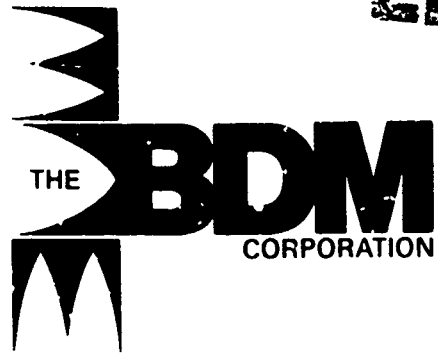


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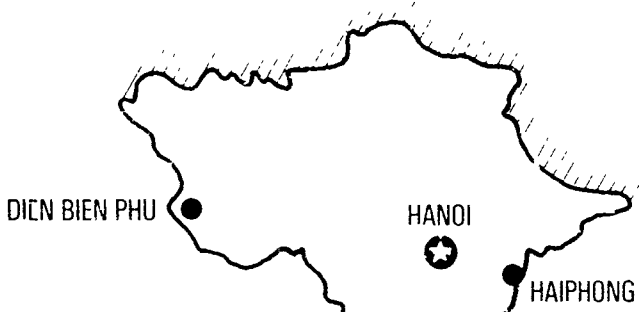
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*A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned  
in Vietnam*

# VOLUME VIII RESULTS OF THE WAR

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
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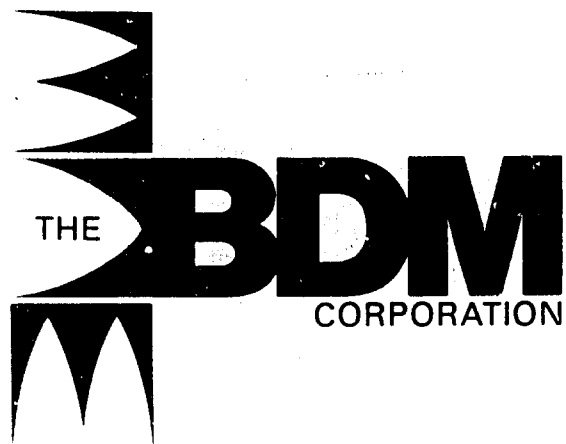
SUBJECT: Declassification of the BDM Study, "The Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam"

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 BG48632L 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  
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ANDREW C. REISON, JR.  
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12/138

11/9 May 80

May 9, 1980

14 BDM/W-78-128-TR-VOL-8

9 Final Rept.

15 DAH-39-78-C-0120

6  
A STUDY OF STRATEGIC LESSONS  
LEARNED IN VIETNAM,  
VOLUME VIII  
RESULTS OF THE WAR

This draft report is submitted to DAMO-SSP.

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 VIII 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

"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, Results of the War, is the eighth 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 multi-faceted: it strives to detail introspectively and objectively the major military and political decisions taken by the US during its protracted involvement in Southeast Asia; to assess the merits of these decisions and their implications for the US people, their leadership, both military and political, and for the nation's leading institutions, specifically the US Army; to derive useful insights and general lessons regarding the US experience in Vietnam; and, finally, to offer a general summary and assessment of the results and implications of this involvement for the United States.

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 III discusses the global conflict in which the US involvement occurred, the major historical precedents influencing US involvement, and the US national level policy process which shaped this involvement. 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, Conduct of 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, this volume, Results of the War, assesses, in broad terms, the results of the war for the US in terms of its society and government, the image and credibility of the nation, US foreign policy and military posture, the regional and world balance of power, and US alliances and commitments.

B. PURPOSE OF VOLUME VIII - RESULTS OF THE WAR

1. Purpose

Volume VIII, Results of the War, is intimately related to this study's previous volumes and to the lessons drawn therein. But it is also unique, owing to the particular focus of the volume: the results of US involvement in Southeast Asia may, in themselves, be regarded as lessons which have as their derivation this entire study effort. Moreover, results are less readily delineated or compartmentalized, primarily because, from the US perspective, the results of the war and their implications are still unfolding and will, thus, only become more apparent with the passage of time. Results, by their very nature, are dependent upon future history and the course of US international and national developments in the years to come. Only with time will these results become clearer and more definitive.

2. Methodology

Volume VIII, Results of the War, assumes a format and methodology which, while in many respects similar to those utilized in Volumes I - VII, are also singularly unique to this particular volume. The selection of the format and methodology is determined by several factors. First, the difficulties in establishing definitive cause and effect relationships and clearly delimited issues dictates a more general, less formal organization. Moreover, because of the multiplicity of interacting and overlapping issues, it seems more logical to organize the major areas into essays on

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major themes. In this way, the topic areas are addressed with less risk of missing their critical relationships, or presenting unnecessary redundancies implied by smaller, more compartmentalized units of analysis. For these reasons, Essay 1 focuses on lessons from history, particularly as they relate to Vietnam, discussing both the utility and limitations of drawing lessons, and, more problematically, of applying them to future events. Essay 2 concentrates on the evolving international order and the role that Vietnam had in shaping both this order and the United States' role in it. Essay 3 assesses the results of the war for the US homefront, focusing on the effects of Vietnam for the US public, its perceptions of the US government's role in both domestic and international politics, and changes in national-level decision making which developed as a result of Vietnam. Essay 4 offers a general and thematic discussion of Vietnam's implications for the US military and, particularly, for the US Army. Topics addressed include the All-Volunteer Army, military perceptions of limited war and the strategy of attrition, and the impact of Vietnam on military training for future threats and crises. Finally, Essay 5 provides an overview of changes in Southeast Asia which have occurred since the final defeat in 1975, and which were, in part, shaped by the Vietnam war.

