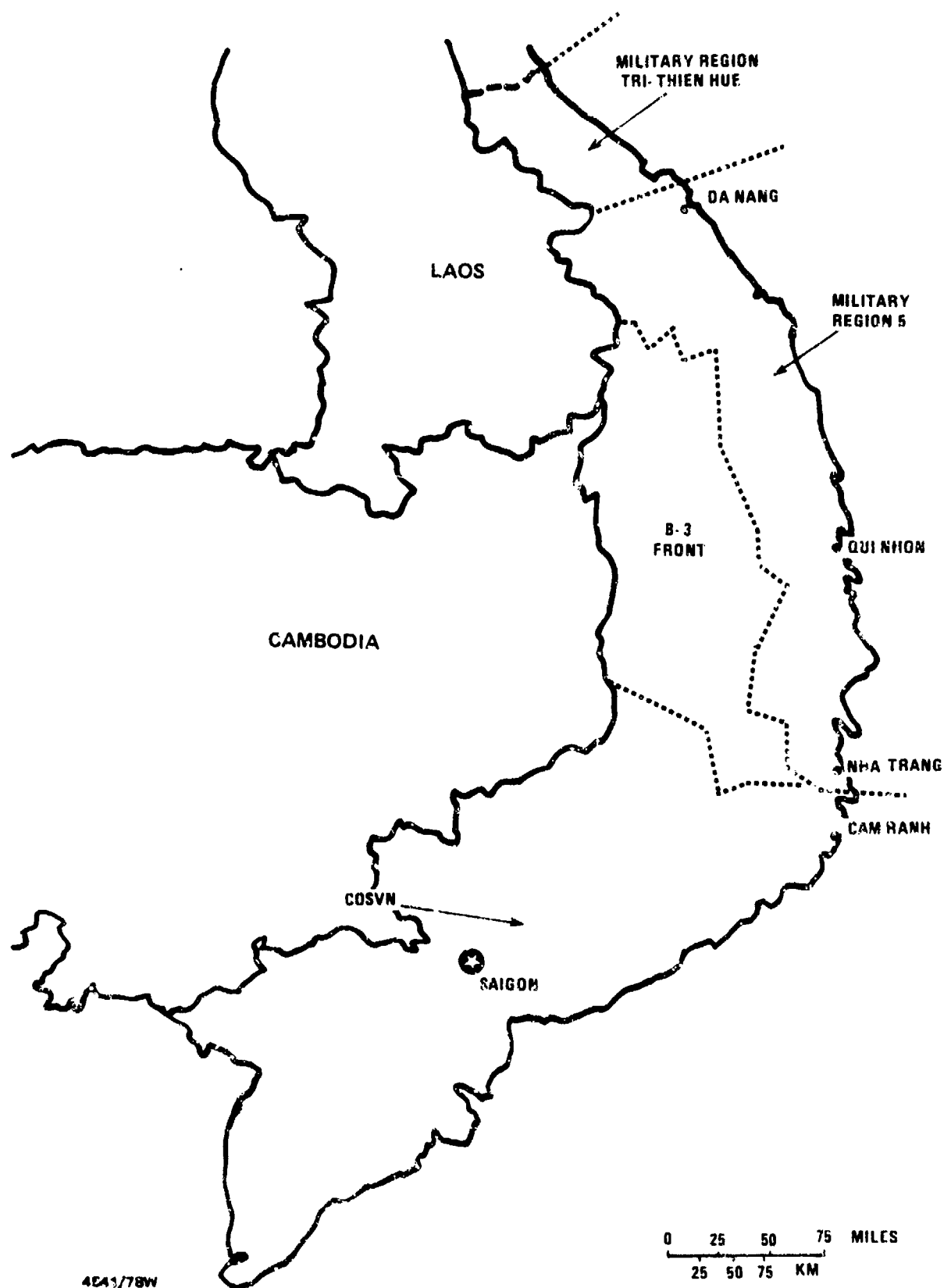
Perhaps contemplating the coming Tet offensive, the North Vietnamese High Command formed three politico-military-logistic headquarters in 1966-68 as counterparts to COSVN. (See Map 5-5). The new command structure in the South had the following responsibilities:62/

- Military Region Tri-Thien-Hue-directed military operations from the DMZ south to Hai Van Pass with Hue as a primary objective.
- Military Region 5 - spanned over 200 miles of coastline from Danang to Cam Ranh Bay and included the communist controlled beach and hinterland areas in Quang Ngai province.
- B-3 Front - responsible for operations in the strategic Central Highlands of Kontum, Pleiku, and Darlac provinces.
- COSVN - responsible for all politico-military operations in southern half of RVN. COSVN maintained liaison with the other headquarters, but they received their directives from Hanoi.

The tactical nature of the war was changing. The Soviets provided increasingly more sophisticated military aid. Heavy caliber mortars, rockets, and artillery arrived. Soviet PT-76 tanks were encountered at Lang Vei in February 1968 and at Ben Het in 1969.63/ By the 1972 Easter Offensive, the PAVN were equipped with Soviet T-54 tanks: by 1975 they had about 600 main battle tanks in or near RVN.64/

A POL pipeline was completed in 1968, linking Vinh with Mu Gia Pass; in 1969 the pipeline extended to Muong Nung and led to A Shau Valley in RVN.65/ By 1974 two separate diesel fuel pipeline systems were installed. One ran across the DMZ splitting the provinces of Quang Tri, Thua Thien and Quang Nam; the second connected Vinh to the Ho Chi Minh Trail and terminated in Quang Duc Province in RVN's MR-3.66/ (See Map 5-6). The pipes were cleverly camouflaged and often were laid in stream beds where detection was nearly impossible. The pipelines should have provided strategic warning that mobile, combined-arms warfare was in the offing.

Rolling Thunder air interdiction operations against North Vietnam were terminated by President Johnson in October 1968, and most of the effort was redirected against the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Despite the awesome



Map 5-5. DRV Command Structure in RVN



Map 5-6. Pipeline Systems

tonnage of bombs, rockets and napalm used against the logistics network, PAVN units in the South were well supplied. In addition, they sponsored the Khmer Rouge, which grew from 12-15,000 men in 1970 to 35-40,000 in 1972 when they began to operate as battalions and regiments under COSVN direction. Finally, by 1975 Khmer Rouge or FUNK divisions appeared, and they, too, received operational, logistical, and politico-military guidance from COSVN.69/

The North Vietnamese constructed a major highway across the DMZ piercing the RVN and providing direct access to several strategic areas of the South. (See Map 5-7) The architect for the final campaign, PAVN Senior General Van Tien Dung, described the new Route 14 or Truong Son Corridor in his article "Great Spring Victory" as follows:

The strategic route east of the Truong Son Range, which was completed in early 1975, was the result of the labor of more than 30,000 troops and shock youths. The length of this route, added to that of the other old and new strategic routes and routes used during various campaigns built during the last war, is more than 20,000 kms. The 8-meter wide route of more than 1,000 kms, which we could see now, is our pride. With 5,000 kms of pipeline laid through deep rivers and streams and on mountains more than 1,000 meters high, we were capable of providing enough fuel for various battlefronts. More than 10,000 transportation vehicles were put on the road.70/

Several senior South Vietnamese officers described the DRV's vastly improved logistics posture after the Paris Agreements of 1973 in these terms:71/

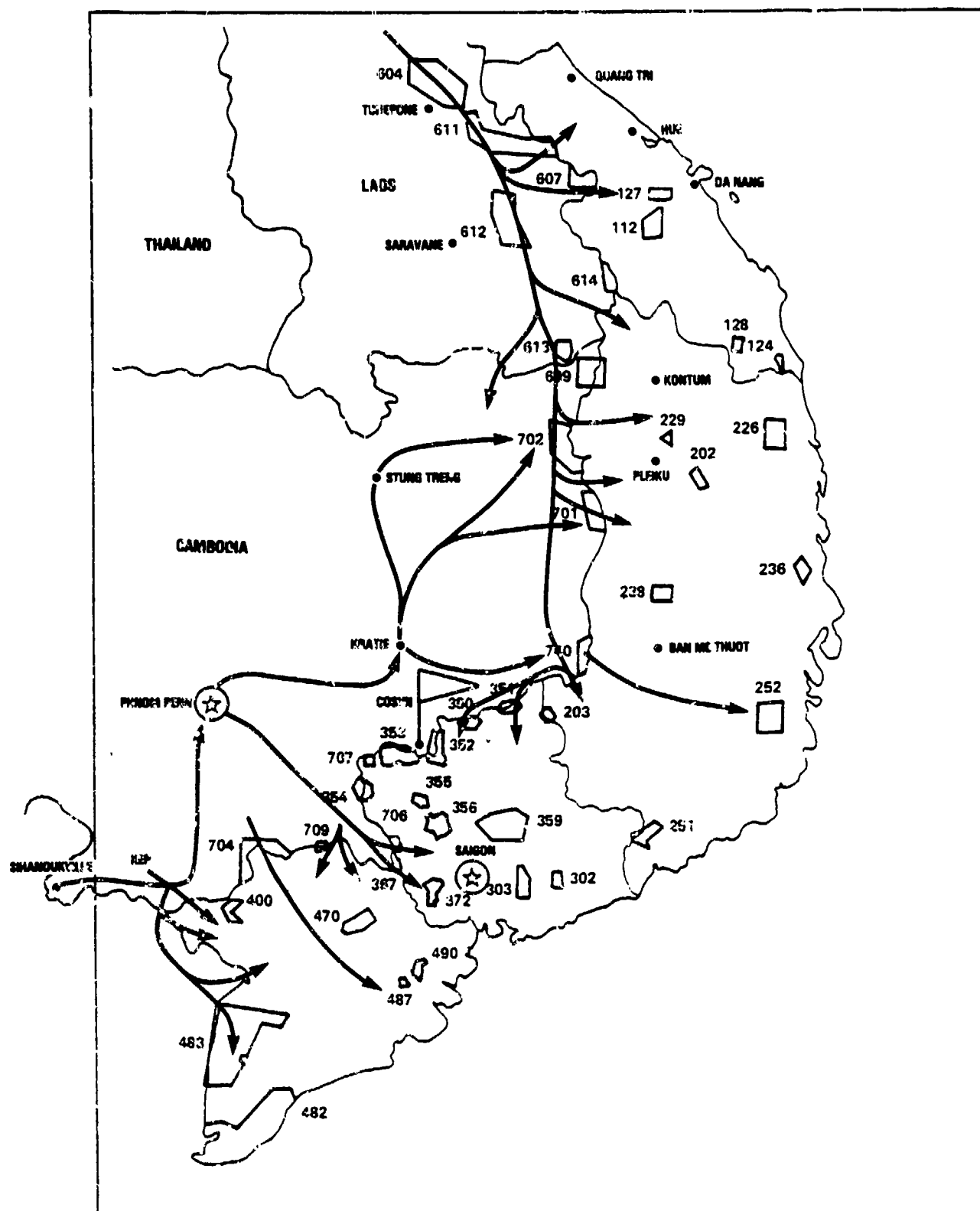
- Soviet aid to the DRV doubled - to 1.5 billion dollars.
- 100,000 cadres had infiltrated South Vietnam.
- Major equipment sent to PAVN units in RVN included about 600 tanks, 500 heavy cannons, 200 antiaircraft weapons, and many additional SA-7 rockets.
- Every week 1500 trucks moved on the expanded Ho Chi Minh Trail, day and night. (See Map 5-8)





4541/7RW

Map 5-7. New Route 14 or Truong Son Corridor



4841/78W

Map 5-8. The Enemy Base Area System and Additional Lines of Communication

## THE BDM CORPORATION

- Supply by sea became more important and a daily average of 10 Hong Ky (Red Flag) Chinese ships were observed using Cua Viet, the strategic port in South Vietnam north of Quang Tri which PAVN forces had captured in the final days before the 1973 cease fire.

#### 4. Synopsis of PAVN/PLAF Combat Operations

This chapter deals with bases, sanctuaries, and LOCs. It would serve no useful purpose here to catalog the hundreds of battles that occurred in Vietnam during the period of US involvement in Southeast Asia, but it is essential that the general ebb and flow of combat operations in Vietnam be related to the use of sanctuaries, bases, and LOCs in and near South Vietnam.

##### a. Prelude: The Peoples' War - 1955-1964

Leftover Viet Minh strongholds in South Vietnam, Laos and northeast Cambodia provided the communists with operational bases during the earliest stages of the insurgency against the Diem government. At the same time, the DRV made a concerted effort to upgrade the foot path and trail network through Laos that had been used to good effect during the First Indochina War.

During 1964 communist successes caused the US to increase its advisory complement significantly and to step up its helicopter and naval support. PLAF (VC) forces controlled most of the countryside at night, largely because their base areas incountry were virtually impregnable against the RVNAF and they enjoyed the advantage of being able to select their targets. The Ho Chi Minh Trail had been reactivated for delivering arms and ammunition, and some 44,000 regroupes had infiltrated back to South Vietnam. The latter provided leadership, guidance, and instructions to the stay behinds, Viet Minh who had either remained loyal to Ho Chi Minh or were significantly anti-Diem.

The defensive integrity of the communists' major base areas within and abutting RVN made it extremely difficult to reduce or neutralize them. In late 1964, three regular PAVN regiments began to walk down the Ho Chi Minh Trail. 74/

b. The Nature of Combat 1965-1975

The year 1965 began with the first PLAF (VC) division-sized battle of the war raging at Binh Gia, 40 miles east of Saigon. That battle marked the beginning of what the enemy apparently believed was the final, mobile phase of the war to destroy the military forces of South Vietnam. Significantly, by February 1965 the three infiltrating PAVN regiments were in Kontum Province in South Vietnam's Central Highlands. Guerrillas and PLAF main force units demonstrated that they were well supplied and that they had the ability to appear suddenly from hiding, strike a specific target, and fade away or stand and fight the South Vietnamese if they chose. The South was losing about a battalion a week.<sup>75/</sup> American combat forces entered RVN in increasing numbers and occasionally caught the enemy where he had to stand and fight; more often, however the PLAF or PAVN units were able to evade or break contact and fall back on their sanctuaries in country, across the DMZ, or beyond the western border.

Among the logistical accomplishments of the DRV in 1966 was the provision of AK-47 assault rifles to the PLAF local and guerrilla forces and introduction of 12.7mm antiaircraft guns, long-range 120mm mortars, and 122mm rockets. The AK-47s gave the enemy a decided advantage over RVNAF forces, who used M-1 rifles or carbines; even many U.S. troops continued to use the M-14 rifle until 1967 when sufficient M-16s became available.<sup>76/</sup> PAVN forces in division strength infiltrated through Laos and across the DMZ into the two provinces north of Hai Van Pass and initiated the main force combat that was to continue in the north until the final collapse of the GVN in 1975.

In the meantime local guerrillas posed a difficult problem for COMUSMACV by harrassing American and South Vietnamese installations throughout RVN with rockets, mortars and sappers.<sup>77/</sup>

Patrol clashes and battalion-sized assaults characterized much of the combat throughout 1967. The PLAF had been forced to evacuate a few of its base areas in RVN in the face of multi-battalion assaults such as Operation JUNCTION City in February 1967 against the Iron Triangle, but

## THE BDM CORPORATION

convenient sanctuaries lay across the Cambodian and Laotian borders. The relocation process was not particularly difficult.

On the US side, offensive land and air action combined with interdiction of the enemy's base camps, sanctuaries and LOCs described most of the actions from 1966 until the communists' 1968 Tet Offensive. It was a period of relative stability. Pacification and search-and-destroy operations made the security picture seem bright.

During that same period the PAVN increased their strength in RVN by more than 20,000 men (estimate).<sup>78/</sup> The Ho Chi Minh Trail network expanded markedly as did the main supply routes leading from Sihanoukville to the numerous border sanctuaries. Then came Tet. The Commander-in-Chief, Pacific described the offensive that began on January 29, 1968 as "... a major offensive, well planned and executed, with a highly effective logistics organization that had been prepared in obviously successful secrecy."<sup>79/</sup>

The offensive failed to stimulate the hoped-for general uprising. The PAVN was hurt, the PLAF was decimated, and the American public was critically disenchanted.

A military objectives study undertaken by USMACV J-52 in September 1968 described the post-Tet situation in these terms:

It has already been suggested that population control is the most significant index of progress. From that standpoint the control and influence exercised by the VC/VCI are significant. Vast areas of the country are either dominated by the enemy or remain in a contested status. Many lines of communications outside of populated and military base areas are interdicted by the enemy and are not safe for unescorted travel. Infiltration of supplies and personnel continues. About the same percentage of the population, but less territory, is under GVN control now than was the case in 1965, this by virtue of refugees and movement to urban areas.<sup>80/</sup>

In October 1968 President Johnson halted all bombing of North Vietnam. The halt was continued by President Nixon for over three years, creating a sanctuary of sorts in the North. Bombing continued in Laos and Cambodia, but men and supplies continued to flow down the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

A senior ARVN intelligence officer contends that progress in Vietnamization, and cross-border incursions in Cambodia and Laos to disrupt activities along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, was among the many causes that compelled the enemy to launch his general offensive of 1972.<sup>81/</sup> That offensive included use of new, heavy-caliber, Soviet howitzers and field guns, T-34 and T-54 tanks, and ZU 23 and SA-2 antiaircraft weapons, prima facie evidence of a massive and successful logistics effort in which the LOCs, bases, and sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia had fully come into use. Despite dramatic early successes, the DRV's offensive cost them heavy casualties. They did not defeat the South. The invasion failed, but PAVN forces managed to seize much additional territory, including the area north of the Cua Viet river, giving them a port within South Vietnam for use later.

US air power had been a key factor in interdicting the battlefields and providing essential direct-fire support for the South Vietnamese. Significantly, PAVN forces had become quite vulnerable to air attack because they now depended on POL for their tanks and other vehicles, and they needed great quantities of ammunition for their modern heavy weapons. Equally significant was the use by US air forces of "smart bombs" which made it possible to interdict the North with precise effect in Operations LINEBACKER I and II.

After the January 1973 cease-fire, the North Vietnamese turned to rebuilding the damage wrought by the December air attacks. Roads and rail lines were repaired, and, thanks to the US Navy, the northern ports were swept of mines. The PRC and USSR provided massive quantities of war materiel and economic support. The DRV initiated a campaign called "logistic general offensive" to increase movement of supplies into South Vietnam, particularly into the northern area of MR-1.<sup>82/</sup> Concurrently with the movement of supplies, some 40,000 North Vietnamese civilians infiltrated southward as a supplement to the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) population base.<sup>83/</sup> Several regular PAVN divisions returned to North Vietnam to refit and rearm. In March 1974 US intelligence estimated that PAVN strength in the South had reached 185,000, men 500 to

700 tanks, and 24 regiments of antiaircraft troops.<sup>84/</sup> That buildup had been accomplished over the Ho Chi Minh Trail. It was not until 1975, just before the final collapse of GVN that the new Truong Son highway was completed across the DMZ and into RVN.

Senior General Van Tien Dung commanded the 1975 invasion of RVN. Like General Vo Nguyen Giap, he considered the rear base to be a deciding factor in revolutionary war. Early in February 1975, General Van Tien Dung flew to Dong Hoi to meet the commander of the 559th Troop Command (also referred to as a Transportation Battalion and, by some ARVN personnel, as a corps). He was assured by the rear services staff that they could provide any amount of rice, ammunition, gas and vehicles needed for the forthcoming attack in the Central Highlands. The general also noted that beginning in 1973 the National Defense Production Branch oversaw production of heavy guns and ammunition in North Vietnam.<sup>85/</sup>

During the "Great Spring Victory," drive, PAVN divisions deployed south on both sides of the Truong Son mountains, using the Ho Chi Minh Trail system and the new Truong Son Road. Combat supplies and materiel had already been delivered to the base areas in Laos and Cambodia that nurtured the attacking forces when they struck in March 1975 at Ban Me Thuot and then Kontum and Pleiku. The DMZ sanctuary was a springboard for three PAVN divisions that poured into Quang Tri province and joined other PAVN/PLAF units already in place for a drive on Hue.

During the final drive, routes, riverways, sea lanes, railroads and airfields were used to advance combat troops and their logistical tail. In their victory, the North Vietnamese, demonstrated the impressive sophistication and effectiveness of their logistic support system. They made use of the bases and LOCs that had served them so well before the cease-fire. They reconnoitered and planned carefully the use of a variety of land and water routes within RVN that would give PAVN forces a tactical advantage as the campaign unfolded. Delivery of supplies, ammunition, and POL during the swift operations of March and April was remarkable, particularly in light of increased demands placed on the supply system by the modernized combined arms PAVN.

5. Significance of PAVN/PLAF Logistics 1965-1975

From 1965 to 1975 the PAVN/PLAF combat service support capability changed from a simple and often field-expedient system to one of considerable sophistication. Significant logistical developments in that decade included:

- Developing North Vietnam as the rear service base capable of supporting multi-division combined arms forces
- Developing logistical tactics and techniques that overcame the massive (but restricted) US air interdiction programs: 86/
  - ROLLING THUNDER 1965-1968 in North Vietnam
  - STEEL TIGER 1965-73 in the Laotian Panhandle
  - FREEDOM DEAL 1970-73 in Cambodia
  - ARC LIGHT 1965-73 (B-52s) in South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia
- Restoring its badly damaged logistical base and LOC after LINEBACKER I (May-October 1972). Note: The damage caused by LINEBACKER II in December 1972 was devastating and contributed to the two-year delay before the final major campaign was launched.
- Expanding and modernizing the Ho Chi Minh Trail system to accommodate long-haul trucks, and providing effective ground and air defense for that system.
- Developing the combat service support capability to supply and maintain a substantial tank, artillery, antiaircraft, and vehicular arsenal that was widespread.
- Developing extensive POL pipeline systems adjacent to and into the combat zone.
- Anticipating, planning for, and effectively using captured South Vietnamese facilities during the final campaign to include major and minor ports, airfields, roads, railways, and streams.
- Providing combat service support for PLAF, Pathet Lao and Khmer Rouge forces throughout Indochina.

The general failure of the DRV's 1972 Easter Offensive cannot be attributed to any significant logistical failures on their part. Rather,



## THE BDM CORPORATION

it was US airpower coupled with resolute action by some of South Vietnam's better commanders and better units that defeated the offensive. In the final campaigns of March-April 1975, the logistical accomplishments revealed the DRV to be very effective in planning and supporting mobile, combined arms warfare.

### F. STRATEGIC LOC 1965-1975

#### 1. The Three Strategic LOC's

In this section a strategic LOC is defined as one external to the DRV over which foreign aid moved to DRV users. During the Viet Minh War only one LOC complex merited this strategic designation--the roads and rail lines in southern China connecting Kunming and Nanning with Viet Minh border stations. Those LOC continued to be important logistically to the DRV throughout the Vietnam War when they carried up to 30% of the materiel supplied by the USSR and PRC.

Expulsion of the French in 1954 freed the port of Haiphong, making possible the second strategic LOC complex. Sea LOCs now connected Haiphong to the PRC, USSR, and bloc nations, and massive quantities of supplies and materiel could be shipped directly to North Vietnam. Haiphong was the principal point of entry for outside aid during the Second Indochina War. It was estimated that about 80% of the imports required in North Vietnam came through that port.<sup>87/</sup> Despite numerous recommendations that the President of the United States authorize mining and blockading Haiphong, it was subjected only to occasional, tightly controlled, aerial attacks until 1972. President Johnson had rejected the JCS recommendation in August 1967 that air power be used to close Haiphong and knock out part of the Red River dike system. His reason was the risk of Chinese or Soviet involvement and fear of heavy civilian casualties.<sup>88/</sup>

Cambodian Prince Norodom Sihanouk made possible the third strategic LOC complex when he agreed to permit PAVN/PLAF supplies to be off-loaded at Sihanoukville. Beginning in 1965 vast quantities of PAVN war materiel arrived at that port city in commercial cargo ships that were

engaged by the North Vietnamese. Two Cambodian trucking firms hauled the cargo from the ships to one of COSVN's eight rear service groups in the various border sanctuaries. The groups, in turn, delivered the materiel to PAVN/PLAF rear service units farther forward. The Sihanoukville LOC supported communist forces in RVN's Military Region III and IV as well as the southern provinces of MR II until March 1970, when Lon Nol deposed Prince Sihanouk and closed the port to DRV use. By that time, however, extensive bases, sanctuaries, and LOCs had been established in a connecting, redundant network which greatly increased the through-put capacity of the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

2. Vulnerabilities of the Strategic LOC

a. The China Routes

The road and rail LOCs in southern China enjoyed complete immunity from outside interference. They lay in a privileged sanctuary. Use of those LOCs to supply the DRV was a PRC option. When Sino-Soviet relations were good, the USSR could ship goods across China to the DRV. When those relations cooled, the Chinese procrastinated and created bureaucratic roadblocks to embarrass the Soviets and slow their military aid to the DRV. For example, Soviet personnel were not allowed to escort shipments through China. Instead, the DRV had to furnish the escorts, but only after considerable haggling. Furthermore, the amount of war materiel crossing the border into North Vietnam was easily controlled by the PRC.

Other than military actions the only option available to the US to influence the overland flow of materiel was action in the diplomatic arena. Serious US overtures to China did not begin until after the Nixon administration took office, and US withdrawal from Vietnam was well underway before the Kissinger/Nixon visits to Peking.

b. The Cambodian Routes

Unlike Haiphong, the port of Sihanoukville was in neutral territory. The US was restricted to surreptitious operations against base areas inside Cambodia, having elected not to blockade or attack the port through which the war materiel flowed.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

The US had little influence on the communist suppliers. Pursuing detente with the Soviets left little room for "arm twisting". Apparently, the US also lacked influence with the shippers, mainly Chinese, who carried weapons, equipment, and munitions to Sihanoukville for the DRV.

Considerable debate took place in US government circles concerning whether or not Sihanoukville was being used by the communists, and it was not until Prince Sihanouk was overthrown that the true role of that port became known.<sup>89/</sup>

The Cambodian routes had enabled the PAVN/PLAF forces to build up extensive war supplies, well beyond the capability of the Ho Chi Minh Trail to provide. The road and trail system blanketed the border sanctuaries and connected with the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos.

The DRV lost the use of Sihanoukville in March 1970 when Lon Nol deposed Prince Sihanouk. Loss of that port slowed but did not cripple the DRV's logistic buildup in the South.

### c. The Haiphong Routes

Oil storage areas and military targets in the Haiphong area were bombed occasionally during the war, but not until 1972 was the harbor mined. Commercial ships from the DRV's communist allies continued to deliver essential war materiel until the mining in May 1972 when they ceased to use that port.

As long as the China routes and Sihanoukville were open, Haiphong was not of crucial importance to the DRV. When Sihanoukville was closed in 1970, after supplies crossing the PRC border had diminished substantially two years earlier, Haiphong assumed an exceptional degree of importance, but the US did not act for two more years.

Mining Haiphong in 1972 came too late to tip the balance in favor of South Vietnam. Critical supplies continued to leak through to the DRV. The unprecedented volume of surface-to-air missiles expended by the DRV during the December 1972 B-52 bombing attacks on Hanoi, however, exhausted their supply. Those missiles could not have been replaced quickly. Asian expert Sir Robert Thompson described the situation thus:

In my view, on December 30, 1972 ... you had won the war. It was over! They had fired 1,242 SAMs' they had none left, and ... their whole rear base was at your mercy. They would have taken any terms. And that is why you actually got a peace agreement in January. ... That cease-fire agreement restored complete security to the rear bases in North Vietnam, in Laos, in Cambodia, and in the parts of South Vietnam that it held. It subjected the South Vietnamese rear base again to being absolutely open to military attack. That is what the cease-fire agreement actually achieved.90/

3. Assessing the Strategic LOC

When all three strategic LOC were operable, the DRV was reasonably assured that its civil and military needs could be met readily. The slowdown in shipments from and through China did not decisively affect the DRV's war-making capability. When Sihancukville was closed in 1970, however, the US had its first promising opportunity to throttle the strategic LOC and seriously impair North Vietnam's logistic lifeline by destroying, blockading, or otherwise severely limiting the last major entry point for supplies. Judging from the PRC's attitude at the time, it appears in retrospect that a golden opportunity to hurt the enemy was overlooked by the US.

After the 1973 cease-fire, the last American forces withdrew from South Vietnam. The DRV maintained its base areas, sanctuaries and LOC in RVN Cambodia and Laos. After departure of the US forces, they used those LOC with remarkable skill in positioning troops and supplies for the coup de grace. The GVN was placed in a militarily untenable position because of the geostrategic advantage which the DRV derived from its bases, sanctuaries, and LOC.

G. ANALYTICAL SUMMARY AND INSIGHTS

Guerilla warfare does not require the massive logistics base needed for modern combined arms operations. In the initial phases of the Vietnam War the men and supplies necessary for PLAF operations were readily provided through local recruitment/procurement, capture of weapons from the South Vietnamese, or infiltration by land or sea. Losses to interdiction

## THE BDM CORPORATION

were minimal and had no measureable effect on combat operations. During the period 1965-1968, the DRV sent nearly half a million men to the South and lost perhaps 5 percent to bombing, plus a loss of supplies amounting to 10 percent. Guenter Lewy adds, "Over this same period, communist main force strength increased about 75 percent, enemy attacks fivefold and overall activity levels ninefold."<sup>91</sup> Clearly the DRV was able to meet the needs of PAVN and PLAF forces in the combat zone, though there is evidence of food shortages in the North, and the communists had to dedicate substantial personnel and materiel assets to the operation of their logistics system. Lon Nol's closing of the port of Sihanoukville was an important turning point in the war in the South. Most supplies needed by COSVN since 1966 had been funneled through that port, easing the burden on the Ho Chi Minh Trail and protecting the supplies from interdiction. After March 1970, COSVN's supplies had to run the gauntlet along the Trail. The North Vietnamese reacted by expanding their areas of control within Cambodia, but they did not launch any major operations in South Vietnam until the 1972 Easter offensive. Obviously they needed that two-year period to build their supply stockpiles in the face of losing Sihanoukville and subsequently losing substantial supplies in the allied attacks in Cambodia and Laos.

The Cambodian incursion and Lam Son 719 in Laos disrupted DRV's supply system, but only temporarily. Without a permanent sealing off of the LOC, the enemy could be expected to restore his stockpiles. Combat operations might have been delayed, but they weren't prevented by short-term, limited interdiction.

The US Government announced publicly and repeatedly that no invasion of North Vietnam was contemplated. Having said so, an aerial interdiction program was undertaken at the first reasonable opportunity. Fear of possible PRC and USSR reaction combined with hopes for a negotiated settlement, however, led the President to self-imposed restrictions on US interdiction operations against the DRV homeland, its coastal regions, and the base areas that proliferated throughout Laos and Cambodia. North Vietnam, therefore, was in itself a sanctuary for most of the war except for the

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Panhandle below 20° North. Only during LINEBACKER I and II were most restrictions lifted on the Hanoi and Haiphong areas, and in those 1972 air campaign the DRV was brought to its knees and agreed to complete the cease-fire negotiations. In the final meetings held after the bombings, Dr. Henry Kissinger, the National Security Advisor to President Nixon, received one of the warmest and most cordial receptions he had yet received from the North Vietnamese negotiators.92/

The South Vietnamese faced two military threats. Within the South there existed an originally small but disciplined insurgent force that operated from relatively secure base areas. That was the initial and most menacing threat. When the successes of the reinforced insurgent threatened the Saigon government, US forces were introduced in increasing numbers. The second threat appeared in the form of regular North Vietnamese units. Both the insurgents and the PAVN forces depended on their base areas for logistic sustenance and sanctuary. The main force or "big-unit" battles that occurred usually ended with an allied victory, due mainly to the inherent mobility and massive firepower the allies commanded. In retrospect, it should be clear that in a stand-up fight the enemy would have been decimated. (Volume VI addresses this aspect in detail). Instead, he enjoyed the relative security of his sanctuaries and bases with elaborate and concealed underground facilities where he was safe from most bombing and had little fear of any major ground attack.

The nature of the climate and terrain of Indochina endowed the communists with the capability to infiltrate combat units close to the point of attack, generally when and where they chose. Equally important, the sanctuaries provided a place to rest, refit, train, and wait for instructions between battles. All the while, those forces constituted a threat to nearby GVN villages and installations.

Because the communist bases in Laos and Cambodia were relatively free from attack, the PAVN/PLAF were able to take sanctuary in them to avoid combat for long periods. Thus they limited their casualties. They were able to conduct a protracted war of attrition, which the US eventually was not willing to sustain. Finally, when the Paris Agreements were signed in

## THE BDM CORPORATION

January 1975, the PAVN/PLAF forces were allowed to retain their sanctuaries. They outflanked the South and retained a remarkable geostrategic advantage. In Korea no such sanctuaries existed, and the Republic has endured for a quarter of a century since hostilities ended. In Vietnam the combination of extensive internal LOC and bases/sanctuaries enabled the DRV to outwait the US, to reinforce and resupply, and thus eventually to destroy South Vietnam's military forces.

### H. LESSONS

The nature, extent, and politico-military implications of an enemy's actual or potential sanctuaries must be studied, analyzed, and understood in order to be in a position to deny him the important advantages conferred by the existence of such sanctuaries.

Sanctuaries can consist of:

- Cooperative people, whether motivated by loyalty or fear
- Remote areas within a country that defy intrusion by opposition forces
- Havens in adjacent "neutral" countries that encourage, permit, or suffer the presence of revolutionary forces.

The initiative, and thus control of the pace of an armed struggle, lies with a party making use of "privileged sanctuaries" (those areas gratuitously placed "off limits" by a protagonist).

"Privileged sanctuaries" are more likely to exist in a limited war than in a total war. In a limited-war situation a democratic power is likely to establish self-imposed constraints that may contribute to the existence of one or more sanctuaries. Conversely a totalitarian power is unlikely to impose on itself any limits.

Because of combat-power ratios and other important factors, revolutionary forces are usually dependent on sanctuaries, at least during early phases of their development, and on more sophisticated base areas and lines of communications as hostilities escalate.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

In cases where an enemy's use of "privilege sanctuaries" figures prominently in the nature and duration of a war, appropriate politico-diplomatic psychological, economic, and military means must be employed in concert to neutralize or restrict such sanctuaries.



# THE BDM CORPORATION

## CHAPTER 5 ENDNOTES

1. Army Area Handbook for North Vietnam, American University, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1967), p. 399
2. Ralph B. Smith, "The Japanese Period in Indochina and the Coup of 9 March 1945", Journal of Southeast Asian Studies. IX, No. 2 (September 1978) p. 226.
3. Strategic Services Unit, War Department, Intelligence Dissemination Number A-66557 of 25 March 1946, quoted in US Senate Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, 92d Cong. 2d Sess, on Causes, Origins and Lessons of the Vietnam War, May 9, 10, and 11, 1972, p. 339.
4. Hoang Van Chi From Colonialism to Communism (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publ., 1964), p. 67 states:

Contrary to what some maintain, the Japanese never gave any of their arms to the Vietminh. During the first days immediately after their surrender, the Japanese inclined to the idea of offering part of their arms and equipment to the Vietminh, but they changed their minds when Vo Nguyen Giap, en route from Viet-Bac to Hanoi, attacked their garrison at Thai Nguyen on August 17, 1945. The Japanese thereafter burned all their commissariat stores and later on handed over to the Chinese at Haiphong 400,000 tons of arms and ammunition.

5. Gen. 1 Vo Nguyen Giap, Unforgettable Months and Years (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program Data Paper No. 99, May 1975) p. 5.
6. George K. Tanham, Communist Revolutionary Warfare. (N.Y.: Praeger, revised ed. 1967), p. 68.
7. Bernard B. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, (N.Y.: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963) pp. 108-111.
8. Tanham p. 68-69.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid, pp. 69-70.
11. Tanham, pp. 69-72 describes the principal supply route from China entering North Vietnam at Cao Bang and Lang Son. Bernard B. Fall Viet-Nam Witness 1953-1966 (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1966), pp. 30-40 discusses the failure of the Navarre plan and depicts the general areas of Viet Minh operations, which reflect a rough trace of the lines of communication used by the Viet Minh in the 1956-1954 period.

12. Beginning in 1958, an elderly southern-born cadre led a team from South Vietnam to the DRV, scouting the lines of communication in the eastern part of the Laotian Panhandle and the western strip of upper South Vietnam to select the best route for infiltrating men and supplies into RVN. The infiltration route took its old name dating from the First Indochina War - The Ho Chi Minh Trail. (Some cadres called it "The Old Man Trail" as a tribute to the man who surveyed it). Col. Hoang Ngoc Lung, ARVN. Strategy and Tactics. Indochina Refugee Authored Monograph Program. Prepared for Department of the Army, Office of Chief of Military History. (McLean, VA: General Research Corp., 10 July 1973), pp. 20-21.
13. MG Nguyen Duy Hinh, ARVN, Lamson 719, Indochina Refugee Authored Monograph Program. Prepared for Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Military History (McLean, VA: General Research Corporation. July 31, 1977), p. 9.
14. Dennis J. Duncanson, Government and Revolution in Vietnam, Under- auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs (N.Y. and London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 177 quoting Edgar O'Ballance. The Indo-China War, 1945-1954, London 1961, p. 201.
15. Fall, pp. 125-127.
16. Military Review, October 1956, p. 10.
17. General Vo Nguyen Giap, People's War, People's Army, (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1961) p. 184.
18. Fall, fn. 5 Chapter 7, p. 472 states that US arms abandoned in Korea in October 1950 armed several Viet Minh divisions one year later.
19. Wallace J. Thies, Coercion and Diplomacy: Force and Foreign Policy in the Vietnam Conflict, 1964-1968, (Yale University PhD Dissertation, 1977) p. 316.  
Tanham, pp. 68-69 describes the flow of Chinese aid during this period. The Pentagon Papers, The Senator Gravel Edition, Volume I (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), pp. 82-86 refers to the Chinese Communist support.
20. LTC Lance J. Burton USA, North Vietnam's Military Logistics System: Its Contribution to the War, 1961-1969, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1977) p. 18. also see Fall, p. 350, and Tanham, 116.
21. Viet Minh strongholds in RVN are described in Burton, p. 18; J.J. Zasloff Origins of the Insurgency in South Vietnam, 1954-1960: The Role of The Southern Vietminh Cadres (Santa Monica: The Rand Corp., 1968) p. 17; The Pentagon Papers, Senator Gravel Edition, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), Volume I, pp. 123, 192; Fall, p. 129 (Also see Fall for maps of the insurgency situation in 1962-63, p. 354 and 1965 pp. 381, 388).

## THE BDM CORPORATION

22. Various sources describing the Ho Chi Minh Trail refer to its use during the first Indochina War. The existence of the trail at that time is logical since some communications and logistic supply lines were needed to direct and sustain the Viet Minh forces operating in the South. Most regroupees returned to the DRV by ship, but some walked North through Laos and left caches of arms behind them. See BG Soutchay Vongsavanh, RLA, RLG Military Operations and Activities in the Laotian Panhandle Indochina Refugee Authored Monograph Program, Prepared for the Department of the Army, Office of Chief of Military History (McLean, VA.: General Research Corporation, February 21, 1978), pp. 4-9.
23. Michael C. Conley, The Communist Insurgent Infrastructure in South Vietnam: A Study of Organization and Strategy, (Washington, D.C.: The American University), pp. 10-13. Also see Douglas Pike, History of Vietnamese Communism 1925-1976, (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institute Press, 1978) pp. 120-122. Hereafter DoD US/VN Relations.
24. Department of Defense, United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967, 12 vols. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1967), Book 2, Pt. IV, Sec A, Subsec 5, Tab 3, p. 32. Hereafter DoD US/VN Relations.
25. CINCPAC/COMUSMACV (Commander in Chief Pacific and Commander US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam), Report on the War in Vietnam, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1968) p. 128.
26. In February 1965 VNAF aircraft sank a 100-foot DRV patrol craft near shore in Vung Ro Bay. The craft carried 80 to 100 tons of weapons and about a million rounds of ammunition. Papers and documents showed Haiphong as the departure point. Several caches of weapons and equipment were found in nearby caves. US Information Service, Special Report, February 23, The Evidence at Vung Ro Bay.
27. "A Review of the Situation in Vietnam", Intelligence Memorandum SC No. 08752/67, Office of Current Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency.
28. Map 5-3 is based on Vongsavanh RLG Military Operations pp. 4-9; General William W. Momyer, USAF (Ret.) Airpower In Three Wars (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Air Force, 1978), pp. 85, 193-196; and Carl Berger, ed. The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia 1961-1973 (Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1977), pp. 101-119.
29. DoD US/VN Relations Book 2, IV. A.5. Tab 3 pp. 34-35. In addition, the DRV sent forces to occupy Tchepone in Laos in 1958. Tchepone had been the crossroads for Viet Minh activity in Laos during their war against the French.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

30. Burton, pp. 48-68 and Col. Hoang Ngoc Lung. Intelligence Indochina Refugee Authored Monograph Program Prepared for Department of the Army, Office Chief of Military History (McLean, Va.: General Research Corporation, 1976).
31. Burton, P. 52.
32. "Viet Cong Base Camps and Supply Caches", USMACV MACJ 343 Counterinsurgency Lessons Learned No. 68 (Unclassified)
33. David R. Palmer, Summons of the Trumpet, (San Rafael, CA: Presidio Press, 1978), p. 134, 135.
34. Vongsavanh, RLG Military Operations, p. 5
35. Ibid. pp. 5-8.
36. Ibid.
37. "A Review of the Situation in Vietnam", op. cit.
38. Vongsavanh, RLG Military Operations, pp. 23-28.
39. LG Sak Sutsakham, FANK Chief of the General Staff and last Chief of State of the Khmer Republic, The Khmer Republic at War and the Final Collapse, Indochina Refugee Authored Monograph Program, Prepared for Department of Army, Office of Chief of Military History, (McLean, VA: General Research Corporation., November 1978), p. 18.
40. L.P. Holliday and R.M. Gurfield, Viet Cong Logistics, Prepared by Rand Corp. (RM-54231 ISA/ARPA, June 1968) for Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense/International Security Affairs and the Advanced Research Projects Agency, p. 1.
41. Albert E. Palmerlee, The Central Office of South Vietnam, Vietnam Documents and Research Notes, Department of State, Document No. 40, August 1968.
42. US Department of State Biographic Intelligence Summary, DOS Historian, Item 11, 1961, Based on agent reports compiled during the First Indochina War.
43. LTG Bernard William Rogers, USA, Cedar Falls-Junction City - A Turning Point, (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, GPO, 1974), pp. 152-153.
44. Figure 5-4 is adapted from Holliday & Gurfield and Burton, passim.
45. Holliday and Gurfield pp. 16-49.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

46. Ibid.
47. DOD US/VN Relations, Book 2, A.5, tab 4, pp. 66-67, BG E.G. Lansdale memo of January 17, 1961 to Secretary of Defense.
48. BDM analysts have concluded that the DRV would have deployed regular PAVN forces to RVN in any event. The Lao Dong Party leaders obviously recognized that despite the governmental chaos that existed since Diem's death, American aid might continue to prop up the various governments. US support may have caused the DRV to speed up its schedule, but there is no evidence to substantiate claims that the DRV would not otherwise have intervened in the South with regular forces. Indeed, it is likely that the DRV leaders considered it essential to seize RVN by military force to preclude any power struggle in the South with noncommunist elements. After the January 1973 ceasefire, Giap saw the "...historic opportunity to liberate South Vietnam totally... thus fulfilling the tasks laid down by the Third National Congress of the Party (September 1960)." Generals Vo Nguyen Giap and Van Tien Dung, How We Won The War (Philadelphia: RECON Publications, 1976), p. 26
49. Vongsavanh, RLG Military Operations, pp. 14-16.
50. Interview with Professor Richard Thornton, BDM Corporation, October 30, 1978.
51. Frank Snepp, Decent Interval, (N.Y.: Random House, 1977), pp. 19-20.
52. King C. Chen "Hanoi VS Peking: Policies and Relations A Survey," Asian Survey Vol. XII., No. 9, Sept. 1972, pp. 806-817.
53. Vongsavanh, RLG Military Operations, p. 54.
54. "A Review of the Situation in Vietnam", op. cit.
55. Vongsavanh, pp. 4-17; Momyer, pp. 85, 193-196; Berger, 101-119.
56. Adm. U.S. Grant Sharp, USN, CINCPAC, "Air War Against North Vietnam", Hearings Before The Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, 90th Congress, 1st Session. August 9, 1967, Pt. 1, p. 6.
57. Guenter Lewy, America In Vietnam, (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 392, and "A Review of the Situation in Vietnam." Interestingly, during the Ninth Session of the PRC-SRV peace talks in Peking during July 1979, the Chinese stated that more than 300,000 Chinese military personnel had been sent to Vietnam during the war, a number that the DRV angrily denied. Clearly the Chinese meant that a total of 300,000 personnel rotated in and out of Vietnam to sustain the estimated 50,000-man force operating in North Vietnam. UPI-Peking, July 30, 1979, News Service Release UP-013.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

58. CINCPAC/COMUSMACV Report On the War in Vietnam pp. 16-54.
59. Department of Defense, Report on Selected Air and Ground Operations In Cambodia and Laos, September 10, 1973, pp. 25-27.
60. Vongsavanh, RLG Military Operations, p. 54.
61. Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Current Intelligence, "The Intelligence Background of the Current Communist Offensive", February 15, 1968.
62. U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam, Combined Intelligence Center, Vietnam (CICV), Study ST 70-05 pp. 3-4.
63. General William C. Westmoreland, A Soldier Reports, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1976), p. 341.
64. Vongsavanh, RLG Military Operations, p. 54.
65. Hinh, Lamson 719, p. 12.
66. Lung, Intelligence, pp. 166-172.
67. CICV Study ST-70-05.
68. Lung Intelligence, pp. 170-172.
69. Sutsakhan, The Khmer Republic, p. 27.
70. Sen. Gen. Van Tien Dung, "Great Spring Victory", Foreign Broadcast Information Service, APA-76-110, June 7, 1976, Vol. IV. No. 110, Supp. 38.
71. Stephen T. Hosmer, Konrad Kellen, Brian Jenkins, The Fall of South Vietnam: Statements By Vietnamese Military and Civilian Leaders, A report prepared for Historian, Office of the Secretary of Defense (Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, December 1978), R-2208-OSD (Hist), pp. 63-65.
72. Lung, Intelligence, pp. 166-172.
73. BG Tran Dinh Tho, ARVN The Cambodian Incursion. Prepared for Department of the Army, Office of Chief of Military History (McLean, VA.: General Research Corp; 1978 pp. 23-27 and Vongsavanh, RLG Military Operations, pp. 4-17.
74. CIA Memo SC No. 08753/67.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

75. CINCPAC/COMUSMACV Report On The War In Vietnam, p. 98.
76. Westmoreland, p. 158.
77. Westmoreland, pp. 194-195.
78. Lewy, p. 75.
79. Sharp, p. 214.
80. US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Military Objectives Study, MACJ-52, October 16, 1968, pp. 18, 19. The term VCI refers to Viet Cong Infrastructure which was/is construed to mean the communist political apparatus of the NLF/PRP.
81. Lung, Intelligence, p. 154.
82. Lung, p. 164.
83. Department of State Working Paper, "Hanoi's Efforts to Build up the PRG", May, 1974.
84. Drew Middleton, "Pentagon Cites Build-up by Hanoi", The New York Times March 4, 1974.
85. Sen. Gen. Dung, Vol. I. pp. 13-17.
86. Air interdiction campaigns are treated in detail in Volume VI.
87. Lewy, p. 392.
88. Lyndon B. Johnson, The Vantage Point, (NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971), p. 369.
89. Ambassador William Colby, former Director of Central Intelligence, stated that several intelligent, top-level people in the USG believed that Sihanoukville was not being used by the DRV. Documentation made available after Lon Nol took charge revealed the extensive use of the port. General John W. Vogt USAF (Ret) reinforced Ambassador Colby's remarks by relating his conversation with the harbor master at Sihanoukville who said, "Hell yes, Chinese and Russian vessels came by the dozens." BDM Senior Review Panel meeting, February 14, 1979. Tape 5. In his book Honorable Men (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), p. 299, Ambassador Colby describes Cambodia as "...both a natural channel and a porous enough one to permit such a flow (of men and supplies) whether the Prince agreed or not."

## THE BDM CORPORATION

90. W. Scott Thompson and D.D. Frizzell, ed. The Lessons of Vietnam, (NY: Crane, Russak, 1977), p. 105. Sir Robert's assessment of DRV vulnerability at that time may be accurate, but his comment that, "They would have taken any terms" must be discounted. The US goal had changed from that of assuring the existence of a free, viable and independent Vietnam to one of recovering US POWs and extricating US combat forces from Vietnam. The DRV leaders were certainly aware of this fact. The USG had dropped its insistence that PAVN forces be withdrawn from RVN, Laos, and Cambodia. By agreeing to continue the cease-fire talks, the communists brought an end to the bombing and paved the way for US withdrawal. It is important that US military leaders not confuse the issue. The war was fought to decide who would control South Vietnam. That war was mainly political in nature, albeit with important military overtones. The DRV's "enthusiasm" to stop Linebacker II and return to the peace talks was a successful tactic on their part to eliminate US military power from the equation. US military power had won nearly all its battles but US national command authorities were constrained from using that power decisively in the Vietnam war by their perception, or the reality, of US public opinion. Any claims that the military "won" the war but that other authorities "lost" it or "gave it away" are spurious. The final victory belongs to the North Vietnamese and US military authorities must share in the blame for not creating, suggesting, or forcing the proper politico-military combination to win.
91. Lewy, p. 391.
92. Interview with Gen. John W. Vogt, USAF (ret.), BDM Corporation, November 30, 1978. Dr. Kissinger personally related to General Vogt the nature of his reception in Paris by The DRV delegates after Linebacker II.



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## CHAPTER 6 EXTERNAL SUPPORT

North Vietnam's ability to exact whatever material assistance its socialist bloc allies are comparatively advantaged to provide, and at the same time to avoid compromising its independence in policy making, remains the signal achievement of the wartime Hanoi regime.

(Melvin Gurtov, "Hanoi on War and Peace",)  
(Vietnam and American Foreign Policy,  
1966,)1/

We are reaping today, in my opinion, and so are all Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians, the tragedy of our fixation on the theory of monolithic aggressive communism that began to develop at this time and to affect our objective analyses of certain problems.

(Statement by Abbot Low Moffat, Former Chief,  
Division of Southeast Asian Affairs, Department of State, 1972,)2/

### A. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The ability of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) and its protege, the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (NLF) to pursue and eventually realize their goals during the Vietnam conflict was directly dependent upon external support provided by those sympathetic to their cause. In fact, the role of the Soviet Union (USSR) and the People's Republic of China (PRC) was essential to the pursuit and satisfactory realization of DRV - NLF ambitions.

External support is defined as the outside aid provided to the DRV/NLF, be it political-ideological, military, or economic. Although some analysts would insist upon a further delineation of external aid, i.e., aid directly provided to the National Liberation Front by the DRV, the purpose of this chapter will be to focus on outside support from non-Vietnamese participants. It is, however, pertinent to acknowledge the funnel-like interrelationships which existed between the primary sympathizers, namely the USSR and PRC, and the DRV. Support was channeled by the USSR and PRC

## THE BDM CORPORATION

directly to the DRV which, in turn, was then disseminated by Hanoi to its own forces and to the NLF.

In assessing the relevance of external support to the DRV/NLF, it is paramount that the overall complexity of Sino-Soviet relations be acknowledged, for although aid was continually forthcoming from both countries, its dimensions were dependent upon the complexion of relations between the two. In addition, US attitudes and actions regarding the bombing of North Vietnam influenced the extent of aid provided by the USSR and PRC.

Rather than trace the complex evolution of problems which developed between the USSR and the PRC, this chapter will provide:

- an assessment of aid to Hanoi and the NLF
- indications of how and why Sino-Soviet differences affected support to the DRV-NLF
- a discussion of the effects, if any, that the Sino-Soviet dispute had on the attainment of DRV-NLF goals.

Figure 6-1 is a time-line depicting the chronology of major events which had an impact on Moscow-Peking-Hanoi interrelationships.

The information is broken down into three separate divisions: The DRV, PRC, and the USSR. Listed under each of these countries are the major events which influenced their interrelationships. Although not all the events which transpired between the DRV, PRC and the USSR appear in the figure, those that do appear provide an adequate overview of their changing relationships, in particular, the development of the schism between the USSR and PRC. The figure also provides a summary of major trends or important themes which continually seemed to be relevant to the respective country during the period under discussion. Therefore, by following the progression of events provided in the figure, it is possible to envision both the progression of changing relationships and the important events which influenced these changes over time.

	USSR	PRC	USSR
1949	CHINESE NATIONALISTS SUPPORT VIET MINH IN THEIR STRUGGLE AGAINST THE FRENCH.	PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA ESTABLISHED OCTOBER 1, 1949. MAO TSE TUNG VISITS MOSCOW DECEMBER 16, 1949. NEGOTIATIONS CONDUCTED AND TREATY OF ALLIANCE AND FRIENDSHIP CONCLUDED IN FEBRUARY 1950. ECONOMIC AID PROVIDED BY USSR.	STALIN DIES MARCH 1953. SOVIET UNION GREATLY INCREASES AID TO PRC. INCREASED CREDIT TERMS AND ECONOMIC ARRANGEMENTS CONCLUDED AS WELL AS THE RESTORATION OF PORT ARTHUR TO CHINA W/COMPLETE SOVIET TROOP WITHDRAWAL BY 1955.
1950	CHINA AND USSR RECOGNIZE GO. CH. MINH'S GOVERNMENT IN JANUARY 1950. OTHER RECOGNITION FOLLOWS.	PRC MEMBERSHIP IN U.N. PROPOSED BY USSR. REJECTED. KOREAN WAR BEGINS JUNE 1950. SOVIET UNION SUPPLIES PRC WITH MILITARY AID INCLUDING ABOUT 1,000 MIG 15s.	
1951	PRC EXTENDS MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID TO VIET MINH.		
1953		KOREAN WAR ENDS.	
1954	GENEVA ACCORDS CONCLUDED. USSR AND PRC BOTH PARTICIPATE IN HELD. ATIONS. AID PROVIDED TO DRV BY PRC AND USSR.		
1955	ECONOMIC AID CONTINUES FROM BOTH PRC AND USSR. DRV BEGINS TO SLOWLY INDUSTRIALIZE. INDUSTRY AND ECONOMY SLOWLY DEVELOP OVERTIME. DEADLINE FOR ELECTIONS PASSES.	BANDUNG CONFERENCE HELD. CHINA SEEKS HEIGHTENED ANTI-IMPERIALISM ROLE. MAY 1955 USSR-PRC CONCLUDE ATOMIC CO-OPERATION AGREEMENT.	20TH PARTY CONGRESS HELD. KRUSHCHEV REAFFIRMS THEORY OF PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE BETWEEN COUNTRIES WITH DIFFERING SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SYSTEMS. SECRET SESSION HELD IN WHICH DE-STALINIZATION UNVEILED. INVASION OF HUNGARY. AID CONTINUES TO PRC THROUGH 1959.
1956		"HUNDRED FLOWERS" CAMPAIGN" ALLOWS FOR INTELLECTUALS' CRITICISM OF PRC COMMUNIST PARTY. PRC HACKS HUNGARIAN SUPPRESSION.	USSR AGREES TO SUPPLY PRC W/SAMPLE ATOM BOMB AND HELP IN NUCLEAR WEAPONS DEVELOPMENT. RUSSIANS ALSO DISPUTE EAST-WEST W/NO THESIS.
1957	CHINESE ADAPTATIONS OF AGRICULTURAL REFORM AND A "HUNDRED FLOWERS" TYPE PROGRAM STARTED IN DRV AND SUBSEQUENTLY REJECTED DU TO MAJOR PROBLEMS AND CRITICISMS.	MAO PROCLAIMS HIS THESIS THAT THE "EAST WIND" IS PREVAILING OVER THE "WEST WIND" AND PEACE MANIFESTO SIGNED BY ALL 64 COMMUNIST PARTIES, INCLUDING PRC. IN MOSCOW, NOV. 1957. WHICH CALLED FOR COMPLETE PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS. PRC UNEASINESS OVER DE-STALINIZATION POLICIES.	
1958		PRC BEGINS "GREAT LEAP FORWARD" W/ ESTABLISHMENT OF PEOPLE'S COMMUNES. PRC ATTEMPTS TO REEQUILIBRATE. WUHAN RESOLUTION OF DEC. 1958 REINTRODUCES "GRADUALNESS" AND GREAT LEAP - COMMUNE EFFORT SUBSIDES.	KRUSHCHEV AGAIN DEMANDS PRC ADMISSION TO U.N. DENIED. KRUSHCHEV BACKS PRC IN QUENGY CRISIS. SUGGESTS FORMATION OF JOINT WAR FORCE. OFFER REJECTED BY CHINESE.
1959	AS U.S. INCREASES AID AND ARMS TO SOUTH VIETNAM, NG CH. MINH PROMOTES PEOPLE'S LIBERATION WAR IN S. CHINA.	DIMINISHING CHINESE FAITH IN USSR. CHINESE - INDIAN BORDER CLASHES. SOVIET UNION DEPLORES BORDER INCIDENTS AND OFFERS AID TO INDIA. FIRST SUBSTANTIAL POLICY SPLIT BETWEEN PRC AND USSR.	KRUSHCHEV VISIT TO PEKING. STRESSES "PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE" W/AMERICA. REJECTED BY CHINESE. SOVIET-PRC SECRET NUCLEAR AGREEMENT OF 1957 BROKEN OFF. PRC RECEIVES NO ATOM BOMB. CAMP DAVID MEETING BETWEEN KRUSHCHEV AND EISENHOWER. PRC ANGERED BY KRUSHCHEV'S PRAISE OF U.S. PRESIDENT. KRUSHCHEV VISITS PEKING. NO COMMUNIQUE ISSUED.
1960		MASSIVE CROP FAILURE IN PRC PLUS INDUSTRIAL SETBACKS. FROM 1950-1963. PRC SLOWLY RECOVERS FROM NEAR FAMINE CONDITIONS CAUSED BY "GREAT LEAP" AS WELL AS WITHDRAWAL OF SOVIET ADVISORS.	JULY 1960. MOSCOW RECALLS ALL ADVISORS FROM CHINA. CANCELS MORE THAN 300 CONTRACTS AND WITHDRAWS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE. BUDAPEST CONFERENCE IN JUNE. SHARP WORDS EXCHANGED BETWEEN MAO AND KRUSHCHEV. CONFERENCE WAS ATTEMPT TO RECONCILE PRC-USSR DIFFERENCES. NOVEMBER MOSCOW CONFERENCE OF WORLD COMMUNIST PARTIES. PRC AND YUGOSLAVIA DO NOT ATTEND.
1961	DEC. 1961-PRC SENDS MILITARY MISSION TO CUBA AND REQUESTS SUPPORT OF DRV.	CHINESE ADVISORS REPLACE SOVIET ADVISORS IN ALBANIA. PRC REQUESTS WILLINGNESS. IF NEE, TO SEND 10,000 TROOPS TO VIETNAM.	22ND PARTY CONFERENCE OF CPSU. CHOU EN LAI WALKS OUT WHEN KRUSHCHEV DANKS ALBANIAN PARTY. AID AGREEMENT SIGNED BETWEEN PRC-USSR. INDICATING USSR DESIRE TO RESOLVE DIFFERENCES.
1962		CHINA REALIZES VERY NEGATIVELY TO YUGOSLAV-SOVIET IMPROVEMENTS IN RELATIONS. PEKING REBUKES KRUSHCHEV FOR "ADVENTURISM" IN CUBA. SINO-INDIAN WAR BREAKS OUT. PRC INTENSIFIES CRITICISM OF USSR.	SOVIET-YUGOSLAV RAPPROCHMENT. CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS. USSR CONTINUED AID TO INDIA. KRUSHCHEV DEFENDS HIS FOREIGN POLICIES.

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Figure 6-1. Chronological Timeline  
Influencing Support

1962	ALBANIA. PRC INDICATES WILLINGNESS, IF NEEDED, TO SEND CHINESE TROOPS TO VIETNAM.	CHINA PLANTS VERY NEGATIVELY TO YUGOSLAV-SOVIET IMPROVEMENTS IN RELATIONS. PEKING RIDICULES KHROUSHCHEV FOR "ADVENTURISM" IN CUBA. SINO-INDIAN WAR BREAKS OUT. PRC INTENSIFIES CRITICISMS OF USSR.	EN LAI WALKS OUT WHEN KHROUSHCHEV BANS ALBANIAN PARTY. AID AGREEMENT SIGNED BETWEEN PRC-USSR, INDICATING USSR DESIRE TO RESOLVE DIFFERENCES.
1963	DRV: CONTINUES STRUGGLE FOR REUNIFICATION. GVN ON VERGE OF DISINTEGRATION. NEUTRAL GVN A DISTINCT POSSIBILITY.	CHINA ISSUES "25 POINT" FOR TALK FRAMEWORK REGARDING OF VIETNAM'S CONFLICTS. CHINA ISSUES VIOLENT DISAPPROVAL OF TEST BAN TREATY IDEOLOGICAL DISPUTE QUESTION RAISED BY CHINA.	SOVIET-YUGOSLAV RAPPROCHMENT. CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS. USSR CONTINUED AID TO INDIA. KHROUSHCHEV DEFENDS HIS FOREIGN POLICIES.
1964	CHINA SENDS SQUADRON OF MIG 15 AND MIG 17 JETS TO HANOI AND BEGINS TO DISPECT HANOI. TR SILENTLY IN S.W. CHINA TO PROVIDE HANOI WATER SUPPLY. CHINA IS ALMOST SILE SUPPLIER TO DRV/NLF FORCES. TOWARD GULF INCIDENT. HANOI-MOSCOW RELATIONS STRAINED DUE TO TEST BAN TREATY AND APPARENT CLOSURE BETWEEN CHINA AND HANOI. AID "INTENSIFIES SOMEWHAT UNTIL BROOKINGS.	PRC INTENSIFIES PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN AGAINST USSR. AGGRESSION IN VIETNAM. CHINESE ECONOMY BECOMES STRONGER AND NEW TRADE TIES WITH JAPAN AND EUROPE STRENGTHENED. CHINA EXTENDS FIRST "NUCLEAR DETENT". CHINA REJECTS TALKS PROPOSED BY USSR.	SOVIET PROPOSAL FOR TALKS BETWEEN PRC-USSR ACCEPTED BY CHINESE. TALKS HELD AND DISSOLVED WITH FEW RESULTS. KHROUSHCHEV SIGNS NUCLEAR BAN TREATY W/ U.S. TENSION ON CENTRAL ASIAN BORDER.
1965	U.S. TROOP COMMITMENT TO VIETNAM INCREASED. BOMBING OF DRV BEGINS. CHINA DECLARES SOVIET UNION HAS CAME LITTLE TO AID DRV. DRV AND PRC IN BASIC AGREEMENT ON PROJECTING AN ATTEMPT AT PEACE TALKS. PRC AND DRV SIGN AGREEMENT PROVIDING DRV WITH TECHNICAL, MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. SOVIET-DRV JOINT STATEMENT SIGNED - PROVIDING FOR MILITARY AND	CHINA DECLARES READINESS TO INTERVENE IN VIETNAM IF DRV LEADERSHIP DESIRES. USSR DIRECTLY ATTACKED CHINA. CHINA EXPLODES SECOND "NUCLEAR DETENT". CHINA PROCLAIMS "WILLING TO LIVE FOR PEACE" OF "PEOPLE'S WAR" WHICH IS USED FOR PROTRACTED GUERRILLA WAR FROM RURAL AREAS OF ALL DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. U.S. TIC NOTE ON PRC	JUST KHROUSHCHEV QUIT. NEW SOVIET LEADERSHIP ATTEMPTS TO REPAIR PRC-USSR LEADERSHIP. A TIGHT SHORT-CLIVED, USSR-PRC LEADERSHIP DISAGREE ON POLICY. HANOI IN TENSION. CHINESE VISITS HANOI. CHINESE REJECTS PEKING. SOVIET VISIT (SINCE 1959) TO DISCUSS VIETNAM. USSR PROPOSES INDO-ASIAN TENSIONS AIR TALKS OUTLINE.
1966	SOVIET UNION SENDS NEW F-4'S, AIRCRAFT, WEAPONS, AND TECHNICAL PERSONNEL. CHINA SUPPLY OF SMALL ARMS AND FOOD. HANOI LEADERSHIP TALKS FOR THE FIRST SUPPORT FROM PRC-USSR. SOVIET AID REPORTEDLY HELD UP BY CHINESE. PEKING TRIES TO EXERCISE PRESSURE ON DRV LEADERSHIP TO REFUSE PEACE TALKS ON EASY TERMS. HANOI REQUESTS LHM READ THE ORIENT. OPTS FOR OFFENSIVE A VIETNAMESE HANDLING OF MILITARY STRATEGY. CHINA SENDS ENGINEER-SOLDIERS TO REPAIR AIR FIELDS DAMAGED BY U.S. BOMBINGS	CHINA ANNOUNCES "GREAT CULTURAL REVOLUTION". PRC REFUSES TO ATTEND 23rd CPSU CONGRESS. RED GUARDS DEMONSTRATE AT SOVIET EMBASSY IN CHINA. CHINA EXPELS ALL SOVIET STUDENTS IN CHINA. 1966-1967. CENTRAL ASIANS IN CHINA CROSS BORDER INTO USSR DUE TO FEAR OF CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND POSSIBLE PRC "WITCH-HUNT" AGAINST SOVIET SYMPATHIZERS.	USC ISSUES LETTER TO OTHER COMMUNIST PARTIES ON PRC-WORLD COMMUNIST RELATIONS. SHARP CRITICISM. 23rd CPSU CONGRESS HELD. BREZHNEV CALLS FOR FRIENDSHIP W/ PRC AND EXAMINATION OF EXISTING PROBLEMS. SOVIET UNION CRITICIZES "GREAT CULTURAL REVOLUTION" & CHINA'S DIVERGENCES FROM SOCIALISM. SOVIETS ISSUE FIRST VERBAL ATTACK ON HAO-TSE-TUNG. USSR EXPELS ALL CHINESE STUDENTS FROM THE SOVIET UNION. 1966 CONFERENCE IN MOSCOW ON AID TO VIETNAM. PEACE TALK IDEA DISCUSSED AND ENCOURAGED.
1967	AID TO DRV FROM CHINA REPORTEDLY DECREASES DUE TO TURMOIL CAUSED BY "GREAT CULTURAL REVOLUTION."	"GREAT CULTURAL REVOLUTION" INTENSIFIES. INTERPART FRICTIONS WITHIN CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY. CHINA EXPLODES A FIRST HYDROGEN BOMB. NEW DEMONSTRATIONS OUTSIDE OF SOVIET EMBASSY IN PEKING. SOVIET EMBASSY ATTACKED BY RED GUARDS.	SOVIETS DEMONSTRATE "GREAT CULTURAL REVOLUTION" AND HAO. ARAB-ISRAELI 6-DAY WAR RESULTS IN CLOSURE OF SUZ CANAL. DISRUPTING SOVIET SUPPLY LINES TO THE DRV. SOVIETS EXTRACT AGREEMENT FROM PEKING TO ALLOW TRANSIT OF AID TO VIETNAM THROUGH CHINESE TERRITORY. BUT ACCOMPANIED BY DRV MILITARY RATHER THAN SOVIET.
1968	PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S PROPOSAL FOR PEACE TALKS ACCEPTED BY HANOI. EMPHATIC BY HANOI AND REJECTED BY PEKING AS "TRIFLE". HANOI GRANTS SOVIET INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA. TIE OFFENSIVE.	CHINA CONDEMNS USSR INVASION AND ANNOUNCES SUPPORT OF CZECHOSLOVAKIANS IN THEIR FIGHT AGAINST SOVIET OCCUPATION. CHINA REFUSES TO GIVE MEDIA COVERAGE OF PEACE TALKS ON VIETNAM. ONLY OCCASIONAL MENTION. SENDS NO DELEGATIONS TO HANOI FOR 15 MONTHS UNTIL HO'S DEATH IN 1969.	SOVIET UNION INVADES CZECHOSLOVAKIA. BREZHNEV ANNOUNCES THEORY OF "LIMITED SOVEREIGNTY" TO JUSTIFY SOVIET INVASION
1969	HANOI LIMITED BY CHINESE RAPPROCHMENT. USSR INCREASES SUPPLIES TO HANOI. INITIAL AGREEMENT COLLAPSES.	CAMBODIA CRISIS HELPS OFFENSE REGAIN INFLUENCE IN HANOI. CONFERENCE HELD IN CHINA ON SINO-CHINESE AFFAIRS.	CAMBODIA ISLAND FIGHTING BETWEEN SOVIET AND CHINESE FRONTIER GUARDS. SOVIETS PROPOSE BOUNDARY NEGOTIATIONS.
1970	DRV FORCES INITIATE OFFENSIVE AGAINST SOUTH. CEASE FIRE JAN. 27, 1973.	LAOS INVASION HELPS TO STRENGTHEN WEAKENED PRC-DRV TIES. PRC REVERSITS AID FOR DRV IN CASE OF FURTHER US ESCALATION. US-SINO RAPPROCHMENT IMMINENT. NIXON VISIT TO PRC PLANNED AND FULFILLED IN FEB. 1972.	CONTINUED EFFORTS FOR DETENTE W/ U.S.
1971	DRV SETZES RVN IN APRIL	NIXON VISIT TO PEKING.	24th CPSU CONFERENCE.
1972			NIXON VISIT TO MOSCOW.
1973			
1975	VIETNAM WAR FROM 1965 ON, USGS INCREASED AMERICAN TROOP COMMITMENT AND REMITTINGS. HANOI WALKING A "THIN LINE" IN RELATIONS WITH THE USSR & PRC DESPITE FOR THREE-PERSONALITY. YET DESIRE FOR EXCLUSIVE AID.	TO PROMOTE REVOLUTION & ATTEMPT TO GAIN LEADERSHIP ROLE IN WORLD COMMUNIST MOVEMENT. MODERNIZATION AND INDUSTRIALIZATION DESIRED BUT "GREAT LEAP" AND "CULTURAL/REVOLUTION" DRAIN SIGNIFICANT GAINS. US-SINO RAPPROCHMENT.	STRATEGIC EQUALITY AND DETENTE WITH U.S. PURSUED. LEADERSHIP OF WORLD COMMUNISM CONTINUES TO BE GOAL.

B. IDEOLOGICAL/POLITICAL SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA (PRC)

1. Background

Relations between the Chinese and Vietnamese Communists (the Viet Minh) existed from the late forties-early fifties, when Peking provided support, both economic-military and ideological, to the Viet Minh during their struggle with the French.<sup>4/</sup> While the intent of this chapter is not to explore the extent of PRC aid to the Viet Minh, it is important to acknowledge that contacts had evolved between these two communist powers prior to the time of US involvement in Vietnam. The PRC also played a major role in the Geneva Conference of 1954 at which an armistice was signed between Ho Chi Minh's forces and French forces. Aid from the People's Republic of China to the DRV, both economic-military and ideological, continued in varying degrees throughout the fifties and throughout the course of the Vietnam conflict.

2. Points of Agreement and Disagreement Between Peking and Hanoi

Although there certainly existed many ideological and political similarities between Hanoi and Peking during the course of the Vietnam conflict, it would be fallacious to assume that Hanoi followed Peking's model on all points concerning ideology and military strategy. Selected Chinese Communists had lived and worked in Vietnam during the 1930s-1950s time span and had enjoyed considerable success in shaping early Vietnamese Communist party ideology, and, particularly, military doctrines.<sup>5/</sup> The Viet Minh's adaptation of Mao's "protracted people's war" theory to their own struggle for independence coupled with Ho's strong desire to promote tight-knit PRC-Viet Minh relations during the early fifties illustrates the DRV's acceptance of the PRC's experience and prowess in conducting and winning wars of national liberation. Yet, however similar early PRC-Viet Minh policies and approaches may have been, they must be considered contiguously with several other important aspects of Vietnamese-Chinese past interactions. In the first place, the Vietnamese people in general regarded the Chinese with a certain amount of suspicion, an outgrowth of

a series of Chinese invasions, including the Chinese Nationalist occupation of Vietnam in the years 1945-46.<sup>6/</sup> Hence, while the Chinese and Vietnamese shared nationalist aspirations in the face of foreign domination, the Vietnamese were concerned that one Chinese had hegemonic intentions with respect to Vietnam.

From early on, the DRV desired support from the PRC, but this aid was not to provide a convenient pretext for the PRC to establish domination over North Vietnam.<sup>7/</sup> Nationalist sentiment, therefore, has been a decisive factor in PRC-DRV relations during the last three decades and most certainly influenced the degree to which the North Vietnamese Communists were willing to yield to PRC advice and pressure during the course of the Vietnam war.

Hanoi and Peking certainly embraced common ideological and political goals. Both acknowledged the importance of Marxist-Leninist principles of class struggle; both were committed to the revolutionary struggle against imperialism, capitalism and colonialism, and both desired the establishment of a society founded on the principles of socialist-communist ideology. However, as Hanoi's self-confidence regarding its own abilities and capabilities developed, its desire for greater autonomy from the PRC party line became more clearly defined. Thus, by the latter half of the fifties, Hanoi had reached a level of ideological-political maturity that precluded mimicking Chinese prototypes or those of any other country.<sup>8/</sup> They consistently maintained that their revolutionary experience and struggle with imperialism was and would continue to be a uniquely Vietnamese experience.

The PRC's rationale for supporting the DRV's struggle was partly predicated on the commonality of the two nations' Asian heritage and their close geographical proximity. Moreover, Mao Tse-tung perceived similarities between Hanoi's and Peking's revolutionary experiences. What he envisioned was a "people's war" waged primarily by means of guerrilla tactics, launched from the countryside.<sup>9/</sup> Mao had successfully waged a "people's war" in his own country, and his prestige as an international revolutionary and communist theoretician depended upon his ability to show the world that his revolutionary theories could be successfully implemented

## THE BDM CORPORATION

by other countries struggling against imperialism. Hence, a certain amount of the PRC's motivation and interest in the Vietnam conflict was based on its desire to champion a revolutionary struggle which it perceived as a reflection of its own.

The DRV Communists did attempt to adapt some of the PRC's domestic reform programs to their own situation.<sup>10/</sup> The land reform program utilized by the PRC was the model for the North Vietnamese land reform program during the fifties; however the results were disastrous and the DRV state planners were eventually forced to discard the PRC model.<sup>11/</sup> What is important to note here is that although the DRV attempted to utilize some of the PRC experiences (perhaps out of gratitude for its continued economic support throughout the fifties), it eventually realized that it must steer its own country according to its own unique needs.<sup>12/</sup> Thus, while the DRV continued to seek (and to receive) aid from the PRC from the early fifties on, it also managed to follow its own course without allowing PRC domination of either its domestic or foreign policies.

PRC and DRV attitudes concerning several aspects of the Vietnam conflict did not consistently correspond, and at times these divergencies caused Peking to diminish its level of economic and military aid to the DRV. In addition, actions of the Soviet Union and the United States precipitated certain PRC responses which in effect were detrimental to Hanoi's overall aid program. The main points of contention between Peking and Hanoi concerned:

- overall military strategy for the war
- peace negotiations
- the desirability for a united aid program to Hanoi from the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union.<sup>13/</sup>

An examination of each of these three points follows.

### a. Overall Military Strategy

The Peking and Hanoi military leaders maintained different orientations concerning which methods of warfare were best suited for the Vietnam conflict. After the DRV's 1963 decision to adopt an offensive posture towards the South, the PRC provided an increased amount of military

## THE BDM CORPORATION

aid to the DRV forces.<sup>14/</sup> This offensive eventually prompted the United States to increase its number of troops in South Vietnam as well as to initiate bombing raids on North Vietnam. Until the US decision to commence bombing the North, Peking and the DRV were basically in agreement concerning the conduct of the war. In essence, both the PRC and the DRV agreed that US aggression had to be halted and guerrilla warfare seemed the most appropriate method for realizing this goal. Lin Piao commented,

...if they are to defeat a formidable enemy, revolutionary armed forces should not fight with reckless disregard for the consequences when there is a great disparity between their own strength and the enemy's. If they do, they will suffer serious losses and bring heavy setbacks to the revolution. Guerrilla warfare is the only way to mobilize and apply the whole strength of the people against the enemy, the only way to expand our forces in the course of the war, deplete and weaken the enemy, gradually change the balance of forces between the enemy and ourselves...<sup>15/</sup>

However, as the bombing raids were initiated and the number of US troops committed increased over time the emphasis of the war changed drastically.<sup>16/</sup> No longer were guerrilla methods solely suitable. The Hanoi leadership, after ample discussion, indicated that in addition to guerrilla activities, US military aggression would have to be countered, to a certain degree, with heavy military hardware similar to that utilized by US combat troops and pilots. Up to this point, the People's Republic of China had been providing the DRV with small arms and other supplies. As US commitment increased, the PRC's initial response was to attempt to supply heavier military equipment, including MIG 15 and MIG 17 jets.<sup>17/</sup> Prior to the bombing raids, the Peking leadership also stated that it would be willing to commit Chinese combat troops in Vietnam.<sup>18/</sup> However, the realities of the Chinese internal situation, both economic and political, imposed certain important limitations on the type and amount of aid it was able to provide.<sup>19/</sup> In addition, the turbulence resulting from the Cultural Revolution imposed additional constraints on the PRC's abilities to provide adequate, long-term technical support and advisors.



## THE BDM CORPORATION

Hence, the PRC was simply not equipped economically or militarily to provide Hanoi with the types of military materiel it required to counter US activities. Peking could only offer equipment that was best suited for a struggle waged by means of guerrilla tactics.

Hanoi was thus caught in a dilemma. It needed the continued support of the PRC for conducting anti-US propaganda as well as for obtaining light arms and ammunition supplies; yet the Hanoi leadership also needed heavy military hardware in order to counter US activities. Another supply source had to be generated in order to meet future heavy equipment needs. The Soviet Union was the only communist country which could meet these needs. The implications of this increased Soviet aid were many. It not only altered Hanoi's relationship with the PRC but also served to increase the already heightened tensions that existed between the PRC and USSR at that time. What is important to note here is that the PRC was not only incapable of providing Hanoi with heavy materiel, it was also not particularly willing to chance a head-on collision with the US. If the Peking leadership was incapable of supplying Hanoi with heavy materiel, it was certainly in no position to withstand a full-scale conflict with the US. Thus, although the PRC's criticism of the US was continually harsh and militant, in actuality verbal rhetoric was the only really feasible weapon available to the PRC in their attacks on the US. The loss of Soviet military assistance and technical expertise had had a decisive influence on the PRC.

...we shall not attack the United States. As a matter of fact, China is not strong enough to attack America. To tell the truth, America is a little afraid of China and China is somewhat afraid of America. I do not believe that the United States would invade present-day China... I do not take a particularly pessimistic view of relations between the United States and China.

(Chen Yi, Chinese Foreign Minister, in 1965)20/

The PRC therefore opted to continue supplying Hanoi with light materiel and supplies while simultaneously calling for the Hanoi leadership to prepare itself for a protracted war of national liberation

with little or no external support. (The PRC's final decision was not made, however, without internal dissension among Peking's key military planners, the eventual outcome of which was the ouster of Lo Jui-ch'ing - Peking's "hawk" who maintained the staunchest anti-US stance.)21/

b. Peking's Views Concerning Peace Negotiations

Throughout the Vietnam conflict, Peking consistently maintained that peace negotiations should not be initiated until final victory by the DRV/NLF forces had been achieved. Why was the PRC so adamantly opposed to peace negotiations? Several important reasons can be offered. First of all, as has been noted, Peking had provided substantial military and economic aid to the DRV. Hence, if peace negotiations were initiated prior to a victorious outcome of the struggle, all aid to date would appear to have been in vain.

A second reason becomes apparent when the following Chinese viewpoint is considered:

China holds the view that conditions for negotiations are not yet ripe...we should continue fighting to bug down the enemy, and should wait until a number of socialist countries acquire adequate conditions for strengthening their main force troops to launch a strong, all-out, and rapid offensive, using all types (italics-the author's) of weapons and heeding no borders. 22/

In essence, this quote concedes one essential point: the Chinese were themselves incapable of providing the type of materiel required by the DRV, thus the need to wait until other socialist countries could contribute more fully to the cause. It is difficult to imagine what other socialist countries the PRC had in mind. Obviously the USSR and Eastern Bloc already met the criterion of "adequate conditions". Other than the USSR and Eastern Bloc countries, no other socialist country at that time could conceivably gain enough military strength to alter the balance of forces substantially. Thus, it appears that the PRC was, in essence, trying to bide time to compensate for and perhaps improve upon its own low-level capabilities. Therefore, negotiations, at a stage considered premature by the PRC, would,

## THE BDM CORPORATION

in Peking's mind, indicate ill-preparation of their ally, the DRV, and would thus be indicative of a sell-out to the enemy and a failure of the "protracted war" theory. The Chinese thesis on national liberation wars of a protracted nature would therefore be jeopardized if peace negotiations were initiated before a military victory could be realized. As the Chinese were constantly embroiled with the Soviet Union over ultimate leadership of the world's communist movement, its reputation and hitherto improved status in this pursuit could be badly tarnished if peace talks were initiated.

Second, as analyst Michael Tatu points out, it is possible that Peking did not envision a unified Vietnam as particularly desirable. Chapter 1 indicates that this was the overall, long-range goal of the Hanoi leadership. In China's pursuit of increased influence in Indochina, a Vietnam under the aegis of an independently-minded Hanoi might present some difficulties.<sup>23/</sup> While Hanoi had consistently maintained that its primary desire was a unified Vietnam, Chinese leadership viewed the realization of this goal as the first stepping stone by which Hanoi could possibly assert domination over the entire Indochinese area.

Finally, Chinese suspicion of the improving relations between the US and the Soviet Union and its deep antipathy for US imperialism and USSR revisionism, provided little motivation for lauding a peace negotiation proposal. A portion of the letter sent to Moscow, in which the Chinese Communist party states it would not attend the CPSU 23rd Party Congress, illustrates the depth of Chinese antagonism. It accused the Soviet Union of:

pursuing US-Soviet collaboration for the domination of the world; of acting in coordination with the United States in its plot for peace talks, of vainly attempting to sell out the struggle of the Vietnamese people against US aggression and...of dragging the Vietnam question into the orbit of Soviet-US collaboration.<sup>24/</sup>

Although other factors may have influenced Peking to reject peace negotiations entirely, these factors appear to have been the most influential. After the DRV disclosed its interest in peace negotiations,

relations between the Hanoi and Peking leaderships were often strained; this in part, influenced the amount of aid provided by the PRC as well as the frequency of diplomatic exchanges between the two countries. (See Tables 6-1 and 6-2.)

c. Peking's Rejection of a United Sino-Soviet Aid Program To the DRV/NLF

Although supplies and materiel were almost consistently forthcoming from both the PRC and the Soviet Union, neither the Hanoi leadership nor Moscow could convince the PRC to develop a unified cohesive support program to North Vietnam. Prior to the US bombing of Vietnam, the absence of a unified support program did not appear to present major difficulties to the Hanoi leadership. However, once Hanoi decided that it was imperative to counter US heavy armaments and bombing raids with similar military means, the need for a coordinated aid campaign from the outside communist world was strongly felt.<sup>25/</sup>

Following Kosygin's February 1965 visit to Hanoi, Moscow suggested establishment of such a joint aid program. The Soviet proposal consisted of the following:

- transit rights of Soviet military weapons through China
- the use of one or two airfields in Yunnan and the right to station 500 men at these air bases
- an air corridor over China
- permission for 4,000 Soviet military personnel to pass through China on the way to Vietnam
- trilateral talks among Russia, China and Vietnam to discuss details of the proposal and future problem.<sup>26/</sup>

The Chinese leadership refused to accept this proposal as well as proposals subsequently suggested. It is likely that the PRC leadership was not at all convinced of the sincerity of the Soviet Union's intentions; the presence of Soviet military personnel in China would be only too convenient, in Chinese minds, for the USSR to utilize their presence as a pretext for "political assistance" to the PRC's internal affairs.<sup>27/</sup> Relentless diatribes continued to be exchanged between the Soviet Union and

TABLE 6-1 CHINESE AND SOVIET AID TO NORTH VIETNAM, 1954-1971.  
(IN MILLIONS US \$) 28/

	1954-1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971
SOVIET AID	365	295	510	705	530	370	420	415
(MILITARY)		(210)	(360)	(505)	(290)	(120)	( 75)	(100)
(ECONOMIC)		( 85)	(150)	(200)	(240)	(250)	(345)	(315)
CHINESE AID	670	110	170	225	200	195	150	175
(MILITARY)		( 60)	( 95)	(145)	(100)	(105)	( 90)	( 75)
(ECONOMIC)		( 50)	( 75)	( 80)	(100)	( 90)	( 60)	(100)

NOTE: 1. The Figures from 1954 to 1964 are King C. Chen's Estimates.  
2. The Figures from 1965 to 1971 are Estimates of the State Department, April 1972.

TABLE 6-2 DELEGATION EXCHANGES BETWEEN PEKING,  
HANOI AND MOSCOW, 1964-1971.29/

	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971
N. VIETNAM TO PRC	34	17	26	13	5	7	12	27
N. VIETNAM TO USSR	17	11	13	17	18	8	5	5
PRC TO N. VIETNAM	17	17	8	2	0	2	3	7
USSR TO N. VIETNAM	8	8	6	10	6	7	3	9

NOTE: The Two Delegations from Peking to Hanoi in 1969 Were for Ho's Funeral.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

the PRC concerning military and economic support to the DRV. Each side accused the other of failure to fulfill its commitment to the Vietnamese people's struggle.

China condemned the Soviet Union for the inadequacy of its supplies and materiel to the DRV.

Both in quantity and quality, the aid the Soviet Union gives to Vietnam is far from commensurate with its strength. It should have been easy for a big power like the Soviet Union to provide Vietnam with several hundred thousands tons of military supplies. But it has only given a few tens of thousands of tons, a deplorably meager amount. ...most of the Soviet supplies consisted of weapons...and even included some that were worn out and of no use at all.30/

The PRC offered its own suggestion to the USSR for bettering its supply links with the DRV.

...Malinovsky ought to know that besides ground and air communications, there are sea routes to link various countries...The Soviet Union has no common boundary with Cuba...yet it could ship rocket nuclear weapons [there]...It is not even that far from Vietnam; why can't it ship even conventional weapons there?31/

Donald Zagoria believes that the PRC was actively trying to force the Soviet Union into a situation in which it would clash directly with the United States. This assessment could be correct. As the USSR and US gradually approached detente, the Chinese leadership spared neither side its violent condemnations. When Moscow accused Peking of delaying its supplies in transit to Hanoi, Peking denied the allegation as totally ill-founded. Finally in 1967, the PRC did agree to allow Soviet supplies and weapons through its territory with the stipulation that all shipments were to be escorted from the Sino-Soviet border by the North Vietnamese.32/

Ironically, although the Chinese consistently stressed its dedication to the Vietnamese people's struggle, it continually disregarded Hanoi's pleas for united action. Although Hanoi stressed its gratitude to both Soviet Union and the PRC for their loyal aid and support, Chinese

opposition to a united aid program could only have caused the DRV to doubt the total sincerity of the Chinese commitment to its cause.

3. Support Provided To the NLF By the Peoples' Republic of China

To assist Hanoi in masking the NLF's subordination to Hanoi, Peking spent considerable time and effort in singling out the NLF as the South's great hope for conducting and winning a "protracted people's war". Moreover, it utilized the NLF as an audience for its relentless verbal attacks on both the US and the USSR. During the NLF's early years, Peking solicited NLF endorsement in the mounting verbal battle between itself and the USSR. Peking's Liao Ch'eng-chih, chairman of the Chinese Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Committee, stated in 1963:

The modern revisionists (that is, the Soviet Union), however, are not only pouring cold water on the South Vietnamese people's just struggle and trying their utmost to diparage its world significance, but are trying to make a very despicable deal with the U.S. imperialists at the expense of the South Vietnamese people...33/

Much of the NLF's willingness to listen to the PRC's ample propaganda efforts may have been prompted by the fact that the PRC was willing to recognize and deal with the NLF which, since its inception in 1960, made continual attempts to focus world attention on its cause and struggle in the posture of a front independent of North Vietnamese control. As we shall see in the discussion of Soviet support to the National Liberation Front, the Front was just as capable of finding ample praise for the Soviet Union at the appropriate moment as it was for the PRC.

As noted earlier, it is not certain that the PRC fully desired to see a unified Vietnam. Hence, to a certain degree, it may have had hopes that the NLF would be encouraged to become a separate, PRC-oriented group.34/ Although Douglas Pike finds this to be a plausible assesment, it is nearly impossible to draw a definitive conclusion.

Numerous messages of encouragement and appreciation were exchanged between the PRC and NLF during the Vietnam conflict. In addition, delegates were exchanged between the two. Perhaps the most significant moment occurred on September 11, 1964, when the NLF permanent delegation



## THE BDM CORPORATION

arrived in Peking.<sup>35/</sup> Of the many interactions between China and the NLF, it appears that the most active of the Chinese participants, other than state officials, were the China Peace Committee, the Chinese Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Committee (AAPSC), and the All-China Federation of Trade Unions.

As additional US troops were committed to South Vietnam, the PRC's support of the NLF cause became increasingly more vocal and militant. The PRC had stated earlier in 1965 that it was willing to allow Chinese troops to fight along side the NLF forces:

We now solemnly declare that we Chinese people firmly respond to the NLF statement and will join the people of the world in sending all necessary material aid, including arms and all other war materials, to the heroic South Vietnamese people who are battling fearlessly. At the same time we are ready to send our own men, whenever the South Vietnamese people want them, to fight together with the South Vietnamese...<sup>36/</sup>

Peking did indicate however, that the tactics employed by the NLF forces were not always to its liking. "The Chinese appeared to believe that the NLF should have used as its model the Chinese people's antifascist war against Japan and felt that many of its methods - the use of terror, for example - tended to turn Vietnamese against Vietnamese rather than to unite them against what China considered the sole enemy, the United States. There seems to be little doubt that the Chinese Communists were appalled by many of the NLF activities and techniques."<sup>37/</sup>

### C. IDEOLOGICAL-POLITICAL SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE SOVIET UNION (USSR)

#### 1. Background

Soviet-North Vietnamese relations and the extent to which the USSR provided the DRV support, both in terms of military-economic aid and verbal encouragement, directly depended upon the nature of the political and ideological atmosphere which existed between the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China and the United States. The intent of this chapter is not an examination of tri-lateral relations between the US,

USSR, and PRC prior to, during, and after the Vietnam conflict. However, it would be both unwise and imprecise to undertake an examination of Soviet aid to the North Vietnamese, without acknowledging the importance of these tri-lateral perceptions. Soviet-DRV interactions did not take place within a vacuum; fluctuations in US-Soviet-Sino relations prompted certain Soviet responses to the North Vietnamese. Of critical import is the nature of Sino-Soviet relations during the Vietnam conflict; Figure 6-1, above, affords an overview of the changing relations between China and the USSR, the schism between these two powers, and the underlying causes which prompted both countries to perceive one another with ample distrust and hostility.

The Soviet Union's attitude towards the North Vietnamese Communists has, to varying degrees, revolved around its own self-interests with regard to its role as the world's leader of communism. Although the Vietnamese Communist Party was the first communist party to claim victory in a nationalist movement after World War II, the Soviet Union reacted coolly and with minimal enthusiasm to its successes.<sup>38/</sup> The Soviet Union's response to the Viet Minh accomplishment was understandably low-key. Overt Soviet support of the Viet Minh would have damaged French Communist chances for winning the election, since the French Communists maintained that dissolution of the French colonial empire was not their intent.<sup>39/</sup>

In addition, while the Soviet Union apparently channeled some support to the Viet Minh in the mid- to late forties, it can be conjectured that the Soviet Union did not regard Indochina as a particularly important region in which to extend its influence at that time.<sup>40/</sup> Soviet aid to the Vietnamese Communists did not take on any sizeable importance or proportion until the mid-fifties. The Soviet Union seemed willing to allow the PRC to be the primary benefactor of the Viet Minh. The USSR would contribute aid as was needed, but it was not until somewhat later that the importance of the Soviet Union's interaction with and support of the DRV grew.

Hanoi's perception of the Soviet Union was colored by the USSR's performance at the Geneva Conference. Hanoi, having postponed military

victory to come to the conference table, witnessed the reshuffling of its priorities in favor of big-power interests and pursuits. It is likely that the DRV regarded the Soviet Union with a certain degree of hostility and suspicion for what it perceived as a sellout or compromise of its own hard-fought goals.<sup>41/</sup>

Although the sixties saw increased interaction between the Soviet Union and the DRV, Hanoi's guard was continually up in order to prevent another similar sellout. Its relations with the Soviet Union were cordial and aid was always forthcoming in varying degrees. But Hanoi pursued its relations with the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China with an eye cautiously open for compromising situations. The Hanoi leadership was careful to balance its relations between Moscow and Peking, especially as relations between the two deteriorated. Yet even though it depended on the good will of both powers for the continuation of its struggle with US forces, it would not opt for a relationship with either power in which its own needs and goals would be jeopardized.