As the reader will note, the discussions in each of the five essays are primarily general and thematic, delimiting those results which are either the most readily discernible or the most thought provoking and, hence, controversial. The effort may, thus, be regarded as a 'first' effort in an on-going national effort to delineate the results of Vietnam. All the results are not, as yet, 'in'; therefore, by necessity, such an evaluation must be regarded as ongoing, one that will consequently engage the attention of historians and analysts alike for some time to come.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Essay</u>	<u>Page</u>
FOREWORD	iii
PREFACE	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF MAPS	xi
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	EX-1 to EX-13
1 LESSONS FROM HISTORY: AN INTRODUCTION	1-1 to 1-5
2 RESULTS OF VIETNAM: UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY AND THE EVOLVING INTERNATIONAL ORDER	2-1 to 2-15
A. Introduction	2-1
B. Status Quo Ante	2-4
C. Aftermath and Results: Vietnam's Legacy	2-4
D. Multiplicity of Factors Affecting American Post-Vietnam Foreign Policy	2-9
3 THE US DOMESTIC SCENE IN THE POST-VIETNAM ENVIRONMENT: CHANGES AND RESULTS	3-1 to 3-24
A. Introduction	3-2
B. Changing Public Opinion	3-5
1. Public Opinion and Domestic Affairs	3-5
2. Public Opinion and International Issues	3-10
4 RESULTS FOR THE US MILITARY: THE IMPLICATIONS AND IMPACT OF VIETNAM	4-1 to 4-30
A. Introduction	4-1
B. Results for the US Military at Home: Effects on the National Command Structure and the Institution and Image of the US Army	4-2



TABLE OF CONTENTS (CONTINUED)

<u>Essay</u>	<u>Page</u>
C. Results for the US Approach to Defense: Implications for US Military Alliances and Military Assistance Programs	4-7
D. The New Technology -- Vietnam's Legacy?	4-9
E. An Appraisal of Future Threats, Future Wars, and the Appropriate US Response: Questions of Strategy and Flexibility in Training	4-11
F. Military Capabilities	4-15
1. The Changing Balance of Power	4-15
2. Mobilization Readiness	4-16
3. Recruitment/Retention Problem Areas	4-17
4. Attitude Problems	4-19
5. Training Readiness	4-20
6. Force Structure	4-21
G. An Epilogue: The Utility of US Military Power in the Post Vietnam Era	4-22
5 REGIONAL RESULTS: THE NEW FACE OF SOUTHEAST ASIA	5-1 to 5-30
A. Introduction	5-1
B. The Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 1975 - Present	5-2
1. In The South	5-2
2. In The North	5-4
C. The Democratic People's Republic of Laos, 1975 - Present	5-10
1. Political Integration	5-10
2. The Military Factor	5-12
D. Democratic Kampuchea (Cambodia), 1975 - Present	5-15
1. The Legacy of War and the Pol Pot Regime	5-15
2. The Vietnamese Solution	5-16
E. The China-Vietnam Conflict of 1979	5-18
F. The Human Cost	5-22
G. Thailand -- On Hanoi's "Hit List"?	5-24
BIBLIOGRAPHY	B-1 to B-10

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>		<u>Page</u>
3-1	Internationalist/Isolationist Trends, 1964-1976	3-11
5-1	Key Vietnamese Leaders	5-5
5-2	Socialist Republic of Vietnam: Party Structure	5-6


LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>		<u>Page</u>
3-1	The US Public: Trust and Confidence	3-7
3-2	The US Public: Trust in Government	3-9
3-3	US Public Opinion on Several Crucial International Issues	3-13
3-4	US Public Opinion on Foreign Aid Programs	3-15
3-5	US Public Opinion on Defense Related Issues	3-16
3-6	US Public Opinion and the United Nations	3-18
5-1	Milestones of Integration, 1975-1979	5-8
5-2	Vietnamese Forces at a Glance	5-11
5-3	China-Vietnam Conflict of February-March 1979	5-21


LIST OF MAPS

<u>Map</u>		<u>Page</u>
5-1	Areas of Continuing Conflict, 1975-79	5-14
5-2	China-Vietnam Conflict in February-March 1979	5-20
5-3	Indochina Refugee Camps in Thailand	5-23

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This volume describes and assesses the results and implications of the Vietnam War for the United States. Each of the five essays focuses on one particular area of concern: lessons of history and their use and importance for the making of future policy, the nation's foreign policy and role in the international order, the US domestic scene, the nation's defense establishment, and the region of Southeast Asia. All of the essays provide useful insights as to the results of Vietnam for these specific areas of interest. A summary of these results and insights follows.



INSIGHTS AND SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Lessons from History:  
An Introduction

- While the Vietnam example may be of limited applicability to future policy decisions, primarily because of its unique features, it is also just as obvious that historical events all share some common elements, allowing for some degree of instructive and predictive analysis regarding potential, future crises. Even the most unusual cases of history can be instructive.
- Lessons of history will continue to be debated and remain difficult to draw, dependent as they are on personal assessment and value judgments. Rational, systematic explanations cannot always be imposed even in retrospect. The operation of unknown or unexpected variables must, thus, be allowed for. Useful lessons must take this into account.
- If experience in the past is not to be lost, if history is not to disintegrate beyond all intelligible recovery, the difficulty in pursuing lessons and results must not, consequently, stop it from being attempted. Extreme caution and an open mind can help reduce some of the uncertainty. In looking to history for understanding, it is well to remember that events which seem deep in the past were once far in the future. In looking to the future for preparation, it is well to remember that projecting the present is a far cry from predicting the future.

INSIGHTS AND SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Results of Vietnam:  
The United States'  
Foreign Policy and  
the Evolving Inter-  
national Order

- Even by cautious estimation, the war had far-reaching effects on both the international scene and the performance of the United States. The rapid change in the status and outlook of the US, occurring as they did during the period of America's bitter and ultimately unsuccessful involvement in Southeast Asia, are often associated with the war and viewed as its most important legacy. However, Vietnam was only one, albeit important, factor which prompted change and, consequently, it is important that Vietnam-related cause and effect relationships be cautiously drawn and assessed.
- US involvement in Vietnam was the culmination of, not an aberration from, post-World War II policies. The initial American intervention in Vietnam was consistent with the contemporary US national philosophy and objectives, however one evaluates that policy or the relevance of its application to Vietnam. One of the most valuable results of Vietnam is that it has compelled the nation to reexamine its national philosophy and objectives in its effort to appreciate the implications of US involvement in Southeast Asia.
- We must be wary of oversimplification in any treatment of the American intervention in Vietnam on bi-, tri-, and multipolar relationships, for while the imprint of Vietnam can be detected in numerous areas, it by no means constitutes a direct line of tracks leading to specific consequences. The rapidly changing structure of the international scene in some ways made the continuing American presence in Vietnam -- at least by the late 1960s and early

1970s -- something of an anachronism, and it was this character, this limited relevance in the changing world order and the changing US attitude and posture, which thus limited the impact of Vietnam on other foreign policy questions.

- The most significant aspect of change in the post-Vietnam environment is perhaps not just the emergence of pluralism --of multiple centers of power -- but more the emergence of more variegated centers of power, creating a complicated network of international relationships. There has not only been a diffusion of power, but a confusion. The Soviet-American relationship remained (and remains) critical, but no longer exclusively so.

INSIGHTS AND SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The US Domestic Scene  
in the Post-Vietnam  
Environment: Changes  
and Results

- The outlook of a people towards its country's role and image in the international order, and towards its government's credibility and reliability on the whole, is shaped by that nation's successes and failures, both at home and abroad. It is also determined by the extent to which a nation and its people are capable of accepting and creatively integrating change, both positive and negative, into the day-to-day making of domestic and foreign policy. The ability to do so derives from a belief, both on the part of the people and its government leaders, in the fundamental strengths inherent in the country's fabric, and in the need to draw upon these strengths in solving domestic and international problems.
- The decade of active US involvement in Vietnam spanned the activist period of the American civil rights movement, the emergence of a youth subculture, Watergate, the decline of the dollar, intensive space exploration, two Arab-Israeli wars, the beginning of detente, the rise of oil power, and the thaw in US-PRC hostilities. The appearance of a national consensus was shattered as public dissent regarding the American social system was expressed through urban riots and massive antiwar demonstrations. The sanctity and credibility of the American government was called into question and Congressional-Presidential relations ceased to share the bipartisan flavor of the 1950s. Vietnam served, in part, as a catalyst for these developments.

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- The "passing" of the Cold War mentality is the trend most readily observable in the public opinion polls and assessments of US-international relations taken during the sixties and seventies. This phenomenon may, in fact, be a natural outgrowth of the "passing" of the World War II generation and the subsequent infusion of a new "Vietnam" generation.
- The US public is more suspicious of its leaders' abilities to define US security interests and develop appropriate strategies for their protection. In the wake of Vietnam it is, thus, not surprising that there has been a perceptible "turning inward" on the part of the nation and its people. The need to recover and to initiate a period of national self-evaluation prompted this turn, as did the urgent need to put one's house in order after a decade or more of neglect.
- The Vietnam experience has not resulted in a burgeoning desire for isolationism. The world is too interesting for such a sentiment to reach epidemic proportions. Self-preoccupation more aptly defines the contemporary national spirit. Consequently, Vietnam has exerted at least one appreciable and important effect on the US domestic scene: it has prompted the need and desire for serious dialogue and a reexamination of America's role, domestic and international. It is through this stage of growth and development that the US is now cautiously proceeding.