## 2. Sino and US Influences on Moscow's Aid to the DRV

It is extremely important to appreciate the ideological-political support provided by the USSR to the DRV. By assessing the political and ideological interaction between these two countries, it becomes increasingly evident that the actual aid provided was greatly influenced by the Soviet Union's perception of the DRV, by its interactions with the United States and perhaps more importantly, by the PRC's attempts to undermine Moscow's role as the leader of world communism. Three broad themes will be assessed in the following section.

- National liberation wars and the theory of peaceful coexistence
- Moscow's call for a united aid program to North Vietnam
- Moscow's views concerning peace negotiations.

These themes can be utilized as a gauge to measure Moscow's commitment to the DRV as well as to its primary cause--maintaining its leadership position of world communism.

a. National Liberation Wars and the Theory of Peaceful Co-existence

Khrushchev's theory of peaceful coexistence between states with differing social and economic systems conflicted to a certain extent with the PRC's (and Hanoi's) thesis of national liberation wars. While peaceful coexistence was obviously directed primarily at the West, and particularly at the United States, it was with regard to North Vietnam that this theory caused Soviet theoreticians certain difficulties. First, although the Soviet Union did acknowledge the existence and importance of national liberation wars for peoples struggling against imperialism and colonialism, its support of this concept can only be understood within the context of its support for peaceful coexistence. A Brezhnev policy address published in Pravda in 1964 states:

Because we are for peaceful coexistence, we resolutely and relentlessly oppose those who seek to violate this peaceful coexistence,...we rebuff the provocations of the imperialists and any encroachments by them...on the freedom and independence of the peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America...we support in every way the just struggle of these people.42/

By applauding a theory supposedly originated by the "renegade" PRC, its own prestige as the primary and leading formulator of communist ideology would, in effect, be tarnished. In fact, the USSR's political theorists occasionally asserted that it was in fact the Soviet Union which had originated and implemented the world's first national liberation movement.43/ On one hand, the Soviet Union felt compelled to support a struggle between a fraternal communist country and the US imperialist aggressors. If it did not, this would signify to the world's less powerful communist parties that Moscow could not be depended upon for support, and therefore, that it was not sincere in its desire to engender worldwide communism. On the other hand, by advocating a theory supported by the People's Republic of China without justification, a power deliberately trying to undermine the prestige of the USSR as the world's leader of communism, the Soviet Union would in essence be demeaning its own position with regard to the world communist

## THE BDM CORPORATION

movement. Hence, the Vietnam conflict presented certain perplexing contradictions to the Soviet leadership.

Yet another important question is that of the relationship between the struggle of the international working class and the national liberation movement of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America...These are the great forces of our epoch. Correct coordination between them constitutes one of the main prerequisites for victory over imperialism.

How do the Chinese comrades solve this problem? This is seen from their new theory, according to which the main contradiction of our time is not between socialism and imperialism, but between the national liberation movement and imperialism. The decisive force in the struggle against imperialism, the Chinese comrades maintain, is not the world system of Socialism, not the struggle of the international work class, but the national liberation movement.

...The Chinese comrades regard as the main criterion of revolutionary spirit recognition of the armed uprising...(They are thereby in fact denying the possibility of using peaceful forms of struggle for the victory of the Socialist revolution...44/

(Open letter to the Chinese in Pravda, July, 1963)

Relations between the DRV and the USSR were colored to a certain extent by their divergent points of view concerning the theory of national liberation wars. As the Soviet leadership attempted to seek detente with the United States, one facet of which was the signing of the nuclear test ban treaty in the summer of 1963, the North Vietnamese leadership could not help but respond somewhat negatively. However, as the Vietnam conflict evolved from a national liberation war to a local war, a situation which was even more diametrically opposed to the theory of peaceful coexistence, the Soviet Union was compelled to reassess its support to Hanoi. While it was hesitant to enter a conflict in which a head-on collision with the US might result, Moscow was tempted to use the conflict for pursuit of its own interests in its dispute with the PRC. Since Hanoi desperately needed more

## THE BDM CORPORATION

aid, of which a considerable amount would be heavy materiel, and since the Soviet Union was the only communist country capable of fulfilling these needs, an opportunity had developed in which the USSR could outdo the PRC. The Moscow leadership opted to meet Hanoi's needs.

### b. Moscow's Call For A United Aid Program To North Vietnam

The Soviet Union consistently called for a united Sino-Soviet aid program in support of Hanoi's struggle with the United States. The Peking leadership consistently rejected such a proposal. Why was the Soviet leadership so intent on providing Hanoi with a coordinated aid effort? Several explanations can be offered.

First of all, if the Soviet Union could transport materiel through Chinese territory, it could thereby reduce the possibility of interaction between the Soviet naval or merchant marine vessels and American vessels in the sea lanes providing access to North Vietnamese ports. Second, by calling for a united aid program in the atmosphere of intense hostility which existed between the USSR and PRC, the Soviet Union, in effect, could single out the Peking leadership as having somewhat questionable loyalties to the DRV cause. In proposing a united support campaign, (realizing, most likely, that the PRC would reject the proposal), the Soviet Union could achieve a more influential relationship with Hanoi as well as indicate to the world's communist parties that it, rather than the PRC, would do everything within its power to assist a fraternal communist country. The Soviets admonished the Chinese in these terms:

The attitude of the PRC leadership towards the struggle of the DRV against US aggression is currently causing great damage to the joint cause of the countries of socialism...The CPSU has proposed to the Chinese leaders more than once that joint action to support Vietnam be organized, but the Chinese leadership opposed such action...These proposals, which were received by the Politburo of the Vietnamese Party of Labour with approval, were not accepted by the Chinese leaders. At the same time, the PRC leadership hindered the implementation of the agreement of the Government of the USSR with the Government of the DRV on an immediate increase in military aid for the DRV...From all this, it becomes clear that the Chinese leaders need a

## THE BDM CORPORATION

lengthy Vietnamese war to maintain international tensions...There is every reason to assert that it is one of the goals of the policy of the Chinese leadership on the Vietnam question to originate a military conflict between the USSR and the United States...We believe that the hegemonic activities of the Chinese leaders are aimed at subordinating the policy of Socialist countries, the international Communist and workers' movement, and the national liberation movement to their great-power interests...It is not without intention that the Chinese leaders, while criticizing the other fraternal parties and Socialist countries because of their alleged insufficient revolutionary spirit and indecisiveness in the fight against imperialism, show extraordinary caution in their own practical deeds...45/

(Soviet letter to other Communist Parties, Feb, 1966)

By indicating to Hanoi that it was sincere in its desire to provide a coordinated assistance program, it would then be possible to exert a certain amount of pressure on the Hanoi leadership to discuss peace, a goal which the Soviet Union also consistently maintained. However, while the Hanoi leadership was more than willing to accept aid from the USSR and continually supported Moscow's call for a united program, it would not take sides in the Sino-Soviet dispute.

### c. Moscow's Views Concerning Peace Negotiations

Whereas the PRC staunchly refused to support any suggestion of peace negotiations with regard to the Vietnam conflict, the reverse was true of the Soviet Union. What motivated the Soviet leadership to persist in promoting peace negotiations to the Hanoi Leadership?

As the war in Vietnam intensified, Hanoi's needs for Soviet military assistance also increased. While in 1964 the possibility of a communist victory seemed quite plausible, thereby prompting the Soviet Union to consider providing more aid to the DRV/NLF, the situation that developed in 1965 altered the Soviet perspective. With the onset of US bombing of North Vietnam and in the face of intensified disputes with the People's Republic of China, the Soviet Union felt compelled to offer additional, heavier materiel to the North Vietnamese. However, it can be

conjectured that the Soviet Union, in its desire for improved US-Soviet relations, was somewhat disgruntled by a more intensified situation in Vietnam. The Soviet Union continued to display its displeasure with US actions in Vietnam. Yet, it also tried to pressure Hanoi, with minimal success, to clarify its ambiguous position regarding negotiations and to consider resolving the conflict through peace negotiations.

Hence, the pursuit of detente was one important motivating factor prompting the Soviet leadership to encourage peace talks. Another plausible contributing influence was the Soviet Union's desire to appear as a mediating influence and a peace-pursuing advocate, a stance which would lend credence to its theme of peaceful coexistence. However, the USSR had to contend simultaneously with PRC accusations that it was conspiring against the Vietnamese people by selling out a communist cause to the imperialist United States.

Although Hanoi did not accept the PRC viewpoint that peace talks were an absolute impossibility, it was not to be pressured by Moscow to begin peace talks either. Hanoi's suspicion of Soviet intentions mitigated Soviet pressure to a certain extent. Therefore, the Soviet Union, already more heavily committed to supplying North Vietnam, was caught in a perplexing dilemma. It did not particularly want an open confrontation with the US similar to the Cuban missile crisis, yet it could not appear weak in the face of PRC allegations and therefore lose face in the eyes of the communist world.

3. Ideological-Political Support Provided By the USSR to the NLF

As was the case with PRC-DRV relations, so too did the Soviet Union concentrate on the Hanoi-backed NLF as a readily attentive audience for its propaganda efforts, especially for those formulated to counter the PRC's anti-Soviet attacks. The NLF, in its efforts to muster support for its cause, praised the Soviet Union as a great model on which to base its on-going revolutionary experience, however dissimilar the USSR's model was from its own.<sup>46/</sup> The Soviet Union found the NLF ready to champion many of its political ventures. The National Liberation Front willingly asserted that the on-going conflict in Vietnam was a threat to worldwide peace and



## THE BDM CORPORATION

disarmament, a statement which the Soviet Union could conveniently capitalize on in its peaceful coexistence campaign. The Soviet Union was also interested in developing the propaganda position of the NLF as the representative of the Vietnamese people's revolutionary movement. By doing so, the Soviet Union would appear as an ardent champion of revolution, a role it desired to engender in the face of continual PRC accusations. The NLF even went so far as to support the USSR's decision with regard to the nuclear test ban treaty, although a year later it was to reverse its advocacy.<sup>47/</sup>

According to Douglas Pike, the major Soviet organizations involved in providing support to the NLF were the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Committee, the World Peace Council (Soviet Branch), and the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions of the USSR. In addition, the Permanent Bureau of the International Conference for Solidarity with the People of Vietnam played a substantial supportive role to the NLF, an organization which was conveniently utilized to counter PRC charges of the Soviet Union's sellout intentions.<sup>48/</sup>

### D. ACTUAL SUPPORT (MILITARY, ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL) PROVIDED TO THE DRV/NLF BY THE SOVIET UNION, PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND OTHERS SYMPATHETIC TO THE DRV-NLF CAUSE

#### 1. Introduction

Based on the above examination of the ideological-political support provided by the PRC and the USSR to Hanoi (as well as the NLF), it becomes clear that certain factors influenced the relationships of those involved. When examining actual figures for military, economic and technical aid provided to Hanoi, it becomes even clearer that these political-ideological interactions had a marked influence on the extent of aid provided.

Although it is difficult to pinpoint the exact amount of aid provided by one communist country to another, several reliable estimates are available which give a clearer picture of the extent and type of support provided to the DRV/NLF by the USSR, PRC and by other countries or organizations sympathetic to their cause.

Both the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China offered economic, technical and military assistance to the DRV. In addition, the NLF was provided with certain aid, the majority of which appears to have been channeled to them via Hanoi, although some medical support was provided directly by the PRC Red Cross as well as by other sympathetic countries and organizations.<sup>49/</sup> The aid offered by the USSR and PRC was usually provided on a long-term loan basis.<sup>50/</sup>

2. Economic and Technical Aid to the DRV/NLF

The Soviet Union's technical assistance, outside of the military realm, consisted primarily of equipment for factories, oil and oil products, fishing trawlers, lorries, spare parts for machinery, tractors, automobiles, medical equipment and food (primarily wheat).<sup>51/</sup> In addition, the USSR provided specialists for training DRV technical personnel and teachers.<sup>52/</sup> Peking's economic and technical assistance consisted primarily of machinery, road and rail construction materials, and foodstuffs. Table 6-1 provides data on the amount of economic (and military) assistance provided to Hanoi by the PRC and USSR from 1950-1971.

The nations of Eastern Europe and other Bloc countries also contributed economic and technical support to Hanoi. Although total aid provided by these countries did not come anywhere near the sums provided by the PRC and the USSR, it is important to note their contributions to the DRV's cause; Bernard Fall indicates that Hungary provided city buses; Poland offered sugar experts and meteorologists; the GDR sent medical personnel as well as a complete hospital and fishing trawler; Czechoslovakia provided crop-dusting aircraft; and finally, Mongolia offered the assistance of its cattle experts along with 100,000 head of breed cattle.<sup>53/</sup> These countries also provided diplomatic recognition of both the DRV and the NLF. Later they recognized the PRG (Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam). Appendices A, B, and C provide information depicting those countries and organizations which maintained diplomatic ties with the DRV, the NLF, and subsequently the PRG.

Diplomatic exchanges between the DRV, the PRC, and the USSR were common throughout the Vietnam conflict. Information on the number of

exchanges which occurred from 1964-1971 indicates that there were fluctuations. (See Table 6-2 above). When a comparison is made of the timeline appearing in Figure 6-1 and this table, it becomes obvious that exchanges diminished or increased according to the needs, goals and political moods of these three countries.

### 3. Military Assistance Provided to the DRV/NLF

Figures for military aid provided by the PRC and USSR to the DRV also appear in Table 6-1. In addition, Eastern Europe provided a small amount of military assistance, although it was relatively insignificant in comparison to Soviet and Chinese support. As has already been noted, the Soviet Union provided the DRV with heavy military hardware, specifically anti-aircraft guns, surface-to-air missiles (SAM), MIG-21 aircraft (and prior to 1966, subsonic MIG-17 aircraft), tanks, ammunition, ships, several submarines and fuel; the DRV also sent many of its military men to the Soviet Union for pilot training.<sup>54/</sup>

In addition, Soviet military personnel were stationed in North Vietnam in order to provide advisory assistance on the surface-to-air missile sites.<sup>55/</sup> The PRC provided complementary military equipment such as semi-automatic carbines, rocket launchers, mortars, recoilless rifles, pistols and flares.<sup>56/</sup> Chinese military-engineers, estimated between 20,000-60,000 strong, also participated in rebuilding the DRV's airfields and rail lines destroyed by US bombing raids.<sup>57/</sup> Douglas Pike indicates that, according to the GVN, Chinese officers assisted in combat activities in the South; bodies of the enemy were often found decapitated (presumably by DRV forces) in order to thwart GVN/US identification of Chinese participants.<sup>58/</sup> Table 6-3 and Appendix D provide information on the types of military assistance provided to the DRV forces by the USSR and the PRC during the Vietnam conflict.

## E. ANALYTICAL SUMMARY AND INSIGHTS

Hanoi's capability to pursue its long-range goals in the face of intensified US involvement directly depended upon the external support.

TABLE 6-3 ESTIMATES OF EQUIPMENT DELIVERIES RECEIVED BY THE DRV,  
1965-JUNE 1967.59/

ESTIMATES OF EQUIPMENT DELIVERIES RECEIVED BY THE DRVN, 1965-JUNE 1967. (IN NUMBERS EXCEPT WHERE INDICATED OTHERWISE)			
USSR	1965	1966	JAN-JUNE 1967
SAM BATTALIONS	15	10	5
SAM REPLACEMENT MISSILES	200	1100	1750
AIRCRAFT	57	85	5
ARTILLERY, ANTIAIRCRAFT	1430	2830	2180
RADAR	23	160	73
AMMUNITION (TONS)	17,000	40,000	30,000
PRC	1965	1966	JAN-JUNE 67
AIRCRAFT	8	0	12
NAVAL CRAFT	2	2	6
ARTILLERY ANTIAIRCRAFT	20	140	285
RADAR	33	112	60
TRUCKS, ETC.	600	400	300
SMALL ARMS (IN MILLION US \$)	10	35	8
AMMUNITION (TONS)	8000	10,000	10,000

SOURCE: Intelligence Memorandum (CIA)

## THE BDM CORPORATION

provided by the USSR, the PRC, and to a certain extent, by others sympathetic to its cause. Clearly, the ability of the DRV to sustain itself both economically and militarily throughout the Vietnam conflict would have been seriously undermined if not totally jeopardized without this input. Until 1972, when both the USSR and the PRC appeared suddenly more intent on pursuing detente with the US, Hanoi had little cause to be concerned that outside aid would cease. The PRC and the USSR continued to provide aid throughout the conflict. A competitive situation evolved wherein neither the USSR nor the PRC would allow the other to outdo it in support. Decreases in aid did occur as is evident in Table 6-1, but they were generally shortlived. In reality, tensions existing between the USSR and the PRC prevented overall withdrawal of support. In this context, the DRV was in essence a barometer of existing Sino-Soviet tensions. Both the USSR and the PRC sought to influence the DRV, each in their own way, but in the final count, it was the DRV which was the least willing of the three to yield to pressure. The DRV's adeptness in simultaneously walking the "thin line" between its two powerful allies while, in effect, playing one power off against the other, was indeed "the signal achievement of the wartime Hanoi regime".<sup>60/</sup>

During the years of the Vietnam War, there was a dramatic change in the US perception of USSR and PRC interaction. The insight that has been gained from observing the evolution of inter-Party relationships was that communism is not monolithic. This statement appears as a truism now, but it represents a major step forward in Western understanding of communism. This insight serves as the foundation for current US dealings with the communist countries of the world. It may be said that the insight has been gained and that one of the central misperceptions of the Cold War has been corrected.

Closely related to the understanding of the workings of communism is the appreciation of nationalism's strength as a sentiment and also as a force that shapes people's reaction to ideologies, including communism. The experience of the Vietnam conflict illustrated the vitality of nationalism in national communist parties. Viewing Indochina after the fall of

## THE BDM CORPORATION

the US-supported governments in South Vietnam and Cambodia and the neutralist government in Laos, it is evident that the individual communist parties which have replaced those governments are as thoroughly nationalistic as their predecessors. Because of this characteristic, those regimes are determined to protect the interests of their respective nations, even to the point of waging war. The insight recent events have provided for the United States is as follows: even if nations are taken over by communist governments, the geopolitical balance of an area may not be completely upset. There are, of course, differing degrees and kinds of affiliations between communist regimes and Moscow or Peking. The experience of the Vietnam conflict illustrates the importance of carefully examining the nature of the communist party in a country and where that country fits in the regional power equation in order to estimate accurately the impact a government run by that Party might have on a region's political balance.

Another insight that can be derived from the examination of the outside support provided to the Communist Vietnamese is that the type of war the United States waged was an important element in determining Hanoi's relationship with Moscow and Peking. As noted above, the PRC was incapable of providing the military hardware North Vietnam needed to answer the challenge that was posed by sophisticated American weaponry and large numbers of US troops. As the United States increased the intensity of its assault, the necessity of obtaining the requisite types of arms prompted Hanoi to draw closer to the Soviet Union. The lesson this insight provides is that the type of military response the United States makes to a military situation like the Vietnam conflict may be a factor in shaping the political outcome of a conflict. There were many other variables that affected the development of the close ties between the USSR and Vietnam, but Hanoi's armament requirements in the latter part of the war must be recognized as a significant factor in that evolution.

Throughout the conflict the United States sought to influence the supply of aid to the communist Vietnamese through negotiations with the USSR and PRC. The thought was that the Communist superpowers might be willing to alter their aid programs to the Vietnamese if they perceived that their

## THE BDM CORPORATION

own interests might be well served in other areas. The United States efforts did not have discernible, long-term impacts on the flow of aid. That fact provides another insight: the bargaining position of the US in the triangular relationship between the US, PRC, and USSR not was as strong as we have at times believed. It seems that the Russians and Chinese respond more directly to the forces generated by their mutual rivalry than to policy initiatives of the United States. A final insight is that more should have been known about the roles of the USSR and PRC, and better use should have been made of what was known.

### F. LESSONS

Major communist powers such as the USSR and PRC have certain vested interests in supporting and ensuring the success of lesser communist nations; this suggests that an opponent of one of their surrogates would be advised not to elect a strategy of attrition unless there was a reasonable assurance of a quick victory or of influencing the external supply of resources and/or use of geographic sanctuaries over a long haul.

Close and continuous observation must be maintained over communist or other potentially hostile states, and flexibility in interpretation is essential to an understanding of their motives and likely courses of action.

A locally based insurgency normally requires extensive external support to offset an adverse balance of military and economic power; this dependence may produce inherent contradictions which, if identified and understood, can present opportunities for exploitation.

CHAPTER 6

APPENDICES



# THE BDM CORPORATION

## APPENDIX A

NATIONS CONSIDERED TO RECOGNIZE, DE JURE OR DE FACTO, THE DEMOCRATIC  
REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM - AS OF JANUARY 9, 1973 61/

- |                            |                                 |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. ALBANIA                 | 27. IRAQ                        |
| 2. ALGERIA                 | 28. KOREA, DEM. PEOPLE'S REP OF |
| 3. AUSTRIA                 | 29. LAOS                        |
| 4. AUSTRALIA               | 30. MALAGASY REPUBLIC           |
| 5. BANGLADESH              | 31. MALI                        |
| 6. BULGARIA                | 32. MAURITANIA                  |
| 7. BURMA                   | 33. MONGOLIA                    |
| 8. CAMEROON                | 34. NORWAY                      |
| 9. CANADA                  | 35. PAKISTAN                    |
| 10. CHILE                  | 36. POLAND                      |
| 11. CHINA, PEOPLE'S REP OF | 37. ROMANIA                     |
| 12. CONGO                  | 38. SENEGAL                     |
| 13. CUBA                   | 39. SOMALIA                     |
| 14. CZECHOSLOVAKIA         | 40. SRI LANKA                   |
| 15. DENMARK                | 41. SUDAN                       |
| 16. EGYPT                  | 42. SWEDEN                      |
| 17. FINLAND                | 43. SWITZERLAND                 |
| 18. FRANCE                 | 44. SYRIA                       |
| 19. GERMANY, DEM REP OF    | 45. TANZANIA                    |
| 20. GHANA                  | 46. TUNISIA                     |
| 21. GUINEA                 | 47. USSR                        |
| 22. GUINEA, EQUATORIAL     | 48. YEMEN, ARAB REPUBLIC        |
| 23. HUNGARY                | 49. YEMEN, PEOPLE'S DEM. REP.   |
| 24. ICELAND                | 50. YUGOSLAVIA                  |
| 25. INDIA                  | 51. ZAMBIA                      |
| 26. INDONESIA              |                                 |

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### NOTES

- A. The United Kingdom, which does not recognize the DRV, has a Consulate General accredited to the municipal authorities of Hanoi.
- B. The ICC maintains a mission in Hanoi with Canadian, Indian and Polish representatives in it. India and Poland have embassies there. Canada has no other representation.
- C. The DRV is recognized by Sihanouk's exile Royal Government of National Union of Cambodia.

SOURCE: Douglas Pike, Personal Library and Files, Washington, D.C., 1978.

# THE BDM CORPORATION

## APPENDIX B

### COUNTRIES RECOGNIZING THE PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH VIET-NAM as of November 24, 1972 62/

- |                                  |                                  |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Albania                       | 15. Mali                         |
| 2. Algeria                       | 16. Mauritania                   |
| 3. Bulgaria                      | 17. Mongolia                     |
| 4. Chile                         | 18. Poland                       |
| 5. China, People's Rep. of       | 19. Romania                      |
| 6. Congo                         | 20. Somalia                      |
| 7. Cuba                          | 21. South Yemen                  |
| 8. Czechoslovakia                | 22. Sri Lanka                    |
| 9. Egypt                         | 23. Sudan                        |
| 10. Germany, Dem. Rep. of        | 24. Syria                        |
| 11. Guinea, Equatorial           | 25. Tanzania                     |
| 12. Hungary                      | 26. Uganda                       |
| 13. Iraq                         | 27. USSR                         |
| 14. Korea, Dem. People's Rep. of | 28. Viet-Nam, Dem. Rep. of*      |
|                                  | 29. Yemen, People's Dem. Rep. of |
|                                  | 30. Yugoslavia                   |

\*The Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam accredits the PRG Chief of Mission as a "special representatives" rather than as an Ambassador.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### NOTES

- a. Denmark, Finland, France, Norway and Sweden have allowed the establishment of National Liberation Front for South Viet-Nam (NLF) information offices in their capitals.
- b. The PRG is recognized by Sihanouk's exile Royal Government of National Union of Cambodia.
- c. An NLF Mission exists in Jakarta, through Indonesia does not recognize the PRG.

# THE BDM CORPORATION

## APPENDIX C

### NLF AND PRG RELATIONS AND DIPLOMATIC TIES: COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS 63/

Fifteen major parties and fronts (which are not in power) and 10 international and national organizations have recognized the NLF (formerly) and the PRG as the genuine and legal representative of the South Vietnamese people.

The NLF (PRG) is a member of the following international organizations' central committees:

- The World Council of Peace (WCP)
- The World Federation of Trade Unions (FTU)
- The World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY)
- The International Union of Students (IUS)
- The International Association of Journalists (IAJ)
- The Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization (AAPSO)
- The Afro-Asian Latin American Peoples' Solidarity Organization
- The Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF)
- The International Teachers' Trade Union
- The NLF (PRG)
- Participates in 31 important international conferences including:
  - The Third Congress of WFTU in Moscow (5 November 1961)
  - The Congress of the International Association Democratic Lawyers (IADL) in Budapest (31 March 1964)
  - The International Scientific Symposium in Peking (26 August 1964)
  - The Congress of WCP in Helsinki (July 1965)
  - The Congress of Afro-Asian Latin American Peoples' Solidarity Organization in Cuba (October 1965)
  - The Fifth Congress of the WIDF in Finland (June 1969)
  - The Conference of WFDY in support of the Indochinese peoples in France (July 1970)
  - The Summit Conference of non-aligned countries in Lusaka (September 1970)

Source: Hanoi, Vietnam Courier

# THE BDM CORPORATION

## APPENDIX D

### A SUMMARY OF WEAPONS CAPTURED IN SOUTH VIETNAM PRIOR TO 1965 64/

1. Weapons and supplies of PRC origin
  - 75-MM recoilless rifles
  - 57-MM recoilless guns
  - Shells for 75-MM guns
  - Shells for 57-MM guns
  - 80-MM mortar
  - 60-MM mortar
  - Shells for 60-MM mortar
  - 90-MM Bazooka
  - Caliber 27-MM rocket launchers
  - Caliber 7.92-MM model 08 Maxim machine guns
  - MP-82 rockets
  - TNT explosives
  - Red phosphorus
  - Potassium chlorate
  - Cartridges for 7.92-mm. machine guns
  - Detonating fuses for 60-MM mortar shells
2. Weapons and supplies of Soviet origin
  - MP-82 rifles
  - Launching cartridges
  - Mossin Nagant carbines (w/automatic bayonets)
  - Rifles
  - Automatic pistols
  - Grenades
  - Rifle cartridges
  - Submachine guns

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### 3. Weapons and supplies of Czech origin

- 7.65-MM Automatic pistols
- K-50 Submachine guns
- Rifles
- Machine gun cartridges
- Grenade launchers
- 3.5" antitank bazookas

SOURCE: Aggression from the North. Washington, D.C., Department of State

CHAPTER 6 ENDNOTES

1. Melvin Gurtov, "Hanoi on War and Peace," in Vietnam and American Foreign Policy, ed. J. R. Boettiger (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath & Co., 1968), p. 59.
2. Causes, Origins and Lessons of the Vietnam War, Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, Ninety-Second Congress, 2nd Session, May 9, 10, 11, 1972. (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1973), p. 177.
3. The important events listed in the chronology were selected by the BDM Study Team from the documentation reflected in these endnotes, passim. In particular, Keesing's Research Report. The Sino-Soviet Dispute (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969) and Edgar Snow, Red Star Over China (New York: Grove Press, 1961) provided excellent data for the compilation of this figure.
4. King C. Chen, Vietnam and China, 1938-1954, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 243, 252-260. and Douglas S. Blaufarb, The Counterinsurgency Era: U.S. Doctrine and Performance. (New York: The Free Press, 1979), pp. 11-13.
5. Ibid.
6. King C. Chen, "Hanoi vs Peking: Policies and Relations - A Survey," Asian Survey, Vol. XII, No. 9 (September 1972), p. 807.
7. Ibid.
8. Donald S. Zagoria, Vietnam Triangle. Moscow, Peking, Hanoi, New York: Pegasus, 1967), p. 104.
9. Michael Tatu, "Moscow, Peking and the Conflict in Vietnam," Vietnam Legacy. The War, American Society and the Future of American Foreign Policy, (New York: New York University Press, 1976), p. 23.
10. Melvin Gurtov, "Hanoi on War and Peace," In Vietnam and American Foreign Policy, ed. J. R. Boettiger (Lexington, Mass: D. C. Heath & Co., 1968), pp. 59, 67.
11. Geoffrey Jukes, The Soviet Union In Asia, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973), p. 208.
12. Raymond L. McGovern, "Moscow and Hanoi," In Vietnam and American Foreign Policy, ed., J. R. Boettiger (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath & Co., 1968), p. 74.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

13. Chen, pp. 809-813.
14. Ibid., p. 807.
15. Zagoria, p. 81.
16. General William C. Westmoreland Report on Operations in South Vietnam January 1964 - June 1968 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968), p. 84 stated that in 1964 "Hanoi had determined that the time was ripe to begin the final and decisive "mobile" phase of the war, which would lead to the collapse of the government and a complete Communist victory. This unmistakably, is the significance of the enemy decision in 1964 to begin to form Viet Cong divisions and to start the southward deployment of regular NVA forces."
17. Chen, p. 808.
18. Roger Swearingen and Hammond Rolph, Communism in Vietnam, (Chicago, Illinois: American Bar Association, 1967), p. 149.
19. Lucian W. Pye, "China in Context," Vietnam and American Foreign Policy, (Lexington, Mass: D. C. Heath & Co., 1968), p. 102; David P. Mozingo, "Containment in Asia Reconsidered," in Vietnam and American Foreign Policy. (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath & Co., 1968), p. 88.
20. Zagoria, p. 97. Despite this and other indications that the Chinese were not likely to intervene with ground or air combat forces in Vietnam, the US perception at the time (at least the perception of President Johnson and the Secretaries of State and Defense) held that PRC intervention was a possibility if US actions were provocative to China.
21. Ibid., pp 69-91.
22. U.S. Department of State. Office of the Historian, "The Position of North Viet-Nam on Negotiations," Vietnam Documents and Research Notes, Doc. No. 8, October 1967, P. 5.
23. Tatu, pp. 24-25.
24. Keesing's Research Report, p.88.
25. Chen, p. 813.
26. Ibid., p. 809.
27. Chen, p. 809 and Zagoria, p. 50.



## THE BDM CORPORATION

28. Table 6-1 is based on Chen, p. 815. For a highly interesting and provocative commentary regarding CIA estimates of USSR and PRC aid to North Vietnam during the 1967-1974 period, see Frank Snepp, Decent Interval (New York: Random House, 1977), pp. 161-162. Mr. Snepp contends that the agency's aid estimates were "a travesty, not only on the intelligence but also on their integrity....The final tabulation showed that while total foreign assistance to North Vietnam had risen to unprecedented levels in 1974, the jump had been in economic rather than military aid categories. If you were trying to prove Hanoi's 'aggressive' intent ...", just the reverse resulted.
29. Table 6-2 is based on Chen, p. 814.
30. Zagoria, p. 54.
31. Ibid.
32. Tatu, p. 28.
33. Douglas Pike, Viet Cong. The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (Cambridge, Mass., and London, England: The M.I.T. Press, 1966), p. 336.
34. Ibid., p. 330.
35. Ibid., p. 334.
36. Ibid., p. 338.
37. Ibid., p. 339.
38. Zagoria, p. 27.
39. Ibid., pp. 27, 100.
40. Zagoria, p. 100. Jukes, pp. 205-206; and Evelyn Colbert, Southeast Asia in International Politics 1941-1956 (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 61-62, 80.
41. Ibid., pp. 41. Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson described how Chou en-Lai and V. M. Molotov drew DRV delegate Pham Van Dong aside at the 1954 Geneva Conference to prevail on him to accept the "temporary" partition of Vietnam until nationwide popular elections could be held in 1956. Interview at BDM 13 September 1978.
42. Claude Constant Gau, "Communist Wars of National Liberation and the Sino-Soviet Dispute" (Ph.D. dissertation, Georgetown University, 1967), p. 302, quote originally appeared in Current Digest of the Soviet Press, December 30, 1964, p. 20.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

43. Ibid. p. 307.
44. The Sino-Soviet Dispute, p. 56.
45. Ibid., pp. 339.
46. Pike, p. 339.
47. Ibid., p. 341.
48. Ibid., p. 342.
49. Ibid., p. 337.
50. Bernard Fall. The Two-Vietnams. A Political and Military Analysis, revised ed. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1964), p. 175. It is important to remember that both the USSR and the PRC, as rivals for the leadership of the "worldwide communist revolution," had a substantial interest in a North Vietnamese victory so long as that victory was achieved with their apparent support and guidance.
51. Ibid., pp. 175-176; Jukes, p. 212.
52. "Dimensions of Soviet Aid to North Vietnam," IRS/AF Vietnam Unit Report, (August 1965, from the personal library of Douglas Pike), p. 2.
53. Fall, 175.
54. Tatu, p. 31; Zagoria, p. 51; Maj Gen. A'N, L. Mikryukov and Col. V. Babich. "Development of Fighter Aviation Tactics Since World War II," Voenno-Istoricheskiy Zhurnal, No. 5, May 1977, p. 32.
55. Zagoria, p. 51.
56. Pike, p. 337.
57. Tatu, p. 24.
58. Pike, p. 338.
59. Table 6-3 is based on data in Central Intelligence Agency, Intelligence Memorandum 8 December 1967 "A Review of the Situation in Vietnam," SC No. 08753/67.
60. Gurtov, p. 59.
61. Appendix A was prepared by BDM analysts from a series of documents in the personal library and files of Douglas Pike, Washington, D.C., 1978.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

43. Ibid. p. 307.
44. The Sino-Soviet Dispute., p. 56.
45. Ibid., pp. 339.
46. Pike, p. 339.
47. Ibid., p. 341.
48. Ibid., p. 342.
49. Ibid., p. 337.
50. Bernard Fall. The Two-Vietnams. A Political and Military Analysis, revised ed. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1964), p. 175. It is important to remember that both the USSR and the PRC, as rivals for the leadership of the "worldwide communist revolution," had a substantial interest in a North Vietnamese victory so long as that victory was achieved with their apparent support and guidance.
51. Ibid., pp. 175-176; Jukes, p. 212.
52. "Dimensions of Soviet Aid to North Vietnam," IRS/AF Vietnam Unit Report, (August 1965, from the personal library of Douglas Pike), p. 2.
53. Fall, p. 175.
54. Tatu, p. 31; Zagoria, p. 51; Maj Gen. AVN, L. Mikryukov and Col. V. Babich. "Development of Fighter Aviation Tactics Since World War II," Voyenno-Istoricheskiy Zhurnal, No. 5, May 1977, p. 32.
55. Zagoria, p. 51.
56. Pike, p. 337.
57. Tatu, p. 24.
58. Pike, p. 338.
59. Table 6-3 is based on data in Central Intelligence Agency, Intelligence Memorandum 8 December 1967 "A Review of the Situation in Vietnam," SC No. 09753/67.
60. Gurtov, p. 59.
61. Appendix A was prepared by BDM analysts from a series of documents in the personal library and files of Douglas Pike, Washington, D.C., 1978.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

62. Appendix B, Ibid.
63. Appendix C is from the Vietnam Courier, Hanoi, (in English)  
21 December 1970, p. 41.
64. Appendix D is from Department of State, Aggression From the North  
(Washington, D.C.: GPO, February 1965).

CHAPTER 7  
CONSTRAINTS ON POLICY

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the major domestic and international constraints on the policies of the North Vietnamese and the NLF leadership. By the term "constraint" is meant a condition which limited the freedom of actions of the North Vietnamese leadership in its attempts to gain political control in the South and which its leadership had to work around or attack with diligence over an extended period of time. This chapter is organized into three sections:

- The major goals and policies of the leadership
- Long-standing international and domestic constraints on policy
- Major changes in constraints - conflict environment

B. MAJOR GOALS AND POLICIES OF THE LEADERSHIPS OF NORTH VIETNAM AND THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT

As explained in Chapter 1, the major goals of the North Vietnamese leadership were first, to consolidate the North economically and politically and second, to reunify Vietnam under Lao Dong Party control.<sup>1/</sup> The major goal of the leadership of the National Liberation Front was to gain political power in South Vietnam in any way possible.<sup>2/</sup> There were three basic and distinctive types of policy options available to the leaderships to attain these goals, (1) political and diplomatic, (2) armed struggle, and (3) the talk-fight strategy.

1. Among the many variations of political and diplomatic options, five stand out as having been major and distinctive:<sup>3/</sup>

- Country-wide elections
- Assistance from the French in enforcing provisions of the Geneva Agreements of 1954
- Political activity in South Vietnam to gain the support of the population and promote revolution in South Vietnam

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- Accommodation with the Government of the Republic of Vietnam (GVN), with provisions for creation of a coalition government (with the intention of gaining complete control as soon as possible)
  - Negotiated settlement with the GVN and United States.
2. Among the variants of armed struggle, three stand out as having been major and distinctive. These were:
- General uprising,
  - Guerrilla warfare, and
  - Conventional military operations.
3. The third type of policy alternative, frequently referred to as the "Talk-fight" strategy, consisted of engaging in negotiations with the enemy while continuing to fight him on the battlefield with any combination of the armed struggle options.

The following sections of this chapter will examine the major domestic and international constraints on the implementation of these policies by the North Vietnamese and NLF.

### C. LONG-STANDING INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC CONSTRAINTS ON POLICY

#### 1. International Constraints

##### a. Geographical Realities that Required Obtaining Bases and Sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia

Prior to the regularization of an American naval presence in the South China Sea, the DRV was able to move supplies into South Vietnam through coastal waters. However, lacking an amphibious warfare capability, the DRV could not expect to seize the RVN from the sea. An overt military drive southward was possible but less attractive than a flanking movement from the western hills of the Annamite Chain. Main force operations along the coast were difficult throughout the period of American presence in Vietnam because of the effectiveness of air power and naval interdiction and terrain compartmentalization. Concentrations of PAVN troops, supplies and equipment in Laos and Cambodia, however, were subject only to air attacks and minor ground-force incursions. The DRV treated Southeast Asia

as a single theater of operations; therefore, Laos and Cambodia formed part of the Rear, to their thinking. An ineffective neutralist government in Laos and the presence of friendly Pathet Lao forces along the Vietnam-Lao border allowed the North Vietnamese to overcome this constraint by means of a fairly permanent presence of large and growing numbers of North Vietnamese service troops operating the Ho Chi Minh Trail and its way stations, supply dumps, rest areas, and eventually, POL pipelines.

Clearly the DRV leadership focused on consolidating their position in North Vietnam as a matter of first priority; second they moved towards unification of Vietnam while confining their activities in Laos and Cambodia to those measures necessary to support their war effort. Hegemony over all of the former colonies of Indochina would follow later.

The significance of the North Vietnamese long-term effort to overcome their supply problems was that the DRV could not successfully have waged its war in the South without the sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia. Existence of the sanctuaries and of America's "secret war" against them may have been one of the war's worst kept secrets, but the United States was alone in receiving criticism for operations against the sanctuaries while the North Vietnamese suffered few international constraints because of their activity in establishing and maintaining them.

b. Dependence on Foreign Aid

The DRV's overall ability to wage a protracted struggle was determined both by the availability and the extent of aid received from countries and organizations sympathetic to its cause. Without foreign aid, the viability of Hanoi's military struggle in the South and economic development in the North would have been seriously weakened or even destroyed. Food, supplies, heavy and light arms, and technical equipment and assistance were all essential elements of Hanoi's aid requirements. As the war progressed two factors intensified this dependence. First, because of the effects of the bombings, the North's economy became increasingly dependent on outside aid and, second, the requirement for more sophisticated weapons to defeat the RVNAF on the battlefield required larger amounts and more sophisticated types of armaments. Although foreign aid

## THE BDM CORPORATION

and encouragement were received, Hanoi did have to deal with the realities of an ever-changing international political scene, especially realities affected by the Sino-Soviet split described in Chapter 6. In particular, Chinese refusal to provide a unified Sino-Soviet aid effort posed at least a minor constraint on the military efforts of the DRV and the NLF. However, Hanoi was generally successful in its efforts to gain foreign support and was able to formulate its policies without severe limitations or constraints due to outside interests or interference.

### c. Limitations of Entry Points for International Aid

As pointed out in Chapter 5, North Vietnam relied strategically on three external lines of communication. First, the road and rail network leading into the North from the PRC provided a secure means for the transportation of urgently needed supplies. Second, they depended on supplies funnelled through Haiphong and a few minor Northern ports. Third, Kompong Som, better known as Sihanoukville, provided strategic access to the southern regions of South Vietnam; and Cambodian trucks moved supplies from the port city eastward to the PAVN base areas controlled by the Central Office of South Vietnam (COSVN).

North Vietnam depended on the vital links with China and the international shipping that offloaded at Haiphong. Both networks were needed to meet continuing and long-range requirements, but the DRV could subsist indefinitely, though at a reduced scale, as long as one of the networks functioned.

## 2. Domestic Constraints

Major policy statements of high-level party and military leaders during the Vietnam war reveal a repeated concern with domestic affairs. This section will evaluate the major domestic constraints upon the implementation of internal policies and programs within Vietnam.

### a. Vietnamese Regionalism

Although the total population of the DRV was larger, by two or more million, and was more homogeneous than was that of the RVN, the options open to the communists were limited by strong Vietnamese regionalism.



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While communist propaganda dwelt continually upon the unity of Vietnam and the desire of the people for unification, historically there has been great suspicion and distrust among the people of the three regions of Vietnam; Tonkin (North), Annam (Center) and Cochinchina (South). According to his Tonkinese counterparts, the average Cochinchinese was lazy, ill-disciplined, carefree, and a spendthrift. The arrogance and disdain of the Tonkinese created major problems for the communists as their proselytizing effort in the South became more dependent on Northerners.

The ethnic and religious mix of the people in the RVN was a problem that was never really solved by the Viet Minh or the NLF. Except for the Catholics and the other refugees from the North, few of these sizeable minorities were enthusiastic about the Diem regime, but neither were they very receptive to the communist programs. In 1965 it was estimated that there were over 1.5 million Catholics, 800,000 to 1.2 million Chinese, 400,000 Khmers, 700,000 or more Montagnards, about 200,000 Protestants, 2 million Cao Dai, and 1.5 million Hoa Hao. Out of an estimated population of 16.1 million, these minorities added up to a sizeable group of people, generally "off limits" to the Viet Minh and NLF recruiters.<sup>4/</sup>

### b. Manpower Shortages

Many factors affected the enemy's continual need for replacement troops in the armed struggle. Heavy casualties, severe logistical requirements and population movements during the course of the war were among the major constraints on maintaining an adequate manpower pool.

The big-unit battles, fought from mid-1965 through early 1969, took a heavy toll on both sides, but especially of PAVN & PLAF main force units; US firepower and air mobility were too potent for the latter to overcome. Their replacements became increasingly younger, less well-trained and indoctrinated.

The NLF never really recovered from the catastrophic loss of key cadres suffered during the 1968 Tet offensives. Experienced cadres were the keystone of the communist effort in the South. Without large numbers of well-trained, highly motivated cadres, the effort to organize

## THE BDM CORPORATION

any kind of Southern insurgency against the GVN was doomed. Because of the extremely heavy casualties suffered by the PLAF during the 1968 Tet offensive and the follow-up attacks, most of the Southerners in PLAF main force units were replaced primarily with Northerners because of the general inability of the communists to recruit Southerners to fight for this cause. This created a strain on manpower resources and eroded the once-strong local ties to the family and village social structure.

### c. Limitations in Materiel Resources

During both the first and second Indochina wars, the DRV leadership experienced a continual strain in maintaining the flow of essential supply items to the combat and logistical forces. The DRV had neither the industrial nor agricultural bases sufficient to support a large-scale protracted war.

Many factors influenced the supply of foodstuffs (particularly rice) to the population of North Vietnam. Agricultural methods, weather conditions, transportation capabilities and land availability were a few of the elements which affected the DRV's ability to maintain food production, overtime.

The North Vietnamese leadership attempted to respond to economic hardships by increasing the national output of secondary food crops such as corn, sweet potatoes, cassava and peanuts. By 1965, the production of these food staples had improved the food situation; however, they remained minor outputs and continued to require substantial capital investment.

Depleted supplies of rice and other foodstuffs may have resulted in a decrease of popular support for the party leadership. Estimates of the rice deficit ran from approximately 200,000 tons to nearly one-half million tons per year.<sup>5/</sup> Inflation was rampant and black marketeering flourished. By 1972, DRV press reports cited, among other abuses, incidents of hoarding, economic speculation, illegal trade and economic sabotage.<sup>6/</sup>

The North Vietnamese leadership deviated sharply from its overriding goal of economic self-sufficiency by dramatically increasing

## THE BDM CORPORATION

overt reliance on Soviet and Chinese "loans" of steel, cotton and yarn, chemicals, medicines, and mechanical equipment. The Soviet Union sold power and electrotechnical equipment, ball bearings, cable, chemicals and cloth to North Vietnam. The extensive trade agreements with the PRC and the Soviet Union confirm the DRV's inability to expand economic production.

### d. Ideological Constraints

In a limited sense, doctrine is the application of ideology in the decision-making process. The conduct of Hanoi's policy-making during the course of the war reveals a pragmatic adjustment of accepted doctrine, as required to achieve goals. The communist leaders made numerous, serious, costly military mistakes during the war. Those mistakes usually occurred because of faulty estimates of the situation or an inability to evaluate the nature and strength of American reaction to some communist action. These failures on their part can be traced to the influence of their communist ideology and their politico-military philosophy in which they believed whole heartedly. Conversely, having experienced failure, the communists were generally able to reassess their strategy and adopt a different course of action.

Examples of the impact of the constraint of communist ideology upon the Hanoi leadership reach back to the beginning of the conflict. The communists believed they were the wave of the future, and they could not believe that Diem would be able to establish a credible government. Faced with the reality of growing ARVN strengths and GVN internal growth, the Hanoi leadership turned to the combination of political and armed struggle that had served them so well against the French. The communists believed they would be the beneficiaries of the kind of popular support they received in the Viet Minh war. They were not. They believed the Southerners could be organized to overthrow the Saigon government. They seriously miscalculated the kind of support they would receive and after 1964 had to commit increasingly larger numbers of Northerners to maintain their campaign in the South.

Evidence indicates that the communist leaders continued to select their strategies on the basis of their ideological beliefs up until

the failure of the 1968 Tet Offensive.<sup>7/</sup> The failure of the Southern population to join the general uprising and to support the general offensive of the PLAF was a dramatic demonstration of the vast difference between the objective situation in the South and the interpretation of that situation dictated by communist ideology. That failure indicated clearly that the communists were not going to topple the Saigon government by organizing the resentment and class hatred of the South Vietnamese masses. Thereafter, the Hanoi leadership sought to accomplish its objective mainly by the application of North Vietnamese military might, although efforts were made by COSVN to revitalize the PRP and its military arm, the PLAF.<sup>8/</sup>

In launching the 1972 attack upon the ARVN, the communist leadership did not rely on the so-called "southern insurgency" for any significant contribution. The assault was a classic large unit military attack against the ARVN. The communist leaders were ill-prepared for the US response, but they also underestimated the strength and tenacity of the South Vietnamese military. The Hanoi leadership had to change their tactics until the North Vietnamese Army was better armed and when politics would neutralize US power before they could accomplish their military conquest of South Vietnam in 1975. Vietnamese Communist nationalism was the chief component in the Hanoi leadership's commitment to reunification. As such, it was the driving factor that led the communists to ultimate victory. But while nationalism was the driving factor, it was communist ideology and politico-military theory that were applied, often with disastrous results.<sup>9/</sup>

### 3. Military Constraints

#### a. Tactical

The People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) was structured along conventional lines. The first five years of PAVN operations within RVN were characterized by conventional light infantry tactics with a liberal dose of guerrilla warfare. Lacking air support, heavy-weapons support and helicopter mobility, the PAVN were constrained from relying on conventional military operations (Phase Three) to achieve victory. During the US military presence in RVN, several costly, large-scale battles were fought

## THE BDM CORPORATION

but superior US firepower and mobility handed the communists a series of tactical defeats.

The People's Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF) of the National Liberation front consisted of main force units and guerrilla units. The latter included paramilitary, regional-territorial, and local guerrillas.<sup>10/</sup> The main force units included several full divisions and independent regiments and battalions, but like their PAVN counterparts they had limited heavy weapons support. They, too, were constrained from direct, large-scale engagements in the face of superior US firepower and helicopter mobility except when it suited their purpose to fight such engagements.<sup>11/</sup> In the guerrilla area, however, demonstrated their superior foot mobility and capitalized on their knowledge of the terrain and the local situation.

### b. Tactical/Logistical

A combination of political, physical, and organizational factors lengthened the time needed by the DRV to implement a selected strategy. In such a process, at least when implementation of a given strategy depended upon new or additional materiel support from the USSR or PRC, it was probably necessary to obtain the concurrence of either Moscow or Peking with the strategy.<sup>12/</sup> Then appropriate weaponry had to be obtained from the USSR or China, and after the weapons were obtained and training in their use accomplished, they had to be moved to the South over the transportation system developed in the course of the war. Aside from these kinds of materiel problems that slowed the implementation of strategies, the communists also had significant organizational requirements that were time-consuming. Thus, for instance, preparation for the general offensive and general uprising required the careful organization and indoctrination of the forces that would be employed months in advance. These long lead times required to implement selected strategies necessarily constrained North Vietnamese military planners.

D. MAJOR CHANGES IN CONSTRAINTS - CONFLICT ENVIRONMENT

Between the end of World War II and the fall of Saigon 30 years later, there were five distinct periods during which the Lao Dong leadership might have achieved their primary long-range goal: an independent and unified Vietnam under Party control. Each of these opportunities except the last was missed due to a varying mix of external and internal constraints inherent in the changing conflict environment, which consisted of political, psychological, military and geographic elements. In this section, those forces which significantly frustrated or restricted the policies of the Party's central committee in the years between 1956 and 1975 will be discussed.

1. 1954-1956

a. Background and Opportunity

The Geneva Accords called for nation-wide "free" elections in 1956. Ho and the Viet Minh Communists successfully associated themselves with nationalism and anti-colonialism; they appeared almost certain to win any election.<sup>13/</sup> There was a distinct possibility that unification under Lao Dong might be achieved even earlier through the collapse of the weak Bao Dai regime. Actually, the leadership in the North benefited from this enforced respite, since they had more time to consolidate their new "base" and prepare for the expected takeover in the South.

b. External Constraints

Since the French were co-signers of the Accords, the Central Committee expected them to exert diplomatic influence in the enforcement of the agreements. This hope received a setback when the anti-French Ngo Dinh Diem was appointed premier with US support; it was completely dashed in 1955 when he was elected president of the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) and later announced that there would be no elections in 1956.<sup>14/</sup>

The increasing US support, political, military, and economic, for the rival RVN precluded a quick political takeover of the South, and raised considerably the potential costs of a military effort. The 1955

## THE BDM CORPORATION

plebecite granted Diem's government (GVN) a basis for legitimacy and international recognition and support, especially from those nations fearful of communism. The exodus from the North to the South of nearly a million people, the majority of them Catholic, provided the US and GVN with an effective propaganda weapon to employ against the communists. The departure of this group was probably privately endorsed and encouraged by the Lao Dong leadership since it removed a significant number of potential resisters to their programs.15/

To the amazement of nearly every informed observer, Diem brought more than a measure of order and unity out of the confused heterogeneous mix he inherited. As stated earlier, the communist posture in the RVN was much weaker than it was in the North; under heavy pressures from the newly created Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces, the stay-behind cadres became steadily weaker through desertion, capture, and death until they reached their nadir in 1959.16/

### c. Internal Constraints

The inexperience, and too often overzealousness, of many of the communist cadres in the DRV created resentment and even periodic open resistance. This resistance to forced collectivization came to an armed clash in Nghe An, Ho Chi Minh's native province, in 1956; it took a full PAVN division to suppress the uprising at the cost of perhaps 6000 farmers. (This was little noticed in the world due to the closed society of the DRV and the attention accorded the revolt in Hungary.) Extensive war damage, inept administrators, inefficient collectivization, and the loss of about 900,000 rice farmers of the Red River Delta, those who regrouped in the South, created a large shortage of food; a major famine was averted only through a rapid rescue effort by the USSR.

## 2. 1965

### a. The Situation and Opportunity

The exclusion of the peaceful options for reunification plus the decimation of the residual Viet Minh cadre in RVN during the late 1950's resulted in the 1959 Lao Dong decision to reinforce the political struggle with the military arm beginning in that year. The formation in

## THE BDM CORPORATION

1960 of the National Liberation Front (NLF) and of the People's Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF) to carry out the anti-Diem and anti-US struggle in the South committed the Lao Dong Party to the reunification-by-force policy. (Although the tactics and means changed with circumstances, this policy remained constant for 15 years). The increasing successes of the NLF and PLAF in both the political and military fronts in the early 1960s pointed out to keen observers the fragility of the Diem regime. After the United States lost patience with Diem and his brother Nhu over the mishandling of the Buddhist protest movement, the brothers were overthrown and killed by RVNAF leaders. Political chaos followed, seriously degrading GVN's legitimacy as well as its military effort. By the end of 1964, the RVN was losing, on the average, one battalion and one district capital per week. The end was in sight. By the end of the year, three regular PAVN regiments were in RVN or in Laotian base camps opposite the Central Highlands. Ho and Giap wanted to ensure that they would be in a position of strength at the collapse of the GVN.<sup>17/</sup>

### b. External Constraints

The intervention of US ground, air and naval forces in the war closed out, at least temporarily, the possibility of a military victory in the South; it took the Central Committee three years to accept this fact. The widening split between the USSR and the PRC required the DRV to walk a narrow and delicate balance beam in order to ensure the essential military and economic aid.

### c. Internal Constraints

Except for some internal debate among the leadership of the Party about overcoming the US effort, there were no significant restraints on their freedom of action at this time.

## 3. 1968

### a. The Situation and Opportunity

The decision to try to defeat the US forces in battle cost PAVN and PLAF severe casualties. It created a situation where both opponents were employing strategies of attrition. By the end of 1967 the enemy main force units had been pushed back to or across the borders of the



## THE BDM CORPORATION

RVN. There they reinforced, re-equipped and planned for the next round. There was a lengthy and spirited debate between various factions of the leadership about whether to retreat to guerrilla or protracted war, or continue the semi-conventional big battles. The decision resulted in the bold and imaginative Tet Offensive, a simultaneous assault into the heart of the major cities and government towns. Their intent was to bypass major US forces - except for drawing them to the borders in War Zone C and at Khe Sanh - and unravel GVN by creating mass uprisings in the cities and engendering wholesale desertions from RVNAF.<sup>18/</sup> Had these events come to pass, the US would have been in an untenable position.

### b. External Constraints

As a result of the Tet debacle most of the enemy leadership, reluctantly, had come to realize that the firepower and air mobility of the US military made it too costly, if not impossible, to overcome in direct battle; the war would have to be won, if at all, in Washington as the earlier French-Viet Minh war had been won in Paris.

The ever-expanding scope of the war made Hanoi increasingly dependent on outside military and economic aid. Any major offensive or increase in force structure required the blessings of both Moscow and Peking well in advance if the essential materiel were to arrive in time. The need to placate both of these rival supporters became all-important and more difficult.

The larger the units employed and the greater the supplies needed, the more reliable the safe passage needed to be to the South. This necessity demanded that the eastern portions of Laos and Cambodia be firmly under PAVN control, which consumed a large number of men.

The air war over the DRV also tied up vast amounts of human and material resources for air defense, reconstruction, and resupply. (Ironically, this air campaign assisted the Lao Dong Party in unifying their people and in mobilizing women.) Significant reserves had to be retained in the DRV to counter possible airborne and amphibious landings.<sup>19/</sup>

## THE BDM CORPORATION

The 1967 elections in the RVN had provided the government much needed stability and a sense of legitimacy, which was lacking since the overthrow of Diem. Additionally, the intervention of large and powerful US forces provided RVNAF with the opportunity to regroup and retrain. (Apparently the full extent of these two turnabouts was not fully appreciated in Hanoi.)

The rugged terrain and the climate (two opposing monsoons) in Indochina became an even greater impediment as the scale and nature of the fighting escalated. Also, the US Navy and the expanding VNN had practically sealed off the coast of RVN to infiltration. These factors meant that more men, time, and effort had to be expended to extend and improve the Ho Chi Minh Trail(s).

### c. Internal Constraints

The attrition of men in the South and the visible destruction in the DRV, though they aided in mobilizing the people of the North, did create serious morale and efficiency problems. The absolutely essential "secure base" in the North was endangered, seriously.

The total demands for manpower--at home, on the trail, and in the South--were steadily climbing. Many of the replacements sent to the South were too young or too old and ill-trained. Although they never reached the bottom of their manpower pool, they had to strain extremely hard to meet the minimum needs of all fronts.

A combination of commitment to communist ideology and/or outright false reporting from their leaders in the South led Giap and the Central Committee to make serious errors in their political and military planning for the 1968 offensives. The general uprising never materialized.

## 4. 1972

### a. Situation and Opportunity

Despite their heavy losses, the enemy had won major psychological victory in Washington as a result of the Tet Offensive. The crucial attrition suffered in the ranks of the NLF/PLAF, however, constrained the communists from any future attempts to achieve a general uprising. Without an effective Southern apparatus, an uprising was no longer possible. New strategies seemed necessary.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

The unilateral halt of bombings, the plea for negotiations, and the withdrawal of President Johnson from the 1968 election gave the enemy new life and confidence. The withdrawal of US forces and the emphasis on Vietnamization and Pacification resulted in a major dilemma for the enemy. On the one hand, it was obvious that the US was backing out of the war, irrevocably, and that before too long it would be the DRV against only the RVN. But conversely, both the NLF and the PLAF were sorely wounded and PAVN was in no condition to render them sufficient aid to reverse the downward trend.

The period from 1969 through the first quarter of 1972 was the "golden days" of the RVN. Its power and confidence grew as more territory and more people than ever were brought under governmental control; the large number of refugees who fled the countryside for the cities further reduced the recruiting base of the NLF/PLAF.

The Central Committee debated painful alternatives: return to guerrilla war or continue to expand the big unit war. The decision was for a practical compromise: interim "super guerrilla" war (widespread attack by elite sappers and standoff mortar and rocket attacks to create uncertainty, casualties, and headlines), and the organization, equipping, and training of larger and more modern conventional units. The former mode provided time for the latter to develop without surrendering the overall initiative to their opponents, and at least cost. The on-again-off-again negotiations with the US also bought time and propaganda gains.

In 1971 the enemy decided that they would have to act decisively soon or their strength in RVN would be totally neutralized. Yet they also had hope, since the US strength in RVN was declining rapidly, especially in ground forces who were committed primarily to a self-defense role. The rough handling they gave the RVNAF during their attack into Laos (Lam Son 719) gave them additional confidence.

Internationally, the odds appeared to be on their side. Although Vietnamization and the drastic reduction in US casualties had temporarily defused the antiwar movement in the US, the violent reaction to the 1970 incursion into Cambodia lent them hope that President Nixon's

## THE BDM CORPORATION

options were few. Above all, their allies, especially the USSR, had supplied them with huge quantities of modern arms - tanks, long-range artillery, and low-level antiaircraft missiles.

On balance, the "Easter offensive" of 1972 appeared to be the instrument by which they could reverse the trends of both Vietnamization and Pacification.

### b. External Constraints

The probably unexpected violent reaction of the USG to this overt attack eventually defeated it. The South Vietnamese, supported by US air strikes, quickly resupplied in equipment and munitions by the US to replace combat losses, and glued together by the US advisory network, first stopped and then forced the enemy back. Again the communist leaders had miscalculated.

Their major supporters, the USSR and the PRC, for their separate reasons, wanted better relations with the US--a situation which was exploited by Nixon and Kissinger.<sup>20/</sup> The Soviets and Chinese failed to support the DRV strongly when it was faced with the mining of its harbors and the "Christmas blitz" on Hanoi and Haiphong. The two major communist powers may have helped to convince the DRV to accept the ceasefire in January 1973.

The attack on their bases in Cambodia, in 1970, and the closing of the port of Sihanoukville by Lon Nol seriously restricted DRV capabilities in Cochinchina. The 1971 attacks in the Laotian panhandle also set them back temporarily, even though they eventually defeated the RVNAF forces.

### c. Internal Constraints

The strain of almost three decades of war was telling on the people and apparently even on their leadership. The false hopes of the extended peace talks compounded by the mining of Haiphong and B-52 strikes placed them in a very isolated and vulnerable position. By the end of 1972 their freedom of action was severely reduced.

### 5. 1973-1975 (final reversal)

During this period the external constraints on the DRV were removed one by one. Increasingly constrained by Congress and then consumed

## THE BDM CORPORATION

by the Watergate crisis, the Nixon Administration was in no position to live up to the agreements to SVN. As both economic and military aid was slashed year by year, the RVNAF lost both capability and morale. The inflation, inflamed by the 1973 oil embargo, further depleted the resources available to the RVN. And "in place" ceasefire arrangements insured that South Vietnam would be exposed, both internally and externally, on all flanks.

On the other hand, supplies and arms continued to pour into the now reopened ports of the DRV. The balance of forces had finally shifted decisively in favor of the communists. The capture of Phuoc Long Province, in late 1974, proved to the Central Committee that the US would not and could not intervene in time or with sufficient strength to redress the balance. During this period the Ho Chi Minh Trails and pipelines were expanded vastly in length and capability; they were even built through the western reaches of RVN.

The final campaign consumed only 55 days. Errors in judgment by President Thieu and some of his senior military commanders merely accelerated the timing of, but did not preordain, the end result. Vietnamization came too late and too fast.<sup>21/</sup> Without massive US support, the South Vietnamese were incapable of standing up to the stronger, more experienced, and cohesive enemy.

After overcoming formidable constraints over the years, the Lao Dong Party eventually achieved their ultimate objective relatively cheaply.

### E. SUMMARY

In view of the serious constraints discussed in this chapter, the question arises, why did Hanoi and the NLF not succumb to US pressures? The answer to this question is complex. But in part it can be found in Hanoi's perspective of the Vietnam War, which was firmly shaped by a profound sense of history and destiny. The leadership of North Vietnam believed that it was waging a war of global revolutionary significance, and its policies and actions were firmly grounded on its own past experiences

## THE BDM CORPORATION

in successfully resisting attempted domination by the Chinese, the Japanese, and the French. The strong nationalist character and the strong will of the leadership to triumph over all opponents, served to alleviate the material constraints which operated against them. These were major reasons why Hanoi was not as vulnerable to military pressure as some in the United States apparently expected. Moreover, Hanoi believed that the inherent social, moral and political contradictions of the United States were unchangeable and would be fatal, and that the superior military hardware and technology of the US could be countered over a period of time. They knew their enemy.

The North Vietnamese and their cadres in the National Liberation Front faced serious constraints - militarily, economically, industrially, and agriculturally. But --- they were fighting a total war; their enemies were conducting a limited war which was further constrained by self-imposed injunctions. Those injunctions prohibited a ground invasion of the North or any action that might bring in the Chinese. US decision makers failed to perceive and exploit the intensity of the PRC-USSR split until late in the war. Conversely, the DRV successfully exploited both of its major supporters throughout hostilities despite that split.

The United States presence in Vietnam gave credence to the North Vietnamese and NLF claims that the Vietnam War was being fought justly for freedom from foreign influence and domination. This increased credibility of the justice of their cause clearly had a positive effect on the discipline and morale of the "people's armies." Over time it also had a corrosive effect on US public support for the war, which eventually led to the withdrawal of United States forces from Vietnam, thereby eliminating a major constraint on North Vietnamese and NLF policy and actions. It seems quite clear that the massive US presence in Vietnam was self-defeating, over the long term. And this is precisely what the North Vietnamese leaders argued when they commented on their enemy's "inherent contradictions."

Major constraints on Hanoi's policies and actions appear to have attracted far less attention in the United States, especially in the

## THE BDM CORPORATION

earlier periods of the Vietnam conflict, than the communist character of the leaderships of North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front. The US generally considered the political and military struggle in South Vietnam to be an extension of Soviet and Chinese Communist expansionism, driven by policies formulated in Moscow and Peking. Major constraints which were comparatively neglected included: insufficient food in North Vietnam to feed its growing population, a relatively undeveloped industrial base for economic growth in North Vietnam, Party disunity and general disorganization within the Southern resistance movement, Vietnamese geographical regionalism and ethnic separatism, and elements of the political and military environment of South Vietnam which constrained the North Vietnamese and NLF leaderships in their attempts to gain legitimate political control in the South. In retrospect, these constraints appear to have been of major practical importance to the leaders of North Vietnam and the NLF in their formulation and implementation of policy. If the United States had clearly understood these constraints, it might have adopted alternatives to its political, economic and military strategies in Vietnam. For example, it might have developed realistic Pacification/Vietnamization programs in South Vietnam at an early stage of the conflict. Or, it might have chosen to be an interested, but nonparticipating observer in Vietnam.

While the commitment of the Hanoi leadership to its goal of reunifying Vietnam under Lao Dong leadership was the major factor that kept the communists in the war, the constraints reviewed in this chapter severely restricted the selection of strategies and the timing for achieving that purpose. By the end of 1972 the United States and the South Vietnamese government had exploited the communist constraints through combinations of military, political, and diplomatic efforts so that the Hanoi leadership was forced to return to the peace table in Paris. For reasons that will be examined in Volumes III and IV of this study, the pressures that had been brought to bear on the communists were subsequently relaxed, and the Hanoi leadership was able to begin again formulating a strategy for conquering the South.

F. SUMMARY ANALYSIS AND INSIGHTS

The Vietnamese Communists were able to overcome most of the significant domestic and international constraints on their activities through their strong leadership, their dedicated commitment to ultimate victory, and the flexibility they demonstrated in their efforts to achieve that victory. The DRV leadership was a relatively homogeneous entity. Differences of opinion between members of the Central Committee (such as between Truong Chinh and Vo Nguyen Giap) were resolved within the Central Committee. A united front was presented to the people of North Vietnam and to the outside world. In this context, the Politburo was not constrained by a divisive public image. The flexibility and durability shown by the members of the Central Committee were remarkable.

The Vietnamese Communists were strongly aware of the constraints on their actions, and they showed themselves capable of reviewing and altering both strategies and tactics in order to reach their ultimate objective. Nor were DRV leaders constrained by ingrained Vietnamese traditionalism; rather, they used the spirit of nationalism, anticolonialism, and defense of the homeland against foreign enemies to neutralize those traditions and impose their population control program (in the guise of land reform) and to mobilize their political, military, agricultural, and industrial entities.

The Vietnamese Communists showed themselves to be keenly aware of the constraints on US and South Vietnamese actions and they attempted to manipulate those factors to obtain relative advantages on the battlefield, in the war for the international public opinion, and at the peace table. In this context they were more successful in the political arena than on the battlefield while US forces were in-country. Political constraints were less restricting than were the US-imposed military constraints.

The massive and essentially unconstrained bombing of North Vietnam in May-October and again in December, 1972, brought the DRV leaders to the peace table and was instrumental in enabling the US to achieve its principal contemporary goals of recovering US POWs and completing its



## THE BDM CORPORATION

uncontested military withdrawal from South Vietnam; that withdrawal ultimately removed the single most important constraint which had prevented a communist military victory from 1965 to 1973.

After the 1973 "ceasefire" the constraints on the DRV's freedom of action were minimal. Time was the principal constraint; the DRV leaders needed a respite during which they could retrain, rebuild, and re-equip their forces with more modern weapons, while simultaneously preparing road and POL pipeline networks to support the final offensive which, to them, was foreordained. Constraints on the GVN and RVNAF multiplied in every important respect during this period.

### G. LESSONS

All participants in a sustained political-military struggle are faced with a varying mix of internal and external constraints. Successful politicians/strategists develop ways and means to minimize or circumvent the restrictions on their freedom of action while exacerbating and exploiting those facing their opponent(s).

Clever and dedicated leaders do not impose constraints on themselves that are likely to prevent them from achieving the goals they have established. If the goal is worth achieving, all significant constraints must be overcome, neutralized, or circumvented.

CHAPTER 7 ENDNOTES

1. The enduring aspiration of the North Vietnamese leadership for unification of Vietnam and hegemony over Laos and Cambodia. According to Douglas Pike, DRV Attitude Toward Cambodia: Special Study, from the History of The Vietnam War on Microfilm (Personal Library of Douglas Pike, file DRV, Subj: FR, Date 3/74, subcategory CAMB) March 1974, in 1974 speculation among East European diplomats in Hanoi suggested that Hanoi would have preferred a "Gaullist" solution for Laos and Cambodia which would have left the two, together with South Vietnam, under the domination of Hanoi's Lao Dong Party. But in the 1950's, consolidation of The North or "Rear" held the first priority.
2. There is ample evidence that The NLF included some noncommunist groups. Clearly, as parts of the Front, those groups supported the overthrow of Diem and successor GVN regimes and sought a share in the political power in South Vietnam. The communist elements in the NLF exploited the united-front aspect of the organization, but they took their orders from the Lao Dong Party in Hanoi via the PRP, the Central Committee of which was also the Central Committee of COSVN. See Albert E. Palmerlee "The Central Office of South Viet-Nam" Vietnam Documents and Research Notes, Vietnam Document No. 40, August 1968.
3. These options were deduced by BDM analysts from the documentation used in the research for this chapter.
4. Harvey Smith et.al., Area Handbook for South Vietnam (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1967), pp. 59-62. During President Diem's crack down on the militant sects, many Hoa Hao and Cao Dai joined the communist side in RVN, but many rallied to the GVN after Diem's death. Contrary to the Area Handbook's claim that the Montagnards were "off limits" to communist recruiters, a substantial number of mountain people in the Central Highlands served in Montagnard VC units, according to Ha Jimmy, a Montagnard Chief, who was interviewed in March 1976. Data on that interview provided by a former member of The staff of the House Select Committee on Missing Persons in Southeast Asia who conducted that interview. Ha Jimmy stated that two of his Montagnard friends were generals in the VC and commanded large-sized Montagnard units.

For a discussion of the minorities in North Vietnam see Bernard B. Fall, The Two Viet-Nam's (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publisher, Second Revised Edition, 1967), p. 112. Fall states, "It must be considered one of the Viet-Minh's signal achievements that it succeeded in at least partly winning over the mountain tribes of Viet-Nam: without the successful wooing of those tribes, Ho and his staff would sooner or later have been betrayed to the French."

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Ho Chi Minh recognized very early that special measures were required in dealing with the mountain tribes. Within a year after the Viet Minh victory over the French, Ho announced the establishment of the Thai-Meo Autonomous Region. See Ho's "Letter to the Compatriots in the Thai-Meo Autonomous Region" May 7, 1955. Ho Chi Minh On Revolution. Selected writings, 1920-66. Ed. and introduction by Bernard B. Fall (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1967), pp. 287-289.

5. Douglas Pike, War, Peace and The Viet Cong, (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1969), p. 65.
6. Douglas Pike, "North Vietnam in the Year 1972." Asian Survey 13 (January 1973), p. 52.
7. The Tet '68 offensive was a failure militarily, but clearly the psychological victory achieved in the US by the communists, however inadvertent that victory might have been, more than compensated for their over-optimism in anticipating a general uprising. In a COSVN document dated January 5, 1968, the description of the friendly (NLF) situation was described in these terms: "The Central Headquarters concludes that the time has come for a direct revolution, and that the opportunity for a general offensive and general uprising is within reach." From "Final Phase of the Revolution at Hand" p. 11.
8. The Ninth Conference of COSVN in July 1969 pointed out that its military and political forces had not fulfilled all the expectations that it had placed upon them. COSVN issued instructions for holding Party elections at district and province level and for improving discipline and control. DOS Historian Viet Nam Documents and Research Notes, "The PRPSVN-Part II - CISVN'S 1969-1970 Attempt to Revitalize the PRP." Document No. 102, Part II.
9. In the French-Viet Minh war General Vo Nguyen Giap miscalculated badly in 1951 when he moved into Phase Three, conventional warfare. In the five-month struggle that began in January, Giap lost a major part of three divisions to newly arrived French Commander in Chief Jean de Lattre de Tassigny. The communist forces retreated to Phase Two of Mao's precepts, guerrilla warfare. For a more complete description of these events see Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, pp. 113-118. In the second Indochina War, infiltration by PAVN units into RVN gave the US an additional reason to introduce ground combat forces, an eventuality that the DRV would have preferred to avoid. In 1968 the hoped-for general uprising did not occur, and the results were disastrous for the PLAF. In 1972 their Easter Offensive cost the DRV heavily when they unexpectedly encountered a violent reaction by US air power.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

10. Douglas Pike, interview on 20 November 1978 at the BDM Corporation.
11. USAID official John Paul Vann, generally recognized as an authority on operations in South Vietnam (particularly in Military Regions III and IV) stated in 1967 that the communists sometimes fought large-unit battles for the express purpose of offering sufficient bait to induce the US command to continue to operate in battalion and larger size formations. That tactic prevented the US forces from breaking down into small units and neutralizing or destroying the insurgents by expanding such programs as the Marine Combined Action Platoons and Army Mobile Advisory Teams. Presentation by John Paul Vann on 27 November 1967 at a seminar at the University of Denver, Graduate School of International Studies. The presentation was hosted by Professor Vincent Davis who made the tape recording available to BDM for purposes of this study.
12. Two authors provide some insights in this area although neither claims that Soviet or Chinese concurrence with a strategic decision was essential. See Janos Radvanyi, Delusion and Reality (South Bend, Ind.: Gateway Editions, Ltd., 1978), pp. 40, 158-159; and Douglas S. Blaufarb, The Counterinsurgency Era (New York: The Free Press, 1977), pp. 10-11.
13. The "Unilateral Declaration by the United States at the Closing Session of the Geneva Conference, July 21, 1954" included the following statement:

In the case of nations now divided against their will, we shall continue to seek to achieve unity through free elections supervised by the United Nations to insure that they are conducted fairly.

That Unilateral Declaration was published in Department of State Press Release No. 394 of July 21, 1954.

The population of North Vietnam was about two million persons larger than that of the South at that time, and the Northerners constituted a more homogeneous society. Ho Chi Minh was a heroic figure to a majority of Vietnamese, North and South. These factors made it abundantly clear that in any nation-wide election, Ho Chi Minh was a "shoo-in". President Eisenhower acknowledged that, "...possibly 80 percent of the population would have voted for the Communist Ho Chi Minh as their leader rather than Chief of State Bao Dai." Dwight D. Eisenhower Mandate For Change (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1963), p. 372.
14. On July 16, 1955 Diem made a radio broadcast and pointed out that, "We did not sign the Geneva Agreements." He stated that he would not consider any Viet Minh proposals unless proof were given that the Viet Minh put national interests above those of communism. For a discussion of these events see The Pentagon Papers, Senator Gravel Edition, Volume I (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), pp. 286-289.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

15. The 1979 example of the "boat people", the unfortunate Chinese and other minorities including some anticommunist Vietnamese who are fleeing Vietnam at considerable risk of life and substantial financial sacrifice (including bribes) provides additional evidence that the Vietnamese Communist leaders prefer to rid themselves of dissidents by expulsion. It saves a major "blood bath" and scarce resources.
16. There is some question concerning precisely when the staybehind cadres were at their lowest point. P. J. Honey (cited in Gravel, The Pentagon Papers p. 325) found in 1958 that one could travel anywhere in South Vietnam without any risk, but a year later he detected dangerous unease in the countryside. In any event, the precarious situation in which the Southern cadres found themselves by 1958 prompted the DRV to begin sending regroupees to the South beginning in 1959.
17. CINCPAC and COMUSMACV Report on the War in Vietnam (As of 30 June 1968) Sec. II, by General W. C. Westmoreland, p. 95 reports that at least the 95th, 32d, and 101st North Vietnamese regiments were believed in December 1964 to have deployed South.
18. Mass uprisings did not occur, nor did mass desertions. One of the authorities on the 1968 Tet Offensive commented that the communist forces in South Vietnam were unable to recruit new members in the South after Tet because the people in RVN were deeply affronted by many aspects of that offensive and particularly by the vicious massacre at Hue. The Hue incident had a profound effect on noncommunists. Peter Braestrup (author of The Big Story) comment at the BDM Senior Review Panel discussion on Volume I of this study, 13 February 1979, tape 3. At the same discussion, Ambassador William Colby pointed out that the Party apparatus in the South atrophied in the early 1970's after Tet.
19. This constraint dissolved with the departure of American troops and air forces, and in the 1975 offensive the DRV was able to commit virtually its entire army to the offensive without fear of the North being invaded.
20. Leslie H. Gelb with Richard K. Betts The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1979), p. 355-357, provides a convincing analysis of how President Nixon exploited the situation.
21. During the early phases of the Vietnam War the US took most of the initiative. When the Nixon administration came to power in 1969, the US was seeking ways to assuage the American public while building up RVNAF and drawing down US military forces in RVN. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird designated the new strategy "Vietnamization".

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Expounding the new doctrine in a speech "The Nixon Doctrine: From Potential Despair to New Opportunities," Laird stated: From a standpoint of American defense policy, a real tragedy of Vietnam is that Vietnamization was not started much earlier than 1969..." Several Vietnamese generals contend, with considerable justification, that Vietnamization was "implemented in haste," "belatedly," and "the US began to rush the Vietnamization process." "By far the widest loophole of the Vietnamization program was its failure to provide the RVN with enough time for an overall improvement." Major General Hguyen Duy Hinh, Vietnamization and the Cease-fire. Indochina Refugee Authored Monograph Program. Prepared for Department of the Army, Office of The Chief of Military History, by General Research Corp. of McLean, VA. 15 September 1976, pp. 183 and 189. Another monograph in this generally excellent series, Lt. Gen. Ngo Quang Truong, RVNAF and US Operational and Cooperation and Coordination (McLean, Va: General Research Corp., 1976) pp. 172 and 181 states that valuable time was lost before US attention focused on preparing the Vietnamese to save their own houses. The author wonders what could have been done had Vietnamization been initiated at the beginning. In Stephen T. Hosmer, Konrad Kellen, Brian M. Jenkins, The Fall of South Vietnam: Statements by Vietnamese Military and Civilian Leaders, a report prepared for Historian, Office of the Secretary of Defense (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 1978), pp. 9, 47, and 72 the subject of Vietnamization is addressed; General William C. Westmoreland A Soldier Reports (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1976) pp. 235 and 390 states that Defense Secretaries McNamara and Clifford never fully approved his goal of self-contained ARVN forces, and he describes the shortcomings of ARVN, despite Vietnamization, at the outset of the 1971 Lam Son 719 operation.

At least one senior American commander gives good marks to Vietnamization. Admiral U.S. Grant Sharp Strategy for Defeat (San Rafael, Ca.: President Press, 1978), pp. 246, 261. It should be remembered that Admiral Sharp was based in Hawaii and while he recognized some of the benefits of Vietnamization he lacked the vantage point of the soldier on the ground. A number of BDM analysts who served in RVN during the later days describe Operation Enhance and Operation Enhance Plus as forced-feeding operations that pumped into RVN vastly greater quantities of weapons and equipment than RVNAF was capable of using or absorbing. In many instances they lacked the skilled, technically trained personnel that were urgently needed.

Finally, Tran Van Don Our Endless War (San Rafael, Ca.: Presidio Press, 1978), pp. 157-158 describes the innundation with American material and adds, "It was a question of too much, too late."

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Braestrup, Peter. Editor, Wilson Quarterly. Former Saigon Bureau Chief for the Washington Post and author of Big Story.

Colby, William E., LLB. Former Ambassador and Deputy to COMUSMACV for CORDS, and former Director of Central Intelligence.

Davis, Vincent, Dr. Professor and Director of the Patterson School of Diplomacy and International Commerce, University of Kentucky.

Greene, Fred, Dr. Professor, Williams College. Former Director, Office of Research for East Asian Affairs, Department of State.

Hallowell, John H., Dr. James B. Duke Professor of Political Science, Duke University.

Hughes, Thomas L., LLD. President of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Former Director for Intelligence and Research, US Department of State with rank of Assistant Secretary of State.

Johnson, U. Alexis. Chairman of the Senior Review Panel. Career Ambassador. Former Under Secretary of State and former Ambassador to Czechoslovakia, Thailand, and Japan, and (in 1964-65) Deputy Ambassador to Maxwell Taylor in the Republic of Vietnam.

Sapin, Burton M., Dr. Dean, School of Public and International Affairs, George Washington University. Former Foreign Service Officer.

Sigur, Gaston, Dr. Director, Institute of Sino-Soviet Studies, George Washington University.

Thompson, Kenneth W., Dr. Director, White Burkett Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia.

Vogt, John W., General. USAF (Ret.). Formerly J-3 and Director, Joint Staff and DEPCOMUSMACV and Commander, 7th Air Force.

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- Item 65. Translation of a notebook belonging to a COSVN cadre captured by elements of the US 101st Airborne Division in January 1967. Notes based on speech given by late North Vietnamese Senior General Nguyen Chi Thanh, head of COSVN, 1965-1967.
- Item 66. Translation of a document captured by elements of III Marine Amphibious Force on July 20, 1966.
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## GLOSSARY

Alliance	Full Title - The Alliance of National and Democratic Peace forces of Viet-Nam. A front organization designed to unite communist and non-communist forces in the political struggle in South Vietnam. Specifically appealed to intellectuals in urban areas.
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam, under command of the Saigon government.
Binh Trám	Equivalent to a logistics regiment headquarters
Binh Van	"Action against the enemy troops." This was a program of the National Liberation Front to degrade and demoralize the enemy's armed forces - the troop proselyting program.
Cao Dai & Hoa Hao	Organized religious sects involved in the political movement (struggle) in South Vietnam, armed by French to resist Viet Minh.
COSVN	Central Office for South Vietnam. The top command post for all communist political and military activities in the southern half of South Vietnam. Southern branch of the Lao Dong Party. Through interlocking organization and concurrent assignments, COSVN members directed or guided the PRP, NLF, and PLAF.
DLD	Dang Lao Dong. The Workers' Party or Communist Party in North Vietnam. Often referred to as the Lao-Dong Party, it was formed on March 31, 1951 and eventually became the primary political party in North Vietnam.
DRVN (DRV)	Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Often abbreviated DRV. Proclaimed as the official government of North Vietnam by Ho Chi Minh on September 2, 1945.
GDR	German Democratic Republic (East Germany).
GVN	Government of (South) Vietnam in Saigon.
Dan Van	Literally translates to "action among the people." This program originated with the Viet Minh and was directed toward gaining popular support from the general population. During NLF days, the program was redefined and limited to the "liberated areas."
Dich Van	Literally translates to "action among the enemy." This program originated during the Viet Minh days and was originally directed against the enemy's military and civilian



## THE BDM CORPORATION

administration. As an NLF program, it was designed to gain popular support among the rural population in GVN-controlled areas.

FWMAF	Free World Military Assistance Forces.
ICC	International Control Commission. The international organization established for the supervision of the 1954 Geneva Agreements in Indochina. Also known as ICSC - The International Control and Surveillance Commission.
ICP	Indochinese Communist Party. Formed in January, 1930 by Ho Chi Minh, it was dissolved on November 11, 1945 and replaced by the Lien Viet (see below).
Lien Viet	Full title - Mat-tran Lien Viet Quoc Dan Viet-Nam. United Vietnamese Nationalist Front organization formed on May 27, 1946 which became the political organizational structure for the Viet-Minh. It was considered a popular (nationalist) front party in North Vietnam and eventually outlived its usefulness as an organizational vehicle for the North Vietnamese communists.
NLF (NLF)	National Liberation Front of South Vietnam. Often abbreviated as NLF. This was the communist front organization in South Vietnam. Similar in structure to the North Vietnamese government (DRV), it had a central committee, a presidium or politburo and a secretariat with organizational elements running down to the village level.
NVA	A common but imprecise term used in many official US documents to identify the North Vietnamese Army. Generally referred to in this volume by its official title, the PAVN.
PAVN	People's Army of Vietnam. This term refers to North Vietnamese army units, including those regular North Vietnamese units deployed to RVN.
PLAF	People's Liberation Armed Forces, also called the Liberation Army. The PLAF consists of two elements: the Full Military Force or the Main Force and the Para-Military Force or the guerrilla force. Initially indigenous Southerners, but increasingly comprised of PAVN fillers as the war continued.
POL	Petroleum, Oil and Lubricants.
PRC	People's Republic of China.

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PRGRSV (PRG)	Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam, often abbreviated PRG. Established on June 10, 1969 as a means to challenge the legitimacy of the Saigon Government and provide a political entity to claim a share of any coalition government that might eventuate (temporarily).
PRP	People's Revolutionary Party. Formed on January 1, 1962, the PRP was the Communist Party of South Vietnam.
PSY-WAR	Psychological Warfare.
RVN	Republic of (South) Vietnam.
Tet	Vietnamese holiday, the lunar new year.
USG	US Government
Viet-Cong(VC)	Term used by the US to describe Communist forces in Vietnam. Although imprecise, it is in almost universal use.
Viet-Minh	Formal title - Viet-Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi or Revolutionary League for the Independence of Vietnam. Formed on May 19, 1941 at the initiative of the ICP to develop a "national front" policy.
VNQDD	Vietnam Quoc Dan Dong or Vietnamese Nationalist Party. Early nationalist noncommunist political party eventually supplanted by the ICP.
VPA	Vietnamese People's Army. In some translations of some official DRV documents the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) is referred to as the VPA.



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
US ARMY WAR COLLEGE  
STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE  
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF

AWCI

9 March 1981

SUBJECT: Declassification of the BDM Study, "The Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam"

Defense Technical Information Center  
ATTN: Ms. Betty Weatherholtz  
Cameron Station  
Alexandria, VA 22314

1. Your organization was on the distribution list for the BDM study, "The Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam." The study was assigned AD numbers R048632L through 641L.
2. In December 1980, the Army War College Security Office notified all recipients of the study by telephone that it contained classified information and should be secured.
3. BDM now has revised the appropriate pages of the study to delete all classified information and has conformed to all other requirements required by the clearance review.
4. A revised copy of the study which is unclassified and approved for public release is inclosed. DTIC Form 50's are inclosed for assignment of new AD numbers.

Incls  
as

  
ANDREW C. REMSON, JR.

Colonel, CE  
Director, Strategic Studies Institute



7915 Jones Branch Drive  
McLean, Virginia 22102  
Phone (703) 821-5000

February 15, 1980

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A STUDY OF STRATEGIC LESSONS  
LEARNED IN VIETNAM.  
VOLUME III,  
US FOREIGN POLICY AND VIETNAM 1945-1975.

This draft report is submitted to DAMO-SSP.

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# THE BDM CORPORATION

## FOREWORD

This Study is a final draft submitted to DAMO-SSP in accordance with the provisions of Contract No. DAAG 39-78-C-0120.

The task is to identify and analyze lessons that should be learned from three decades of US involvement in Vietnam. This is Volume III of the Study.

Volume I	The Enemy
Volume II	South Vietnam
Volume III	US Foreign Policy and Vietnam 1945-1975
Volume IV	US Domestic Factors Influencing Vietnam War Policy Making
Volume V	Planning the War
Volume VI	Conduct of the War
Volume VII	The Soldier
Volume VIII	The Results of the War

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Justification	
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The views of the authors do not purport to reflect the positions of the Department of the Army or the Department of Defense.

PREFACE

A. PERSPECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This volume, "US Foreign Policy and Vietnam, 1945-1975," is the third of an eight-volume study entitled A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam undertaken by the BDM Corporation under contract to the US Army. This comprehensive research effort is aimed at identifying lessons which US military leaders and US civilian policy makers should have learned or should now be learning from the US experience in Vietnam.

Volume I of this study, an examination of the enemy, includes discussions of the DRV leadership and party organization, Communist Vietnamese goals and strategies, and internal and external channels of support established to aid the North's war effort. Volume II focuses on the Republic of Vietnam, the country's societal characteristics and problems, its government, and its armed forces. Volume IV explores the US domestic scene, including its political and economic components, the role of the media during the Vietnam conflict, and the extent of domestic support for the war. Volume V concentrates on the actual planning of the US war effort, examining various aspects of this effort, including contingency planning, the Pacification and Vietnamization programs, and the negotiation process. Volume VI, "Fighting the War," includes discussions of US intelligence, logistics, and advisory efforts; US counterinsurgency programs; and ground, air, naval, and unconventional operations. Volume VII examines the US soldier, including the war's psychological effects on the soldier; alcohol, drug abuse, and race relations in the US military; and leadership and personnel relations in the US armed forces. Finally, Volume VIII discusses, in broad terms, the results of the war for the United States in terms of domestic, foreign, and military policies.

This eight-volume study effort is analytical, not historical in nature. Its focus is primarily military in orientation. The purpose of the entire eight volumes is not a retelling of the Vietnam conflict, but a

drawing of lessons and insights of value to present and future US policy makers, both civilian and military.

3. METHODOLOGY AND PURPOSE OF VOLUME III, "FOREIGN POLICY AND VIETNAM, 1945-1975"

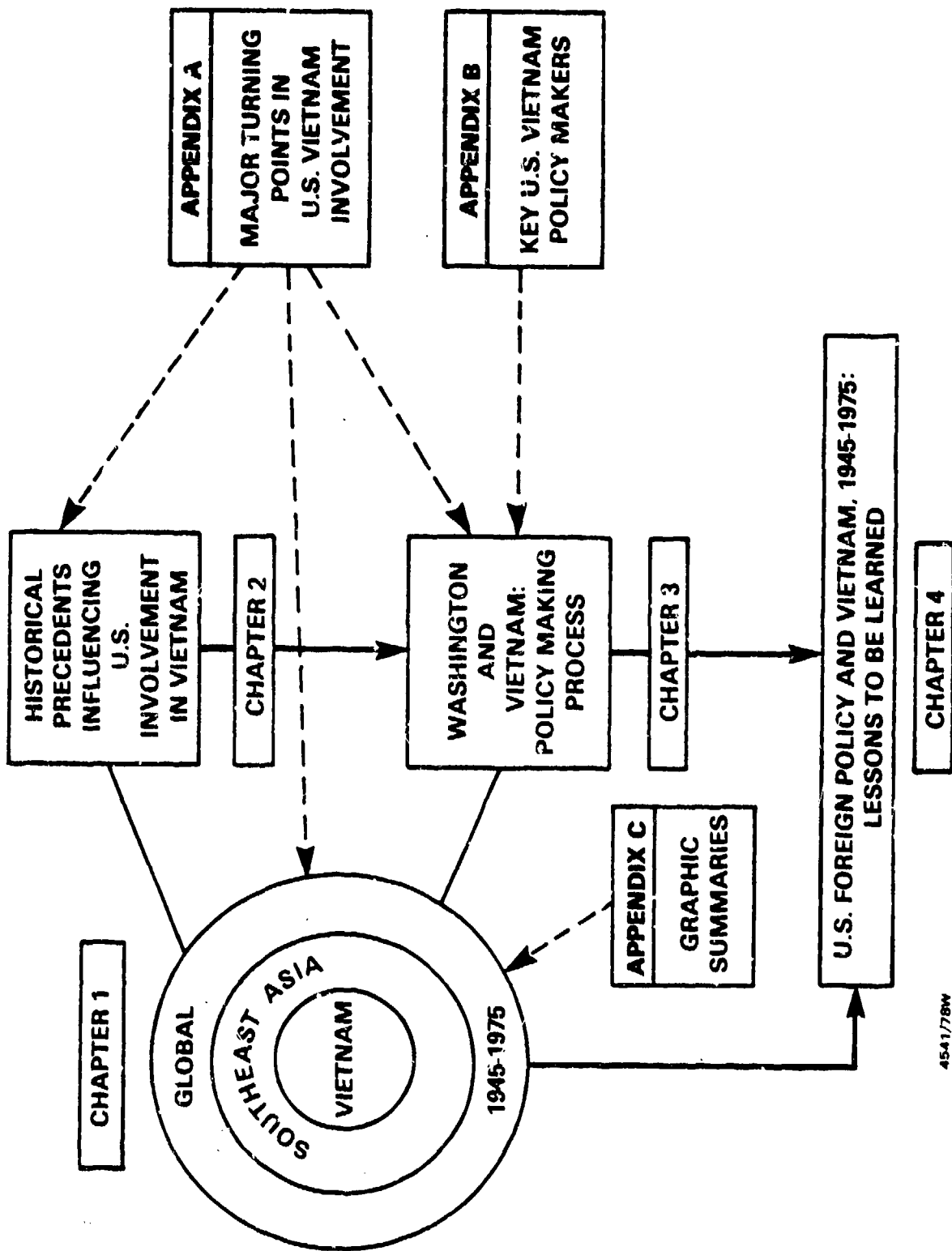
1. Methodology

This volume, entitled "US Foreign Policy and Vietnam, 1945-1975," assesses the United States' involvement in Vietnam by examining the global context in which this involvement occurred, the major historical precedents influencing US involvement, and the US national-level policy process which shaped this involvement. This volume and Volume IV, "US Domestic Factors Influencing Vietnam War Policy Making," serve together as a joint research effort; both US domestic and foreign policies influenced the nature and scope of US military involvement in Vietnam and it would be detrimental to segregate these concerns into mutually exclusive efforts. The information in these volumes should, therefore, be considered together in order to gain an appreciation of the full constraints and concerns which influenced US policy makers determining US policy for Vietnam.