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## INSIGHTS AND SUMMARY OF RESULTS

### Results for the US Military: Implications and Impact Vietnam

- The years of the United States' protracted military activity in Southeast Asia, particularly during the 1965-1973 time frame in which US forces were committed to a combat role in the region, saw the emergence of a new, somewhat problematic approach to war-related decision making on the national level. The World War II precept of 'do what you must to achieve victory' was replaced by a set of political-military formulae for planning, waging, and ultimately, winning the war. The Johnson years, in particular, witnessed the Commander-in-Chief's extension of his decision-making authority in areas of war management, previously the realm of the nation's top-ranking military commanders and, on occasion, even of front-line or theater commanders. The dictates of a more complex international environment, the availability of highly developed technology for the transmission of Washington-Vietnam wartime communications, and the Commander-in-Chief's individual personality traits which caused him to seek intimate involvement in what were often considered routine matters of war management, all figured prominently in the emergence of this arrangement.
- What has transpired, at least in part as a result of Vietnam, is that the roles of national level decision makers and decision-making bodies in war/crisis management have been (and are still being) subjected to a period of redefinition and refinement. Vietnam served as a 'forum' during which certain command structure deficiencies became apparent; the post-Vietnam period provided and provides a peacetime respite for reviewing and rectifying some of these problems. Future crises will, thus, illuminate the effectiveness of on-going adjustments

and, perhaps more essential, will illustrate again how intimately entwined war/crisis management is with present and future political exigencies, causing what some may again regard as a 'hands-tied' approach to waging war or defusing crises.

- Vietnam set the stage for the VOLAR concept and its subsequent implementation. The effects of this political decision for the US armed forces are many and varied; its implications for national military preparedness, for the quality of the nation's military personnel, and for the military's professional image are still being heatedly debated. With the institution of VOLAR, the US armed forces, and particularly the Army, must contend with a shift away from a higher educated, middle-class, white representation in the services to a less educated, lower class and black/minority representation. This and other related aspects of VOLAR pose fundamental problems for the Army, many of which still require carefully developed solutions.
- The tendency to approach the services as 'just another job' - an outgrowth of the VOLAR recruiting dilemma posed by market considerations - is somewhat inimical to the armed forces' professional and philosophical tradition. The armed forces, which require a soldier to be 'faithful unto death,' must indeed depend on incentives over and above those inspired by financial and career considerations to attract and retain truly dedicated manpower, particularly for leadership positions. In reality, however, the services often seek to attract personnel by offering promises of career opportunities, thereby generating an environment that rewards relatively insignificant indicators of success, and disregarding or discouraging the growth of long-term qualities of moral and ethical strength

on which the future of the services depend. Vietnam is not solely responsible for this dilemma, but the war and the stress it placed on US military personnel most definitely contributed to the present state of affairs.

- In the aftermath of Vietnam, the US has indeed turned its attention to those alliances in which it is and has been the most 'comfortable.' What has apparently developed is a desire on the part of the US to uphold, underscore and upgrade its longer-held security alliances, perhaps because the US leadership regards these allies as more important, more deserving, and too long ignored or mistreated during our years in Vietnam. Yet this tendency avoids the issue of our other, smaller, 'less-comfortable' alliances, particularly those less well established with Third World nations. For the US military, faced with the requirement of establishing viable and cohesive military assistance programs and defense pacts, the implications of this tendency are many. The US military will be faced with establishing defense arrangements with peoples who are often unclear about or suspicious of US long-term intentions and objectives, and about whom the US leadership has only sketchy knowledge. The all-important lesson of "Know Your Ally" may, therefore, continue to elude the US in a relatively uncertain and turbulent world.
- In the aftermath of Vietnam, the US has directed a sizeable amount of its defense dollars and energies to the research and development of new, highly complex weapon systems, to the modernization of materiel and forces neglected during the years of the Vietnam war effort, and to the upgrading and enhancement of systems tried and tested during the conflict. While this development is hardly surprising, it has also caused a great number of

military leaders and defense analysts alike to question the nation's 'high-tech' approach to defense and its preoccupation with the performance (vs. manning) of sophisticated technology. While 'pulling the plug' on technology's march forward is not advocated, it is certainly imperative that a compromise be reached between the level of sophisticated technology available and the present-day capabilities of our servicemen. Flexibility is the key: our experience in Vietnam counsels the benefits of such an approach.

- It is not implausible to regard Vietnam as a prologue to an entire chapter of global turbulence in the Third World, characteristic of and unique to international political development in the post-WWII era, and which is unfolding and will continue to unfold with greater rapidity for at least the next several decades. Implicit in this global scenario of turbulence is the question of US response -- shaped as it is by the United States' military-political experiences in Southeast Asia -- and the US military's capacity to train adequately to meet a variety of threats which may occur singly, successively, or simultaneously. Yet, the question arises: are the US forces prepared to cope with threats of both a conventional and non-conventional, quasi-revolutionary nature? And, as a consequence of Vietnam, have the US armed forces, specifically the US Army, zealously over-trained for one type of conflict, to the exclusion of training-readiness for other forms of warfare possible in future, limited engagements? The answers to these questions are intimately entwined with the US perception of limited (non-nuclear) war, shaped (and perhaps altered) as a result of Vietnam. Vietnam has hopefully served one major purpose -- it has highlighted the often forgotten fact that the limited war concept not

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only has many applications, but that there must also be a broad range of strategies from which to select the one (or several) appropriate to each particular, unique engagement. Certainly the ever-present possibility of turbulence and aggression in the Third World underscores the vital necessity of such a flexible approach.

INSIGHTS AND SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Regional Results:  
The New Face of  
Southeast Asia

- Despite the desire of many Americans to forget about Indochina, recent events have demonstrated that this region has by no means exhausted its ability to both astonish and to involve the rest of the world -- however reluctant it may be -- in its continuing problems. Interest of the great powers in this region has been demonstrated by the USSR's massive assistance to Hanoi, by Chinese fears of a strong, aggressive Vietnam on its southern doorstep, and by worldwide concern for the Indo-chinese refugees.
- In addition to imposing its rule in the South, Hanoi has also been faced with the huge task of national reconstruction, particularly in the Northern half of the country where bombing damage was the most severe. The North Vietnamese transportation system was largely destroyed, industrial facilities seriously damaged, and about 1,000 villages devastated. Despite the fact that rebuilding has been ongoing since the final defeat in 1975, the "new" Vietnam still faces pressing economic troubles, both on account of war damage and because of the SRV's rapid expansion of its armed forces, thereby overburdening an already shattered economy.
- With the fall of Saigon in 1975, the Royal Lao Government saw little chance of holding its own and thus declared the war in Laos to be over, capitulating on Hanoi's terms. In December, the Laotian monarchy was abolished and the Democratic People's Republic of Laos established. In a political transformation which passed with little notice in the West, a communist regime was installed in Laos. With the continued presence of both Vietnamese and Soviet forces in the country, it is apparent that Laos will continue to be

a pawn and staging area in the continuing struggle for Southeast Asia.

- The tragedy of Cambodia is still being played out today. The post-war revolutionary regime of Pol Pot directed what probably has been the most radical and far-reaching revolution of the twentieth century. Individualism and chaotic license were replaced by radical collectivism and perpetual conditioning, while the regime murdered its subjects by the hundreds of thousands.
- The Vietnamese and the pro-Hanoi forces of Cambodia launched a massive campaign to rout the Pol Pot regime, giving rise to a hot-bed of military activity in Southeast Asia and alarming the world about a possible Third World War. The popular image of the Vietnamese has changed as a result of the Cambodian venture. No longer is Vietnam pictured as brave little "David" struggling against "Goliath." Instead, the Vietnamese are now portrayed as expansionists, however unpopular that view was in the West in the 1960s.

ESSAY 1

LESSONS FROM HISTORY: AN INTRODUCTION

... of all the disasters of Vietnam, the worst may be the "lessons" that we'll draw from it.1/

Albert Wohlstetter  
Professor, University of Chicago

The question which the Vietnam fiasco raises is both crucial and difficult to answer. Has Vietnam been an accident, an aberration, an exception, or as Walt Rostow's preaching would have us believe and as so many revisionists assert, has it been a logical and necessary development in American foreign policy? If they are right then our failure there should oblige us to revise drastically our whole policy, to follow a totally new course in the future and also to re-examine more critically our past successes so as to find in them the germs of our later failure. If they are wrong, then the only lesson of Vietnam is that we applied valid concepts clumsily and that in future interventions we ought to be more careful about the means and strategy we use to reach our goals.2/

Stanley Hoffman  
Professor, Harvard University

There is a respectable body of opinion that holds we can learn nothing, or next to nothing, from our experience in Vietnam, primarily because Vietnam was unique. McGeorge Bundy, for example, said that "...there is at least a great lesson about Vietnam which deserves to be learned and understood by all of us just as soon as possible: it is that the case of Vietnam is unique."3/ Frances E. Rourke concluded that "Critics of the war as well as its defenders often tended to stake out more extravagant positions on the meaning of Vietnam than were justified by the rather unique circumstances of that conflict."4/ James C. Thomson, Jr. noted that "The only lesson we should learn from Vietnam ... is never again to fight a nationalist movement dominated by communists in a former French colony."5/ And Samuel Huntington, summarizing the conditions which put Vietnam in a category of its own, concluded that "Every historical event or confluence of events is obviously unique; Vietnam may also be irrelevant."6/



In many respects the Vietnam example does seem to be of limited applicability to future policy decisions. Western colonialism, which created and shaped the problems in Vietnam, is, with a few exceptions, a thing of the past. Also seemingly on the decline are the US's domination of international affairs and even its eagerness to get involved overseas. Further, several facets of the Vietnamese situation--the remnants of Chinese and French dominance, the social makeup and physical division of the country, and the nature of the roles of the USSR and PRC, to name a few--bear only limited resemblance to conditions affecting current world trouble spots.