Volume III is divided into four chapters. Figure III-1 provides an overview summarizing the interrelationship of the four chapters and volume appendices and the methodology employed to derive lessons and insights regarding US foreign policy for Vietnam. The four chapters and the volume appendices serve together as an integrated and unified study effort. Each chapter, in succession, provides background information for the next, culminating in the final chapter, "US Foreign Policy and Vietnam, 1945-1975: Lessons to Be Learned." The appendices serve as supplementary support data for the reader. (See Figure III-1 for the relationship of the appendices to the rest of Volume III.)

2. Purpose

Chapter 1 illustrates US global policy during the 1945-1975 period and relates this policy to US policies for Southeast Asia in general, and for Vietnam specifically. Chapter 2 discusses a number of



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Figure III-1. Summary of Volume III Methodology: Interrelationship of Chapters and Related Appendices



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historical precedents and perceptions expressed as catchwords such as the "loss of China" or "appeasement at Munich," which served to justify or constrain US policy making for Vietnam. Chapter 3 assesses the US Vietnam policy-making process, providing an overview of the six post-WW II administrations, their respective policy-making styles, and the relative level of influence enjoyed by the major US policy-making bodies in the Vietnam policy-making process. Chapter 3 also provides case studies for each of the six administrations examined; these case studies provide detailed descriptions of the policy-making process employed by each particular administration in making key Vietnam policy decisions.

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 all conclude with a section entitled "Analytic Summary and Insights," serving both as a conclusion and as a basis for deriving lessons on US foreign policy and Vietnam for the period 1945-1975. Chapter 4 is based on the data and analyses appearing in Chapters 1, 2, and 3, integrating this information in a brief concluding chapter devoted to lessons.

### C. THEMES THAT EMERGE FROM VOLUME III: "US FOREIGN POLICY AND VIETNAM, 1945-1975"

Chapter 1, entitled "US Global Policy and Its Relationship to US Policy for Southeast Asia, 1945-1975," demonstrates that US interests in Southeast Asia were almost entirely dictated by US perceptions of global threats outside of the region, particularly the threat of Soviet and Chinese Communist expansionism. The major themes (and their relationship to US involvement in Vietnam) assessed in this chapter include:

- the conflict of colonialist concerns with post-war economic reconstruction and the creation of security alliances;
- the conflict between anticolonialist and anticommunist concerns;
- the US understanding of monolithic communism and the Sino-Soviet rift;
- the US investment with its allies, particularly with South Vietnam, (in men, materiel, money, and prestige) and its effect on US foreign policy formation, and

## THE BDM CORPORATION

- the United States' eventual exploitation of hostilities between the Soviet Union and Communist China as a politico-diplomatic tool.

Chapter 2, entitled "Historical Precedents Which Influenced US Involvement in Vietnam," identifies those historical experiences most influential in shaping US policy for Vietnam. The major themes emerging from this chapter include:

- the fear of appeasement, such as occurred at Munich in 1938, served to justify the US policy of containment in Southeast Asia;
- the "loss of China" prompted successive US administrations to fear a "loss" in Southeast Asia, and to commit US resources in order to prevent such a "loss";
- the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion served to strengthen the Kennedy administration's resolve in proving US capabilities (especially counterinsurgency) elsewhere, particularly in Vietnam;
- the fear of Chinese Communist intervention, such as experienced during the Korean War, limited the level of the US military response to North Vietnam; and
- the adage "never again," referring to US involvement in another Asian land war, served to constrain two post-WW II administrations in policy making for Vietnam.

Chapter 3, entitled "Washington and Vietnam: US National-Level Policy Makers and the Policy-Making Process," explains the pervasiveness of the containment doctrine and domino theory in US policy toward Vietnam by showing that the key decision makers shared a belief in their validity in Indochina. Chapter 3 also shows that the decision-making processes, while enabling some dissent on this view to emerge, tended to minimize dissent by stressing presidential decisionmaking with a narrow band of loyal appointed advisers who shared the basic beliefs of the president. Chapter 3 also explores the themes of centralization and decentralization in the decision making process.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Chapter 4, entitled "US Foreign Policy and Vietnam, 1945-1975: Lessons to Be Learned," examines a number of general lessons to be learned from the preceding discussion of US foreign policy and Vietnam. The lessons and insights are summarized in the "Executive Summary" following this preface.

### D. HISTORICAL-CHRONOLOGICAL OVERVIEW OF VOLUME III

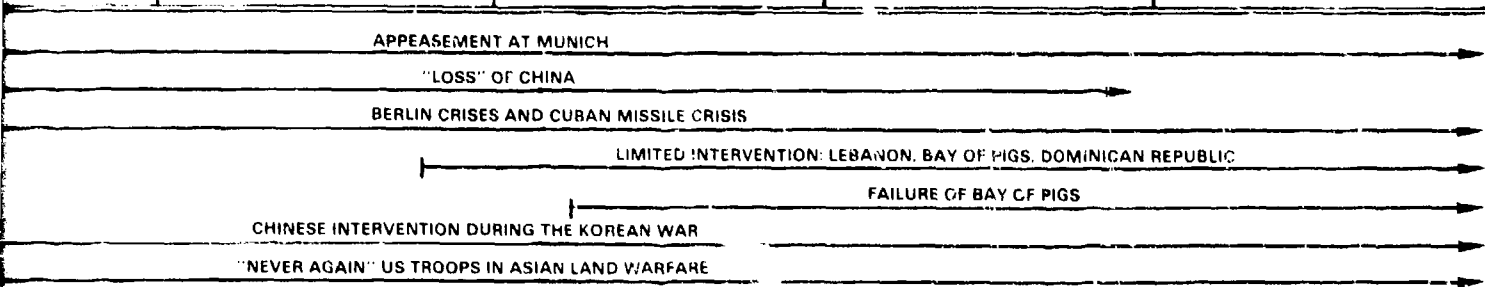
Figure III-2 provides an encapsulation of the data and analyses appearing in Volume III. The figure offers a time-sensitive depiction of major US global objectives and interests, perceived threats, and strategies for the thirty-year period, 1945-1975. The figure also summarizes the impact of certain historical precedents which served to justify or constrain US policy making for Vietnam during this time period. In addition, the graphic highlights general characteristics of the policy-making styles and processes for each of the six post-WW II administrations. The final section of Figure III-2 plots seventeen major turning points during US military involvement in Vietnam, allowing the reader to gauge their development with other data appearing in this framework of US foreign policy, 1945-1975.

YEAR		1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	
CHAPTER 1 US GLOBAL POLICY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO US POLICY FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA	INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>REBUILD EUROPE ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION</li><li>BUILD A STRONG INTERNATIONAL ORDER</li><li>CONTAIN COMMUNISM</li><li>PROMOTE SELF DETERMINATION INDEPENDENCE OF WORLD'S COLONIES</li></ul>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>PREVENT THE ADVANCE OF COMMUNISM IN EUROPE AND ASIA</li><li>CONTAIN COMMUNISM TO PROTECT US AND ALLIES AND STRATEGIC INTERESTS</li><li>PREVENT COMMUNISM IN THE WORLD'S COLONIES</li></ul>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>HALT THE ADVANCE OF COMMUNISM THROUGHOUT THE WORLD BY NEUTRALIZATION</li><li>PROVIDE AN ATTRACTIVE ALTERNATIVE TO COMMUNISM</li><li>PREVENT TOTAL WAR</li><li>SHORE UP US CREDIBILITY</li><li>PRESERVE THE SECURITY OF THE FUNDAMENTAL VALUES AND INTERESTS</li></ul>				
	PERCEIVED THREATS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>SOVIET IMPERIALISM AND EXPANSIONIST DRIVE</li><li>POST WAR OBJECTIVES OF US ALLIES</li><li>ADVANCE OF MONOLITHIC COMMUNISM</li><li>COLONIALISM</li><li>US LACK OF WELL DEFINED POLICY REGARDING DEVELOPING COUNTRIES</li></ul>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>THE ADVANCE OF COMMUNISM IN EUROPE AND ASIA</li><li>SUBVERSION AND GUERRILLA WAR ARE WEAKNESS OF WESTERN EUROPE IN GENERAL AND IN PARTICULAR REGARDING SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS</li></ul>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>ADVANCE OF MONOLITHIC COMMUNISM ON A WORLD WIDE BASIS</li><li>USSR NUCLEAR CAPABILITIES</li><li>SUBVERSION AND PROTRACTED WARFARE</li></ul>				
	STRATEGIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>PROMOTE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND RECONSTRUCTION</li><li>PROMOTE INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND COOPERATION ECONOMIC, TECHNICAL AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES</li><li>PROMOTE BILATERAL AND COLLECTIVE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS</li><li>PROMOTE INDEPENDENCE FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WHEN FEASIBLE</li></ul>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>PROMOTE BILATERAL AND COLLECTIVE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS UNITED ACTION</li><li>MASSIVE RETALIATION LIBERATION DOCTRINE AND PREPARATION FOR COUNTERING GUERRILLA WARFARE</li><li>PROMOTE SELF DETERMINATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRACY IN THE WORLD'S DEVELOPING NATIONS</li></ul>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>MASSIVE (SELECTIVE) RETALIATION</li><li>SAFEGUARDED DISARMAMENT</li><li>PROMOTE BILATERAL AND COLLECTIVE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS</li><li>PROVIDE ECONOMIC, TECHNICAL AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO DEVELOPING NATIONS IN THE FACE OF COMMUNIST SUBVERSION</li><li>EXPLOIT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE VULNERABILITIES OF BLOC COUNTRIES</li></ul>				
CHAPTER 2 IMPACT OF HISTORICAL PRECEDENTS OVER TIME	JUSTIFICATIONS															
	CONSTRAINTS	CHINESE INTERESTS "NEVER AGAIN"														
CHAPTER 3 WASHINGTON AND VIETNAM: US POLICY MAKERS AND POLICY MAKING PROCESS	VIETNAM DECISION-MAKING:  GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF DECISION-MAKING STYLE AND PROCESS	TRUMAN <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>GENERALLY CONSISTENT RELIANCE ON FORMAL DECISION MAKING ORGANIZATIONS IN DECISION MAKING PROCESS</li><li>RELATIVELY FORMAL AND STRUCTURED APPROACH TO DECISION MAKING</li></ul>							EISENHOWER <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>EXTREMELY FORMAL CAREFULLY CONTROLLED DECISION MAKING PROCESS</li><li>PROPER CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION UTILIZED REGULARLY AND FORMAL DECISION MAKING ORGANIZATIONS CONVENED FREQUENTLY AND WITH REGULARITY</li></ul>							
	APPENDIX A SIGNIFICANT US NATIONAL POLICY DECISIONS WHICH INFLUENCED US MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM	MAJOR TURNING POINTS	US ACQUIESCENCE TO REENTRY OF FRENCH RECOGNITION OF ASSOCIATED STATES AND PROVISION OF MILITARY AID AND MAAG SUPPORT OF DIEM DIEN BIEN PHU													
YEAR		1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	

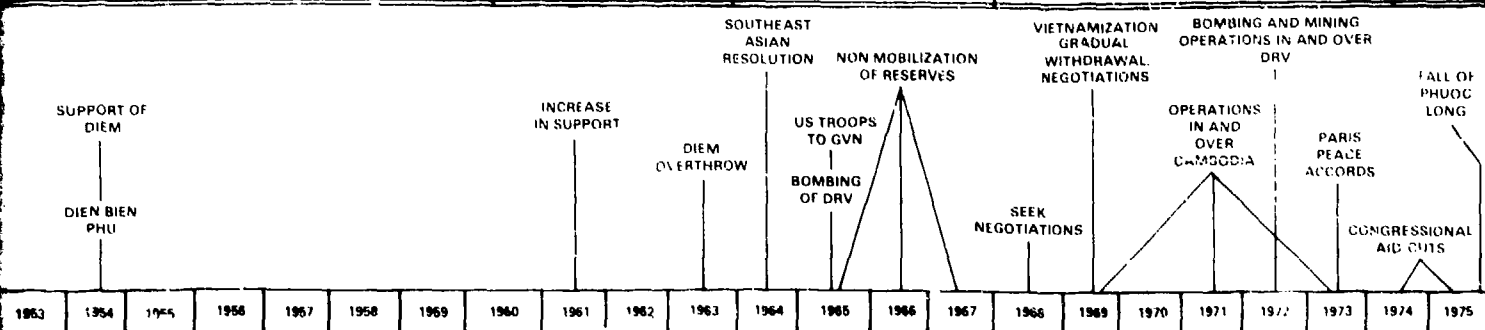
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Figure III-2. Historical-Chronology

1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975
<b>COMMUNISM IN THE WORLD</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● HALT THE ADVANCE OF COMMUNISM THROUGHOUT THE WORLD BY DESTRUCTION OR NEUTRALIZATION</li> <li>● PROVIDE AN ATTRACTIVE ALTERNATIVE TO COMMUNISM</li> <li>● DETER TOTAL WAR</li> <li>● SHORE UP US CREDIBILITY</li> <li>● PRESERVE THE SECURITY OF THE US AND ITS FUNDAMENTAL VALUES AND INSTITUTIONS</li> </ul>												
<b>COMMUNISM IN EUROPE AND ASIA</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ADVANCE OF MONOLITHIC COMMUNISM ON A WORLD WIDE BASIS</li> <li>● USSR NUCLEAR CAPABILITIES</li> <li>● SUBVERSION AND PROTRACTED GUERRILLA WARFARE</li> </ul>												
<b>COLLECTIVE SECURITY ACTION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● MASSIVE (SELECTIVE) RETALIATION, DETERRENCE</li> <li>● SAFEGUARDED DISARMAMENT</li> <li>● PROMOTE BILATERAL AND COLLECTIVE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS</li> <li>● PROVIDE ECONOMIC, TECHNICAL AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO DEVELOPING NATIONS IN THE FACE OF COMMUNIST SUBVERSION</li> <li>● EXPLOIT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AND VULNERABILITIES OF BLOC COUNTRIES</li> </ul>												
<b>COMMUNISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● PREVENT COMMUNISM'S DRIVE TO DOMINATE THE WORLD</li> <li>● MAINTAIN AND PROTECT US SECURITY BY PRESERVING A FREE ASIA AND FREE WORLD</li> <li>● PRESERVE AND MAINTAIN US PLEDGES OF ASSISTANCE AND CREDIBILITY</li> </ul>												
<b>COMMUNISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● PREVENT COMMUNISM'S DRIVE TO DOMINATE THE WORLD</li> <li>● STRENGTHEN US ALLIED RELATIONS</li> <li>● PREVENT WORLD WAR III</li> <li>● CALM TENSIONS WITH USSR AND PRC</li> <li>● PREVENT LOSS OF US CREDIBILITY A/D INVESTMENTS</li> <li>● SECURE AN HONORABLE AND DURABLE PEACE</li> </ul>												
<b>COMMUNISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● BUILD A STABLE WORLD ORDER BASED ON MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND RESTRAINT</li> <li>● PROMOTE SELF SUFFICIENCY OF DEVELOPING NATIONS</li> <li>● DETER AGGRESSION AND MAINTAIN A STRONG DEFENSE</li> <li>● DECREASE TENSIONS WITH USSR AND PRC</li> <li>● PRESERVE US CREDIBILITY</li> <li>● SECURE AN HONORABLE AND DURABLE PEACE</li> </ul>												



EISENHOWER	KENNEDY	JOHNSON	NIXON	FORD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● EXTREMELY FORMAL CAREFULLY CONTROLLED DECISION MAKING PROCESS</li> <li>● PROPER CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION UTILIZED REGULARLY AND FORMAL DECISION MAKING ORGANIZATIONS CONVENED FREQUENTLY AND WITH REGULARITY</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● PREDOMINATELY INFORMAL PERSONAL APPROACH TO DECISION MAKING MARKED BY FLUIDITY FLEXIBILITY AND OPEN CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION</li> <li>● FORMAL DECISION MAKING BODIES INFREQUENTLY CONVENED IN FAVOR OF AN AD HOC TASK FORCE SEMINAR APPROACH</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● GENERALLY INFORMAL BUT CENTRALIZED PROCESS CHARACTERIZED BY A "CONSENSUS BUILDING" APPROACH TO DECISION MAKING</li> <li>● FORMAL DECISION MAKING ORGANIZATIONS CONVENED INFREQUENTLY, DECISIONS MADE PREDOMINATELY BY A SMALL GROUP OF TRUSTED ADVISORS "TUESDAY CABINET"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● INITIALLY FORMAL OPEN CHANNELLED DECISION MAKING PROCESS WHICH SHORTLY GAVE WAY TO A CLOSED RELATIVELY SECRETIVE APPROACH</li> <li>● VERY CENTRALIZED APPROACH TO DECISION MAKING, DECISION MAKING PROCESS JEOPARDIZED BY WATERGATE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● RELATIVELY INFORMAL APPROACH FORMAL DECISION MAKING ORAL AT 24 HOURS CONVENED WITH REGULARITY</li> <li>● CONGRESS EXTREMELY ASSISTIVE IN DECISION MAKING PROCESS</li> </ul>



2

# THE BDM CORPORATION

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Chapter</u>		<u>Page</u>
	FOREWORD	iii
	PREFACE	v
	TABLE OF CONTENTS	xiii
	LIST OF FIGURES	xv
	LIST OF MAPS	xix
	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	EX-1 to EX-6
1	US GLOBAL POLICY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO US POLICY FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA, 1945-1975	1-1 to 1-48
	A. Introduction	1-1
	B. 1945-1950 (Pre-Korea)	1-3
	C. 1950-1955	1-12
	D. 1955-1960	1-17
	E. 1960-1965	1-22
	F. 1965-1970	1-27
	G. 1970-1975	1-33
	H. Analytic Summary and Insights	1-40
2	HISTORICAL PRECEDENTS WHICH INFLUENCED US INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM	2-1 to 2-34
	A. Introduction	2-1
	B. Appeasement in Munich	2-1
	C. The Fall of China	2-6
	D. The Cuban Missile Crisis and Berlin: Firmness With the Adversary	2-10
	E. The Bay of Pigs: Limited Intervention As a Means of Containment	2-13
	F. The Chinese Intervention in Korea	2-17
	G. "Never Again" Employ Combat Troops in an Asian Land War	2-22
	H. Analytic Summary and Insights	2-25
3	WASHINGTON AND VIETNAM: US NATIONAL LEVEL POLICY MAKERS AND THE POLICY-MAKING PROCESS	3-1 to 3-71
	A. Introduction	3-1
	B. The Truman Administration	3-3

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

<u>Chapter</u>		<u>Page</u>
	C. The Eisenhower Administration	3-12
	D. The Kennedy Administration	3-22
	E. The Johnson Administration	3-33
	F. The Nixon Administration	3-39
	G. The Ford Administration	3-48
	H. Analytic Summary and Insights	3-55
4	US FOREIGN POLICY AND VIETNAM, 1945-1975: LESSONS TO BE LEARNED	4-1 to 4-8
	A. Introduction	4-1
	B. Lessons	4-1
<u>Appendix</u>		<u>Page</u>
A	SUPPLEMENTAL DATA TO VOLUME III: SIGNIFICANT US NATIONAL POLICY DECISIONS WHICH INFLUENCED US MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM	A-1 to A-99
B	SUPPLEMENTAL DATA TO CHAPTER 3: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ON KEY US VIETNAM DECISION MAKERS, 1945-1975, THEIR BACKGROUNDS AND BIASES	B-1 to B-29
C	SUPPLEMENTAL DATA TO CHAPTER 1: A SERIES OF SIX CHARTS SUMMARIZING US GLOBAL INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES, PERCEIVED THREATS, AND STRATEGIES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO US INTERESTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, 1945-1975	C-1 to C-14
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	BB-1 to BB-19

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>		<u>Page</u>
III-1	Summary of Volume III Methodology: Inter-relationship of Chapters and Related Appendices	vii
III-2	Historical - Chronological Overview of Volume III	xi/xii
1-1	A Summary of US Interests, Objectives, Perceived Threats, and Strategies on a Global Basis, 1945-1975	1-5/6
2-1	A Summary of Historical Precedents as They Influenced US Involvement in Vietnam	2-2
3-1	Vietnam Policy Making: Key Decision Makers and Other Important Advisers Within the Truman Administration, 1945-1952	3-5
3-2	Vietnam Policy Making: Key Decision Makers and Other Important Advisers Within the Eisenhower Administration, 1953-1960	3-14
3-3	Vietnam Policy Making: Key Decision Makers and Other Important Advisers Within the Kennedy Administration, 1961-1963	3-24
3-4	Vietnam Policy Making: Key Decision Makers and Other Important Advisers Within the Johnson Administration, 1963-1968	3-35
3-5	Vietnam Policy Making: Key Decision Makers and Other Important Advisers Within the Nixon Administration, 1969-1974	3-42
3-6	Vietnam Policy Making: Key Decision Makers and Other Important Advisers Within the Ford Administration, 1974-April 1975	3-50
A-1	Decision I, US Decision To Acquiesce to French Reentry Into Indochina	A-5
A-2	Decision II, US Decision To Recognize the Associated States of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, February 1950; and To Increase Military Aid to France and Indochina, June 1950	A-11



# THE BDM CORPORATION

## LIST OF FIGURES (CONTINUED)

<u>Figure</u>		<u>Page</u>
A-3	Decision III, US Decision Not To Intervene Militarily at Dien Bien Phu	A-17
A-4	Decision IV, US Decision To Become Directly Involved in Vietnam	A-25
A-5	Decision V, US Decision To Sharply Increase US-RVN Joint Efforts	A-31
A-6	Decision VI, US Decision To Support the Overthrow of Ngo Dinh Diem and Ngo Dinh Nhu	A-37
A-7	Decision VII, Southeast Asia Resolution (Tonkin Gulf Resolution)	A-41
A-8	Decision VIII, US Decision To Conduct Air Strikes Against Targets in North Vietnam	A-45
A-9	Decision IX, US Decision To Introduce Ground Troops Into Vietnam	A-49
A-10	Decision X, US Decision(s) Not To Mobilize the Reserves	A-55
A-11	Decision XI, US Policy Decision To Change From Commitment to Disengagement	A-59
A-12	Decision XII, US Policy Decision on Negotiations, Withdrawal, and Vietnamization	A-65
A-13	Decision XIII, US Decision To Launch Incursions Against Enemy Sanctuary Bases in Cambodia	A-71
A-14	Decision XIV, US Decision To Bomb DRV Military Targets and Mine Haiphong Harbor	A-75
A-15	Decision XV, Paris Cease-Fire Accords	A-81
A-16	Decision XVI, US Congressional Decision To Cut US Military Assistance to RVN to \$700 Million	A-85
A-17	Decision XVII, US Decision Not To Aid RVN at the Fall of Phuoc Long	A-89

LIST OF FIGURES (Continued)

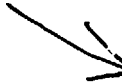
<u>Figure</u>		<u>Page</u>
C-1	Summary of US Global Policy, 1945-1950 (Pre-Korea), and Its Relationship to US Policy for Southeast Asia	C-3/4
C-2	Summary of US Global Policy, 1950-1955, and Its Relationship to US Policy for Southeast Asia	C-5/6
C-3	Summary of US Global Policy, 1955-1960, and Its Relationship to US Policy for Southeast Asia	C-7/8
C-4	Summary of US Global Policy, 1960-1965, and Its Relationship to US Policy for Southeast Asia	C-9/10
C-5	Summary of US Global Policy, 1965-1970, and Its Relationship to US Policy for Southeast Asia	C-11/12
C-6	Summary of US Global Policy, 1970-1975, and Its Relationship to US Policy for Southeast Asia	C-13/14

# THE BDM CORPORATION


## LIST OF MAPS

<u>Map</u>		<u>Page</u>
1-1	Major Crises and Significant Events Affecting US Policy for the Period 1945-1950 (Pre-Korea)	1-8
1-2	Major Crises and Significant Events Affecting US Policy for the Period 1950-1955	1-13
1-3	Major Crises and Significant Events Affecting US Policy for the Period 1955-1960	1-18
1-4	Major Crises and Significant Events Affecting US Policy for the Period 1960-1965	1-23
1-5	Major Crises and Significant Events Affecting US Policy for the Period 1965-1970	1-28
1-6	Major Crises and Significant Events Affecting US Policy for the Period 1970-1975	1-35

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The chapters of Volume III develop a number of key insights and lessons relating to the formulation of US policy toward Vietnam during the years 1945-1975. These insights underscore both the general context and the specific nature of US policy making--the global environment in which Vietnam policy was formulated, the historical precedents which influenced subsequent US foreign policy and particularly Southeast Asian policies, and the US policy-making process. The insights are specific, focusing on such issues as US perceptions of its global role, US perceptions of external powers, both friendly and unfriendly, consistencies and contradictions in US foreign policies, the influence of historical precedents on US policy makers, and the advantages and liabilities inherent in specific approaches to policy making. In contrast, the lessons derived in this volume are general, concentrating on the broader issues and themes discussed in the volume which are relevant to a discussion of US foreign policy during the 1945-1975 period and to present day policy considerations.



## THE BDM CORPORATION

### INSIGHTS

US Foreign Policy  
and Vietnam,  
1945-1975

- The early years of US involvement in Southeast Asia witnessed an attempt by national policy makers to reconcile US anticolonialist and anticommunist policies, generally at the expense of the former.
- During the time period under consideration, the US found itself constrained by perceptions of its own leadership role in the world and by its perceptions of threats to US objectives.
- The United States' post-WW II assumption of the role of "global policeman," aimed at combatting international communism in the post-World War II era, limited its appreciation of other forces at work in the global environment, particularly that of nationalism.
- Inconsistencies or abrupt changes in US policies undermined the effectiveness and credibility of the United States. In addition, the United States' long-held Eurocentric policy perspective diminished overall US effectiveness in fashioning viable policies outside of Europe.
- The broad US objective of containing communism globally conflicted with the US objective to promote self-determination for and civil liberties in the world's former colonies in general and in South Vietnam in particular. Perceptions of the monolithic communist threat frequently clouded the differences between civil wars, colonial wars, and what the communists termed as "wars of national liberation."
- Foreign policy terms such as "vital interest," "objective," and "threat" were often applied without careful discrimination by US national policy makers, thus leading to oversimplification, contradictions, and confusion in US foreign policy.

LESSON

The importance of particular US interests may undergo significant changes, depending upon a broad array of international and national considerations, often beyond the control of the United States Government. To minimize confusion at subordinate levels of leadership, US national leaders must be as clear, precise, and discriminating as possible in determining "vital" interests, especially prior to making a long-term commitment to another nation or government.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### INSIGHTS

#### Historical Precedents Which Influenced US Involvement In Vietnam

- The Chinese threat perceived by the US was more assumed than real. For example, throughout the period of US involvement in the Vietnam conflict the significance of the political rift between the USSR and the PRC and the cultural enmity between the Vietnamese and Chinese was consistently understated.
- The admonition that the US must not "lose" South Vietnam (like it "lost" China) was often used by US policy makers to justify the US commitment to Southeast Asia. The fact that the term "loss" implied previous control or hegemony by the US over China reinforced the United States' perception of its post-World War II role as the free world's global policeman, and of the nature of global politics as "bipolar," where a "loss" by the US was considered a gain for world communism.
- Tendencies toward moderation and compromise in Vietnam policy making were sometimes discredited by being compared with "appeasement" of Hitler at Munich in 1938.
- Policies and strategies proven effective in super-power confrontations may be wholly inapplicable to problems in the Third World.
- Several important lessons provided by the Bay of Pigs experience were neglected: first, prior to committing military and/or political resources to a given country, a thorough assessment of political and social realities in that country should be undertaken. Second, there are significant risks inherent in restricting the scope and employment of military resources in a given operation. US lack of knowledge about Asia and Asians helped lead to faulty perceptions, as did a lack of understanding about the goals, etc. of Cuba and Cubans.

### LESSON

It is essential to know precisely the nature of relationships between Third World countries and external communist powers - a corollary to the "Know Your Enemy" and "Know Your Ally" lessons underscored in Volumes I and II. US policy makers must carefully examine the premises upon which they formulate any US policies.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### INSIGHTS

#### US National-level Policy Makers and the Policy Making Process

- Pressures to arrive at timely decisions militate against the possibility of obtaining expert advice on all sides of every issue. However, when expert advice is available but is continually ignored because of an assertion that timeliness is crucial, then the validity and implications of this assertion deserve careful scrutiny.
- The US Congress indicated its dissatisfaction with the executive branch's performance in foreign policy, especially with regard to Southeast Asia, by reducing aid to South Vietnam and Cambodia, thereby using its "power of the purse" to shape future US commitments to the region.
- Presidents, like other leaders, sometimes confused dissent over Vietnam policy with personal disloyalty or lack of patriotism.
- General beliefs about the dangers of "appeasement" and of global communist unity and expansionism, conditioned by experiences such as Munich, Yalta, Korea, and the McCarthy era, frequently served as the basis for US Southeast Asian policy formulation, often regardless of the political, cultural, traditional, or ideological realities in the region.
- All decision makers are human and fallible and adopt a decision-making process with which they feel comfortable. While good organizations and procedures cannot ensure sound decisions, weak ones are more likely to produce bad policies and decisions.

### LESSON

The American experience in Vietnam points to the danger of elevating one fundamental principle -- anticommunism -- to the status of doctrine and of applying it to all regions of the globe. This reduces the possibility of meaningful debate and limits the airing of legitimate dissenting viewpoints. Careful and continual reexamination of US foreign policy premises may forestall this potentially dangerous development from occurring in future policy deliberations.



OVERALL LESSON

US national leaders, both civilian and military, must continually assess the validity and importance of the policies they are pursuing. In particular, they must assess the changing implications of these policies for particular foreign countries and regions and determine the political, military, and economic prices that they are likely and willing to pay for successful policy implementation. Assessments of this nature will foster the creation and/or revitalization of strong, mutually beneficial alliances, thereby providing an element of continuity and constancy to US foreign policy. Moreover, the national leadership should continually assess its willingness to accept the responsibility for policy failures, especially if it is unwilling to pay the price called for by a given policy. US national leadership must, therefore, conduct continual and honest reassessments of the premises of its national policy in light of changing circumstances in both bipolar and multipolar relationships.

CHAPTER 1  
US GLOBAL POLICY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO  
US POLICY FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA, 1945-1975

A. INTRODUCTION

The nature and extent of US involvement in Vietnam was shaped by the post-WW II global environment and the tensions inherent in that environment. This chapter provides a discussion of US global interests and objectives, the tensions and problems which threatened these goals, and major US strategies to achieve these goals. This chapter also assesses US interests and objectives in Southeast Asia and strategies for achieving them which usually flowed directly from US global interests and objectives.

Use of terms "national interest," "national objective," "national strategy," "national threat," and "national policy" is common in any discussion of US foreign policy; yet they have been frequently overused, misapplied or misunderstood. US policy makers, both civilian and military, have often been obscure rather than clear and precise in their use of these terms. For the purposes of this discussion, the above terms are defined as follows: 1/

- National Interest: A fundamental goal or purpose of a nation (e.g., peace, freedom, security, prosperity) which a nation is prepared to defend.
- National Objective: A tangible, material object (as distinguished from a theoretical, abstract concept or idea) which a nation desires in pursuit of its interests (e.g., use of resources, use of sea, air and land for security reasons - bases, etc.).
- National Threat: Anything which appears to jeopardize or obstruct the attainment of a national interest or objective (e.g., aggression, non-cooperation).
- National Strategy: A plan for developing and applying a nation's political, economic, psychological, and military capabilities and

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resources to provide maximum support to policies, thereby securing national objectives and interests, (e.g., provision of economic, military, technical aid; promote the establishment of defense organizations.)

- National Policy: A broad course of action or statements of guidance adopted by the government at the national level in pursuit of its national objectives and interests, including strategies for their attainment and for dealing with national threats (e.g., statements of definition or clarification of US interests, objectives, and strategies).

From the above, then, US national policy is seen as the government's articulation of national interests, objectives, and threats in the form of a stated course of action.

The thirty years covered in this chapter are divided into six five-year time periods, an approach which lends itself to a neutral, perhaps clinical, overview of the era to be discussed. This analytical tool of five-year "slices" - to use Paul Kattenburg's terminology - allows for the inclusion of a broad array of diverse themes within the discussion.<sup>2/</sup> There are other possible time-sensitive breakdowns open to the analyst assessing US foreign policy. The following list, by no means exhaustive, illustrates a number of these breakdowns; the era could be delineated and discussed according to:

- US administrations;
- Periods of the Cold War;
- Changes in the global strategic balance;
- Changes in the global economic balance;
- Emergence of the Third World and its impact on the global environment;
- Changes in the European balance of power;
- Changes in the Asian balance of power;
- Key events on a global basis shaping US foreign policy;
- Key events during the years of US involvement in Vietnam;

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- o Changes in a bipolar world;
- o Changes in a tripolar world; and
- o Changes in a multipolar world.

Most of the above devices, however, are geared primarily to one particular theme, thus limiting the inclusion of other relevant yet dissimilar themes manifested in a given time period. The five-year "slice" approach, on the other hand, allows for an interweaving of themes without necessarily limiting the discussion to any one particular focus. The approach chosen, therefore, is a superior analytical tool for developing a neutral, objective discussion of US global interests and objectives, perceived threats, and strategies for the period 1945-1975. Figure 1-1 provides an overview of the themes addressed in the chapter and is divided according to the five-year breakdown. Appendix C of this volume provides additional graphic depictions of these themes, relating their global applicability to US interests and objectives, perceived threats, and strategies for Southeast Asia, 1945-1975.

### B. 1945-1950 (PRE-KOREA)

Emerging as the world's major power at the close of the second World War, the United States hoped to create a strong and stable international order and in pursuit of this goal strove for two major objectives: the reconstruction and stabilization of the European continent and the evolution of the world's colonies towards self-government. Yet, in the immediate post-war environment, obstacles to the attainment of these objectives arose: the incompatibility of these two major objectives was, in itself, a sizable obstacle to overcome.

To attain the first objective, the US committed itself to programs for European economic recovery, centered on the Marshall Plan, and security assistance, centered on NATO. To attain the second objective, the US encouraged the colonial powers to prepare their Asian colonies for self-government. France and Britain, whose participation in European security

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THREAT	HOWER	1960	THROUGHOUT THE WORLD • PROVIDE AN ATTRACTIVE ALTERNATIVE TO COMMUNISM • DETER TOTAL WAR • SHORE UP US CREDIBILITY • PRESERVE THE SECURITY OF THE US AND ITS FUNDAMENTAL VALUES AND INSTITUTIONS	WORLDWIDE BASIS • USSR NUCLEAR CAPABILITIES AND TECHNOLOGICAL PROMESS • SUBVERSION AND PROTRACTED GUERRILLA WARFARE • CHINESE CHALLENGE TO BIPOLARITY • UNCERTAINTY OF SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS	DETERRENCE • SAFEGUARDED DISARMAMENT • PROMOTE BILATERAL AND COLLECTIVE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS • PROVIDE ECONOMIC, TECHNICAL AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO DEVELOPING NATIONS IN THE FACE OF COMMUNIST SUBVERSION • EXPLOIT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AND VULNERABILITIES OF BLOC COUNTRIES • EISENHOWER DOCTRINE
THAW	KENNEDY	1960-1965	• PREVENT COMMUNISM'S DRIVE TO DOMINATE THE WORLD • MAINTAIN AND PROTECT US SECURITY BY PRESERVING A FREE ASIA AND FREE WORLD • PRESERVE AND MAINTAIN US PLEDGES OF ASSISTANCE AND CREDIBILITY	• COMMUNIST AGGRESSION, IMPERIALISM, AND SUBVERSION • WARS OF NATIONAL LIBERATION AND BRUSH-FIRE AGGRESSION • LOSS OF US PRESTIGE AND CREDIBILITY WITH ALLIES AND US PUBLIC • US LOSS OF NUCLEAR SUPERIORITY	• NATION-BUILDING: PROVISION OF POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND MILITARY AID TO DEVELOPING NATIONS • FLEXIBLE RESPONSE: ABILITY TO WAGE LIMITED WARS, GRADUATED ESCALATION, AND COUNTER-INSURGENCY WARFARE
	JOHNSON	1965-1970	• PREVENT COMMUNISM'S DRIVE TO DOMINATE THE WORLD • STRENGTHEN US - ALLIED RELATIONS • PREVENT WORLD WAR III • CALM TENSIONS WITH USSR AND PRC • PREVENT LOSS OF US CREDIBILITY AND INVESTMENTS • SECURE AN HONORABLE AND DURABLE PEACE	• POSSIBLE PRC INTERVENTION IN VIETNAM • US CREDIBILITY LOSS AND POSSIBLE FAILURE OF COUNTERINSURGENCY STRATEGY • WARS OF NATIONAL LIBERATION, SUBVERSION AND GUERRILLA WARFARE • GLOBAL TURBULENCE, ESPECIALLY IN THE THIRD WORLD • DEVELOPING NATIONS 'OVER-DEPENDENCE' ON THE US	• PROVISION OF ECONOMIC, TECHNICAL AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO THE DEVELOPING NATIONS • FLEXIBLE RESPONSE • INITIATE DIALOGUE WITH PRC AND USSR • NIXON DOCTRINE • PERSONAL (AND OFTEN SECRET) DIPLOMACY
DETEENTE	NIXON	1970-1975	• BUILD A STABLE WORLD ORDER BASED ON MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND RESTRAINT • PROMOTE SELF-SUFFICIENCY OF DEVELOPING NATIONS • DETER AGGRESSION AND MAINTAIN A STRONG DEFENSE • DECREASE TENSIONS WITH USSR AND PRC • PRESERVE US CREDIBILITY • SECURE AN HONORABLE AND DURABLE PEACE	• POSSIBILITY OF LOCAL CONFLICTS ERUPTING INTO MAJOR CONFLAGRATION • COMMUNIST AGGRESSION • OVER-RELIANCE ON OR FALSE SECURITY OF DETENTE • US UNPREPAREDNESS TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH EVOLVING INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM • ISOLATIONISM • THE THIRD WORLD'S AND OTHER REGIONAL BLOC'S IMPACT ON THE STATUS QUO	• NIXON DOCTRINE • PROVISION OF ECONOMIC, TECHNICAL AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO DEVELOPING NATIONS • PERSONAL (AND OFTEN SECRET) DIPLOMACY • ASSIST SELECTED COUNTRIES IN DEVELOPING THEIR OWN INDIGENOUS DEFENSE CAPABILITIES • ARMS LIMITATIONS: US MAINTENANCE OF BALANCE IN NUCLEAR AND CONVENTIONAL FORCES
	FORD				

of US Interests, Objectives, Perceived Threats, and Strategies  
1 Basis, 1945-1975

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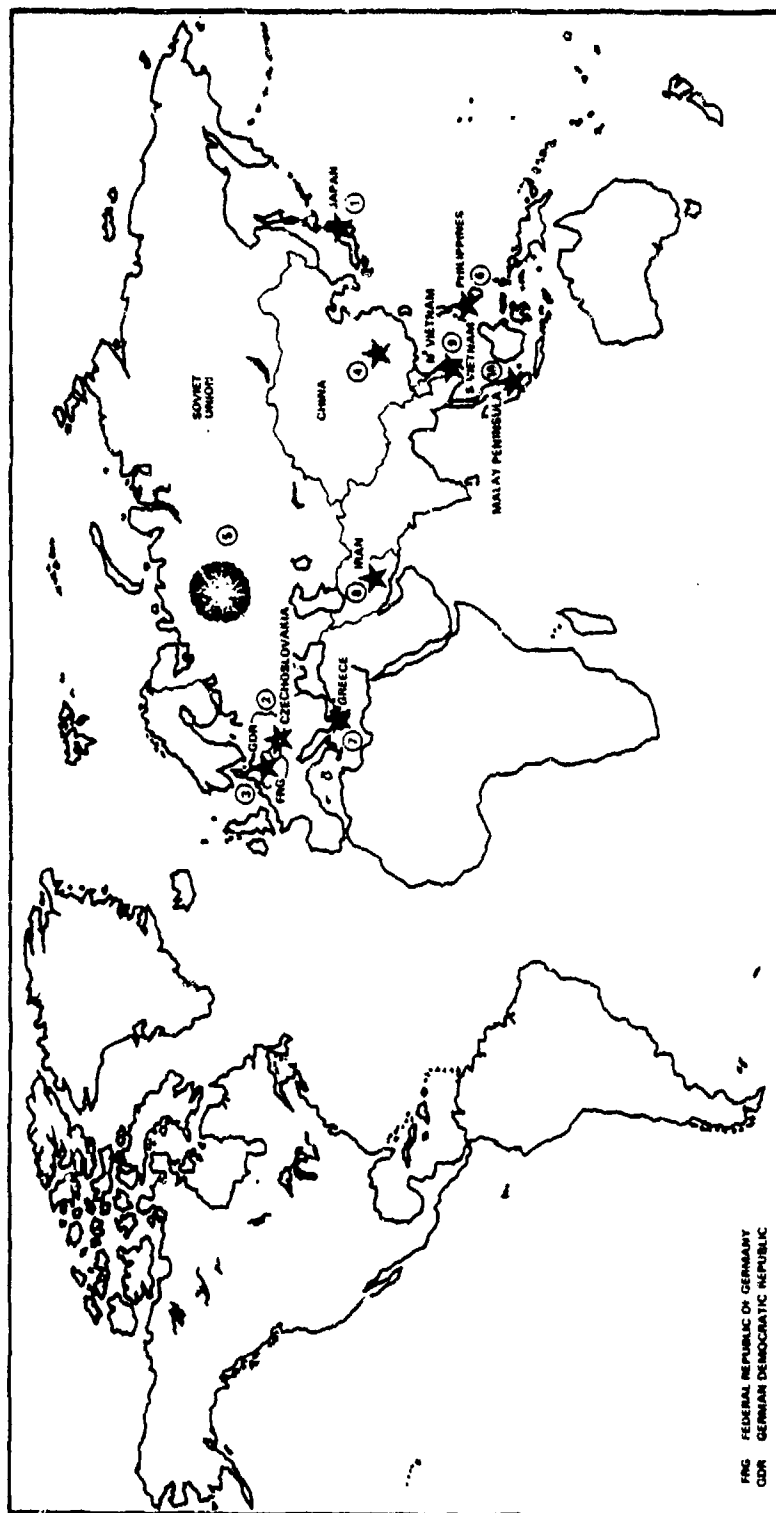
arrangements was believed essential by the United States, were unwilling to move as fast as the US had hoped toward preparing their Asian colonies for self-government. In addition, tension with the Soviet Union resulted from disagreements with the West over the nature and scope of European reconstruction and defense requirements, culminating in Soviet refusal to participate in the US-sponsored European recovery and security programs. US perceptions of Soviet post-war objectives in Europe clashed with US objectives, as did British and French objectives regarding the fate of their colonial territories. On this overarching global framework depended US interests and objectives for the Asian continent and, in particular, for Southeast Asia.

Map i-1 pinpoints major crises and events in the period 1945 - 1950 which had a significant impact on the development of US objectives, interests, and strategies. This graphic representation serves as a conceptual backdrop for the following analysis of US global and Southeast-Asian policy.

### 1. Interests and Objectives

Desiring a strong international system composed of several viable powers with which to trade, and based on a rational balance of power in both Europe and Asia, the US committed its economic, political, and military resources to the European Recovery Program, the United Nations, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. From 1945 to 1950, the US maintained its traditional European focus. Concerning Asia, US attention was concentrated on the reconstruction of Japan and on the promotion of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist China as a viable, independent, "replacement" power for debilitated Japan.

US interests and objectives for Japan and China underwent radical redefinition during the 1945-1950 period, having a very real influence on overall US relations with the Asian countries and the power balance in Asia. At the beginning of the Truman administration, the primary US objective in the Pacific remained the defeat of the Japanese; as one means to secure this objective, US OSS personnel cultivated relations with



- 1 JAPANESE THREAT IN THE PACIFIC, 1945
- 2 CZECHOSLOVAKIAN COMMUNIST PARTY ALIGNS WITH MOSCOW, SOVIET BLOC INITIATED, FEBRUARY, 1948
- 3 BERLIN BLOCKADE, JULY 1948
- 4 SOVIET UNION ENTERS KOREA, 1948
- 5 SOVIET UNION ENTERS CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 1948
- 6 FIRST ATOMIC DEVICE, 1949
- 7 CIVIL WAR IN GREECE
- 8 DISPUTE OVER IRAN, 1946-1947
- 9 CONFLICT BETWEEN COMMUNIST CHINA AND NATIONALIST CHINA
- 10 INSURGENCY ON THE MALAY PENINSULA, 1948

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Map 1-1. Major Crises and Significant Events Affecting US Policy for the Period 1945-1950 (Pre-Korea)



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Vietnamese nationalists, including Ho Chi Minh, as an important and dynamic anti-Japanese force.<sup>4/</sup> With Japan's defeat, US objectives and interests in the Pacific came to center on revitalizing Asia, which included the creation of peace-time markets and the establishment of strategic bases. US relationships with the Southeast Asian nationalists, previously based on the objective of defeating the Japanese, dimmed considerably in the absence of their common enemy. European reconstruction and the need to ensure French and British participation won out over earlier ties established with nationalist forces in Indochina.

With the defeat of the Japanese, China became of vital interest to US policy makers, both as a "replacement" power in the Pacific and as a potential investment site for US entrepreneurs. The success of Mao Tse-tung's forces in 1949 abruptly altered US interests in Asia. The attention of the US came to rest on containing the communist advance, and, as NSC 48/2 of December 1949, stated, on the:

prevention of power relationships in Asia which would enable any other nation or alliance to threaten the security of the United States from that area, or the peace, national independence and stability of the Asiatic nations."<sup>5/</sup>

### 2. Threats

In the immediate post-war years, the US found itself in a vitally different global environment: the effects of the war and the ramifications of the post-war settlements had shaped a new and unfamiliar world, marked by different boundaries, a weakened Europe, and a single world power possessing a nuclear capability. The post-war expectations of US policy makers assumed that a certain compatibility of interests existed; yet US war-time allies - the Soviet Union, Britain, and France - expressed objectives which did not coincide neatly with those of the US. Soviet expansionism, based on a professed need to secure its fronts against encroachments such as those witnessed during the war, and the British and French desire to preserve intact their empires for both economic and prestige-related reasons, threatened US post-war objectives.

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A series of events led gradually to a redefinition of US policy in the immediate post-war period: first, French and British requests for a clear statement of US intentions regarding their colonial possessions, and an increased concern, especially on the part of Churchill, regarding Soviet intentions, set the heretofore ambiguous US policy on a course strongly predicated upon anticommunist principles.<sup>6/</sup> Hence, while the US stood firmly against colonialism when dealing with the Dutch, a less important ally, when pressed for a clear statement of policy by the French and British regarding the US position on colonial issues, the US chose to pursue objectives which would serve to rally Western Europe and the US against the Soviet-inspired advance of communism.<sup>7/</sup> The series of crises pinpointed in Map 1, in particular the events in Eastern Europe and the USSR's successful detonation of its first atomic device, lent credence to the belief that communism was the major threat to US-allied interests and objectives. The "loss" of China to the communist orbit did more to enhance the "validity" of this threat than perhaps any other crisis or event during the 1945-1950 period. Yugoslavia's breakaway from the Kremlin's orbit was overshadowed by the China "loss" and did little to shake the US perception of the monolithic character of communism.

The US, therefore, found itself on a policy course directed towards the containment of communism. The United States' ambiguous policy regarding colonialism gave way to strategies focused on controlling the communist advance, often to the detriment of ties earlier forged with nationalist forces in the Asian Third World.

### 3. Strategies

The most significant and far-reaching strategy devised by the national policy makers during this period, a broad program for dealing with communism and, to a lesser degree, with the developing nations, was stated in the Truman Doctrine and NSC 68. The Truman Doctrine was a response to the British inability to deliver aid to Greece and Turkey beyond March 1947

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and set out the following policy which would serve as a basis for US relations with the world's developing nations, including Vietnam:

It must be the policy of the US to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures...we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way... 8/

Herein lay the foundation for assistance programs designed to inculcate democratic principles, inspire democratic development, and serve as an attractive alternative to communism.

NSC 68 set forth a broad range of objectives and strategies for a US victory in the Cold War 9/ and identified the Soviet Union as the major threat to the free world. It set forth a highly ambitious, all-encompassing program for containment of the Soviet Union. Briefly, the document recommended:

- Against negotiations with the Soviet Union since conditions were not yet sufficient to force the Kremlin to "change its policies drastically;"
- Development of hydrogen bombs to offset possible Soviet possession of an effective atomic arsenal by 1954;
- Rapid building of conventional military forces to preserve American interests without having to wage atomic war;
- A large increase in taxes to pay for this new, highly expensive military establishment;
- A strong alliance system directed by the US;
- Undermining of the "Soviet totalitariat" from within by making "the Russian people our allies in this enterprise."10/

By June 1950, then, US national policy makers had decided on a strategy to counter communist-inspired aggression. As will be seen in the following discussion of the 1950-1955 period beginning with the Korean War, NSC 68 and the Truman Doctrine served as the basis for US assistance to South Korea and to the French in the latter's conflict in Indochina with the Viet-Minh.

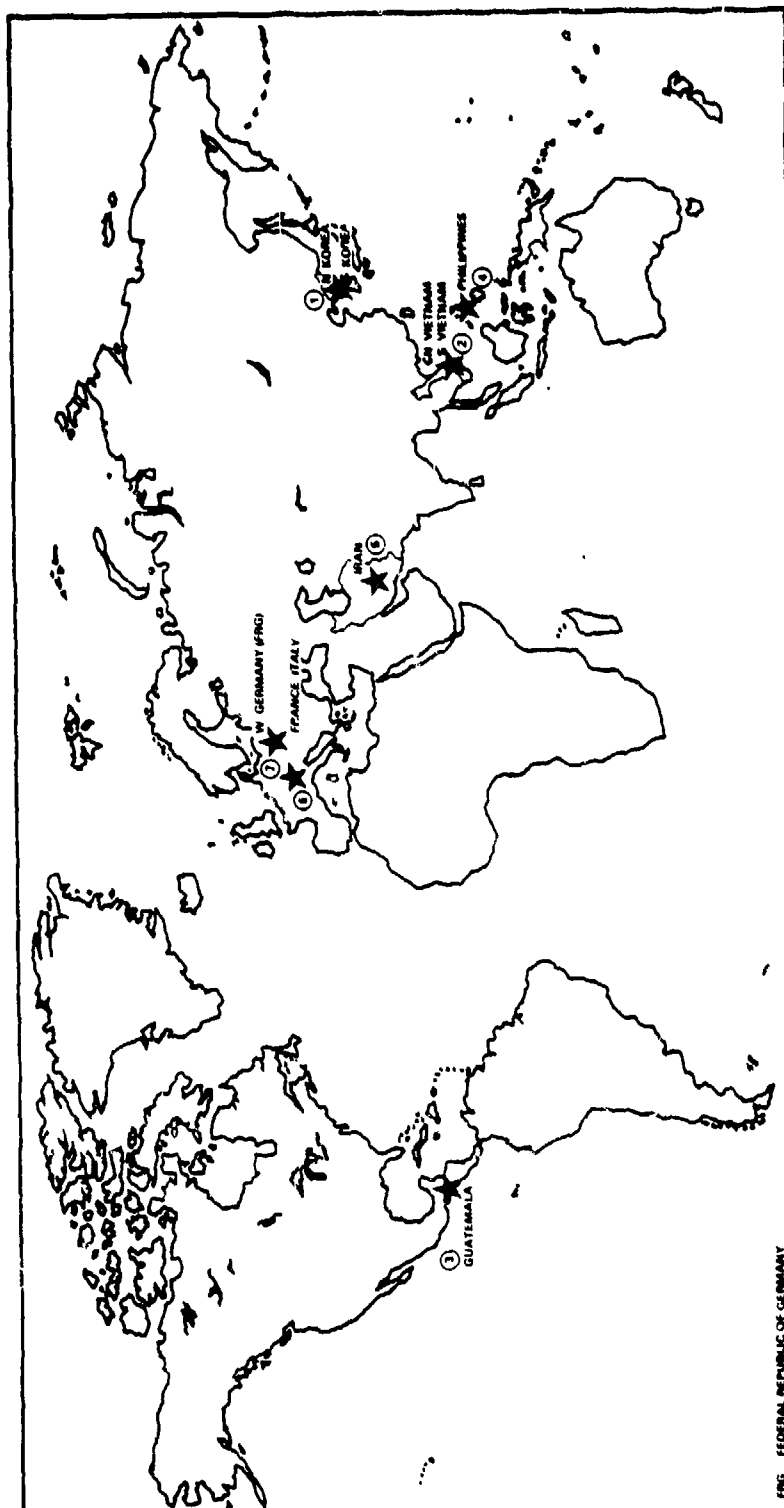
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### C. 1950-1955

With the outbreak of the Korean War, the US undertook a mission aimed at curbing the advance of presumably monolithic communism and at vindicating the administration for "allowing" the defeat of Chiang Kai-shek's forces by those of Mao Tse-tung in China. The Korean conflict, following so closely after the victory of the Chinese Communists and the recognition of Ho Chi Minh's government by both the Soviet Union and the Peoples' Republic of China, appeared to be a threat of substantial proportion. One important result of the Korean conflict was that it concentrated the attentions of high-ranking US national advisers on the Asian arena, perhaps serving to balance the heretofore disproportionate attention concentrated on European concerns.

As in the 1945-1950 period, the US continued to seek French cooperation in granting a modicum of independence to Indochina; yet, in retrospect, the US desire for establishing a strong European defense community and for defeating the advance of monolithic communism took precedence over anticolonialist concerns.

This period also witnessed a restatement of US interests and objectives, particularly with regard to the preservation of Southeast Asia as a region of economic and strategic significance, the stability of which was perceived as paramount to the security of the US, Japan, and the rest of the non-communist world. Perceptions of the communist threat during this period took on a new dimension: the threat of subversion and guerrilla warfare were considered offshoots of the broader threat of monolithic communism. And new strategies to counter these threats evolved: "massive retaliation" and initial preparations for what was later termed counterinsurgency had their inception during this period of US policy formulation. Map 1-2 depicts the significant events which had a bearing on US policy during the years 1950-1955.



FRG FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

- 1 KOREAN WAR 1950-1953
- 2 CHINA IN VIETNAM - FRENCH VIETNAMESE CONFLICT, DIEN BIEN PHU 1954
- 3 VIETNAM - FRENCH VIETNAMESE CONFLICT, DIEN BIEN PHU 1954
- 4 MALAY INSURGENT CONTINGENT THROUGH 1954
- 5 OVERTHROW OF MOSSADEGH IN IRAN 1953
- 6 REJECTION OF ACCEPTANCE OF EUROPEAN DEFENSE COMMUNITY (EDC) TREATY 1954
- 7 WEST GERMANY ENTERS NATO 1955

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Map 1-2. Major Crises and Significant Events Affecting US Policy for the Period 1950-1955

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### 1. Interests and Objectives

The Korean conflict served as a catalyst for increased US involvement in Southeast Asia. North Korea's invasion not only precipitated US involvement on the Korean peninsula, but also provided the rationale for the immediate provision of military assistance to the Associated States of Indochina and, in particular, to the French and Vietnamese forces battling the Viet-Minh.<sup>11/</sup> The prevention of a communist takeover in Southeast Asia was seen to be of importance, for both economic and strategic interests were open to partial compromise or total jeopardy if communism gained a foothold in the region: numerous national policy statements stressed the importance of Southeast Asia as the "Asian rice bowl", providing Japan with essential resources for its industrialization.<sup>12/</sup> The preservation of a Southeast Asia sympathetic to Western defense needs explained the strategic-military interest in the region: bases, air and sea routes, and an Asian "perimeter of defense" were cited as the major strategic interests meriting US protection.<sup>13/</sup>

As before, the US continued to call for the establishment of a viable, non-communist, yet independent Indochina. The French, however, regardless of US beliefs to the contrary, were involved in a battle to preserve the French Indochinese empire.<sup>14/</sup> Yet, the US, committed to its policy of "containment," tended to gloss over the colonial realities operating in Indochina. As the US saw it, France was to serve as the Western force dedicated to defeating communism in Southeast Asia; upon winning, the French would bow out of the region, allowing for the Associated States' independence and self-government.<sup>15/</sup> The US government did not overly stress such expectations, for it was also extremely conscious of French hesitancy over joining the US-sponsored European Defense Community. US interests in Europe coupled with the realities of a growing communist movement in Indochina, therefore, worked against a firm US anticolonialist posture vis-a-vis the French in Indochina.

The Dien Bien Phu crisis in 1954 found the US encumbered as it sought to balance its European and Asian objectives. Committed to containment, yet fearful of initiating unilateral action, especially in an

Asian land war, the US developed its strategy for collective, "united action."<sup>16/</sup>

## 2. Threats

While Kremlin-inspired aggression in Europe continued to be seen as a dangerous threat to US global objectives and interests, the threat of Chinese Communist aggression was perceived as equalling, if not surpassing, the Soviet threat in Asia. Mindful of falling dominos and of the Chinese Communist support to North Korea, the US sought to deter future PRC intervention, especially in Indochina. In fact, the 1950-1955 period found the US national-level security advisers preoccupied with the possibility of Chinese Communist intervention in the Indochinese-French conflict.<sup>17/</sup>

Several other threats were identified during this period, presenting serious problems for the US: the increase in communist guerrilla warfare in the Philippines and Indochina was seen as potentially detrimental to the preservation of the status quo. Problems in Europe also troubled the US. Still weakened from the second World War, US allies were incapable of committing economic and military resources comparable to those provided by the US for the establishment of a strong, European defense community. In particular, the large commitment of French troops to Indochina was incompatible with European defense requirements, imposing severe constraints on French participation in NATO. Moreover, a divided Germany did little to foster either a strong Europe or an economically viable German nation.

## 3. Strategies

One of the most significant strategies developed by the US as a means to curb the communist advance both in Europe and in Asia was to establish regional defense organizations, including collective and bilateral security arrangements. During this period, numerous US-Asian security treaties were negotiated, including: <sup>18/</sup>

- ANZUS: September 1, 1951 - US, Australia, New Zealand
- US - Republic of the Philippines: August 30, 1951
- US - Republic of Korea: October 1, 1953

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- SEATO: September 8, 1954 - US, UK, France, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Republic of the Philippines, Thailand
- US - Republic of China: December 2, 1954

Strategies set out in the Truman Doctrine and in NSC 68 also obtained for this period: military and economic assistance provided to the French and Vietnamese by the Truman administration increased steadily under Eisenhower. Yet, mindful of the Korean experience, President Eisenhower required an allied commitment to united action in Indochina as a prerequisite to US military intervention during the Dien Bien Phu crisis.19/

Perhaps the most well-known strategy developed during this period was Secretary Dulles' deterrence strategy of "massive retaliation." Frequently misunderstood, this strategy was designed to alleviate the sizeable economic burden of security expenditures which were weighing heavily on the US and its allies during this period.20/ In short, this strategy called for:

...a maximum deterrent at a bearable cost. Local defense will always be important. But there is no local defense which alone will contain the mighty land power of the Communist world. Local defenses must be reinforced by the further deterrent of massive retaliatory power...The way to deter aggression is for the free community to be willing and able to respond vigorously at places and with means of its own choosing.21/

Contrary to some interpretations of Dulles' speech, the strategy allowed for a degree of flexibility by providing for a conscious and selective approach to retaliation. Coupled with the Dulles-inspired "roll-back" and "liberation" slogans, however, massive retaliation carried with it an undertone indicative of this period's staunch anticommunist posture. While the following period of 1955-1960 saw a continuation of the declared strategy of massive retaliation, its credibility as a deterrent threat was diluted by President Eisenhower's desire to reduce the superpower tensions which prevailed during the 1950-1955 period.

In Indochina, the US continued to support the development of a non-communist, nationalist government. By 1955, US concerns over Vietnam



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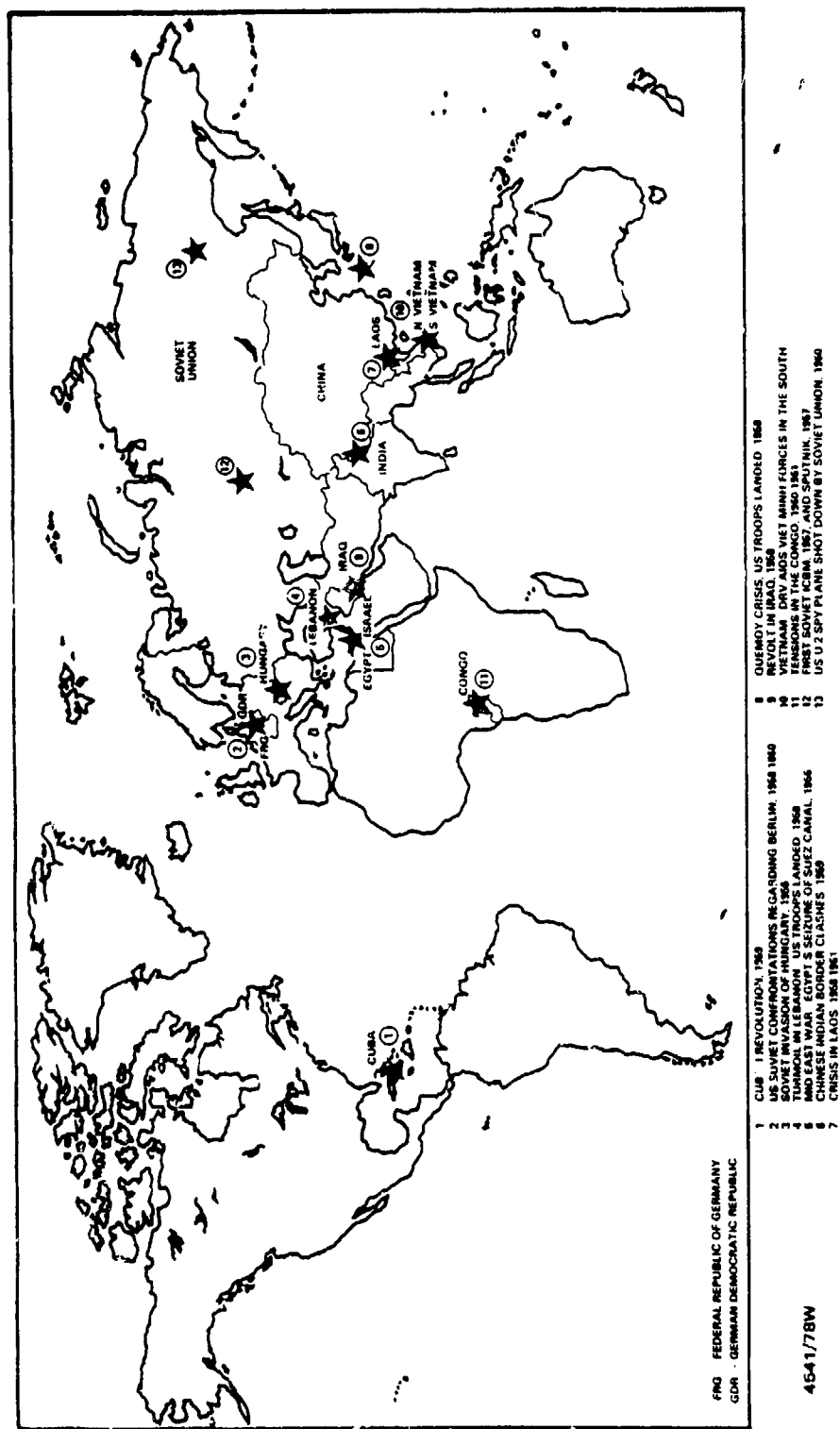
had subsided; the US continued to provide assistance to Vietnam and cultivated ties with its non-communist leader, Diem, while the activities of Ho's forces appeared minimal after their defeat of the French at Dien Bien Phu and Ho's setback at the conference table in Geneva.

### D. 1955-1960

US interests and objectives during this time period were markedly similar to those discussed for the preceding period. However, US perceptions of the communist threat and strategies to deal with it underwent a subtle reinterpretation. While the threat of monolithic communism continued to weigh heavily on US national security advisers, the nature and scope of communist aggression now appeared capable of manifesting itself in forms other than overt activity. Cloaked in the guise of indigenous rebellion, the communist advance was now seen as a major cause of global unrest, subversive activities, and guerrilla warfare. Moreover, the Kremlin's call for "peaceful coexistence" did not preclude communist-inspired exploitation of political and economic vulnerabilities in the Third World.

US strategies devised during the 1955-1960 period for dealing with this "multi-front" threat were also carried over from the preceding period, although subtly modified. While Dulles' deterrent strategy of "massive retaliation" remained a basic element of US Cold War policy, it was combined with Eisenhower's cautious desire for relaxation of tensions between the two superpowers. Hence, while containment remained a primary national objective, increased emphasis came to rest on deterring total war through the control of arms and the maintenance of a low threshold of global conflict.<sup>22/</sup> Thus, while Cold War attitudes persisted, the US began to focus on "learning to live with the Communists."<sup>23/</sup>

As Map 1-3 indicates, the period 1955-1960 witnessed a broad array of crises, any one of which could have developed into a major superpower confrontation. The developing nations of Asia, Latin America, and Africa all posed unique problems for the US and the Soviet Union. South Vietnam was



Map 1-3. Major Crises and Significant Events Affecting US Policy for the Period 1955-1960

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viewed as an example of the US success in engendering a "model" democracy in a developing nation. Concerns in Southeast Asia, especially during the last several years of this period, centered primarily on Laos and the activities there of communist insurgents.

### 1. Interests and Objectives

Consistent with the objectives and interests set forth during the years 1950-1955, the US continued to view Southeast Asia as vitally important, owing to the region's wealth of natural resources. President Eisenhower, in a 1959 speech, noted:

...by strengthening Viet-Nam and helping insure the safety of the South Pacific and Southeast Asia, we gradually develop the great trade potential between this region, rich in natural resources, and highly industrialized Japan to the benefit of both. In this way freedom in the Western Pacific will be greatly strengthened and the interests of the free world advanced.24/

After the resolution of the first Indochinese war which left a divided Vietnam, the importance of South Vietnam as an economic trade link to Japan appeared paramount. The strategic significance of Southeast Asia to the US and its allies was also a persistent theme throughout this period; the possibility of losing another Asian state to the communist orbit would run counter to the primary US objective of this period: the global containment of communist expansion. It was felt that the "loss" of Southeast Asia would:

- Indicate US inability to act resolutely in the face of communist aggression and to maintain a strong, credible, leadership position in the free world;
- Illustrate the weakness of capitalism and democracy;
- Encourage other non-communist Asian states, including Japan and India, to seek accommodation with the Communists.25/

Therefore, while Southeast Asia and, in particular, Vietnam did not consume the attentions of US policy makers during this period, its potential loss would have a major impact on both US Asian and global policy.

2. Threats

US perceptions of a monolithic communist threat continued throughout this period, regardless of the growing antagonism between the Soviet Union and the PRC. Soviet technological advances, in particular the launching of Sputnik I, greatly alarmed Washington. It was perceived as an ominous indication of overall Soviet military strength - greatly overestimated by the US at this time - and created suspicions in the US as to the Soviet Union's sincerity in calling for "peaceful coexistence" between capitalism and communism.

In Asia, the communist strategy seemed oriented towards non-military forms of aggression; while communist overt military aggression was not ruled out by the US, "subversive activities ranging up to armed insurrection" and "an intensified campaign of communist political, economic and cultural penetration" appeared the more prominent and less easily controlled threat to US interests in the region.<sup>26/</sup>

Local conflicts - involving low-level subversion, armed insurrection, and protracted guerrilla warfare - concerned US policy makers; they would debilitate weaker states, thereby making them more susceptible to communist penetration. Nationalist uprisings threatening the status quo were frequently considered as communist-inspired. US global objectives were also seen as threatened by the preference for "non-alignment" or neutrality, professed by a number of Third World nations, particularly as regards economic and strategic arrangements.

In Europe, the 1956 invasion of Hungary indicated the limits on the Kremlin's willingness to liberalize, or "de-Stalinize," its policies. The invasion also dealt a decisive blow to Dulles' "liberation" doctrine, for Hungary now appeared even more entwined within the communist bloc. Tensions regarding the status of Berlin, as well as antagonisms between the US French and British over the handling of the Suez crisis threatened both the spirit of this period's mini-detente and the cohesion of the Atlantic Alliance.

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### 3. Strategies

While the US continued to rely on the strategy of "massive retaliation" to deter aggression, other strategies were also developed during the period 1955-1960. The most notable of these was the strategy of "flexible response" articulated by General Maxwell Taylor and the strategy of negotiating with the Soviet Union in the fields of arms control and disarmament.

President Eisenhower did draw somewhat on the principles underlying these strategies, for he gradually came to stress the need for flexibility in dealing with conflicts and for controlling the arms race with the Soviet Union. His growing advocacy of conventional forces backed by comparatively low-yield tactical nuclear weapons was (as the European allies of the US sometimes feared) indicative of this readjustment away from the deterrent strategy of massive retaliation towards more flexibility in dealing with aggression in Europe. Eisenhower's interest in arms control led to the Open Skies Agreement of 1955, the Geneva conference on nuclear test bans, and the 1958 Surprise Attack Conference. The US continued to promote regional collective security arrangements to deter Soviet aggression and to justify the use of US force to meet communist aggression if deterrence failed. An excerpt from President Eisenhower's 1957 message to Congress regarding mutual security programs illustrates this:

We in our own interest, and other free nations in their own interest, have therefore joined in the building and maintenance of a system of collective security in which the effort of each nation strengthens all. Today that system has become the keystone of our own and their security in a tense and uncertain world.27/

To preserve both our economic and strategic interests in Southeast Asia, then, the US drew up detailed strategies for meeting the often subtle threat of communism in the region. The basic national policy statement outlining many of these strategies was NSC 5809. (See Appendix C.) Several of these strategies - for example, those relating to the training of indigenous police forces and the implementation of covert operations - were, in retrospect, the building blocks for future US strategies in

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Southeast Asia, thus paving the way for future US military involvement in the region. Yet, even though national policy makers of this period fashioned strategies for dealing with communist aggression in Indochina, it was not until the following period, beginning with the Kennedy presidency, that attention focused on this particular region.

### E. 1960-1965

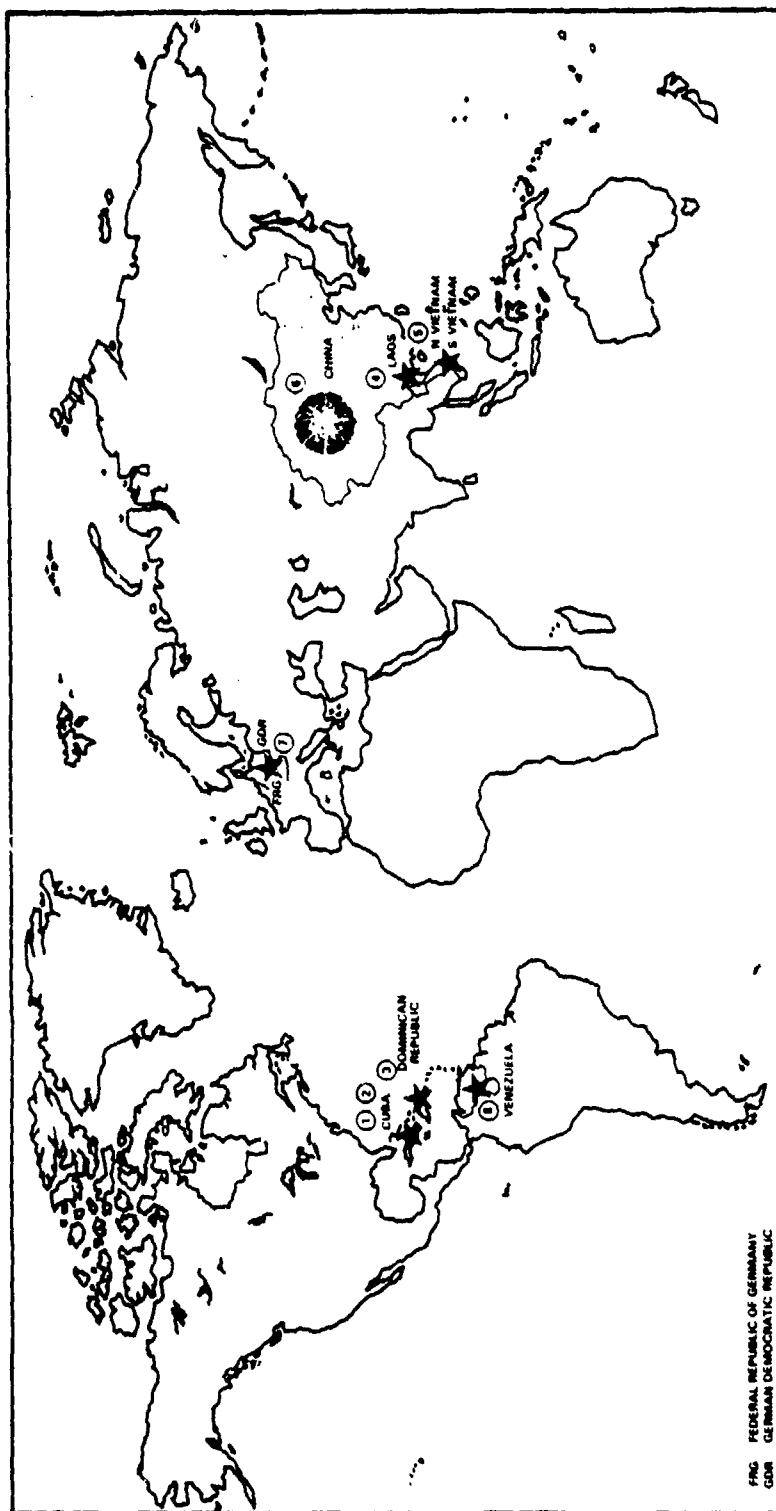
This time period, beginning with the inauguration of President Kennedy in 1960 and ending just prior to the 1965 arrival of US troops at Danang, can be characterized as an era in which new strategies were used for the attainment of old interests and objectives. The Kennedy administration began to stress the necessity of "nation-building" in Vietnam, concentrating on the region as a "test-case" for halting "wars of national liberation." In fact, while policy makers in the preceding time frame viewed subversion and guerrilla warfare as threats to US national objectives, it was not until the Kennedy presidency that a strategy was developed specifically for dealing with these threats.

A rejection of the "massive retaliation" strategy resulted; while the US would maintain an adequate defense in the event of total war, which implied the use of nuclear weapons, US strategists focused intently on developing responses for fighting limited wars, particularly those of an insurgent, subversive nature.<sup>28/</sup>

Indeed, the majority of conflicts in the world during this period were primarily of a limited, subversive nature (see Map 1-4). Except for the 1962 Cuban missile crisis and continuing tensions over Berlin, both of which involved direct superpower confrontations, this era's focus on flexible response appeared to meet the requirements of the time.

#### 1. Interests and Objectives

Similar to the interests and objectives outlined for the preceding periods, the US continued to stress the need to maintain a free, non-Communist Southeast Asia. In particular, the preservation of Vietnam



- 1 BAY OF PIGS INVASION CUBA 1961  
2 CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS 1962  
3 CONFLICT IN LAOS 1960-1961  
4 CONFLICT IN LAOS CONTINUOUS EVOLUTIONAL NEUTRALIZATION OF COUNTRY 1962  
5 VIETNAM CONFLICT INTENSIFIES 1960-1965  
6 CHINA EXPLODES ITS FIRST NUCLEAR DEVICE 1964  
7 CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS 1962  
8 INSURGENCY IN VENEZUELA 1962-1963

4541/78W

MAP 1-4 MAJOR CRISES AND SIGNIFICANT EVENTS AFFECTING U.S. POLICY  
FOR THE PERIOD 1960-1965

Map 1-4. Major Crises and Significant Events Affecting US Policy for the Period 1960-1965

## THE BDM CORPORATION

from the aggressive machinations of communist China was emphasized.<sup>29/</sup> Moreover, the emphasis on the region's economic importance to the US was reduced during this period; statements regarding US interests in Southeast Asia focused more on its strategic relevance and on the importance of fulfilling prior US commitments based on obligations set forth by SEATO.<sup>30/</sup>

The promotion and development of a viable, democratic South Vietnamese government was frequently cited as a major US objective in Southeast Asia. However, US visions of a "model" democracy in Vietnam were shattered by the corrupt and uncompromising Diem regime.

Globally, the US focused on two objectives: deterring total war and countering guerrilla insurgency. After the first tension-filled years of this period, characterized by saber-rattling on the part of both the US and the USSR, emphasis came to rest on reducing the frequency and intensity of superpower brinkmanship. The objective of deterring a nuclear holocaust came to be regarded as a vital interest of both powers.<sup>31/</sup>

The second objective, aimed directly at the Third World and indirectly at the world's two leading communist nations, entailed proving that the US was capable of dealing effectively with insurgency and guerrilla warfare. So vital was this objective considered that President Kennedy officially endorsed the US Army Special Forces, christening them the "Green Berets." Their responsibilities were greatly expanded in line with the administration's focus on counterinsurgency and covert operations. While the Bay of Pigs episode failed to prove US capabilities in this type of warfare, Vietnam seemed an excellent testing ground for countering "protracted guerrilla warfare" and "wars of national liberation."<sup>32/</sup>

### 2. Threats

The threat of communist aggression and imperialism assumed substantial proportions during this time period; in particular, the US perceived Peking as the primary instigator of subversion in Asia, Africa, and even in Latin America. Rhetoric emanating from the Soviet Union, stressing



## THE BDM CORPORATION

Soviet support for "wars of national liberation," and from the PRC, praising the virtues of "protracted guerrilla warfare," reinforced perceptions of a monolithic communist threat. A 1962 JCS assessment stated:

It is recognized that the military and political effort of Communist China...and the political and psychological threat by the USSR...is part of a major campaign to extend communist control beyond the periphery of the Sino-Soviet Bloc...It is, in fact, a planned phase in the communist timetable of world domination.33/

Hence, while President Kennedy indicated an appreciation for the "profound divisions" which, by 1962, had beset would-be communist unity, it was apparent that this appreciation was not shared by all other national policy advisers.34/ Even when the tensions between the USSR and PRC could no longer escape US notice, the dynamics of the rift and its overall effect on the Vietnam conflict were not seriously considered.35/

But, regardless of their external or internal direction, the US considered "wars of national liberation" - entailing cross-border insurgency, brush-fire aggression, and "spread and conquer" tactics - a major threat to its interests in Southeast Asia and, indeed, throughout the Third World. According to President Kennedy,

This is another type of war, new in its intensity, different in its origin -- war by guerrillas, subversives, insurgents, assassins, wars by ambush instead of by combat, by infiltration, instead of aggression, seeking victory by eroding and exhausting the enemy instead of engaging him. It is a form of warfare uniquely adapted to what has been strangely called "wars of liberation," to undermine the efforts of new and poor countries to maintain the freedom that they have finally achieved.36/

Globally, US tensions with European countries, particularly with France, threatened the fragile harmony of the Atlantic Alliance. Disgruntled by the US approach to a multi-lateral force (MLF) concept, France indicated intense displeasure with the US, initiating a reassessment of its

## THE BDM CORPORATION

own commitment to NATO and, in general, causing considerable anxiety within the US government.<sup>37/</sup> The sincerity of the US commitment to its treaty obligations had, thus, come under question. Although this was not the first time that US allies questioned the sincerity of US intentions, the French reassessment did mark the beginning of a decade in which US credibility became an issue domestically and internationally. The frequency with which national level policy makers stressed our SEATO obligations suggests that the possibility of losing credibility was a major national-level concern. This theme gains increasing relevance in the remaining two time-frames.

### 3. Strategies

Pursuing its objectives of an independent government and strong economy in South Vietnam, the US increased its political, economic and technical assistance to the country as part of its "nation building" program.

The most important national strategy developed during the 1960-1965 period, influencing not only US involvement in Vietnam but the entire US military posture, was the strategy of "flexible response." The importance of developing a method for dealing with subversion, especially of a limited nature, was a major reason for its evolution - thus, the development of the Counterinsurgency Plan (CIP) and other programs designed to meet the threat of insurgency. In 1961, President Kennedy noted,

We need a greater ability to deal with guerrilla forces, insurrections, and subversion. Much of our effort to create guerrilla and anti-guerrilla capabilities has in the past been aimed at general war. We must be ready now to deal with any use of force, including small externally supported bands of men; and we must help train local forces to be equally effective.<sup>38/</sup>

The strategy of "flexible response," by which the US was "to respond anywhere, at anytime, with weapons and forces appropriate to the situation," <sup>39/</sup> also left open the option of US troop commitment as a means

## THE BDM CORPORATION

by which to realize US national objectives, both global and in Southeast Asia. The Kennedy administration's build-up of US conventional forces was in keeping with this strategy of US flexible response. Citing its SEATO commitments and the Southeast Asian Resolution, the US committed troops to South Vietnam in 1965 and initiated its first bombing campaign against North Vietnamese targets as part of its strategy of flexible response in the Southeast Asian theater.

### F. 1965-1970

The 1965-1970 time period can be divided into two sub-periods: the first, 1965-1968, saw a high degree of thematic continuity from the preceding time period; the second, 1969-1970, marked the United States' entry into a fundamentally different era of foreign policy making. While characterized by many of the same objectives and interests which obtained for the four periods discussed above, this period saw the development of new strategies for their realization.

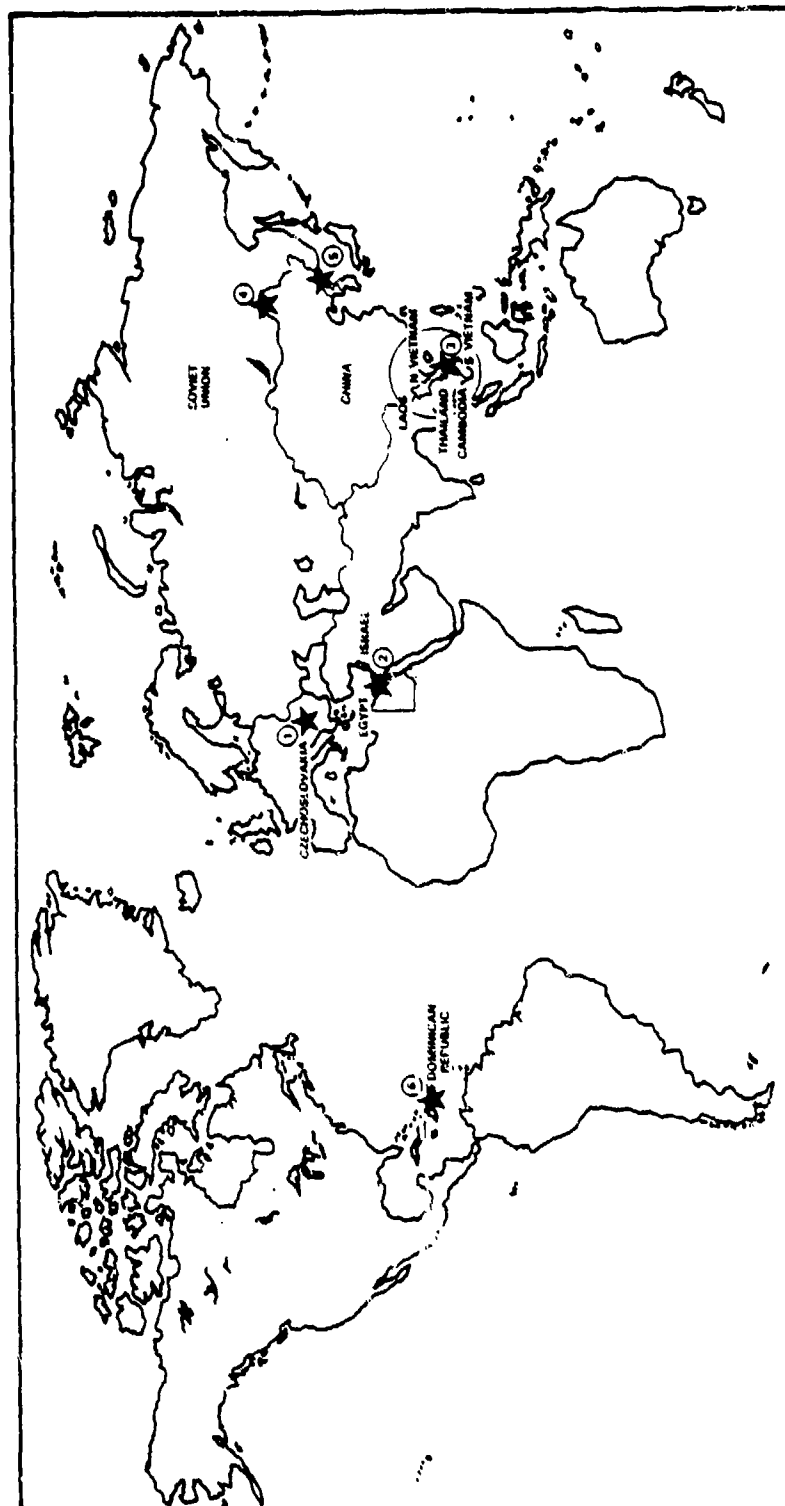
The years 1965-1970 found the Vietnam conflict at the center of US foreign policy concerns. The magnitude of the US investment in men, money, and materiel was unprecedented for any of the preceding time periods. Indeed, as the US investment in the region increased, so too did the frequency with which policy advisers stressed the need to uphold US commitments to its allies and to preserve the credibility and prestige of the US both at home and abroad.

Globally, the US found itself in a less turmoil-ridden environment as compared to the 1960-1965 period. With the exception of Vietnam, the focus of US policy came to rest briefly on the Dominican Republic and on the Middle East. Map 1-5 depicts these and other events which affected US policy for the period under consideration.

#### 1. Interests and Objectives

##### a. 1965-1968

As in the 1960-1965 period, the US continued to view the containment of communist-inspired aggression in Southeast Asia as a major



1. US INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 1968
2. VIETNAM COMPLETES EAST-WEST WAR, 1970
3. VIETNAM COMPLETES EAST-WEST WAR, 1970
4. US IN PAC BORDER CLASHES, 1968
5. COLLAPSE OF US IN PAC BORDER CLASHES, 1968
6. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC INTERVENTION, 1965

4541/78W

Map 1-5. Major Crises and Significant Events Affecting US Policy for the Period 1965-1970

## THE BDM CORPORATION

US policy objective. Communist China was perceived to be the primary instigator of aggression in Southeast Asia and, hence, US national interests included the containment of this aggression prior to its eruption into a major global confrontation. Guided by the lesson that "aggression is never satisfied," <sup>39/</sup> the preservation of US and allied security in the face of a potential third world war was considered to be of vital importance.

While the frequency of statements regarding the strategic significance of Vietnam decreased during this period, US policy advisers did continue to view the region as vital to US national security.<sup>41/</sup> More prevalent, however, were statements regarding the preservation of US credibility with its allies. As Secretary Rusk stated in August 1965,

...we know we have a commitment. The South Vietnamese know we have a commitment. The Communist world knows we have a commitment...This means that the integrity of the American commitment is the heart of this problem. ...if our allies, or, more particularly, if our adversaries should consider that the American commitment is not worth anything, then the world would face dangers of which we have not yet dreamed. And so it is important for us to make good on that American commitment to South Vietnam.<sup>42/</sup>

The US commitment to SEATO and successive presidential pledges served to reinforce the significance of the US investment in Vietnam. The preservation of US integrity and honor, therefore, became a high priority interest, both in waging the war, and, as will be seen, in terminating it.

### b. 1969-1970

In this sub-period, the US continued to view the preservation of a free South Vietnam as a vital objective, but in contrast with earlier periods, more emphasis was placed on South Vietnamese participation as a method for securing this objective. This policy, one facet of the Nixon administration's strategy for terminating the conflict, was an election campaign promise and a major objective of this sub-period and the following one.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

While still committed to containing communism in Asia and throughout the world, the US began to focus substantial attention on securing the objective of peace in Southeast Asia. The war's unpopularity, its seemingly endless duration, and its adverse effects on the US economy made the realization of this objective particularly vital.

Consistent with this aim, then, was the objective of reducing tensions with both the USSR and the PRC. The reduction of tensions on a global basis was regarded as a way to eventually terminate the conflict in Southeast Asia. Therefore, this sub-period saw an increase in statements highlighting the US desire to pursue detente; it also witnessed a greater appreciation of Sino-Soviet hostilities, as well as of the potential for exploiting these hostilities as one method for realizing US global objectives.

### 2. Threats

#### a. 1965-1968

Similar to perceptions maintained in the 1960-1963 period, in the 1965-1968 sub-period, Communist China was regarded as the most significant danger to the security of Southeast Asia and, therefore, to the security of the US as a Pacific power. In its effort to secure South Vietnam, the US was faced with the threat of cross-border insurgency. This phenomenon made it exceedingly difficult to create and preserve regions in the South "free" of communist infiltration and subversion. Hence, brush-fire aggression, with its tactics of "spread and conquer," was seen not only as threatening the security of Southeast Asia, but also the US ability to counter limited, guerrilla warfare.

A possible withdrawal of US forces from the conflict area was seen by US national security advisers as a psychological threat, with both domestic and international repercussions. If the US failed to curb the advance of communism in Asia, then as President Johnson stated in July, 1965, "no nation can ever again have the same confidence in American promise or in American protection."43/

## THE BDM CORPORATION

The Third World continued to experience a high degree of turbulence as it moved towards independence, and the US feared this chaos would lend itself too easily to communist subversion. The United States' 1965 intervention in the Dominican Republic reflected the Johnson administration's uneasiness over political shifts in the world's developing nations. It was felt that the Soviet Union, while perceived as almost docile when compared with the extremely militant and vocal PRC, would not pass up an opportunity to influence events in a turbulent, Third World nation.

### b. 1969-1970

The Third World continued to be a major concern for the US during this sub-period; in addition to lending itself to communist subversion, it was also regarded as a potentially disruptive annoyance, encumbering the US-Soviet-Chinese approach towards detente. The Vietnam conflict was, therefore, in itself, perceived as a threat to detente, as well as to the economic prosperity of the US both domestically and internationally. Widespread inflation coupled with a devalued dollar, outgrowths of managing a war on a peacetime economy, were very real threats to US strength during this sub-period.<sup>44/</sup> Concurrently, the rise of Japan and the Common Market as strongly endowed competitors threatened to exacerbate the critical US economic situation.

In Southeast Asia, guerrilla warfare and cross-border insurgency, now seen as a predominantly North Vietnamese export, continued to be seen as a major threat to the preservation of a free South Vietnam. In addition, over-reliance by US allies on American assistance and expertise was viewed as a liability to allied self-defense, diminishing allied initiative in meeting their own defense needs. As Richard Nixon said, "for if domination by the aggressor can destroy the freedom of a nation, too much dependence on a protector can eventually erode its dignity."<sup>45/</sup> The situation in South Vietnam reflected this concern.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### 3. Strategies

#### a. 1965-1969

Just as the interests and objectives for the 1960-1965 period were markedly similar to those for this sub-period, so also were the strategies employed for realizing these objectives during this and the previous period: The significant difference lay in the level of the US commitment - the number of troops, the amount of aid appropriated, and the intensity of bombing - to realizing its policy objectives in Southeast Asia. Consistent with its objective of maintaining a non-communist South Vietnam, the US initiated its "talk-fight" strategy, designed to induce Hanoi and its allies to cease aggression and eventually move towards a position considered by the US as favorable to North-South-US negotiations.

The US continued to commit its resources to South Vietnam; troops, materiel, and economic aid served to reinforce the US investment in the region. They also served to weaken the strategy aimed at inspiring South Vietnamese self-reliance and initiative in developing their own defense capabilities.

#### b. 1969-1970

The most significant strategy developed during this sub-period for realizing US policy objectives in Southeast Asia was the Nixon Doctrine, laying the groundwork for the gradual termination of hostilities in the region. Its central thesis, said President Nixon:

is that the United States will participate in the defense and development of allies and friends, but that America cannot -- and will not -- conceive ALL the plans, design ALL the programs, execute ALL the decisions, and undertake ALL the defense of the free nations of the world. We will help where it makes a real difference and is considered in our interest.46/

The Nixon Doctrine reflected a vast array of concerns: the economic well-being of the US was jeopardized by over-spending on the war, US NATO allies expressed displeasure over what they perceived as the US



## THE BDM CORPORATION

over-extension in Vietnam, and a commitment to reducing tensions with the USSR and the PRC required a timely resolution of the Vietnam conflict. Hence, this sub-period saw the initiation of the "Vietnamization" strategy, of gradual withdrawal of US troops from South Vietnam, and of attempts at negotiating a durable and honorable peace.<sup>47/</sup>

While committed to an "era of negotiation," the US continued to provide a high level of military assistance to South Vietnam as a means of preserving the country from a communist takeover and, in addition, as a way to bolster Saigon's morale as the US force withdrawal commenced. Military operations in and over Cambodia were also directed towards these ends.