As Hans Morgenthau has observed, however, "it is not a new discovery that historical phenomena are unique in one sense."7/ Nor is it particularly troubling. For just as it is obvious that historical events all have elements peculiar to them, it is also clear that they have other elements in common. Naturally certain events may be more predictable and predictive than others, but even unusual cases may prove instructive. It is the same with human beings. A study of the 'great' (ergo unusual) men and women of history might seem a poor way to shed light on the lives--the desires, the views, the conditions--of the majority, unless, as has been argued, the lives of the 'great' are simply the lives of the average writ large. If this is so they may well provide an ideal mechanism for understanding human character and history.

In a similar manner the Vietnam example might prove to be very instructive. As Stanley Hoffmar observed,

On the one hand Vietnam is an extreme case: the most inappropriate terrain for the application of concepts that have proved fertile and adequate elsewhere. On the other hand, the very attempt, indeed the massive and often frenzied effort, at pursuing goals, applying notions, and devising strategies that turned out to be irrelevant, self-defeating, and dangerous in so unrewarding an area with such persistence in wishful thinking and self-delusion tells us a great deal about what ought to be discarded in the future. It reveals flaws that come from the depths of our political style and machinery, but had never been so clearly brought to

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light in any previous operation. An extreme case that is an aberration teaches little. An extreme case which is at the margin, in the sense of disclosing either a logic or a set of contradictions that are not apparent in run-of-the-mill cases and of forcing one to make explicit choices that are normally made without much thought or pain, can perform the same functions as an ideal type: it is an intensification, an enlargement, of normally blurred features. Vietnam is like a blowup of many of our flaws.<sup>8/</sup>

But if Vietnam was not unique in every aspect, if there are lessons it does teach, which are the relevant aspects, and how do we know when we have found--much less learned--the lessons? It is said that those critics who pontificate in the wake of a traumatic situation are as likely to be wrong as those who got us involved in the first place. Recognizing this, Samuel Huntington composed an antidote to Santayana's famous warning ("Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."): "Those who remember the past are condemned to misread it." Huntington concludes that Munich, Berlin, Algeria, Cuba, and Korea each provided more mislessons than lessons as far as decision making in Vietnam was concerned, and that the lessons from Vietnam are no more likely to be accurate.

There is no easy solution to this dilemma. Lessons will continue to be debated and remain difficult to draw, dependent as they are on personal assessment and value judgments. Even were there to be some general agreement, the validity of many lessons is made precarious by the abundance of unknowns--past, present, and future. Rational, systematic explanations cannot always be imposed even in retrospect--the operation of unknown or chance variables must be allowed for. That there will continue to be unknown and unexpected variables to grapple with, that we will be not much better than our predecessors at predicting the future, that mistakes are more a constant than a variable, would be folly not to admit. Useful lessons must take this into account.

There is still another problem that assails the would-be lesson maker. Successes in national policy are usually less closely examined than failures. Indeed some policy "successes" seem hardly to have been scrutinized at all. And yet it would be dubious to assume that successes are

always less revealing than failures, that successes are always the result of correct policy, or even that successes are always correctly so labelled. Does the successful resolution of the Cuban missile crisis mean that President Carter should force another confrontation in Cuba? Great care must be taken before such conclusions are made. As J. K. Galbraith once observed, "Success in a lottery is no argument for lotteries."10/

If anything, there are even more problems involved in analyzing "failure." It is, for example, a basic premise of human psychology that no one likes to admit failure. Examples abound of the great lengths to which individuals and groups will go to avoid acknowledging error, both to others and to themselves. There is usually some careful interpretation, some special perspective, some obscure thought process, or some saving grace to which interested parties can cling for exoneration or reassurance in almost any situation. So in addition to the already significant problems attending policy analysis and planning there is the formidable one of ego.

Mundane but telling examples of such behavior--rationalization, defensiveness, willful ignorance, distortion, and so on--can be easily culled from the advice column in most newspapers. Unfortunately, national and international illustrations are equally common, and often have more extensive or tragic consequences.

With so many potential pitfalls, is there any point in pursuing elusive lessons and nebulous results? Unfortunately, while this quest may produce a poor excuse for certainty, it is the only substitute available. If experience gained in the past is not to be lost, if history is not to disintegrate beyond all intelligible recovery, the difficulty of this exercise must not stop it from being attempted. Extreme caution and an open mind can help reduce some of the uncertainty.

In looking to history for understanding, it is well to remember that events which now seem deep in the past were once far in the future. In looking to the future for preparation it is well to remember that projecting the present is a far cry from predicting the future.

ESSAY 1 ENDNOTES

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2. Stanley Hoffman, cited in No More Vietnams?, p. 5.
3. McGeorge Bundy, cited in Earl Ravenal Never Again (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1978), p. 6.
4. Frances E. Rourke, cited in Never Again, p. 23.
5. James Thomson, cited in Never Again, p. 23.
6. Samuel Huntington, cited in Never Again, p. 23.
7. Hans Morgenthau, cited in No More Vietnams?, p. 3.
8. Stanley Hoffman, cited in No More Vietnams?, pp. 5-6.

ESSAY 2

RESULTS OF VIETNAM: UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY AND  
THE EVOLVING INTERNATIONAL ORDER

The blow to American idealism . . . and the damage which military and political failure in Vietnam may have done to American influence are only aspects of a larger process of change; and the new structure of power relations in the world would not, in my view, be radically different if the United States had never become seriously involved in Indochina, or even if it had been able to impose a peace settlement upon North Vietnam between 1964 and 1973.<sup>1/</sup>

Alastair Buchan

I would like to leave you, therefore, with two thoughts with regard to power: that you cannot divorce power and responsibility and, secondly, that the whole secret of power is not to use it.<sup>2/</sup>

Sir Robert Thompson

A. INTRODUCTION

Certainly, if one examines the structure of power in the world, both before and after the period of America's involvement in Indochina, there would seem to be striking evidence--even by cautious estimation--that the war had far-reaching effects on both the international scene and the performance of the United States.

In the early 1960s the US produced nearly half of the world's wealth and consumed a disproportionately large share of its resources. At the same time it was able to support an active and expensive foreign policy, including a vast developmental aid program. On almost every scale used to measure power, wealth, and influence, the US surpassed its competitors. Its strategic weapons superiority over the Soviet Union was assessed on the order of ten to one, and it seemed to be able to put this advantage to good use in the diplomatic sphere--as in the Cuban missile crisis. This dominance extended to the US relationship with its allies; in Western Europe the NATO alliance was, for most countries, more important than the European Economic Community. And despite periodic setbacks, domestic reforms were

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proceeding apace, spreading the benefits of higher education, racial desegregation, and other federal programs to ever widening circles in an already prosperous society.

After the withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam, this picture was vastly different. Though still the world's most powerful nation, the US now faced much more serious rivalry from the Soviet Union, which during the war years had succeeded in transforming itself from a potential to a real world power by constructing a series of alliances, capitalizing on its foreign policy successes and the US's failures, and achieving numerical parity in various strategic weapons. With a strong foothold in the Middle East and increasing success in Africa and the Indian subcontinent, the USSR seemed to be headed for an even stronger world position. At the same time, China was emerging as an important member of the international community, a fact which led to something of a triangular relationship between it, the US, and the Soviet Union. This multipolarity was also reflected in the increasingly assertive foreign policies of the US's allies. France, of course, was already established as the problem child of the Western alliance; now, however, Japan and Germany had begun to explore policies consonant with their reassumption of strong positions in the world's economic-political order.

In the Pacific the US's position was still strong, but no longer as dominant as before. Many of the smaller Asian states, notably Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore, gained recognition as increasingly important players in the international economic system. Moreover, their assumption of a more concerned and active role in developing a Pacific alliance system was evidenced in these countries' efforts to strengthen ASEAN.

Moreover, this multipolarity was reflected in the concurrent rise of the Third World as a potent economic and political force. The integration of these nations into the global community was seen to be of increasing importance to the more developed Western nations - particularly to the two "giants" - and integral to the creation of a pluralistic world system based on global interdependence. As Henry Kissinger aptly notes,

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The new nations make insistent demands on the global system, testing their new economic power and seeking a greater role and more equitable share in the world's prosperity. A new pattern of relationships must be fashioned out of cooperation for mutual benefit, impelled by the reality of our global interdependence.

Our friendships with nations in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, on the basis of mutual respect and practical cooperation, take on a new importance as the building blocks of world community. We must recognize that no world order will be stable over the last quarter of this century unless all its participants consider that they have a stake in it and that it is legitimate and just.<sup>3/</sup>

Economic developments were, if anything, even more sobering. As early as 1958 the US showed an adverse balance of payments, and by the mid 1960s some countries began to accumulate significant dollar surpluses. Increasing American overseas investment (which took advantage of lower wage levels abroad) furthered the balance of payments problems and contributed to unemployment at home. By 1970 the strength of the US dollar was on the decline, and America's balance of trade was in deficit, with increasing US dependence on foreign raw materials--especially oil--indicating that the situation was likely to worsen.

This rapid change in the structure of international relations and in the status and outlook of the US, occurring as they did during the period of America's bitter and ultimately unsuccessful involvement in Southeast Asia, are, not surprisingly, often associated with the war and viewed as its most important legacy. To what extent these can be linked, to what extent a cause and effect relationship can be established, however, must be cautiously assessed; concurrent events may well be, but are not necessarily, causally connected. A closer look at the status quo ante, the unfolding of events, and an assessment of the interplay of the more important variables is necessary before any conclusion can be reached.

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### B. STATUS QUO ANTE

For two decades after World War II the single most important factor influencing world politics was the preeminence of the United States. Given the conditions of the post-war world and America's unprecedented strong economic position, the United States was able to pursue an active, expensive, interventionist foreign policy fueled by a fear of monolithic Stalinist communism ("the communist menace"), a spirit of liberal democratic evangelicalism ("global New Dealism"), and a belief in the necessity of maintaining a single durable world order to stop aggression and maintain security ("Stimsonianism"). Post-war defense alliances and the rebuilding of Europe through the Marshall Plan were both part of this overall goal. So was intervention. From Greece in 1947 to the Dominican Republic in 1965 the US sent military and paramilitary forces into other countries to fight guerrilla movements or combat communism at an average rate of once every 18 months. Given these goals and this pattern of intervention, it can be seen that the US involvement in Vietnam was the culmination of, not an aberration from, post-WWII US policies.<sup>4/</sup>

That initial American intervention in Vietnam was consistent with the contemporary US national philosophy and objectives--however one evaluates that policy or the relevance of its application to Vietnam--seems fairly clear. Yet, as the war proceeded, both the relevance of the specific case and the validity of the national policy came increasingly into question. To understand the role which the Vietnam experience played in this evolution we must first clarify what in fact the foreign policy results were--what this evolution evolved to.