The Kissinger-Nixon style of diplomacy, characterized by personal and often secret dialogue, served as a tool by which to realize negotiation objectives -- with the PRC and USSR for the purpose of detente, and with Hanoi for the purpose of terminating the war. As will be seen in the next period, 1970-1975, this style of diplomacy did allow for progress in both of the above-mentioned areas. It also allowed for a commitment to be made to South Vietnam which, given the attitude of the US Congress at the time, had little chance, if any, of being upheld.

### G. 1970-1975

The 1970-1975 time period evidenced a thematic continuation of the major interests and objectives, perceived threats, and strategies enumerated for the 1969-1970 sub-period. During this final time period, the US found itself in the midst of a major foreign policy reevaluation which had a significant influence on the nature and shape of US international relations. In essence, a set of new objectives dictated that the ideologies of the post-WW II period be substantially discarded; the US objective of terminating hostilities in Southeast Asia and of realizing a durable and honorable peace stimulated the development of a significantly different US foreign policy.

A desire to limit aggression (and the tools of aggression) and establish an international order based on stability, restraint, and peace were

## THE BDM CORPORATION

the major US global objectives during this period. Their realization required a commitment to international partnership, national strength, and a willingness to negotiate.<sup>48/</sup> In addition, the executive branch's boldness of purpose, built upon linkage and personal diplomacy, served as the driving force for realizing major US objectives during this time period.

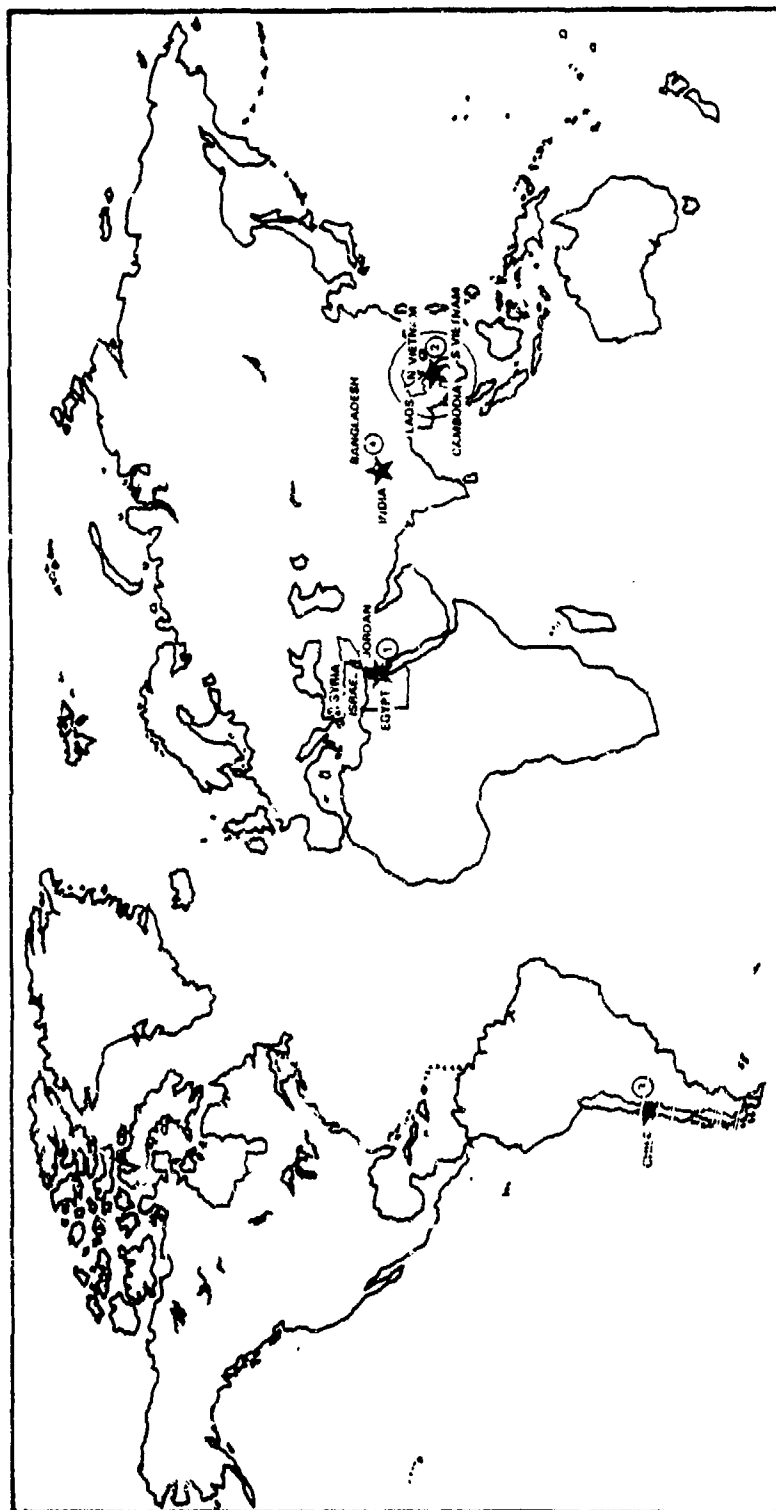
The problem of turbulence in Southeast Asia remained a major concern of US national policy makers. Yet, the desire to progress towards detente with the PRC and the USSR was of equal, if not greater, significance. The Sino-US and Soviet-US rapprochement came to be seen as a powerful diplomatic tool for resolving Southeast Asian hostilities.

As Map 1-6 indicates, other global concerns captured the attention of US policy makers during this period. The Yom Kippur War and the Arab oil embargo of 1973 drew US attention away from Vietnam for which a peace settlement had been negotiated the same year. From the US experience with the Middle East came a greater appreciation of the potency of economic and political regionalism; the Arab-Israeli conflict brought the compatibility of US-allied interests (particularly those of Japan and Western Europe) into question.

### 1. Interests and Objectives

US interests and objectives for Southeast Asia for the 1970-1975 period emphasized the elimination of hostilities in the region, the realization of a peace which was durable and honorable for both the US and South Vietnam, and the promotion of South Vietnam's (and of other countries' of the region) self-reliance in defending its own national interests and objectives.

The elimination of hostilities in the region paralleled the US global objective of resolving local conflicts prior to their resulting in a major superpower confrontation and prior to the antagonists' use of force to resolve the conflict. The US objective of decreasing tensions with both the PRC and the USSR served the purpose of avoiding a major superpower confrontation as well as of securing Hanoi's acceptance to negotiate more willingly and with less intransigence. While the US gradually withdrew its



4541/78W

- 1 MIDDLE EAST WAR AND OTHER TENSIONS INCLUDING THE ARAB OIL EMBARGO 1973
- 2 CONFLICT IN VIETNAM CONTINUES SPREADS INTO CAMBODIA, LAOS
- 3 PEACE ACCORDS 1973 SOUTH VIETNAM FALLS 1975 COMMUNIST REGIMES
- 4 UNREST IN SOUTH AMERICA ESPECIALLY CHILE 1973

Map 1-6. Major Crises and Significant Events Affecting US Policy for the Period 1970-1975

## THE BDM CORPORATION

troops from the South, it increased its bombing activities to compensate for the RVNAF's weakness, to decrease further the number of US war casualties, and to serve notice to Hanoi that it was inherently in its interests to halt insurgency and negotiate a settlement. This objective did, in fact, conflict with the objectives of securing detente and deterring a major confrontation with the world's leading communist powers: the decision to mine Haiphong harbor and, in general, to escalate just prior to the 1972 Moscow summit, was not only a bold move, but a risky one. Yet, in retrospect, the decision appears to have been made based upon a balancing of seemingly opposite objectives. The US had gained a greater appreciation of the Sino-Soviet rift, of the objectives and interests pursued by each of these countries, and of Hanoi's independence in policy formation.<sup>49/</sup> With these factors in mind, it was possible (albeit risky) to pursue concurrently these two major objectives.

The preservation of US credibility, both domestically and internationally, continued, as before, to be a major US objective. Hence, in Southeast Asia, the search for a lasting and honorable settlement, providing for the maintenance of a free South Vietnam, reflected the US interest in standing by its commitments and in protecting its past investment (of men, materiel, monetary assistance, and pride) in the region.

The US objective of maintaining viable and mutually beneficial security programs, particularly with Western Europe, Japan and Taiwan, found itself jeopardized by US foreign policy initiatives with the Soviet Union and Communist China. The US pro-Israel stance in the face of the Arab oil embargo, the US resistance to British and French efforts to create an independent nuclear force (an objective theoretically in line with the US aim of encouraging greater allied self-reliance), the US non-consultation with its allies concerning its major policy changes regarding the USSR and the PRC, and the US changes in its trade and monetary policies all served to bring the sincerity of this US objective into question. The allied response to US behavior indicated that the post-war era was, indeed, drawing to a close.<sup>50/</sup> The 1970-1975 period was dynamic, placing in

## THE BDM CORPORATION

opposition, often purposefully, many long-held interests and objectives with new.

### 2. Threats

A closed, compartmentalized world, divided into a number of dominant and competing blocs consisting of the US, PRC, USSR, Japan, the Common Market, and OPEC - all pursuing self-serving objectives and interests with little regard for international cooperation - was perceived by US policy makers as a threat to both global stability and to US-allied economic and military partnerships.<sup>51/</sup> Thus, as Winston Lord, Director of the Policy Planning Staff, noted in 1974,

Partners in international politics, as in marriage, take each other for granted only at the risk of divorce. Our alliances must grow or they will wither - adjust to new conditions or become anachronistic...we will advance together, or we can all slide back together. Nations no longer can afford to pursue national or regional or bloc self interest without a broader perspective. Countries must find their self-interest in the common interest and, indeed, recognize that the two are often identical.<sup>52/</sup>

Threats to global stability evolved in response to US-allied reevaluations of their common objective. Perceptions of the monolithic communist threat and the concomitant policy to contain this threat were considered misguided.<sup>53/</sup> Therefore, while communist insurgency and terrorism continued to be regarded as a major threat to US (and allied) security interests, the fact that these activities were independently initiated or exported, rather than monolithically conceived, made it more difficult to garner broad-based support for alliances based upon the principles of containment.

The economic difficulties of the US during this time period also served to threaten US-allied economic and political relations. Deficit spending, a weakened dollar, massive inflation, and Arab oil politics prompted the Nixon administration to develop a number of economic policies designed to stabilize the US economy; many of these actions were met with

## THE BDM CORPORATION

considerable allied consternation. Global interdependence, based on mutual understanding and restraint and applied not only to US-Soviet and Sino-US relations, but also to US-allied relations, was regarded as a major US objective; the inability to realize this goal was, in itself, a threat. According to Mr. Lord,

Global interdependence is no longer a slogan, but an insistent reality. The crises of oil, food, and inflation cast shadows over the future of developed and developing, rich and poor, consumer and producer nations alike. Not only the prospects for world growth are at stake. A serious economic decline could trigger widespread domestic instability and tear the fabric of international political cooperation upon which peace itself depends.<sup>54/</sup>

Domestic difficulties generated by the Watergate scandal also posed a serious threat to US credibility, both at home and abroad.

In Southeast Asia, US national policy makers identified several threats. Prior to the 1973 peace settlement, the most significant threats appeared to be Hanoi's (and the Viet Cong's) continued aggression coupled with intransigence regarding negotiations, and South Vietnam's internal weaknesses - economical, political, and military. Communist infiltration from the North, Hanoi's use of supply routes and sanctuaries in neighboring countries, and the replenishing of the North's military stockpile, primarily by the USSR, represented major obstacles to the US objectives of preserving a free South Vietnam (and Cambodia) and of reaching a negotiated settlement.

The US goal of peace with honor (and of diminishing its own presence in the region) was also obstructed by South Vietnam's initial refusal to accept an in-place cease-fire and by its rejection of the Vietnamese-language version of what had been considered the final text of the treaty.<sup>55/</sup> South Vietnam felt threatened not only by communist aggression but also by its own realization that its forces were not yet adequately prepared to fulfill the objectives of the Nixon Doctrine.

After the peace settlement was signed, US national policy makers identified two serious threats to US interests in Southeast Asia: South

Vietnam continued to have difficulties in self-defense and the North continued its aggression after a brief respite. By mid-1974, the situation in South Vietnam and Cambodia had begun to deteriorate significantly. From this point until the communist successes in these countries in the spring of 1975, the US executive sought a way to counter this threat. As will be seen in Chapter 3 of this volume (in the sections dealing with the Nixon and Ford administrations), Congressional restraints on the provision of US aid to the region came to be considered, at least from the executive perspective, a threat as great, if perhaps not greater, than Hanoi's aggression.<sup>56/</sup>

### 3. Strategies

The basic strategies used by US national policy makers for realizing US objectives during this time period were, essentially, those determined in the 1969-1970 sub-period. In the international arena, the US sought to accomplish its goal of relaxing tensions with the Soviet Union and Communist China; the basic strategy employed was that of personal diplomacy which included a tough negotiating posture and the strategy of linkage. The Nixon-Kissinger initiatives in summit negotiations served as major vehicles for realizing a number of important arms limitations negotiations, specifically the SALT I agreement and the MBFR and SALT II talks. The strategy of exploiting the hostilities existing between Moscow and Peking was also utilized as a means both for realizing detente with each of the powers and for bringing pressure on Hanoi to negotiate.

The strategies set forth in the Nixon Doctrine also obtained for the 1970-1975 period: In Southeast Asia, "Vietnamization" continued as did the provision of US military assistance to those countries in the region dependent upon the US for the development of their indigenous defense capabilities. Prior to the 1973 peace settlement, the US also employed coercive diplomacy in the region (a strategy which was, in essence, a continuation of Johnson's "talk-fight" strategy) as a way to compel Hanoi towards negotiations.

The maintenance of US bilateral and multilateral defense arrangements, such as SEATO, was emphasized during this period, both as a way to

## THE BDM CORPORATION

assuage suspicions regarding the US sincerity in upholding its commitments as it withdrew gradually from South Vietnam, and as a way to deter aggression in countries aligned with the US.

The applicability of these strategies to US-Southeast Asian relations during this time period was, however, limited: their effectiveness was diminished both by US Congressional (and public) constraints on renewing US involvement in the region and by national-level confusion generated by the Watergate crisis. In theory, the Nixon Doctrine could have been both a realistic and effective strategy if applied to a country which had not been exposed to a high level of US presence or, for that matter, to the US willingness to fight the "host" country's battles. For South Vietnam, the strategy of self-reliance was so poorly understood and applied that it stood little chance of succeeding.

### H. ANALYTIC SUMMARY AND INSIGHTS

The 1945-1950 period was marked by an ardent and perhaps idealistic desire for a tension-free international system; it also witnessed an attempt by national policy makers to reconcile US anticolonialist and anticommunist policies. With the outbreak of the Korean war, the second period, 1950-1955, saw the advance of monolithic communism as the major threat to US interests and objectives. The US strategy of "massive retaliation" and the "liberation" doctrine ("roll back") earmarked the US for the role of "world policeman." The third period, 1955-1960, saw a degree of continuity with the preceding period regarding perceptions of the monolithic communist threat; however, while the bi-polar world continued to be marked by considerable tension between the two superpowers, the US and the USSR, a perceptible softening in the rhetoric of "massive retaliation" and "liberation" occurred, illustrating the US policy makers' gradual approach to arms limitations and the reduction of international tensions. A new strategy, "flexible response," which included counterinsurgency to fight what Khrushchev termed "wars of national liberation," marked the 1960-1965 period; in addition, the preservation of US credibility was found to be of



## THE BDM CORPORATION

increasing relevance as a major national interest and its potential loss, a threat to US international and domestic prestige.

The fifth period, 1965-1970, was divided into two sub-periods: The first, terminating with the close of the Johnson presidency, saw a continuation of themes from the preceding period, although greater emphasis was placed on the PRC as the major threat to US interests and objectives. The second sub-period ushered in a substantially new era of national policy which, while characterized by similar objectives and interests, saw the development of several new strategies for their realization. In the 1970-1975 period, the major goal and preoccupation of US policy makers was the establishment of a stable, international system based on mutual understanding and restraint, an objective which was remarkably similar to that of the 1945-1950 period (see Figure I-1). The credibility and prestige themes continued to permeate US national policy during this period, and the employment of coercive and secret diplomacy came to the center of US foreign policy conduct.

In the majority of time periods discussed, the US found itself constrained by its perceptions of its own leadership role in the world and of the threats which appeared to obstruct the realization of US objectives. As the strongest post-World War II power - both economically and militarily - the US fashioned its global policy on the premise that it was America's duty to assume the role of global arbiter and policeman. Although this perspective was a "natural" response precipitated by the realities operating in the immediate post-war environment, it was also one founded upon what many prominent individuals have termed arrogance. This viewpoint came to be so firmly ingrained in the minds of US policy makers, that, in essence, it served to limit the US appreciation of the other forces at work in the global environment, particularly of nationalism.

Inconsistencies in policy served to undermine the effectiveness and credibility of the United States. For instance, the US World War II objective of defeating the Japanese served as the basis for cooperation and friendship between US forces in Southeast Asia with Southeast Asian, particularly Vietnamese, nationalists. Yet, after their common enemy had been

## THE BDM CORPORATION

defeated, the predominantly Eurocentric US policy perspective reasserted itself; to many Vietnamese nationalists, this appeared to be a betrayal of confidence, laying the foundation for future anti-American (and anti-imperialist and anticolonialist) attitudes on the part of numerous Vietnamese people.

The objective of containing the communist threat, globally and in Southeast Asia, was the major US objective throughout most of the time periods discussed. This aim conflicted steadily with the US objective of promoting self-determination and civil liberties on a global basis, particularly in Vietnam. The battle against communism took precedence over these other US objectives. Hence, the US came to support predominantly authoritarian, repressive regimes, as in South Vietnam and South Korea, rationalizing this support by citing the domino theory and the lessons of Munich. The differences between civil wars, colonial wars, and "wars of national liberation" were too frequently clouded by perceptions of the monolithic communist threat.

Finally, terms such as "interest," "objective," and "threat" have been frequently misunderstood, overused, or misapplied by US national policy makers. In scrutinizing the major US policy statements for the period 1945-1975, especially regarding Southeast Asia, one is immediately struck by the frequency with which these terms are employed, often emphasized by the adjective "vital." Such verbal extravagance leads to generalization and ambiguity, making it difficult for the US public, US policy makers, and US allies and non-allies to grasp the true level of priority attached to US interests, objectives, and threats. For the purpose of a coherent and consistent US foreign policy, it is of paramount importance that such terms be applied carefully, with the utmost attention given to identifying real US objectives and interests in a realistic manner. Frequent US national level reviews of long-held objectives and interests, of perceived threats, and of strategies to meet the threats or accomplish US national objectives and interests would facilitate this process of evaluation and reevaluation.

CHAPTER 1  
ENDNOTES

1. These definitions were drawn primarily from the JCS manual, Dictionary of United States Military Terms for Joint Usage, Publication 1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968). Modifications were made, however, to reflect a blend of military and civilian usage of these terms.
2. The five year "slice" approach was utilized by Paul Kattenburg in "Vietnam and US Diplomacy 1940-1970," Orbis, 15, #13 (Fall 1971), pp. 818-841. Although Kattenburg uses the device as an analytic tool as the Vietnam Study team does, his methodology and conclusions are somewhat different. Nevertheless, his article served as the basic inspiration for this chapter's five-year breakdown.
3. Figure 1-1 was compiled from sources which appear in the Volume III Bibliography. The major source used in drawing up this graphic was United States - Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967, Study Prepared by the Department of Defense (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971) hereafter DOD US/VN Relations. All entries are paraphrases of US national policy statements made by US national level policy makers.
4. See DOD US/VN Relations, Book 1 for a discussion of US wartime interaction with Ho Chi Minh. The US OSS had cultivated ties with Ho, prompting the latter to view the US as the only major post-war power truly interested in and capable of intervening for the Viet-Minh on the side of independence, countering the French colonialist drive in Indochina.
5. DOD US/VN Relations, Book 8, p. 266, "Report by NSC on US Position in Indochina."
6. Churchill's "iron-curtain" speech, in Paul Hammond, Cold War and Detente (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Jovanich, 1975), p. 32.
7. See Kattenburg, p. 821. For a discussion of the US handling of the Dutch colonialist problem, see Henry Kenny, "The Changing Importance of Vietnam in United States Policy: 1949-1962," Ph.D. dissertation, American University, 1974.
8. President Truman in his March 1947 message known as the "Truman Doctrine," cited in DOD US/VN Relations, Book 1, IV A 5.
9. For an illuminating and controversial treatment of the Truman Doctrine, NSC 68, and Cold War Strategies, see Richard M. Freeland's work, The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism (New York: Schocken Books, 1974).

## THE BDM CORPORATION

10. Walter La Feber, America, Russia, and the Cold War 1945-1975, 3rd ed. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1976); see also Stephen E. Ambrose, Rise to Globalism (London: Penguin Book, 1971), pp. 188-191; NSC 68 was indeed a highly controversial document which decreed that the Soviet Union sought complete dominion over the entire globe. Regardless of a number of top-ranking State Department officials' opposing viewpoints (including those of Kennan and Bowlen), who argued that this was not the USSR's intention, the document and strategy it proposed served the aim of providing an "enemy" for the US, giving purpose and definition to the US in the new post-war environment. See also Hammond, pp. 61-62.
11. See Chapter 3 of this volume - "The Truman Administration" for more details on the provision of aid.
12. See, for example, Under Secretary of State Bedell Smith's statement of April 19, 1954, in DOD US/VN Relations, Book 7, B-12; Dulles' statements in Book 1, II B-21, and in Book 7, B-15; Eisenhower's statement in Book 7, B-10. Interestingly, the 1950-1955 and 1955-1960 periods were, in fact, the only periods during which the economic significance of the Southeast Asian region was given primary stress. Some analysts (Schlesinger, for example) indicate that with the development of synthetic rubber, the natural rubber of Southeast Asia was no longer of prime interest to the US or Japan. Other analysts contend that the US emphasis on the significance of Southeast Asia as a resource base was extremely exaggerated; their view sees Southeast Asia's economic merits as having little or no importance. It should be noted that Japan's resurgence as an industrial power derived mainly from US requirements for support of US/UN forces in Korea.
13. See, for example, the JCS memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, 10 April 1950, on the strategic importance of Southeast Asia, DOD US/VN Relations, Bk. 8, pp. 308-313.
14. Ambrose, p. 229; and Kenny, p. 326.
15. See Kenny, p. 326, and DOD US/VN Relations, Bk. 2, p. A-2.
16. See Chapter 3 of this volume - "The Eisenhower Administration" for additional information on the strategy of "united action."
17. For example, see NSC 124 (February 1952) which recommended in the case of overt Chinese intervention:
  - o naval, air, and logistical support of French Union forces;
  - o naval blockade of Communist China; and
  - o attacks by land and carrier-based aircraft on military targets in Mainland China. DOD US/VN Relations, Bk. 1, II.B. 1.a., p. B-5.
18. Fred Greene, US Policy and the Security of Asia (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), pp. 72-73.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

19. See Chapter III of this volume - "The Eisenhower Administration" for a detailed discussion of the US call for united action during the Dien Bien Phu crisis.
20. John Foster Dulles, "The Doctrine of Massive Retaliation", in Richard Head and Ervin Rokke, eds., American Defense Policy (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).
21. Ibid.
22. Ambrose, p. 258.
23. Ibid., p. 262. This "softer" approach, apparent in late 1957-1958, particularly after Dulles' departure from the administration, waned at the close of the Eisenhower administration. Tensions over Berlin, the Cuban Revolution, and the U-2 incident (leading to the aborted summit) were major factors in this US turn away from the mini-detente evident during these years.
24. President Eisenhower, Address at Gettysburg College, "The Importance of Understanding," April 4, 1959, DOD US/VN Relations, Bk. 7, B-51.
25. Taken from NSC 5809, DOD US/VN Relations, Bk. 10, 1115, and NSC 5602/1, pp. 1054-1056.
26. See NSC 5809, DOD US/VN Relations, Bk. 10, p. 1115.
27. President Eisenhower, "Special Message to the Congress on the Mutual Security Programs," May 21, 1957, DOD US/VN Relations, Bk. 7, B-32.
28. For a brief discussion of the basic tenets of "Flexible Response," see Maxwell Taylor's "Flexible Response: A New National Military Program," in Head and Rokke, pp. 65-67.
29. During this period, Secretary of State Dean Rusk went to great lengths to highlight the Peking-Hanoi alliance. He consistently pinpointed the PRC as responsible for the aggression in Vietnam. See for example, DOD US/VN Relations, Bk. 12, VI B, p. 8 - Interview with Rusk on February 25, 1965; also, DOD US/VN Relations, Bk. 7, D-25 - NBC conversation with Rusk on January 18, 1965; also Ambrose, pp. 301-302.
30. See "Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense" from the JCS on the strategic importance of the Southeast Asian mainland, January 13, 1962, DOD US/VN Relations, Bk. 12, V B 4, pp. 448-453.
31. While this period did not witness a great deal of progress in detente in general, and in arm limitations in particular, it should be noted that an underground nuclear test ban and the establishment of the Moscow-Washington hot-line occurred during this time frame.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

32. See, for example, NSAM 288, an extract of which appears in DOD US/VN Relations, Bk. 3, IV C 1, p. 47, as an indication of the national level acceptance of Vietnam as a "test-case."
33. Memo for the Secretary of Defense, 13 January 1962 from the JCS on the strategic importance of the Southeast Asian mainland, DOD US/VN Relations, Bk. 12, V B 4, p. 450.
34. See President Kennedy's speech at the University of California, March 23, 1962, DOD US/VN Relations, Bk. 7, C-18. Kennedy's appreciation was also rather limited in that, while he admitted international communism was suffering from disunity, he also maintained that the USSR and PRC were still pursuing the goal of a monolithic communist world.
35. See Secretary Rusk's news conference in which he quoted President Johnson, February 25, 1965, DOD US/VN Relations, Bk. 12, VI B, p. 4. From 1962-1964, the split was particularly obvious. During the Brezhnev power consolidation period (1964-1965), however, the USSR and PRC did attempt to initiate a healing of the rift, which, ultimately, failed. In all fairness, President Johnson may have taken notice of this brief "thaw" between the USSR and the PRC and assumed the two powers were united and unified in their objectives and strategies regarding Vietnam.
36. President Kennedy's address at graduation exercises of the US Military Academy, DOD US/VN Relations, Bk. 7, p. C-23.
37. De Gualle, already distrustful of US independence in deciding to threaten a nuclear attack without consulting its NATO allies in Europe (re. missiles in Cuba), was further dismayed by the US veto in multilateral force decision making. See Ambrose, p. 295.
38. J. F. Kennedy, "Special Message to Congress on the Defense Budget," March 28, 1961, DOD US/VN Relations, Bk. 7, C-7.
39. From General Maxwell Taylor's "Flexible Response: A New National Military Program," Rokke and Head, p. 65.
40. LBJ speech at John Hopkins, April 17, 1965, DOD US/VN Relations, Bk. 12, VI B-13.
41. See, for example, Address by Leonard Unger, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs, "Present Objectives and Future Possibilities in Southeast Asia," April 19, 1965, DOD US/VN Relations, Bk. 7, D-33; also, Statement by Secretary Robert McNamara before the Subcommittee on Department of Defense Appropriations, August 4, 1965, "Build up of US Forces in Vietnam," Bk. 7, D-51.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

42. Secretary Rusk, Interview with Mr. Reasoner and Mr. Kendrick, August 8, 1965, DOD US/VN Relations, Bk. 7, D-55.
43. LBJ press conference, July 28, 1965, DOD US/VN Relations, Bk. 12, VI B-17.
44. See Volume IV - U.S. Domestic Factors Influencing Vietnam War Policy Making, Chapter 4 "US Economy and the Vietnam War," for a detailed discussion of the war's impact on the US economic situation.
45. Elliot Richardson, quoting President Richard M. Nixon, "The Foreign Policy of the Nixon Administration: Its Aims and Strategies," Department of State Bulletin, LXI, 1978, p. 258.
46. Richard M. Nixon, "United States Foreign Policy for the 1970's," in Head and Rokke, pp. 75-76.
47. See Chapter 3 of this volume, the Nixon administration, for a more detailed discussion of the Vietnamization, withdrawal, and negotiation strategies.
48. President Richard M. Nixon, "US Foreign Policy for the 1970's: A New Strategy for Peace," Report to the Congress, February 18, 1970, Department of State Bulletin, LXII, 1602 (March 9, 1970), p. 275; and Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Rush, "Department Discussed Security Assistance Program for Fiscal Year 1974," Department of State Bulletin, LXVII, 1770, p. 697.
49. See, for example, Nixon's "US Foreign Policy for the 1970's: A New Strategy for Peace," op. cit. For a well developed discussion of the US balancing of these objectives, see Hammond, pp. 269-278.
50. The allied response, while varied, indicated a position marked by more independence and initiative: West Germany moved to settle the Berlin issue; Western Europe and Japan, in line with their own national interests and needs, moved to support the Arabs in the Middle East as the oil embargo took its toll on their economies. For a detailed discussion of US policy during this period and its impact on US-allied relations, see Hammond, Chapter 11, "Nixon and the New 'Era of Negotiations.'" Also, see LaFeber, pp. 275, 283.
51. LaFeber, p. 265.
52. Address by Winston Lord, Director, Policy Planning Staff, "America's Purposes in an Ambiguous Age," Department of State Bulletin, LXXI, 1845, (November 4, 1974), pp. 618, 621.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

53. Lord, pp. 618-619; President Nixon, "US Foreign Policy for the 1970's," pp. 274-275; and Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Rush, "The US Commitment to a Generation of Peace," Department of State Bulletin, LXX, 1825, p. 649.
54. Lord, p. 621.
55. Hammond, pp. 280-281.
56. See, for example, Secretary of State Kissinger's "America's Strength and America's Purposes," Department of State Bulletin, LXXI, 1838, p. 377.



CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL PRECEDENTS WHICH INFLUENCED US INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM

A. INTRODUCTION

Past history shapes perceptions of present day events as well as the evolution of future events. This statement, albeit unoriginal, is extremely relevant to a discussion of US foreign policy for Vietnam. During the course of the war, US policy makers frequently drew from the "lessons" of history in explaining a particular course of action - political or military. Simplistic adages, such as "never again" or "remember Munich," were often used in lieu of developing more precise and perhaps more convincing explanations for making a particular policy decision. In addition, they often came to be voiced indiscriminately, leading to generalization, overuse, and misapplication.

This chapter focuses on "historical precedents" and US policy makers' perceptions of these precedents. The discussion centers on the use of these precedents their role in determining and constraining US policy formation for Vietnam. The term "historical precedent" is defined in this chapter as a decision or event that occurred in the past which served as an example or lesson justifying a subsequent action. The precedents analyzed in this chapter are chosen only insofar as they relate to US involvement in Vietnam. Those chosen are considered to have been the most important and most frequently cited precedents influencing US national-level policy makers. 1/ Figure 2-1 provides an overview of the historical precedents discussed in this chapter and summarizes their role in shaping or constraining US involvement in Vietnam. 2/

B. APPEASEMENT IN MUNICH

The 1930s taught us a clear lesson: aggressive conduct if allowed to go unchecked and unchallenged, ultimately leads to war. 3/

(President John F. Kennedy, 1962.)

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HISTORICAL PRECEDENTS AS INFLUENCES IN THE VIETNAM WAR	
PRECEDENTS	HOW THE PRECEDENTS INFLUENCED US POLICIES
JUSTIFICATIONS FOR INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM	
APPEASEMENT AT MUNICH	APPEASEMENT ENCOURAGED NAZI AGGRESSION; SIMILAR APPEASEMENT WOULD ENCOURAGE THE COMMUNISTS.
"LOSS" OF CHINA	THE DEMOCRATS WERE ACCUSED OF LOSING CHINA, WHICH, INTER ALIA, RESULTED IN THE MCCARTHY ERA; ALSO LOSS OF VIETNAM TO THE COMMUNISTS MIGHT CRIPPLE ANY INCUMBENT ADMINISTRATION.
CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS AND BERLIN CRISES	FIRMNESS WITH THE ENEMY, GOOD CRISIS MANAGEMENT, AND GRADUAL PRESSURE ON THE ENEMY LED TO SUCCESS IN THESE CRISES AND PROVIDED A BASIS FOR THE SUBSEQUENT US POLICY OF GRADUALISM IN VIETNAM.
LIMITED INTERVENTION TO CONTAIN COMMUNISM INCLUDING LEBANON, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, AND THE BAY OF PIGS.	US INTERVENTION IN LEBANON AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC WERE RELATIVELY BLOODLESS, SHORT-TERM AND DECISIVE OPERATIONS. CONVERSELY, FAILURE AT THE BAY OF PIGS PROVIDED AN INCENTIVE FOR PRESIDENT KENNEDY TO DEMONSTRATE SUCCESS IN VIETNAM.
CONSTRAINTS ON THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR	
FAILURE OF THE BAY OF PIGS	US FAILURE IN THE BAY OF PIGS OPERATION MILITATED AGAINST DIRECT US INTERVENTION IN LAOS IN 1961 AND 1962. HAVING FAILED TO DESPOSE CASTRO IN CUBA, KENNEDY APPROVED THE DIEM COUP ONLY AFTER BEING ASSURED IT WOULD SUCCEED.
CHINESE INTERVENTION DURING THE KOREAN WAR	SURPRISE CHINESE INTERVENTION IN KOREA DRASTICALLY CHANGED THE COURSE AND COST OF OF THE KOREAN WAR. THEREAFTER US ADMINISTRATIONS AVOIDED ACTIONS THAT MIGHT BE PROVOCATIVE TO THE CHINESE.
THE RESPECTED ADAGE: "NEVER AGAIN" SEND TROOPS TO FIGHT IN THE ASIAN MAINLAND (AS IN KOREA)	EISENHOWER DECIDED NOT TO SUPPORT THE FRENCH AT DIEN BIEN PHU. KENNEDY RESISTED COMMITTING GROUND COMBAT FORCES IN LAOS AND VIETNAM. JOHNSON COMMITTED GROUND COMBAT FORCES ONLY AFTER AIR POWER FAILED TO DETER THE DRV.

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Figure 2.1. A Summary of Historical Precedents as they Influenced US Involvement in Vietnam. 2/

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When Senator Henry Jackson accused President Carter of "appeasing" the Soviets with the SALT II treaty, he was invoking one of the most agonizing memories of his generation. 4/ The lesson, derived from the 1938 appeasement of Hitler in Munich, has been frequently cited by US post-WWII administrations to gain support for a policy of containing communism and aggression. US presidents and congressmen repeatedly warned that "appeasement" in Greece, Berlin, Quemoy, Cuba, or Indochina would only encourage more aggression. In 1947, Congressman Lyndon Johnson cited Munich to support Truman's aid proposal for Greece and Turkey. 5/ During the Vietnam conflict, Presidents Kennedy and Johnson both stressed that US vital interests would be jeopardized if the US failed to meet force with force, thereby showing strong determination to halt communist expansion in the Third World.

As a result of the Munich experience, the concept "appeasement" has come to connote weakness and conciliation -- "peace at any price" -- rather than a means for buying time. 6/ The traumatic Munich experience seemed to teach that US national leaders meet aggression quickly, decisively, and ideally multi-laterally; moreover, it cautioned that unchecked aggression is less restrained with each success, prompting states to fall like dominoes, as happened after Munich. Finally, the Munich experience warned that a statesman must be willing to go to war if his policy and determination are to appear credible.

Each of the major decisions that increased US involvement in Vietnam, beginning with the 1950 decisions to recognize Bao Dai and provide aid and advisers (MAAG) to the Associated States, was based on a belief that the Munich analogy applied to Vietnam. In June 1950, with the outbreak of the Korean War, President Truman justified his request for the rapid dispatch of aid to Indochina by stating,

The Communists...are engaged in a monstrous conspiracy... the best time to meet the threat is in the beginning...if [peace loving nations] don't act together, they are likely to be picked off, one by one. 7/

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Eisenhower called for united action in 1954 when he asked Churchill to join forces with the US in preventing the collapse of the French garrison at Dien Bien Phu:

We failed to halt Hirohito, Mussolini, and Hitler by not acting in unity and in time. That marked the beginning of many years of stark tragedy and desperate peril...May it not be that our nations have learned something from the lesson? 8/

Winston Churchill, however, rejected the applicability of the Munich analogy to the situation in Indochina. 9/

To justify the deepening of America's involvement in Vietnam, President Johnson and his advisers cited the danger of appeasement and the domino effect: "aggression feeds upon aggression." 10/ Only a week before the Gulf of Tonkin incident, President Johnson stated,

...we learned from Hitler at Munich that success only feeds the appetite of aggression. The battle would be renewed in one country and then another country, bringing with it perhaps even larger war and crueller conflict as we have learned from the lessons of history. 11/

President Johnson's Secretary of State, Mr. Rusk, extended the Munich analogy further, equating Hitler's Mein Kampf with Chinese Defense Minister Lin Piao's 1965 message to the Third World. 12/ President Johnson also alluded to the Munich analogy when he suggested that US involvement in Vietnam was probably deterring World War III:

Your American President cannot tell you with certainty that a Southeast Asia dominated by Communist power would bring a third world war much closer to terrible reality. One could hope that this would not be so. But all that we have learned in this tragic century strongly suggests to me it would be so. 13/

With the Tet offensive of 1968 and the subsequent winding down of the US involvement in Vietnam, the Munich analogy as applied to Vietnam was dropped from the speeches of key US policy makers. However, the necessity

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of showing domestic and international audiences that the US was not selling out an ally or appeasing an aggressor was reflected in phrases such as "peace with honor" used by the Nixon administration.

Was the Munich analogy misused and overused? Indeed, this analogy was frequently drawn by US national leaders to justify or explain the US need to meet aggression anywhere (in this case, in Vietnam) in an assertive, aggressive, non-appeasing manner because it served as a convenient and familiar rallying device for eliciting a strong, often emotional response from the US public in support of US policies directed at forcefully containing or curtailing (communist) aggression. Frequent application of historical analogies, however, often leads to misapplication and generalization. They often come to serve as a basis for action, causing the necessary reflective analysis of each singular case to be neglected or even avoided. The Munich experience and the circumstances surrounding it were unique, not wholly or even partially applicable to the US experience in Vietnam. It appears that of the post-WWII presidents, only President Kennedy seemed to appreciate that historical analogies must be drawn sparingly and with great care; 14/ for few if any contemporary events or crises mirror those found in past history.

In the case of Vietnam, memories of Munich encouraged a forceful US response; they may also have contributed to the United States' reticence in negotiating with the North Vietnamese, particularly in the 1960-1965 time-frame. Broadly speaking, reticence to negotiate based on the fear that negotiating might be construed as or result in "appeasement" illustrates an incorrect usage of the Munich analogy. 15/ The diplomatic tragedy of Munich, however, had such international consequence that its use (and, hence, misuse) as an historical analogy, especially regarding Vietnam, was, problematically, a "natural" response to aggression in the post-WWII environment.

C. THE FALL OF CHINA

The United States is determined that the Republic of Vietnam shall not be lost. 16/

(President John F. Kennedy, 1961.)

I am not going to lose Vietnam. I am not going to be the president who saw Southeast Asia go the way China went. 17/

(President Lyndon B. Johnson, 1963.)

China's "loss" to the communists in 1949 served as an historical precedent compelling each successive post-WWII president to support South Vietnam in order to contain communism and prevent the loss of another Asian nation. Mao Tse-tung's victory over Chiang Kai-shek was indeed a traumatic event for the United States. At the time, the Chinese Communist victory was considered a severe threat to US global, strategic interests. On the domestic front, it had severe consequences for the Democratic administration and provided ample ammunition for Senator Joseph McCarthy in his proceedings against alleged communists in the US government.

Although the Chinese mainland was not actually the United States' to "lose," its fall has been considered by some analysts to have been "the greatest single tragedy of modern times." 18/ Peking's alignment with Moscow significantly altered the balance of power in Asia. 19/ And Mao's vociferous anti-US stance was also a grave disappointment for the US: before his death, President Roosevelt had hoped that China would serve as a stabilizing influence in Asia during the continent's transition from colonialism to nationalism. 20/

After the fall, communist activities in Asia were seen as directly inspired by Peking. Soviet support for the Mao regime during the early and mid-1950's intensified the US fear of international communism, serving as the basis for US perceptions of communism as a monolithic entity, even after the Peking-Moscow union had become severely strained.

On the domestic front, the "loss" of China, followed shortly by the Korean War, contributed to the 1952 defeat of the Democratic party. 21/

## THE 8DM CORPORATION

The view that China's fall occurred because of communist plotting from within the Department of State led to the McCarthy hearings. As a result, the US government lost officials who best understood Asian communism. The purge of China experts also discouraged Foreign Service Officers from independent thinking and encouraged many to assume a rigid anticommunist stance. 22/

China's "loss," or the "fall of China syndrome" 23/ prompted subsequent post-WWII presidents to intervene actively and often forcefully in Asia in support of non-communists faced with communist aggression. Both Korea and Vietnam can be seen in this light. The "loss" of South Vietnam to communism was feared by US national level policy makers because it could potentially,

- Alter the strategic balance of power in Asia, benefiting the communist world;
- Lead to a domino-like fall of other states in Southeast Asia;
- Encourage the communists to foment additional "wars of liberation;"
- Weaken the SEATO alliance;
- Weaken US allies' faith in America's commitments abroad;
- "Stimulate bitter domestic controversies in the US and be seized upon by extreme elements to divide the country and harass the administration"; 24/ and
- Mar the place in history of the president who "lost" South Vietnam.

During the United States' involvement in Vietnam, the "fall of China syndrome" weighed heavily on US national level policy makers. According to Charles Yost,

The US leaders recollection of the domestic-political consequences of the "loss" of China and their fear of similar consequences to them if Vietnam were "lost" was perhaps the decisive factor in determining their policies and behavior. 25/

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Even Republican President Nixon, while withdrawing US forces from Vietnam, was fearful of a political backlash reminiscent of the 1952 and 1968 Democratic Party's defeat if he were to "lose" South Vietnam. Mr. Yost states,

President Nixon continued to be so convinced that the "silent majority" would still react with political fury to a defeat in Vietnam that for four more years he pursued the will o' wisp of winning the war while withdrawing from it. 26/

Was the "loss" of China and the events surrounding it analogous to the situation in Vietnam? The evidence indicates that the Nationalists "lost" China because of their corrupt, inefficient leadership, a lack of broad based popular support, and a lack of ideological purpose. The eminent Sinologist John King Fairbanks pointed out that, although from 1945-1959 Soviet aid to the Chinese Communists was less than US aid to the Chinese Nationalists, Mao's forces were, nevertheless, capable of mobilizing and utilizing the potentialities of revolution while the Nationalists were not. 27/ Some analysts contend that the Chinese Nationalists would have been defeated even if the US had committed one million men to the region. 28/ In Vietnam, during the 1968 Tet offensive, US gradualism left open the possibility of sending an additional 200-250 thousand US troops to Vietnam in order to deal with the growing number of communist troops in South Vietnam. 29/ Although President Johnson did not fulfill this request, the already large number of US troops in Vietnam indicated the administration's fear of being the second Democratic administration since World War II to "lose" an Asian country to communism.

It is possible to draw some parallels between the leadership capabilities of Nationalist Chinese Chiang Kai-shek and South Vietnamese Ngo Dinh Diem. The regimes of both men were corrupt, repressive, and without broad based popular support. Broadly speaking, a government that is incapable of demonstrating real leadership has little chance for survival. A State Department cable dated May 1949, transmitted over Secretary Acheson's name to the US consulate in Hanoi, made this point regarding Bao Dai's political



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viability at the time. Drawing from the US China experience, a comparison was made between the leadership problems in China pre-Mao and Vietnam:

The experience [of] China has shown [that] no amount [of] US military and economic aid can save [the] government, even if recognized by all other powers and [if it] possessed full opportunity [to] achieve national aims, unless it can rally support [of the] people against commies by affording representation [of] all important national groups, manifesting devotion to national as opposed [to] personal or party interests, and demonstrating real leadership. 30/

Had this cable been written a decade or so later regarding the Diem government, it would have been an equally realistic assessment.

Finally, at the time of China's fall, there were a number of talented, experienced China "watchers" within the US government who were capable of assessing the situation in civil war-torn China. The purge of these old China hands, a by-product of the McCarthy era, left a void in the State Department's pool of Asian experts. 31/ This purge also had an effect on US Vietnam policy making; whereas the old Asian experts had generally promoted compromise between the Communists and Nationalists in China, the new Asian hands urged intervention at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. 32/ By way of contrast, the Cuban missile crisis found a number of well-informed Sovietologists on hand to gauge the situation and advise the President accordingly.

The "loss" of China, therefore, served as a justification for US involvement in Vietnam as it had for US participation in the Korean War. As an historical precedent, it served as the basis for a gradualist approach to the insurgency in Vietnam, particularly since many US policy makers believed that the US had done too little in trying to "save" China in 1949. Strong criticism regarding Congressional aid limitations at the time of Mao's victory may also have encouraged the Congress, especially during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, to be less "budget-conscious" and more willing to appropriate funds for the Vietnam war effort.

D. THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS AND BERLIN: FIRMNESS WITH THE ADVERSARY

The challenge that we face in Southeast Asia today is the same challenge that we have faced with courage and that we have met with strength in Greece and Turkey, in Berlin and Korea, in Lebanon and in Cuba, ...there can be no peace by aggression and no immunity from reply. 33/

(President Lyndon B. Johnson, 1964.)

The Cuban missile crisis of 1962 and successive crises over Berlin served as precedents illustrating the benefits inherent in good crisis management, in dealing firmly with an adversary, and in employing gradual coercion as an indication of US resolve, while simultaneously allowing the antagonist time to comply with US demands. Presidents Kennedy and Johnson both hoped to resolve the Vietnam challenge by employing similar tactics in order to compel Hanoi to halt its subversive activities. The Cuban missile crisis brought the US and USSR very near to a major nuclear confrontation; this fact counseled the need for more moderate policies of co-existence on the part of both the US and the Soviet Union. The 1963 nuclear test ban treaty and the establishment of the Moscow-Washington hot-line illustrated the moderating influence of that crisis, marking a watershed in Soviet-American relations 34/ and prompting both countries to refrain from a nuclear confrontation over Vietnam.

After three years of post-WWII bureaucratic wrangling between the four occupying powers in Berlin over the city's status, the Soviets and East Germans attempted to blockade Berlin in order to prevent Western access. The US responded with the famous Berlin Airlift of 1948. 35/ Minor crises erupted in Berlin during the 1950s, culminating in the 1961 erection of the Berlin Wall which the Soviets and East Germans hoped would halt the flow of East Berliners to the West. Construction of the wall resulted in a tense confrontation between US and Soviet forces during which President Kennedy mobilized US reserve forces to reinforce the West Berlin garrison. 36/

The installation of missiles in Cuba, 90 miles from the United States, was considered a significant threat to US security. US national policy makers felt their installation would enhance the Soviet Union's strategic

## THE BDM CORPORATION

posture and, perhaps more importantly, would damage US prestige and threaten US strategic interests. If the Soviets were successful in establishing and maintaining a missile base in the Western Hemisphere, then, in the view of the Kennedy administration, the politico-diplomatic damage to the US would be sizeable. After the crisis, President Kennedy indicated that a Soviet success "would have politically changed the balance of power. It would have appeared to, and appearances contribute to reality." 37/

The US experiences in Berlin and Cuba illustrated the US ability to deal firmly with the Soviet Union in order to achieve US objectives while also avoiding a nuclear conflict. In both crises Kennedy respected the rules of good crisis management:

- Never corner an opponent and always assist him to save face;
- Convince the opponent that the situation threatens US vital interests;
- Clearly communicate to the opponent one's own goals and intentions, and pressure the opponent by gradual steps;
- Provide a time limit within which the opponent may respond;
- Convincingly threaten the opponent if he fails to respond in a favorable or timely fashion; and
- Offer an incentive or "carrot" as well as a "stick." 38/

In the 1961 Berlin crisis, President Kennedy moved gradually to increase US pressure on the Soviets. In order to convince Khrushchev how strongly the US regarded Berlin as a vital interest, President Kennedy called up the Reserves and mobilized for a possible conflict. Khrushchev finally removed his deadline for Kennedy and the US president removed his threat of attack. The Berlin Wall marked the termination of the crisis, halting the flow of refugees yet allowing Western access to Berlin. 39/

In the Cuban missile crisis, Kennedy again moved in gradual steps, increasing US pressure on the Soviet Union to remove its missiles; he provided a time limit and, if the Soviets persisted, a threat of nuclear attack. Kennedy employed the "carrot and stick" strategy: the "carrot" was a promise not to invade Cuba, and the "stick" - a tacit ultimatum of nuclear war. In addition, Kennedy privately assured Khrushchev that the US

## THE BDM CORPORATION

would remove its own missiles from Turkey after the crisis. 40/ Khrushchev valued the political significance of this act, aware that US missiles in Turkey were obsolete. 41/ After the missile crisis was defused, President Kennedy observed that the lesson "toughness with the communists guarantees their collapse or compliance" should not necessarily be concluded from his administration's victory. 42/

The Cuban missile crisis tested the strength of American leadership and its ability to manage power effectively. Theodore Sorenson, Kennedy's Special Assistant at the time, provided this assessment,

To the whole world it displayed the ripening of an American leadership unsurpassed in the responsible management of power. From the moment of challenge the American President never had a doubt about the need for a hard response. But throughout the crisis he coolly and exactly measured the level of force necessary to deal with the level of threat ... At every stage he gave his adversary time for reflection and reappraisal, taking care not to force him into "spasm" reactions or to cut off his retreat. 43/

Southeast Asia posed no sudden crises of the magnitude that the Berlin or Cuba crises caused for the Kennedy Administration (the Laotian crisis was temporized by the neutrality agreement of 1962). Nonetheless, Kennedy responded to communist subversion and terrorism in Vietnam with a similar gradual approach, increasing the amount of US aid and the number of US advisors allocated for South Vietnam. President Kennedy was determined to prove that "wars of national liberation" would not succeed and that the US was capable of meeting this type of challenge through counter-insurgency tactics.

The situation in Vietnam reached crisis proportions during the Johnson administration. As vice president under Kennedy, Johnson had observed the administration's management of the Berlin and Cuban crises, concluding that the danger of nuclear blackmail could be removed by facing down the Soviet threat. 44/ Johnson had hoped for similar success in forcing Hanoi to desist in its support of Southern insurgency by gradually escalating US bombing against the North. When this strategy failed, he decided upon the

## THE BDM CORPORATION

next gradual step of committing US combat forces to curtail Hanoi's aggression. In the case of Vietnam, however, each increase in US pressure was met by an increase in pressure from the DRV and the NLF.

During the Nixon administration, Henry Kissinger employed a similar "carrot and stick" strategy as a way to move Hanoi towards negotiations. In this instance, the "carrot" was an offer of substantial aid to rebuild the North; the "stick" - more bombing. <sup>45/</sup> This strategy was not, however, effective for dealing with the Vietnam conflict. Two essential elements present in the Cuba and Berlin crises were absent from the Vietnam situation. While the Soviet Union had apparently set its own limits as to the level of US punishment it was willing to endure for involvement in Berlin and Cuba, the DRV was uncompromising in its determination to reunify Vietnam and seemed to have no such limitations. In the Berlin and Cuba crises, the US employed a potent threat that, if absolutely necessary, would have been fulfilled; in Vietnam, the US was unwilling to exert the kind of military pressure (i.e., nuclear attack) sufficient to threaten the North's survival, thereby compelling Hanoi to meet US demands and desist from aggressive activities. Time limits proved to be inapplicable to Vietnam.

Therefore, while the Berlin and Cuba precedents influenced both President Johnson and Nixon to meet the adversary firmly, both in war and negotiations, the Vietnam conflict was actually too long and complex to be handled as Berlin and Cuba were; the lessons learned from Cuba and Berlin by both Moscow and Washington cautioned against employing the "carrot and (nuclear) stick" in Vietnam.

### E. THE BAY OF PIGS: LIMITED INTERVENTION AS A MEANS OF CONTAINMENT

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures. I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their destinies in their own way. <sup>46/</sup>

(President Harry S. Truman, 1947.)

## THE BDM CORPORATION

The principle espoused by President Truman in his 1947 speech regarding aid to Greece and Turkey became the basis for the majority of US economic and military assistance programs during the next thirty years. The purpose of the Truman Doctrine, as it came to be called, was to contain communist aggression and protect US strategic economic, and political interests on a global basis. It served as the basis for covert intervention in Iran, Guatemala, Cuba, the Philippines, and Chile; and overt action in Korea, Lebanon, the Dominican Republic, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. 47/ A number of these earlier operations, such as the 1953 reinstatement of the Shah of Iran, came to be regarded by US national policy makers as having been so successful that future presidents were also prompted to endorse strategies of limited covert politico-military intervention.

In 1958, when President Eisenhower sent US Marines to Lebanon to quell pro-Nasser Arabs and protect US oil interests, he cited the Truman Doctrine as the justification for the action. Eisenhower limited the action to a take over of the airfields, capital, and other key installations while the Lebanese government regained stability. 48/ In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson sent US Marines and an airborne division to the Dominican Republic to restore order, protect American citizens and their interests, and deter a possible communist coup. The intervention was limited in time, economic cost, and number of troops and casualties. This experience probably encouraged President Johnson in his hope that Vietnam would also be a short-term limited war which would be resolved quickly and satisfactorily. 49/

One of the most significant examples of limited intervention, from the standpoint of lessons later applied to US involvement in Indochina, was the Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961. The invasion was an American-planned attempt to depose Fidel Castro and establish a government more amicable to the US. Only ninety miles from the Florida coast, a communist Cuba was seen as a direct threat to the US, capable of exporting communist subversion to neighboring Latin American countries.

Encouraged by a 1954 success in Guatemala, the CIA drew up invasion plans during the Eisenhower administration. 50/ After his inauguration,

## THE BDM CORPORATION

President Kennedy soon came under heavy pressure to accept and act upon these plans. 51/ The new President, while agreeing to the plan, imposed one condition on the invasion: he ruled out any direct, overt participation of US armed forces in order to avoid the appearance of direct interference in Cuba's internal affairs and any associated international criticism of US activities, particularly by the OAS. This limitation, however, greatly weakened the CIA-sponsored operation; the spring 1961 invasion by Cuban exiles failed miserably.

The operation's failure had a substantial impact on the US, particularly on its international relations. US support of the invasion strengthened Castro's popular support in Cuba and revived Latin American fears of American imperialism, negating Kennedy's attempt to identify the US with anticolonialism. It undermined American allies' confidence in US leadership, while the Soviet Union gained prestige as a protector of small nations, threatening the US with retaliation for its actions. More important, the humiliation compelled Kennedy to follow a harder line in the Cold War to prove his toughness both to domestic critics and to the Soviet leaders. 52/

President Kennedy learned some valuable lessons from this experience at a relatively low cost. The most important lesson counseled the need for caution before embarking on military ventures in the Third World. President Kennedy's appreciation of this lesson was reflected in his statement after the invasion's failure: "If it hadn't been for Cuba, we might be about to intervene in Laos....I might have taken [Lemnitzer's] advice seriously," referring to the JCS's urging to bomb and/or invade Laos. 53/ Thus, Kennedy was more wary of advice from the JCS and CIA, instituting stricter controls over CIA activities. For alternative military advice, he turned to his newly appointed Special Military Representative, General Maxwell Taylor. Furthermore, the White House staff was given more responsibility in foreign and defense affairs; the staff offices were moved closer to the president, providing better coordination within the executive branch.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

The US attitude towards the overthrow of South Vietnam's President Diem was also influenced by the Bay of Pigs experience. Several of President Kennedy's advisers, in particular Ambassador Frederick Nolting and Vice President Johnson, urged that Diem be allowed to continue as president, hoping Diem would institute much-needed reforms to gain the confidence and support of the South Vietnamese populace. As US patience with Diem dwindled, the South Vietnamese generals advised US officials they were prepared to remove Diem from power. President Kennedy, however, remained noncommittal, wishing to avoid world criticism for interfering in the internal affairs of another Third World nation.<sup>54/</sup> (For a detailed discussion of US involvement in the Diem overthrow see Chapter 3 - The Kennedy Administration.)

Although the Bay of Pigs experience imposed certain constraints on US activities in Southeast Asia, the experience also served as an incentive to succeed in Vietnam. Kennedy's embarrassment over the invasion's failure, his settling for the neutralization of Laos and for the USSR's erection of the Berlin Wall, and, finally, his 1961 Vienna encounter with the gruff and vociferous Nikita Khrushchev prompted the President to remark to James Reston,

...the only place in the world where there was a real challenge was in Vietnam, and now we have a problem in trying to make our power credible, ... Vietnam looks like the place. <sup>55/</sup>

President Kennedy felt compelled to balance what he perceived as blows to his and America's prestige by taking an aggressive stand in Vietnam. South Vietnam, therefore, was to serve as a "test-case" of America's capabilities in containing Third World based communist aggression in a limited war, the successful outcome of which was of paramount importance to the United States.



## THE BDM CORPORATION

### F. THE CHINESE INTERVENTION IN KOREA

...it is clear that, to bomb the North sufficiently to make a radical impact on Hanoi's political, economic and social structure, would require an effort which we could make but which would not be stomached either by our own people or by world opinion; and it would involve a serious risk of drawing us into open war with China. 56/

(Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, 1966.)

The fear that the Chinese might intervene as they did in the Korean War acted as one of the most significant constraints on US policy makers in their determination of a military strategy for Vietnam. The Chinese intervention in Korea changed the direction of both the Korean War and of the Cold War: it prevented a UN victory and led to a stalemate involving two painful years of negotiations. Moreover, it resulted in greater hostilities between the US and Communist China, tensions which continued for the next 20 years. 57/

In 1952, American policy makers expected the Chinese Communists to intervene in Vietnam against the French, regarding as evidence of this intention the massing of Chinese troops on the Tonkin border. 58/ The US contingency plans for responding to massive Chinese intervention at that time included a naval blockade, interdiction of Chinese communication lines, and possible air strikes against military targets in China. 59/ It was generally assumed by US strategists that if a "wider war" resulted owing to Chinese intervention, then nuclear weapons would be used to terminate the conflict. In April 1954, at the time of the Dien Bien Phu siege, Secretary of State Dulles met with Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov and Chinese Foreign Minister Chou En-lai in Geneva. Based on his discussions with the two ministers regarding the situation in Vietnam, Dulles remarked in a memo to Washington:

The attitude here of Molotov and Chou En-lai's statement yesterday lead me to rate more highly than heretofore the probability that any open US intervention

## THE BDM CORPORATION

would be answered by open Chinese intervention with consequences of general war in Asia.60/ (Emphasis added.)

Hence, US fears of Chinese intervention in Vietnam arose early in the history of US involvement in that area, continuing throughout most of the war.

The "flash point" (or point beyond which Communist China could no longer tolerate US actions in Vietnam, prompting them to intervene) was difficult for US policy makers to quantify. Although fear of Chinese intervention persisted throughout most of the war years, speculations as to which US action would trigger Chinese intervention changed over time. The level of escalation considered by the US as being tolerable to the Chinese was reassessed frequently during the war. In 1954, Secretary Dulles defined the "flash point" as that time when the US initiated "any open intervention;" in 1965, the Chinese themselves defined the "flash point" as the moment when US troops entered North Vietnam. 61/

During the United States' intermittent bombing of North Vietnam, specific targets most likely to be provocative were avoided. President Johnson believed that a "wider war" with China or the Soviet Union could be prevented if certain actions were avoided, including:

- Use of nuclear weapons;
- Invasion of North Vietnam;
- Destruction of the dike system in North Vietnam;
- Bombardment of civilian population centers;
- Attacks on lines of communication close to the Chinese border;
- Mining of North Vietnamese ports; and
- Increases in clandestine operations in, or an invasion of, Cambodia and Laos.

The prohibitions against the first four were so strong that these particular actions were never seriously proposed; the others were suggested by the JCS at various times and rejected. 62/ Yet US policy makers were never absolutely sure that by avoiding certain provocative actions, the Chinese would not intervene. As George Ball said in 1966, "Unhappily we will not find out [where the flash point is] until after the catastrophe." 63/

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Later, President Nixon and his policy advisers appeared less fearful of triggering Communist Chinese intervention. The Nixon administration's initiation of detente with the PRC and the USSR decreased the likelihood that a "flash point" would be reached. This leverage allowed the US to conduct bombing of and operations in Cambodia and Laos, as well as to bomb targets and mine waters in North Vietnam heretofore considered too provocative.

The collection, US-Vietnam Relations 1945-1967, (the DoD Pentagon Papers) includes many memos and conversations in which a decision to escalate operations against North Vietnam or its sanctuaries was postponed or never approved out of fear that the Chinese would intervene. When considering the US intervention at Dien Bien Phu, the State Department urged caution, suggesting that the US make clear to both the PRC and US allies that US intervention would not have as its aim the overthrow or destruction of the Peking regime. 64/ Ten years later, because of uncertainty as to the Chinese response, the US refrained from a retaliatory strike after the Viet Cong attack on the Bien Hoa base in November 1964. 65/ For the same reason, air strikes against POL facilities, power stations, airfields, and surface-to-air missile sites were postponed in 1964-65. US decision makers also postponed destruction of the MIGS and airfield in Phuc Yet for three months in 1965. 66/ Likewise, in August 1967, President Johnson rejected using air power to close the port of Haiphong and to destroy a section of the dike system. 67/ Decisions to mine the North's major ports were also constrained by fears of possible Soviet retaliation, either directly in Vietnam or elsewhere, such as in Berlin. 68/

Chinese and Soviet warnings increased in number when President Johnson initiated the first US bombing campaigns against the North and committed troops to the South. In March 1965, both Brezhnev and Chou En-lai offered to send in troops in support of Hanoi. 69/ The Chinese did, in fact, intervene in the war between 1964 and 1971 by sending military personnel to North Vietnam, including engineers, railroad construction workers, and anti-aircraft personnel, some of whom were casualties of American bombing. 70/ But the Chinese never responded by sending a "yellow horde" into Vietnam as happened in Korea.

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The major effect that the fear of Chinese intervention had on the US conduct of the war from 1961-1968 was that it limited the scope and nature of US military operations. By proceeding gradually (in reaction to increasing DRV-NLF pressure), the US felt it could gauge the Chinese-Soviet reaction and, thereby, avoid a major confrontation with either power. The United States' gradual escalation, however, afforded North Vietnam the time to replenish both men and materiel, as well as to augment its resources with those provided by the USSR and the PRC. In 1968, Clark Clifford offered this pessimistic appraisal:

If we send in 100,000 men, the North Vietnamese will meet us. If North Vietnam runs out of men, the Chinese will send in volunteers. Russia and China don't intend for us to win the war. 71/

The JCS argued that once the US had committed itself to the defense of South Vietnam, no restrictions should be placed on the US conduct of the war; 72/ nevertheless, each administration felt compelled to limit US military action out of concern for a wider war. Admiral Sharp, among others, criticized the restrictions placed on the US military; he argued that the "political and diplomatic circles in Washington were disproportionately concerned with the possibility of Communist Chinese and Soviet intervention, throttling the military's ability to conclude successfully the commitment into which that leadership had drawn us." 73/ Others maintained a similar point of view. According to Bernard Brodie,

We have seen the US engage itself in a foolish and costly war in Vietnam, but with critical restraint with respect to anything that might involve China or the Soviet Union, and doing so despite the fact that the cost of that restraint was humiliation and military failure in Vietnam. 74/

Whereas the US military enjoyed considerable flexibility in the conventional fighting employed in Korea short of using nuclear weapons or violating the Manchurian sanctuary, in Vietnam US military planners were frustrated by the constraints on operations against Hanoi which had been imposed from fear that the Chinese or Soviets might intervene in response.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

It is possible, however, that fear of a wider war constrained the Chinese more than the US. In the 1960s, the Chinese had many internal difficulties with which to contend, including the upheaval caused by the Cultural Revolution from which they are still trying to recover. These problems may have restrained the PRC from intervening in Vietnam, making their provision of aid to Hanoi a more realistic and feasible course of action for them at the time. General Maxwell Taylor suggested that the Chinese and Soviets may have feared confrontation with the US more than the US feared one with them. 75/ Certainly the idea of a major superpower confrontation prompted both the US and the two major communist powers to be cautious during the Vietnam conflict. Even if the Chinese had been ready to directly intervene, the North Vietnamese would not have been enthusiastic about having great numbers of Chinese on their soil again. Historically, considerable enmity has existed between the Vietnamese and Chinese for centuries; China controlled Vietnam for over a thousand years. As an example of the Vietnamese disdain for the Chinese, Ho Chi Minh stated in 1945:

The French are foreigners. They are weak...Colonialism is dying out. Nothing will be able to withstand world pressure for independence. They may stay for a while, but they will have to go because the white man is finished in Asia. But if the Chinese stay now, they will never leave. For me, I prefer to smell French sh-- for five years, rather than Chinese sh-- for the rest of my life. 76/

Fear of Chinese intervention coupled with a desire to avoid a nuclear confrontation between the major superpowers, therefore, counseled US restraint in determining military strategies for Vietnam. The Korean precedent of Chinese intervention shaped this attitude. The gradual Sino-US rapprochement of the early 1970s eased the intensity of this heretofore prevalent US fear, allowing for actions to be taken previously considered too provocative.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### G. "NEVER AGAIN" EMPLOY COMBAT TROOPS IN AN ASIAN LAND WAR

We don't want our American boys to do the fighting for Asian boys. We don't want to get involved in a nation with 700 million people and get tied down in a land war in Asia. 77/

(President Lyndon B. Johnson, 1964.)

The fear of another protracted Asian land war like Korea served to restrain Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy from committing US ground forces to Vietnam. After the Korean War, which resulted in a stalemate after long negotiations, a number of high-ranking US military leaders 78/ and civilians stressed the importance of "never again" committing American ground forces to a ground war in Asia.

Several factors militated against such a commitment:

- The vast expanse of Asia with its huge population historically placed the foreign invader at a disadvantage;
- Geopolitical boundaries provided numerous potential sanctuaries;
- The terrain and climate of many parts of Asia, particularly in Indochina, were not conducive to operations by modern, sophisticated armed forces;
- The communications infrastructure was primitive, lacking modern roads, railroads, ports, harbors, and airfields needed to support US combat forces;
- The enormous engineering and logistical problems involved in supporting combat operations in Indochina required exceptionally heavy commitments of combat service support units;
- Heavy casualties could be expected to result from a combination of enemy action, disease, and sickness during a protracted war; and
- The communists in Asia had ready access to almost unlimited personnel and materiel and enjoyed relatively safe lines of communication.

Advocates of air and naval power during the Dien Bien Phu crisis contended that ground combat troops were not needed in Indochina; air support

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alone would do the job, although tactical nuclear weapons would possibly be required. The Chairman of the JCS at the time, Admiral Radford, was such an advocate. He proposed "Operation Vautour" (Vulture) which would have provided approximately 200 Naval aircraft from two US carriers in the Gulf of Tonkin and land-based US Airforce planes from the Philippines to attack General Giap's three divisions of Viet Minh surrounding Dien Bien Phu. Vice President Nixon and Secretary of State Dulles supported Admiral Radford, but Congress and others in the military who opposed his plan prevailed. It was felt that air and naval power alone could not do the job intended and that ground forces would inevitably be needed. 79/ General Matthew B. Ridgeway, US Army Chief of Staff, cautioned President Eisenhower in the strongest terms not to intervene at Dien Bien Phu:

If we did go into Indo-China, we would have to win. We would have to go in with a military force adequate in all its branches, and that meant a very strong ground force--an Army that could not only stand the normal attrition of battle, but could absorb heavy casualties from the jungle heat, and the rots and fevers which afflict the white man in the tropics. We could not again afford to accept anything short of decisive military victory. 80/

Not only would intervention at Dien Bien Phu be infeasible, but also costly and neocolonialist. 81/ Senator John Stennis also drew from the Korean experience, stating in a letter to Secretary of Defense Wilson in January 1954:

We should certainly stop short of sending our troops or airmen to this area...when we send one group, we shall have to send another to protect the first....I do not think we can at all afford to take chances on becoming participants in Indo-China. 82/

President Kennedy was consistently opposed to sending ground troops to Vietnam, although he did not openly admit his opposition for fear of criticism. 83/ He had been warned against future involvement in Asian land wars by both President Eisenhower and General MacArthur. Kennedy's aversion to waging a "white man's" war contributed further to his reluctance to

## THE BDM CORPORATION

commit combat forces to Vietnam; in lieu of this course of action, he continued to send aid and advisors to South Vietnam and promoted the development of a counterinsurgency program. 84/

By March 1965, the imperatives of the deteriorating situation in South Vietnam, however, convinced President Kennedy's successor, Lyndon Johnson and his principal advisers that a cautious, carefully orchestrated commitment of US forces to the South could prevent its loss to the communists without enlarging the war beyond the two Vietnams. The decision to commit US ground forces to Vietnam was based on a number of reasons, including:

- The need to counter the South's deteriorating situation in the war;
- The need to bolster South Vietnam's morale and determination;
- Prior US bombing campaigns had failed to slow DRV and NLF aggression;
- By 1965, the US conventional force posture had improved; 85/
- The Chinese, it was felt, would not intervene as long as US troops conducted operations in the South without crossing into North Vietnam; 86/ and
- The need to prove US capabilities in Vietnam.

It is quite possible that the above reasons negated the potency of the "never again" adage in the minds of Johnson administration decision makers. President Eisenhower gave credence to "never again" owing to the freshness of the United States' Korean experience. President Kennedy, warned by both President Eisenhower and General MacArthur to avoid US involvement in an Asian land war, was also, thereby, constrained from sending US combat troops to Asia, particularly to Indochina. Had the Bay of Pigs mission succeeded, however, Kennedy might have been more receptive to the idea of committing US forces to Laos and/or Vietnam. While not an overt commitment of US combat forces to an Asian land war, counterinsurgency operations and bombing campaigns prior to the 1965 force commitment did lay the groundwork for successive increments of involvement; the 1965 decision can, therefore, be seen as one step in a series of gradual steps which moved three successive administrations away from the potency of the "never again" adage.



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In addition, the strength of "never again" was further diluted when counterbalanced with a number of the justifications for US involvement in Vietnam. (See Figure 2-1). Frequently used analogies such as the "loss of China" and "appeasement at Munich" very likely outweighed "never again," especially for the Democratic Johnson administration. Yet, if the constraining influence of the "never again" adage abated to allow for the 1965 decision to commit US combat forces to Vietnam, it soon regained a prominent position in the hierarchy of historical analogies. The majority of reasons given for avoiding a land war in Asia were soon found to be applicable to the US combat experience in Vietnam.

### H. ANALYTIC SUMMARY AND INSIGHTS

The fear of another "Munich" - of appeasing an aggressive antagonist and, thereby, unleashing an extreme political backlash - served to justify the US long-held policy of containment for Southeast Asia. The phrase "appeasement," generally invoking an emotional response, serves to convince domestic and international audiences that firmness is the best response for handling a threatening aggressor. Yet moderation and compromise should not be confused or equated with "appeasement." The Munich experience and the circumstances surrounding it were unique in world history and should not be haphazardly applied to any situation in which the US chooses a policy course of moderation or compromise as a means for achieving its objectives or protecting its interests.

Appeasement deserves consideration from two angles: on the one hand, a nation may appease an enemy; on the other, a nation may also appease an ally. Both acts of appeasement may be detrimental to a nation's interests and objectives. The US-French relationship, from 1945 through the French exit from Indochina in the mid-1950's, illustrates this latter notion of appeasement. Fearing a French refusal to participate in US-sponsored European defense programs, American policy makers "appeased" France with regard to French territorial claims in Indochina.

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South Vietnam also exploited its relationship with the United States, using intransigence, animosity, and non-compliance to obtain desired responses from the US. As a result, US policy makers occasionally found themselves actively soothing, if not "appeasing," the aroused leadership of South Vietnam. This second brand of appeasement, while perhaps not equivalent to Munich in international significance, significantly constrained US policy making for Vietnam during a major portion of the US involvement in Southeast Asia.

The "loss of China" adage was frequently, if not excessively, utilized by US policy makers in warning against such a "loss" in Southeast Asia, particularly with regard to Vietnam. The fear of possible political repercussions if another nation were to be "lost" to communism served to justify the US commitment to Vietnam. Both Presidents Kennedy and Johnson were particularly fearful of the implications that another "loss" would have for their presidencies and for their political party as a whole. This broad-based fear, moreover, tended to mitigate the fact that "loss" generally connotes possession. It is arguable therefore, that statements regarding the US ability to "lose" another sovereign nation are, in themselves, indications of America's post-WW II vision of its own global responsibilities and power.

The US experience in handling the Cuba and Berlin crises stressed the virtue of dealing firmly with an adversary, employing gradual coercion to elicit a desired response. The politico-diplomatic lessons derived from these crises were then applied to the insurgency problems in Vietnam. It is arguable, however, that these lessons were not wholly applicable to the situation in Indochina. A crisis situation differs significantly from aggression evolving in a gradual, spurt-like fashion as manifested in Vietnam during the 1960's. Additionally, while time-limits and cautious US threats of nuclear retaliation apparently prompted the USSR to meet the US demands regarding Cuba and Berlin, such strategies, in effect, were inappropriate for dealing with Hanoi. A Third World country which perceives it has little to gain, but much to lose by acquiescing to a superpower's demands (in this case those of the US) cannot be expected to respond "appropriately" to a

## THE BDM CORPORATION

strategy designed for use in superpower confrontations. Broadly speaking, strategies useful in the superpower arena may be wholly unsuitable for engendering change in or achieving compliance from a Third World country.

The Bay of Pigs precedent offered a number of potential lessons to the Kennedy administration: it cautioned against initiating overly ambitious plans for overthrowing Third World leaders perceived as inimicable to US global interests; it strengthened the Kennedy administration's resolve to counter communist (Soviet) successes in the Third World by developing a brand of warfare effective for fighting "wars of national liberation;" and it advised against sponsoring a coup unless a reasonably sound assurance for its success could be guaranteed.

Of the lessons derived from the Bay of Pigs experience, it appears US national policy makers learned the lesson of "resolve" the most readily. The Bay of Pigs experience should have cautioned against military and/or political involvement in a country prior to cultivating a thorough appreciation of the political realities in that country. The invasion's failure also should have illustrated the potential liabilities and risks in restricting US military resources for a given operation, conventionally and/or unconventionally. These same insights have even more relevance in assessing the US experience in Vietnam.

Fear of provoking Communist China to intervene on behalf of Hanoi permeated US policy deliberations regarding military operations in and over Vietnam for both the Eisenhower and Johnson administrations. The PRC's reported massing of troops in 1954 and Peking's protracted vocal militancy during the 1960's forewarned US policy makers that the Chinese leadership could indeed be provoked. India's intermittent difficulties with China illustrated Peking's resolve to pursue boldly its national policy objectives. It is plausible, however, that Peking's militancy, both verbal and physical, was displayed by the Chinese leadership for the purpose of gaining international credibility at what were perceived as politically opportune moments. President Kennedy's observation that "appearances contribute to reality" may have had its Communist Chinese proponents as well. Generally speaking, high-level US observations as to the nature of

## THE BDM CORPORATION

the Chinese threat during the years of US military involvement in Vietnam were generally based more on presumption than reality. The fact that both the political rift between Peking and Moscow and the cultural enmity between the Vietnamese and Chinese were largely understated throughout the conflict serves to substantiate this insight.

"Never again" served as only a minor constraint on the formation of US policy for Vietnam. President Eisenhower seemed to respect the lesson; President Kennedy diluted the adage by providing South Vietnam with additional aid and advisers. President Johnson, a one-time adherent of "united action" during the Dien Bien Phu crisis, found the "never again" precedent a hindrance only when reminded by dissenting policy advisers or antagonistic members of the media. The potency of "never again" was, in actuality, diminished by a number of more weighty adages: "beware of appeasement," "avoid losing Vietnam," and "stand firm with the adversary" took precedence over "never again."

Lessons and insights derived from past historical experiences are crucial to present and future US policy formulation. Yet, while history may be regarded as cyclical or repetitive in nature, broad generalizations of history or sweeping applications of historical analogies lead to ambiguity of policy rather than clarity. Historical precedents are useful tools for analysis, but their use must be moderated so as not to lead to policy paralysis. As historian-writer Mark Twain stated,

We should be careful to get out of an experience only the wisdom that is in it--and stop there; lest we be like the cat that sits down on a hot stove lid. She will never sit down on a hot stove lid again--and that is well; but also she will never sit down on a cold one.

Lessons derived from the US Vietnam experience should not be reduced to the simplistic level of "No More Vietnams."

CHAPTER 2  
ENDNOTES

1. Other possible precedents influencing US-Vietnam policy making include the training of clients (South Vietnamese army) for the wrong type of war, a mistake made in Korea before the outbreak of war there, and the precedent of negotiating with communist governments (Korea, North Vietnam), and lessons to be drawn from these precedents. However, these precedents are considered less influential in shaping or constraining US involvement in Vietnam than those selected for discussion in this chapter.
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10. Johnson Administration - 1966 Summary, in DOD US/VN Relations, Book 7, V. A. II D., p. D-60.
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## THE BDM CORPORATION

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13. Ibid., p. 91.
14. See Chapter 3, p. 29; Schlesinger, The Bitter Heritage, pp. 91-92; and US Army Military History Research Collection, Senior Officers' Debriefing Paper, Interview on January 9, 1976, at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, with General Andrew J. Goodpaster by Colonel William D. Johnson and LTC James C. Ferguson, USAWC Class of 1976. Goodpaster transcript section 4, p. 28.
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CHAPTER 3

WASHINGTON AND VIETNAM: US NATIONAL LEVEL  
POLICY MAKERS AND THE POLICY-MAKING PROCESS

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines US national-level policy making concerning Vietnam during the period 1945 to 1975. It focuses on the executive branch because most of the major policy decisions which shaped US military involvement were made by the president after consultation with his close advisers. Congress did not play a major role until the second term of the Nixon administration when it increasingly acted as a major constraint on the president's ability to implement his policies (and thereby shaped future policies) by placing limits on appropriations, and requiring presidential notification of and consent from Congress for further military activities in Vietnam.

The purpose of this chapter is to gain insights and lessons about the process of decision making and the role of individual US decision makers in the shaping of US policies toward Vietnam. The four tasks of this chapter are to identify the key policy makers, to show how their backgrounds influenced their decisions concerning Vietnam, to describe changes in the process of national level policy making concerning Vietnam, and to analyze how these changes influenced US policies toward Vietnam.

The chapter is divided into six subsections covering each administration from Presidents Truman through Ford. Within each subsection is a brief introduction, followed by a graphic representation identifying the key decision makers in that administration as well as other important policy advisers influencing Vietnam decision making. (Appendix B, which appears at the close of Volume III, provides additional bibliographical information on the key Vietnam decision makers for each of the administrations considered.) Next is an overview of the national-level decision making process concerning Vietnam, which includes both an assessment of the relative influences of the president, White House staff, National Security

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Council, Department of State, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Congress as well as an evaluation of the decision-making style peculiar to each administration. This discussion is followed by a detailed analysis of the making of one or more significant decisions concerning Vietnam, illustrating the interaction of the key personalities and the unfolding of the Vietnam decision-making process used by that particular administration at the time the decision was made. As will be shown, the details of the decision-making process differed for each decision, depending on the time and circumstances. The purpose here is not to demonstrate these details, but rather to illustrate, by case study, how decisions were made by all six administrations, and to highlight the interrelationships between and changing roles of the key decision-makers and institutions as a particular decision was "made."

The significant themes and topics presented in this chapter include:

- Differences in decision-making styles of each administration;
- Tendencies toward centralized vs. decentralized control of decision making;
- The building of a "consensus" in support of a decision;
- The conflict between the building of presidential confidence on the one hand with the necessity for considering dissenting opinions;
- Relations between the executive and legislative branches;
- Constraints and other influences on decisions;
- The role of an individual's background in shaping his views on Vietnam, especially the role of the president and his perceptions in the shaping of decisions;
- The pervasiveness within all administrations of a belief in the "domino theory" regarding Asian communism and the need not to "lose" Vietnam to communism;
- The paramount importance of loyalty to the president as a precondition for influence as an advisor;
- The emergence of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs to a position of great significance in the formulation of Vietnam policy;

## THE BDM CORPORATION

- The changing relative influence of the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and Special Assistant for National Security Affairs in Vietnam decision making; and
- The role of the National Security Council and the White House staff in such decision making.

The chapter concludes with an analytical summary highlighting the relevance of the above and offering insights to be gained from the US Vietnam decision-making process.

### B. THE TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures. I believe we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way ... 1/

(President Harry S. Truman, 1947)

#### 1. Introduction

The Truman administration began its tenure in the White House just prior to the resolution of World War II. After defeating the Japanese in the Pacific, the new president faced the tasks of restoring the US to peace-time footing, rebuilding a weakened and decimated Europe, and securing a semblance of international stability, prosperity, and order. To help accomplish these tasks, President Truman promoted the Marshall Plan, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the United Nations.

The international environment was highly complex and dynamic. One of the United States major allies in the war - the Soviet Union - sought to establish its own security by means of power consolidation and expansion in both Eastern Europe and in Asia. The Truman administration gradually came to focus on the USSR as its major enemy and initiated a drive to contain communism both at home and abroad. The Cold War had begun.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

In the post-war environment the native peoples of the world's colonial empires expressed their desire for self-determination and independence. The US sought to support such movements, granting the Philippines independence as an example for other nations with colonies. Yet the US anticolonialist policies operated within certain limits: in a broad sense the US was committed to the concept of self-determination, but if such a policy jeopardized Western European participation in a security arrangement, the concept was relegated to a secondary position.

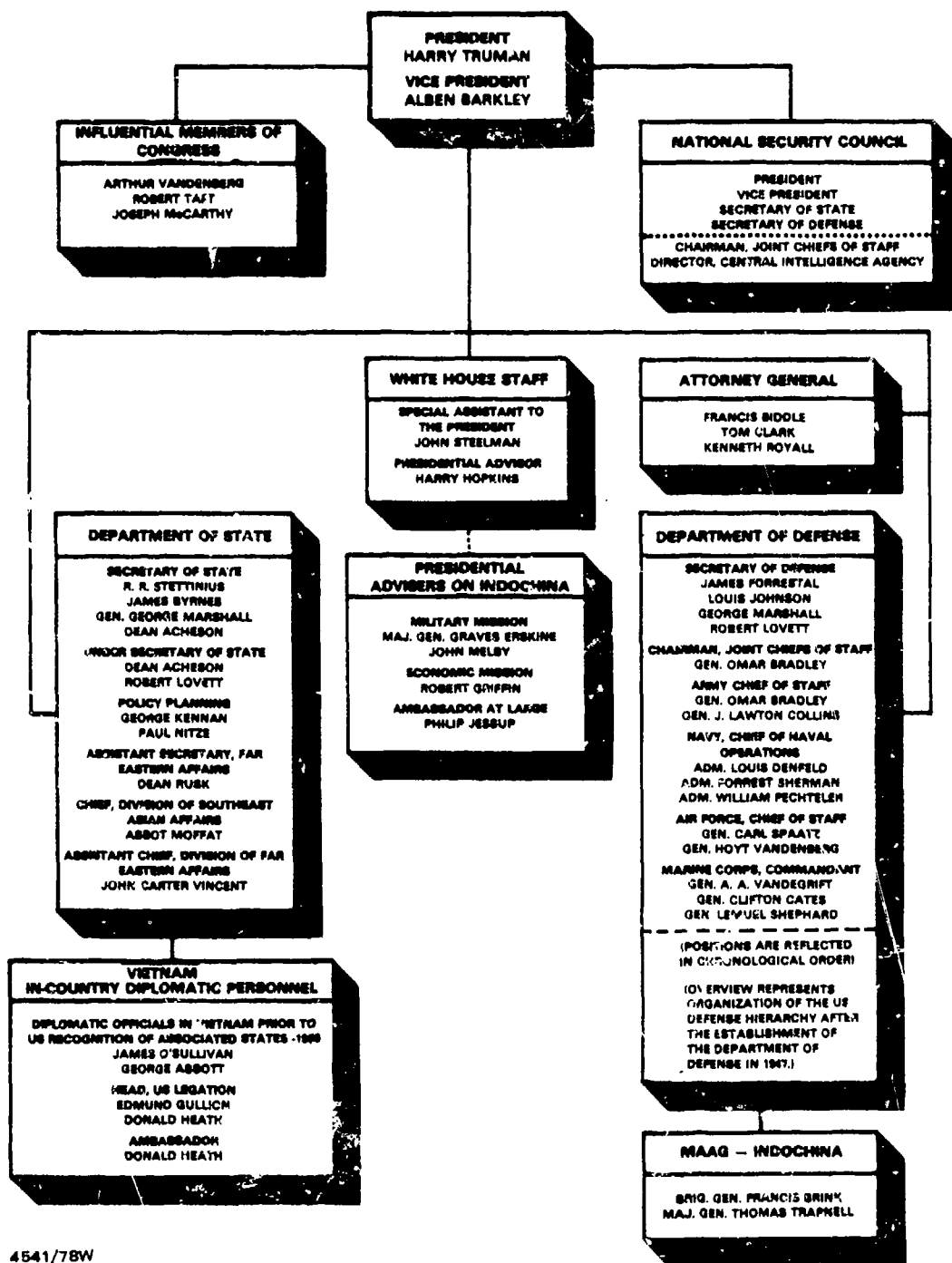
Thus, the Truman administration walked a thin line, attempting to balance its anticolonialist policies with those aimed at securing Western European cooperation. The balance, from the start, leaned heavily towards the latter consideration. US promotion of Vietnamese independence from France must, therefore, be considered within this framework. While urging France to consider such policies, overall security considerations led the US to allow for French re-entry in Indochina, much to the dismay of the Vietnamese nationalists.<sup>2/</sup>

### 2. Vietnam Decision-Making Process During the Truman Administration

#### a. Vietnam Decision-Making Style and the Level of Institutional Influence During the Truman Administration

In contrast to the highly personal, somewhat disorganized approach to wartime decision making taken by President Roosevelt, President Truman relied more fully on formal decision-making organizations. In fact, his administration was responsible for several important innovations in the US national security machinery. The 1947 National Security Act, providing for the creation of the National Security Council, the National Security Resources Board, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency, and a separate Air Force, <sup>4/</sup> was the most important of these innovations. The National Security Act served as a centralizing mechanism, delegating heretofore ambiguous decision-making responsibilities to specific institutions at the national level of US government. (See Figure 3-1 for a graphic representation of the key decision-making institutions and key Vietnam decision makers within the Truman administration.)

# THE BDM CORPORATION



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Figure 3-1. Vietnam Policy Making: Key Decision Makers and Other Important Advisers Within the Truman Administration, 1945-1952 3/

## THE BDM CORPORATION

President Truman's first term in office found him jealously guarding his presidential prerogatives, seeking to limit possible encroachments by both Congress and his advisers in decision making.<sup>5/</sup> Truman prided himself on his abilities as a decision maker.<sup>6/</sup> His belief in the importance of the role of the president as the Commander in Chief and as the nation's top-ranking decision maker, dominated his outlook.<sup>7/</sup>

The Truman administration saw a remarkable increase in the size of the White House policy staff, serving to institutionalize the White House advisers as an in-house resource base for the making of national policy.<sup>8/</sup> This increase, however, was relatively small when compared to those made by later administrations. Due to his desire to make key decisions himself, President Truman infrequently convened the National Security Council (NSC) until the outbreak of the Korean War. But at the outset of that crisis and the attendant increase in international tension, Truman met with the NSC on a weekly basis.<sup>9/</sup> His decision for more frequent meetings reflected the administration's increased need for top-level coordination in the decision-making process. It did not, however, indicate a reversal in Truman's thinking regarding presidential responsibility. He stressed that the NSC was a place for recommendations to be worked out, but policy and final decisions continued to come down from the President.

Although the State Department's overall role in the Truman administration was not highly influential, it did play the leading role in formulating US policy towards Indochina until 1950.<sup>10/</sup> One major reason can be offered by way of explanation: the administration's top priority was the reconstruction of Europe; Asia, although important, was relegated to a second-place position. Reports from in-country personnel served as the primary basis for the administration's perception of Vietnamese-French relations. In essence, prior to 1950, Indochina concerned the administration only insofar as tensions there detracted from France's cooperation in European security arrangements. Therefore, while the State Department's Division of Far Eastern Affairs stressed the need for French "liberalism" in the area, the overall posture of the Department leaned heavily towards European concerns. With Mao's victory in China, the State Department's



## THE BDM CORPORATION

Asian specialists came under attack for the "loss" of China to communism. And with the onset of the McCarthy era, many of these specialists found their reputations tarnished and careers destroyed.<sup>11/</sup> A line of continuity and familiarity with Asian affairs was broken.

The Truman administration was faced with restoring national security-policy formulation to a civilian peace-time footing. The transition, however, disturbed the administration's professional military advisers who had been highly influential in policy formulation during the second World War.<sup>12/</sup> In addition, the decision to place the military establishment under the authority of a civilian Secretary of Defense caused the military significant dissatisfaction. With the creation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and appointment of General Marshall as Secretary of Defense, the military professionals appeared more at ease with their standing within the administration. The JCS were not as influential in policy formulation as senior military officers during Roosevelt's presidency. However, they were generally supportive of the Truman administration's policies, including, as will be seen below, the need to save what they regarded as strategically important Indochina from the advance of communism.<sup>13/</sup>

The Truman administration, aware of Congress's desire for a greater voice in decision making on foreign affairs after the war, sought to establish a solid, bi-partisan working relationship with the legislative branch.<sup>14/</sup> The executive branch's frequent consultations with Congress regarding the Marshall plan fortified this relationship. However, with the outbreak of the Korean war, the Congress saw its influence slip in relation to that of the military. President Truman's decision not to consult with Congress prior to initiating military operations in Korea, in Senator Vandenberg's words, set the Congress on an inevitable collision course with the administration.<sup>15/</sup>

b. Decision to Accelerate the Provision of Military Aid to France and the Associated States of Indochina and to Dispatch a Military Mission to Indochina

1) Awareness of the Problem

During the years 1945-1949, the Truman administration came to view Indochina as an important battleground upon which to wage the struggle against communism; at the same time, however, the administration was cognizant of French colonial designs on the region. Hence, these two major concerns shaped the administration's attitude towards Indochina. By 1949, as the Chinese Nationalists' probability of defeat increased, so too did the administration's concern regarding Indochina. Communications between the US diplomatic representative in Vietnam, Mr. George Abbott (see Figure 3-1 and Appendix B) and the State Department indicated a growing uneasiness on the part of the US over both Moscow's intentions in the area and Ho Chi Minh's affiliation with the communist party of the Soviet Union. With Mao's victory in China in October 1949, the Truman administration began a reassessment of its policy regarding Asia in general, and Indochina in particular. The Bao Dai "solution," therefore, came to be regarded as the only alternative to a costly colonial war or to French withdrawal and the subsequent establishment of a communist-controlled government in Vietnam.<sup>16/</sup>

2) Debate and Reassessment in Washington

In response to a request by Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson for a reassessment of US policy toward Asia, the NSC submitted its report of December 23, 1949, entitled "The Position of the US with Respect to Asia." The report, as amended and approved by President Truman as NSC 48/2 a week later, set forth the following US objectives in Asia:<sup>17/</sup>

- (1) Development of the nations and peoples of Asia on a stable and self-sustaining basis in conformity with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter,
- (2) Development of sufficient military power in selected non-communist nations of Asia to maintain internal security and to prevent further encroachment by communism,

## THE BDM CORPORATION

- (3) Gradual reduction and eventual elimination of the preponderant power and influence of the USSR in Asia to such a degree that the Soviet Union will not be capable of threatening from that area the security of the United States or its friends and that the Soviet Union would encounter serious obstacles should it attempt to threaten the peace, national independence and stability of the Asiatic nations, and
- (4) Prevention of power relationships in Asia which would enable any other nation or alliance to threaten the security of the United States from that area, or the peace, national independence and stability of the Asiatic nations.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, in a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense dated January 1950, proposed as a major military objective that "US support in the Pacific be available to delay any Communist invasion in the ... Far East and Southeast Asian areas...."<sup>18/</sup> Hence, key decision-making bodies within the Truman administration agreed that the major US political and military objective in Southeast Asia was the containment of communism.

One facet of the administration's NSC 48/2 strategy for containing communism in Asia called for the establishment of "stable and self-sustaining" nations. With regard to Vietnam, the path to realizing this objective was obstructed by the colonialist desires of the French. The Truman administration agonized over recognizing the French-supported Bao Dai government because the government was considered a puppet regime by neighboring Asiatic states. However, with Secretary of State Acheson's conviction that Ho Chi Minh was a communist and with Moscow's recognition of Ho Chi Minh's government in January 1950, the Truman administration felt compelled to take a stand. (See Appendix B - Acheson) French intransigence on the issue of granting independence to the Associated States further persuaded President Truman to approve a recommendation from Secretary Acheson that the US recognize the Associated States of Indochina (Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia).<sup>19/</sup> Formal recognition was extended on February 7, 1950.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Additional assessments of US interests in Southeast Asia were undertaken by the Truman administration during the period February - May 1950. Based on the recommendations of NSC 64, which reiterated the administration's containment theory, the Departments of State and Defense were asked to prepare a "program of all practicable measures ... to protect US security interests in Indochina."20/ Prompted by French requests for assistance, 21/ the US Government sent one of its first fact-finding missions to Southeast Asia in mid-March 1950, for the purpose of assessing the economic needs of the countries in the region.22/ Upon its return, the Griffin Mission recommended economic and technical assistance to Vietnam as a "way to promote the Bao Dai government's appearance of independence and its local and international prestige," and to "win" over the "non-communist elements that continue to support Ho."23/

The Joint Chiefs of Staff completed their military assessment of Southeast Asia in early-May 1950. In line with their memorandum of 10 April 1950 to the Secretary of Defense, which stated that the "mainland states of Southeast Asia are at present of critical strategic importance to the US because of the requirement to stockpile strategic materials acquired there," the JCS "stressed" in a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, dated May 2, 1950, that a small United States military aid group should be established in Indochina "immediately," that the need for early arrival of US military aid (\$15 million) to Indochina was "urgent," and that there was a requirement to integrate such aid with political and economic programs.24/ Evidently, earlier in a draft position paper of April 25, 1950, the State Department had opposed the establishment of a US MAAG in Indochina because it believed that such action would place the responsibility for the security of Indochina on US shoulders.25/ In challenging the argument of the State Department, the JCS referred to the conclusion in NSC-68, a document largely written by State Department officials, that the US "position as the center of power in the free world places a heavy responsibility upon the United States for leadership."26/ In this vein, the JCS argued that "in order to retrieve the losses resulting from previous mistakes on the part of the British and the French, as

## THE EDM CORPORATION

well as to preclude such mistakes in the future,...it [is] necessary that positive and proper leadership among the Western Powers be assumed by the United States in Southeast Asian matters."27/

In May 1950, as an outgrowth of the recommendations of the Griffin Mission and of the JCS, President Truman approved the establishment of an economic mission to the Associated States and \$10 million in military aid to France and Indochina.28/ However, the Truman administration adopted the State Department view that, while Southeast Asia was of strategic importance to the US, the direct responsibilities of the UK and France made it of greater concern to them. Therefore, President Truman did not decide to establish a MAAG in Indochina until the outbreak of the Korean War one month later.29/

### 3) Catalyst for a Decision

On June 25, 1950, North Korean forces attacked South Korea. According to President Truman, this incident forced the acceleration of US military assistance to France and Indochina.30/ President Truman and his advisers were acting on the assumption that the North Korean attack was possibly only the beginning of a campaign by communism to conquer independent nations in the Pacific, and suspected that it might even be a prelude to or feint for an assault on Western Europe.31/

### 4) Decision to Accelerate the Provision of Military Aid to France and to the Associated States of Indochina, and to Dispatch a Military Mission to Indochina

On June 27, 1950, President Truman announced the US government's intention to provide military support to the South Korean government. In addition, the president stated:

I have ... directed acceleration in the furnishing of military assistance to the Forces of France and the Associated States in Indo-China and the dispatch of a military mission to provide close working relations with those forces.32/

According to President Truman, the fall of China and North Korea's attack made it "plain beyond all doubt that communism had passed beyond the use of subversion to conquer independent nations and would now use armed invasions

## THE BDM CORPORATION

and war."<sup>33/</sup> Within this context, Vietnam's strategic importance grew as a country where communism had to be contained. Another possible loss of an Asian country to communism - be it South Korea or one of the Associated States of Indochina - would indicate the Democratic administration's incapacity for dealing with what the JCS (and Truman administration) perceived as the "Kremlin's design for world domination."<sup>34/</sup> The Korean experience, while ensuring President Truman's political demise and encouraging a "never again" attitude towards US involvement in Asian land wars, did not dampen the US resolve to contain communism in both Asia and Europe.

### C. THE EISENHOWER ADMINISTRATION

There is going to be no involvement of America in war unless it is a result of the Constitutional process that is placed upon Congress to declare it. Now let us have that clear.<sup>35/</sup>

(President Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954)

#### 1. Introduction

General Eisenhower was elected president in 1952 on a platform that asserted the necessity for the "enslaved nations of the world," then under communist domination, to have the freedom to choose their own governments.<sup>36/</sup> For President Eisenhower, as for President Truman, the consequences of Munich were a constant reminder of the disaster that could attend the appeasement of aggressors. Eisenhower often spoke of Munich and compared the communist leaders in the Soviet Union and China to Hitler.<sup>37/</sup> President Eisenhower also knew that the American public was weary of the fighting in Korea. Already the cry was raised that the United States should never again allow itself to become involved in an Asian land war. Moreover, the Republican Party was committed to balancing the federal budget, and President Eisenhower chose to do this by reducing military spending.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

In 1954 the US government agonized over possible US military intervention on behalf of the French at Dien Bien Phu in Indochina. President Eisenhower and his senior advisers called for numerous high-level assessments of the immediate battlefield situation and of its global ramifications. Ultimately, the president decided against taking unilateral executive action and he brought Congress into the decision making process.

### 2. Vietnam Decision-Making Process During the Eisenhower Administration

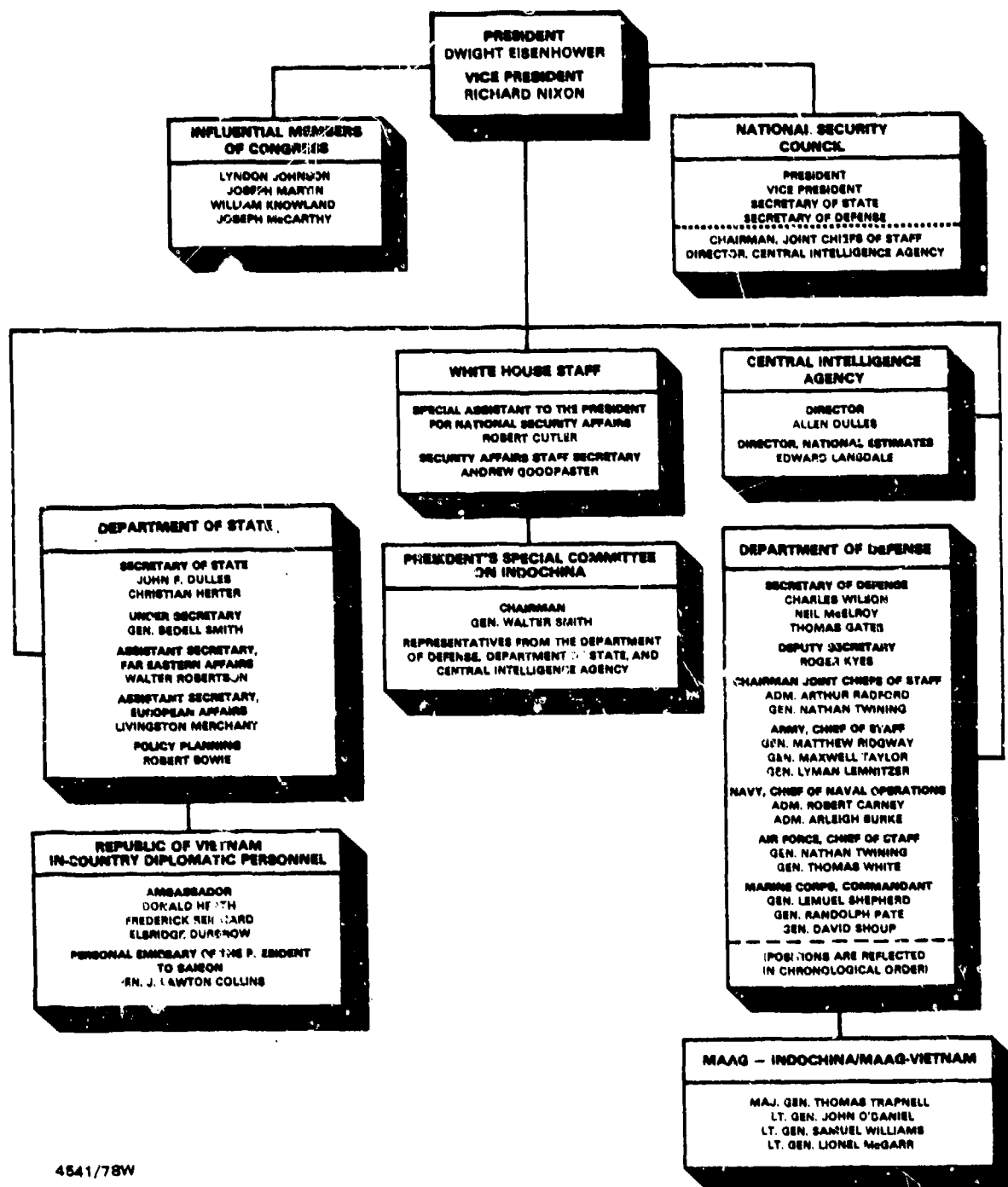
#### a. Vietnam Decision-Making Style and the Level of Institutional Influence During the Eisenhower Administration

President Eisenhower's military background and desire to arrive at decisions through careful, painstaking staff studies, led him to control the process of national security policy making in a more highly structured manner than any other president in the post-World-War II era. That structure was particularly evident in the National Security Council system. Whereas President Truman had used the council as a supplementary advisory organization, President Eisenhower decided that, except in special cases of urgency, national-security policy formulation was to run from a department, agency, or individual through the NSC.<sup>38/</sup> (See Figure 3-2 for an overview of the Eisenhower administration's decision making institutions and key Vietnam decision makers. For additional biographical information on the administration's key Vietnam decision makers, see Appendix B.)

President Eisenhower was more flexible in his attitude toward the NSC than many commentators suggest. He did not formally consult the council on every issue, and he did not use the council to decide immediate problems. Moreover, President Eisenhower frequently met with a select group of advisors in what were termed "Special NSC meetings" on important issues rather than call a regular NSC meeting.

With the important exception of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles's shuttle diplomacy between Washington, London, and Paris, the Vietnam decision making process under President Eisenhower conformed to the highly structured approach that the President preferred in his NSC system. The White House staff worked through the executive departments and

# THE BDM CORPORATION



4541/78W

Figure 3-2. Vietnam Policy Making: key Decision Makers and Other Important Advisers within the Eisenhower Administration, 1953-1960. 39/



## THE BDM CORPORATION

agencies to identify and clarify the significant issues that needed attention in the NSC and resolution by the president. This work was largely carried out at meetings of the NSC Planning Board, attended by senior officials who were usually at the assistant-secretary level, and chaired by the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs.<sup>40/</sup> The Special Assistant (Robert Cutler, at the time of Dien Bien Phu) served largely as an administrator, though he did help shape the substantive content which ultimately reached the president. In fact, President Eisenhower wanted his Special Assistant to integrate and compromise any opposing departmental views whenever possible at meetings of the Planning Board and bring only the irreconcilable differences to the NSC.<sup>41/</sup>

Foreign policy options were generally developed in the State Department with advice from the Central Intelligence Agency and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It was not rare during the Dien Bien Phu crisis, however, to find Secretary Dulles taking swift diplomatic action, especially with France and Great Britain, without submitting issues through the State Department or NSC.<sup>42/</sup> He did seek and gain full prior approval for his actions from the President.<sup>43/</sup>

Military options in support of foreign policy objectives were largely developed by the Joints Chiefs of Staff, though the CIA and the President's Intelligence Advisory Committee (which included representatives from the State Department and the Armed Services) had important advisory roles. In addition, the president created an ad hoc "Special Committee on Indochina" during the Dien Bien Phu crisis, which included General Bedell Smith, Director of the CIA Allen Dulles, Deputy Secretary of Defense Roger Kyes, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to study feasible options for supporting the French "Navarre Plan."<sup>44/</sup> (See Figure 3-2 and Appendix B - Eisenhower) Recommendations by this committee were forwarded with the recommendations of the individual departments and agencies to the NSC for review.<sup>45/</sup>

President Eisenhower wanted the Congress to be a partner in the decision-making process concerning US intervention at Dien Bien Phu. One of his preconditions for US military intervention was the passage of a

joint resolution by Congress permitting the president to use military power in Indochina.<sup>46/</sup> Congressional leaders from both parties were consulted at the critical juncture in the process, "probably the decisive moment," according to a recent publication by the Congressional Research Service.<sup>47/</sup> However, as the publication asserts, "Congress for the most part remained on the periphery of the action, at a distance from the main diplomatic events and military maneuvering."<sup>48/</sup> Congress was at the periphery largely because it took little interest in Indochina affairs at this time, illustrating a general tendency in Congress to neglect particular foreign-policy problems until they have gained national prominence.<sup>49/</sup> In turn, the failure of the Dien Bien Phu crisis to gain such prominence resulted in part from a general tendency of the executive branch to downplay the significance of crises in its public statements until a policy has been established by the administration for dealing with them.<sup>50/</sup>

Public opinion had an indirect influence on Vietnam decision making during the Eisenhower administration in the sense that the Administration was well aware that less than a year after the pain and frustration of the Korean War, the American people were hardly ready to embrace a new war.<sup>51/</sup> The Eisenhower administration believed that it had a responsibility to "educate" the American and foreign publics and induce them to understand and support American policies. As Dulles bluntly stated, "We can't get too far ahead of public opinion, and we must do everything we can to bring it along with us."<sup>52/</sup>

b. Case Study: Decision Not to Intervene at Dien Bien Phu Without the Assistance of US Allies

1) Awareness of the Problem

As a former military commander, President Eisenhower was seriously disturbed by the French decision in November 1953, to send ten thousand troops into Dien Bien Phu, whose only means of resupply was by air. On December 30, 1953, CIA Director Allen Dulles reported to the President that "the real danger spot" in Indochina was at Dien Bien Phu, where the Viet Minh forces were attempting to surround the French garrison. By January 1, 1954, reports were received in Washington that the French garrison was surrounded by approximately three Viet Minh divisions -- a

## THE BDM CORPORATION

ratio favoring the Viet Minh by three to one.<sup>53/</sup> Eisenhower later recollected that, in Washington, there was an awareness of the potential "far-reaching" psychological effects on the French should the garrison at Dien Bien Phu be lost. Such a loss might lead to the withdrawal of the French from Indochina, despite the fact that the location of Dien Bien Phu was of "minor military significance."<sup>54/</sup> Thus, the essential problem, as President Eisenhower perceived it, was not the fate of Dien Bien Phu, per se. The essential problem was to keep the French fighting in Indochina against the Communist Vietnamese forces, even if Dien Bien Phu were to fall. A withdrawal was considered against the interest of the United States because, if it happened, the United States would have to participate more actively in the Indochina conflict in order to prevent the "loss" of Indochina to the Vietnamese Communist forces. In addition, there was concern, as expressed by the National Security Council on 14 January 1954, that if the United States were to join the fighting, there would be a "substantial risk that the Chinese Communists would intervene."<sup>55/</sup>

### 2) Debate in Washington

April 1954 was the critical month of debate and decision in Washington concerning the crisis at Dien Bien Phu. On 30 March 1954, the Viet Minh launched a large-scale attack on the garrison, and the issue of Chinese Communist intervention on behalf of the Viet Minh was raised at that time by General Paul Ely, French Chief of Staff, with Secretary Dulles and Admiral Radford. Dulles, a staunch anticommunist, sent a memorandum to Eisenhower, arguing that if the United States were to use its military forces in Indochina, then "the prestige of the United States would be engaged to a point where we would want to have a success."<sup>56/</sup> One clear implication was that, before initiating any intervention in Indochina, the US ought to be prepared to fight successfully against Chinese Communist forces, on the assumption that they might become involved. With the Korean War fresh in the minds of the American public, and because the crisis at Dien Bien Phu was not a sudden, unforeseen emergency, President Eisenhower wanted congressional endorsement for any plan of US intervention.<sup>57/</sup>

## THE BDM CORPORATION

On 3 April 1954, eight congressional leaders, including Senator Lyndon Johnson, were called in by the administration to meet with Secretary Dulles and Admiral Radford about the Indochina situation.<sup>58/</sup> Specifically, the administration wanted to know the prospects of obtaining a congressional resolution supporting US military intervention at Dien Bien Phu. The intervention, as proposed by Admiral Radford, Chairman of the JCS and a zealous anticommunist, would consist of an air attack from carriers in the Pacific, possibly involving the use of tactical nuclear weapons, on communist installations around Dien Bien Phu.<sup>59/</sup> The congressmen, particularly Senator Johnson, made clear that the US had to have allies before they could support a congressional resolution. The congressional leaders said that support from Congress would be contingent on meeting three conditions:<sup>60/</sup>

- US intervention must be part of a coalition, including the free nations of Southeast Asia, the Philippines, and the British Commonwealth;
- France must agree to accelerate the independence of the Associated States in Indochina, so that US assistance would not be interpreted as support for French colonialism; and
- France must agree to keep its forces in the war if the US commits its forces.

President Eisenhower accepted these conditions, in part, because he had similar reservations, but also, it appears, out of genuine respect for congressional opinion and its constitutional significance.<sup>61/</sup>

As a result of the meeting with the congressmen, Secretary Dulles and Under Secretary Smith tried to rally international support for the idea of "united action" in Indochina, that is, a joint effort by the United States and its allies in support of the French. However, concern over Dien Bien Phu was overshadowed in Britain and France by the prospects for a peaceful settlement of the Indochina conflict through the Geneva Conference, scheduled to open on 26 April 1954.<sup>62/</sup> Dulles met

uncompromising resistance from the British to any scheme for united military action in Indochina before the Geneva Conference. Owing to the need to enlist international support, the State Department recommended to the NSC, in early April 1954, the following courses of action:63/

- That there be no US military intervention for the moment, nor the promise of such action to the French;
- That planning for military intervention continue; and
- That discussions continue with potential allies on the possibility of forming a regional defense grouping for Southeast Asia.

These three recommendations were approved by the NSC and the president and formed the basis of US policy up through the fall of Dien Bien Phu on 7 May 1954.64/

While the State Department sought allies for united action, the Defense Department debated the likely success of possible military actions to save Dien Bien Phu. Admiral Radford advocated an air strike from carriers, and the possible use of tactical nuclear weapons, on communist installations around Dien Bien Phu, as a means for saving the French garrison. The Army argued strongly against Radford's proposal, as offered at the meeting with the congressional leaders, claiming that air and naval action alone would not assure a military victory.65/ In the first week of April 1954, Army Chief of Staff, General Matthew Ridgway issued a report based on extensive field research, which concluded that US ground forces would eventually be required to assure a military victory in Indochina. The report is believed to have been highly influential with President Eisenhower.66/ The contents of the report can be summarized as follows:67/

- A military victory in Indochina cannot be assured by US intervention with air and naval forces alone;
- The use of atomic weapons will not reduce the number of ground forces required to achieve military victory;
- If the French withdraw and the Chinese Communists do not intervene, an estimated seven US divisions or their equivalent will be required to achieve victory;

- If the French withdraw and the Chinese Communists intervene, twelve US divisions will be required;
- If the French remain and the Chinese Communists intervene, seven divisions will be required; and
- There are important military disadvantages to intervention in Indochina, namely, the US ability to meet its NATO commitment will be seriously affected for a considerable period.

3) Catalyst for a Decision

On the night of 4 April 1954, French Prime Minister Laniel and Foreign Minister Bidault met with the American Ambassador to France, C. Douglas Dillon, to request immediate armed intervention of US carrier aircraft at Dien Bien Phu to "save the situation."68/ The French leaders also reported, according to Dillon, that "Chinese intervention in Indochina [is] already fully established," including technical advisers, communications operators, and personnel to operate antiaircraft guns and one thousand supply trucks. Secretary Dulles, Under Secretary Smith, and Admiral Radford were immediately notified of this request.69/

4) Decision: President Eisenhower Decides that there will be "No Intervention without Allies"

In response to the French request, a meeting of the National Security Council was called on 6 April 1954 to discuss recommendations on "appropriate action regarding Indochina and on the need for US military intervention."70/ The NSC Planning Board had met the previous day and agreed that "on balance, it appears that the US should now reach a decision whether or not to intervene with combat forces, if that is necessary to save Indochina from communist control and, tentatively, the form and condition of such intervention." The Planning Board also neatly clarified for the NSC the key issue involved in this decision: "The real issue," according to the Planning Board,71/

...is that the [National Security] Council must decide whether it is essential to intervene now with little or no time to (1) work out arrangements with the French (including acceptance of conditions, command arrangements, etc.), (2) condition public and Congressional opinion -- intervention may involve our drafting men

## THE BDM CORPORATION

for Indochina where the French have never yet sent a conscript -- and (3) try to prepare a regional type arrangement. Decision to act later may take care of these difficulties but might come too late to save Dien Bien Phu.

At its meeting on 6 April 1954, the NSC "postponed decision" on the Planning Board's recommendation that the US decide whether or not to intervene. The President approved this postponement, and affirmed the main precondition for intervention established by the congressional leaders on 3 April: that the US intervene only as part of a coalition. This coalition, or "regional grouping," as termed by the NSC, was to include the US, France, Great Britain, the Associated States, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, and the Philippines. Thus a major decision was taken by the President, with the participation of members of Congress and the NSC. As Eisenhower later recorded, "There would be no intervention without allies."72/

On April 23, French Foreign Minister Bidault again requested US armed intervention -- to involve massive B-29 bombing. Dulles responded that the proposed intervention "seemed to me out of the question under existing circumstances," that is, the continued refusal by the British Government to participate in a regional grouping before the Geneva Conference.73/ Dulles forwarded the request to President Eisenhower for final decision. President Eisenhower reaffirmed his earlier decision that the United States would not initiate armed intervention in Indochina without allies.74/ This remained the US policy through 7 May 1954, when the French garrison at Dien Bien Phu fell to General Giap.

One of the most striking features of the decision-making process for the Dien Bien Phu decision is that despite the rapid deterioration of the situation, the Eisenhower Administration continued to proceed in a highly-structured manner with carefully planned meetings of the NSC and its Planning Board used to clarify the main issues for the President. This formal, structured approach was an ever-present characteristic of the Eisenhower administration's decision-making style, contrasting significantly with the style of his successor's administration.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### D. THE KENNEDY ADMINISTRATION

Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and success of liberty. This much we pledge and more.75/

(President John F. Kennedy, 1961)

#### 1. Introduction

John F. Kennedy, elected President in 1960 by a slim margin, promised a new, dynamic approach to American foreign policy. Characterized by boldness and a penchant for action, the Kennedy administration stressed the importance of US assistance to Third World nations.76/ The world's newly developing nations were a "great battlefield for the defense and expansion of freedom;" Vietnam would serve as an example of the US commitment to this cause.

While the Kennedy administration sought to vitalize what it perceived as the tired, bland approach of the preceding administration,77/ it nonetheless continued to formulate US policy on the basis of the containment and domino theories. Southeast Asia, particularly Vietnam, served as more than a test case for nation building; it was also the Kennedy administration's proving ground for checking wars of national liberation. In addition, success in Vietnam would help to blot out the administration's foreign policy debacles in Cuba at the Bay of Pigs.78/

#### 2. Vietnam Decision-Making Process During the Kennedy Administration

##### a. Vietnam Decision-Making Style and the Level of Institutional Influence During the Kennedy Administration

Believing that the Eisenhower administration's decision-making process had been too rigidly structured and thereby had unduly restricted the President's freedom of choice, the Kennedy administration utilized a seminar approach to decision making which allowed for a fluid, open, and flexible process and culled the ideas and suggestions of advisers at all levels in the executive branch.79/ President Kennedy sought to



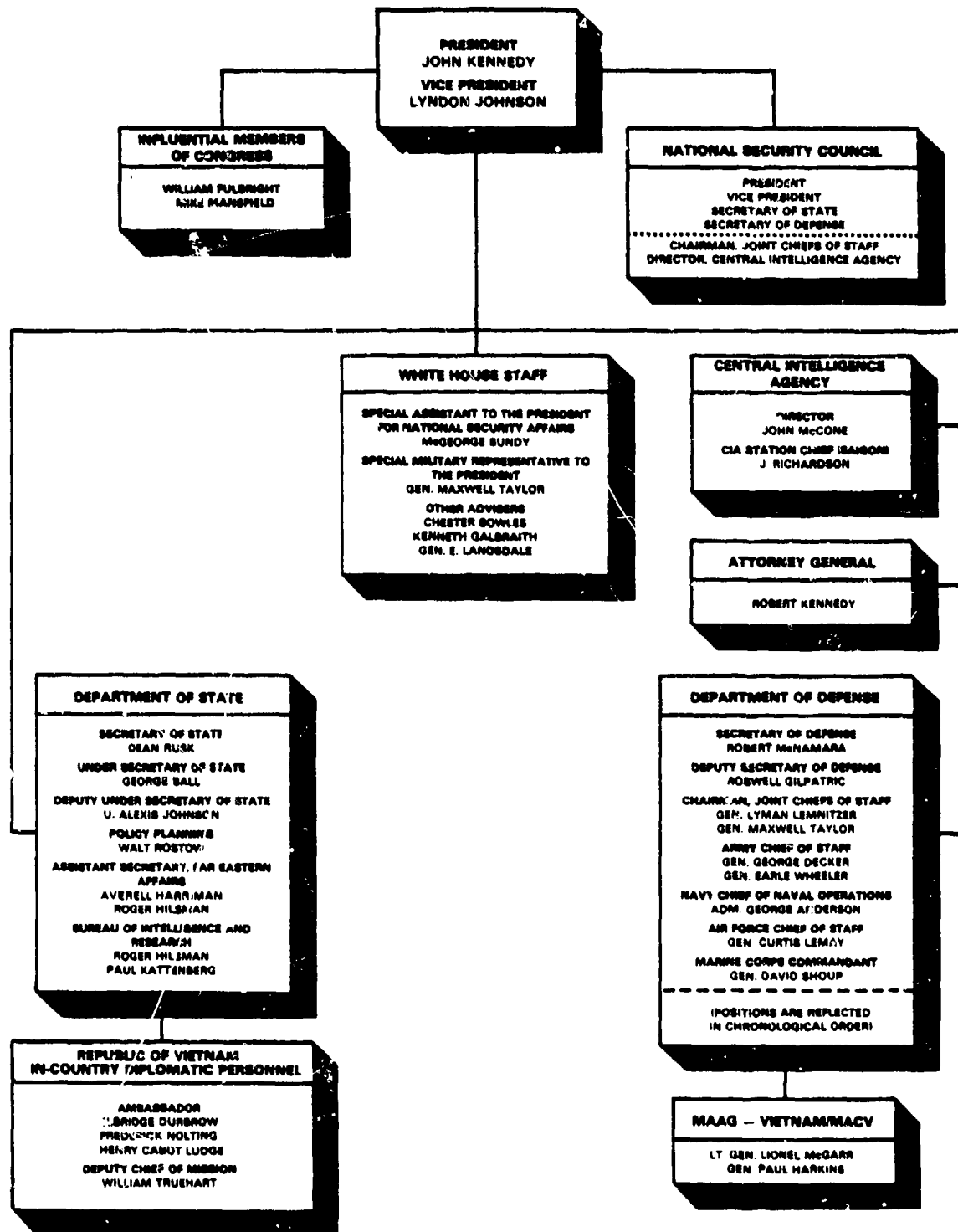
## THE BDM CORPORATION

maintain open channels of communication in the government as well as auxiliary lines to respected individuals outside the administration and the Washington bureaucracy. Figure 3-3 provides a summary of the major decision-making institutions in the Kennedy administration and an overview of its high-level decision makers. Additional biographical information on the administration's key Vietnam decision makers appears in Appendix B.

As a function of this informal approach, official decision-making bodies and committees were often disbanded or ignored.<sup>81/</sup> The National Security Council met less frequently and, in its place, White House staff meetings and special interagency task forces generated foreign policy options and advice.<sup>82/</sup> In fact, while President Kennedy was not the first of the post-war presidents to use an ad hoc approach in policy formulation, the extent to which the new President created ad hoc groups to assist him was unprecedented. The most notable of these groups, with respect to Vietnam decision making, was the inter-agency task force on Vietnam, created in the early days of the administration, which included representatives from the CIA, the White House, USIA, and the Departments of State and Defense.<sup>83/</sup> The most important set of recommendations issued by this group called for a commitment of US combat forces to Vietnam. In addition to the use of ad hoc groups, President Kennedy created the White House situation room as a convenient in-house operations-and-planning center for the administration's use, especially during times of crisis.<sup>84/</sup>

While Kennedy's creation of a strong White House staff afforded the President a constant influx of policy considerations and frequent interaction with his adviser-intellectuals, it diminished the role and influence of the State Department in the decision-making process. President Kennedy's attitude towards the State Department was marked by a certain ambivalence; upon coming to office he stressed the need to improve the quality of advice coming from the Department; yet, with the passage of time, the President appeared increasingly reluctant to use the Department in the formulation of national security policy on a day-to-day basis.<sup>85/</sup> Two major factors contributed to the Kennedy administration's attitude. First, the president's own personal, informal approach to decision making

# THE BDM CORPORATION



4541/78W

Figure 3-3. Vietnam Policy Making: Key Decision Makers and Other Important Advisers Within the Kennedy Administration, 1961-1963 80/

## THE BDM CORPORATION

reduced the administration's reliance on a formal, bureaucratic entity for policy formulation. Second, Kennedy saw the Department as lacking in initiative, which prompted him to rely more fully on his White House staff.<sup>86/</sup> The staff, under the direction of McGeorge Bundy, a believer in presenting the president with dissenting points of view, assembled policy options and organized all incoming information according to the president's preferred format. The Kennedy administration's final decisions and orders were recorded in its National Security Action Memoranda (NSAMs).

The State Department's overall influence on Vietnam-related policies also declined with the ascendancy of Secretary McNamara and the Department of Defense. Several authors have described the State Department's apparent inability to compete with the Pentagon; they contend it resulted both from McNamara's extraordinary strength and dominance in expressing his Department's views, and from Secretary of State Rusk's own ambivalence.<sup>87/</sup> However, Rusk contends that he and his staff generally agreed with McNamara's military solutions for Vietnam, and, therefore, that there was no serious bureaucratic struggle between McNamara and himself on Vietnam policies.<sup>88/</sup>

Secretary McNamara's innovations in the Defense Department's budgeting system, his demands for short-order defense assessments, and his reliance on civilian defense analysts contributed to the gulf that grew increasingly wide between the Secretary of Defense and his immediate staff on one hand and the military services and Joint Chiefs of Staff on the other.<sup>89/</sup>

The president's call for a combined political-military solution for Vietnam was based on the counterinsurgency (CI) strategies proposed by the Special Group for Counterinsurgency, chaired by General Taylor. The president had established the Special Group for Counterinsurgency shortly after the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion.<sup>90/</sup> His emphasis on a combined solution probably reflected his suspicion of military solutions and desire to restrain the JCS (and CIA) in Vietnam operations. As Kennedy saw it, Vietnam was the test case for the CI response to communist insurgency.<sup>91/</sup>

## THE BDM CORPORATION

The president, in line with this political-military orientation, urged the JCS to expand its horizons beyond purely military considerations.<sup>92/</sup> However, the JCS had difficulty in fulfilling his wishes. In fact, as a statement by General Wheeler in 1962 suggests, the JCS bridled at the Taylor-Kennedy political-military program of counterinsurgency operations. According to Wheeler,

It is fashionable in some quarters to say that the problems in Southeast Asia are primarily political and economic rather than military. I do not agree. The essence of the problem in Vietnam is military.<sup>93/</sup>

Therefore, it is not surprising that while the administration sought to implement its CI program, the military's interpretation and subsequent application of it emphasized "conventional, military" methods, particularly since the military was professionally trained to respond to conflicts using these methods.<sup>94/</sup> Even General Taylor, who headed the Special Group for Counterinsurgency, initially had difficulty in understanding President Kennedy's conception of counterinsurgency operations.<sup>95/</sup>

The Kennedy administration, especially with regard to its covert operations abroad, sought to avoid congressional disapproval of its foreign policy initiatives by maintaining a certain degree of secrecy.<sup>96/</sup> To protect its initiatives and prevent leaks, the administration established a strong White House legislative liaison with selected members of Congress.<sup>97/</sup> President Kennedy's attempt to reserve foreign-policy decision making for the executive branch <sup>98/</sup> may have been an outgrowth of his own insecurity and lack of success in dealing with Congress despite his previous congressional experience.<sup>99/</sup> He had little success in obtaining passage of a great number of his bills. Indeed, Kennedy remarked that the Congress looked more powerful from the President's position than from inside the legislative chambers.<sup>100/</sup> In addition, President Kennedy's understanding of his presidential prerogative, similar to the views later maintained by Presidents Nixon and Ford, lent credence to his rationale for swift unilateral action. As a presidential candidate, Mr. Kennedy was highly critical of President Eisenhower's conception of the presidency. In

## THE BDM CORPORATION

the foreign-policy area, Senator Kennedy said that "it is the President alone who must make the major decisions."101/ He added, should a "brush-fire" war threaten "in some part of the globe," the President "alone can act, without waiting for Congress."102/

The following discussion of the decision-making process and final decision taken by the Kennedy administration to support the overthrow of South Vietnam's President Diem illustrates the actual roles of and interplay between the decision-making institutions discussed above.

b. Decision to Support a Coup Which Would Have a "Good Chance of Succeeding" in Overthrowing the Diem Government, without Directly Involving US Armed Forces

1) Awareness of the Problem

During its tenure, the Diem regime had never succeeded in cultivating broad popular support; in essence, it had isolated itself from the people and had given the predominately Buddhist population cause for resentment due to the regime's blatant favoritism of the country's Catholic minority. By the spring of 1963, two factors contributed to the Diem regime's unpopularity and, hence, its instability. First, the power and dominance of the Nhus and their acerbic attitude towards the Buddhist community had become increasingly apparent.103/ Second, and as an outgrowth of the first, the regime's favoritism of the Catholic community had evolved into outright discrimination against the Buddhists.104/ On May 8, 1963, the Diem regime responded to a demonstration celebrating Buddha's birthday with gunfire, killing several people and injuring many others. This was the beginning of a series of repressive actions taken by the Diem government against the Buddhist community. To the embarrassment of the United States, President Diem remained unmoved by the dissent of the Buddhists or their supporters, refusing to implicate his government's forces in the May 8 killings. With the world watching, the first of several Buddhist monks offered his self-immolation in protest against the regime's repression and discrimination.105/ The US government, increasingly concerned, began to exert considerable pressure on President Diem to comply with the Buddhists' demands and to curtail his government's repressive actions.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

On July 10, 1963, in a Special National Intelligence Estimate, entitled "The Situation in South Vietnam," the CIA, with concurrence from the US Intelligence Board, reported to the NSC that in several countries, including the US, the Buddhist crisis revived international criticism of US policy on the grounds that it supported an "oppressive and unrepresentative regime."106/ In speculating about the likely situation in South Vietnam after a possible departure of the Diem government, the authors of the SNIE said that the counterinsurgency effort "would probably be temporarily disrupted."107/ However, they added,

...there is a reasonably large pool of under-utilized but experienced and trained manpower not only within the military and civilian sectors of the present government but also, to some extent, outside. These elements, given continued support from the US, could provide reasonably effective leadership for the government and the war effort.108/

Thus, the attention of the US government was drawn to possible alternatives to the Diem regime, in the light of growing criticism of US policy toward Vietnam.

### 2) Debate in Washington

The Kennedy administration began what was to be an intensive and lengthy debate concerning the future of the Diem regime and the likely consequences of a possible coup. The administration was faced with a vast array of conflicting assessments. The US media's reporting indicated that the regime's repressive actions were having a detrimental effect on the country's stability in general, and on the progress of the war in particular; US military personnel in Saigon and the Joint Chiefs of Staff disagreed, arguing that a coup in itself would disrupt the war effort.109/ The US Ambassador in Saigon, Frederick Nolting, soon to be succeeded by Henry Cabot Lodge, urged continued efforts in the on-going pressure campaign to obtain Diem's compliance with US demands.110/ In Nolting's view, a coup would probably lead to a civil war. In short, the administration realized that a coup could indeed result from the turbulence in Saigon, especially if the Nhus remained in power. Yet it was considered

## THE BDM CORPORATION

highly improbable that the Nhus would relinquish power or that Diem could be convinced to remove them.<sup>110/</sup> Against the backdrop of Congressional pressure for cutbacks in US aid to South Vietnam (in protest against Diem's repressive actions), the administration granted Ambassador Nolting's request that he be allowed one more attempt to elicit a satisfactory response from President Diem.<sup>112/</sup>

### 3) Catalyst for a Decision

On August 21, 1963, Nhu ordered an assault on the country's Buddhist pagodas, culminating in the arrest of hundreds of Buddhist monks.<sup>113/</sup> Arriving the next day, US Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, who had abruptly replaced Ambassador Nolting, faced a highly confusing situation; the US Embassy's information about the incident was extremely sketchy, partly owing to Nhu's order that its line of communications be cut during the attack.<sup>114/</sup> In addition, Diem maintained that it was the Army, and not Nhu, who had ordered the attack. Amid this confusion, several South Vietnamese generals approached US Embassy personnel to discern what the US reaction to a possible military coup against President Diem would be and to clear up the misunderstanding over who had ordered the attack.<sup>115/</sup>

#### b. Decision to Support a Coup

The pagoda incident found four of the Kennedy administration's highest level decision makers away from Washington at a time when a decision or change in policy appeared to be an urgent requirement. In the absence of President Kennedy, Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, and CIA Director McCone, a fateful cable to Ambassador Lodge, was drafted in the State Department on August 24, 1963. Approval of the absent policy makers or those acting in their place was obtained hurriedly and the cable was sent.<sup>116/</sup> The message, which met with the Ambassador Lodge's immediate approval, and which the Ambassador interpreted as a "direct order to prepare for a coup against Diem," <sup>117/</sup> signaled US acquiescence in the plotting of a coup and set out the administration's stipulations for

## THE BDM CORPORATION

supporting the military commanders in their efforts to overthrow the Diem government. Significant excerpts from the cable follow:

U.S. Government cannot tolerate situation in which power lies in Nhu's hands. Diem must be given chance to rid himself of Nhu and his coterie and replace them with best military and political personalities available....

We wish [to] give Diem reasonable opportunity to remove Nhus, but if he remains obdurate, then we are prepared to accept the obvious implication that we can no longer support Diem. You may tell appropriate military commanders we will give them direct support in any interim period of breakdown [of the] central government mechanism...

Concurrently, with above, Ambassador and country team should urgently examine all possible alternative leadership and make detailed plans as to how we might bring about Diem's replacement if this should become necessary.118/

In addition, the State Department instructed Lodge to inform both President Diem and the generals involved in the plotting of the coup, of the US position. Ambassador Lodge, however, proposed that only the generals be informed since he felt the chances of Diem's compliance were quite slim.119/ However, following the telegram's dispatch, a mood of uncertainty and ambivalence permeated the Kennedy White House. The broad array of existing assessments and conflicting points of view lent little clarity or decisiveness to the administration's posture regarding a coup or the question of how to handle the Diem-Nhu regime in general. On the one hand, there were those involved in the drafting of the cable and its recipient, Ambassador Lodge, who advocated US support for a coup; on the other, there were the Defense Department, former US Ambassador to South Vietnam Nolting, and General Harkins, who argued that a coup would debilitate the country and, therefore, have a detrimental effect on the progress of the war.120/

President Kennedy, reflecting his earlier unhappy experience with the Bay of Pigs invasion, told his advisers at an NSC meeting on August 29, 1963, that he wanted assurance that a coup would succeed before



## THE BDM CORPORATION

he would support it.<sup>121/</sup> In a cable notifying Ambassador Lodge and General Harkins of the President's decision, Secretary of State Rusk said, "The USG will support a coup which has good chance of succeeding but plans no direct involvement of US armed forces." It instructed Harkins to tell the South Vietnamese generals that he was prepared to "establish liaison with the coup planners and to review plans," but not to engage directly in joint coup planning. According to former CIA director, William Colby, from this point on US in-country CIA personnel were in continual contact with the plotting generals.<sup>122/</sup> Lodge was further authorized to suspend aid to the South Vietnamese government if he thought that it would "enhance the chances of a successful coup."<sup>123/</sup> This presidential decision of August 29, 1963 and the famous cable of August 24, 1963 were the essential statements of US policy concerning the coup. But for the next two months, the Kennedy administration constantly reassessed the political-military situation in South Vietnam, using fact-finding missions and continuous cable traffic, hoping to improve its perception of the prospects for a successful coup, but refusing to make a decision on further US involvement beyond supporting the continued coup plotting by the generals, while continuing to pressure Diem to make reforms.

In an effort to clarify how detrimental a coup might be and to assess the political-military situation in South Vietnam, the administration sent two high-level fact-finding missions to the country. The first, the Krulak-Mendenhall mission, was a military-civilian team. Upon its return, it offered highly contradictory assessments to the NSC, offering little clarity to the prevailing ambiguities.<sup>124/</sup> In the mission's report, dated September 10, 1963, General Krulak, taking an optimistic view, stressed that the civil-political turmoil had little effect on the progress of the war. Mr. Mendenhall, a senior Foreign Service Officer, argued that disaffection with the regime threatened the viability of the civil government; he concluded that the war effort could not proceed effectively with the present regime.<sup>125/</sup> The second, the McNamara-Taylor mission, resulted

## THE BDM CORPORATION

in a compromise assessment of the prevailing civilian and military viewpoints.<sup>126/</sup> In its report, dated October 2, 1963, the team suggested the following alternative policy options to the president:

- (1) Return to avowed support of the Diem regime and attempt to obtain the necessary improvements through persuasion from a posture of "reconciliation." This would not mean any expression of approval of the repressive actions of the regime, but simply that we would go back in practice to business as usual.
- (2) Follow a policy of selective pressures: "purely correct" relationships at the top official level, continuing to withhold further actions in the commodity import program, and making clear our disapproval of the regime. A further element in this policy is letting the present impression stand that the US would not be averse to a change of Government -- although we would not take any immediate actions to initiate a coup.
- (3) Start immediately to promote a coup by high ranking military officers. This policy might involve more extended suspensions of aid and sharp denunciations of the regime's actions so timed as to fit with coup prospects and planning.<sup>127/</sup>

The president, after further deliberations with his NSC advisers on October 2, 1963, opted for the second option. The decision was, therefore, an affirmation of US policy to date: The Kennedy administration would continue its pressure on the Diem Government, in the form of economic sanctions, while, simultaneously, supporting the coup plotting. The coup began on November 1, 1963; an official in Saigon was allowed to sit with the plotting generals and report the coup's development to the CIA Saigon station.<sup>128/</sup> The administration's earlier cable of August 24, 1963, set the coup plotting in motion and, although the US national-level policy makers entertained second thoughts regarding the advisability of a coup, the matter was, in actuality, already beyond the control of Washington. The outcome of the coup has been reported in detail by many historians of the Vietnam era. Twenty-one days later President John Kennedy was dead and a new administration faced the continuing turbulence in South Vietnam.

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### E. THE JOHNSON ADMINISTRATION

Our purpose in Vietnam is to join in the defense of freedom of a brave people who are under attack that is controlled and that is directed from outside their country.<sup>129/</sup>

(President Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965)

#### 1. Introduction

In many respects the Johnson administration continued the Vietnam policies of its postwar predecessors. As a product of World War II and the cold war era, the Johnson administration continued to see the world in bipolar terms, a battle between the forces of the communism and the free world. Also like its predecessors, the Johnson administration considered the failure of appeasement at Munich to be a lesson of great importance and relevance to the contemporary fight against communism in Asia. Communist China was perceived as a highly aggressive power which had to be contained, much as the Soviet Union had to be contained in Europe. President Johnson believed that the conflict in Vietnam was principally inspired and fueled by the Chinese and Soviet leaders, to gain a unified monolithic "communist bloc," rather than a nationalist form of Vietnamese Communism under the rule of the North Vietnamese Communist Party.<sup>130/</sup>

In a deeper sense, President Johnson, like his predecessors, did not appreciate the cultural dissimilarities between the American and Vietnamese societies; he assumed that his programs for a "Great Society" in the United States could be applied in Vietnam, once "democracy" had been established there.<sup>131/</sup>

#### 2. Vietnam Decision-Making Process During the Johnson Administration

##### a. Vietnam Decision-Making Style and the Level of Institutional Influence During the Johnson Administration

President Johnson's Vietnam decision-making style was informal, centering on the Tuesday Lunch Group and meetings between the president and small groups of advisers both in and out of the government. Senior civilian advisers with cabinet rank and senior military officers provided advice directly to the president during such meetings, as well as

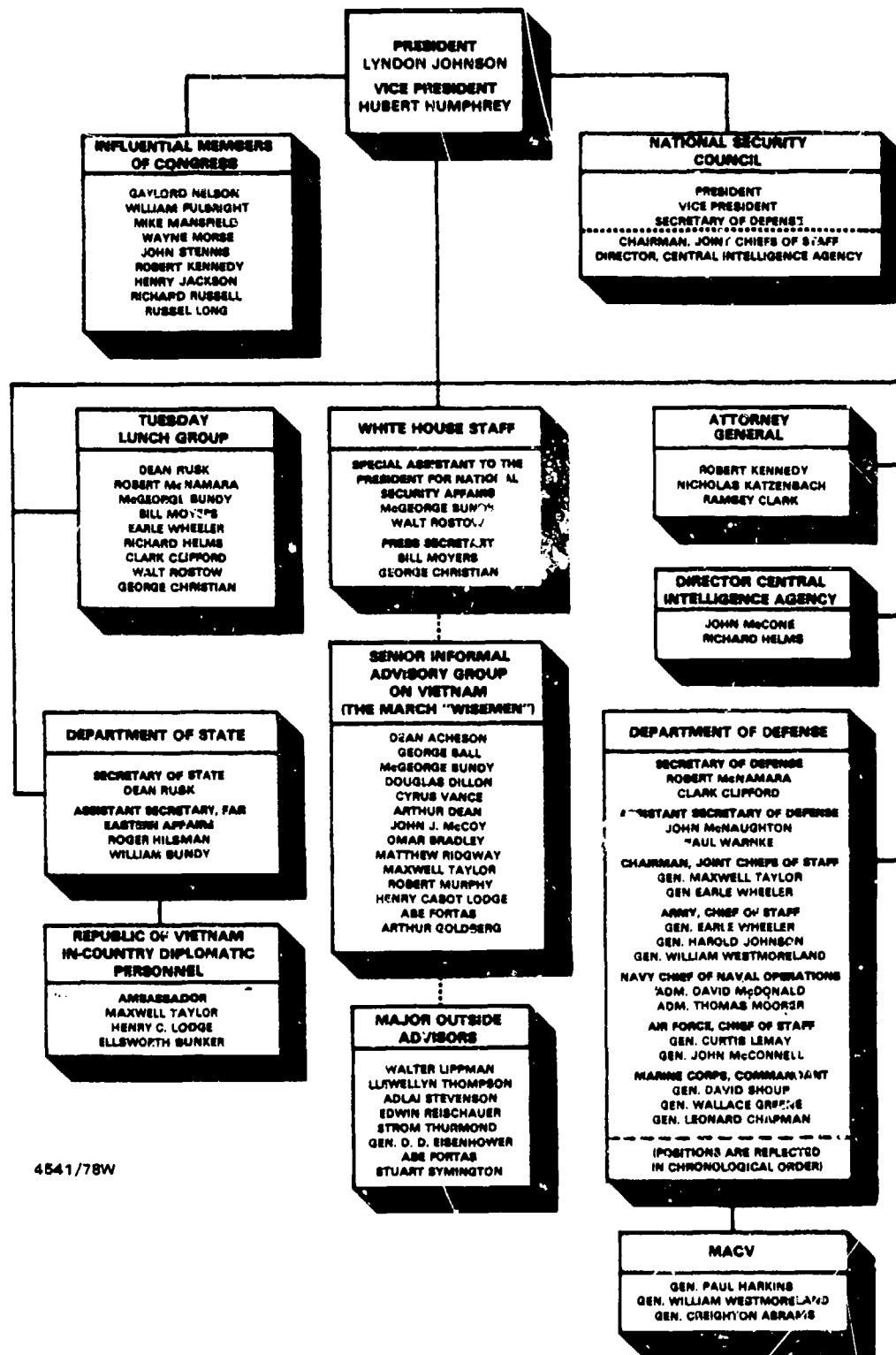
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at the formal meetings of the National Security Council. However, subordinate officials in the various government departments and agencies had very little direct access to the president. They were dependent upon their superiors to forward advice to the president.<sup>132/</sup> President Johnson's style also reflected his desire to achieve consensus on a particular policy decision, this drive for "consensus building" was particularly evident in the face of an ambiguous situation requiring a policy decision or when confronted by dissent from a participating policy maker challenging the majority view. In the latter cases, the dissenter was usually encouraged to rethink his approach; his exclusion from the decision-making process followed if he persisted in blocking the "consensus building" drive. Administrative efforts to reach consensus very likely contributed further to the executive's ever-growing tendency to a centralized approach to decision making.

The role of the NSC as a decision-making organization on Vietnam policy was marginal.<sup>133/</sup> Johnson relied far more on the personal views of Secretary of Defense McNamara, of McGeorge Bundy, and of other members of his White House staff. (See Figure 3-4 for a graphic overview of the positions held by these and other of the key Vietnam decision makers in the Johnson administration. Appendix B provides biographical information on the key Johnson administration Vietnam decision makers.) This reliance on close senior advisers grew as Johnson became increasingly suspicious of the NSC as a wellspring for security leaks to the press.<sup>135/</sup> The Johnson administration's attitude towards the press was never particularly positive and, with the passage of time, the press came to be considered as one of the administration's more powerful and most critical enemies.

The influence of the State Department continued to decline under President Johnson, whereas conversely, the Defense Department, and particularly the Office of the Secretary of Defense, maintained a very prominent position in Vietnam decision making. The Joint Chiefs of Staff apparently felt that McNamara's influence with Johnson frequently exceeded his professional expertise, and were concerned that their advice on military issues such as selection of bombing targets, received less attention than did advice by civilian "whiz kid" in the Defense Department.<sup>136/</sup>

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Figure 3-4. Vietnam Policy Making: Key Decision Makers and Other Important Advisers within the Johnson Administration, 1963-1968. 134/3-35

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Early in President Johnson's administration, the Congress played a supportive but largely peripheral role in Vietnam decision making. Congress passed the Southeast Asia Resolution in August 1964, with only two dissenting votes, thereby, perhaps unintentionally, yielding unprecedented power to the president to act unilaterally in Vietnam. It is rather ironic that Johnson sought and received congressional support in this instance without a precondition that US allies also participate in heightened military action in Vietnam. During the Eisenhower administration, Senator Johnson emphasized that he would not support US military action during the Dien Bien Phu crisis unless US allies also participated. By 1966, key congressmen, particularly Senator William Fulbright who had been a close friend of the president, vocalized their dissent to Johnson's Vietnam policies in an effort to bring about an end to the war. But congressional opinion continued to play a minor role, even in Johnson's reversal of policy in March 1968. This reversal was not in response to dissent from Congress. Rather, it was in response to the changed opinion of his close personal advisers and of a select advisory group commonly referred to as the "Wise Men."

President Johnson is famous for his "consensus-building" approach to national security policy. It was not that the president sought to reach a consensus in the Congress or even in most of the executive branch when policy was actually being formulated. Rather, such a consensus was usually sought after he had taken a decision. Essentially, the consensus-building approach was a tool to get the Congress and NSC advisers on record as being in agreement with major, sensitive decisions.<sup>137/</sup> The decisions themselves usually had been taken earlier, based on the advice of a very small group of trusted advisers, usually including the Secretaries of State and Defense and the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs. This approach was represented in the decision-making process surrounding the Tonkin Gulf crisis of August 1964.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### b. Case Study: Decision to Retaliate Against North Vietnam After the Attacks

#### 1) Awareness of the Problem

After the Diem coup in November 1963, and particularly beginning in February and March 1964, US intelligence assessments indicated substantial deterioration in the military situation in Vietnam.<sup>138/</sup> These assessments induced President Johnson to send Secretary McNamara and Chairman of the JCS Maxwell Taylor on a major fact-finding mission to Vietnam from March 8 to 13.<sup>139/</sup> In his formal report to the president, McNamara argued that the US should send additional economic aid and military equipment to South Vietnam and be in a position on thirty-days notice to initiate a program of "Graduated Overt Military Pressure" against North Vietnam.<sup>140/</sup>

#### 2) Debate In Washington

McNamara's recommendations were softer than those proffered on February 18 and on March 2 by the JCS, which included a proposal for punitive action against North Vietnam to halt support for the insurgency in the South.<sup>141/</sup> The JCS had specifically recommended that bombing of the North be initiated.<sup>142/</sup>

President Johnson accepted McNamara's recommendations and instructed the JCS not to initiate bombing but instead to plan how the United States should strike at sources of the insurgency in North Vietnam.<sup>143/</sup> On June 15, 1964, McGeorge Bundy, the president's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, sent a memorandum to McNamara and Rusk, which dealt with the question of obtaining a congressional resolution supporting Johnson's Vietnam policy.<sup>144/</sup> Thus, almost two months before the Tonkin Gulf crisis, the Johnson Administration considered the possibility of bombing North Vietnam and obtaining a congressional resolution that would justify such action.

General Maxwell Taylor, who, as Chairman of the JCS and as a member of the fact-finding mission with McNamara in March 1964, had recommended immediate bombing of the North, was sent by President Johnson to serve as US Ambassador to South Vietnam in early July.<sup>145/</sup>

3) Catalyst for a Decision

On August 2, 1964, the USS Maddox and C. Turner Joy were reportedly attacked in the Gulf of Tonkin.<sup>146/</sup> General Maxwell Taylor, the new US Ambassador to South Vietnam, recommended that the US initiate immediate and severe retaliatory bombing against North Vietnam.<sup>147/</sup> The United States officially protested to the International Control Commission, but President Johnson did not order the reprisals Taylor recommended. However, a second set of attacks allegedly occurred on August 3 and 4, 1964.<sup>148/</sup> These attacks were the catalyst for a major US decision.

4) Decision: President Johnson Decides to Retaliate Against North Vietnam

On August 4, President Johnson met first with the JCS and then with the National Security Council. Significantly, from the standpoint of Vietnam decision making, President Johnson dismissed the NSC in order to be with his closest advisers, McNamara, Rusk, Bundy, Cyrus Vance, and John McCone.<sup>149/</sup> This small group of advisers concluded that reprisals were necessary. Johnson agreed and at that time made the decision to retaliate. According to Johnson:

The unanimous view of these advisers was that we could not ignore this second provocation and that the attack required retaliation. I agreed. We decided on air strikes against North Vietnamese PT boats and their bases plus a strike on one oil depot.<sup>150/</sup>

Later that day, Johnson reconvened the NSC to confirm formally the details of the attack. He then met with congressional leaders and informed them of his decision to initiate reprisals on his own authority, but true to his consensus building approach he requested Congressional support for this action and any subsequent action he considered necessary. These key Congressmen informed him that he would have no difficulty in getting such a resolution through Congress.<sup>151/</sup> With the presidential election only three months away, Johnson was concerned with presenting an image of moderation in military affairs compared to the image Senator Goldwater projected. The Southeast Asia Resolution, therefore,



## THE BDM CORPORATION

served as public evidence that consensus existed throughout the federal government concerning Johnson's Vietnam policy. From the president's point of view, such a suggestion had the desired effect of sharing the responsibility for the initiation of military reprisals with the Congress. No evidence suggests that Congress or the NSC played a significant role in making the decision to initiate reprisals.

This case study illustrates the administration's decision-making process during President Johnson's first years in office. From the discussion it is evident that the president did rely on the NSC, a formal decision-making organization, as an advisory body during the crisis; the final decision, however, was taken in the company of a small group of presidential advisers outside the confines of a formal, structured meeting. Eventually President Johnson's regular Tuesday lunches assumed the function of an integral, if not the integral, decision-making body within his administration. Johnson's remaining four years in the White House saw his preference for this type of decision making process and style grow, diminishing low-level access to the administration's key decision makers and increasing the executive branch's tendency towards centralized decision making.

### F. THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION

I believe that one of the reasons for the deep division about Vietnam is that many Americans have lost confidence in what the government has told them about our policy. The American people cannot and should not be asked to support a policy which involves the overriding issues of war and peace unless they know the truth about that policy.<sup>152/</sup>

(President Richard M. Nixon, 1969)

#### 1. Introduction

The installation of the Nixon administration in 1969 marked the beginning of a new and significantly different approach to the making of US foreign policy: the Nixon administration was determined to end the Vietnam

war - perceived as President Johnson's fiasco - and to restore balance to US foreign policy. Based on a growing appreciation of the diversities in the world communist movement, Nixon and Kissinger sought an approach to foreign diplomacy which would restore the world's confidence in the US, strengthen US alliances with Western powers, and command the respect of the major communist powers.<sup>153/</sup> In campaign pledges in 1968, Mr. Nixon promised the rapid termination of the Vietnam conflict. When Henry Kissinger joined the Nixon White House staff, a plan for realizing this goal emerged, as will be seen in the decision-making case study for the Nixon administration.

2. Vietnam Decision-Making Process During the Nixon Administration

a. Vietnam Decision-Making Style and the Level of Institutional Influence During the Nixon Administration

In the Nixon administration's early period, the decision-making style tended to be formal and structured, similar in both style and approach to President Eisenhower's mode of operation.<sup>154/</sup> This formal approach was characterized by frequent NSC meetings, a low-profile position for the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, and a commitment to a well-coordinated, open-channeled approach to national security. However, this formal process quickly diminished and eventually faded almost entirely.<sup>155/</sup>

Kissinger initiated several organizational innovations in the NSC system which were designed to enhance the NSC's coordination with the White House and other government agencies on national security matters, including interagency task forces, such as the Washington Special Action Group (WSAG). Kissinger's innovations were designed to improve crisis management at the national level. As Kissinger's responsibilities and access to the president increased, the frequency of NSC meetings diminished significantly. Decision making, especially during crises, came to be a White House operation with Special Assistant Kissinger at the forefront of these advisory groups. As an outgrowth of this development, the influence of the State Department on major Vietnam decisions declined still further. (For a graphic overview of the Nixon administration's decision-making

## THE BDM CORPORATION

bodies and its key Vietnam decision makers, see Figure 3-5. Appendix B provides biographical information on each of the key Vietnam decision makers.)

The Department of Defense, under the stewardship of Secretary Laird, attempted to increase the participation of the military in the overall decision-making process. Evidence suggests that this goal was only partially realized. While the military did in fact concur with Nixon and Kissinger on a number of broad issues - maximization of aid to South Vietnam, the bombing of Cambodia, and the mining of Haiphong harbor - it appears the JCS frequently had difficulty in making their voices heard over the more dominant one of Henry Kissinger. Nevertheless, compared to the McNamara era, the military relished its comparative increase in overall decision-making participation within the administration.<sup>157/</sup>

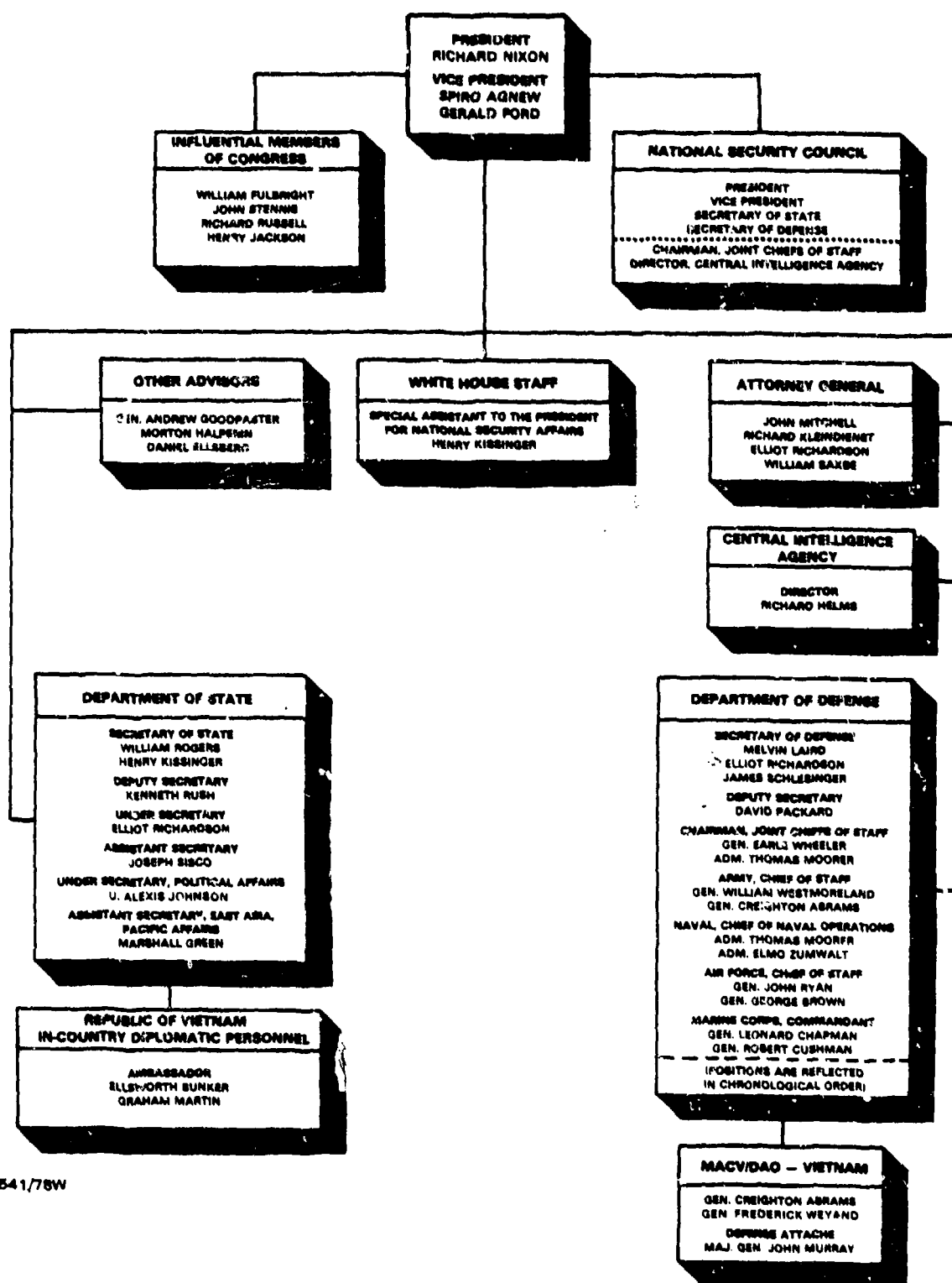
The role of Congress in Vietnam decision making changed markedly during the Nixon administration. In the administration's early years, the Congress did not substantially influence or restrict major executive decisions affecting US involvement in Southeast Asia, including the decisions on negotiations, Vietnamization, and US troop withdrawals set out in National Security Decision Memorandum 9 (NSDM 9), or the decision to bomb the sanctuaries in Cambodia. However, with the passage of time, Congress increasingly asserted itself in the formulation of US foreign policy by restricting presidential powers in military matters, including allocation of defense appropriations and the application of US military force. Most significant among these restrictions were bills cutting off all funds for Cambodia and prohibiting further military action in Indochina without explicit congressional authorization, and provisions in the War Powers Act of 1973 requiring the president to report to Congress any commitment of US combat forces abroad and allowing Congress to terminate US commitment of forces at any time.<sup>158/</sup>

b. Case Study: Decision for a New Approach to the Vietnam Conflict: National Security Decision Memorandum 9 (NSDM 9)

1) Awareness of the Problem

President Nixon came to office in 1969 at the height of public concern over US involvement in Vietnam. His predecessor, Lyndon

# THE BDM CORPORATION



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Figure 3-5. Vietnam Policy Making: Key Decision Makers and Other Important Advisers Within the Nixon Administration, 1969-1974 156/

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Johnson, had acknowledged the need for deescalating US activity in South-east Asia and, just prior to leaving the presidency, had received Hanoi's willingness to commence negotiations. Therefore, President Nixon and his staff, in particular Henry Kissinger, were confronted with the problem of gracefully extricating the United States from an extremely unpopular war.

Although it is doubtful that Nixon himself had a detailed preelection "plan" for dealing with this problem, such a plan did emerge in the first days of the administration. Henry Kissinger, in an article entitled "The Vietnam Negotiations" published in the January 1969 issue of Foreign Affairs, explained his approach for ending the war.<sup>159/</sup> He proposed a two-track solution which called for the following negotiating sequence:

- The US would seek a military settlement with Hanoi while, simultaneously,
- Saigon would seek a political solution through negotiations with the National Liberation Front (NLF).

After the completion of the above two steps, an international conference would be convened during which the necessary safeguards and guarantees would be drawn up. Kissinger also provided a contingency plan in the event that this approach shortcircuited and the war continued. This second strategy called for the upgrading and strengthening of South Vietnam's military (later coined "Vietnamization") in order that US forces could be withdrawn gradually.<sup>160/</sup>

### 2) Debate in Washington

The Nixon administration, armed with this plan, set the bureaucratic process in motion by calling for an all-governmental review and reassessment of US involvement in Vietnam. In January, a special task force, including Henry Kissinger, Daniel Ellsberg, and Morton Halperin, drew up an options paper for the administration.<sup>161/</sup> In addition, various government agencies were tasked with answering a series of 28 questions covering a broad spectrum of war-related concerns: negotiations, enemy capabilities, South Vietnam's military and political capabilities, pacification, and US military operations.<sup>162/</sup> Significantly, Kissinger directed

## THE BDM CORPORATION

that US departments and agencies, including the State Department, CIA, MACV, and the US Embassy in Saigon, develop their responses separately rather than formulating a joint reply. In this way, the prevailing views of each particular agency would surface, thereby revealing diversities of viewpoint. The responses submitted to the administration in late February 1969 did indeed reveal that a broad array of views existed in the bureaucracy.<sup>163/</sup>

### 3) Catalyst for a Decision

The major catalyst for the decision taken by the Nixon administration was the public pledge of the new president to end the war: "New leadership will end the war and win the peace in the Pacific."<sup>164/</sup> Based both on the responses of the various agencies which were compiled in National Security Study Memorandum 1 (NSSM 1), and on Henry Kissinger's two-track solution for terminating the war, President Nixon arrived at his own decision.

### 4) Decision: President Nixon Adopts a Four-Fold Approach for Terminating the War

President Nixon, with the advice of his special assistant Henry Kissinger, and in reaction to NSSM 1 which indicated that the military pressure applied on Hanoi by the Johnson administration had generally been ineffective, decided that the war could be terminated by increasing bombing to a maximal level in Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia.<sup>165/</sup> In his view, the previous ineffectiveness of the bombing did not indicate that a new approach without the use of bombing was needed, but, rather that an intensified bombing campaign to elicit a "better" DRV negotiating posture would be more effective.<sup>166/</sup> In addition, President Nixon, with advice from Dr. Kissinger and the NSC staff, decided three important issues. As outlined in National Security Decision Memorandum 9 (NSDM 9), these decisions were as follows:

- The negotiation policy would include insistence on mutual withdrawal by DRV and U.S. forces with adequate inspection procedures;
- The Vietnamization process would be carried out rapidly and effectively; and

## THE BDM CORPORATION

- A specific timetable for US troop withdrawals, regardless of the progress made at the Paris talks, would be worked out.<sup>167/</sup>

The decision-making process which generated the NSDM 9 document reflected a generally formal and structured approach; input from a variety of agencies was solicited, a special task force was created, and the National Security Council was convened. However, NSDM 9 was essentially a reiteration of the Kissinger Plan and, therefore, cannot be cited as evidence of strong influence on Vietnam decision making by various bureaucratic elements in the Nixon administration. The bombing decision, on the other hand, was developed more clearly on the basis of analysis provided in NSSM 1, thereby suggesting the influence of other bureaucratic elements on Vietnam decision making in the very early period of the Nixon administration.

By mid-1969, the administration's broadly based (though formal) decision-making process became tightly closed. Centralization of Vietnam decision making and the secrecy which sustained this centralized structure was soon carried to an extreme in the decision to bomb the sanctuaries in Cambodia. Secretary of Defense Laird was excluded from this decision-making process.<sup>168/</sup> The reasons for this high degree of centralization and secrecy stemmed largely from the Nixon-Kissinger desire to retain maximum flexibility for bold, personally developed initiatives. Hence, what were perceived as fleeting opportunities were seized upon privately, thus avoiding possible sabotage by leaks from NSC staff members, time-consuming scrutiny (and possible opposition) by Congress, and the ponderous workings of the bureaucracy.

c. The Final Years of the Nixon Administration and the Rise of Congress to the Center of Vietnam Decision Making

After the Paris Peace Accords had been signed in January 1973, the locus of Vietnam decision making shifted dramatically toward Congress. Domestic reasons for the shift are highly complex, and will be analyzed in Volume IV of this study.<sup>169/</sup> But it is important to acknowledge here that the centralized Vietnam decision-making process of the Nixon Administration devolved into one characterized by active congressional participation.

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Congress's heightened activity in the Vietnam decision-making process became visible in the late spring of 1973. In May 1973, the House recommended that all supporting funds for the bombing of Cambodia be terminated. In July, the House and Senate passed this recommendation, and prohibited US military activity after 15 August 1973, in, over, or off the shores of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam without explicit congressional approval.<sup>170/</sup>

During the last quarter of 1973, the Nixon administration, constrained by congressional aid cuts for military activities in Cambodia and limitations on overall military activity in Southeast Asia, girded itself for a battle over aid to Vietnam for the next fiscal year. Based on recommendations by Ambassador Graham Martin, the administration requested \$1.45 billion in aid for South Vietnam. Ambassador Martin and the US Defense Attache in Saigon, Major General John E. Murray, made numerous trips to Washington in an effort to persuade Congress to maintain the size of the appropriations. Several congressional committees recommended sizeable cuts in the administration's proposal. Finally, the Senate Armed Services Committee, uncertain of South Vietnam's actual aid requirements, requested that a Pentagon team assess the situation and report its findings to Congress. Erich von Marbod, one of Secretary Schlesinger's top civilian logistics experts, toured South Vietnam and reported that the administration's aid recommendations had overestimated the GVN's requirements. In late July 1974 the Senate and House voted to impose a \$1 billion ceiling on all Vietnam-related military spending for the next eleven months. This was the last congressional aid decision taken during Nixon's tenure as President; however, the next administration would face a continuation of the aid battle with Congress.

A second legislative act deserves consideration when discussing Congress's rise to the center of Vietnam decision making: the War Powers Act. This bill, passed by Congress in November 1973, required the president to notify Congress within 72 hours of any new commitment or increase in existing commitment of US combat troops abroad. In addition, it required the president to terminate any such action within 120 days of



## THE BDM CORPORATION

his notification unless Congress authorized continuation of the commitment; the law also allowed Congress to direct the termination of US commitments at any time.<sup>171/</sup>

The passage of this act, a logical progression from the July-August 1973 congressional limitations on US aid and commitments to Southeast Asia, illustrates the greatly increased participation of Congress in Vietnam decision making. The last years of Nixon's presidency, in particular from mid-1973 through August 1974, were marked by a breakdown of the administration's characteristically centralized approach to decision making. The exposure of Watergate and the administration's secrecy in the making of foreign policy eroded any congressional acceptance of this centralized approach; Congress visibly increased its participation in the decision-making process through its control of Vietnam appropriations.

Hence, there were three distinct stages of Vietnam decision making during the Nixon Administration. In the first stage -- immediately following President Nixon's inauguration in January 1969 -- the principal decision makers were those in the executive branch, and participation was actively sought from a broad spectrum of government agencies. The decision-making process leading to NSDM 9 fell in this stage. The second stage was characterized by a highly centralized process, in which bureaucratic participation declined sharply as a function of Dr. Kissinger's rise to prominence as the administration's chief spokesman and adviser on foreign affairs. The peak of this stage was reached in September 1973, when Dr. Kissinger was appointed Secretary of State, while continuing to hold the position of Special Assistant for National Security Affairs. The third stage followed almost immediately in mid-1973 when Congress, alarmed by abuses of executive power, began its rise to the forefront of Vietnam decision making. This shift in power continued after President Nixon resigned in August 1974.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### G. THE FORD ADMINISTRATION

The President and his emissaries must not be handicapped in advance in their relations with foreign governments as has happened in the past. ...There can be only one Commander in Chief.<sup>172/</sup>

(President Gerald Ford, 1977)

#### 1. Introduction

Gerald Ford assumed the presidency under trying circumstances. In his two and one-half-year tenure in the White House, he was faced with a broad spectrum of domestic and international problems. The Watergate scandal and President Nixon's subsequent resignation had shattered the US public's faith in high-level government. International attention focused on the Middle East, and Secretary of State Kissinger turned his attentions towards shuttle diplomacy in that area of the world. Vietnam, once a household word, was rapidly fading from the minds of most Americans, and Congress sought to keep US involvement in Southeast Asia to a bare minimum. Several pieces of legislation, in particular the War Powers Act of 1973, indicated that the Congress was intent on restraining presidential maneuverability in foreign affairs. President Ford found that Congress, in direct contrast to the early years of the Johnson administration, demanded and required executive accountability for all military-related activities abroad. This phenomenon - the enlarged role of Congress - stands out as the most significant feature of Vietnam decision making during the Ford administration.

#### 2. Vietnam Decision-Making Process During the Ford Administration

##### a. Vietnam Decision-Making Style and the Level of Institutional Influence During the Ford Administration

In a normal transition period, a president-elect has time to prepare for his assumption of presidential responsibilities. He studies the previous administration's foreign policy and takes time in the selection of his cabinet members and staff. Like Presidents Truman and Johnson, President Ford did not have this opportunity to gear up and ease into his new position.<sup>173/</sup> Consequently, he chose to retain most of the key Vietnam

## THE BDM CORPORATION

decision makers of the Nixon administration, ensuring a good deal of continuity in administration policy toward Vietnam. (Figure 3-6 provides a summary of the Ford administration's key Vietnam decision makers. Biographical information for a number of these individuals appears in Appendix B.)

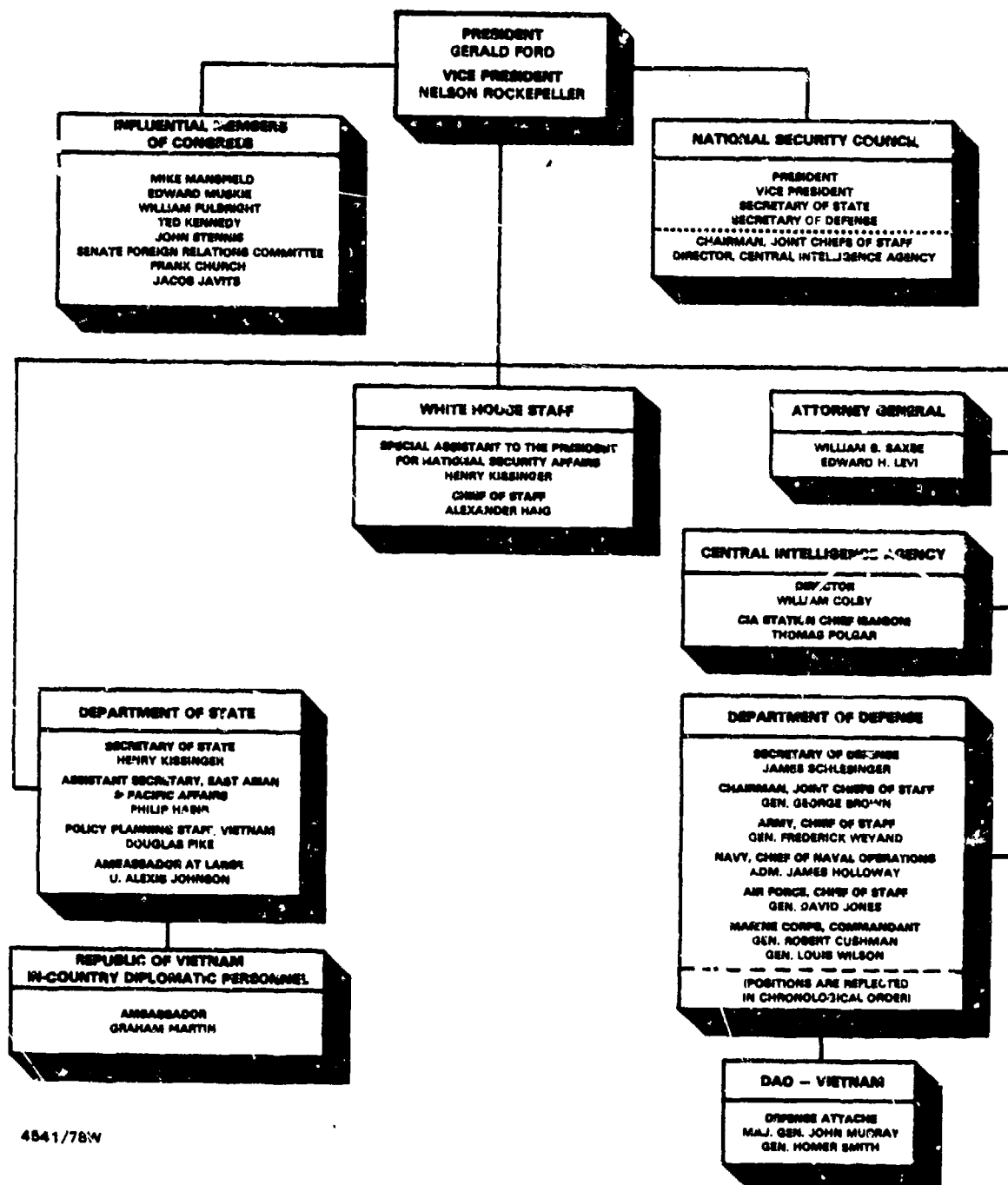
President Ford's decision-making style contrasted significantly with President Nixon's. Ford preferred an informal decentralized mode of operation, seeking the opinions of a broad range of advisers.<sup>175/</sup> One vehicle used for this exchange of views was the NSC which Ford convened with regularity. He championed interagency debate on Vietnam issues, considering this activity to be beneficial in making sound presidential decisions.<sup>176/</sup>

Based on lessons he drew from President Nixon's Watergate experiences, President Ford ensured that his White House staff operated within carefully defined boundaries: while the president appreciated the need for a staff with authority, his White House assistants did not have the right to make policy decisions or prevent access of other advisers to the president.<sup>177/</sup> Ford's eventual decision to remove Dr. Kissinger from the position of Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, which Ford considered an administrative position, while retaining him as Secretary of State, a policy-making position, was in keeping with this principle.<sup>178/</sup>

Under Dr. Kissinger's leadership, the bureaucracy at the Department of State remained relatively uninfluential in Vietnam decision making during Ford's tenure as president. Some officials in the department found their assessments of South Vietnam's aid requirements ignored because they did not coincide with Ford's or Kissinger's conceptions.<sup>179/</sup>

The administration's military specialists, including those in the Department of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, supported the position held by President Ford and Secretary Kissinger that supplemental military aid to South Vietnam would reverse that country's deteriorating situation.<sup>180/</sup> The Defense Department produced a number of pessimistic assessments regarding Saigon's viability. The Office of the Secretary of Defense and the US Defense Attache to Saigon, Major General Murray, were

# THE BDM CORPORATION



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Figure 3-6. Vietnam Policy Making: Key Decision Makers and Other Important Advisers within the Ford Administration, 1974-April 1975. 174/

## THE BDM CORPORATION

the principal contributors of these pessimistic assessments. The Departments of State and Defense, however, were to some degree caught up in the Kissinger-Schlesinger tensions which eventually caused the latter to be placed on the periphery of the administration's Vietnam decision making.<sup>181/</sup> Moreover, according to Admiral Sharp, Secretary Kissinger's personalized diplomacy often removed the Joint Chiefs of Staff from an influential position in the decision-making process, leaving them uninformed on policy initiatives.<sup>182/</sup>

Congress, as has been indicated, participated extensively in the formulation of US policy toward Vietnam. By early 1975, when approval of aid appropriations to South Vietnam was particularly critical, the new congressional majority used its legislative power to end US involvement in the area completely.<sup>183/</sup> There were two major congressional constraints on the Ford administration's efforts to bolster South Vietnam:

- Congressional refusal to approve substantial amounts of military and economic aid to the Saigon regime, and
- Congressional refusal to approve renewed American military involvement after Hanoi's violation of the 1973 Paris Peace Accords.<sup>184/</sup>

b. April 1975 Congressional Decision not to Grant Supplemental Military Aid to South Vietnam

This decision emerged from a complex decision-making process which involved officials in the Ford administration, the US Congress, and high-level US military and diplomatic personnel stationed in Saigon. The decision followed a lengthy debate between Congress and the administration over whether a large amount of additional aid to Saigon was necessary to "save" the rapidly deteriorating military and political situation in South Vietnam, and over whether the interests of the United States would be served by this increase in aid.

1) Awareness of the Problem

As Vice President, Mr. Ford had witnessed the Nixon administration's difficulties in securing congressional support for supplemental aid to South Vietnam. Two weeks before President Nixon's resignation, Congress imposed a \$1 billion ceiling on military spending for Vietnam to cover the next eleven months.<sup>185/</sup> In President Ford's first month in office, Congress refused to allow the \$1 billion ceiling to be reached, appropriating only \$700 million for military spending in Vietnam.<sup>186/</sup> The new president, aware of his predecessor's commitments to defend the South if Hanoi broke the 1973 Accords, was faced with continual reports that Saigon's stability was deteriorating. This instability stemmed both from the increased activities on the part of the North, and from the South's sagging morale, resulting from the above and from fear that the US would no longer provide support. Hence, the Ford administration, on 8 January 1975, requested Congress to grant the South \$300 million in supplemental military aid. President Ford, in requesting this aid, was aware that congressional support would be difficult to obtain.<sup>187/</sup>

2) Debate in Washington

President Ford's request for supplemental aid received criticism in Congress. Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield and House Majority Leader Thomas O'Neill said they would not back the request. Speaker of the House Carl Albert promised his support but conceded that the request would stand little chance of passage in the House.<sup>188/</sup> Throughout the first quarter of 1975, Congress considered the request, but could not support it in the face of widely varying intelligence assessments regarding South Vietnam's viability. Congressional confusion over the real situation in Vietnam was fueled by conflicting briefings, some of which obscured the South's problems, while others highlighted them.<sup>189/</sup>

In an attempt to obtain a clearer view of the situation, Congress sent its own fact-finding team to South Vietnam.<sup>190/</sup> Unwilling to participate only in the ambassador's prepared briefings, the team sought to uncover facts for themselves by speaking with other US personnel in Saigon and with South Vietnamese. The mission did little to

## THE BDM CORPORATION

alleviate the confusion in Congress. While some legislators on the mission concluded that continued US support was essential, most returned home unconvinced of its necessity. Those who supported aid, apparently came to this conclusion as a result of fruitless talks with DRV and PRG officials concerning the return of the prisoners of war and information about those who were missing in action. These congressmen argued that until the question was resolved, continued aid to the South was necessary. Those who remained unconvinced, found fuel for their positions in meetings with US and South Vietnamese officials who dissented with Ambassador Martin's position.191/

From January to mid-April 1975, the Ford administration lobbied hard on Capitol Hill. Senior officials from the Departments of State and Defense testified before Congress, urging the passage of the administration's \$300 million aid request. President Ford, Vice President Rockefeller, Secretary Kissinger, and Ambassador Martin made appeals promoting the aid proposal.

President Ford convened a session of his top-level advisers on March 25, 1975. The meeting took place just after Secretary Kissinger's return from a trip to the Middle East, during which an option for obtaining aid for South Vietnam from Saudi Arabia had been discussed.192/ The advisers included Dr. Kissinger, Ambassador Martin, General Frederick Weyand, and Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft. Secretary of Defense Schlesinger was noticeably absent, apparently excluded at the request of Henry Kissinger.193/ At this meeting the following decisions were made:

- To send a fact-finding mission to South Vietnam and Southeast Asia headed by General Weyand. (The team included two staff members from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.)
- To use American naval vessels to aid the evacuation of US personnel and to inform Congress of this action, in accordance with provisions in the War Powers Act.
- To send all arms and supplies already on order to Saigon without delay.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

- To delay any increase in its aid request for South Vietnam until after the return of the Weyand mission (that is, the Administration would continue to lobby for \$300 million in supplemental military aid).194/

In mid-March, standing plans for such an evacuation were considered by in-country personnel in the face of an increase in DRV military activities.195/ Concurrent with DRV military successes in many of the country's provinces, there was an increase in the evacuation of US personnel and their belongings, and in the dismantling of posts in these areas. Full-scale evacuation began in the last weeks of April 1975.196/

### 3) Catalyst For a Decision

On 10 April 1975, based on the Weyand mission's report which indicated that the situation in Southeast Asia was extremely critical, President Ford went before a joint session of Congress to request a grant of \$722 million in emergency military aid to South Vietnam and a reaffirmation of his authority to use the US military for a full-scale evacuation.197/ The legislators' reaction was almost uniformly negative: in essence, they were greatly concerned by the president's request for the use of military forces and bridled at his emergency aid request as "throwing more good money after bad."198/ A few days later, two staff members from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who had also participated on the Weyand mission, briefed the committee on their findings.199/ The committee was alarmed by their report which recommended an acceleration of the US evacuation from South Vietnam and argued that the administration's aid request was unlikely to prevent the South's collapse.200/

### 4) Decision Not to Grant Supplemental Aid to South Vietnam

On April 14, 1975, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in a meeting with President Ford, Secretary Kissinger, and Secretary Schlesinger, insisted on an accelerated evacuation of US personnel from South Vietnam. Aid for evacuation was promised, but military aid for other purposes was bluntly rejected.201/ The president, obviously frustrated by the committee's stance, refused to meet its demands for accelerated evacuation. According to his later account of the meeting, the president said to the congressmen,



## THE BDM CORPORATION

Gentlemen, I respect your views, but I have to carry out the plan that in my opinion is in our nation's best interest. If we try to pull out right now, it'll lead to panic and the chaos will jeopardize the lives of untold Americans. Believe me, we need to buy time, even a few days. Thank you for coming down. We've had a good discussion but the decision is my responsibility and I'll accept the consequences.202/

The speed of events in Indochina overtook the administration, prompting the decision to accelerate evacuation. On April 17, 1975, the day of Cambodia's fall, the Senate Armed Services Committee voted not to support any appropriation of supplemental military aid for South Vietnam.203/ Without waiting for a joint congressional vote on the issue, Secretary Kissinger ceased asking for the supplemental aid and conceded the administration's defeat. In Kissinger's words, "The Vietnam debate is over. The Administration will accept the Congress' verdict without recrimination or vindictiveness."204/

It is clear that Congress served as a major participant in the development of US policy toward Vietnam during the Ford administration's term of office.205/ Regardless of the tactics used by President Ford and other members of the administration to alleviate congressional concern, key congressional committees considered any compromise over US military aid to Indochina unacceptable. In short, Congress acted as a decision maker through its control of military appropriations for Vietnam. The Ford administration was forced to accelerate its evacuation of US personnel because Congress refused to allocate the additional money believed necessary by President Ford to support South Vietnam. On April 29, 1975, the Saigon government collapsed.

### H. ANALYTIC SUMMARY AND INSIGHTS

Decision making is, in many respects, so specific to the particular issues and circumstances that generalized insights are somewhat hazardous to make. In assessing national-level decision making, the information upon which analysts must rely is the written documented word. Yet, as a point

## THE BDM CORPORATION

of fact, it should be observed that many presidential decisions are communicated "by voice instead of in writing, by telephone instead of letter and to one instead of many."206/ Theodore Sorenson's statement regarding John Kennedy can be applied to the other five post-WWII presidents concerned with Vietnam:

While those on the inside knew far more than those on the outside, no one -- no single aide, friend or member of his family -- knew all his thoughts or actions on any single subject...His motives were often unknown or unclear to others, for he resisted the obvious and the easy; and he was usually too busy with the next decision to take time to explain the last.207/

Statements such as these serve to illustrate that there are certain elements and constraints in assessing national-level decision makers and the decision-making process. Pressures to arrive at timely decisions also militate against the possibility of obtaining expert advice on all sides of every issue, particularly since the situation in Vietnam, even under crisis conditions, was only one of the problem areas that daily required presidential attention.

Presidents were the key decision makers on Vietnam policy. Each of the six postwar presidents considered himself to be the one ultimately responsible for the determination of Vietnam policy, though each chose to involve the Congress more or less, depending on the circumstances and presidential preferences. Eisenhower would involve the Congress in the formulation of policy provided that there was not a "sudden, unforeseen emergency," presumably so deemed by himself, in which case the Congress would not necessarily be involved. This approach contrasts significantly with that employed by the Nixon administration when Congress began to assert its right to extensive involvement in Vietnam policy making.

All of the presidents had lived through Manchuria, Munich, Poland, Yalta, the "loss" of China, the Korean War, and the McCarthy era. Each drew the lesson that the United States could not afford to be soft on communism, specifically that he could not be the president who permitted the "loss" of Vietnam to communism. Their close advisers reinforced their

## THE BDM CORPORATION

own anticommunist orientation. There is no question that the presidents and their advisers were conditioned by such past experiences when considering how to deal with the conflict in Vietnam.

Like leaders in any organization, presidents are not immune to confusing dissent with disloyalty. The Vietnam experience should point to some of the dangers in such confusion. Premises fail to receive the critical examination they require in formulating a sound policy that keeps pace with changes in a dynamic world. There was a time when monolithic communism may have justified the anticommunist approach of the US in the 1950s. Equally, it seems possible that the US might have tailored its policy toward Vietnam more closely to observable changes in the Sino-Soviet relationship earlier than it did (during the Nixon presidency). Unfortunately, the problem arose that the investment of US political, economic and military prestige, not to mention US casualties, came to override the intrinsic importance of Vietnam to the US.

The American experience in Vietnam points to the danger of having one fundamental principle -- anticommunism -- elevated to the status of doctrine for all regions in the world. By elevating a principle to the level of doctrine, further debate of the subject is minimized, thereby reducing the possibility that legitimate dissenting views will receive sufficient attention at the national policy-making level. What tended to happen in Vietnam was that consensus building on the premise of anticommunism was achieved to give coherence to Vietnam policy at the national level, at the sacrifice of a needed closer examination of the accuracy of that premise.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### CHAPTER 3 ENDNOTES

1. Harry S. Truman, Memoirs, Vol. 2, (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1956), p. 106.
2. For additional information on Ho Chi Minh and the OSS, see Decision #1 in Appendix A of this volume. Books 1, 7, and 8 of US Vietnam Relations 1945 - 1967, Prepared by the Department of Defense, Printed for the Use of the House Committee on Armed Services (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), offer a number of pertinent communications between the US and Ho Chi Minh as well as information relating to early US-Vietnam relations. Hereafter, DOD US/VN Relations.
3. Compiled from sources which appear in the Volume III bibliography. The DOD US/VN Relations series was the major source used in drawing up this particular graphic.
4. Gordon Hoxie, Command Decision and the Presidency (New York: Reader's Digest Press, 1977) See Chapter 5, "J. V. Forrestal and the National Security Act of 1947."
5. Hoxie, pp. 76, 94; and Keith C. Clark, and Laurence Legere, eds., The President and the Management of National Security (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), pp. 58-59.
6. Hoxie, p. 55.
7. Ibid., p. 80.
8. Ibid., p. 119.
9. Clark and Legere, p. 59.
10. Leslie H. Gelb and Richard K. Betts, The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute, 1979), pp. 36-56.
11. E. J. Kahn, The China Hands (New York: Viking Press, 1972); Origins Causes, and Lessons of the Vietnam War. Hearings from the Committee on Foreign Relations U.S. Senate, 1972, p. 64 and Richard Freeland, The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism (New York: Schocken Books, 1974).
12. James Roherty, Decisions of Robert S. McNamara (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1970), p. 21.
13. See Hoxie, Chapter 5, pp. 133-143, for a detailed discussion of this issue.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

14. Richard K. Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen and Cold War Crises (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), pp. 6, 53.
15. Congress, Information and Foreign Affairs, Congressional Research Services (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978) p. 17. Hereafter Cong. Info.
16. DOD US/VN Relations, Book 8, pp. 150, 190, Cable from Abbott to Department of State and Cable from Acheson to American Consul, Saigon.
17. Ibid., Book 8, p. 266, Report by NSC.
18. Ibid., Book 8; p. 274, JCS report.
19. Ibid., Book 8, p. 276-277, Memo for the President from Acheson; and Russell Fifield, Americans in Southeast Asia (New York: Crowell, 1973), pp. 126-127.
20. DOD US/VN Relations, Book 8, pp. 283-285. NSC Report on US position on Indochina.
21. Russell Fifield, p. 174.
22. DOD US/VN Relations, Book 8, pp. 286-287, Cable from Under Secretary Webb to Griffin.
23. Ibid., Book 8, p. 292, Report from Griffin.
24. Ibid., pp. 312-315, JCS Memos.
25. Ibid., p. 319, JCS Memo to Secretary of Defense.
26. Ibid., p. 318.
27. Ibid., pp. 321-332, Acheson to London embassy.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., Book 8, ix, "Extract of Tripartite Ministerial Talks," May 13, 1950.
30. Ibid., Book 8, p. 336, Statement by the President.
31. Ibid., Book 8, p. 336-340.
32. Ibid., Book 8, p. 336.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid., p. 318, JCS to Secretary of Defense.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

35. William Effros, Quotations Vietnam: 1945-1970 (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 15.
36. Stephen E. Ambrose, Rise to Globalism (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 217.
37. Ibid., p. 220.
38. Clarke and Legere, p. 62.
39. Compiled from sources which appear in the Volume III bibliography. The DOD US/VN Relations series was the major source used in drawing up this particular graphic.
40. Clarke and Legere, p. 63.
41. See David Hall, "The 'Custodian-Manager' of the Policymaking Process," in Volume 2 of Commission on the Organization of the Government for the Conduct of Foreign Policy.
42. See the exchange of telegrams between The Department of State and American Embassies in London and Paris during the period 1-5 April 1954 cited in DOD US/VN Relations, Book 9, pp. 291-297.
43. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Mandate for Change (New York: Doubleday, 1965) pp. 349-350.
44. Ibid., pp. 338-341.
45. DOD US/VN Relations, Book 9, pp. 333-358. President's Special Committee Report - "Indochina."
46. Eisenhower, p. 340.
47. Cong. Info., p. 35.
48. Ibid., p. 36.
49. Ibid., p. 36, and Melvin Gurtov, Southeast Asia Tomorrow (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), pp. 145-146.
50. Ibid. See also Volume IV of this study for a discussion of domestic politics.
51. Townsend Hoopes, The Devil and John Foster Dulles (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973) p. 205.
52. Andrew H. Berding, Dulles on Diplomacy (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1965), p. 142.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

53. Eisenhower, p. 339.
54. Ibid., p. 340.
55. DOD US/VN Relations, Book 9, p. 266, JCS to Secretary of Defense, on negotiations.
56. Eisenhower, p. 345.
57. Ibid.
58. See Chalmers Roberts, "The Day We Didn't Go to War," The Reporter, Vol. II (September 14, 1954), pp. 31-35.
59. Roberts, p. 31, and Betts, p. 106.
60. Eisenhower, p. 347
61. Ibid., Congr. Info., p. 35, and Gurtov, pp. 145-146.
62. Eisenhower, p. 345, DOD US/VN Relations, Book 9, pp. 277-296, 388-390.
63. Sen. Mike Gravel, ed., The Pentagon Papers, Vol. I, p. 94.
64. DOD US/VN Relations, Book 9, pp. 461-465, 382-383.
65. Ibid., p. 332, and Betts, pp. 21-22.
66. Ibid., p. 332. See also General Matthew B. Ridgway, Soldier (Westport, Conn.: 1956), pp. 274-280.
67. DOD US/VN Relations, Book 9, p. 332, "Army Position on NSC Action No. 1074-A".
68. Ibid., p. 296., Telegram from U.S. Embassy in Paris to Secretary of State.
69. Ibid., p. 297.
70. Ibid., p. 361, Recommendations of Planning Board on NSC Action 1074-A.
71. Ibid., p. 362, Emphasis in the original.
72. Ibid., p. 382, and Eisenhower, p. 351. Later in September 1954, this regional grouping formed the basis of SEATO. But at this point, before the Geneva Conference, the concept of a regional grouping was discussed in reference to requirements for immediate US intervention rather than to possible future defense requirements in Southeast Asia.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

73. Eisenhower, p. 350.
74. Ibid., p. 351.
75. President Kennedy's Inaugural Address, January 1961.
76. Ambrose, p. 271, and Walter LaFeber, America, Russia and the Cold War, 1945-1975 (New York: Wiley & Sons, 1967), pp. 214-215.
77. Ambrose, p. 271.
78. LaFeber, pp. 222-229.
79. I. M. Destler, Presidents, Bureaucrats and Foreign Policy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 99; Ambassador U.A. Johnson and Dr. Vince Davis, BDM Senior Review Panel, September 7, 1979, in a discussion of the Kennedy administration's decision-making style, referred to the administration's style as a "seminar approach."
80. Compiled from sources which appear in the Volume III bibliography. The DOD US/VN Relations series was the major source used in drawing up this particular graphic.
81. Destler, p. 26.
82. Clark and Legere, p. 77.
83. Theodore C. Sorenson, Kennedy (New York: Harper and Row, 1965) p. 652.
84. Clark and Legere, pp. 73-74.
85. Destler, pp. 97-98; Clark and Legere, pp. 74-75.
86. John P. Leacacos, Fires in the In-Basket (New York: World Publishing Co., 1968).
87. Sorenson, p. 655; Robert Gallucci, Neither Peace Nor Honor (Baltimore: Johns Hopkin. University Press, 1975), p. 33.
88. Frank Merli and Theodore Wilson, Makers of American Diplomacy (New York: Scribner & Sons, 1974) p. 322; Leacacos, p. 132; BDM interview June 13, 1979 with Dr. Vincent Davis. In a private meeting with Mr. Rusk, Dr. Davis queried him concerning Rusk's apparent deference. Mr. Rusk himself explained that in matters of Vietnam, he and his staff generally concurred with McNamara's approach.
39. Lawrence J. Korb, The Joint Chiefs of Staff (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), pp. 112-113, 119-120; Betts, p. 35; Destler, p. 229.



## THE BDM CORPORATION

90. Gallucci, p. 15.
91. Ibid., p. 16.
92. Betts, p. 35.
93. Ibid., p. 35.
94. Robert Gallucci, Neither Peace Nor Honor (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), pp. 14-17.
95. In an interview with BDM analysts, General Taylor indicated that President Kennedy had an excellent appreciation of the potential role of counterinsurgency operations in "wars of national liberation." In fact, Kennedy was obliged to explain the concept of counterinsurgency to General Taylor so that the latter could understand it and explain the concept to other military professionals.
96. Congr. Info., p. 133.
97. Ibid., p. 42.
98. Ibid., p. 41.
99. Leacacos, p. 133.
100. Congr. Info., p. 42.
101. Ibid., p. 41.
102. Ibid., p. 41, cite taken from John F. Kennedy, A Compilation of Statements and Speeches Made During his Services in the US Senate and House of Representatives (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office 1964).
103. With the passage of time, the ferocity of the Nhus' abuse towards the Buddhists increased. Madam Nhu was particularly insensitive in her remarks: upon the death of the first Buddhist monk by fire, she referred to the incident as a "barbeque." She was also outspokenly anti-American in her comments.
104. DDO US/VN Relations, Book 3, IV B 5, pp. 1-5. "Overthrow of Ngo Dinh Diem."
105. Ibid., p. 6.
106. Ibid., Book 12, V B 4, p. 533.
107. Ibid., p. 535.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

108. Ibid.
109. Ibid., Book 3, IV B 5, p. 10.
110. Ibid., pp. 10-11.
111. Ibid. President Diem's reluctance in removing the Nhus stemmed partially from the traditional Vietnamese regard for family unity and loyalty.
112. Senator Frank Church urged the passage of a bill reducing or eliminating US aid to South Vietnam. The administration requested that he postpone introduction of the bill until the administration had settled on a course of action.
113. DOD US/VN Relations, Book 3, IV B 5, p. 10, "No Alternatives to Diem" Policy.
114. Ambassador Nolting reported later that the announcement of his replacement by Ambassador Lodge had come as a surprise to him. "I heard that I had been replaced by Ambassador Lodge in a radio broadcast while I was on vacation. It seems obvious to me that those who wanted to let Diem hang himself didn't want me back in Saigon," in US New & World Report, July 26, 1971, p. 68. Ambassador Nolting provided BDM with a copy of this article. He still considers the US role in that coup to have been our "cardinal mistake."
115. Tran Van Don, Our Endless War (San Fafael: Presideo Press, 1978), pp. 89-90.
116. Lodge vs. Diem: August 20-October 2: The Pagoda Raids and Repercussions, cited in DOD US/VN Relations, Book 3, IV B 5, p. 15.
117. William Colby, Honorable Men (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978), p. 120.
118. DOD US/VN Relations Book 12, V B 4, p. 536. State Department to Lodge.
119. Ibid., Book 3, IV B 5, p. 16., "Lodge vs Diem: August 20 - October 2."
120. Later, General Harkins described Ambassador Lodge as pulling the rug "... right out from under Diem." Although Harkins had been instructed from Washington to confer with General "Big" Minh, he was unable to comply with the instruction because the Vietnamese General refused to see him. US Army Military History Research Collection, Senior Officers Debriefing Program, Report of an interview of General Paul D. Harkins, April 28, 1974, by Major Jacob B. Couch, Jr., p. 54.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

121. State Department to Lodge and Harkins, DOD US/VN Relations, Book 12, V B 4, p. 538.
122. Colby, p. 211.
123. DOD US/VN Relations, Book 12, V B 4, p. 538.
124. Ibid., IV B 5, p. 24.
125. Ibid., p. 26., President Kennedy, upon hearing their respective reports, could not help but ask, "You two did visit the same country, didn't you?"
126. Ibid., p. 30.
127. Ibid., Book 12, V B 4, p. 571.
128. Colby, p. 215.
129. Effros, p. 33.
130. Doris Kearns, Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream (New York: Signet Books, 1976), p. 325, 331; Tom Wicker, JFK & LBJ (Baltimore: Pelican Books, 1970), pp. 200-201.
131. Kearns, pp. 278-279; DOD US/VN Relations, Book 4, IV C, p. 95.
132. Gallucci, p. 97; Hoopes, pp. 59-61; Janis, p. 126.
133. Kearns, pp. 274-5, 339.
134. Compiled from sources which appear in the Volume III bibliography. The DOD US/VN Relations series was the major source used in drawing up this particular graphic.
135. Chester Cooper, The Lost Crusade (Greenwich: Fawcett Publishers, 1970), p. 273.
136. Kearns, pp. 334-335.
137. Gallucci, pp. 89-91; Hoopes, pp. 83-89.
138. Cooper, p. 273.
139. US Progress in South Vietnam, November 1963-April 1965 NSAM 273-NSAM 288, DOD US/VN Relations, Book 3, IV C 1, pp. A-4, A-8.
140. Ibid., Book 3, IV C 2 A, p. 9., "Military Pressures Against NVN."

## THE BDM CORPORATION

141. Ibid., Book 3, IV C 1, A-5. (Chronological history).
142. Ibid., pp. A-4, A-5.
143. Ibid., p. A-6.
144. Ibid., p. A-8.
145. Ibid., pp. A-4, A-8. Secretaries McNamara and Rusk both volunteered to serve as US Ambassador to South Vietnam. General Taylor did not volunteer for the assignment but accepted it when assigned. Taylor interview by BDM on 11 July 1979.
146. DOD US/VN Relations, Book 3, IV C 1, p. A-9.
147. General Maxwell Taylor, Swords and Plowshares (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), pp. 324-325.
148. US Progress in South Vietnam, November 1963-April 1965. Chronology cited in DOD US/VN Relations, Book 3, IV C 1, p. A-10.
149. Lyndon Johnson, The Vantage Point (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971), p. 114.
150. Ibid.
151. Ibid., pp. 115-118.
152. Effros, p. 12.
153. Raymond Price, With Nixon (New York: The Viking Press, 1977), p. 108.
154. Hall, p. 112.
155. Ibid., pp. 12-13.
156. Compiled from sources which appear in the Volume III bibliography. The DOD US/VN Relations series was the major source used in drawing up this particular graphic.
157. Betts, p. 9.
158. Frank Snepp, Decent Interval (New York: Random House, 1977), p. 63.
159. Henry Kissinger, "Vietnam Negotiations," Foreign Affairs, January 1969; John Stoessinger, Henry Kissinger: The Anguish of Power (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976), p. 51. Dr. Vincent Davis, in an interview at BDM, 1979, indicated that Dr. Kissinger's plan drew heavily on information from the papers of John Vann. After the Republican

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Convention in 1968, at which Rockefeller lost the nomination for the Republican ticket, Kissinger returned to Harvard a disillusioned man. He had strongly supported Rockefeller's nomination and had desired to work as Rockefeller's Special Assistant on National Security Affairs. While preparing for fall classes, he requested to see Vann's papers in which were contained the seeds for Kissinger's later article in the January 1969 issue of Foreign Affairs.

160. Early in 1969, the new Secretary of the Navy, John Chaffee, toured Vietnam. One of the most persistent questions he posed to senior officers concerned the efficacy of withdrawing American forces and the circumstances that would make such a withdrawal possible. Based on a discussion with Secretary Chaffee as reported by Col. J. A. MacDonald, USMC (Ret.), the MACV J-52. Memo for the Record.
161. Tad Szulc, The Illusion of Peace (New York: Viking Press, 1978), pp. 23-24.
162. William Corson, Consequences of Failure (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974), p. 185; Daniel Ellsberg, "Alternatives and Issues for US Policy in Vietnam," John P. Vann Papers, 1969.
163. Ibid. Corson notes that the responses to the questions posed regarding Vietnam indicated agreement on some matters as well as very substantial differences of opinion within the U.S. government on many aspects of the Vietnam situation. While there were some divergencies on the facts, the sharpest differences arose in the interpretation of those facts, the relative weight given them, and the implications drawn. There was general agreement on the following points:
  1. The GVN and allied position in Vietnam had been strengthened in many respects.
  2. The GVN had improved its political position, but it was not certain that the GVN and other non-Communist groups would be able to survive a peaceful competition with the NLF for political power in South Vietnam.
  3. The RVNAF alone could not, at the moment, or in the foreseeable future, stand up to the current North Vietnamese-Vietcong forces.
  4. The enemy had suffered some reverses but they had not changed their essential objectives and they had sufficient strength to pursue these objectives. We were not attriting his forces faster than he could recruit or infiltrate.
  5. The enemy was not in Paris primarily out of weakness.

As for the disagreements, their portrayal was simplified when broken down into the two schools of thought which existed within the administration. (Corson's breakdown.)

The first school, Group A, usually included MACV, CINCPAC, JCS, and Embassy Saigon. The second school, Group B, usually included OSD,

## THE BDM CORPORATION

CIA, and (to a lesser extent) State. These schools lined up as follows on some of the broader questions:

1. In explaining reduced enemy military presence and activities, Group A gave greater relative weight to allied military pressure than did Group B.
2. The improvements in RVNAF were considered much more significant by Group A than Group B.
3. Group A underlined advancements in the pacification program, while Group B was skeptical both of the evaluation system used to measure progress and of the solidity of recent advances.
4. In looking at the political scene, Group A accented recent improvements while Group B highlighted remaining obstacles and the relative strength of the NLF.
5. Group A assigned much greater effectiveness to bombing in Vietnam and Laos than Group B.

164. Nixon, Memoirs (New York: Grosset & Dunlop, 1978), p. 298.

165. Szulc, p. 31.

166. Ibid.

167. Charles MacDonald, An Outline History of US Policy Toward Vietnam (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1978), p. 74.

168. William Shawcross, Sideshow (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979), p. 140; Laird was not at the discussion on the decision to bomb Cambodia; according to William Watts of Kissinger's staff, who was present, Admiral Moorer asked what he should relay back to the Secretary. He was informed that he was attending the meeting as the President's military adviser not as the representative of the Secretary of the Defense; he was to tell Laird nothing.

169. Several important factors influenced the congressional rise to the center of Vietnam decision making. The mood of the US public, especially after the signing of the 1973 Peace Accords, indicated an overall desire to minimize further US military activities in Southeast Asia. Domestic unrest over the administration's Cambodia bombing found reflection in the Congress; aware of the public's displeasure with this policy and with rising inflation, the Congress sought to curtail further Vietnam-related military spending. In addition, Congress may have itself been displeased with the Administration, in particular, with Henry Kissinger. Prior to his rise to the stewardship of the State Department, Kissinger, as Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, was not, by law, required to testify before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Testimony before Congressional committees serves as an important vehicle by which Congress obtains information regarding an

## THE BDM CORPORATION

administration's foreign policy. Since Special Assistant Kissinger was, in fact, the Administration's chief foreign affairs advisor and spokesman, his non-accountability to Congress was viewed with suspicion and displeasure.

It is interesting to note that, two months after Nixon signed this bill into law, he promised President Thieu that US support would be forthcoming if the North broke the 1973 Peace Accords. In his November letter, Nixon stated: "You have my absolute assurance that if Hanoi fails to abide by the terms of this agreement, it is my intention to take swift and retaliatory action." And in a subsequent letter of January 1973, Nixon stated: "...you have my assurance of continued assistance in the post-settlement period and that we will respond with full force should the settlement be violated by North Vietnam." See John Osborne, White House Watch: The Ford Years (Washington, D.C.: New Republic Book, 1977), p. 122. The question arises, how could President Nixon, in good faith, promise this type of action, based on Congress's restrictions several months earlier?

171. President Ford: The Man and His Record, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, August 1974.
172. Hoxie, preface, pp. xvii-xviii.
173. Gerald Ford, A Time to Heal (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), pp. 125-126.
174. Compiled from sources which appear in the Volume III bibliography. The DOD US/VN Relations series was the major source used in drawing up this particular graphic.
175. Ibid., p. 126.
176. Ibid., pp. 131-132.
177. Ibid.
178. Hoxie, p. 332.
179. See for example, Snapp, p. 148.
180. For examples of their concurrence, see Ford, p. 253, and Snapp, pp. 146-147.
181. Snapp, p. 235.
182. Admiral U.S.G. Sharp, Strategy for Defeat (San Rafael: Presidio Press, 1978), p. 41.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

183. Gelb, p. 351.
184. Ibid., p. 350.
185. Ford, p. 250; Snepp, p. 112.
186. Ford, p. 250.
187. \$200 million was also requested for Cambodia at this time. Snepp, p. 142.
188. Ford, p. 250.
189. For example, in late winter 1974, Ambassador Martin apparently attempted to minimize South Vietnam's problems, to convince Congress that the situation in the South was not so desperate as to be past saving. However, Senator Sam Nunn, on a visit to Saigon in mid-January 1975, questioned Ambassador Martin and CIA Station chief Thomas Polgar about the South's viability. While Martin stressed that the South, with sufficient aid, could be economically independent within three years, Polgar's estimates were directly contradictory. He argued that unless the USSR and PRC cut back their aid supplies, the South could in no way become viable with or without US aid. Other US officials supplied alternately pessimistic and optimistic assessments. See Ford, p. 254, and Snepp, pp. 117-149.
190. Snepp, p. 159.
191. Ibid., pp. 166-169
192. Ibid., p. 216.
193. Ibid., p. 235.
194. Ibid., p. 308.
195. Snepp, p. 190.
196. Ibid. pp. 347, 365, 375, 389.
197. Ford, p. 254; Snepp, p. 337.
198. Snepp, p. 337.
199. Ibid.
200. Ibid., pp. 359-360



## THE BDM CORPORATION

201. Senator Jacob Javits, for example, asserted, "I will give you large sums for evacuation, but not one nickel for military aid." Ford, p. 255.
202. Ibid.
203. Snapp, p. 364.
204. Ibid.
205. By extension, Congressional suspicion of the administration's urgent request for military aid also reflected the US public's resolve to avoid further involvement in Vietnam. The influence of public opinion on US policy toward Vietnam is discussed in Volume IV of this study.
206. Sorenson, p. 17.
207. Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

US FOREIGN POLICY AND VIETNAM, 1945-1975: LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

A. INTRODUCTION

In order to derive lessons from the development of US policy toward Vietnam during the period 1945-1975, the analysis in this volume has been divided into three chapters each of which provides a distinctive analytical perspective: the global environment of US policy making, historical landmarks or precedents which influenced subsequent US foreign policy, and the process of national policy making in the US. Each of these perspectives provide insights into the reasons why the United States adopted particular policies. This chapter will derive lessons of broad significance based on these insights. Subsequent volumes of this study will consider other perspectives, such as the US domestic environment, illuminating other reasons for these policies.

B. LESSONS

First among the lessons of this volume is a reinforcement of the adage, "know your enemy." Fundamentally, before 1962, the US response to the conflict in Vietnam was driven by the logical connections which linked four widely held beliefs:

- (1) Ho Chi Minh and his forces were communists;
- (2) All communist forces were part of a monolithic hierarchy ruled by Moscow (i.e., that communist nationalism was a contradiction in terms, with the exception of Russian communism);
- (3) Moscow was determined to dominate the world; and
- (4) US security was globally indivisible in the sense that a victory by communist forces in any part of the "free world" would result automatically in a step toward Moscow's global domination, would diminish US security, and therefore required US resistance.

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It was not until 1962 that the US government began to act on signs of international communist disunity which had appeared since 1956 (highlighted by the Sino-Soviet split), and Hanoi's struggle in South Vietnam came to be seen as part of a Chinese drive for hegemony in Southeast Asia, a situation considered no less dangerous for US security interests (e.g., in Japan) than one in which Hanoi was Moscow's satellite. It was not until the 1966-1968 period that the US government began to act on perceptions that Hanoi's aims were nationalist and distinguishable from Soviet and Chinese aims in Southeast Asia. Whether and how United States involvement in Vietnam would have been different if key decision makers had earlier understood the true nature of the Hanoi-Moscow-Peking relationship are not issues addressed in this study. (The purpose of this study is not to speculate on "might have been history," but rather to explain what actually happened.) But clearly the attractiveness of alternative courses of action might have increased, which reinforces the importance of learning the basic lesson -- "Know your enemy." A corollary of this lesson is "Know very precisely the nature of the relationships between Third World countries and external communist supporters." These are particularly important lessons today, as the problems of proxy wars and surrogate forces attract the concern of US policy makers.

A second lesson that emerges from Volume III is that what, in the past, have been termed vital interests, can cease being seen as such in a very short span of time, depending on such factors as US perceptions of global threats. US involvement in a particular country, however, cannot be altered as rapidly since it is based on various long-term commitments and on US political, economic, and military "investment" in that country. This is a very important and complex lesson, as US policy makers learned when considering plans for withdrawing US forces from South Vietnam. The rhetoric in this instance was much easier to formulate ("peace with honor") than to implement ("Vietnamization"). Changes in policy statements are easily made; reversals in actual policy implementation are much more difficult to effect in a short period of time. The general lesson about vital

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interests defined above is similarly problematic because it is hard to know precisely how to act upon it. An approach to this problem, helpful in avoiding extreme consequences, but not in entirely eliminating the problem, is suggested in Chapter 1 of this volume: Be very clear at all times about what is actually meant by "vital" interest and about whether a particular interest in another country meets that definition, prior to committing US resources - political, economical, or military--especially to such an extent that US "investment" in the country is likely to preclude an honorable extrication from that country when and if US interests are no longer perceived as vital. The basic thrust of this lesson is to force US policy makers to think through the reasons for and consequences of their actions. A corollary to this approach is to insure that at the national level of the US government careful examinations are continually made of the premises as well as the instrumentalities of US policy.

A third lesson based on the research in Volume III can be derived from the relationship between the US and its allies, the French and the South Vietnamese: US leverage over an ally is a function not only of how much the ally perceives it needs US help, but also of how much the US perceives it needs the ally's help, and of how much the ally recognizes that the US needs its help. This statement speaks to the US problems in persuading the French to continue fighting in Indochina during the period immediately before and after the Geneva Conference of 1954, while at the same time trying to persuade the French to promise the independence of the Associated States of Indochina. Clearly, as a first priority, the US wanted the French to continue fighting the communist forces. Second, the US wanted a French declaration that independence would be granted. The French perceived this ordering of priorities and therefore refused to be pressured into making a declaration by openly reminding the US that France might choose to negotiate with the communists. The lesson also relates to the problems the US had in trying to persuade successive South Vietnamese governments to institute democratic reforms which these governments did not wish to implement.

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When reflecting on US-GVN relations, it is also important to underscore the following lesson: The US should not expect the political processes of other countries to be structured or to function in exactly the way those of the United States do. If the US encourages "reform" of the political processes of another country, it should be prepared to face considerable resistance by the political leadership in that country and to deal with the potentially destabilizing tendencies in that country's political system which might jeopardize or preclude self-determination for that country. Self-determination in the sense of choosing one's own form of government must not be confused with the US conception of "democracy" or "civil liberty." The fact that democracy and civil liberty occur together in the United States is no argument or guarantee that they should occur in all countries, or even that they can occur in other countries with different cultural, moral, and ethical values.

A fourth lesson concerns the relationship between US perceptions of the global environment and restraints imposed by US policy makers on the US conduct of the Vietnam War. In Third World conflicts presenting possibilities of military confrontation between the United States and another great power, especially the Soviet Union or China, US policy makers will impose restraints on US methods of conflict resolution. This lesson may be most applicable and immediately essential in conflicts where clearly identifiable US interests (e.g., tangible interests such as natural, technological, or manpower resources needed by the US) are not at stake. This lesson combines insights relating to the US conduct of "limited war" (sometimes referred to as "gradualism") in Vietnam. For example, it is often wondered why the US chose to fight within narrow territorial boundaries in Indochina, while the North Vietnamese communist forces were unrestrained by such boundaries. A central answer to that question is that the North Vietnamese, from their perspective, were fighting a total war which they believed would result either in the eventual union of North Vietnam with South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, under Lao Dong Party rule, or else in the total destruction of North Vietnam - in short, a "do or die" proposition from their perspective. Such was never the case for the United

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States. US policy makers had no intention of provoking a war with China or the Soviet Union. Conflict avoidance with the PRC and USSR remained their basic approach and explains why several major restraints on the US were imposed. This helps explain why the war from the US side was limited geographically and in terms of the types of weapons used and targets struck. Arguments continue today over whether the US was too restrained in its conduct of the war. But to enter into this issue would, once again, be to engage in "might-have-been history," which is not the task of this study. The point remains that US policy makers did impose restraints and, under similar conditions, are likely to do so again. Problems relating to "limited war" and "gradualism" will be examined further in this study. (See Volume IV domestic factors influencing US involvement in Vietnam, and Volume VI - Conduct of the War.)

A fifth lesson in Volume III derives from the decision-making styles of the six US administrations involved in Vietnam policy making. Although centralization of executive policy making (the reduction in the number of individuals involved in policy making) may lead to an increase in the executive branch's flexibility of approach and speed of response in resolving foreign problems, centralization also tends to isolate these individuals from governmental as well as private expertise. There are several consequences of this isolation: First, the President and his key advisers may be forced to rely on their own preconceptions, predispositions, and prejudices in shaping policy. Second, premises of foreign policy (such as what constitute US "vital" interests at a given moment) are less likely to be vigorously debated than the instrumentalities, that is, the strategies and tactics of implementation. The second problem arises because premises, couched in general terms, are more likely to appear unobjectionable and because of the executive branch's urge to do something to solve the problem. Since the principal function of the executive is to execute policy, no actions can be taken until the premises are firmly established. This urge to "do something" is reflected in an impatience with continual reexaminations of premises. This urge and impatience seem to have been particularly strong in President Johnson. Critics who seek a simple remedy in

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"pluralism" (allowing more individuals or groups to participate in national policy making), expose US foreign policy to potential dangers of a different but no less significant kind. This approach results in fragmentation of responsibility, loss of accountability, and incoherence or inconsistency in policy prescriptions with respect to key issues and their applicability to different countries or regions.

One of the most difficult aspects of the problem concerns the amount of time that national-level policy makers can afford to devote to particular issues. Limits on time force a simplification of arguments, initially developed in detail by the bureaucracy, into presentations more manageable for consumption at higher levels of government. Thus, it should be clear that simplification (and the potential for oversimplification) is in itself an inescapable result of centralized decision making. Although the need for simplification certainly does not eliminate the need for expertise, the subtler ways of treating complex issues are often screened out before they reach the national level. As Chester L. Cooper, a former CIA official and member of the National Security Council Staff, explained:

...a major bureaucratic problem is that by the time lower-level judgments, sometimes provided by the intelligence community and sometimes by political means, reach top decision-makers, many of the qualifications and many of the differences of approach get washed out, partly because the desire and sometimes the necessity, to reduce the problems to a page or two becomes a governing factor -- mainly because busy men feel unable to read the facts.]/

There are methods for mitigating some of the consequences of centralization. For example, Chapter 2 in this Volume indicated major consequences arising from the indiscriminate use of historical precedents, including most dangerously, the proliferation of emotionally charged adages such as "appeasement at Munich." One of the problems of centralized decision making is that sensitivity to nuances in history may be reduced at the national level; fewer perspectives are brought to bear on the particular, complex issues involved while simplification up the hierarchy eliminates the qualifications, as Chester Cooper explains in the passage above. One

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significant lesson is that personalities, predispositions, and prejudices are more likely to determine US decisions on foreign policy in the absence of informed discussion and debate at the national level of policy making. This is no minor lesson, as we have seen from the Vietnam experience in which such charged words as "Munich," "the Free World," the "loss of China," and the "the Domino theory" came to be accepted as self-evident lessons. This is a very important point. US policy makers were forced to rely on inapplicable historical precedents and misleading analogies because there was so little expertise on Vietnam at the national policy-making level. As Dr. Vincent Davis has explained, "...we had virtually no knowledge of Vietnam, no intellectual capital to draw on, no sense of Vietnam itself, its history, its culture, its economics, its political dynamics."2/ Moreover, the use of "buzz words" had the circular effect of freezing debate, leading to US involvement and escalation in Vietnam. In this connection, it is similarly disturbing to reflect on the possibility that the American experience in Vietnam may lead to the future derivation of seemingly self-evident "lessons." At the moment, the expression "No More Vietnams" signifies different things to different Americans. But a problem of centralized decision making, whether in the executive branch or in Congress, is that particularist, oversimplified interpretations of "No More Vietnams" by a small group of individuals in key policymaking positions may come to dominate the shaping of US foreign policy in the near future.



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### CHAPTER 4 ENDNOTES

1. Richard M. Pfeffer, ed., No More Vietnams? The War and the Future of American Foreign Policy (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1968), pp. 108-109.
2. Dr. Vincent Davis, Director, Patterson School of Diplomacy and International Commerce, University of Kentucky, Interviews and Notes, BDM, September 6-7, 1979.

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VOLUME III  
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
SUPPLEMENTAL DATA TO VOLUME III: SIGNIFICANT US  
NATIONAL POLICY DECISIONS WHICH INFLUENCED US  
MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM

The material presented in Appendix A examines seventeen key turning points that mark, in the estimation of the Vietnam study team, the beginnings or ends of important stages in the US military commitment to the Vietnam conflict. These seventeen decisions have the following characteristics in common.

- They are decisions made by the United States. Key events, such as the Tet '68 offensive, are not included because they were not designed by US policy makers. The American response to Tet in March 1968, however, is of interest within the given methodology.
- They are decisions that affected the level of US military involvement. Thus, decisions that affected increases or decreases in the US war effort are considered as turning points.

The seventeen US national policy decisions are as follows:

- (1) The decision to allow the French return to Indochina in 1945, marking the first major US post-WWII action regarding Vietnam's future.
- (2) The 1950 decision to recognize the government of Bao Dai and to accelerate military and economic aid to France and the Associated States, including the installment of MAAG in Saigon.
- (3) The 1954 decision not to assist the French directly through bombing support during the Dien Bien Phu crisis.
- (4) The 1954 decisions to prevent the communists from taking over all of Vietnam by supporting Diem in the South.
- (5) The 1961 decision to increase sharply the scale of US support to South Vietnam.
- (6) The 1963 decision to support the overthrow of Ngo Dinh Diem and Ngo Dinh Nhu.

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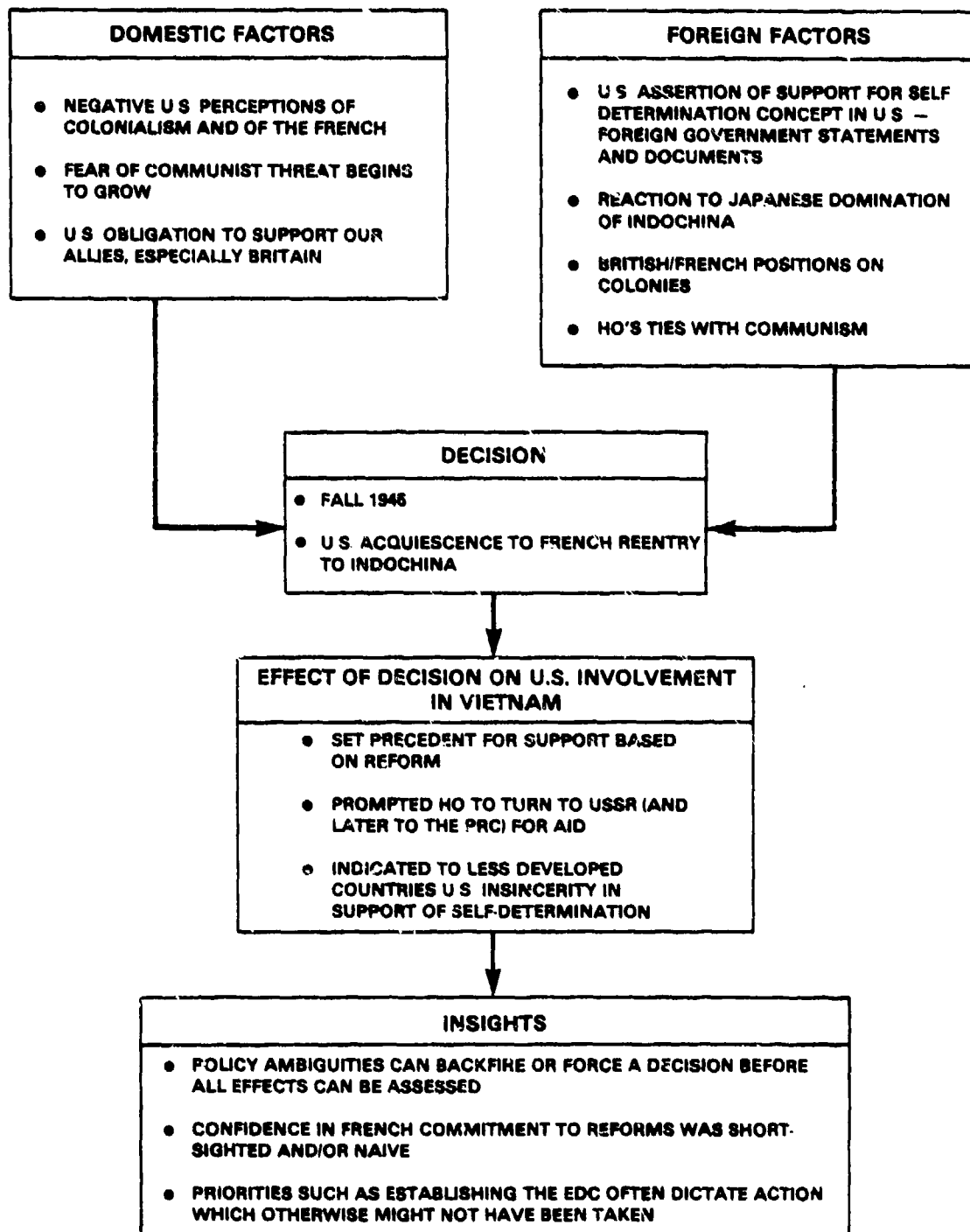
- (7) The 1964 Congressional decision to pass the 1964 Southeast Asia Resolution marking the "high water mark" of Congressional and domestic US support for the war effort and paving the way for further US escalation.
- (8) The 1964-65 decisions to conduct air strikes against targets in North Vietnam to reverse the downward trend of the war.
- (9) The 1965 decision to introduce US ground combat troops into Vietnam, representing a major increase in US commitment to Vietnam.
- (10) The 1965, 1966, and 1967 decisions not to mobilize US Reserves to augment the US military commitment made to Vietnam.
- (11) The 1968 decision to seek a negotiated settlement of the Vietnam conflict, shifting the US goal from military victory to finding an acceptable political solution to the conflict.
- (12) The 1969 Nixon Administration decisions to withdraw US troops, to support the South Vietnamese efforts to pacify the countryside and take over the war effort (Vietnamization), and to negotiate on "honorable and durable" peace.
- (13) 1970 decision to launch combined US/RVNAF incursions against the PAVN/PLAF sanctuary bases in Cambodia.
- (14) The 1972 decision to bomb North Vietnamese military targets (Linebackers I and II) and mine Haiphong harbor and inland waterways.
- (15) The 1973 Paris Peace Accords, representing the formal conclusion of direct US military participation in the Vietnam War.
- (16) The 1974-1975 Congressional decision to cut military appropriations for Vietnam, culminating in a decision not to grant supplemental aid to the South.
- (17) The 1975 US decision not to intervene militarily in spite of the GVN's inability to hold Phuoc Long Province.

The data presented in Appendix A was used extensively in the writing of Volume III. It was utilized as a supporting research tool by the Volume III research team and is intended as a useful compendium of supplementary

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data for the reader. The material herein is also deliberately presented in abbreviated style; endnotes are restricted to general sources, all of which appear in the Volume III Bibliography.

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Figure A-1. Decision I: US Decision To Acquiesce to French Reentry Into Indochina

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### I. US DECISION TO ACQUIESCE TO FRENCH RETURN IN INDOCHINA (I.C.)1/

- A. Decision. US Government states that it "has no thought of opposing the reestablishment of French control in Indochina and no official statement by US Government has questioned even by implication French sovereignty over Indochina. However, it is not the policy of this government to assist the French to reestablish their control over Indochina by force and the willingness of the US to see French control reestablished assumes the French claim to have the support of the population of Indochina is borne out by future events."2/

1. When: October 1945
2. Principal Decision Makers: President Truman and Secretary of State Stettinius.
3. Purpose: To clarify the US government's somewhat ambiguous policy stance vis à vis Indochina in light of British and French interest in the area coupled with our allies' confusion concerning our exact policy position on Indochina.
4. Themes: Ardent anticolonialism stance toned down to acceptance of our allies' colonial interests but with qualifications/stipulations.
  - a. No direct US involvement in aiding French reassertion of influence in I.C.
  - b. Reassertion of French dominance in I.C. to be based on amount of leeway given to peoples of I.C. for self-determination and self-government coupled with French posture on reform in Indochina.

- B. Precedents for the Decision. Two sets of precedents are evident which influenced the formation of this policy decision. As US government policy regarding I.C. was somewhat ambivalent until the October 1945 statement, it seems relevant and necessary to highlight the two existing sets of precedents which at times were contradictory.

1. Set of Precedents 1: Several statements, communiques and official diplomatic exchanges indicating US support of French reassertion of influence in its overseas empire post WW-II. US commitments regarding this policy surfaced in various documents and statements, for example:
  - a. November 2, 1942 - letter from President's personal representative to General Henri Giraud (letter from Mr. Murphy to Gen. Giraud).

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- b. FDR instruction of November 3, 1944 on US view of France in regaining Indochina.
  - c. May 1945 - Communication between French government (Bidault) and US Sec'y of State Stettinius which indicated US did not question French sovereignty in Indochina.
2. Set of Precedents 2: Presidential position on colonialism stresses the importance of self-determination for peoples of the world's colonies; if colony status to be maintained, the "natives" should be assisted in their development and growth towards self-government and the "colonizers" stance should indicate willingness to better the colonies' positions via reforms etc.
- a. January 24, 1944 - FDR response to memorandum from Sec'y of State Hull on Indochina. Indochina should not go back to France.
  - b. FDR's conversations with Stalin and Chiang Kai-shek on colonies.
  - c. November 1942 - Draft proposal submitted to FDR by Sec'y of State Hull on colonies and self-determination entitled "The Atlantic Charter and National Independence." Draft approved by FDR.
  - d. June 1945 - Dept. of State instructs US ambassador to China on US position concerning colonies and necessity of increased civil liberties and self-government for Indochina.

### C. Options Presented.

- 1. Policy of International Trusteeship for Indochina and other of the world's colonies. Consistently supported by FDR, especially from 1942-1944. Met with little if any support on the part of Britain, France and, it appears, some sections of the US military.
- 2. Policy on support for resistance forces in Indochina at the close of WWII which could have, if pursued after the war, indicated U.S. support for the "natives" vs. the "colonizers" (Ho Chi Minh). Pressure from France/Britain coupled with the recognition of Ho's communist orientations reduced the viability of this particular option.



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3. Concept of Neutralization. This particular policy option was considered as an alternative to Japanese wartime domination of Indochina. It could conceivably have been considered as a post-war option, although the French/British response would likely have been negative.
4. Policy of non-involvement/non-commitment and non-decision. At the close of WWII, FDR, until his death, stressed US low-key posture on committing itself to a forthright policy stance concerning Indochina as a colony. FDR stressed the importance of dealing with the issue as a post-war matter, perhaps in hopes of buying time for the promotion of his "self-determination" concepts. This option of low-key, non-committal policy regarding Indochina could not have continued; the US, as one of the strongest post-WWII powers, was compelled to take a forthright stand in the face of continual French/British inquiries.

### D. Influential Factors

#### 1. Foreign:

- a. US assertion of its support for self-determination concept which appeared in:
  - 1) Atlantic charter
  - 2) League of Nations charter
  - 3) At Yalta, in conversations between FDR and Stalin
- b. US strong reaction to Japanese domination/occupation of Indochina during World War II.
- c. The British and French positions on their colonies.
- d. Ho's ties with communism.

#### 2. Domestic:

- a. US negative domestic perceptions of colonialism and of the French.
- b. Initial, growing concerns of a Communist threat.
- c. Desire to support our allies, especially Britain, (the pressure of which influenced this policy decision) as one of the Big Three post-WWII

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### E. Effect of Decision on US Involvement in Vietnam.

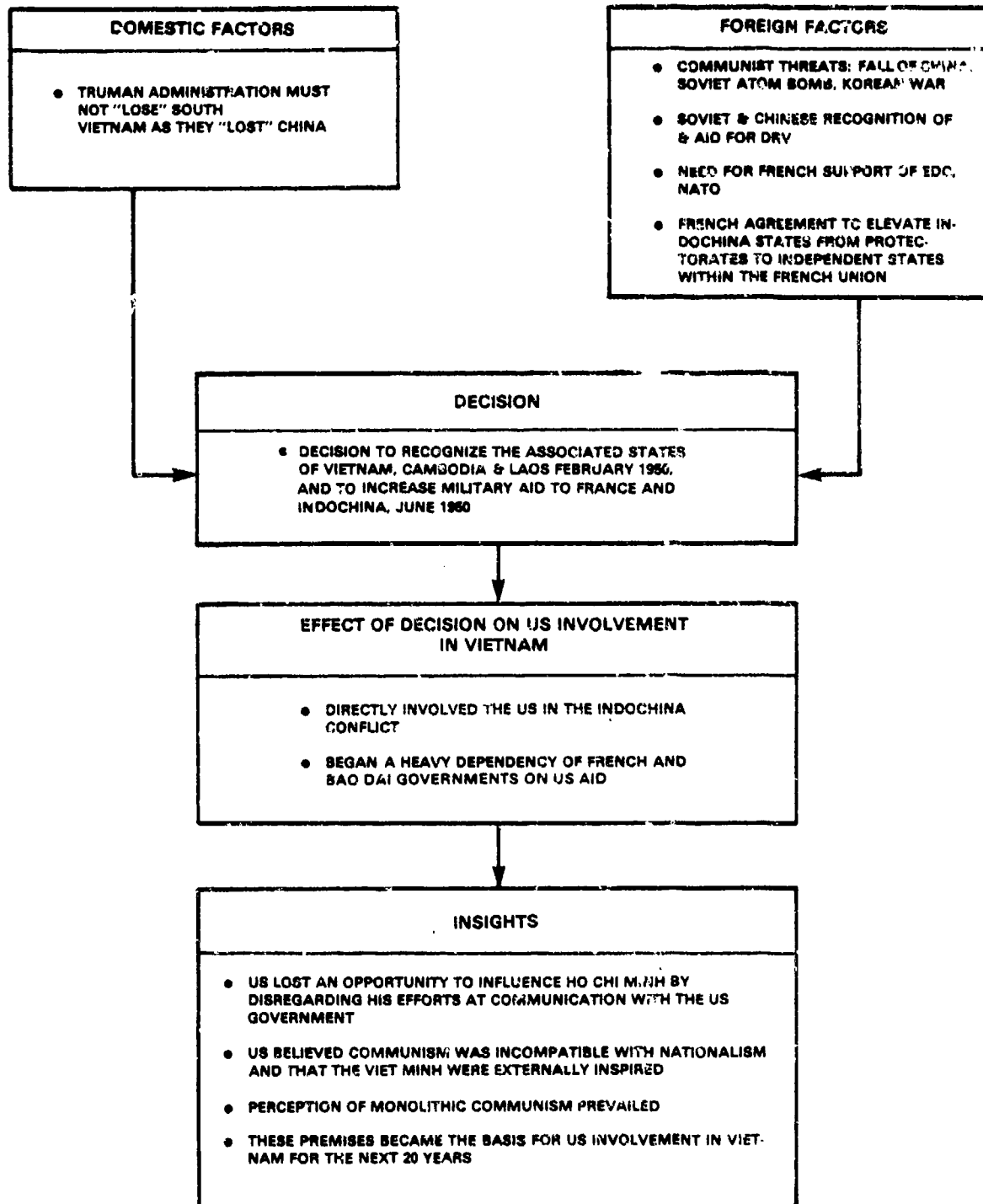
1. Although this policy reflected the US attitude of non-involvement in assisting the French to reassert domination in Indochina, it set a precedent for US "go-ahead" policies of approval/aid contingent on reforms to be made by the appropriate party. (In this case by the French, later by the GVN- Diem).
2. Decision to allow the French to return, and to cease support for Ho's resistance forces affected later events by prompting him to turn to the USSR and the Chinese Communists for aid and assistance. Future implications are obvious.
3. May have indicated to world's colonies and less developed countries, especially in Indochina, that US could not be counted on to support concept of self-determination.

F. Effectiveness of the Decision. Decision taken allowed French to reenter Indochina without our initial assistance. (Although we did provide modest aid to the French in re-entering by not resisting the British turnover of 800 US lend-lease transport vehicles to the French). As a post-war consideration, we chose to back our allies' interests, presumably a natural response. However, in light of FDR's continual advocacy of self-determination and the growing sentiments of nationalism in the post-war world, the decision left the possibility of a French-Vietnamese conflict wide open.

### G. Insights.

1. Policy ambiguities, while perhaps a convenient way to stall for or buy time, may serve to force a policy stance before all possible effects of the policy decision can be assessed. FDR's verbal attacks on colonialism caused a great degree of confusion in OSS operations/relations with Ho, for the French and the British, and served to confuse the French as regards US goals in Indochina. The record needed to be set straight in order to avoid ambiguities and misinterpretations by our allies as well as US (OSS) personnel in Indochina.
2. Confidence in the French ability to tackle reforms in Indochina, in view of the rising nationalist sentiments in Indochina and Ho's strong posture, may have been short-sighted and/or naive.
3. The US desire that the French support the European Defense Community overruled the US anticolonialist stance.

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Figure A-2. Decision II: US Decision To Recognize the Associated States of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, February 1950, and To Increase Military Aid to France and Indochina, June 1950

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### II. DECISION TO RECOGNIZE THE ASSOCIATED STATES OF VIETNAM, CAMBODIA AND LAOS (FEBRUARY 1950), AND THE RELATED DECISION TO ACCELERATE MILITARY AID TO FRANCE AND THE ASSOCIATED STATES AND DISPATCH A US MILITARY MISSION (MAAG) TO INDOCHINA (JUNE 1950)<sup>3/</sup>

A. Decision. US decision to recognize the Bao Dai government, and to give military aid to both France and the Bao Dai Government of South Vietnam.

1. When: Formally recognized Bao Dai Government February 7, 1950; "Statement by the President" to give military aid, June 27, 1950.
2. Principal Decision Makers: President Truman and Secretary of State Dean Acheson, in concert with the NSC and JCS.
3. Purpose: The US recognition of Bao Dai's government was a means to assist the French in their anticommunist fight while trying to avoid support for French colonialist activities in the region. The US viewed the Viet Minh threat as part of a monolithic communist advance against the Free World. The US, suffering from the fall of Nationalist China, wanted to prevent the fall of Vietnam. Provision of military and economic aid was designed to keep the French in Indochina fighting the Viet Minh and to encourage the French to support NATO and EDC.
4. Themes:
  - a. Anticommunism - The US chose to aid the French in their war with the Viet Minh to resist monolithic communist aggression.
  - b. Anticolonialism - Paradoxically, the US remained opposed to French efforts to restore their colonial power in Indochina while, at the same time, supporting the French forces. The US minimized this paradox by stressing French promise of independence for Vietnam, and the other Associated States and by viewing the French effort as part of a united free world response to communist aggression.
  - c. Support for emerging nationalism in less developed countries - While supporting the French colonial programs, the US insisted on the rights of self-determination for the Vietnamese.

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### B. Precedents for the Decision.

1. US acquiesced to French reentry to Indochina in 1945.
2. In 1949 the US acted to protect the Nationalist regime in Taiwan from communist attack.
3. The US was supporting the Republic of Korea.
4. The US gave military aid to Greece in their fight against communist aggression in 1947.

### C. Options Presented.

1. No support - remain outside the Indochina conflict and disapprove of French colonialist objectives.
  - a. Not recognize Bao Dai because of Asian perception of him as a puppet of the French.
  - b. Not establish MAAG in Indochina because it would directly involve the US in the security of Indochina, although with the French playing the dominant role.
2. Support the French and the Bao government but disapprove of colonialist objectives.
3. Direct US military intervention.

### D. Influential Factors

1. Foreign:
  - a. The fall of Nationalist China in 1949 made more urgent the US and allied support of non-communist governments.
  - b. North Korean attack on South Korea prompted US military support of Indochina.
  - c. USSR exploded atom bomb in September 1949.
  - d. February 1950 French agreement to elevate Indochinese states from protectorates to independent states within the French Union.
  - e. US perception of its vital interests required a viable Western Europe, which in turn required French viability and membership in a European Defense Community (EDC).

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- f. December 1949 Chinese communist forces at the borders of Vietnam.
- g. January 1950 the PRC and USSR recognized Ho Chi Minh's government (DRV).
- h. The Chinese and Soviet governments promised financial and military support to the DRV.

### 2. Domestic:

- Truman administration could not afford to "lose" another country to communism as China was "lost."

### E. Effect of Decision on US Involvement in Vietnam.

- 1) The decision directly involved the US in the Indochina conflict.
- 2) It began a heavy dependency of French and Bao Dai governments on US aid.

### F. Effectiveness of the Decision.

- 1. The decisions did accomplish the purpose of getting the French to support NATO and EDC, and of temporarily staving off a communist takeover of all of Vietnam.

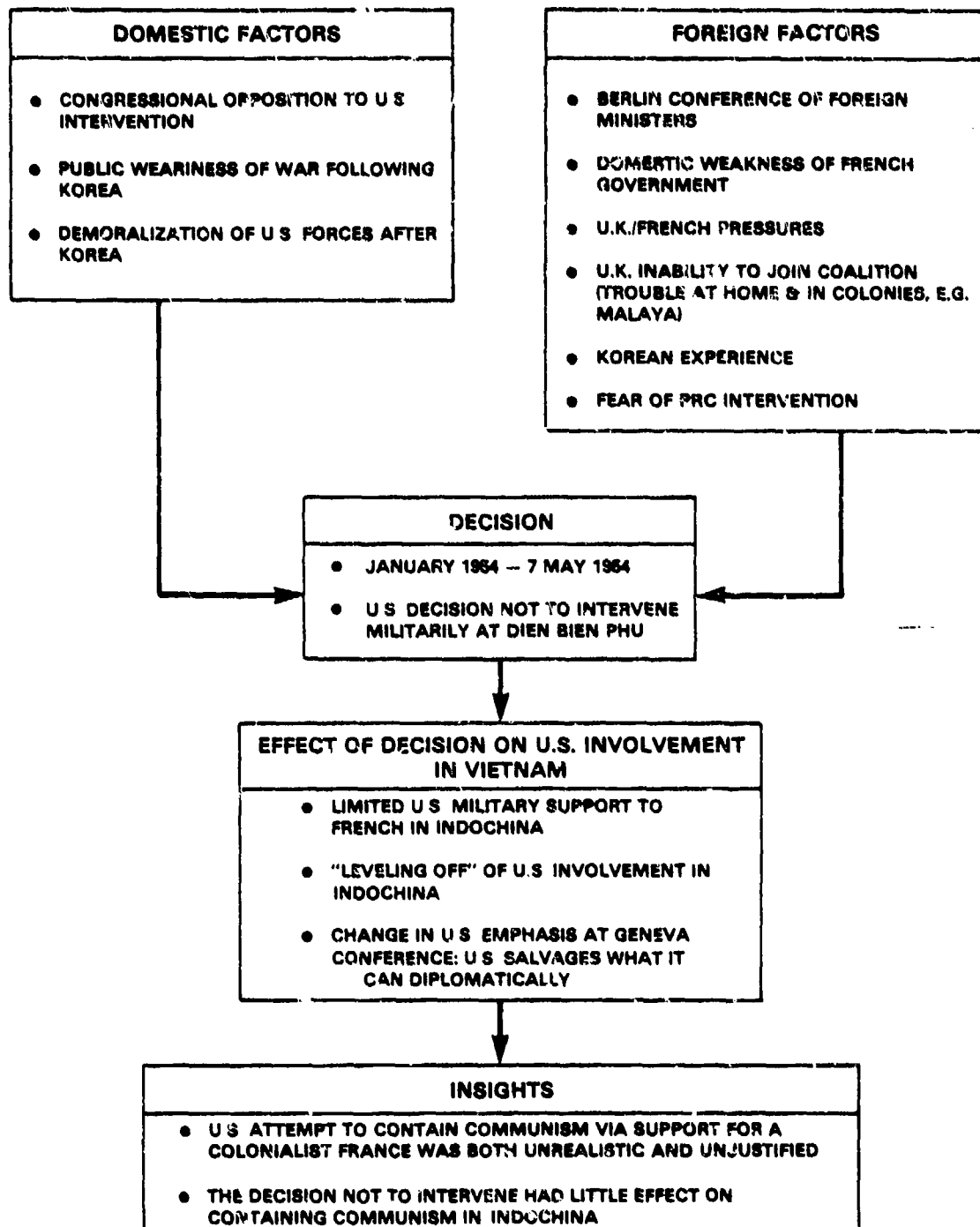
### G. Insights

- 1. The US policymakers perceived Ho Chi Minh as part of an international communist pattern of aggression. The US believed that communism was incompatible with Vietnamese nationalism or, that nationalism was a disguise for communism.
- 2. The US policy makers perceived the Viet Minh effort as externally inspired by the forces of monolithic communism. It was assumed that if outside support of the Viet Minh ceased, the insurgency would wither away.
- 3. Since the conflict was seen as part of an international communist plan, the domino theory prevailed: the fall of Indochina would lead to the fall of Southeast Asia.
- 4. The above reasoning became the basis for US involvement in Vietnam for the next 20 years.

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5. By publicly linking Ho Chi Minh to Moscow and disregarding his many efforts to communicate with the US, the US lost an opportunity to influence Vietnam away from Moscow and towards a Tito-like independence.

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Figure A-3. Decision III: US Decision Not To Intervene Militarily at Dien Bien Phu



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### III. US DECISION NOT TO INTERVENE MILITARILY AT DIEN BIEN PHU (DBP)<sup>4/</sup>

- A. Decision. US Government continually reaffirmed its Indochina policy, held for more than three years, that the US would not intervene militarily in Indochina on behalf of the French, unless the French government would "unequivocally pledge independence to the Associated States upon the achievement of military victory," and, even then, only if the US were "one of a concert of powers, which concert must include local Asiatic peoples."<sup>5/</sup>

1. When: January 1954 - May 7, 1954.
2. Principal Decision-Makers: President Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles, Admiral Radford, General Ridgway.
3. Purpose:
  - a. To uphold US moral position as leader of the Free World by avoiding association with colonialism and imperialism.
  - b. To prevent the sacrifice of US forces for an unjustified cause.
  - c. To encourage the formation of a joint allied coalition for resisting communism.
  - d. To accelerate independence of the Associated States.
4. Themes:
  1. Anticolonialism.
  2. Anticommunism.
  3. Internationalization of the conflict.

- B. Precedents for The Decision. Key decisions, which taken together, comprised the US decision not to intervene at DBP.

1. Early 1954: Eisenhower's precondition for US military intervention in Vietnam:
  - a. Urgent French request for US intervention.
  - b. Desire of Vietnamese government for US intervention.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

- c. Favorable climate of Free World opinion.
  - d. Favorable action by Congress.
2. January 1954: Eisenhower told associates that he could not at the moment see the value of putting US ground forces in SEA. The final decision here entailed: 6/
- a. Trying to convince British and French to form coalition in order to give moral meaning to intervention.
  - b. Trying to convince Vietnamese and world of French sincerity to grant Associated States independence.
  - c. Stepping up US material aid in every practical way.
3. March 1954: Eisenhower "let it be known (to the French) that I would never agree to send our ground troops as mere reinforcements for French units, to be used only as they (the French) saw fit." 7/
4. April 4, 1954: Eisenhower writes to Churchill about the importance of establishing a new, ad hoc grouping or coalition composed of nations which have a vital concern in the checking of communist expansion in Indochina: UK, US, France, Associated States of Indochina, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand and the Philippines. Eisenhower did not envisage the need for US or UK ground forces in Indochina. British response was essentially negative.
5. April 4, 1954: According to Dulles who had met with congressional leaders, it would be impossible to get Congressional authorization for the US to act alone. Congressional support was dependent on 3 conditions with which Eisenhower was in full agreement:
- a. US intervention being part of a coalition to include the other free nations of SEA, Philippines, and British Commonwealth.
  - b. French must accelerate their independence program for the Associated States.
  - c. French must agree not to pull their forces out of the war if we put our forces in.
6. April 12, 1954: Dulles conferred with UK leaders in London. UK appeared to place much faith in negotiations at Geneva. Eisenhower's view of negotiating with communists: communist participation in conferences never implied that they would either make concessions or keep promises.

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7. April 23, 1954: Eisenhower reaffirms Dulles' position of April 4, that there would be no US intervention at Dien Bien Phu without allies.
8. April 22, 1954: Eisenhower was told that Australia and New Zealand would consider intervention but Eisenhower decides that US should not urge collective action with other members of the British Commonwealth without "sturdy Britain as a participant."
9. April 29, 1954: US government considers again the possible use of air strikes in Indochina. According to Eisenhower: "During the course of this meeting I remarked that if the United States were, unilaterally, to permit its forces to be drawn into conflict in Indochina and in a succession of Asian wars, the end result would be to drain off our resources and to weaken our over-all defensive position. If we, without allies, should ever find ourselves fighting at various places all over the region, and if Red Chinese aggressive participation were clearly identified, then we could scarcely avoid, I said, considering the necessity of striking directly at the head instead of the tail of the snake, Red China itself. But in the meantime, the problem was to solve the current dilemma. Even without a mechanism for united action, we could still go on giving the French considerable material aid."8/
10. May 7, 1954: Dien Bien Phu fell.

### C. Options.

1. Massive B-29 bombing (US operation from US bases outside Indochina).
2. Support for cease fire at Dien Bien Phu.
3. Support for cease fire throughout all Indochina.
4. Send US ground forces to Dien Bien Phu - according to Eisenhower, "this was always a possibility; the question was under constant study."9/ The logistical problems were too great; this also might require mobilization.
5. Use nuclear weapons against Viet Minh.10/

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### D. Influential Factors.

1. Berlin Conference of Foreign Ministers - January 25, 1954 through February 18, 1954, between US, UK, France, USSR. UK and France were both seeking agreement to hold a future conference at Geneva on the Far East: Korea and Indochina. Eisenhower (and Dulles) believed "there was danger in the attitude developing among the Western Allies which, to us, seemed to put too much faith in the validity of negotiations with the Soviets and Chinese Communists." But the life of the Laniel government in France was important to US policies; it took a very strong position on the defense of Indochina and in support of the European Defense Community. According to Eisenhower, "We had to be sympathetic to the French desire." US was also concerned to manifest unity of the Western Allies, and recognized that if the US was held responsible for blocking such a conference, the moral obligation to carry on the war in Indochina might be shifted from the French to the US. For these reasons, Dulles proposed that the four powers meet for a conference on the Far East.
2. Domestic weakness of French Government - US fear that the Laniel government would fall unless US came to the aid of the French in Indochina.
3. Unwillingness of UK to join in a coalition with the US for collective action in Indochina, until all possibility of a settlement by negotiations had been tried and failed.
4. Pressure from France and UK to negotiate with the Communists. US wanted to avoid negotiations with Communists from a position of weakness.
5. Geneva Conference was looming in the background. The decision to hold the conference was taken in February 1954. Dien Bien Phu did not fall until May 7, 1954.
6. Korean experience led to reluctance on the part of the US to carry the primary responsibility for defense of Indochina.
7. 30 March 1954 a new issue arose: What would US reaction be to Chinese Communist attack on French in Vietnam with their MIG aircraft. Dulles could not give a definitive answer - would depend upon circumstances. US prestige would be engaged to a point where we would want to have success if we intervened.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### 8. Domestic:

- Congressional opposition to adopting a congressional resolution authorizing American entry into the Indochina war. Congressional leaders knew well the difficulties of the Korean war and were disturbed because US had found no allies to support intervention.

E. Effect of the Decision on US Involvement in Vietnam. The decision from January through May 1954 placed significant limits on US military support for the French in Indochina. The US would continue to supply money and materiel but steadfastly refused to intervene militarily until certain clearly specified conditions were met: French pledge to grant independence to Associated States and formation of a coalition (to include Asiatic states) which would assume responsibility for intervention on behalf of the French. They were never met, and Dien Bien Phu was allowed to fall.

In effect this series of US decisions from January to May 1954 resulted in a "leveling off" of US involvement in Indochina. Previously, there had been an escalation in US involvement from no clear policy at all, to a policy of allowing the French to reassert control in Indochina, to a policy of recognizing Bao Dai and supporting the French with money and materiel without intervening militarily in behalf of the French unless the conditions specified above were met. The series of decisions taken from January to May 1954 by the US clearly reaffirmed the last policy and ultimately led to the negotiated settlement reached at Geneva in July 1954.

### F. Effectiveness of the Decision.

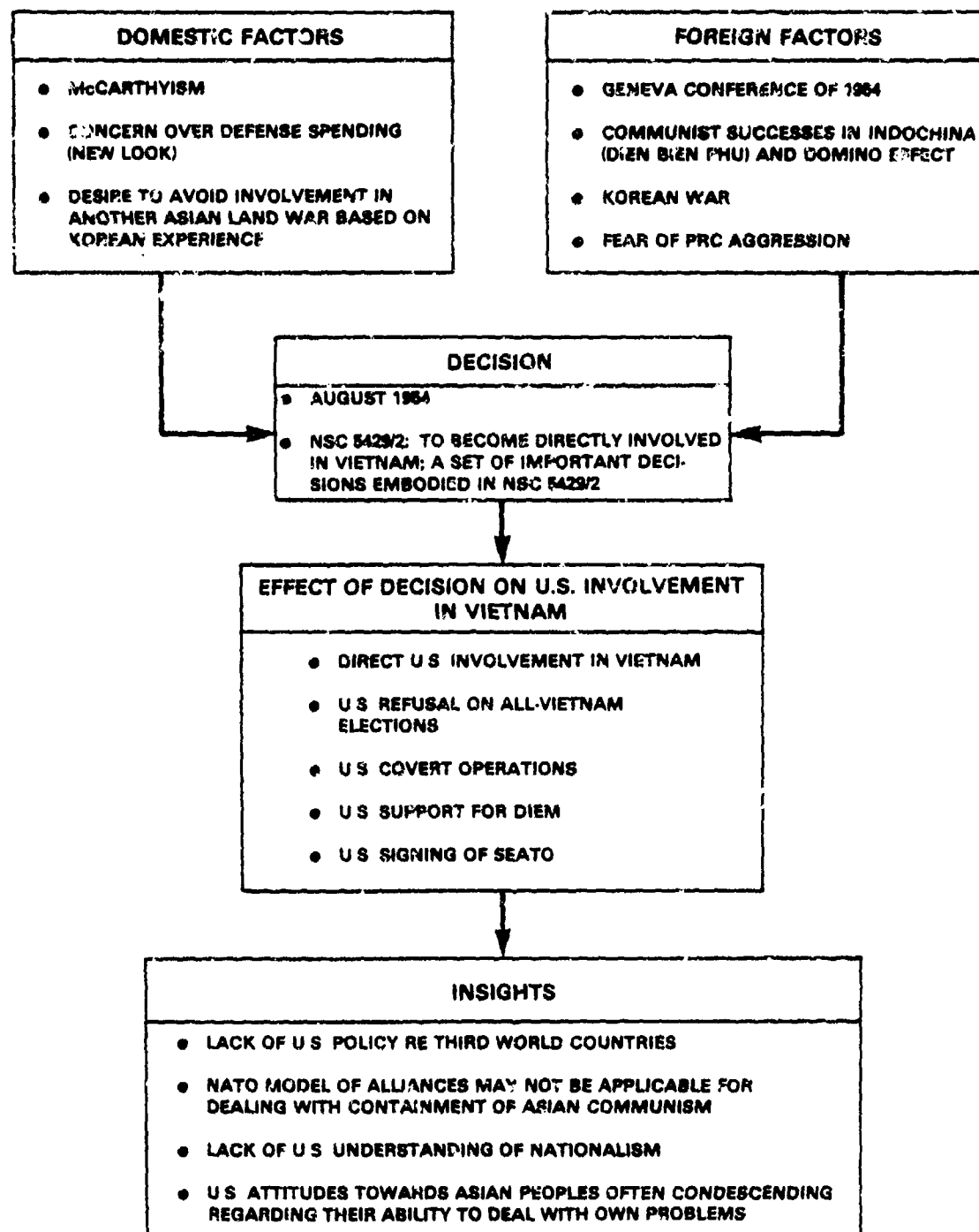
1. Continued US financial and materiel support of the French eroded any good will or moral tone that otherwise might have accrued to the US because of its decision not to intervene at Dien Bien Phu.
2. The decisions were effective in encouraging:
  - a. the formation of a joint allied coalition for resisting communist aggression (SEATO).
  - b. acceleration of independence for the Associated States of Indochina.
3. Continued US support of the French ensured that US prestige was damaged as a result of the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### G. Insights.

1. US non-intervention did little to persuade French to accept willingly the conditions set by Washington for intervention.
2. US attempt to use the French colonialist struggle for its own purposes of containment of communism (by means of indirect support for the French in Indochina) was not successful. US attempts to straddle the fence on the issues of support of French colonialism and support of anticommunist efforts in Vietnam were contradictory and self-defeating.
3. The Dien Bien Phu decision, coupled with continued US aid to the French, did little to stop the spread of communism as soon as it became clear that the French had no intention of granting independence to the Associated States. Where anticolonialist and anticommunist objectives of the United States clash, the US government must consider the possibility that the achievement of anticolonialist objectives is a precondition for the achievement of anticommunist objectives.

# THE BDM CORPORATION



4541/78W

Figure A-4. Decision IV: US Decision To Become Directly Involved in Vietnam

## THE PDM CORPORATION

### IV. US DECISION TO BECOME DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN VIETNAM 11/

A. Decision. Several key decisions were made by the US between the fall of Dien Bien Phu on May 7, 1954 and the approval by President Eisenhower of NSC 5429/2 on August 20, 1954. This outline will focus on NSC 5429/2 as the formal expression of these decisions. NSC 5429/2 clarified the new US policy of direct involvement in the Vietnam conflict. Several specific decisions are included in NSC 5429/2. The most important of these for our purposes are:

- The US will "deal directly," wherever advantageous to the US, with the governments of Cambodia, Laos, and free Vietnam.
- The US will work through the French "only insofar as necessary," in order to assist Cambodia, Laos and South Vietnam to maintain military forces necessary for internal security and economic conditions conducive to the maintenance and strengthening of non-Communist regimes.
- The US will work to maintain a friendly non-Communist South Vietnam.
- The US will work to prevent a Communist victory through all-Vietnam elections. (Later, US and GVN refused all-Vietnam elections).
- The US will work to prevent North Vietnam from becoming incorporated in the Soviet bloc, using consular relations and non-strategic trade.
- The US will conduct covert operations on a large and effective scale in support of foregoing policies.
- The US will negotiate a Southeast Asia security treaty with the UK, France, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand and, as appropriate, other free South and Southeast Asian countries (SEATO).
- The US will encourage the prompt organization of an economic grouping by the maximum number of free Asian states, including Japan and the Colombo powers (Ceylon, India, Pakistan, Indonesia and Burma), and the US.
- The US President should consider requesting congressional authority to take appropriate action, which might include the use of US military forces either locally or against the external source (including Communist China), if requested by a legitimate local government which requires assistance to



## THE BDM CORPORATION

defeat local Communist subversion or rebellion, not constituting armed attack.

1. When: NSC 5429/2 adopted by NSC on 18 August 1954 and approved by Eisenhower on 20 August 1954.
2. Principal Decision Makers: President Eisenhower and the NSC.
3. Purpose:
  - a. To clarify and make formal, in a single document, US policy on the Far East following the Geneva Conference of 1954.
  - b. To contain communism in SEA
    - 1) by halting or preventing subversion
    - 2) by halting or preventing aggression
    - 3) by developing good relations with Free Asia

### B. Precedents.

1. Geneva Conference: US is nonsignatory, but declares that it will refrain from threat or the use of force to disturb the agreements; would view any renewal of the aggression with grave concern and as a threat to international peace and security.
2. CIA assessment of the probable outlook in Indochina in the light of the agreements at the Geneva Conference. (NIE 63-5-54). NIE concludes:
  - a. that the communists will continue to pursue their objectives in South Vietnam by political, psychological and paramilitary means.
  - b. that if elections are held in 1956, the Viet Minh will win.
  - c. that the events in Laos and Cambodia depend on the developments in Vietnam. (3 August 1954).
3. President Eisenhower directed that US aid to Indochina be given directly to the South Vietnamese government rather than through the French. Full military implementation of this directive had to await final French military departure. (17 August 1954). (See also the related US decision not to intervene at Dien Bien Phu).

## THE BDM CORPORATION

4. NSC 5429. "Review of US Policy in the Far East," considered by the NSC at its meeting on 12 August 1954.
- C. Options. JCS recommended that the US formulate a comprehensive policy in which the Far East is viewed as a strategic entity and which would provide definitive direction for the development of a position of military strength in the Far East. Defense and JCS argued that US policy with regard to the peripheral areas should be established in the light of this determination. JCS recommended that the US "continue to exploit opportunities to further US long-range objectives toward uniting Vietnam under a democratic form of government." According to JCS, "the first and basic need ... is for a statement in a single document of a US foreign policy on a global basis, with the principal objectives listed." One principal objective should be "to split Communist China from the Soviet bloc."<sup>13</sup>
- D. Influential Factors.
  1. Foreign:
    - a. Geneva Conference of 1954.
    - b. According to NSC 5429/2, communist successes in Indochina (Dien Bien Phu) culminating in Geneva Agreement 1954 led to:
      - 1) Fear of Communist military and non-military pressures mounted against areas adjacent to RVN and more remote non-communist areas. (Domino effect).
      - 2) Loss of US prestige in Asia resulting from US backing of France and Bao Dai governments. Doubts in Asia resulted concerning US leadership and ability to check further communist expansion in Asia. US prestige was inescapably associated with subsequent developments in SEA.
      - 3) Communists are in a good position to exploit the political strategy of imputing to US motives of extremism, belligerency and opposition to coexistence, seeking thereby to alienate the US from its allies; communists can accentuate "peace propaganda" in Asia to allay fears of expansionism and establish closer relations with nations of free Asia.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

- 4) In order to achieve their ends, the communists have an increased capacity for exploiting political and economic weakness in free Asia without having to resort to armed attack.
- 5) Loss of Southeast Asia would imperil US retention of Japan as a key element in the offshore island chain.
- 6) Concern over possible Chinese aggression in SEA.
- 7) Dien Bien Phu/Geneva Conference 1954.
- 8) Korean War (Chinese intervention,
- 9) Indonesia (see NSC 171/1).
- 10) Concern about falling dominoes in Asia (Philippines, Malaya, Burma).12/

### 2. Domestic Factors:

- a. McCarthyism (contain communism).
- b. Concern over defense spending (New Look).
- c. "Never again" land war in Asia (US tired of fighting in Korea a protracted, indecisive, and costly war.

### E. Effect of Decision on US Involvement in Vietnam.

1. Direct US involvement in Vietnam (Severing of the French connection)
2. US refusal to agree to holding all-Vietnam elections, once it was clear that Ho would win.
3. Increase in covert operations.
4. US support for Diem (maintain a "friendly" non-communist RVN).
5. US signing of SEATO.

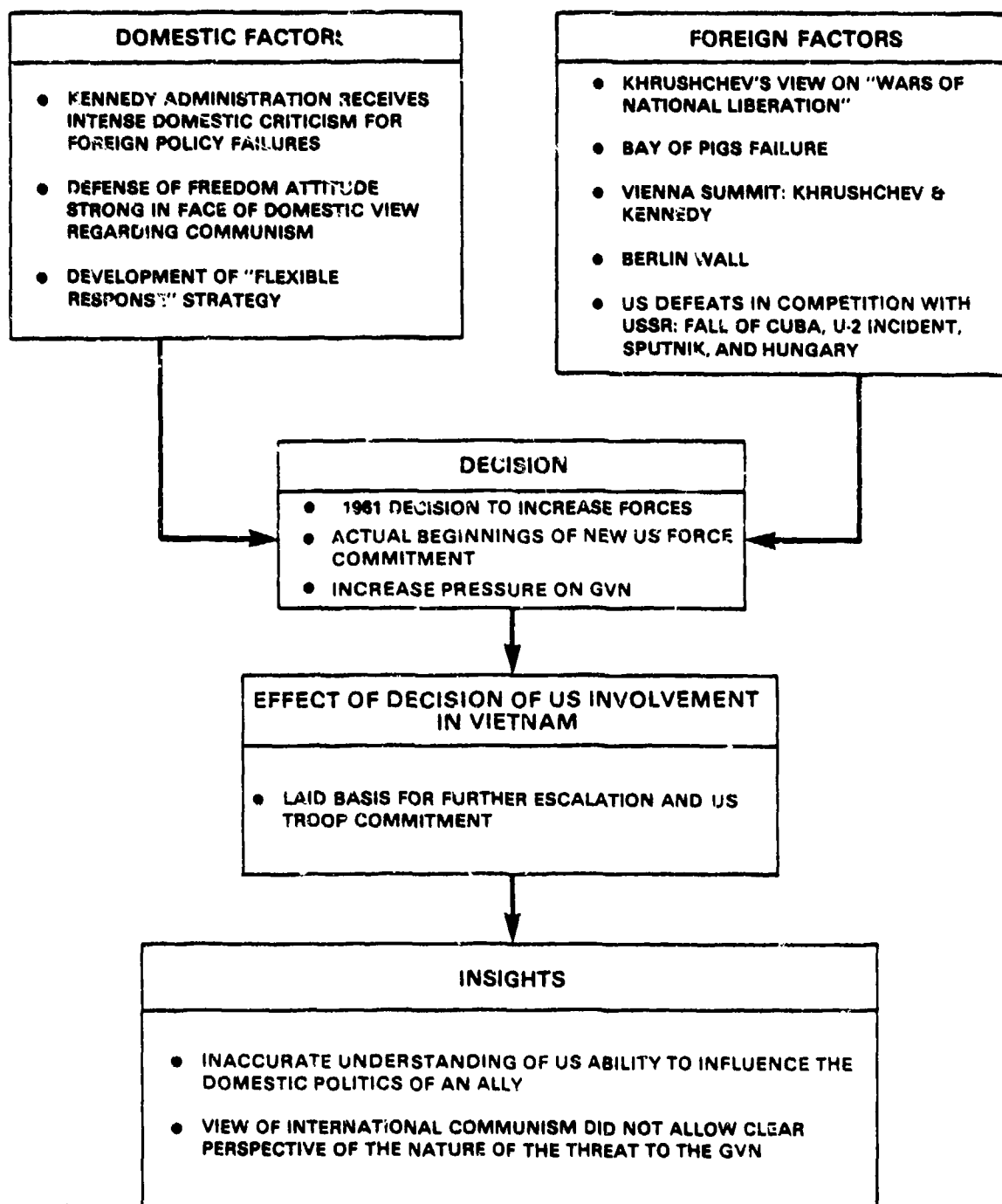
### F. Effectiveness of Decision. NSC 5429.2 was effective in clarifying the change in US policy on Vietnam: to offer aid directly to South Vietnam rather than through the French.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### G. Insights.

1. No policy had yet been formulated by the US for dealing effectively with countries of the Third World.
2. Assumption made that formal alliances such as SEATO, using NATO as the model, would be useful in dealing with Asian communism.
3. US still did not understand the importance of nationalism in Indochina and the need to address problems that had arisen from years of colonialism in SEA before trying to marshal support against communism.
4. US had a condescending attitude toward the Asian peoples and their ability to deal with their own problems.

# THE BDM CORPORATION



4841/78W

Figure A-5. Decision v: US Decision To Increase Sharply US-RVN Joint Efforts

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### V. 1961 DECISION TO INCREASE SHARPLY US - GVN JOINT EFFORTS TO AVOID A FURTHER DETERIORATION OF THE SITUATION IN RVN 14/

#### A. Decision. Decision to increase the scope of US participation in Vietnam was articulated in National Security Action Memorandum 111, 22 November 1961.

- The decision included both increased military assistance and "aid in developing domestic programs" for the GVN.
  - The decision articulated in NSAM 111 had been made earlier when US personnel were committed to Vietnam. 15/
1. When: NSAM 111, November 22, 1961 had been preceded by force commitments in May and November.
  2. Principal Decision-Makers: President Kennedy, especially with advice and support of General Taylor, Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, and cleared with the NSC.
  3. Purpose: In 1959, the North Vietnamese had decided to intensify their struggle in the South by moving from political efforts to combined political and military activities. Beginning in 1960 with the overrunning of a regimental headquarters near Tay Ninh City (January), the DRV escalation began seriously to weaken the RVN. The United States sought to arrest this trend by intensified military commitments that were to be accompanied by GVN reforms and programs for improving the credibility of the GVN among the people of the South.
  4. Themes:
    - a. The United States was determined to resist a perceived march of international communism and to reverse the trend of important communist successes.
    - b. From 1961 onward, The United States policymakers consistently underestimated the ability of the Vietnamese Communists to match our escalation.
    - c. The pattern of action - reaction was being established whereby relatively small increments of US men and materiel were expected to reverse negative trends evident in the struggle in Vietnam.
    - d. The United States coupled its military assistance to the GVN with political requirements for reorganization and reformation of the South Vietnamese government.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### B. Precedents for the Decision.

1. The establishment of MAAG in Indochina in 1950, provided the original precedent for US military commitment in Indochina.
2. In 1954, the MAAGV continued the original commitment to train and equip the South Vietnamese.
3. After 1955, the MAAGV aid was no longer channelled through the French. Instead, it was received directly by the GVN.
4. In 1956, "Temporary Equipment Recovery Mission" (TERM) personnel began performing training functions that were "inseparable from the tasks of recovering and maintaining."
5. In 1960 (5/20) TERM personnel were assigned to MAAGV, moving beyond the manpower restrictions of the Geneva Agreement.
6. In October 1960 an integrated Counterinsurgency Program (CIP) was called for.

### C. Options Presented. The Taylor report frames the basic issue 16/ concerning whether the US should:

1. Commit itself to the clear objective of preventing the fall of South Vietnam to communism, and support this commitment by immediate military actions and preparations for possible later actions.
2. Maintain US commitment at existing level.
3. Reduce US commitment to RVN.

### D. Influential Factors.

#### 1. Foreign:

- a. Bay of Pigs fiasco had tarnished the image of the US as leader of the Free World.
- b. The United States had experienced a series of defeats in its competition with the USSR. These defeats included: Soviet 1956 invasion of Hungary, the fall of Cuba to Castro, the Sputnik launching, and the U-2 incident.
- c. Construction of the Berlin Wall was perceived as a triumph for the USSR in war of wills with the US.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

- d. Khrushchev promised to make South Vietnam a testing ground for his program of wars of national liberation.

### 2. Domestic:

- a. Faced with a series of foreign policy failures, especially the Bay of Pigs, the Kennedy Administration could not afford another defeat and maintain its domestic political credibility.
- b. The Vietnam conflict seemed an appropriate place to test the Administration's inaugural commitment "to pay any price, to bear any burden, in the defense of freedom."

### 3. War Related:

- a. Phuoc Vinh (Provincial capital 40 miles from Saigon) was overrun (autumn 1961).
- b. Communist forces in South were growing stronger after Hanoi's 1959 decision to escalate.

E. Effect of Decision on US Involvement in Vietnam. The United States moved from a limited commitment of maintaining a non-Communist South Vietnam to a large-scale effort. This decision point marked a significant step up in the US escalation as the nation moved to meet and exceed the North Vietnamese commitment made in 1959.

F. Effectiveness of the Decision. Those who made the decision in 1961 to increase significantly US commitment to the war believed that the military forces and the political reform of the GVN would be sufficient to produce the intended positive results. The US was ill-prepared for a failure of those results to materialize. When they did not, the only recourse was to increase the military commitment to a higher level.

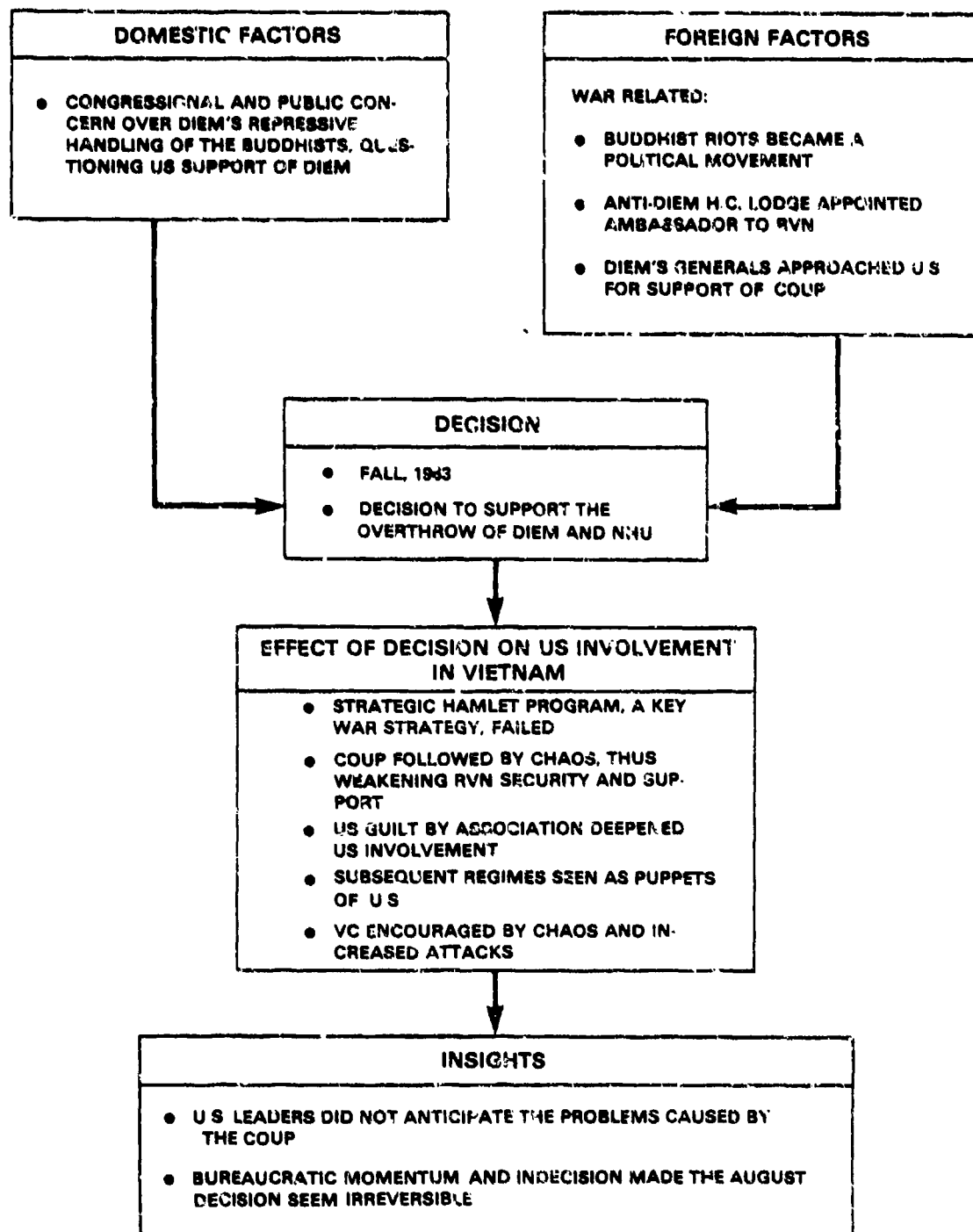
### G. Insights.

- 1. The 1961 US response to the post 1959 North Vietnamese attacks represented a significant increase in US commitment to the RVN, but it was not sufficiently strong to affect permanently the progress of the war.
- 2. The US assumed that the root of the GVN's problem was corruption and inefficiency. It was believed that reforms directed by the Americans would correct these problems.



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3. While US authorities believed that political and governmental reforms were necessary to win the struggle with the North Vietnamese, there seemed to be no way the US could force those reforms without pulling out and thereby forfeiting the country to the communists. Hence the US lost most of its leverage on the GVN.
4. The United States viewed the Vietnam situation as an extension of international communist aggression. As a consequence, it associated the increased pressure from the Vietnamese Communists with Khrushchev's pronouncements rather than internal Vietnamese factors. Thus, the US was ill-prepared to weigh the positive successes of Diem's government and the threat those successes posed to the communists who had expected him to fail.
5. The United States was confident that our experience of strengthening friendly governments (such as Greece and Korea) could be repeated in Asia.



4541/78W

Figure A-6. Decision VI: US Decision To Support the Overthrow of Ngo Dinh Diem and Ngo Dinh Nhu

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### VI. DECISION TO SUPPORT THE OVERTHROW OF NGO DINH DIEM AND NGO DINH NHU 17/

#### A. Decision. To support South Vietnamese generals' overthrow of South Vietnam's President Diem and his brother Nhu.

1. When: August 24, 1963, State Department sent a cable to Ambassador Lodge in Saigon urging Diem's removal of his brother Nhu and stating that if Diem refused to comply with US demands, the US could no longer support Diem and would promote his overthrow. On August 29, President Kennedy agreed to support a coup without direct US support if it was likely to succeed. During October 2 NSC meeting, President Kennedy favored option 2, below.
2. Principal Decision Makers: It was a struggle between mainly the military and CIA on the one hand, who were most concerned about military progress and therefore against the coup (McNamara, Harkins, Taylor, Lansdale, McCone, Colby, Richardson), and State Department personnel on the other hand, who were concerned with political support for GVN (Harriman, Hilsman, Ball, Ambassador Lodge, Truehart, Bundy, Robert Kennedy and Vice President Johnson).
3. Purpose:
  - a. To pressure Diem to reform and unseat his unpopular brother Nhu;
  - b. To disassociate US from the repressive South Vietnam regime;
  - c. If necessary, to promote a change of government "if it appeared capable of increasing effectiveness of military effort, ensuring popular support to win the war, and improving working relations with US". 18/
4. Theme. The coup marked a watershed between the commitments of 1961 and massive military intervention in 1965. By supporting the Vietnamese generals' coup, the US felt even more responsible for the fate of South Vietnam.

#### B. Precedents.

1. In 1965 General Lawton Collins recommended a change in government. (Gelb, p. 86)
2. In 1961 Galbraith visited Saigon, told Washington that we must get rid of Diem, that a military government would be better than this "mandarin."

## THE BDM CORPORATION

3. In June 1963, Deputy Chief of Mission William Truehart warned Diem that the US might have to disassociate itself from him if he were not more forthcoming with reform.<sup>19/</sup>

### C. Influential Factors.

1. Buddhist riots in Hue became a political movement, drawing world attention to the Diem regime's repression with the burning bonzes.
2. Diem's repressive policies towards the Buddhists and Madame Nhu's inflammatory remarks brought severe US domestic criticism of Diem, raising the question of US support for such a regime.
3. Kennedy replaced pro-Diem Ambassador Nolting with anti-Diem Henry Cabot Lodge, partly to demonstrate US disapproval of Diem's policies.
4. Diem's generals approached CIA in bid for support of a coup.

### D. Options.

1. Maintain the status quo and continue to pressure Diem for reforms.
2. Follow a "purely correct" relationship, withholding selective aid programs such as for the Special Forces, and show US disapproval for Diem's policies. Acquiesce to but do not initiate, any coup.
3. Suspend aid, denounce the regime, and promote a coup.

### E. Effect of the Decision on US Involvement in Vietnam.

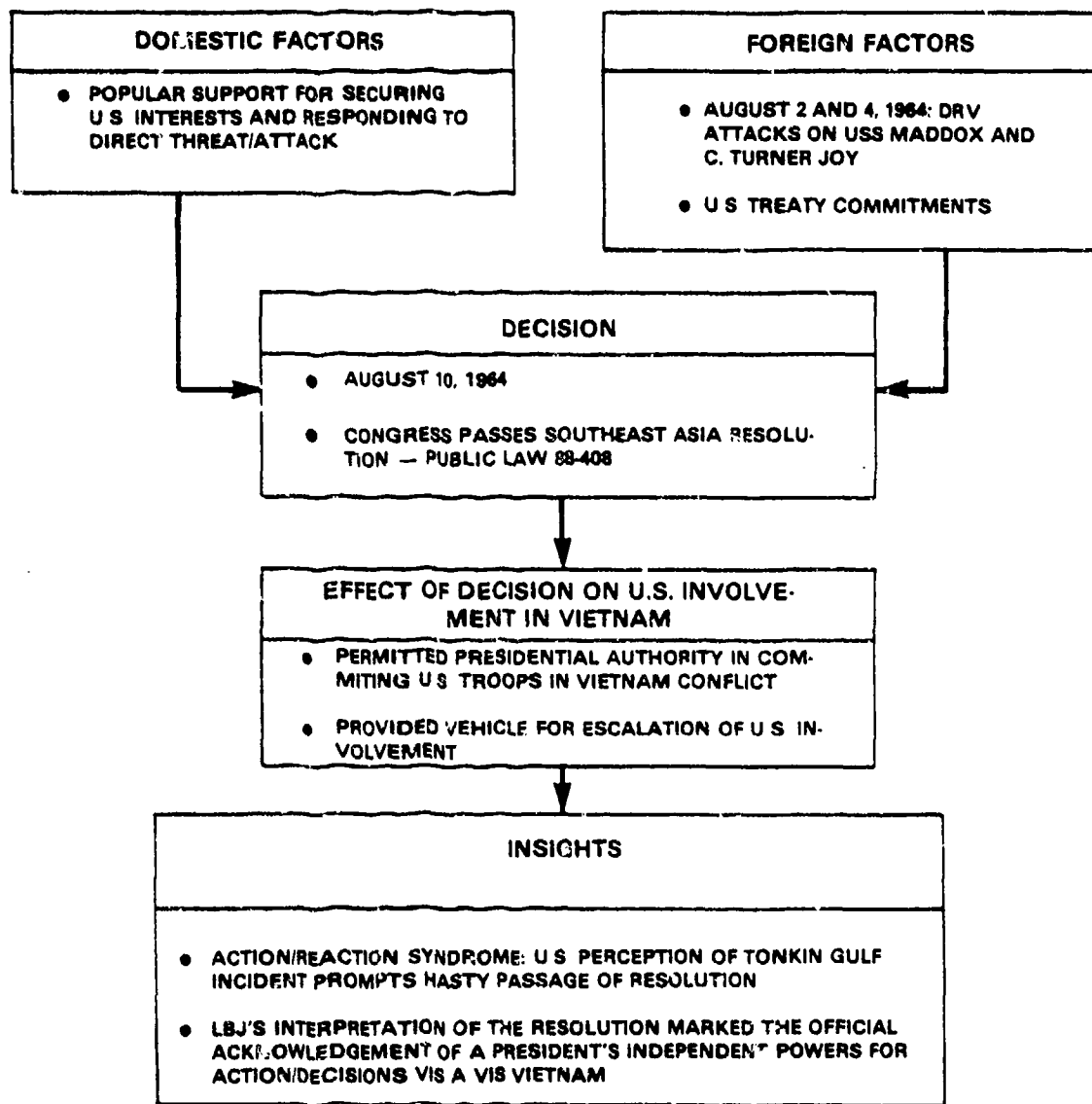
1. The Strategic Hamlet program, identified with the Diem regime, failed.
2. The coup was followed by two years of counter coups and instability, jeopardizing the country's security and GVN's popular support.
3. US guilt by association led to deeper involvement, based on a need to help them out of their difficulties.
4. Subsequent regimes were perceived to be puppets of the US.
5. The VC, encouraged by the chaos in RVN, increased their attacks.

F. Effectiveness of the Decisions.

1. The overthrow of Diem was followed by eight more changes in the government over the next two years. It was therefore decided by many, including Lyndon Johnson, that supporting the coup had been the United States' worst mistake during the Vietnam war.
2. The US association with the coup further confirmed world suspicions of the machinations of the American CIA.20/

G. Insights/Lessons.

1. The US leaders who participated in this decision did not anticipate the adverse political and military consequences of this action. They did not find and prepare someone who could successfully replace Diem.
2. American complicity in Diem's overthrow tended to tie the US morally to the support of succeeding South Vietnamese governments.
3. Bureaucratic momentum behind the US decision in August was used later to make that decision appear irreversible, especially once the US gave the RVNAF generals the go ahead.
4. One cannot foresee the type or extent of violence that may attend a coup. US leaders did not want Diem killed. The overthrow risked civil war and dangerously weakened RVN's defense against the communists.
5. US encouragement of the coup showed a fundamental ignorance of Vietnamese politics and society. Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson described the Washington attitude at that time as one of getting rid of the South Vietnamese leadership if it did not meet US standards.21/



4641/78W

Figure A-7. Decision VII: Southeast Asia Resolution (Tonkin Gulf Resolution)

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### VII. SOUTHEAST ASIA RESOLUTION - PUBLIC LAW 88-408 (TONKIN GULF RESOLUTION)<sup>22/</sup>

- A. Decision. "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.

Sec. 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. ... to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol states of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom."<sup>23/</sup>

1. When: Approved August 10, 1964
  2. Principal Decision Makers: Lyndon B. Johnson and special advisors Rusk, McNamara, Vance, McCone, and Bundy.
  3. Purpose: To show a unified front to Southeast Asia and to provide legal authority for Johnson's future military, political, economic decisions.
- B. Precedents. The historical precedents for this decision show a gradual shift in the balance of power from the Congress to the President. The key issue here is authority for war.
1. 1945 United Nations Participation Act: Congressional delegation of authority to the President to engage in hostilities if acting pursuant to article 43 of the U.N. collective peace force agreement approved by Congress.
  2. Formosa Resolution - 1955: Authorizing the President to employ Armed Forces of US to protect Formosa, the Pescadores, and related territories.
  3. Middle East Resolution - 1957: amended 1961. President is authorized to assist nation(s) in Middle East in development of economic and military strength. US can use armed forces to assist any nation requesting such assistance.<sup>24/</sup>
  4. War Related: August 5, US attacked DRV torpedo boat bases and oil storage area.
- C. Options. The Southeast Asia Resolution was passed in Congress with little opposition and discussion of alternative actions. One senator who was wary of the new resolution, Senator Wayne Morse, called it a "pre-dated resolution of war." He believed

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the passage of this resolution, which provided the President "war-making powers in the absence of a declaration of war," to be "a historic mistake."<sup>25/</sup>

### D. Influential Factors.

#### 1. Foreign:

a. The US had established treaty ties and assistance agreements with South Vietnam and it was widely believed in 1964 that the US did indeed have vital interests in the security of the region.

1. December 23, 1950: Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement

2. February 19, 1955: SEATO

b. The PRC and USSR were active in the SEA region and the US wanted to counter this.

1. PRC and USSR agreements with Cambodia: May 9-17, 1956.

2. Sihanouk demands that the US change its policy or he will request aid from the USSR. (July, 1960)

2. Domestic: There was popular support for securing US interests abroad, especially in face of an attack.

3. War-Related: The August 2, 3 and 4, 1964 attacks on the USS Maddox and C. Turner Joy directly influenced this decision.

### E. Effect of the Decision on US Involvement in Vietnam.

1. Southeast Asia Resolution represents the vehicle of authority by which escalation of the conflict was accomplished.

2. The May 1970 Cooper-Church Amendment represents both the turning point of public tolerance for the war and Congress's recognition of need to curb the powers of the presidency.

### F. Effectiveness of the Decision.

1. Use of this type of resolution for similar conflicts is both legal and reasonable (vs. declaration of war).<sup>26/</sup> Nevertheless, it is this law which creates the issue of authority for war, as well as generating possible court decisions.

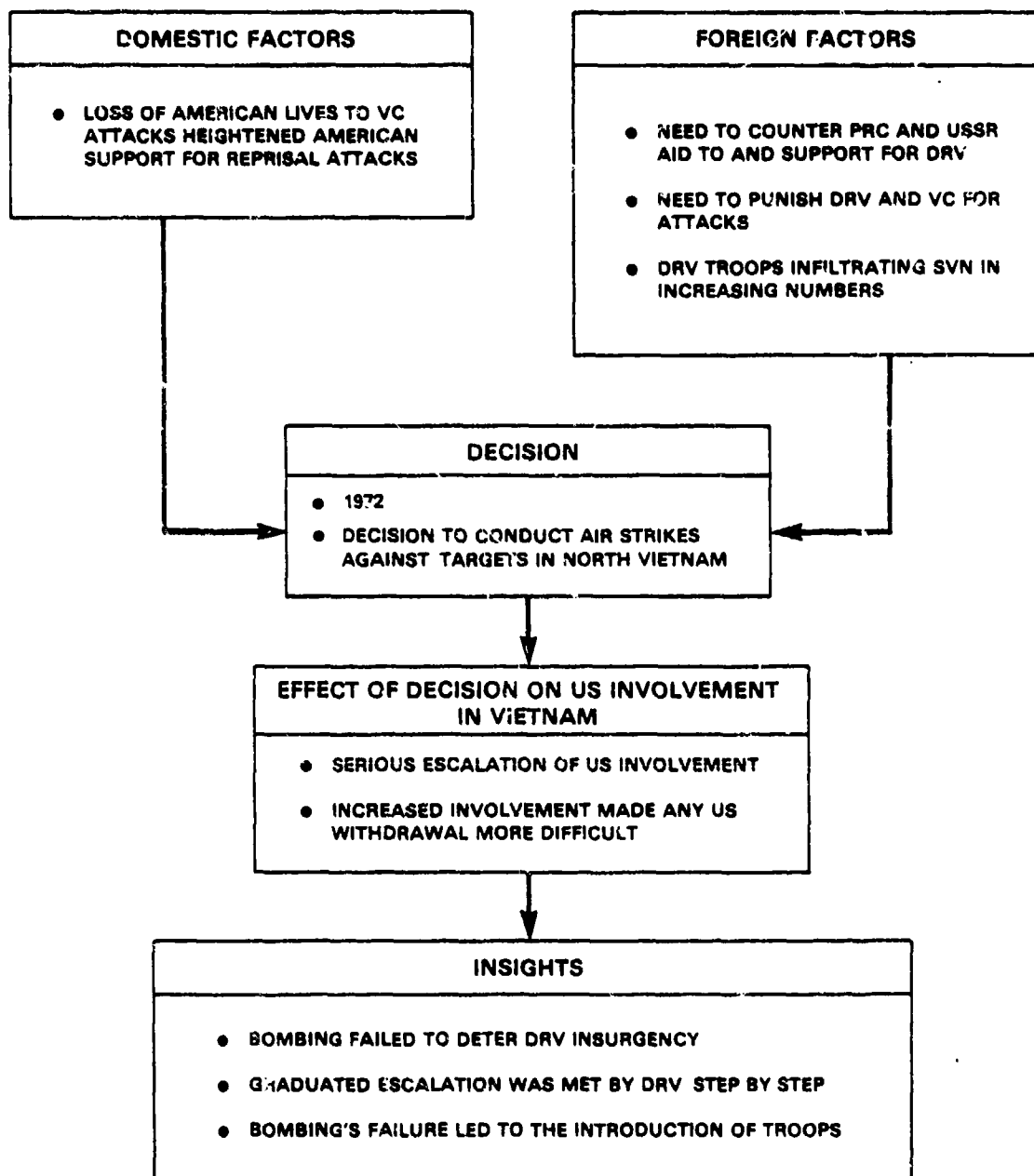


## THE BDM CORPORATION

2. The resolution served as the basis for all involvement in Vietnam, from August 10, 1964, until its repeal during the Cambodian incident.

### G. Insights.

1. A common perception of the Southeast Asia Resolution is that it was hastily passed as a result of the Gulf of Tonkin incident, without Congress having a chance to understand the real implications of this grant of power to the President. However, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee William Fulbright did clearly explain the implications to the Senate, so these charges of deception (which arose 3 years later) are probably unjustified.
2. A watershed in history as the Resolution was interpreted by Johnson as providing independent powers to the President in terms of involvement in Vietnam.



4541/78W

Figure A-8. Decision VIII: US Decision To Conduct Air Strikes Against Targets in North Vietnam

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### VIII. DECISION TO CONDUCT AIR STRIKES AGAINST TARGETS IN NORTH VIETNAM 27/

#### A. Decision. To bomb North Vietnam.

1. When: March 1964 contingency plans were made. June 1964 JCS selected targets. December 1964 forces were put on stand-by for action. February 7, 1965 air strikes were carried out in retaliation for VC attacks on Pleiku.
2. Principal Decision Makers: President Johnson, JCS, NSC, and special advisors McNamara, Rusk, Bundy, Vance, and McCone.
3. Purpose: The war was going very badly. "Early in January 1965, Taylor sent in a report concluding that "we are presently on a losing track and must risk a change... to take no positive action now is to accept defeat in the fairly near future. That was the view of every responsible military adviser in Vietnam and in Washington."28/ The US response was provoked by the February 6 VC attack. The air campaign called Rolling Thunder was based on:
  - a. The theory that an air campaign was low cost and low risk.
  - b. The hope that the bombing campaign would lessen VC violence.
  - c. The desire to punish DRV.
  - d. The need to raise the morale of GVN & RVNAF.
  - e. The limited expectation that communist logistic support would be impeded.

#### B. precedents

1. Southeast Asia Resolution of August 19, 1964.
2. US air strike reprisals for Gulf of Tonkin attacks of August 1964.
3. JCSM 746-64 of August suggesting provoking DRV into action to justify US bombing in the North.
4. September 7, 1964, JCS furnished a list of 94 targets for air strikes.
5. Air interdiction operations in 1964 against Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laotian Panhandle.

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### C. Options.

1. Withhold air support.
2. Air support in South Vietnam only.
3. Air interdiction in Laos only.
4. Bomb/interdict targets in DRV.

### D. Influential Factors.

#### 1. Foreign:

- a. In late 1964, DRV began sending regular troops to the South in increasing numbers.
- b. Need to counter PRC and USSR aid to and support for DRV.
- c. Communist attacks beginning with Tonkin Gulf incidents, including VC attacks against Americans in Pleiku, Saigon, and Qui Nhon.
- d. South Vietnamese military and political leaders agreed to bombing policy and sent air sorties into Laos.

#### 2. Domestic: Loss of American lives to VC attacks, especially in Qui Nhon February 1965, heightened American support for reprisal attacks.

#### 3. War-Related:

- a. The State Department's 1965 White Paper documented DRV infiltration: 71% of the communists in RVN were North-erners.
- b. The RVNAF was determined as not capable of defeating the PAVN or the PLAF.

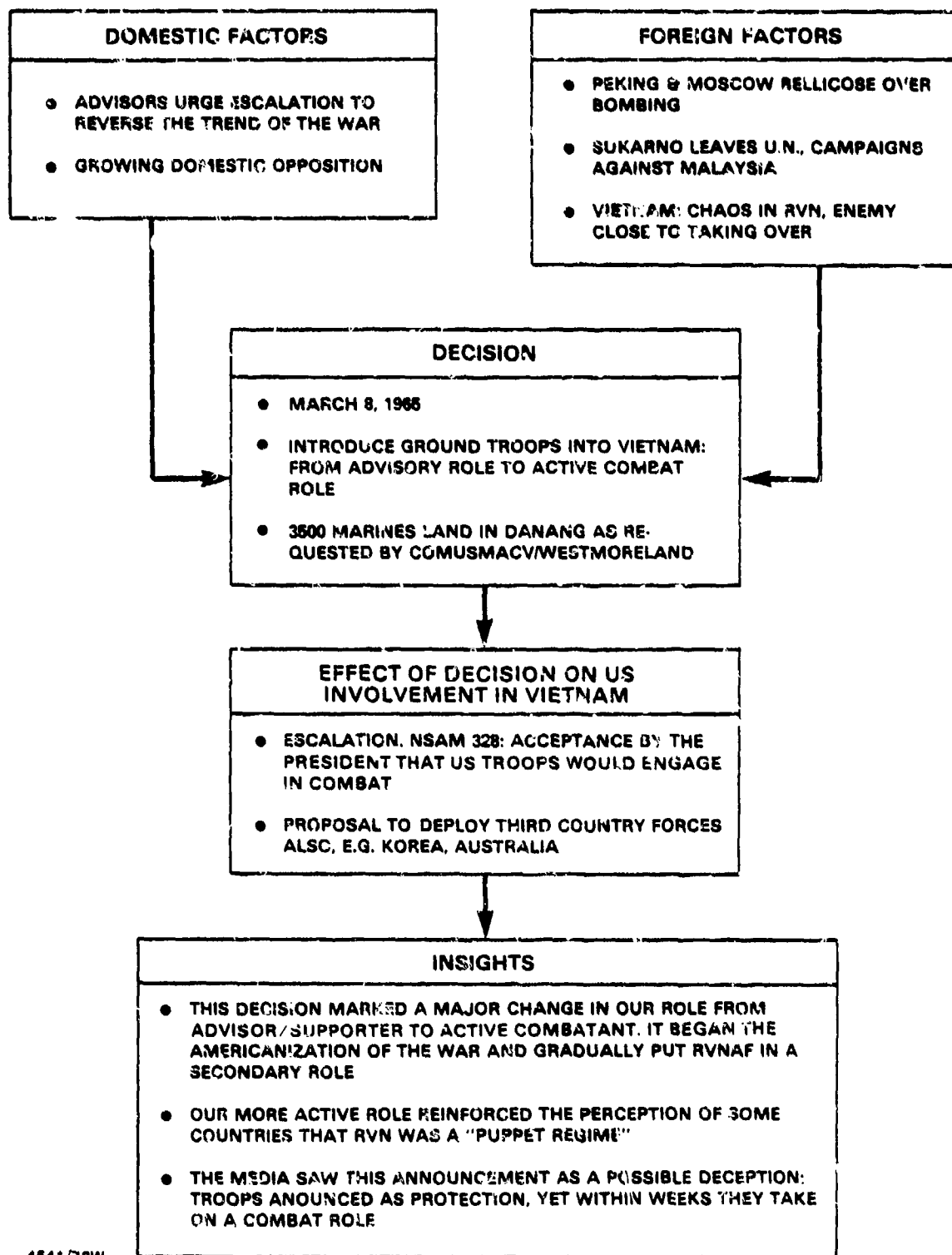
### E. Effect of the Decision on US Involvement in Vietnam

1. Bombing the North was a serious escalation of US involvement. It deepened US commitment to RVN and investment in the war, called public and world attention to the war, and could have provoked Chinese or Soviet intervention. It also brought some world sympathy to the North Vietnamese as victims of American fire power.

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2. Bombing the North signaled a change in the ground rules of the war: no longer was North Vietnam immune to reprisals for its aggression in the South.
  3. This increased involvement made US withdrawal more difficult and changed the war into a "white man's war" with less RVNAF responsibility for the burden of fighting it.
  4. The bombings' ineffectiveness paved the way for a commitment of US combat troops.
- F. Effectiveness of the Decision. The bombing of North Vietnam failed to halt support of the insurgency from the North, and did little to deter the VC attacks in South Vietnam. Although the bombing raised the morale of RVN temporarily, it did not significantly punish the DRV nor did it appreciably interdict the flow of men and supplies being sent from the North to the South. The bombing was more effective in 1972 because of the use of "smart bombs." See Decision XIV.
- G. Insights. The authority for this action was based on the Southeast Asia Resolution, which gave the president authority to repel attacks and to assist any protocol state of SEATO in its defense. The bombing was done in a graduated approach, leaving open the option of further escalation or de-escalation depending on Hanoi's reactions. Unfortunately the bombing campaigns (FLAMING DART I & II) failed to restrain the support from the North. Hanoi adjusted to the graduated pressure in bombing and was not deterred; the US failed to convince Hanoi of its resolve in this contest. More important, the US failed to realize how much will and determination the DRV had to win this war.

# THE BDM CORPORATION



4841/78W

Figure A-9. Decision IX: US Decision To Introduce Ground Troops Into Vietnam

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### IX. THE INTRODUCTION OF GROUND TROOPS INTO VIETNAM 29/

- A. Decision. To send 3,500 Marines (Marine Expeditionary Brigade) to Da Nang.

In February, after a dramatic increase in activity initiated by the Viet Cong, the United States responded by increasing its own level of commitment to the Republic of Vietnam. For the first time, US jet aircraft were authorized to support the RVNAF in ground operations in the South without restriction. In immediate retaliation for guerrilla raids on US installations in the South, US aircraft also began bombing targets in the southern reaches of North Vietnam. In early March, the latter program evolved into Rolling Thunder, the sustained bombing of the North. Also, during March, two US Marine battalions were landed at Da Nang on the coast of Central Vietnam. The air base at Da Nang was a major base of the Rolling Thunder bombing, and the mission of the Marines was to strengthen its defenses. Those troops represented the first US ground combat commitment to the Asian mainland since Korea. 30/

Up to this point we had agreed with Generals MacArthur and Ridgway that we should never again get involved in Asian land warfare.

1. When: March 8, 1965.
2. Principal Decision Makers: COMUSMACV General Westmoreland requested this troop commitment on February 21, 1965. The decision was approved February 26, 1965, by President Johnson.
3. Purpose:
  - a. "To occupy and defend critical terrain features in order to secure the airfield and, as directed, communications facilities, US supporting installations against attack. The US Marine Forces will not, repeat will not, engage in day-to-day actions against the Viet Cong." 31/
  - b. To reverse the downward trend of the war.
4. Theme: The introduction of regular combat troops was a dramatic change in the nature of the American involvement and redefined American commitments.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

- B. Precedents. In February, the US began an incremental bombing campaign, Rolling Thunder, in order to bolster RVNAF and slow the infiltration from the North. Both the bombing and ground troops were preceded by VC violations of the Geneva accords.
- C. Options. The bombing campaign did not halt the VC violence or bring a response from Hanoi. This left the following options open for consideration:
1. Withdrawal without achieving US objectives.
  2. Continuation of the war in the same manner as before and thus, watch South Vietnam crumble.
  3. Escalation of the bombing. This option was rejected in fear of PRC intervention.
  4. Commitment of ground forces. The main objection to this option was that once ground troops were in, it would be almost impossible to reverse the policy to the former non-combatant one. The main question regarded the number of troops to commit. The suggestions outlined ranged from two battalions to several divisions. However, if too many were committed, this would indicate to RVNAF that we had no faith in them.
- D. Influential Factors
1. Foreign:
    - a. Peking and Moscow raised severe objections to the bombing campaign.
    - b. President Sukarno pulled out of the United Nations in January 1965, campaigned against Malaysia.
  2. Domestic:
    - The US felt it needed to show its strength and determination.
  3. War-Related:
    - a. US aircraft deployments to RVN early in 1965 to initiate Rolling Thunder increased the need to protect Da Nang air base and supporting installations against PLAF (VC) attack. MACV had estimated that there were about twelve enemy battalion totalling 6,000 men within striking distance of the airbase.



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- b. In early February 1965, a US Marine Corps light anti-aircraft missile (LAAM) battalion was assigned to the base. General John Throckmorton, DEPCOMUSMACV, recommended that a full Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) be deployed to protect the base. General Westmoreland requested two Marine battalions from the JCS. Ambassador Taylor and Admiral Sharp concurred, although Taylor had misgivings that such a deployment would lead to escalating troop commitments.
  - c. US advisors, including Ambassador Maxwell Taylor, were urging escalation, especially bombing.
  - d. The State Department's 1965 White Paper documented DRV infiltration: 71% of the Communists in RVN were Northerners.33/
  - e. The RVNAF was seen as not capable of defeating the DRV and NLF.
  - f. The use of ground troops was considered as possibly temporary; President Johnson felt he could pull them out if the combat troops failed to make a difference.
  - g. There was a hope that the bombing would bring results and that the US would not have to send any more troops.34/
  - h. The need to bolster GVN morale was felt.
- E. Effect of decision on our involvement in Vietnam.
- 1. Led to further escalation of the war:
    - a. Led to authorization for combat, June 26.
    - b. By the end of 1965, the US had committed 180,000 troops to RVN.
    - c. The JCS proposed deployment of one Korean and two American divisions against the VC.35/
    - d. NSAM 328 was a pivotal document, marking "the acceptance by the President of the United States of the concept that US troops would engage in offensive ground operations against Asian insurgents."36/

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2. Led to much criticism from communist countries, some of which was picked up by groups in the US.

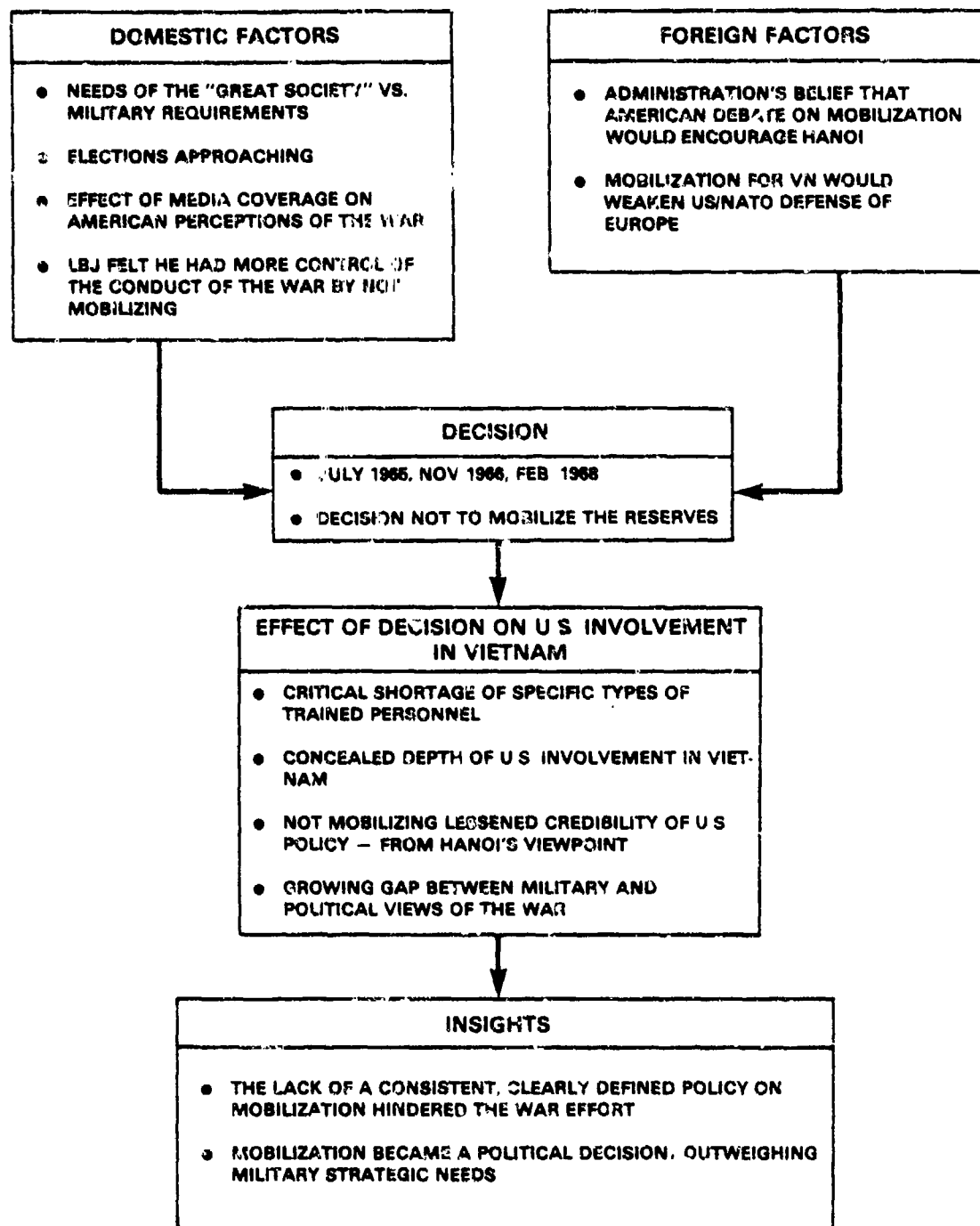
### F. Effectiveness of the decision.

1. It achieved the purpose of base protection and later active combat, bolstering South Vietnam.
2. The decision was justified in May due to VC offensives, the fact that ARVN was near collapse, and the high rate of ARVN desertions; hence, US troops were very much needed.

### G. Insights.

1. The deployment of Marines to Da Nang marked a crucial change in our role in Vietnam from advisor/supporter to active combatant. In fact, we Americanized the war from then until 1969, and RVNAF gradually took on a secondary role. It was a big step in the escalation of the war because once the men and the support were installed, it would be very difficult to reverse the decision and send them back home. As it turned out, they were very much needed.
2. On June 30, 1965, William Bundy warned that unless the performance of the South Vietnamese improved substantially, our intervention in force "would appear to be turning the conflict into a white man's war with the US in the shoes of the French."<sup>37/</sup> By our taking over the combat role in the war, the GVN was more justifiably called a "puppet regime" by the DRV.
3. The landing of the Marines was another case of the media's perception of a possible deception of the American public, which reinforced the credibility gap and later the lack of support of the war. There was a good deal of debate concerning whether to send troops, how many, and how they would be used. The Chairman of the JCS and the Chief of Staff of the Army were determined to see the deployment of troops for "unlimited combat operations." Because of the concern that the PRC might enter the war, CINCPAC contingency plans were drawn up. Yet the announcement concerning the landing of US Marines stressed that they were to be used only for protection of US installations. And Secretary of State Dean Rusk, appearing on "Face the Nation" the day before the marines landed, said that the Marines would not engage in offensive operations against the VC. Twelve days later, JCMS 204-65 proposed that US troops be deployed to GVN for active operations against the VC. The President decided on April 1, 1965 to allow the involvement of US ground combat units in the war against the insurgents.<sup>38/</sup>

# THE BDM CORPORATION



4541/78W

Figure A-10. Decision X: US Decision(s) Not To Mobilize the Reserves

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### X. DECISIONS NOT TO MOBILIZE THE RESERVE COMPONENTS 39/

#### A. Decision. Not to mobilize Reserve Components but rather to continue to depend on the draft for military manpower.

1. When: President Johnson decided not to mobilize during his administration (beginning in July, 1965).
2. Principal Decision Makers: The decision not to mobilize the Reserves was made by President Johnson, supported by McGeorge Bundy and other civilian advisers. The JCS and Generals Westmoreland, Johnson, Taylor and Admiral Sharp advocated mobilization.
3. Purposes:
  - a. Minimize the public perception of the depth of American involvement in Vietnam, and therefore continue the guns and butter policy.
  - b. Avoid using the Reserve components to avoid Congressional dissatisfaction like that which followed the 1961 (Berlin) mobilization.
4. Theme: Although the JCS argued that the US could not meet Vietnam force requirements and simultaneously fulfill other US global commitments like NATO, and that the US could not achieve its war objectives at low cost and quickly unless the reserves were mobilized, President Johnson nevertheless refused to mobilize because it would expose the depth of US involvement and jeopardize his Great Society programs.

#### B. Precedents.

- Berlin 1961. Reserve component personnel were mobilized but were not deployed; the domestic distress which it caused seemed unjustified and brought Congressional criticism.

#### C. Options

1. The President could declare a national emergency and call up a maximum of one million men. Rejected because the Vietnam war was not considered an emergency and US physical security was not threatened. President Johnson wanted to keep the war a "low-key" involvement in the public eye.

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2. The president could ask Congress for a joint resolution authorizing the call up of Reserves. Rejected because it would mean a major congressional debate which would jeopardize Johnson's domestic programs, the guns and butter policy, and such a debate would encourage Hanoi.40/
3. JCS urged mobilization despite above objections in order to:
  - a. Unify the country in support of the war effort.
  - b. Conduct the war more vigorously and thus end the war.
  - c. Signal to the enemy US resolve.
  - d. Provide necessary combat and service support which the Reserves could provide.
  - e. Avoid weakening the worldwide US military posture, including NATO.
  - f. Obtain the good quality, well-trained junior officer leadership that was in the Reserve component.

### D. Influential Factors

#### 1. Foreign:

- a. Recognition that an American debate on mobilization showing internal dissent would encourage Hanoi.
- b. Mobilization for Vietnam would have serious impact on NATO allies whose primary concern was Western Europe.

#### 2. Domestic:

1. Fear that mobilization would erode public support for the administration.
2. Increased public desire to disengage from the war after Tet 1968.
3. LBJ felt that he had more control of the conduct of the war by not asking Congress to authorize a call-up of the Reserves.41/

### E. Effect of the Decision on US Involvement in Vietnam.

1. The forces committed in Vietnam suffered a serious imbalance when the required Reserve component combat support and combat service support units were not activated

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2. Reserve Component equipment was transferred to newly organized active units, thus debilitating many Reserve units.
3. The depth of US involvement in Vietnam was concealed from the American public until about 1967, later resulting in widespread disillusionment.
4. Manpower requirements could not be met effectively by selective service resulting in wasteful personnel policies and practices such as early-outs, etc.
5. Training and equipping draftees was more time consuming and expensive than using reserves.
6. The Reserve Components became a haven for legal draft avoidance.
7. Not mobilizing lessened the credibility of US Vietnam policy in the eyes of Hanoi.

### F. Effectiveness of the Decision.

1. The guns and butter policy continued, to the long-term detriment of US economic health.
2. Not mobilizing dictated the policy of gradualism.

### G. Insights.

1. Without reserve mobilization, active forces could only be introduced into RVN incrementally, contributing to a policy of gradualism.
2. Political imperatives outweighed military rationale in the 1965 non-mobilization decision to the surprise and dismay of the JCS, but that issue did not cause any senior military officials to resign.
3. The administration's manpower policies extant in 1965 contributed to making the Reserve Components a haven for legal draft avoidance during hostilities.
4. The token call-up of Reserves in 1968 was "too little too late" to be of any significance vis à vis the war's outcome or Hanoi's perception of US will and determination.

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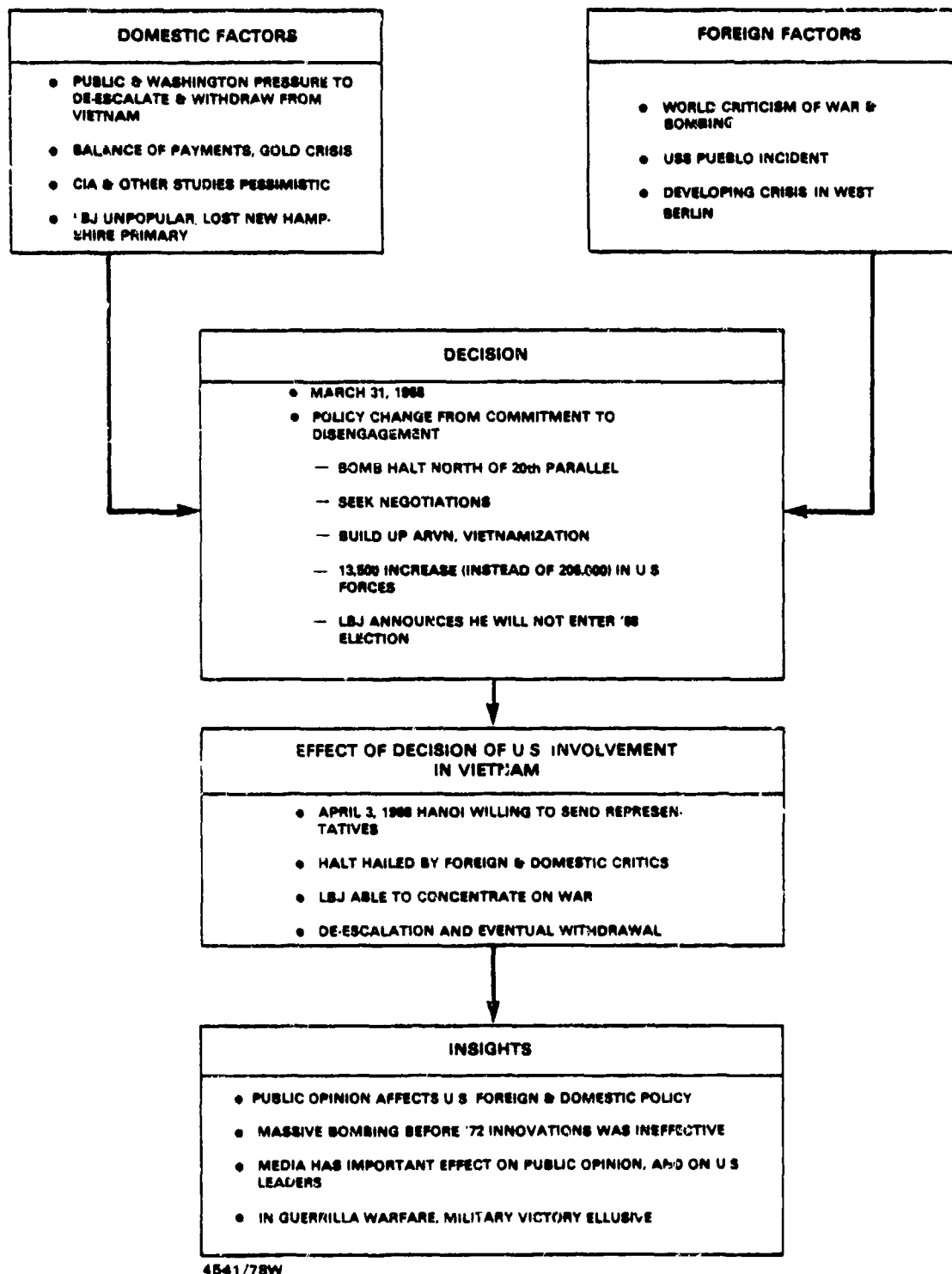


Figure A-11. Decision XI: US Policy Decision To Change From Commitment to Disengagement

XI. POLICY CHANGE FROM COMMITMENT TO DISENGAGEMENT 42/

A. Decision. LBJ's March 31, 1968 speech in which he announces:

- Bomb halt north of 20th parallel.
- Seeking negotiations with Hanoi. Will send Ambassadors Harriman and Thompson as our representatives.
- Will build up South Vietnam economically and militarily (Vietnamization). ARVN is beginning to mobilize.
- Will increase troop strength by only 13,500 (instead of 206,000 that was requested).
- Will not run for reelection in order to unify the country and concentrate on the war and domestic problems.

This point in the history of the Vietnam war was the crest of the wave in escalation and led irreversibly to disengagement. Like Dien Bien Phu, Tet broke US illusions and hopes of progress in the war, and it helped break President Johnson, who so fervently had wanted to succeed in Vietnam. Although Tet was a US/RVN military victory (realized only later), the immediate result was political and psychological defeat there and in the US. The combination of domestic dissent, economic problems, and deep pessimism concerning the war led to the decision to seek negotiations more seriously and buy time, and eventually to disengage. Hence, our policy changed from escalation and commitment to de-escalation, seeking negotiations, and Vietnamization.

1. When: LBJ decided in February-March 1968
2. Principal Decision Makers: LBJ and Rusk reached these decisions after exhaustive studies were submitted by the CIA, Defense, State, NSC, JCS, and Treasury Department. On March 18, 1968 he also consulted the 30 "wise men" who were friends and confidants outside the government. They included: George Ball, Dean Acheson, General Matthew Ridgway, General Maxwell Taylor, Cyrus Vance, McGeorge Bundy, Douglas Dillon, and General Omar Bradley. The briefings they heard were pessimistic.
3. Purpose: To bring a change in the stalemate of the war by political solutions:
  1. To reduce casualties
  2. To recover POWs



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4. Theme: This was a turning point in the war from an escalation, action-reaction strategy. It was realized that no matter how many troops we sent and no matter how much we bombed, the enemy would always win in the end through persistence, determination, will and patience. "They will win politically, psychologically and eventually militarily. Time is on their side. The guerrilla wins if he doesn't lose; the conventional army loses if it doesn't win... Henceforth, no matter how effective our actions, the prevalent strategy could no longer achieve its objective within a period or with force levels politically acceptable to the American people."43/

### B. Precedents for the Decisions.

1. Tet Offensive. Military victory, political defeat there and in the US.
  - a. Vietnam: VC gained control of much of the population through fear and coercion. "We had military successes that could not be translated into permanent political advantage."44/
  - b. US: Media's reporting on Tet caused increased antiwar sentiments and activities, increasing determination to get out of the war.
2. Precedents for the bombing halt and serious attempts to negotiate with Hanoi:
  - a. Manila Pledge: We will withdraw as they withdraw.
  - b. San Antonio formula (Sept. 29, 1967): "The US is willing to stop the aerial and naval bombardment of North Vietnam when this will lead promptly to productive discussions." (LBJ).
  - c. Bombing pauses to promote diplomatic pressure on Hanoi towards peace talks.
  - d. Efforts to have 3rd countries such as Britain and USSR promote peace talks.

### C. Options presented.

1. The desired goals included:
  - a. Making it as costly as possible for DRV to continue the war.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

- b. Defeat of the VC and DRV forces in GVN.
  - c. Extension of GVN control over all of South Vietnam.
2. The options which were considered included:
- a. Escalation of bombing. This option was rejected because it would risk a wider war, thereby rousing the PRC and USSR.
  - b. Increases in troop strength by 200,000 - 500,000 more US forces. This option was rejected because of:
    - 1) It would mean politically costly mobilization of our Reserve forces.
    - 2) Hanoi's ability to keep up the current ratio, matching our increases; hence, increases promise no victory.
    - 3) The presence of 700,000 or more US military in Vietnam would mean total Americanization of the war.
    - 4) GVN determination and will to win the war would lessen, and the GVN would be less likely to reform.
    - 5) It would worsen the domestic crisis at home.
    - 6) It would cost us too much, considering our financial problems.
  - c. Remain as we are. Rejected because no progress was within sight.
  - d. Demographic strategy of population security. Meant a small increase in US troops, and protection for the heavily populated areas. Province capitals would be garrisoned by ARVN. This option was rejected because it would mean increased fighting in the cities, and would give the enemy the ability to mass near the population centers.
  - e. Withdraw. This option was not seriously considered at this time.

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### D. Influential Factors.

#### 1. Foreign:

- a. USS Pueblo incident (Jan 23)
- b. West Berlin crisis developing
- c. World criticism of war and bombing

#### 2. Domestic:

- a. Gold crisis; US in largest deficit since 1950; domestic programs require funding.
- b. Growing pessimism and dissent at home and in Washington. 30 "wisemen" meeting and Asian scholar's caucus in Philadelphia of 375 scholars: 81% agreed that US had already lost the war in terms of stated American objectives.45/
- c. CIA study, 10-month outlook: even if we sent 200,000 more, the study predicted that no positive results could be achieved.46/
- d. LBJ becomes increasingly unpopular. The Gallup poll in March indicated that only 36% of the population approved his conduct in office and only 26% approved his conduct of the war. New Hampshire primary results indicate: 57% McCarthy, 35% Johnson; Kennedy entered the race.47/
- e. The request for 206,000 troops was leaked to the New York Times on March 10 and set off a new debate in Congress and the press, most of it highly critical. This was a boon to peace candidates McCarthy and Kennedy and resulted in one-third of the House of Representatives sponsoring a resolution which called for an immediate congressional review of US policy in Southeast Asia.48/

#### 3. War-Related Factors: Decision for a bombing halt.

- a. To cut down pilot casualties.
- b. The partial bombing halt may bring Hanoi to negotiating table, or lessen VC violence. The halt shifts the responsibility for peace from the US to Hanoi. "I think there will be tremendous world pressure on Hanoi now to respond favorably in kind."49/

## THE BDM CORPORATION

c. The bombing in the north was estimated by some to be only 5-10% effective.

d. To lessen the criticism of US bombing.

### E. Effect of Decisions on US involvement in Vietnam.

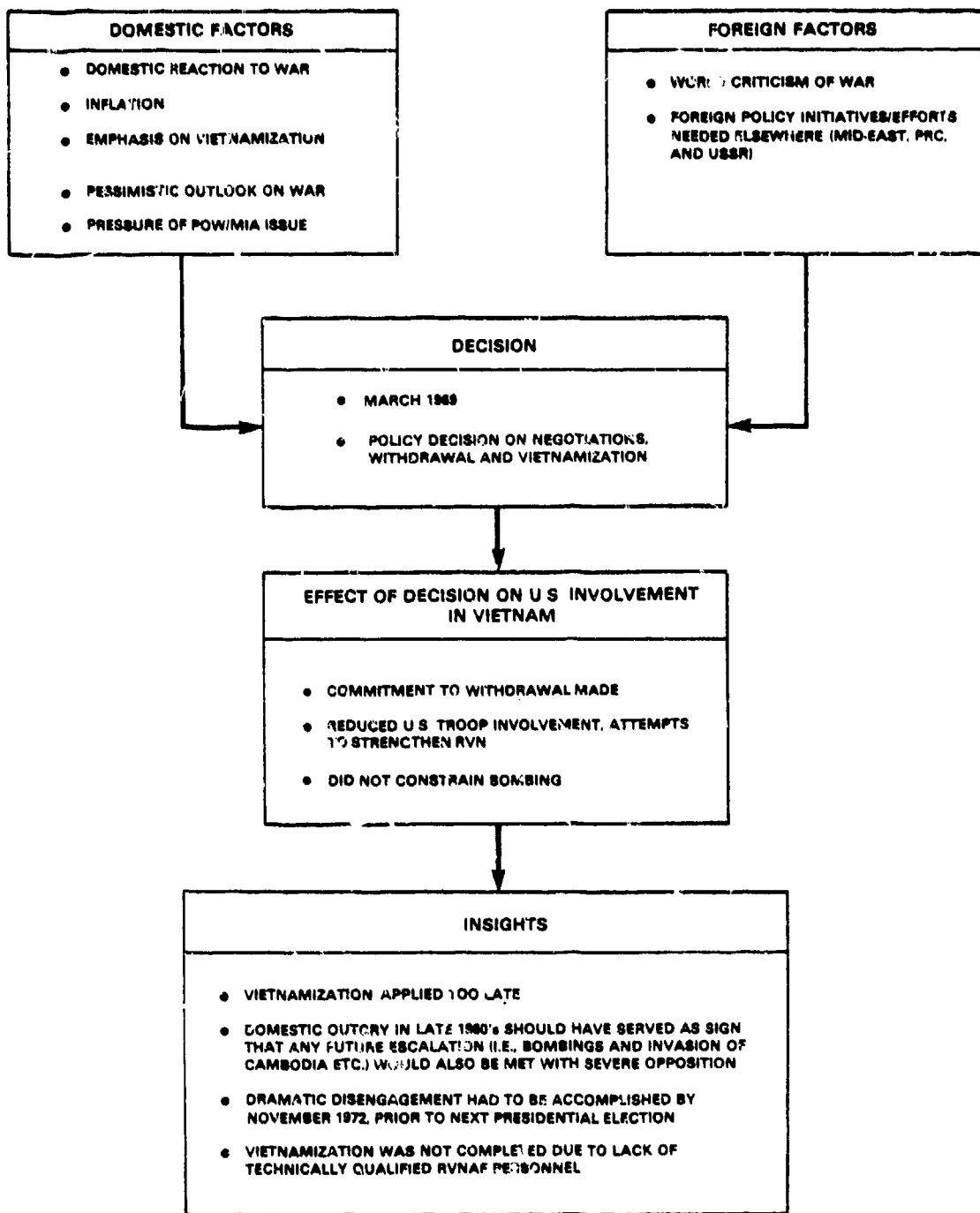
1. Hanoi responded to negotiations proposal on April 3; they will send representatives to discuss US withdrawal and termination of the war.
2. Led to de-escalation and Vietnamization: strengthen ARVN so that they might take on a more active role in conduct of the war, thereby allowing for the start of US withdrawal.

### F. Effectiveness of the Decisions.

1. World and American approval of the decisions.
2. LBJ, now out of the campaign race, was able to spend his energies on the war and domestic programs as he had wished.
3. However, American dissent continued throughout 1968; hence, these decisions did not serve to unify America (although other factors were also involved here.)
4. Purpose was achieved as regards de-escalation and eventual withdrawal.

### G. Insights.

1. "Military power without political cohesiveness and support is an empty shell." 50/
2. Public dissent does affect US foreign and domestic policy.
3. Massive bombing without the "smart bombs" of 1972 was ineffective and harmed our image.
4. The media has a very important influence on the public and Washington, e.g., Tet resulting in political victory for Hanoi; the NY Times and Washington Post, tending to be critical of the war, were read by our leaders and influential people.



4541/78W

Figure A-12. Decision XII: US Policy Decision on Negotiations, Withdrawal, and Vietnamization

XII. POLICY DECISION ON NEGOTIATIONS, WITHDRAWAL AND VIETNAMIZATION 51/

A. Decision. Three point policy decision taken by the Nixon Administration in the first months of Nixon's term in office on withdrawal, Vietnamization and negotiations.

- Negotiation policy would involve insistence on mutual withdrawal of DRV and US troops with adequate inspection procedures.
  - A major step-up to be taken in preparing RVNAF to stand alone, i.e., Vietnamization.
  - Development of a specific timetable for a progressive withdrawal of US troops no matter what progress is made at Paris Peace talks.
1. When: March 27-28, 1969 (made official with NSDM 9-April 1, 1969).
  2. Principal Decision-Makers: Nixon, Kissinger, and the NSC.
  3. Purpose: Based on Nixon's campaign promise, to initiate a de-escalation of US troop involvement in Vietnam by creating a more capable, self-sufficient RVNAF and to allow for "peace with honor" by calling for a mutual withdrawal of US and DRV forces.
  4. Themes: US to maintain its credibility by building up its ally's competence while simultaneously placating the anti-war people's sentiments expressed during the latter part of the sixties. The Vietnamization theme can be viewed as partial implementation of the Nixon Doctrine (albeit unproclaimed at this point) in that both emphasized aid rather than direct involvement as integral components. (i.e., of both the Vietnamization policy and Nixon Doctrine).

B. Precedents. Several important precedents for each of the three points outlined in the March 1969 decision can be identified:

1. Point on negotiations: Nixon qualified the US position on negotiations with the DRV, but the option of utilizing negotiations as a viable method for ending the conflict had been considered by LBJ virtually throughout his entire full-term in office. In 1968, after LBJ partially halted the bombing campaigns against the DRV, Hanoi surprisingly indicated its willingness to discuss negotiations. The negotiation process began in the same year.

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2. Point on Vietnamization: This point was actually a continuation of a policy option adopted by LBJ in 1967 as well as a reflection of earlier statements made by JFK that the RVN should be/is fighting its own war. However, overall emphasis/dedication to the Vietnamization process was far from adequate up to the time Nixon entered office; hence a rescatement and reaffirmation of Vietnamization as an essential policy for US government to pursue vis à vis Vietnam. Several statements made during the Johnson administration serve as illustrations of precedents for the reaffirmation of the Vietnamization policy point:
  - a. March 1968 - Clifford Task Force proposes urgent effort to upgrade RVNAF.
  - b. ISA (Office of International Security Affairs) and DOD memoranda in March 1968 which included statements emphasizing the need to strengthen/modernize RVNAF.
  - c. LBJ statements specifying the need for RVNAF to be strengthened in order that they assume more of the burden of fighting. It should also be stressed that the urgency of Vietnamization was strongly felt in 1968 due to the initiation of the negotiating process and the bombing halt. The JCS felt especially pressed to upgrade RVNAF before a possible cease-fire/force freeze could be implemented as part of the negotiation process (obviously, at this time, JCS considered it plausible that the negotiation process could move along at an accelerated pace).
3. Point on Withdrawal: While the Nixon/NSC point called for a specific timetable for a progressive US troop withdrawal, LBJ did set the precedent for this policy point by calling for force limitations.

### C. Options Presented.

1. The major and obvious option presented prior to the Nixon/NSC policy decision was to increase US involvement, post-Tet, by sending an increased number of US troops to Vietnam. In 1968 there were two possible plans of action, both of which were considered ways of providing the "extra push" needed to maintain the tactical gains of 1968 and to achieve greater future successes, eventually speeding up the end of US involvement.
  - a. Minimum essential force of 80,500 troop increase

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- b. Optimal force of 201,250 additional men.
  - 2. Another option, presented by General Westmoreland, was to speed up the negotiation process etc. by employing small tactical nuclear weapons. This option, formulated and rejected during the Johnson administration, may have been considered during the Nixon years.
  - 3. Based solely on the wording of the Nixon/NSC policy point on withdrawal (i.e. - "withdrawal no matter what progress is made at the Paris Peace Talks"), it seems probable that an option considered (but rejected) regarding withdrawal could have made US troop withdrawal contingent on progress made at the talks. Verification of this as a policy option is necessary. Plausible reasons for its rejection:
    - a. The slow pace at the Paris talks
    - b. Nixon's campaign promises
    - c. Public reaction.
- D. Influential Factors
- 1. Foreign:
    - a. World criticism of US involvement in Vietnam, especially post-Tet, was extremely vocal and harsh.
    - b. Foreign policy time and effort was required in other areas, i.e., the Mid-East, and in attempts at rapprochement with the USSR.
  - 2. Domestic: Domestic reaction to the war greatly influenced the formulation of this policy. The following domestic factors served as influences:
    - a. Media coverage of Tet (and public reaction to Tet), the My Lai incident and the war in general.
    - b. Spiraling inflation.
    - c. Laird's emphasis on "Vietnamization" as a #1 priority.
    - c. Pessimistic appraisals of US position in Vietnam.
    - e. Rise in casualties, especially in 1967.
    - f. Overall course of events vis à vis the war during the Johnson administration, the two "wisemen" meetings.



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- g. "Dove" mood permeates Congress; limits and constraints.
- h. Pressure on POW/MIA issue.

### E. Effect of Decision on US Involvement in Vietnam

- 1. Served as a commitment to carry out progressive withdrawal of US troops according to a specific timetable.

#### DATES OF NIXON ANNOUNCEMENTS ON # OF US TROOPS TO BE WITHDRAWN 1969-1971

- |    |               |                          |
|----|---------------|--------------------------|
| a) | June 8, 1969  | 25,000 (Midway Island)   |
| b) | Sept 16, 1969 | 35,000                   |
| c) | Dec 15, 1969  | 50,000 (by Apr 1970)     |
| d) | Apr 10, 1970  | 150,000 (by Spring 1971) |

- 2. Reduced US troop commitment; attempted to strengthen RVNAF

### F. Effectiveness of Decision.

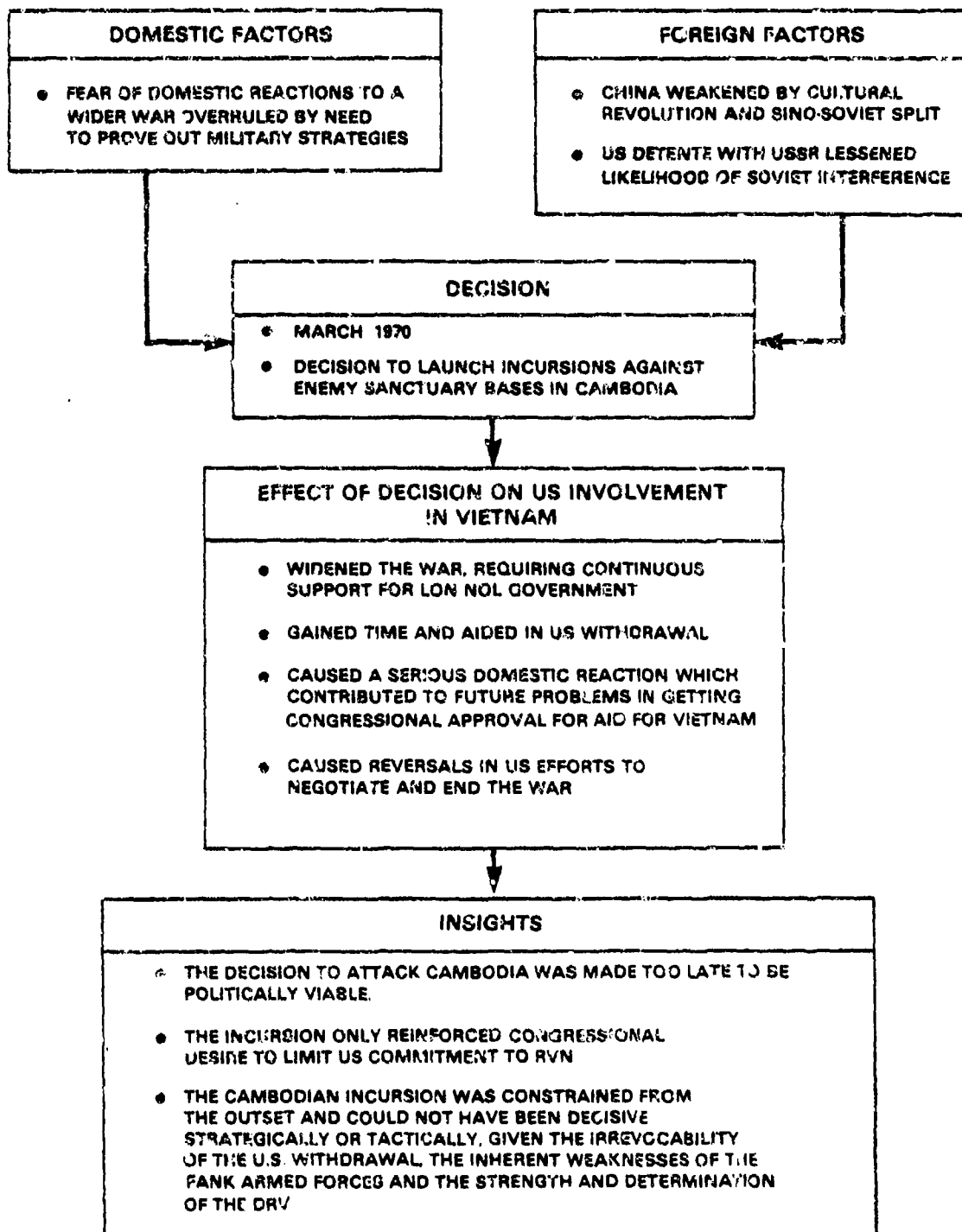
- 1. The initiation of the withdrawal process was the most significant and successful (i.e., it was accomplished) point of this policy decision, eventually reducing US troop involvement to a minimum.
- 2. Vietnamization, although conceptually sound, was not particularly effective for various reasons:
  - a. Its initiation as a serious program came too late.
  - b. With congressional cuts (at a later date) in military spending for RVNAF, re-equipment and strengthening of RVNAF forces became increasingly difficult.
  - c. South Vietnamese perceptions of Vietnamization were often negative. Although RVNAF officers attempted to "Vietnamize" (i.e., in order to please US personnel by "making a go of it"), the South Vietnamese often felt they had all along been "fighting their own war."
  - d. Vietnamization could not offset the DRV's strategic advantages of sanctuaries, bases and Ho Chi Minh trail, and of cohesion and discipline.
- 3. The negotiation procedure point served only to highlight US expectations/intentions vis à vis the talks and withdrawal. In reality, the progress of negotiations depended upon the overall interplay of the parties involved, day-to-day strategy and respective concessions/compromises made by the parties involved.

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### G. Insights.

1. Although both Kennedy and LBJ gave credence to the importance of strengthening RVNAF in order that they be capable of "fighting their own war"/"take on more of the burden of fighting," in actuality, this overall process of Vietnamization came too late and, as regards JFK and LBJ, lacked commitment/sincerity in actual implementation. (i.e., a convenient slogan but little concerted effort).
2. While a scheduled timetable for progressive withdrawal served to help soothe the pervasive anti-war sentiments, the strength of these anti-war attitudes/sentiments from 1968 on should have been an indication to the Nixon administration that future escalations (with or without troops - i.e., the war against DRV & sanctuaries) would be just as unpopular as they were under LBJ.

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4541/78W

Figure A-13. Decision XIII: US Decision To Launch Incursions Against Enemy Sanctuary Bases in Cambodia

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### XIII. DECISION TO LAUNCH A COMBINED US/RVNAF INCURSION INTO THE PAVN/PLAF SANCTUARY BASES IN CAMBODIA 52/

A. Decision. Following the "secret" bombing war in Cambodia in 1969, the US administration decided it necessary to send US/RVNAF ground forces temporarily into the Parrot's Beak and Fish Hook areas.

1. When: March 1970.
2. Principal Decision-Makers: President Nixon and Dr. Kissinger, with support by JCS and COMUSMACV.
3. Purpose:
  - a. To destroy major enemy stockpiles and base areas that supported enemy operations in more than half of RVN.
  - b. To stave off communist domination of Cambodia.
  - c. To save the new Lon Nol government.
  - d. To help defend South Vietnam.
  - e. To protect American withdrawal by gaining time.
  - f. To spare Saigon the shock of seeing its neighbor fall.
  - g. To deny Hanoi an easy gain and an excuse to spurn negotiations.

B. Precedents.

1. Sihanouk had tolerated some 50,000 DRV troops in Cambodia.
2. Johnson had refused to permit ground attacks on supply routes in Laos and Cambodia to avoid a "wider war" and possible Soviet/Chinese intervention.
3. Sihanouk in 1969 secretly and tacitly acquiesced in American B-52 bombing of communist base areas in Cambodia.
4. Sihanouk was deposed in March 1970 by Lon Nol.
5. Lon Nol tried to push out the communist troops without success and therefore requested US support.

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### C. Options. General Creighton Abrams suggested three options:

1. Have South Vietnamese troops harrass the enemy across the border.
2. Help the South Vietnamese army conduct larger attacks over a period of months to disrupt enemy bases.
3. Use US forces with South Vietnamese forces in swift full-scale assaults on bases.

### D. Int'l Factors.

#### 1. Foreign:

- a. China was less able to interfere because she was crippled by the Cultural Revolution and suffered interrupted diplomatic ties with developing nations, and because of the Sino-Soviet split.
- b. US detente with the Soviets lessened likelihood of Soviet interference.
- c. Earlier Indonesia overthrew the communists and became more a stable anticommunist neighbor (more stability in Southeast Asia than before).

#### 2. Domestic:

- Some fear of domestic reaction to the incursion, but this was outweighed by the need to save Lon Nol and to get a stronger hand in negotiations by weakening the sanctuary bases.

### E. Effect of the Decision on US Involvement in Vietnam 53/

1. It widened the war, thereafter requiring continuous air and logistic support for Lon Nol's forces and government.
2. It facilitated US withdrawal by interrupting communist logistics efforts and thereby gaining time for Vietnamization.
3. The 1969 secret bombing and the major incursion in 1970 which seemingly reversed de-escalation, and withdrawal caused a powerful domestic reaction.
4. It caused reversals in efforts to negotiate and end the war: The Soviets backed off from the Indochina conference idea; Sihanouk joined a new united military front for liberation

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of Indochina; Lon Nol, his government still falling, requested \$500 million more in military aid.

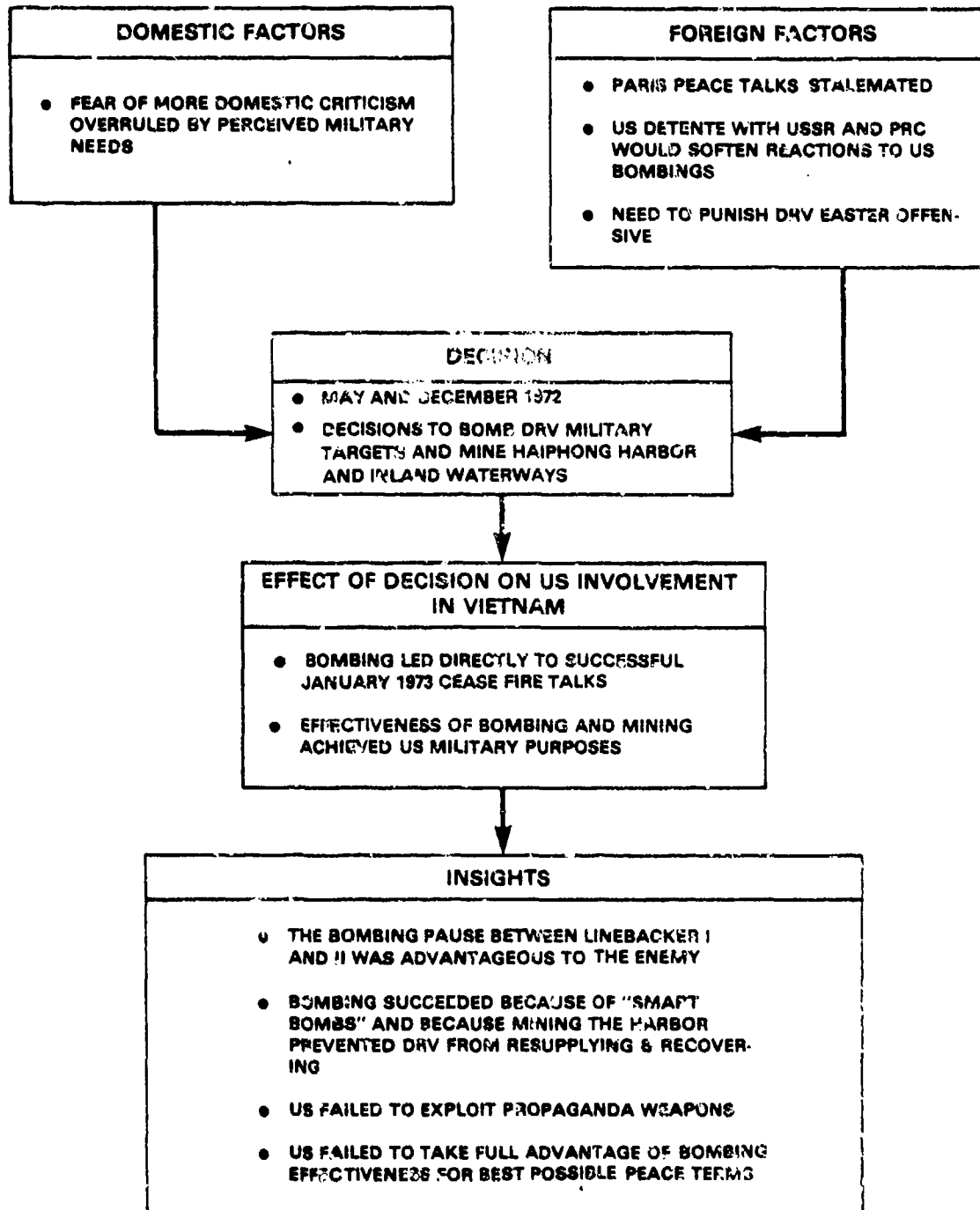
### F. Effectiveness of the Decision.

1. Because of the domestic reaction to the Cambodian actions, the US was later constrained from helping RVNAF in its operations (Lamson 719) in Laos, which suffered heavy casualties.
2. US negotiating hand was weakened as Hanoi took advantage of the American antiwar movement.

### G. Insights:

1. The decision to make an attack into Cambodia was made too late to be viable politically, and it impelled restrictive legislation which impacted on the conduct of that war and any future conflicts.
2. The military implementation of the Cambodian incursion decision was self-constrained from the outset and could not have been decisive strategically or tactically, given the irrevocability of the US withdrawal, the inherent weaknesses of the FANK (Cambodian armed forces) and the strength and determination of the DRV.

# THE EDM CORPORATION



4541/78W

Figure A-14. Decision XIV: US Decisions To Bomb DRV Military Targets and Mine Haiphong Harbor

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### XIV. DECISION TO BOMB NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY TARGETS AND TO MINE HAIPHONG HARBOR AND INLAND WATERWAYS (LINEBACKER I AND II) 54/

#### A. Decision. The decision included the following components:

- Mine all entrances to North Vietnamese ports.
  - Interdict delivery of supplies on internal waters of North Vietnam.
  - Cut off LOCs as much as possible.
  - Initiate air and naval strikes against military targets in DRV.
  - Interdict shipping in the open ocean to stop coastal ships from supplying DRV.
  - Bomb communist depots and supply lines in DRV.
  - Cut key bridges in DRV.
1. When: President Nixon announced this decision (Linebacker I and mining the Haiphong harbor) on television May 8, 1972. Linebacker II was announced December 18.
  2. Principal Decision-Makers: President Nixon made the decision based on the recommendations of JCS and Kissinger, but with dissent from Secretary of Defense Laird.
  3. Purposes:
    - a. Coerce DRV/VC to agree to immediate cease fire under international supervision throughout all of Indochina.
    - b. Coerce the Communists into returning all American POWs.
    - c. Counteract the 1972 Easter offensive and reverse DRV gains.
    - d. Drive DRV forces back to their sanctuaries.
    - e. Close off DRV's importing of war material & supplies from PRC and USSR.
    - f. Offer a "carrot" that if (a) and (b) conditions are met, US would withdraw 60,000 men within the next four months.



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g. Buy time before pulling out entirely.

4. Theme: The need to break the Paris peace talks stalemate, bring home the POWs, and withdraw necessitated the use of force. President Nixon halted the bombing October 23 on the promise of progress; the pause only meant DRV recovery and further hostilities, so President Nixon resumed the bombing December 18, 1972. This led to the January 1973 ceasefire talks.

### B. Precedents.

1. 1965-1968 bombing of DRV as discussed in Decision #8.
2. During the 1965-68 Rolling Thunder operations, President Johnson rejected the JCS proposal to close Haiphong and knock out part of the Red River dike system. Although 80% of the imports for DRV came through Haiphong, he would not authorize mining and blockading out of fear of Chinese/Soviet intervention and fear of heavy civilian casualties.55/

### C. Options.

1. Withdraw as soon as possible while proceeding with Vietnamization, as proposed by Secretary of Defense Laird.
2. Do nothing new out of fear of more criticism at home and out of fear of widening the war.
3. Bomb civilian centers as well as military targets to further demoralize the enemy. This was rejected because of anticipated public reaction and damage to US prestige.

### D. Influential Factors.

1. Foreign:
  - a. Paris peace talks at a stalemate. DRV was demanding that Thieu resign and the US withdraw.
  - b. US detente with USSR and rapprochement with PRC would likely soften these two countries' reactions to US bombing in DRV.
  - c. DRV/VC spring 1972 Easter offensive and invasion required punishment and reversal of their gains.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### 2. Domestic:

- War critics already concerned about bombing in Cambodia and Laos; bombing in NVN would increase the furor.

### E. Effect of the Decision on US Involvement in Vietnam.

1. The bombing led directly to the successful January 1973, ceasefire talks.
2. It stopped the DRV invasion, inflicted heavy casualties, and forced the withdrawal of substantial PAVN forces.
3. It virtually eliminated shipment of goods through Haiphong and other ports.
4. It seriously crippled railroad traffic from China to DRV.
5. It cut all imports to DRV from Communist allies to 1/3 or 1/2 of what it had been in May 1972.<sup>56/</sup>
6. Hanoi responded in Paris to Linebacker I by dropping its insistence on a coalition government and the resignation of Thieu; these concessions were withdrawn after the bombing halt. President Nixon therefore resumed with Linebacker II in December 1972.
7. After Linebacker II, DRV's electricity supply was crippled and its air defenses were shattered.

### F. Effectiveness of the Decision.

#### 1. Positive:

- Progress with the Paris peace talks; US POWs returned home; and RVN's military situation appeared stable. General William Momyer said, "It was apparent that air power was the decisive factor leading to the peace agreement of 15 January 1973."<sup>57/</sup>

#### 2. Negative:

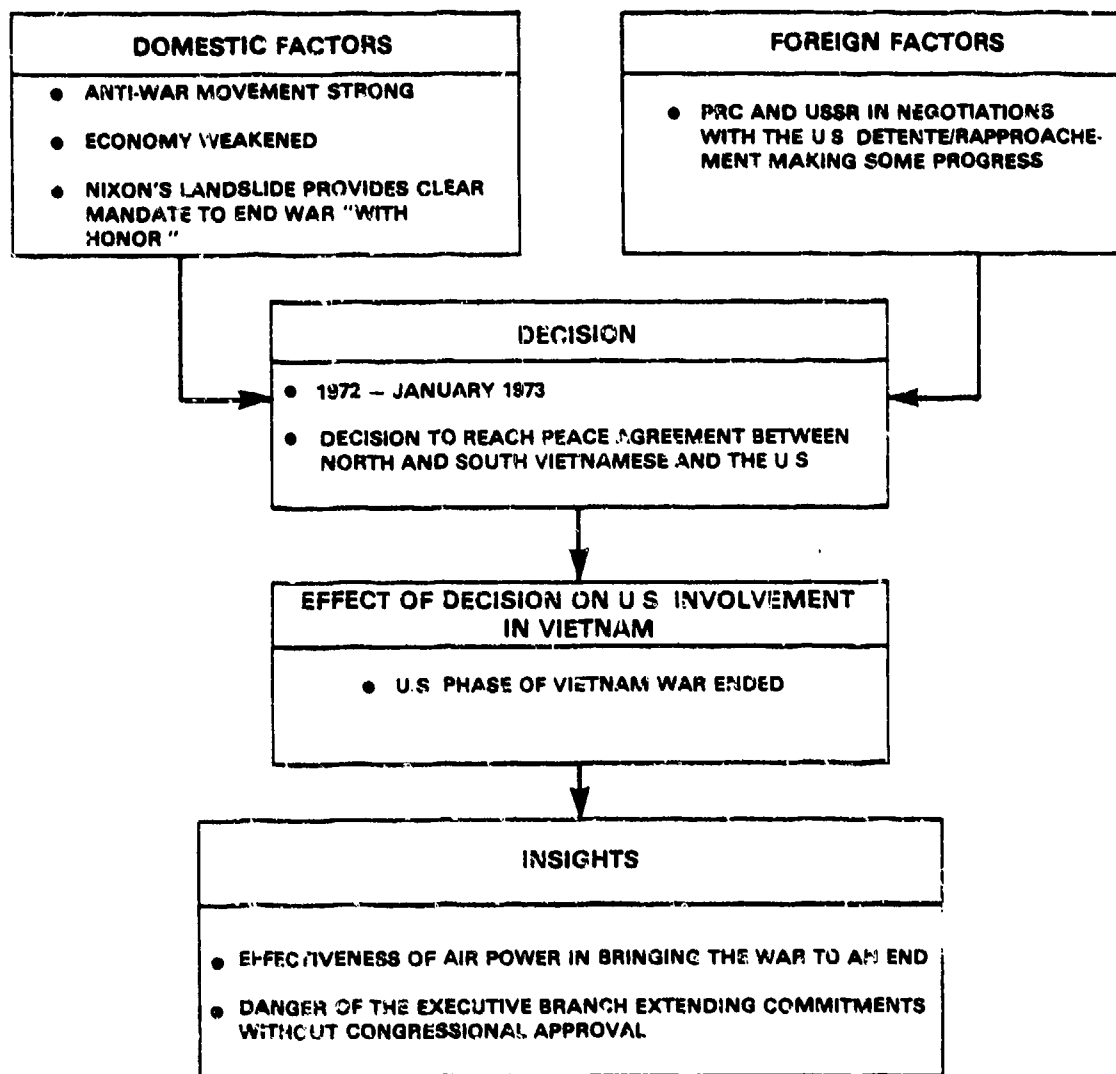
- a. Severe criticism in the US which raised the constraints against further bombing.
- b. Senate Democrats adopted a resolution disapproving of the escalation of the war. It was offered by Senator W. Fulbright, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, approved 29 to 14. Furthermore,

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the Senate Democrats endorsed a proposal that all funds for Vietnam War be cut off four months after DRV returned American prisoners.58/

### G. Insights.

1. The bombing pause between Linebacker I and II provided the enemy time to recover some of its losses and damage, and reversed some of the progress already made in Paris (DRV withdrew some important concessions).
2. The 1972 bombing succeeded in achieving US purposes because (1) Haiphong was mined and therefore war material and supplies could not easily be replaced and (2) the new "smart" bombs which were accurate and efficient, were used.
3. The US did not effectively counter DRV propaganda which sharply criticized US bombing and brought sympathy to the DRV. The DRV reported, for example, that 1,600 civilians were killed as a result of US bombing, but the US failed to counter this with the fact that DRV forces had killed 25,000 South Vietnamese civilians in the 1972 Easter offensive.
4. The US failed to take full advantage of the effectiveness of the bombing. The terms of the peace settlement could have been more advantageous to the US and GVN had the US threatened further bombing on the scale of Linebacker II. But the American public and congressional clamor constrained the US from employing such threats or taking such actions.



4541/78W

Figure A-15. Decision XV: Paris Cease-Fire Accords

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### XV. PARIS CEASE-FIRE ACCORDS 59/

- A. Decision. Decision to reach peace agreement between the North and South Vietnamese and the US (The Paris Peace talks were stalled when Nixon came to office. Henry Kissinger sought to develop a strategy for moving the talks off dead center.)
1. When: The cease-fire was signed in January 1973, but the negotiations had been intense from the summer of 1972.
  2. Principal Decision Makers: Nixon and Kissinger were the principal decision makers who formulated the plan for peace and obtained both South and North Vietnamese participation.
  3. Purpose: The stated purpose of the cease-fire agreements was to bring an end to the Vietnam War and to provide a context for US withdrawal from the conflict.
  4. Themes:
    - a. South Vietnam had to be prepared to defend itself through both the Vietnamization and pacification programs.
    - b. The United States role in the war had to be reduced.
    - d. The North Vietnamese had to be persuaded to join in peace negotiations short of their stated objectives of toppling the GVN.
    - e. The South Vietnamese had to be persuaded to accept a cease-fire that fell short of their earlier objective of forcing the communist forces out of the South.
- B. Precedents for the Decision. President Johnson had initiated peace talks with the North Vietnamese in 1968. By 1972 it was evident that those talks would not produce a cease-fire.
- C. Options.
1. Kissinger's program for achieving peace included both threats of intensified warfare against the North Vietnamese and offerings of financial assistance if they could be persuaded to establish and maintain peace. LBJ suggested aid to DRV in 1965 speech at Johns Hopkins.
  2. The South Vietnamese sought to strengthen their position by refusing to accept the establishment of an in-place ceasefire.

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3. Kissinger was able to create a carefully balanced peace agreement for the following reasons:

- a. The North Vietnamese were persuaded to negotiate through the effectiveness of two 1972 bombing campaigns, Linebacker I and Linebacker II. The cost of continuing its war became prohibitive.
- b. The North Vietnamese had failed in their 1972 "Easter Offensive."
- c. Although the GVN continued to have misgivings over US intentions and reliability, the South Vietnamese were somewhat reassured by Nixon that if the North broke the agreements, the US would retaliate in strength.

### D. Influential Factors

#### 1. Foreign:

- By 1972 US diplomatic initiatives with both the PRC and USSR had undercut the basis for a long-term Northern struggle against RVN.

#### 2. Domestic:

- a. The antiwar movement was exerting pressure on the Nixon Administration.
- b. The US economy was weakened by inflation.
- c. Nixon's 1972 landslide victory gave him a strong mandate for achieving peace.

E. Effect of Decision. The decision to sign the Paris cease-fire accords effectively ended US participation in the Vietnam war.

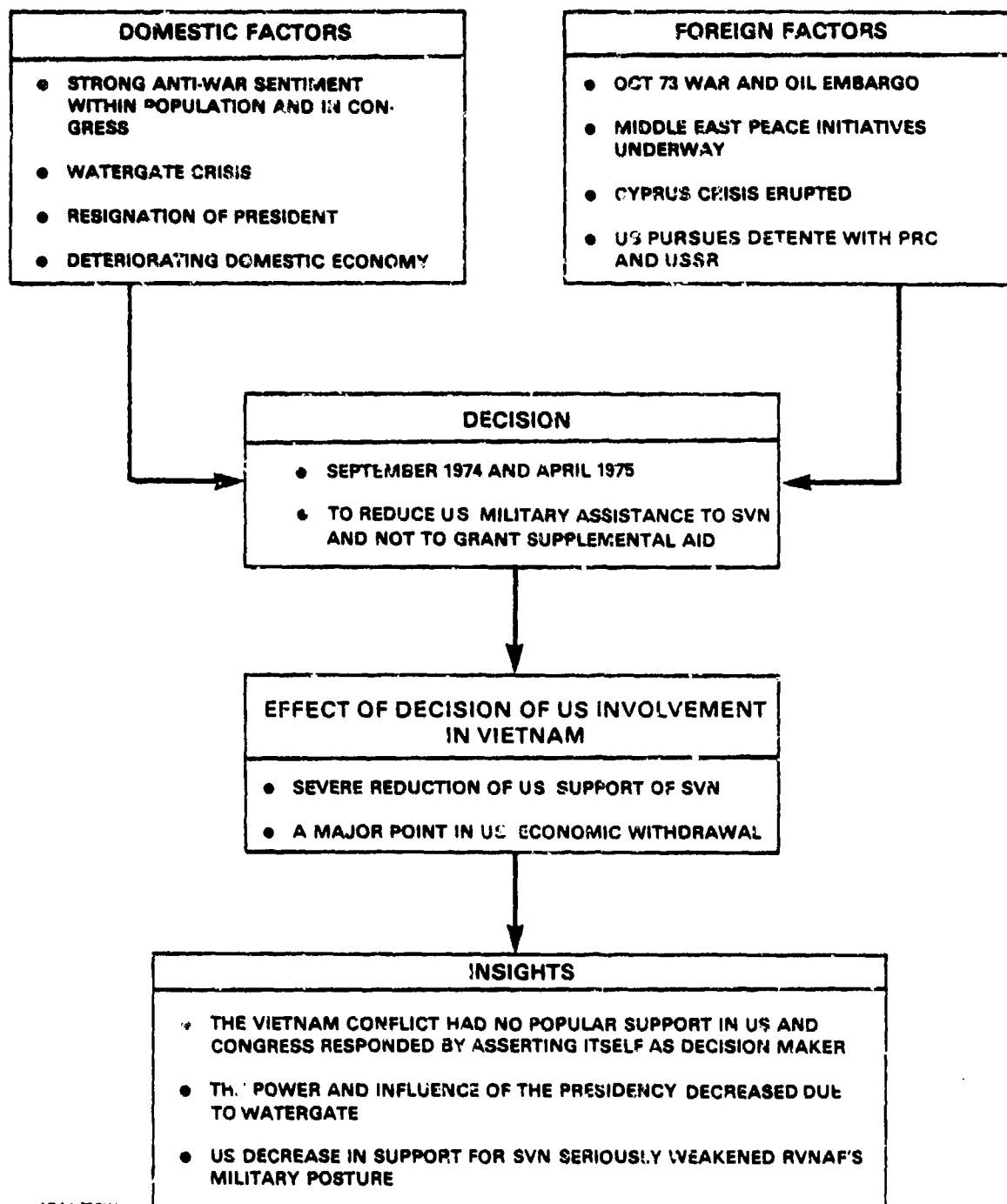
F. Effectiveness of the Decision. The success of the peace accords depended upon either the good will of all the parties who were signatories or upon the United States to enforce the provisions of the accords. The North Vietnamese used the peace provided by the accords to prepare for their final attack on RVN. The United States government, weakened by domestic dissent and Watergate, was unable or unwilling to enforce the provisions of the accords in spite of promises to the GVN. During the 1973 Middle East war, the US resupplied Israel from POMCUS and PWRMS stocks in Europe thereby eroding the supply base that might otherwise have been used to support RVNAF.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### G. Insights.

1. The Nixon Administration made commitments to the RVN that required support from the Congress. When that support was called for, Congress refused.
2. US objectives in RVN changed over time--from wanting to ensure a free, viable, independent South Vietnam to wanting US POWs returned and US forces extricated from RVN while at the same time ensuring a period during which the RVN might achieve the capability to stand alone.
3. The DRV accurately assessed the situation in late 1972 and early 1973:
  - a. The US was anxious to end the war and sign the ceasefire before the inauguration.
  - b. The reduced US demands enabled the DRV to retain its troops in RVN and in the border sanctuaries, thereby retaining a geostrategic advantage over RVN/RVNAF.
  - c. The punishment suffered by the DRV in Linebacker I and II was severe, but they were able to stop their losses by agreeing to the ceasefire at a time when their other objectives became achievable.
  - d. The ceasefire made it possible to reopen the strategic lines of communication overland from China and through Haiphong port, thereby facilitating replenishment of supply and materiel losses during the Linebacker campaigns.
4. Agreeing to the ceasefire records assured the DRV that US forces would leave RVN and leave the field to them.

# THE BDM CORPORATION



4541/78W

Figure A-16. Decision XVI: US Congressional Decision To Cut US Military Assistance to RVN to \$700 Million



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### XVI. CONGRESSIONAL VOTE TO CUT MILITARY SPENDING IN SOUTH VIETNAM 60/

A. Decision. The House and the Senate vote to reduce military aid to RVN to \$700 million (Sept. 1974) and not to grant supplemental aid (April 1975).

1. When: September 1974 and April 1975.
2. Principal Decision Makers: Congress as decision maker. Key proponents: Fulbright, Mansfield, Muskie, over opposition of Ford, Kissinger.
3. Purpose: The decisions were intended to reduce dramatically US involvement in a conflict for which military solutions no longer appeared viable. The US involvement in Vietnam was becoming less and less popular for political and economic reasons and Congress wanted to take a greater part in decision making.
4. Theme: The executive's "Peace with Honor" had become "Get Out Now" in Congress (due to the growing antiwar sentiment in Congress). These actions mark the beginning of an isolationist/non-involvement trend, reducing US military involvement overseas in favor of taking care of the home front.
  - a. The actions also signal congressional reemergence as a powerful decision maker in foreign affairs, an area formerly dominated by the executive branch.
  - b. Economic and military withdrawal constitute a new theme, contrary to our pledges to Thieu at the time of the Paris Peace Agreements.

B. Precedents.

1. 30 June 1973 - Congress voted to cut off all funds for US military activity in Indochina region after August 15, 1973.
2. 7 November 1973 - Enactment of the War Powers Resolution provided Congress greater oversight authority vis a vis US military involvement abroad. While not a direct precedent to the September 1974 congressional move to drastically cut funds, the action is consonant with the trends and themes discussed above.
3. 3 April 1974 - Senate Armed Services Committee voted not to increase aid to Vietnam beyond current levels; the trend had

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been \$2.27 billion for fiscal 1973, \$1.010 billion for fiscal 1974 and \$700 million for fiscal 1975.

4. 5 August 1974 - Senate/House Conference agreed to impose \$1 billion ceiling on all military aid for the next 11 months. Nixon signs into law.

C. Options. This Congressional decision came at a time when the country was in turmoil due to Nixon's resignation a month earlier. Thus, while members of the executive branch favored providing increased aid to RVN, they could gain little support for their views.

D. Influential Factors

1. Foreign:

- a. Oct 1973 Middle East war and oil embargo.
- b. The Middle East situation was taking up much of Kissinger's time and attention. Earlier in 1974, he had, through "shuttle diplomacy," achieved military disengagement accords between Israel and Syria, and Israel and Egypt.
- c. The Cyprus crisis had erupted.
- d. The US was pursuing detente with the USSR and PRC.

2. Domestic:

- a. Direct Factor - strong antiwar sentiment among the US people and within Congress (antiwar protests) and feelings reflecting a "why can't they fight their own war?" stance.
- b. Indirect Factor - Because the Watergate hearings were beginning and John Dean's testimony was incriminating President Nixon, the power of the presidency was reduced.
- c. Direct - Worsening US economic situation and public weariness with US involvement in Vietnam encouraged Congress to move toward withdrawal of US economic aid to RVN.
- d. Indirect Factor - Nixon resigns.

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### E. Effect of Decision on US Involvement in Vietnam.

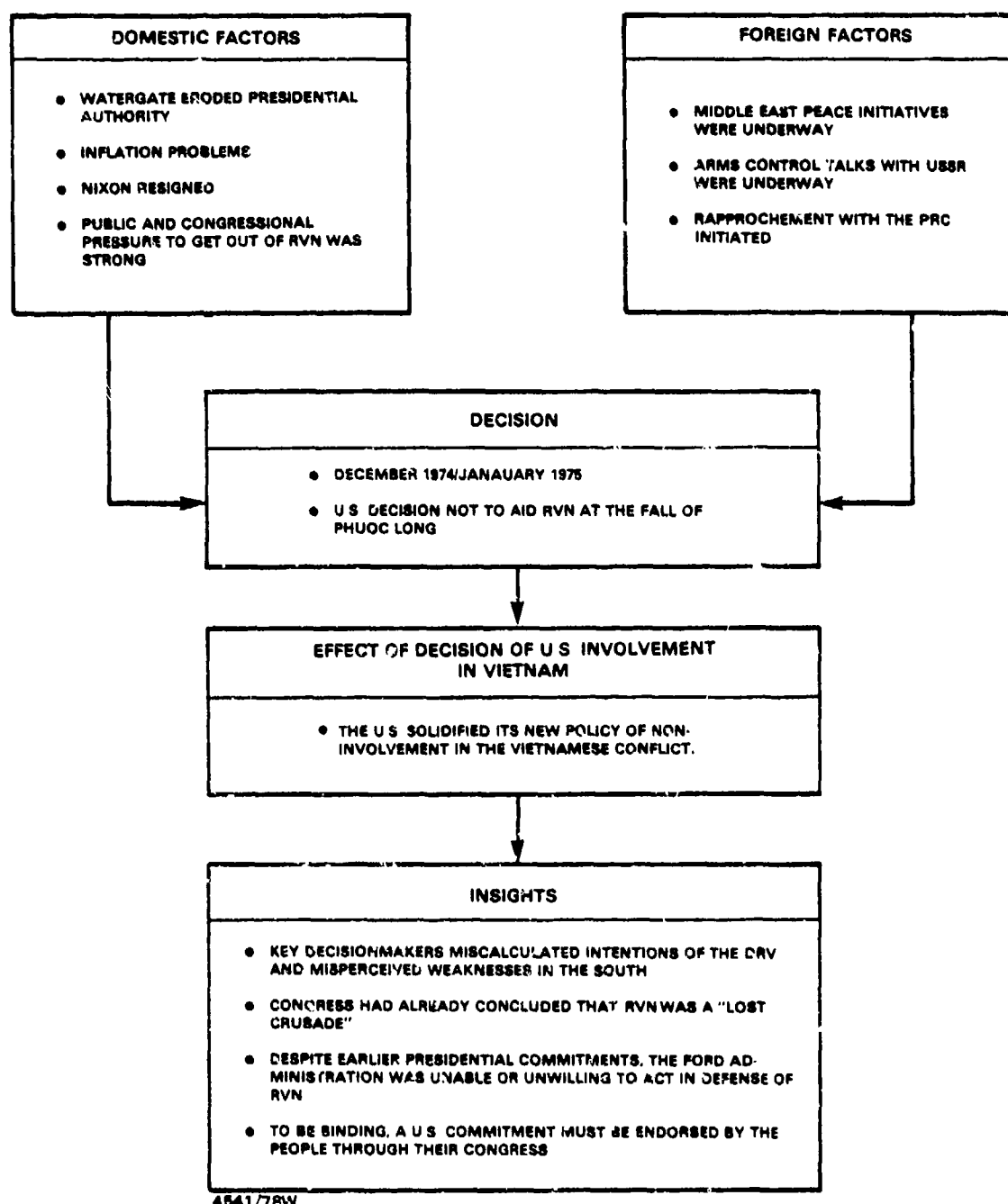
1. Severe reduction of US economic and military support. This decision was a key point in US economic withdrawal from RVN (military withdrawal had already taken place).
2. The oil embargo and high inflation caused the \$700 million US aid to become worth even less.

### F. Effectiveness of Decision. The decisions were a continuation of a trend of withdrawal of economic support to RVN to which Congress adhered. Thus, the purpose of the decisions--withdrawal of US involvement--was achieved. Additional effects, unintended though they were, include the creation of ammunition, POL, and equipment shortages, and a further weakening of morale among RVNAF troops and the population of RVN.61/

### G. Insights.

1. The Vietnam conflict had no popular support in the US and Congress responded to popular sentiments by imposing itself as decision maker.
2. At the same time, the power and influence of the presidency were lessened due to the effects of Watergate.
3. The rapidly decreasing support for RVN seriously weakened RVNAF's military posture while PAVN grew stronger.

## THE BDM CORPORATION



4541/78V

Figure A-17. Decision XVII: US Decision Not to Aid RVN at the Fall of Phuoc Long

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### XVII. US DECISION NOT TO AID SOUTH VIETNAM'S DEFENSE OF PHUOC LONG PROVINCE 62/

A. Decision. The US decided against intervening on behalf of the South Vietnamese at the time of the DRV attack on Phuoc Long. Although the US entered its diplomatic protests, it refrained from sending ground/air materiel and support to South Vietnam as the attack was underway and following the fall of the province. This decision was taken in spite of Nixon's secret assurance to Thieu in November 1972 and January 1973 that, should the North violate the cease-fire in a major way, the US could be counted on to react with force. These assurances were provided to Thieu through two personal letters from President Nixon. 63/

1. When: December 1974/January 1975
2. Principal Decision Makers: Congress as decision maker, opposed by President Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger.
3. Purpose: Adherence to US commitment to withdrawal
4. Themes: RVN must fight its own war and US must withdraw. The broad themes of US withdrawal and deescalation were present in the late 1960s and early 1970s. However, there were differences of opinion in Congress and the Ford administration as to how fast the US should withdraw. President Ford and Dr. Kissinger felt that the US should continue to provide financial support for the purchase of military equipment and supplies for the country to buy time for a "decent interval." Kissinger and Ford were still concerned with the issue of American prestige and image. Kissinger's statement raises this point. "I believe, and the Administration believes, that if Vietnam falls as a result of an American decision to cut off its aid, that this will have, over a period of time, the most serious consequences for the conduct of our foreign policy... it must raise the gravest doubts in the minds of many countries that have been associated with us ...." (February 25, 1975). 64/ Congress, however, took the view that Vietnam would have to make it on its own as there was no public support for further aid.

#### B. Precedents

1. Paris Peace Agreement - 27 January 1973 signed by the US called for a reduction of US presence in the region.
2. Both sides violated the truce by "planting flags" in claimed territory. In fact DRV stepped up its infiltration of men and equipment to the South - despite this, US responses were light in view of the offense. While at first the US

## THE BDM CORPORATION

embarked on a bombing campaign to punish the North for its violations, the Congress reacted strongly and the bombing was halted. Harsh words characterized the level of US responses to violations by the North.

3. June 1973 - Congress passed a bill curtailing all military action by US forces in or over Indochina; Nixon, disapproving of the measure, negotiated to delay the effective date until 15 August 1973.
4. October/November 1973 - Congress passed the War Powers Resolution limiting the president's traditional freedom of action with regard to employment of armed forces. Congress overrode the presidential veto and the Resolution became law PL93-148.
5. Congressional aid cuts as described in Decision XVI.

### C. Options.

1. Intervention by the US was the option not taken. While the US sent the aircraft carrier Enterprise to the Vietnamese coast and ordered the Third US Marine Division (located in Okinawa) to emergency alert, no military action was taken. Defense Secretary Schlesinger is reported to have said that this (Phuoc Long attack) was not a massive offensive by the North and could be ignored.<sup>65/</sup>
2. A second range of options concerned the provision of additional financial assistance in order to buoy RVN up while it was fighting the North. The Ford administration in January 1975 announced that it would ask Congress for additional military aid for the region, to include supplemental aid of \$300 million for RVN. This was followed on February 8, 1975, by Ford's endorsement of the idea that the US embark on a massive aid program to RVN such that the country might be "economically independent" within three years.

### D. Influential Factors.

#### 1. Foreign:

- a. By 1975, the US was preoccupied with achieving a peace settlement in the Middle East and Kissinger, in particular, as the link from Nixon's administration to Ford's, was consumed by step-by-step diplomatic maneuvers.
- b. US progress in achieving rapprochement with the USSR (SALT talks etc.) and the PRC could not be jeopardized.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### 2. Domestic:

- a. Watergate had seriously eroded Presidential authority. Nixon had resigned, and Congress took actions to insure that all activities to be conducted by the US in RVN required Congressional authorization.
- b. There was tremendous public pressure (reflected in public opinion polls, protests) to extricate ourselves from the Vietnamese conflict region. Kent State University, May 1974, and other protests demonstrated the fervor of public commitment to stay out of Vietnam.
- c. The US economy suffered from severe inflation.

E. Effect of Decision on US Involvement in Vietnam. Having stepped aside while the North took and held an entire province of the South, the US signalled its total disengagement from the war. The decision lent credibility to the US withdrawal effort. The decision had a very clear impact on the North as it indicated that the US would not/could not intervene in the South. The attack on Phuoc Long is described as a "trial balloon" attack by the North, and the effect on the North was immediate. Le Duan stated, "The world supports us. Never before have the military and political conditions been more propitious."

F. Effectiveness of Decision. With US intervention no longer likely, the North felt unhindered in its attack on the South.

### G. Insights.

1. The key US decision makers, particularly Congress, may have seriously miscalculated the intentions of the North and the weaknesses of the Southern defense.
2. Governments cannot be counted on to adhere to a peace treaty if they feel that their aims have not been met. Kissinger may have misjudged the sincerity of the DRV or he may have believed that the treaty was the best that could be accomplished given the situation.
3. US commitments to its allies must be made according to the probability for their realization. President Nixon's promises to Thieu were not realistic given Congressional attitudes at the time and Congressional limitations on presidential power.

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## APPENDIX A ENDNOTES

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7. Ibid., p. 345.
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10. General Matthew Ridgway, Soldier (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1956).
11. Sources for this decision included the following:  
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12. Ibid., Book 10, pp. 709-713, 676-741.
13. Ibid., Book 8, p 731.
14. Sources for this decision included the following:  
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15. See DOD US/VN Relations, pp. 419-421, NSAM 52: Decision to send CIA for covert harrassment of DRV and the November 10, 1961 decision to commit a US Air Force Counterinsurgency unit.
16. DOD US/VN Relations, Book 11, p. 343.
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64. Goodman, Epigraph II (Preface).

65. Dung, pp. 6-7.

APPENDIX B  
SUPPLEMENTAL DATA TO CHAPTER 3: BIOGRAPHICAL  
INFORMATION ON KEY US VIETNAM DECISION MAKERS,  
1945-1975, THEIR BACKGROUNDS AND BIASES

The information included herein is intended as a supplement to Chapter 3, "Washington and Vietnam: US National Level Policy Makers and the Policy-Making Process." The appendix is divided by the six post-WWII presidential administrations; for each administration five or six key US Vietnam decision makers are discussed. These biographical sketches are not intended to be exhaustive studies of each particular decision maker's background, personality, and individual biases. Moreover, the selection of the key Vietnam decision makers is not definitive or exhaustive. In each of the administrations discussed in Chapter 3, a graphic overview of other important Vietnam decision makers is included. Those chosen appeared to have been the key US decision makers involved in major US policy making regarding Vietnam. The sources used in compiling Appendix B appear in the Volume III Bibliography. In addition, direct citations appear in the endnote section for Appendix B.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### APPENDIX B KEY DECISION MAKERS

#### A. KEY DECISION MAKERS WITHIN THE TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION

The Truman administration's most influential decision makers involved in Vietnam-related matters included President Harry S. Truman, Under Secretary of State (later, Secretary of State) Dean Acheson, Secretary of State (later, Secretary of Defense) George Marshall, Mr. George M. Abbott - the US Consul General in Saigon, and Deputy Undersecretary of State (later, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs) Dean Rusk. In addition to the above individuals, whose roles and influence will be discussed below, other important advisers involved in early Vietnam decision making appeared in Chapter 3, Figure 3-1, a graphic representation of the decision makers' positions within the administration.

##### 1. President Harry Truman

Harry Truman assumed the presidency on April 12, 1945, upon the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Although he had been aware of Roosevelt's deteriorating health, Truman was initially overwhelmed and ill at ease in the presidency.<sup>1/</sup> As vice president, he had participated only marginally in high-level decision making.<sup>2/</sup> With the passage of time, his familiarity with foreign affairs grew and he came to share the views held by many of his top-level advisers that communist aggression was a Moscow-inspired and directed operation, bent on consuming all of Europe and Asia.<sup>3/</sup> His famous speech of 1947, concerning aid to Greece and Turkey, set the stage for containing communism by offers of US military and economic assistance to the newer and hence weaker countries of the world.<sup>4/</sup> Known as the Truman Doctrine, this policy was broadly applied by President Truman and his administration; Vietnam, for example, was given US aid based on this doctrine.

##### 2. George Marshall

General George Marshall, Truman's third Secretary of State, was praised by the president for his outstanding leadership abilities.<sup>5/</sup> Prior



## THE BDM CORPORATION

to succeeding Secretary Byrnes, General Marshall headed a mission to China in an effort to reconcile nationalist and communist forces. His experiences in China helped shape his understanding of communism and nationalism in the post-war environment; his personal statement to the president upon returning from his year-long mission in January 1947, revealed both his concern about the Chinese Communist Party's activities and his understanding of communism as a possible vehicle for the expression of nationalist sentiments.<sup>6/</sup>

As Secretary of State, Marshall's first mission was to discuss with the Soviet leaders the problem of Germany's reunification. His failure to reach an acceptable agreement with the Soviet leaders stimulated his disdain for the USSR and its policies regarding Eastern Europe. The general's most significant contribution was his plan for European economic recovery; the Marshall Plan became a basis for policy toward areas outside of the European community, including Indochina.

As Secretary of State, his views on Indochina and on Vietnam, in particular, opposed France's colonialist posture. But he also considered French presence in the area more desirable than Moscow's.<sup>7/</sup> During his tenure, Secretary Marshall promoted political - economic solutions for Vietnam as a way to reduce communist influence, prevent Chinese communist penetration, and promote the establishment of an independent and free Vietnam.<sup>8/</sup>

### 3. Dean Acheson

Prior to his appointment as Secretary of State, Dean Acheson served as Undersecretary of State, a position which afforded him ample exposure to the complexities of the post-war environment. Although the administration focused its primary attention on the reconstruction of Europe,<sup>9/</sup> Mr. Acheson also dealt extensively with Asian affairs. He was instrumental in arranging independence for the Philippines, assisted in the resolution of the Thai-French border disputes of 1946, and urged the English to allow for Burma's "peaceful transition to self-government."<sup>10/</sup>

Secretary Acheson placed great hopes on the building of a strong and free international order.<sup>11/</sup> US military strength, security arrangements such as NATO, and an economically viable Europe would contribute to

## THE BDM CORPORATION

the realization of this goal. With the defeat of the nationalist forces in China, however, the Truman administration came under heavy domestic criticism for losing an ally to communism. Secretary Acheson sought to explain the loss, vowing that, barring direct military intervention which the US public would never have tolerated, the Truman administration had done all that was feasible to "save" China.<sup>12/</sup> Acheson concluded from the Chinese experience that no amount of US military and economic aid could save a government, even if it was recognized by all other major powers and had the full opportunity to achieve its national aims, unless, as he wrote to the American Consulate in Hanoi in May 1949, it could rally the support of the people against the communists by "affording representation" to all important national groups, "manifesting devotion to national as opposed to personal or party interests," and "demonstrating real leadership."<sup>13/</sup> When pressed by Vietnamese opinion that "US abandonment" of Nationalist China presented an "unfavorable augury" for any noncommunist regime in Vietnam, Acheson stressed that Nationalist China met its fate because of deficiencies in the above qualities and the lack of a will to fight, not because the US "wrote it off."<sup>14/</sup>

By 1949, Acheson had become fully convinced that Ho Chi Minh was a full fledged Communist. <sup>15/</sup> Although he was confronted with the possibility that Ho might be a nationalist, he questioned the relevance of that possibility, given Ho's background. According to Acheson, in his abbreviated-style cable to the American Consulate in Hanoi:

All Stalinists in colonial areas are nationalists. With achievement national aims (i.e., independence) their objective necessarily becomes subordination state to Commie purposes and ruthless extermination not only opposition groups but all elements suspected even slightest deviation. On basis examples eastern Europe it must be assumed such wld be goal Ho and men... <sup>16/</sup>

#### 4. George M. Abbott

George Abbott, who served with the US Embassy in France and then as US Consul General in Saigon, provided the Truman administration with an in-country perspective of French-Vietnamese relations and assessments of

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Ho Chi Minh. In 1946, at the request of the US Ambassador to France, Jefferson Caffery, he met with Ho and found the Vietnamese leader desirous of US aid, urging such assistance as beneficial to both the US and his own fledgling government.<sup>17/</sup> Despite Abbott's early interaction with Ho his communications with the Truman administration in 1948-1949 indicated his belief that Ho was a communist agent of Moscow who would eventually establish a "New Democratic Republic" in Southeast Asia. The only recourse for deterring such a development, he believed, was US recognition of the Bao Dai government.<sup>18/</sup> His assessments proved to be influential in the administration's policy regarding Vietnam.

### 5. Dean Rusk

The role of Deputy Undersecretary of State Dean Rusk in the Truman administration's Vietnam decision making deserves mention because his line of thinking as developed in the late 1940's and early 1950's was later drawn upon during his service with Presidents Kennedy and Johnson.<sup>19/</sup> As Deputy Undersecretary and as Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs, Mr. Rusk maintained that the US should halt communist aggression in Southeast Asia. In addition to promoting US economic assistance, Rusk urged the JCS to reassess the need for deploying US "resources" in Indochina to prevent the loss of the region which, in his view, was "the most strategically important area of Southeast Asia."<sup>20/</sup>

## B. KEY DECISION MAKERS WITHIN THE EISENHOWER ADMINISTRATION

In decisions concerning Vietnam, two individuals had central roles: President Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. Among the host of individuals involved in the decision-making process, two others had important roles: Under Secretary of State and Chairman of the President's Special Committee on Indochina, General Walter Bedell Smith, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Arthur Radford. In addition to these key officials, whose background and policy recommendations will be discussed below, a large number of senior advisers assisted these key decision makers. Their positions were highlighted in Chapter 3, Figure 3-2, a schematic overview of the Eisenhower administration's high-level personnel.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### 1. President Dwight D. Eisenhower

President Eisenhower was at the center of the decision-making process on national-security issues. Eisenhower's experience as Commander of Allied Forces during World War II and his subsequent service as Supreme Allied Commander in Europe made him uniquely familiar with political, economic, and military factors involved in national and multinational security. His military background also gave him a predisposition for arriving at decisions through careful, painstaking staff studies.<sup>21/</sup>

President Eisenhower was convinced of the validity of the "domino theory" in Southeast Asia. He believed that if Indochina fell, "not only Thailand but Burma and Malaya would be threatened, with added risks to East Pakistan and South Asia as well as to all Indonesia."<sup>22/</sup> President Eisenhower also shared three important perceptions with other members of the policy-making establishment: belief in the monolithic nature of communism, belief that "Ho Chi Minh was, of course, a hard-core Communist," and belief that the First Indochina War was a "clear case of freedom defending itself from communist aggression."<sup>23/</sup>

### 2. John Foster Dulles

Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, the chief foreign policy adviser, enjoyed an influence with Eisenhower that was unequalled in the Washington bureaucracy. Dulles had been the principal architect of the Republican Party's "roll back" platform of 1952, and his vehement anti-communist orientation during his years as Secretary of State has been thoroughly recorded by historians.<sup>24/</sup> Less well recorded is Dulles's antipathy for colonialism. In his words,

Colonialism is the American dilemma. Our foreign policy is squeezed between our opposition to colonialism which in any event is inevitably passing, and our ties to the colonial powers with whom we are linked in the Atlantic alliance. We must be the mediator between the European colonial powers and the people struggling for independence.<sup>25/</sup>

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Dulles was particularly disturbed by French colonial policies in Indochina. He deplored what he considered to be the venal readiness of the French government to establish commercial relations with the Viet Minh, and believed that if Vietnam was to survive as a bulwark against the expansion of international communism in Asia, the French would have to declare their intention to grant the Associated States full independence after (what later came to be called) the First Indochina War.26/

Dulles was a man of exceptional intellectual power and purpose, and he insisted on maintaining a strictly personal and private line to President Eisenhower.27/ Dulles concentrated on the making of policy. He had no interest in administering the Department of State, which he left to his subordinates.28/ His ideas on policy were largely self-developed; he used his subordinates to produce only minor refinements.29/ In addition, probably as a result of his own observation of the disastrous veto of the League of Nations by the US Senate, Dulles was extremely sensitive to public and particularly congressional opinion, which was reflected in a steady collaboration between the executive and legislative branches during his tenure as Secretary of State.30/ This collaboration was clearly evinced during the Vietnam crisis over Dien Bien Phu.

### 3. Arthur Radford

President Eisenhower, a military expert in his own right, turned to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, particularly the Chairman, Admiral Radford, for advice on military policy, and not to Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson. Radford had served previously as Commander of the Pacific Fleet and claimed expertise in Asian affairs.31/ Like Eisenhower and Dulles, Radford was zealous in his anticommunism.32/ This anticommunist posture led him to argue for military intervention in Indochina. However, his repeated arguments for military intervention at Dien Bien Phu were countered by other members of the Joint Chiefs, particularly Army Chief of Staff, General Matthew Ridgway.

### 4. Walter Bedell Smith

More influential than Admiral Radford in Vietnam decision making was Under Secretary of State, General Walter Bedell Smith. Smith was a

## THE BDM CORPORATION

longtime personal friend of Eisenhower's. He had served as General Eisenhower's wartime Chief of Staff, and later served with distinction as US Ambassador to the Soviet Union and Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. According to Eisenhower, Smith's statesmanlike "tact and understanding were remarkable to those who had known him only through his reputation in the Army as a tough and rigid taskmaster."<sup>33/</sup> Smith's background and personality were well suited for his role in the Dien Bien Phu crisis, which was to help initiate discussions with Britain, France, Australia and New Zealand, in the hope of arranging "united action" against the communist forces at Dien Bien Phu.

### C. KEY DECISION MAKERS WITHIN THE KENNEDY ADMINISTRATION

President John Kennedy's commitment to a creative, action-oriented foreign policy was reflected in his choice of advisers. The men most influential in Vietnam decision making -- Robert McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, Dean Rusk, Maxwell Taylor, and Walt Rostow had in common intellectual, scholarly backgrounds and an eagerness to employ their expertise within the dynamic environment provided by the new President.<sup>34/</sup> Figure 3-3, appearing in Chapter 3, provides a graphic representation of the positions held by the above advisers as well as those of other important individuals in the Kennedy administration.

#### 1. President John F. Kennedy

Four experiences in President Kennedy's past significantly influenced his decisions relating to Vietnam. First, as the son of the US Ambassador to Great Britain, Kennedy witnessed the diplomatic developments in Europe leading to World War II. He returned to Harvard to write his thesis on the appeasement at Munich, later published as Why England Slept. Kennedy's understanding of the consequences of that appeasement helped determine his perception that security for any country rested on a superior military force and the will to use it. Moreover, he learned the uniqueness of the situation that led to the Munich tragedy. Unlike other post-war presidents, he did not equate the situation in Vietnam with Hitler's attack

## THE BDM CORPORATION

on Czechoslovakia. Rather he considered the Vietnam conflict to be a civil war, involving insurgent forces led by Ho Chi Minh, which would be won by the side that offered the Vietnamese people the most in terms of freedom to choose their political leaders, security, and nation-building programs. He stressed the importance of politico-military, counterinsurgency operations to help resolve the conflict.<sup>35/</sup> Second, as a US Senator, Kennedy made two trips to South Vietnam and undertook a concerted study of Vietnam's problems; as a result, he believed that a prerequisite to defeating communism in Vietnam was the development of a viable, nationalist government.<sup>36/</sup> For Kennedy, support of Diem was a method for achieving this goal. He did not believe that the indigenous communist movement led by Ho Chi Minh represented the people's aspirations for independence and national self-determination. Third, Kennedy reacted strongly to Khrushchev's speech on "wars of national liberation," delivered a month before Kennedy assumed the presidency. Viewing this speech as a direct challenge to the free world and his administration, the president-elect steeled his resolve to make a clear showing of US strength in Vietnam. Fourth, in light of his perception of the Korean experience, Kennedy was determined to prevent US involvement in another protracted land war in Asia. Shortly before his presidential inauguration, he was again warned of the dangers of such involvement in a special briefing by General Douglas MacArthur. This briefing made a lasting impression on the young President.<sup>37/</sup>

### 2. Robert McNamara

President Kennedy's closest adviser on Vietnam was his Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara. McNamara was highly skilled in the art of bureaucratic management, gaining much of his expertise from services with the Ford Motor Company. He managed the Defense Department like a business, utilizing quantitative techniques of systems analysis to gain maximum cost-effectiveness. His management ability and his extraordinarily retentive mind impressed President Kennedy; as a result, McNamara gained unprecedented influence in the formulation of US military policy. Since this influence was sometimes seen as infringing on the province of the military professionals who often perceived McNamara and his staff as arrogant,

## THE BDM CORPORATION

inexperienced civilians capable of overruling their expert advice, there was resentment towards McNamara and his role.38/

In the area of military policy, Secretary McNamara was instrumental in developing a greatly increased nuclear capability. In addition, he emphasized programs for the improvement of US conventional warfare capabilities.39/ McNamara advocated politico-military solutions for the insurgency problem in Vietnam and, in October 1961, urged the sending of combat forces to South Vietnam to prevent its loss to communism.40/

### 3. McGeorge Bundy

McGeorge Bundy, Kennedy's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, also exerted considerable influence in the White House; like McNamara, he was extremely intelligent and an able administrator. Bundy sought to clarify options for the President; his efficiency in delegating responsibility to his own staff and in eliciting response and cooperation from others aided the development of these options.41/ In contrast to his predecessors under Truman and Eisenhower, whose functions were predominately administrative, Bundy and his staff enjoyed considerable influence in the formulation of national security policy.42/

### 4. Dean Rusk

Secretary of State Dean Rusk, a low-key Southern gentleman, deferred to Secretary McNamara on matters relating to Vietnam, despite his expertise in Asian affairs,43/ Secretary Rusk did, however, provide a historical dimension to Vietnam decision making, having served as Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs in the Truman administration.

President Kennedy was disappointed that Rusk failed to develop imaginative, dynamic solutions to problems in Vietnam,44/ yet, Rusk, perhaps in deference to Mr. Kennedy's ambition to be his own Secretary of State, never sought to be the president's alter ego in foreign policy.45/ While he maintained a close, personal line to the president, he realized he had other duties to fulfill, including constant interaction with other governmental departments involved in the formulation of US foreign policy.46/ Secretary Rusk was strongly anticommunist, and was especially convinced that Communist China was responsible for the turmoil in Vietnam.



## THE BDM CORPORATION

### 5. Maxwell Taylor

General Maxwell Taylor had impressed Mr. Kennedy with his criticism in The Uncertain Trumpet of the Eisenhower administration's strategy of massive retaliation. Taylor advocated a strategy of "flexible response," which emphasized capabilities for responding to limited wars with conventional forces and weaponry. When President Kennedy's confidence in the advice of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was diminished by the experience of the Bay of Pigs, he created a new position in his administration, Special Military Representative to the President, and appointed General Taylor to fill this post.<sup>47/</sup> Taylor argued for political and administrative reforms and counterinsurgency operations in South Vietnam. In his view, US military support should include the conventional bombing of North Vietnam; but as a determined advocate of the "never again" school, <sup>48/</sup> he did not favor the use of American ground combat forces unless such a step became absolutely necessary. He helped establish and chaired the Special Group for Counterinsurgency to discuss ways of meeting the threat of insurgency warfare, especially as exported across national borders.<sup>49/</sup> According to Taylor, this group assured recognition throughout the government "that subversive insurgency was a political-military conflict equal in importance to conventional warfare."<sup>50/</sup> In October 1962, General Taylor was appointed Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and served in that capacity until July 1964.

### 6. Walt Rostow

Walt Rostow, formerly a professor of economics, served as McGeorge Bundy's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs early in the Kennedy administration. Rostow was influential in developing the Counterinsurgency Plan (CIP).<sup>51/</sup> In addition, he was the first of Kennedy's advisers to deal closely with Vietnam-related matters, heading a White House task force in February 1961, which kept a close watch on developments in Laos and Vietnam.<sup>52/</sup> Yet President Kennedy, while impressed with Mr. Rostow's creativity, became suspicious of his judgment on questions concerning the use of military force. Rostow had been one of the most vociferous advocates of the bombing of North Vietnam and of using

## THE BDM CORPORATION

US combat forces in the South. President Kennedy consistently rejected that advice, believing that Vietnam was primarily a political conflict which required counterinsurgency efforts, advisers, and aid. After a few months in office, President Kennedy appointed Mr. Rostow Chairman of the State Department's Policy Planning Council, thereby moving him from the White House to a somewhat less powerful, "safer" position more suited to his creative approach to policy making.<sup>53/</sup> In this position, Mr. Rostow put his professional economic talents to use in planning programs for the economic development of Third World countries.<sup>54/</sup>

### D. KEY DECISION MAKERS WITHIN THE JOHNSON ADMINISTRATION

Johnson's continuity in Vietnam policy sprang not only from his own background and preconceptions but also from the fact that he kept many of President Kennedy's Cabinet and White House Staff members as advisers. Although Dean Rusk was the only major Vietnam adviser to remain in the Johnson Administration until Johnson left office in January 1969, several of Kennedy's top-level advisers, such as Robert McNamara and Walt Rostow, McGeorge Bundy's replacement,<sup>55/</sup> continued to serve Johnson for the majority of his presidential tenure. The positions of these and other important advisers appeared in Chapter 3, Figure 3-4, an overview of the Johnson administration.

#### 1. President Lyndon B. Johnson

Three major factors influenced President Johnson's Vietnam decisions. First, as a Democrat who had lived through the "loss" of China and the McCarthy era, he believed strongly that he must not be "soft" on communism or "lose" South Vietnam to communists.<sup>56/</sup> Second, his previous experience in the Congress, particularly as Senate Majority Leader, had taught him the value of achieving consensus, often to the detriment of minority views, by squelching all debate.<sup>57/</sup> His desire to reason together and achieve consensus on Vietnam policy was reflected in his special "Tuesday lunch group" meetings where representatives from various departments and agencies met regularly to discuss most actions relating to

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Vietnam. Based on this rationale, Johnson believed that every man could be bargained with, including Ho Chi Minh, and that a strategy of gradual escalation in Vietnam provided the US with bargaining leverage at a reasonable cost to the United States.<sup>58/</sup> Third, President Johnson, whose great strength lay in the area of domestic politics, was fundamentally insecure when dealing in foreign affairs. This insecurity was reflected in his attitude toward key advisers on Vietnam policy. Those who disagreed with his basic objective of preventing the loss of South Vietnam to the communist forces, or with his strategies for achieving that objective, were often excluded from high-level decision making.<sup>59/</sup>

### 2. Robert McNamara

President Johnson described Robert McNamara as "the ablest man I've ever met." Johnson was awed by McNamara's facility with statistics, and strongly supported McNamara's systems-analysis approach to military questions concerning Vietnam.<sup>60/</sup> As Johnson's Secretary of Defense, McNamara continued to advocate a broad range of political and economic, as well as military actions to prevent the "loss" of South Vietnam. He also advocated bombing restrictions which caused considerable consternation within the JCS.<sup>61/</sup> By late 1967, McNamara was disillusioned about US involvement in Vietnam, and he began to press for deescalation.<sup>62/</sup> This position ran counter to Johnson's instincts and stated policy, causing the President to lose confidence in his Secretary of Defense.<sup>63/</sup> Clark Clifford replaced McNamara as Secretary of Defense one month after the Tet '68 Offensive abated and one day after President Johnson announced his decision not to run for reelection.

### 3. McGeorge Bundy

Like McNamara, McGeorge Bundy was retained by President Johnson as a close adviser after Kennedy's death. Bundy continued to serve as Special Assistant for National Security Affairs until 1966, when he resigned to become President of The Ford Foundation. This decision to leave the administration allegedly stemmed from his dissatisfaction with Johnson's overall approach to policy formulation and not from a softening of his own position regarding the war.<sup>64/</sup> Until that time, Bundy had

## THE BDM CORPORATION

supported military solutions, including the bombing of North Vietnam and the use of ground forces, partly because he believed that the United States, as a superpower, had the responsibility for resisting communist aggression.<sup>65/</sup> and partly because he believed that a strong US presence in Southeast Asia was needed in order to maintain the credibility of American defense commitments with other allies. He had been deeply moved by his official trips to Vietnam, during which he saw the consequences of terrorist actions by Vietnamese communist forces.<sup>66/</sup> President Johnson was impressed with Bundy's knowledge of foreign affairs and relied on his advice as a member of the Tuesday Lunch Group.

### 4. Dean Rusk

Dean Rusk continued as Secretary of State throughout President Johnson's term of office. His continued service was a testament to his unswerving loyalty to the president as much as it was to the quality of his stewardship.<sup>67/</sup> Johnson greatly prized and rewarded loyalty; at times this tendency caused him to confuse dissent with disloyalty.<sup>68/</sup> Rusk believed that Communist China was bent on consuming the "free world" and that the Soviet Union and China constituted a monolithic communist power structure despite contrary evidence from his subordinates. By 1968, however, it appears Rusk did acknowledge that the monolithic view of communism was an outmoded concept.<sup>69/</sup>

### 5. Clark Clifford

Clark Clifford succeeded McNamara as Secretary of Defense in March 1968. His long-time personal friendship with President Johnson and his reputation for anticommunism, established while serving as an adviser to President Truman, endowed him with important credentials. These factors enhanced his influence when advocating a reversal of Johnson's Vietnam policy in the spring of 1968. Johnson could, therefore, not suspect him of being "soft" on communism. However, as Clifford geared up for his new responsibilities as Secretary of Defense, he realized that support for Johnson's war policies had waned substantially. Armed with his Task Force's findings, he conveyed to Johnson that the administration must seek a new course. Johnson's reaction to Clifford's appraisal was apparently

## THE BDM CORPORATION

one of dismay; Clifford's coming aboard was to have been a means of reestablishing solid group harmony, and then, as Clifford himself stated, "this Judas appeared."<sup>70</sup>/ Clifford stayed on in the administration serving as one of the President's more influential advisers bent on reassessing US policy regarding Vietnam.

### 6. Walt Rostow

Walt Rostow is noteworthy because, as Bundy's successor in 1966, he became a highly influential advocate of the bombing and use of ground forces in Vietnam. He was a continuous supporter of a hard-line position in Vietnam, founded on decisive military action. Even more than Rusk, Mr. Rostow was a vehement anticommunist.<sup>71</sup>/ His close proximity to Johnson in 1966, after his exile in the State Department, is believed to have been largely responsible for Johnson's excessive optimism concerning the progress of the war.<sup>72</sup>/ Rostow has been described as having a penchant for "mind-guarding" and for the "cleansing" of incoming intelligence, when he served as Special Assistant for National Security Affairs.

## E. KEY DECISION MAKERS WITHIN THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION

Of the individuals who served in the Nixon administration, those that played the most significant roles in overall Vietnam decision making included President Nixon, Henry Kissinger, Melvin Laird and William Rogers. In addition to these key officials, whose backgrounds and policy recommendations will be discussed below, a large number of senior advisers assisted these key decisionmakers. Their positions are highlighted in Chapter 3, Figure 3-5, a schematic overview of the Nixon administration's high-level personnel.

### 1. President Richard M. Nixon

Two significant factors which influenced President Nixon's approach to international affairs were belief in the importance of a strong posture towards communism and belief in the necessity of a centralized, personal foreign policy. Nixon's views on communism coalesced during his tenure as vice president under President Dwight Eisenhower. From his

## THE BDM CORPORATION

experiences during the Korean war era, he came to appreciate the use of force as potential tool for eliciting desired diplomatic responses. By the time he became president, Nixon had developed a reputation as a hard-liner capable of potent anticommunist rhetoric. But he also was pragmatic in his approach to foreign policy, and appreciated the opportunity to initiate detente with the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China.

This major shift in US foreign relations stemmed from President Nixon's belief that the Vietnam war could be terminated favorably if the US made use of the tensions which existed between Peking and Moscow. The promotion of peace in Vietnam and detente with the Soviet Union and the PRC were the Nixon administration's top priorities. They were to be accomplished via linkage politics, a strategy which Nixon and Kissinger strongly endorsed. In short, the administration's linkage policy combined Kissinger's theories on power balancing with Nixon's belief that the Soviet Union held the key to peace in Vietnam.<sup>73/</sup> In essence, linkage was a form of diplomatic barter: the Soviet Union, for example, would reap US credit in return for cooperation in reducing the tensions in Southeast Asia. The realization of this goal was to be accomplished by means of personal diplomacy, which both Nixon and Kissinger practiced extensively.

President Nixon had a penchant for privacy which was clearly evident in his decision-making style. When making decisions, he generally pigeonholed himself in his office with notepad and pencil, ultimately making all final decisions in private. His penchant for privacy at times bordered on secrecy; his fear of leaks and antipathy towards the press tended only to increase this tendency.

### 2. Henry Kissinger

In Henry Kissinger, Nixon found a man who promoted an approach to foreign affairs which he advocated and admired. Their working relationships as President and Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (and later, as Secretary of State) was extremely close -- based on a rare compatability of mind and temperament.<sup>74/</sup>

Henry Kissinger's centralized approach to decision making and his preference for linkage diplomacy stand out as the two major features of his

## THE BDM CORPORATION

overall approach to foreign policy. His preference for centralized decision making stems from his views regarding the dangers inherent in any bureaucracy:

The bureaucracy absorbs the energies of top executives...Attention tends to be diverted from the act of choice--which is the ultimate test of statesmanship--to the accumulation of facts. Decisions can be avoided until a crisis brooks no further delay...But at that point the scope for constructive action is at a minimum...Moreover, the reputation, indeed the political survival, of most leaders depends on their ability to realize their goals, however these may have been arrived at.75/

His was a conventional approach to foreign affairs based on the notion of power balance in the international arena; peace could be achieved and maintained only in a stable international scene. Kissinger's approach to resolving the Vietnam conflict by way of enlisting Moscow's and Peking's participation stemmed from his general approach to international affairs. A former Harvard historian, Kissinger found contemporary application for the diplomatic power-balancing maneuvering of Metternich, whom he had closely studied.76/

A difficult man to work for, Kissinger's overall strength was greatly enhanced precisely because his approach fit smoothly into Nixon's preferred mode of decision making. The president's trust in Kissinger reinforced his special assistant's overall effectiveness and strength.77/ However, one major drawback to Kissinger's dominance of the administration's national security decision making was that the administration was frequently out of touch with events in Vietnam.78/ This dilemma was particularly apparent during Kissinger's frequent trips to the Middle East in hopes of realizing a peace settlement.

Kissinger's powers in the administration reached a peak in 1973, when he replaced William Rogers as Secretary of State, thereby assuming dual authority in the formulation of national security policy - as Secretary of State and Special Assistant for National Security Affairs.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### 3. William Rogers

William Rogers served as Secretary of State from 1969 to 1973, leaving private law practice to join the Nixon administration. Lacking significant background in foreign affairs, Secretary Rogers' influence in the administration steadily declined concurrent with Kissinger's increasing dominance in the decision-making process.

Uneasy with the Nixon-Kissinger preference for personal diplomacy, Secretary of State Rogers strongly opposed Kissinger's extension of authority into policy formulation which Rogers considered within the realm of the State Department.<sup>79/</sup> Rogers opposed any continuation of military operations in Southeast Asia, and along with Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, advocated a prompt liquidation of the US war effort.<sup>80/</sup> While President Nixon maintained that Rogers was his chief foreign policy adviser and spokesman for the administration, Rogers' influence within the administration was negligible on Vietnam policy compared to Kissinger's.<sup>81/</sup>

### 4. Melvin Laird

Secretary of Defense Laird was, like Rogers, a strong advocate of rapid Vietnamization combined with the rapid withdrawal of US forces. This approach contrasted with that advocated by Nixon, Kissinger, and the JCS, all of whom desired a more gradual withdrawal and a less hasty Vietnamization. Laird's chief objective was to get out of Vietnam as quickly as possible--all other issues were secondary.<sup>82/</sup> Laird and Rogers were the Nixon administration's highest level opponents of military escalation in the Indochina area <sup>83/</sup> In fact, it was Laird who actually coined the term "Vietnamization" and, at every possible opportunity, he promoted this program with the public in his search for a political solution to the war.<sup>84/</sup> He made use of his familiarity with Congress by meeting frequently with various legislators to promote his overall approach for the war's termination; apparently he was quite successful in this undertaking.<sup>85/</sup> It is therefore possible that the Secretary's interaction with Congress reinforced the legislature's growing anti-interventionist sentiments.

In his stewardship of the Defense Department, he advocated an increase in the military's overall input in the decision-making process.



## THE BDM CORPORATION

However, in practice, it appears he distrusted the JCS, owing to their close relationship with Kissinger, and actually sought to restrict their interaction with high-level decision makers. According to Admiral Sharp,

Laird operated according to a closely held "game plan," a blueprint of precise and skillfully devised political moves carried out by a small group of confidants. When Kissinger sought my views on the basis of my experience in Vietnam, the Secretary made clear his disapproval of my talking directly with Kissinger. Although the two were seldom together in my presence, Laird seemed to be concerned that Kissinger was exerting undue influence on policies of the Department of Defense.<sup>86/</sup>

### F. KEY DECISION MAKERS WITHIN THE FORD ADMINISTRATION

Similar to Lyndon Johnson's approach to the transition period, after President Kennedy's assassination, President Ford also sought to maintain a modicum of administrative stability and continuity after Nixon's resignation. He insisted that the transition period be smoothly handled by a special staff selected for this purpose, and made few personnel changes in the ranks of the high-level bureaucracy. Other key decision makers involved in Vietnam-related issues included Henry Kissinger, James Schlesinger and Graham Martin, each of whom had served under President Nixon. The respective positions of these individuals within the bureaucracy, as well as those of other important advisers, appeared in Chapter 3, Figure 3-6, an overview of the Ford administration.

#### 1. President Gerald Ford

Gerald Ford had over twenty years of experience in the US Congress before entering the Nixon administration as vice president in 1973. As a congressman, he had consistently advocated a US military posture of strength and supported legislation which provided ample military assistance to US allies. His resolve to contain communism was similar to that of his five postwar presidential predecessors. A statement by Congressman Ford just prior to the Gulf of Tonkin crisis illustrates this resolve.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Our lesson in Cuba ought to guide us during the third great crisis of this decade - in Viet Nam. In Cuba, our early vacillation encouraged the Communists to bolder and bolder aggression. We cannot - we dare not - lead them to repeat that mistake in Viet Nam. The Communist leaders in Moscow, Peking and Hanoi must fully understand that the United States considers the freedom of South Viet Nam vital to our interests. And they must know that we are not bluffing in our determination to defend those interests. ...Toward this end I recommended a short time ago that we intensify our air strikes against significant military targets in North Viet Nam... 87/

As Congressional Minority Leader in the early seventies, Mr. Ford's record clearly indicates that he in no way softened his view regarding US commitments in Southeast Asia.88/

President Ford was familiar with foreign affairs. His membership in the Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee provided him the opportunity to question Secretaries of State and Defense, and the Directors of the Central Intelligence Agency. He had also traveled extensively in Europe and Southeast Asia. As vice president he was afforded the opportunity to participate in briefings given by Dr. Kissinger on a variety of foreign policy issues.89/ He endorsed Nixon's gradual Vietnamization program and the 1973 signing of the Paris Peace Accords.90/

Gerald Ford's views on the role and responsibilities of the presidency deserve mention because, as president, he was confronted by an increasingly assertive Congress which he felt had undermined the power of the president as Commander-in-Chief with the passage of the 1973 War Powers Act.91/ Indeed, before leaving Congress for the vice presidency, he had opposed the passage of this act. As president, he came to view Congress as being overly involved in the day-to-day operation of US foreign policy, a complaint which increased as he wrestled with Congress over appropriations to shore up the rapidly deteriorating situation in South Vietnam. Therefore, while he believed that his responsibilities as president included the effective and expeditious resolution of crises, in practice, he found his freedom of action severely constrained by Congress.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### 2. Henry Kissinger

Gerald Ford chose to retain Henry Kissinger as Secretary of State because of his high regard for Kissinger's ability. According to Ford,

He [Kissinger] had gone through hell during the final days of the Nixon administration, and he had agreed to stay on only because I said I needed him. Sure he had an ego ... and it's also true he had a penchant for secrecy. But that, I felt, was a necessary ingredient of successful diplomacy... Our personalities meshed. I respected his expertise in foreign policy and he respected my judgment in domestic policies. He was a total pragmatist who thought in terms of power and national interest instead of ideology... 92/

Since the signing of the Peace Accords, Dr. Kissinger had turned his attention to other international concerns and tried to restore acceptance of the validity of the domino theory. When faced with the rapidly deteriorating situation in South Vietnam in late 1974 and early 1975, he stated:

We must understand that peace is indivisible. The US cannot pursue a policy of selective reliability. We cannot abandon friends in one part of the world without jeopardizing the security of friends everywhere... [if Saigon falls]... then we are likely to find a massive shift in the foreign policies of many countries and a fundamental threat over a period of time to the security of the U.S. 93/

Kissinger's distress was aggravated by congressional reluctance to support the administration's requests for aid to rescue South Vietnam. Executive-legislative haggling over military aid appropriations was the most significant feature of the Vietnam decision-making process during the Ford administration, and Kissinger was one of the main participants in these debates.

### 3. James Schlesinger

President Ford also retained Secretary of Defense Schlesinger, when the former took office in August 1974. However, in contrast to the Ford-Kissinger relationship, Ford had difficulties in dealing with Schlesinger. 94/ Aware of the nation's need to heal its war-inflicted

## THE BDM CORPORATION

wounds, Schlesinger suggested that the president take positive action regarding the status of Vietnam draft evaders and deserters. Apparently he was influential with the president on this issue, for the president shortly thereafter developed a program to rehabilitate these men.<sup>95/</sup>

Schlesinger's relationship with Dr. Kissinger was also marred by tension. Both men, dominant and aggressive, did not always agree on strategies to save South Vietnam.<sup>96/</sup> By March 1975, tension between the two men ran so high that it complicated the administration's development of a concerted strategy for dealing with the crisis in Vietnam.<sup>97/</sup> Schlesinger's resignation was finally requested by the president prior to the 1976 presidential election.

#### 4. Graham Martin

As a career diplomat who was assigned the ambassadorial post to Saigon in 1973, Graham Martin had previous experience in US-Vietnamese diplomacy. He participated in the 1954 Geneva negotiations and joined the 1973 Paris talks as an observer.<sup>98/</sup> His participation in national-level Vietnam decision making became more visible as congressional resistance to the administration's aid requests increased. Ambassador Martin made frequent trips to Washington to lobby for the administration's aid packages, illustrating his commitment to saving the rapidly weakening Saigon government.

THE BDM CORPORATION

APPENDIX 3  
ENDNOTES

1. Harry S. Truman, Memoirs (New York: Doubleday, 1956) Vol. 1, pp. 1-4, and Gordon Hoxie, Command Decision and the Presidency (New York: Reader's Digest Press, 1977), p. 55.
2. Hoxie, pp. 55-56.
3. Janis Irving, Victims of Groupthink (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), p. 61; and "Origins of the U.S. Involvement in Vietnam," US-Vietnam Relations 1945-1967. Prepared by the Department of Defense. Printed for the Use of the House Committee on Armed Services. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971) in 12 Books; Book 1, I.A.3. pp. A51-A58, Hereafter DOD US/VN Relations.
4. Barton J. Bernstein and Allen Matusow, The Truman Administration (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), pp. 251-256, and Russell Fifield, Americans in Southeast Asia (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell), p. 65.
5. Hoxie, p. 80.
6. Bernstein, pp. 331-332.
7. Cable from Secretary of State G. Marshall to American Embassy, Paris, cited in DOD US/VN Relations, Book 8, p. 99.
8. Ibid., Book 8, pp. 130, 135, 144.
9. Fifield, p. 67.
10. Ibid., pp. 71-73, 75, 100.
11. See for example, "Strengthening the Forces of Freedom," in Bernstein and Matusow, pp. 289-293.
12. See Acheson's "Summary of China Policy" in Bernstein and Matusow, pp. 300-309.
13. DOD US/VN Relations, Book 8, p. 198, Cable from Acheson to American Consul in Hanoi, May 20, 1949.
14. Ibid., Book 8, pp. 198, 199.
15. Ibid., Book 8, p. 196.
16. Ibid., Book 8, p. 196, and Fifield, p. 126.
17. Fifield, p. 118, Ho's discussion with Abbott was one in a series of oral and written communications with the US in which Ho requested US

## THE BDM CORPORATION

support for Vietnam's search for self-determination. "U.S. Neutrality in the Franco-Viet Minh War, 1946-1949: Failures of Negotiated Settlement" cited in DOD US/VN Relations, Book 1, 1.A.2. pp. A-28-A-29. Also see, in Book 8, the following: Memo From The Assistant Chief of the Division of Southeast Asian Affairs London to the Secretary of State, February 1946, p. 61; Telegram from The Vice Council at Hanoi O'Sullivan to the Secretary of State, June 5, 1946, p. 71; and Department of State Cable to AMCONSUL Saigon, February 3, 1948, p. 117.

18. Cable from Abbott to Department of State, November 5, 1948, cited in DOD US/VN Relations, Book 8, p. 159; and American Consulate General Saigon Memorandum on Indochina for the New Delhi Foreign Service Conference, p. 157.
19. See section on President Lyndon Johnson in Appendix B - The Johnson Administration.
20. DOD US/VN Relations, Book 8, p. 288, Letter from Dean Rusk, Deputy Under Secretary of State, to MG James Burns, Office of Secretary of Defense and Fifield, p. 142.
21. Ibid., p. 249.
22. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Mandate for Change (New York: Doubleday, 1965), p. 333.
23. Ibid., pp. 333-336.
24. Stephen E. Ambrose, Rise to Globalism (Baltimore: Penguin, 1971), pp. 217-221. "Roll Back" went a step further than "containment." The former entailed the "liberation" of peoples who were already under communist leadership, whereas the latter stressed maintenance of the status quo by halting current or future communist expansionism.
25. Andrew H. Berding, Dulles on Diplomacy (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1965), p. 84.
26. Townsend Hoopes, The Devil and John Foster Dulles (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973), p. 252.
27. Townsend Hoopes, p. 140. According to Sherman Adams, the President's principal staff man in the White House, Dulles would bypass and enter the President's anteroom, ask the lady secretary if the President was engaged, and "if the answer was no, he just opened the door and walked in." Dulles enjoyed the confidence and respect of the President partly because of his meticulous preparation, down to and including a recommended course of action for the problem at hand.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

28. Ibid., p. 142-145.
29. Ibid., p. 141-143.
30. Charles Yost, The Conduct and Misconduct of Foreign Affairs (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 68.
31. Richard K. Betts Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), pp. 66-67.
32. Ibid., p. 177.
33. Eisenhower, p. 367.
34. Paul M. Kattenburg, "Viet Nam and US Diplomacy 1940-1970," Orbis 15, #3, Fall 1971.
35. Robert Gallucci, Neither Peace Nor Honor (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), pp. 15-16.
36. Roger Hilsman, To Move a Nation (New York: Doubleday), p. 423.
37. Frank Merli and Theodore Wilson, ed., Makers of American Diplomacy (New York: Charles Scribners), p. 327, and U. A. Johnson, BDM interview, January 9, 1979.
38. Lawrence J. Korb, The Joint Chiefs of Staff (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), p. 119.
39. Merli, p. 325.
40. Russell Weigley, The American Way of War (New York: MacMillan Co., 1973), p. 459.
41. John Leacacos, Fires in the In-Basket (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1968), pp. 138-139.
42. David K. Hall, "The Custodian-Manager of the Policymaking Process", in U.S., Commission on the Organization of the Government for the Conduct of Foreign Policy (Washington, D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, June 1975) Vol. 2, p. 108.
43. Merli, p. 322; Leacacos, p. 132; BDM Interview June 13, 1979 with Dr. Vincent Davis. In a private meeting with Mr. Rusk, Dr. Davis queried Rusk concerning the apparent deference. Mr. Rusk himself explained that in matters concerning Vietnam he and his staff generally concurred with McNamara's approach to the problem.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

44. Leacacos, p. 6.
45. Ibid., p. 124, 128.
46. Ibid., p. 124.
47. Theodore Sorenson, Kennedy (New York: Harper & Row), p. 606, and Betts, p. 67.
48. Fred Greene, U.S. Policy and the Security of Asia (New York: McGraw Hill, 1968), p. 33.
49. In an interview with BDM analysts, General Taylor indicated that President Kennedy had an excellent appreciation of the potential role of counterinsurgency operations in "wars of national liberation." In fact, Kennedy was obliged to explain the concept of counterinsurgency to General Taylor so that the latter could understand it and explain the concept to other military professionals.
50. Maxwell Taylor, Swords and Plowshares (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1972), p. 201.
51. Arthur Schlesinger, A Thousand Days (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 341.
52. Leacacos, p. 165.
53. Hoopes, p. 21.
54. Leacacos, p. 166.
55. Two significant changes occurred: Walt Rostow supplanted McGeorge Bundy in 1966 after the latter became disillusioned with the war, and Clark Clifford replaced Defense Secretary McNamara shortly after the Tet Offensive of 1968.
56. Tom Wicker, JFK and LBJ (Baltimore: Pelican, 1970) pp. 205, 248; and Gallucci, p. 43.
57. Doris Kearns, Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream (New York: Signet, 1976), pp. 142-145.
58. Ibid., pp. 268-270, 279; and Wicker, p. 153.
59. Gallucci, p. 99; Schlesinger, pp. 184-185; and Kearns, p. 335.
60. Hoopes, pp. 17-18; Lyndon Johnson, The Vantage Point (New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1971), p. 20; Dr. Vince Davis, interview at BDM, June 13, 1979.



## THE BDM CORPORATION

61. Henry L. Trewhitt, McNamara (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 225-227.
62. Wicker, p. 198; Jim F. Heath, Decade of Disillusionment (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1975), p. 102, DOD US/VN Relations, Book 6, p. 138.
63. Heath, p. 102; Hoopes, pp. 83, 90.
64. David Halberstam, The Best and the Brightest (New York: Random House, 1969), pp. 624-625.
65. Hoopes, pp. 18-20.
66. Ambassador Maxwell Taylor had previously recommended bombing the DRV on two occasions, but his recommendations were not accepted. Bundy was in South Vietnam when the Viet Cong attacked the US barracks at Pleiku, and he joined in Taylor's third recommendation for bombing. Ambassador Taylor credits Bundy with having tipped the scales in his favor. The bombing request was approved. Maxwell Taylor, BDM interview, July 11, 1979.
67. Ibid.
68. Johnson, p. 208; Henry Graff, The Tuesday Cabinet (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1970), p. 40.
69. Kearns, pp. 334-336.
70. Interview with Dr. Davis, BDM, June 13, 1979; examples may be found in DOD US/VN Relations, Book 7, D-81.
71. Hoopes, p. 181; Kearns pp. 361-362.
72. Hoopes, pp. 20-21.
73. Marvin Kalb and Elie Abel, Roots of Involvement (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971), pp. 102-3.
74. A. Hartley, "American Foreign Policy in the Nixon Era," Adelphi Papers, #110 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies), p. 1.
75. Henry Kissinger, "Domestic Structure and Foreign Policy," in Conditions of World Order (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1968), pp. 168-170.
76. Michael Roskin, "An American Metternich: Henry A. Kissinger and the Global Balance of Powers," in Merli, p. 377.
77. I. M. Destler, Presidents, Bureaucrats and Foreign Policy (Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 125.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

78. Stephen Graubard, Kissinger: Portrait of a Mind (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974), p. 276.
79. Theodore White, Breach of Faith (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), p. 105.
80. Halberstam, p. 6 ; White, p. 380.
81. Destler, p. 131.
82. Admiral U.S.G. Sharp, Strategic Direction of the Armed Forces (Newport, Rhode Island: Naval War College, 1977), pp. 36-37.
83. General Andrew J. Goodpaster, Interview at Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, April 19, 1976 Transcript at US Army Military History Research Collection, Senior Officers Debriefing Program, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.; Destler, p. 29; and Tad Szulc The Illusion of Peace: Foreign Policy in the Nixon Years (New York: Viking Press, 1978), pp. 60, 290.
84. Sharp, Strategic Direction, pp. 36-37.
85. Ibid.
86. General William Westmoreland, A Soldier Reports (New York: Doubleday, 1976), p. 387. Admiral Sharp obviously concurs with this evaluation since he quoted this passage as an example of the delicate relationship between the two secretaries. See Sharp, p. 37.
87. Speech by Gerald Ford at the National Press Club, July 1965, cited in President Ford: The Man and His Record (Washington, D.C., Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1974).
88. Ibid.
89. Gerald Ford, A Time to Heal (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 129.
90. See "President Ford: The Man and His Record."
91. See Hoxie, pp. xvii-xviii.
92. Ford, p. 129.
93. Gelb, p. 351.
94. Ford, p. 136. In the first days of the Ford administration, the President was irritated by rumors that Schlesinger, concerned about Nixon's mental stability during his last days in office, had taken measures to ensure that Nixon could not issue unilateral orders to the Armed Services. Ford told Schlesinger that he was aware of these

## THE BDM CORPORATION

rumors, and while not pointing a finger directly at the Secretary of Defense, stated that he wanted the situation straightened out immediately. Ford's comment after his meeting with Schlesinger indicated a disharmony between the two. "...that was the first run-in I had with Schlesinger. I hoped it would be the last, but I suspected otherwise."

95. Ford, p. 141.
96. Frank Snepp, Decent Interval (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), p. 153.
97. Ibid., p. 235.
98. While he felt Le Duc Tho had not changed much since 1954, he was impressed by some of the younger technocrats who took part in the 1973 talks. He considered them more malleable and more inclined toward moderation. See Snepp, p. 63.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### APPENDIX C

#### SUPPLEMENTAL DATA TO CHAPTER 1: A SERIES OF SIX CHARTS SUMMARIZING US GLOBAL INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES, PERCEIVED THREATS, AND STRATEGIES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO US INTERESTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, 1945-1975

Six charts appear in Appendix C, each representing a five year time-period during the 30 year era of US involvement in Vietnam. Each chart depicts the interrelationship between US global interests and objectives, perceived threats, and strategies with those related to Southeast Asia. All information summarized in each graphic is taken directly from US national policy statements which appeared during each particular time period. The US Department of Defense publication, United States - Vietnam Relations 1945-1967 and US Department of State Bulletins served as the primary sources for the extraction of such statements. All other sources used in the preparation of these charts appear in the Volume III Bibliography.

1945 - 1950

INTERESTS/OBJECTIVES	PERCEIVED THREATS	STRATEGIES
ON A GLOBAL BASIS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• REBUILD EUROPE; ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION</li> <li>• BUILD A STRONG INTERNATIONAL ORDER</li> <li>• CONTAIN COMMUNISM</li> <li>• PROMOTE SELF-DETERMINATION, INDEPENDENCE OF WORLD'S COLONIES</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SOVIET IMPERIALISM AND EXPANSIONIST DRIVE</li> <li>• POST-WAR OBJECTIVES OF US ALLIES</li> <li>• ADVANCE OF MONOLITHIC COMMUNISM</li> <li>• COLONIALISM</li> <li>• US LACK OF WELL DEFINED POLICY REGARDING DEVELOPING COUNTRIES</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TRUMAN DOCTRINE</li> <li>• PROMOTE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND RECONSTRUCTION</li> <li>• PROMOTE INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND COOPERATION</li> <li>• ECONOMIC, MILITARY, AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES</li> <li>• PROMOTE BILATERAL AND COLLECTIVE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS</li> <li>• PROMOTE INDEPENDENCE FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WHEN FEASIBLE</li> <li>• NSC 64 AND NSC 68</li> </ul>
SOUTHEAST ASIA RELATED		
• PROVIDE FOR A PROGRESSIVE MEASURE	• COLONIALISM AND BRITISH/AMERICAN	• PROMOTE INDEPENDENCE OF

4541/78W

Figure C-1. Summary of US Global Policy to US Policy for Southeast

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PROMOTE BILATERAL AND COLLECTIVE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS</li> <li>• PROMOTE INDEPENDENCE FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WHEN FEASIBLE</li> <li>• NSC 64 AND NSC 68</li> </ul>		
<p style="text-align: center;">----- <b>SOUTHEAST ASIA RELATED</b> -----</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PROMOTE INDEPENDENCE OF COLONIES</li> <li>- TRUSTEESHIP AND NEUTRALITY CONCEPTS</li> <li>- REQUEST FRENCH INDICATION OF GOOD WILL REGARDING CIVIL LIBERTIES IN INDOCHINA</li> <li>- ARTICLE 73 OF THE UNITED NATIONS CHARTER</li> <li>- NSC 48/2: URGING FRANCE TO ENGENDER VIETNAMESE SUPPORT FOR NON-COMMUNIST NATIONALIST LEADERS SUCH AS BAO DAI</li> <li>• TRUMAN DOCTRINE: DIRECT AID (ECONOMIC, MILITARY, POLITICAL) TO PROMOTE THE PEACEFUL DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONS</li> <li>• COLLECTIVE DEFENSE AS PROVIDED FOR BY THE MUTUAL DEFENSE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR ASIA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COLONIALISM AND BRITISH/FRENCH ATTITUDE TOWARDS COLONIES</li> <li>• THE SOVIET UNION IN ASIA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SOVIET CONTROL OF OR PRESENCE IN THE FAR EAST AS THREAT TO BALANCE OF POWER IN ASIA</li> <li>- THREAT OF KREMLIN DIRECTED SUBVERSIVE COMMUNIST MOVEMENTS</li> <li>- COMMUNIST AFFILIATION OF HO CHI MINH</li> <li>- LOSS OF CHINA TO COMMUNIST ORBIT</li> </ul> </li> <li>• RIGHT AND LEFT POLITICAL PARTIES IN FRANCE AND THEIR POTENTIAL IMPACT ON THE BALANCE OF POWER IN ASIA</li> <li>• WEAKNESS OF FRANCE; CONFLICT WITH VIETMINH TIES DOWN FRENCH TROOPS IN INDOCHINA, WEAKENS FRENCH ECONOMY FURTHER AND THE OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF ECONOMIC RECOVERY, AND DENYS THE AVAILABILITY OF INDOCHINESE SURPLUS RESOURCES, THEREBY CAUSING SHORTAGES AND DISORDER</li> <li>• ANY ATTEMPT BY A MAJOR ASIAN POWER, E.G. JAPAN, INDIA, CHINA, TO DOMINATE THE ASIAN CONTINENT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PROVIDE FOR A PROGRESSIVE MEASURE OF SELF-GOVERNMENT FOR ALL DEPENDENT PEOPLES LOOKING TOWARD THEIR EVENTUAL INDEPENDENCE OR INCORPORATION IN SOME FORM OF FEDERATION ACCORDING TO CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE ABILITY OF THE PEOPLES TO ASSUME THESE RESPONSIBILITIES</li> <li>• ENCOURAGE PEOPLES OF ASIAN STATES TO TAKE LEADERSHIP IN MEETING COMMON PROBLEMS OF THE AREA</li> <li>• CONTAIN COMMUNISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA TO PROTECT STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN FAR EAST</li> <li>• AVOID LOSS OF ANOTHER ASIAN POWER TO COMMUNISM (POST-CHINA, 1949)</li> <li>• SUPPORT FREE PEOPLES RESISTING ATTEMPTED SUBJUGATION BY ARMED MINORITIES OR BY OUTSIDE PRESSURES</li> </ul>

1950 - 1955

INTERESTS/OBJECTIVES	PERCEIVED THREATS	STRATEGIES
ON A GLOBAL BASIS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PREVENT THE ADVANCE OF COMMUNISM IN THE WORLD</li> <li>• CONTAIN COMMUNISM TO PROTECT US AND ALLIES' ECONOMIC AND STRATEGIC INTERESTS</li> <li>• PREVENT WORLD WAR III</li> <li>• PROMOTE INDEPENDENCE OF WORLD'S COLONIES</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• THE ADVANCE OF COMMUNISM IN EUROPE AND IN ASIA: MONOLITHIC COMMUNISM</li> <li>• SUBVERSION AND GUERRILLA WARFARE</li> <li>• WEAKNESS OF WESTERN EUROPE, PARTICULARLY IN SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS</li> <li>• US INTERNAL CONDEMNATIONS AGAINST WEAKNESS IN THE FACE OF COMMUNIST AGGRESSION ('LOSS' OF CHINA, MCCARTHY)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PROMOTE BILATERAL AND COLLECTIVE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS; UNITED ACTION</li> <li>• MASSIVE RETALIATION; NSC 162/2; LIBERATION DOCTRINE; PREPARATION FOR COUNTERING GUERRILLA WARFARE; ROLL-BACK</li> <li>• PROMOTE SELF-DETERMINATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRACY IN THE WORLD'S DEVELOPING NATIONS</li> <li>• PROMOTE DISUNITY IN COMMUNIST BLOC</li> </ul>
SOUTHEAST ASIA RELATED		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PROTECT INDOCHINA FROM COMMUNISM TO PRESERVE IT AS A RESOURCE BASE ESPECIALLY FOR JAPAN, IN ORDER TO PREVENT JAPAN FROM TURNING TO COMMUNIST COUNTRIES FOR TRADE AND RESOURCES (RESOURCES INCLUDED TIN, TUNGSTEN, RICE, RUBBER, GIL, ...)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COMMUNISM'S ADVANCE IN ASIA:                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'LOSS' OF CHINA AND POSSIBLE CHINESE INTERVENTION IN INDOCHINA</li> <li>- NORTH KOREAN AGGRESSION</li> <li>- IMPACT OF COMMUNIST CONTROL OF SEA ON THE BALANCE OF POWER IN ASIA</li> </ul> </li> <li>• INCOMPATIBILITY OF US INTERESTS:                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- FRANCE TO CLASH ANTI-COMMUNIST WAR</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PROMOTE INDOCHINESE INDEPENDENCE VIA NON-COMMUNIST NATIONALIST LEADERSHIP (BAO DAI OR OTHER ALTERNATIVE) AND RECOGNITION OF THE ASSOCIATED STATES</li> <li>• ASSIST THE FRENCH IN INDOCHINA</li> </ul>

4541/78W

Figure C-2. Summary of US Global Policy to US Policy for Southeast

## SOUTHEAST ASIA RELATED

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|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PROTECT INDOCHINA FROM COMMUNISM TO PRESERVE IT AS A RESOURCE BASE ESPECIALLY FOR JAPAN, IN ORDER TO PREVENT JAPAN FROM TURNING TO COMMUNIST COUNTRIES FOR TRADE AND RESOURCES (RESOURCES INCLUDED TIN, TUNGSTEN, RICE, RUBBER, OIL, AND IRON ORE.)</li> <li>• PROTECT INDOCHINA AS A CRITICALLY IMPORTANT STRATEGIC REGION:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PROTECT THE OFF-SHORE ISLAND CHAIN</li> <li>- PREVENT FALLING DOMINOS BY SUPPORTING VIETNAM AS ONE OF THOSE DOMINOS</li> <li>- PREVENT LOSS OF CERTAIN STRATEGIC MATERIALS REQUIRED FOR THE COMPLETION OF US STOCKPILE PROJECTS</li> <li>- PREVENT ITS LOSS AS A CROSS-ROAD OF COMMUNICATIONS</li> <li>- PREVENT LOSS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA BECAUSE IT IS A VITAL SEGMENT IN LINE OF CONTAINMENT AND AS BASE FOR OPERATIONS IN CONTAINING COMMUNISM</li> </ul> </li> <li>• SECURE FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN THE EUROPEAN DEFENSE COMMUNITY</li> <li>• AVOID FRENCH SELL-OUT AT GENEVA</li> <li>• AVOID UNILATERAL ACTION IN ASIA</li> <li>• PROMOTE INDEPENDENCE OF INDOCHINA BY FINDING AND SUPPORTING VIABLE, NATIONALIST, NON-COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COMMUNISM'S ADVANCE IN ASIA:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'LOSS' OF CHINA AND POSSIBLE CHINESE INTERVENTION IN INDOCHINA</li> <li>- NORTH KOREAN AGGRESSION</li> <li>- IMPACT OF COMMUNIST CONTROL OF SEA ON THE BALANCE OF POWER IN ASIA</li> </ul> </li> <li>• INCOMPATIBILITY OF US INTERESTS:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- FRANCE TO FIGHT ANTI-COMMUNIST WAR IN INDOCHINA VS. THE REALITY OF THE SITUATION</li> </ul> </li> <li>• FRENCH PREOCCUPATION WITH ALGERIA (AFTER DIEN BIEU PHU DEFEAT)</li> <li>• EMERGING FORCE OF THIRD WORLD AND CONCEPT OF NON-ALIGNMENT AS EVIDENCED AT THE BANDUNG CONFERENCE</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PROMOTE INDOCHINESE INDEPENDENCE VIA NON-COMMUNIST NATIONALIST LEADERSHIP (BAO DAI OR OTHER ALTERNATIVE) AND RECOGNITION OF THE ASSOCIATED STATES</li> <li>• ASSIST THE FRENCH IN INDOCHINA IN OPPOSING COMMUNISM:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ESTABLISHMENT OF MILITARY MISSION</li> <li>- COVERT OPERATIONS IN SOUTH-</li> <li>- ASIA TO INTERFERE WITH COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES</li> <li>- GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS</li> <li>- SEATO: REGIONAL SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS</li> <li>- UNITED ACTION TO CURTAIL AGGRESSION IN INDOCHINA IN RETURN FOR FRENCH GRANTING INDEPENDENCE TO INDOCHINA</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
|---|--|---|



1955 - 1960

INTERESTS/OBJECTIVES	PERCEIVED THREATS	STRATEGIES
----- ON A GLOBAL BASIS -----		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HALT THE ADVANCE OF COMMUNISM THROUGHOUT THE WORLD</li> <li>• PROVIDE AN ATTRACTIVE ALTERNATIVE TO COMMUNISM</li> <li>• DETER TOTAL WAR</li> <li>• SHORE UP US CREDIBILITY</li> <li>• PRESERVE SECURITY OF THE US AND ITS FUNDAMENTAL VALUES AND INSTITUTIONS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ADVANCE OF MONOLITHIC COMMUNISM ON A WORLDWIDE BASIS</li> <li>• USSR NUCLEAR CAPABILITIES AND TECHNOLOGICAL PROMESS (SPUTNIK)</li> <li>• SUBVERSION AND PROTRACTED GUERRILLA WARFARE</li> <li>• CHINESE CHALLENGE TO BIPOLARITY</li> <li>• US LACK OF APPRECIATION FOR THE DEVELOPING SINO-SOVIET SPLIT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EISENHOWER DOCTRINE</li> <li>• MASSIVE (SELECTIVE) RETALIATION: DETERRENCE</li> <li>• SAFEGUARDED DISARMAMENT</li> <li>• PROMOTE BILATERAL AND COLLECTIVE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS</li> <li>• PROVIDE ECONOMIC, TECHNICAL AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO DEVELOPING NATIONS IN THE FACE OF COMMUNIST SUBVERSION</li> <li>• EXPLOIT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AND VULNERABILITIES OF BLOC COUNTRIES</li> </ul>
----- SOUTHEAST ASIA RELATED -----		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PROTECT INDOCHINA FROM COMMUNISM TO PRESERVE IT AS A RESOURCE BASE FOR JAPAN AND THE FREE WORLD</li> <li>• MAINTAIN WORLDWIDE RESPECT FOR US LEADERSHIP AND BE READY TO RESPOND RESOLUTELY WHEN CHALLENGED, I.E., IN SOUTHEAST ASIA</li> <li>• PRESERVATION OF NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE OF MAINLAND SOUTHEAST ASIAN STATES AS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ADVANCE OF MONOLITHIC COMMUNISM OVER THE CONTINENT OF ASIA, INCLUDING CHINA, NORTH KOREA, AND NORTH VIETNAM</li> <li>• ASIANS' DISTRUST OF COLONIALISM AND ITS IMPACT ON THE US ATTEMPT TO CULTIVATE TIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA</li> <li>• THE IMPROVEMENT OF VIET-MINH COOPERATION SINCE GENEVA (1954)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DETERRENCE OF CHINESE INTERVENTION IN INDOCHINA BY US THREAT OF USING NUCLEAR WEAPONS</li> <li>• FROM NSC 5809:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PROVISION OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO SOUTHEAST ASIA</li> <li>- ASSIST POLICE FORCES IN SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES TO OBTAIN TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT TO DETECT AND</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

4541/78W

Figure C-3. Summary of US Global Policy, to US Policy for Southeast Asia

## -----SOUTHEAST ASIA RELATED-----

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PROTECT INDOCHINA FROM COMMUNISM TO PRESERVE IT AS A RESOURCE BASE FOR JAPAN AND THE FREE WORLD</li> <li>• MAINTAIN WORLDWIDE RESPECT FOR US LEADERSHIP AND BE READY TO RESPOND RESOLUTELY WHEN CHALLENGED, I.E., IN SOUTHEAST ASIA</li> <li>• PRESERVATION OF NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE OF MAINLAND SOUTHEAST ASIAN STATES AS IMPORTANT TO US SECURITY INTERESTS</li> <li>• PEACEFUL REUNIFICATION OF A FREE AND INDEPENDENT VIETNAM UNDER ANTI-COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ADVANCE OF MONOLITHIC COMMUNISM OVER THE CONTINENT OF ASIA, INCLUDING CHINA, NORTH KOREA, AND NORTH VIETNAM</li> <li>• ASIANS' DISTRUST OF COLONIALISM AND ITS IMPACT ON THE US ATTEMPT TO CULTIVATE TIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA</li> <li>• THE IMPROVEMENT OF VIET-MINH CAPABILITIES SINCE GENEVA (1954)</li> <li>• TURBULENCE IN LAOS</li> <li>• SUBVERSION AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNIST INSURRECTION</li> <li>• COMMUNIST POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC OFFENSIVE: EXPLOITATION OF WEAKER, NON-COMMUNIST STATES' BACKWARDNESS</li> <li>• POSSIBLE LOATHNESS OF US ALLIES TO DEFEND ASIAN STATES AS PROVIDED FOR BY UN CHARTER OR SEATO OBLIGATIONS</li> <li>• NEUTRALITY AND NON-ALIGNMENT</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DETERRENCE OF CHINESE INTERVENTION IN INDOCHINA BY US THREAT OF USING NUCLEAR WEAPONS</li> <li>• FROM NSC 5809:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PROVISION OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO SOUTHEAST ASIA</li> <li>- ASSIST POLICE FORCES IN SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES TO OBTAIN TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT TO DETECT AND CONTAIN COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES</li> <li>- IMPLEMENT APPROPRIATE COVERT OPERATIONS DESIGNED TO ASSIST IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF US OBJECTIVES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA</li> <li>- PROMOTE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROGRAMS TO DEVELOP SOUTHEAST ASIAN STABILITY, INDEPENDENCE, AND NON-RELIANCE ON COMMUNIST BLOC FOR ASSISTANCE: PROMOTE MULTI-LATERAL TRADE, CREDIT ARRANGEMENTS AND US INVESTMENT IN THE REGION</li> <li>- ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL INDIGENOUS FORCES TO FIGHT COMMUNISM</li> <li>- MAINTAIN AN ADEQUATE NUMBER OF US FORCES IN THE FAR EAST AREA TO EXERT A DETERRING INFLUENCE ON COMMUNIST AGGRESSION</li> <li>- INVOKE REGIONAL SECURITY OBLIGATIONS (SEATO) WHEN NECESSARY TO HALT AGGRESSION</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
|---|---|---|

1980 - 1985

INTERESTS/OBJECTIVES	PERCEIVED THREATS	STRATEGIES
<b>ON A GLOBAL BASIS</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PREVENT COMMUNISM'S DRIVE TO DOMINATE THE WORLD</li> <li>• MAINTAIN AND PROTECT US SECURITY BY PRESERVING A FREE ASIA AND FREE WORLD</li> <li>• PRESERVE AND MAINTAIN US PLEDGES OF ASSISTANCE AND CREDIBILITY</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COMMUNIST AGGRESSION, IMPERIALISM, AND SUBVERSION</li> <li>• WARS OF NATIONAL LIBERATION AND BRUSHFIRE AGGRESSION</li> <li>• LOSS OF US PRESTIGE AND CREDIBILITY WITH ALLIES AND US PUBLIC</li> <li>• NUCLEAR PARITY WITH THE SOVIET UNION</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NATION-BUILDING; PROVISION OF POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND MILITARY AID TO DEVELOPING NATIONS</li> <li>• FLEXIBLE RESPONSE; ABILITY TO WAGE LIMITED WARS, GRADUATED ESCALATION, AND COUNTERINSURGENCY WARFARE</li> </ul>
<b>SOUTHEAST ASIA RELATED</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HALT PRC'S POWER DRIVE IN ASIA BEFORE MAJOR CONFLAGRATION RESULTS</li> <li>• PREVENT PIECEMEAL LOSS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA (SOUTH VIETNAM, WHILE SMALL, IS A POTENTIALLY IMPORTANT PIECE OF THE JIGSAW PUZZLE)</li> <li>• PRESERVE DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT FROM DISRUPTION AND INTERVENTION</li> <li>• PRESERVE A NEUTRAL LAOS</li> <li>• MAINTAIN PEACE AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA</li> <li>• WORK TOWARDS THE REALIZATION OF A PROGRESSIVE AND PROSPEROUS PACIFIC COMMUNITY</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BRUSHFIRE AGGRESSION TACTICS OF 'SPREAD AND CONQUER'</li> <li>• CROSS-BORDER INSURGENCY</li> <li>• NEGATIVE IMPACT OF US DISENGAGEMENT FROM VIETNAM ON ALLIES' VIEW OF US COMMITMENT TO NATO AND OTHER DEFENSE COMMITMENTS</li> <li>• LOSS OF SOUTH VIETNAM BEHIND THE 'BAMBOO CURTAIN' WOULD:                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TRANSFER 20 MILLION PEOPLE OF FREE WORLD TO COMMUNIST BLOC</li> <li>- PUSH REST OF SOUTHEAST ASIA AND INDONESIA TO ACCOMMODATION WITH THE COMMUNISTS</li> <li>- DESTROY SEATO AND UNDERMINE US CREDIBILITY</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COUNTERINSURGENCY, COVERT OPERATIONS, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE</li> <li>• INTRODUCTION OF COMBAT TROOPS IF DEEMED NECESSARY</li> <li>• CONTINUED AID TO SOUTH VIETNAM: ADVISERS AND TECHNICAL, MILITARY, AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE</li> <li>• UNDERMINE DRV/NLF MORALE</li> <li>• PROMOTE SOUTH VIETNAM'S PROGRESS TOWARDS DEVELOPING ITS OWN SELF-DEFENSE CAPABILITIES AND INITIATIVE IN MEETINGS ITS DEFENSE NEEDS</li> </ul>

4641/78W

Figure C-4. Summary of US Global Policy, 1980 to US Policy for Southeast Asia

<p>ATIONS, AND POLITICAL ORIENTATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• INTRODUCTION OF COMBAT TROOPS IF DEEMED NECESSARY</li> <li>• CONTINUED AID TO SOUTH VIETNAM: ADVISERS AND TECHNICAL, MILITARY, AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE</li> <li>• UNDERMINE DRV/NLF MORALE</li> <li>• PROMOTE SOUTH VIETNAM'S PROGRESS TOWARDS DEVELOPING ITS OWN SELF-DEFENSE CAPABILITIES AND INITIATIVE IN MEETINGS ITS DEFENSE NEEDS</li> </ul>	<p>AND CONQUER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CROSS-BORDER INSURGENCY</li> <li>• NEGATIVE IMPACT OF US DISENGAGEMENT FROM VIETNAM ON ALLIES' VIEW OF US COMMITMENT TO NATO AND OTHER DEFENSE COMMITMENTS</li> <li>• LOSS OF SOUTH VIETNAM BEHIND THE 'BAMBOO CURTAIN' WOULD: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TRANSFER 20 MILLION PEOPLE OF FREE WORLD TO COMMUNIST BLOC</li> <li>- PUSH REST OF SOUTHEAST ASIA AND INDONESIA TO ACCOMMODATION WITH THE COMMUNISTS</li> <li>- DESTROY SEATO AND UNDERMINE US CREDIBILITY</li> <li>- STIMULATE BITTER INTERNAL DEBATE IN THE US AND HARASSMENT OF ADMINISTRATION</li> <li>- LIMIT US ABILITY TO WAGE LIMITED WAR BY DENYING AIR, LAND, SEA BASES; COMPLICATING LOGS</li> </ul> </li> <li>• CHINESE STRATEGY OF 'TALK-FIGHT' AND ITS EFFECT OF CONFUSION ON THE FREE WORLD</li> <li>• US LACK OF EXPERIENCE IN DEALING WITH LIMITED, ESPECIALLY GUERRILLA, CONFLICTS</li> <li>• DIEM'S EXCESSES IN RULE AND SOUTH VIETNAM'S INTERNAL STRIFE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PREVENT PIECEMEAL LOSS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA (SOUTH VIETNAM, WHILE SMALL, IS A POTENTIALLY IMPORTANT PIECE OF THE JIGSAW PUZZLE)</li> <li>• PRESERVE DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT FROM DISRUPTION AND INTERVENTION</li> <li>• PRESERVE A NEUTRAL LAOS</li> <li>• MAINTAIN PEACE AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA</li> <li>• WORK TOWARDS THE REALIZATION OF A PROGRESSIVE AND PROSPEROUS PACIFIC COMMUNITY</li> <li>• PROVE THE US CAPABILITY IN CHECKING COMMUNIST INSURGENCY IN THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES</li> </ul>
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1965 - 1970

INTERESTS/OBJECTIVES	PERCEIVED THREATS	STRATEGIES
----- ON A GLOBAL BASIS -----		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PREVENT COMMUNISM'S DRIVE TO DOMINATE THE WORLD</li> <li>• STRENGTHEN US - ALLIED RELATIONS</li> <li>• PREVENT WORLD WAR III</li> <li>• CALM TENSIONS WITH USSR AND PRC</li> <li>• PREVENT LOSS OF US CREDIBILITY</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NUCLEAR PARITY WITH THE USSR</li> <li>• PRC AS MAJOR FORCE BENT ON WORLD DOMINATION</li> <li>• US CREDIBILITY LOSS AND POSSIBLE FAILURE OF COUNTERINSURGENCY STRATEGY</li> <li>• WARS OF NATIONAL LIBERATION, SUBVERSION AND GUERRILLA WARFARE</li> <li>• GLOBAL TURBULENCE, ESPECIALLY IN THIRD WORLD</li> <li>• DEVELOPING NATIONS 'OVER-DEPENDENCE' ON THE US</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'TALK-FIGHT'</li> <li>• PROVISION OF ECONOMIC, TECHNICAL AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO DEVELOPING NATIONS</li> <li>• FLEXIBLE RESPONSE</li> <li>• INITIATE DIALOGUE WITH PRC AND USSR</li> <li>• NIXON DOCTRINE AND REALISTIC DETERRENCE</li> <li>• PERSONAL (AND OFTEN SECRET) DIPLOMACY</li> <li>• USE USSR-PRC RIFT FOR POLITICAL LEVERAGE</li> </ul>
----- SOUTHEAST ASIA RELATED -----		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HALT PRC'S DRIVE IN ASIA BEFORE MAJOR CONFLAGRATION RESULTS</li> <li>• PREVENT PIECEMEAL LOSS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA (SOUTH VIETNAM, WHILE SMALL, IS A POTENTIALLY IMPORTANT PIECE OF THE JIGSAW PUZZLE)</li> <li>• PRESERVE DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT FROM DISRUPTION AND INTERVENTION</li> <li>• MAINTAIN PEACE AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA</li> <li>• PROVE THE US CAPABILITY IN CHECKING COMMUNIST INSURGENCY IN THIRD WORLD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BRUSHFIRE AGGRESSION: TACTICS OF 'SPREAD AND CONQUER'</li> <li>• CROSS-BORDER INSURGENCY</li> <li>• NEGATIVE IMPACT OF US DISENGAGEMENT FROM VIETNAM ON ALLIES' VIEW OF US COMMITMENT TO NATO AND OTHER DEFENSE COMMITMENTS</li> <li>• LOSS OF SOUTH VIETNAM BEHIND THE 'BAMBOO CURTAIN' WOULD:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TRANSFER 20 MILLION PEOPLE OF FREE WORLD TO COMMUNIST BLOCK</li> <li>- PUSH REST OF SOUTHEAST ASIA AND INDONESIA</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COUNTER-INSURGENCY, COVERT OPERATIONS, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE</li> <li>• INTRODUCTION OF CONVENTIONAL COMBAT FORCES AND BOMBING CAMPAIGNS AGAINST DRV TARGETS, SANCTUARIES, LOGS</li> <li>• CONTINUED AID TO SOUTH VIETNAM: ADVISERS AND TECHNICAL, MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE</li> <li>• PROMOTE SOUTH VIETNAM'S PROGRESS TOWARDS SELF-HELP, SELF-DEFENSE, AND SELF-RELIANCE</li> <li>• NEGOTIATE A JUST, HONORABLE, AND DURABLE PEACE</li> </ul>

4541/78W

Figure C-5. Summary of US Global Policy, 1965 to US Policy for Southeast Asia

# SOUTHEAST ASIA RELATED

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HALT PRC'S DRIVE IN ASIA BEFORE MAJOR CONFLAGRATION RESULTS</li> <li>• PREVENT PIECEMEAL LOSS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA (SOUTH VIETNAM, WHILE SMALL, IS A POTENTIALLY IMPORTANT PIECE OF THE JIGSAW PUZZLE)</li> <li>• PRESERVE DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT FROM DISRUPTION AND INTERVENTION</li> <li>• MAINTAIN PEACE AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA</li> <li>• PROVE THE US CAPABILITY IN CHECKING COMMUNIST INSURGENCY IN THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES</li> <li>• AGGRESSION SHOULD NOT BE PERMITTED TO SUCCEED - PREVENT ANOTHER MUNICH CESSATION<sup>2</sup> OF HOSTILITIES</li> <li>• PREVENT LOSS OF SOUTH VIETNAM'S MORALE</li> <li>• PROMOTE SELF-HELP AND SELF-DEFENSE OF ALLIES, AVOIDING OVER-DEPENDENCE ON US</li> <li>• PRESERVE A FREE AND INDEPENDENT SOUTH VIETNAM AND SOUTHEAST ASIA</li> <li>• SECURE AN HONORABLE, JUST, AND DURABLE PEACE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BRUSHFIRE AGGRESSION: TACTICS OF 'SPREAD AND CONQUER'</li> <li>• CROSS-BORDER INSURGENCY</li> <li>• NEGATIVE IMPACT OF US DISENGAGEMENT FROM VIETNAM ON ALLIES' VIEW OF US COMMITMENT TO NATO AND OTHER DEFENSE COMMITMENTS</li> <li>• LOSS OF SOUTH VIETNAM BEHIND THE 'BAMBOO CURTAIN' WOULD:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TRANSFER 20 MILLION PEOPLE OF FREE WORLD TO COMMUNIST BLOCK</li> <li>- PUSH REST OF SOUTHEAST ASIA AND INDONESIA TO ACCOMMODATION WITH THE COMMUNISTS</li> <li>- DESTROY SEATO AND UNDERMINE US CREDIBILITY</li> <li>- STIMULATE BITTER INTERNAL DEBATE IN THE US AND HARASSMENT OF ADMINISTRATION</li> <li>- LIMIT US ABILITY TO WAGE LIMITED WAR BY DENYING AIR, LAND, SEA BASES: COMPLICATING LOGS AND INTELLIGENCE EFFORTS'</li> </ul> </li> <li>• CHINESE STRATEGY OF 'TALK-FIGHT' AND ITS EFFECT OF CONFUSION ON THE FREE WORLD</li> <li>• OVERDEPENDENCE OF ALLIES ON US</li> <li>• US INTROSPECTION AND ISOLATION IF US LOSES IN VIETNAM</li> <li>• DRV AGGRESSION</li> <li>• PRC AND USSR ASSISTANCE TO DRV</li> <li>• SUBVERSION IN THE THIRD WORLD, ESPECIALLY IN LAOS, CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COUNTER-INSURGENCY, COVERT OPERATIONS, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE</li> <li>• INTRODUCTION OF CONVENTIONAL COMBAT FORCES AND BOMBING CAMPAIGNS AGAINST DRV TARGETS, SANCTUARIES, LOGS</li> <li>• CONTINUED AID TO SOUTH VIETNAM: ADVISERS AND TECHNICAL, MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE</li> <li>• PROMOTE SOUTH VIETNAM'S PROGRESS TOWARDS SELF-HELP, SELF-DEFENSE, AND SELF-RELIANCE</li> <li>• NEGOTIATE A JUST, HONORABLE, AND DURABLE PEACE</li> <li>• NIXON DOCTRINE</li> <li>• VIETNAMIZATION</li> <li>• CURTAIL DRV USE OF SANCTUARIES BY (SECRET) BOMBINGS AND GROUND OPERATIONS</li> <li>• GRADUAL WITHDRAWAL OF US FORCES</li> <li>• INFUSION OF ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE (MILITARY AND ECONOMIC) TO SOUTH VIETNAM</li> </ul>
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C-11/12

1970 - 1975

INTERESTS/OBJECTIVES	PERCEIVED THREATS	STRATEGIES
ON A GLOBAL BASIS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MAINTAIN VITALITY OF US GLOBAL ALLIANCES</li> <li>• RESOLVE LOCAL CONFLICTS PRIOR TO THE USE OF FORCE</li> <li>• DETER NUCLEAR WAR</li> <li>• BUILD A STABLE WORLD ORDER BASED ON MUTUAL RESTRAINT AND UNDERSTANDING</li> <li>• PROMOTE SELF-SUFFICIENCY OF DEVELOPING NATIONS</li> <li>• DETER AGGRESSION AND MAINTAIN A STRONG DEFENSE</li> <li>• DECREASE TENSIONS WITH PRC AND USSR</li> <li>• PRESERVE US CREDIBILITY AND COMMITMENTS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL REGIONALISM: OPEC, COMMON MARKET, ETC.</li> <li>• POSSIBILITY OF LOCAL CONFLICTS ERUPTING INTO MAJOR CONFLAGRATION</li> <li>• COMMUNIST AGGRESSION AND TERRORISM</li> <li>• OVER-RELIANCE ON OR FALSE SECURITY FROM DETENTE</li> <li>• US UNPREPAREDNESS TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH EVOLVING INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM, ESPECIALLY WITH THE THIRD WORLD</li> <li>• ISOLATIONISM AND A CLOSED, COMPARTMENTALIZED WORLD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NIXON DOCTRINE AND REALISTIC DETERRENCE</li> <li>• PROVISION OF ECONOMIC, TECHNICAL AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO DEVELOPING NATIONS</li> <li>• PERSONAL (AND OFTEN SECRET) DIPLOMACY</li> <li>• ASSIST SELECTED COUNTRIES IN DEVELOPING THEIR OWN INDIGENOUS DEFENSE CAPABILITIES</li> <li>• ARMS LIMITATIONS: US MAINTENANCE OF BALANCE IN BOTH NUCLEAR AND CONVENTIONAL FORCES</li> </ul>
SOUTHEAST ASIA RELATED		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SECURE HONORABLE AND DURABLE PEACE IN INDOCHINA FOR BOTH THE VIETNAMESE, OTHER INDOCHINESE PEOPLES, AND FOR AMERICANS</li> <li>- AVOID RELAPSE INTO ANOTHER WAR IN SOUTHEAST ASIA</li> <li>- STRENGTHEN UNCERTAIN PEACE IN VIETNAM</li> <li>• PRESERVE SEATO AND OTHER PACIFIC DEFENSE ORGANIZATIONS</li> <li>• ELIMINATE CROSS-BORDER INSURGENCY INTO SOUTH VIETNAM FROM BORDERING NATIONS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CROSS-BORDER INSURGENCY AND COVERT COMMUNIST INTERVENTION, SUBVERSION, AND TERRORISM</li> <li>• BREAKDOWN OF PEACE OR FAILURE TO IMPLEMENT PEACE AGREEMENT</li> <li>• OVER-EXTENSION OF INFLUENCE BY ANY OF THE MAJOR WORLD POWERS IN THE PACIFIC, IN GENERAL, AND IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, IN PARTICULAR</li> <li>• SOUTH VIETNAM'S WEAKNESS, INSTABILITY, ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS TO CAMBODIA, THAILAND, AND SOUTH VIETNAM</li> <li>• VIETNAMIZATION</li> <li>• PEACE TALKS AND OTHER RELATED NEGOTIATIONS WITH HANOI AND THE PRG</li> <li>• BOMBING OF CAMBODIA AND NORTH VIETNAM, AND OTHER OPERATIONS IN CHINA OVER CAMBODIA, NORTH VIETNAM AND LAOS</li> <li>• ECONOMIC AID TO SOUTHEAST ASIA</li> </ul>

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Figure C-6. Summary of US Global Policy, 1970-1975, and US Policy for Southeast Asia

## SOUTHEAST ASIA RELATED

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SECURE HONORABLE AND DURABLE PEACE IN INDOCHINA FOR BOTH THE VIETNAMESE, OTHER INDOCHINESE PEOPLES, AND FOR AMERICANS                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- AVOID RELAPSE INTO ANOTHER WAR IN SOUTHEAST ASIA</li> </ul> </li> <li>• STRENGTHEN UNCERTAIN PEACE IN VIETNAM</li> <li>• PRESERVE SEATO AND OTHER PACIFIC DEFENSE ORGANIZATIONS</li> <li>• ELIMINATE CROSS-BORDER INSURGENCY INTO SOUTH VIETNAM FROM BORDERING NATIONS</li> <li>• PRESERVE A FREE, NON-COMMUNIST SOUTH VIETNAM</li> <li>• PROMOTE THE REGION'S SELF-DEVELOPMENT, REGIONAL COOPERATION, STABILITY, SELF-DEFENSE, AND ENCOURAGE INDEPENDENT VISION OF THE FUTURE</li> <li>• STABILIZE THE BALANCE (OF POWER) IN THE REGION WITH OTHER MAJOR POWERS PROFESSING INTEREST IN THE REGION</li> <li>• REDUCE US CASUALTIES IN VIETNAM AND RESOLVE THE MIA/POW PROBLEM</li> <li>• PROMOTE STABLE ECONOMIC AND MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM</li> <li>• ENCOURAGE PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF CONFLICT IN CAMBODIA</li> <li>• PROMOTE RECONSTRUCTION OF LAOS AND MAINTENANCE OF CEASE-FIRE</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CROSS-BORDER INSURGENCY AND COVERT COMMUNIST INTERVENTION, SUBVERSION, AND TERRORISM</li> <li>• BREAKDOWN OF PEACE OR FAILURE TO IMPLEMENT PEACE AGREEMENT</li> <li>• OVER-EXTENSION OF INFLUENCE BY ANY OF THE MAJOR WORLD POWERS IN THE PACIFIC, IN GENERAL, AND IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, IN PARTICULAR</li> <li>• SOUTH VIETNAM'S WEAKNESS, INSTABILITY, ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT</li> <li>• NORTH VIETNAM'S PURSUANCE OF WAR ACTIVITIES</li> <li>• US DOMESTIC DISTRESS GENERATED BY WATERGATE</li> <li>• FROM THE EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVE - CONGRESSIONAL LIMITATIONS ON PROVISION OF AID TO THE REGION</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS TO CAMBODIA, THAILAND, AND SOUTH VIETNAM</li> <li>• VIETNAMIZATION</li> <li>• PEACE TALKS AND OTHER RELATED NEGOTIATIONS WITH HANOI AND THE PRG</li> <li>• BOMBING OF CAMBODIA AND NORTH VIETNAM, AND OTHER OPERATIONS IN OR OVER CAMBODIA, NORTH VIETNAM, AND LAOS</li> <li>• ECONOMIC AID TO SOUTHEAST ASIA:                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PROVISION OF AID TO CAMBODIA, THAILAND, LAOS, AND SOUTH VIETNAM</li> <li>- STIMULATE RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF COUNTRIES IN THE AREA</li> <li>- RETURN REFUGEES TO PRODUCTIVE LIVES</li> </ul> </li> <li>• PROMOTE INCREASED ROLE OF US PACIFIC ALLIES (E.G., AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND) IN ANZUS AND OTHER PACIFIC DEFENSE ORGANIZATIONS AS STABILIZING INFLUENCE IN REGION</li> <li>• MAINTAIN US TIES WITH AND PARTICIPATION IN SEATO AND OTHER PACIFIC DEFENSE ORGANIZATIONS</li> </ul> |
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C-13/14



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VOLUME III  
BIBLIOGRAPHY

VOLUME III

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PANEL DISCUSSIONS

The following persons participated in the BDM Senior Review Panel meeting on September 7 and 8, 1979 at The BDM Westbranch Conference Center. Members of the panel provided a critique of the original drafts for this volume and offered detailed comments during the panel discussions.

Braestrup, Peter., Editor, Wilson Quarterly. Former Saigon Bureau Chief for The Washington Post and author of Big Story.

Colby, William E., LLB., Former Ambassador and Deputy to COMUSMACV for CORDS, and former Director of Central Intelligence.

Davis, Vincent, Dr., Professor and Director of the Patterson School of Diplomacy and International Commerce, The University of Kentucky.

Greene, Fred, Dr., Professor, Williams College. Former Director, Office of Research for East Asian Affairs, Department of State.

Hallowell, John H., Dr., James B. Duke Professor of Political Science, Duke University.

Hughes, Thomas L., LL.D., President of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Former Director for Intelligence and Research, US Department of State with rank of Assistant Secretary of State.

Johnson, U. Alexis, Chairman of the Senior Review Panel. Career Ambassador. Former Under Secretary of State and former Ambassador to Czechoslovakia, Thailand, and Japan, and (1964-65) Deputy Ambassador to Maxwell Taylor in the Republic of Vietnam.

Sapin, Burton M., Dr., Dean, School of Public and International Affairs, The George Washington University. Former Foreign Service Officer.

Thompson, Kenneth W., Dr., Director, White Burkett Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia.

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#### INTERVIEWS

The following interviews, conducted by members of the BDM study team, provided either general or specific information useful in Volume III:

Berger, Samuel D., Retired Ambassador. Former Ambassador and Deputy to Ambassador Bunker in Saigon 1968-69. Interviewed at his home in Washington, D.C. on 22 June 1979.

Brady, Leslie S., Retired Foreign Service Officer. Former Public Affairs Officer in Saigon 1951-1952. Interviewed at The BDM Corporation 5 June 1979.

Cornin, Lucien, Colonel, US Army (Ret). Former OSS and CIA officer, serving in North Vietnam in 1945-46 and 1955, and in South Vietnam in the mid-1950s and 1961-1964. Interviewed at The BDM Corporation on 25 August 1979.

Davis, Vincent, Dr., Director, Patterson School of Diplomacy and International Commerce. Frequent consultant to high-level offices in the Departments of State and Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency. Interviewed at The BDM Corporation 13 June 1979.

Bui Dinh, Former GVN Ambassador to the US (1967-71). Cabinet Secretary in Defense Ministry in the Bao Dai Government. Interviewed in Washington, D.C. 8 June 1979.

Lemnitzer, Lyman L., General, US Army (Ret) Former Army Chief of Staff and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Supreme Allied Commander, Europe. Interviewed in the Pentagon on 15 June 1979.

Taylor, Maxwell D., General, US Army (Ret). Former Army Chief of Staff, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Ambassador to the Republic of Vietnam. Interviewed at his home in Washington, D.C. on 11 July 1979.

Westmoreland, William C., General, US Army (Ret) Former COMUSMACV and Army Chief of Staff. Interviewed at The BDM Corporation on 17 August 1979.

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The following persons responded in writing to BDM queries and provided information of use in Volume III:

Croizat, Victor Colonel, USMC (Ret). While employed by the Rand Corporation in 1967, Colonel Croizat translated a document, The Lessons of the War in Indochina, Volume II, written in 1955 by the Commander in Chief, French Forces, Indochina. Colonel Croizat provided The BDM Corporation with his views on US involvement in Indochina in a letter dated 11 September 1979. A detailed transcript covering his experiences in Indochina in the mid-1950s is held by the Oral History Section, History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, Washington, D.C.

Harkins, Paul D., General, US Army (Ret). Former COMUSMACV (1962-64) in a letter to BDM dated 29 August 1979 provided certain of his views of the 1963-64 period in Vietnam.

Nolting, Frederick E., Jr., Retired Ambassador. Former Ambassador to the Republic of Vietnam (1961-1963) in a letter to BDM dated 18 June 1979 replied briefly on the Diem coup, about which he still feels strongly, and furnished a copy of an interview he gave to the U.S. News and World Report and which appeared in the 26 July 1971 issue of that magazine, pp. 66-70.

The following transcripts in the US Army Military History Research Collection, Senior Officers Debriefing Program, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania provided some background data or insights useful in Volume III.

Goodpaster, Andrew J., General, US Army (Ret). Former DEPCOMUSMACV (1968-69) and later SACEUR, USCINCEUR (1970-1974). Interviewed by Col. William D. Johnson and LTC James C. Ferguson, (Class of '76 at AWC) at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 9 January 1976.

Harkins, Paul D., General, US Army (Ret). Former COMUSMACV. Interviewed by Major Jacob B. Couch Jr. in Dallas, Texas on 28 April 1972.

Professor Vincent Davis, Director of the Patterson School of Diplomacy and International Commerce, made available to the BDM Corporation, for purposes of this study, selected correspondence and tape recordings from John Paul Vann for the period 1965-1972. As a lieutenant colonel, Vann was the senior advisor in Tay Ninh Province in 1963, notably at the Battle of Ap Bac. He retired in 1964 and from 1965 until his death in 1972 he served in Vietnam with USAID and CORDS. He was the Corps Advisor in II Corps as a civilian at the end. Vann was a controversial individual, but his service in Vietnam was longer and more varied than that of any other American, hence his unique value as an observer. The data provided was of some use in Volume III but has its greatest value in Volumes V and VI.

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