### C. AFTERMATH AND RESULTS: VIETNAM'S LEGACY

Assertions about the effects of the Vietnam experience on the content and application of US foreign policy have ranged from those that claim that its impact was minimal and at most shortlived to those that see it as the crucial event responsible for the change in the US's outlook on and position in the world.



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Chester Cooper concluded that the US's experience in Vietnam had the effect of raising the 'critical activation energy' necessary for future US intervention--but only temporarily.

If we can draw a lesson from Vietnam in terms of intervention I suspect it is that the threshold will be higher for future intervention, that the alarms will have to be louder and more traumatic, that the case for United States security being affected will have to be somewhat more convincing. I am not arguing whether we should intervene or not. I am suggesting the kind of standard likely to emerge after Vietnam, and life being what it is, this standard will have a life expectancy of only five years or so.<sup>5/</sup>

Others see the Vietnam experience as playing some kind of catalytic role--bringing about or hurrying the timetable for events for which there was already a favorable environment. Anthony Hartley, writing for the International Institute of Strategic Studies, thus observed, ". . . in the particular case of Vietnam, the general effect was to inaugurate a transitional phase of American policy which, while apparently maintaining a traditional structure, hastened the advent of a new international system and put the US in a position to make further changes in her commitments as her interests might dictate." <sup>6/</sup> This he sees as primarily the result of a shift in public opinion--"the post-Vietnam disillusionment with ecumenical foreign policy based on strong moral opinions." <sup>7/</sup> Similarly, the Vietnam experience, acting as high-lighter catalyst, can be seen behind the remarks by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger when he concluded that the turmoil of the past decade has taught us "that our resources, while enormous, are yet finite; that our efforts, while they can be considerable, must be put into some sense of priority. . . thoughtful people will understand we cannot dominate the world, nor can we escape from it." <sup>8/</sup>

There is also the view that the effect of the Vietnam experience was something more than catalytic. Luigi Einaudi, a Rand Corporation social scientist, concludes that "one lesson of Vietnam that is going to condition the international environment for some time is, very simply, that the credibility of US advice has been substantially compromised, . . . regardless of whether we choose to assess Vietnam as some kind of failure," <sup>9/</sup>

and this in a nuclear-capacity, superpower-dominated world in which speaking softly but carrying a big stick is becoming increasingly important; in which the key to effective power is not having to use it; in which credibility, influence, and diplomacy play increasingly important roles.

It is impossible to present the full range of views on the impact of US involvement in Vietnam on American foreign policy, as it is impossible also to do justice to the intricacies and contexts of the views that are presented. Only the major strands can be hinted at; the temptation to distort and make 'straw men' out of undesirable views must be avoided.

In any analysis of the impact of Vietnam on American foreign policy, an assessment of its impact on the actual content and conduct of immediate post-war foreign policy is of course crucial. In this period, the Nixon doctrine is certainly the most dominant concept. There are a number of excellent accounts and evaluations of Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy and the Nixon doctrine. 10/ Sensitive as always to public opinion and the international mood, Nixon, with Kissinger, created or at least oversaw a conglomeration of policies which were indeed reflective of the international domestic situation.

As discussed more fully elsewhere in these volumes, Richard Nixon became president at a time when the foreign policy consensus of the last 20 years--for some years on the decline--had finally crumbled to a point of essential collapse. Weariness at home and disapproval and changed circumstances abroad seemed to indicate that American withdrawal from Vietnam would not be an aberration from an otherwise equally active interventionist foreign policy; if the administration wanted "business as usual" it seemed it would have to be business of a different sort. The Nixon doctrine was part of the attempt to steer this new course.

In many ways the Nixon doctrine--as promulgated at the Guam briefing in July 1969 and as refined in later pronouncements and actions--captured both the intentions and the confusion of the time. Intent on keeping current commitments but limiting 'unnecessary' liabilities or entangling alliances, the Nixon doctrine implied retrenchment without making entirely clear the new ranking of priorities, and suggested a form of moral neutrality which conflicted in certain of its applications with the US system of alliances. 11/ This does not mean that the Nixon doctrine was a failed

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effort at policy making; the flexibility allowed by the indefiniteness of the policies' details was certainly recognized and to some extent necessary. Kissinger himself recognized the incompatibility of a policy preserving American freedom of action and the existence of a solid alliance system:

If we reserve the right to judge each issue on its "merits," we shall remove the psychological basis of a coalition policy. If other powers are assured of our support without formal commitment whenever we agree with them, or if they can suffer our opposition regardless of past association when we differ, no special significance attaches to alliances any longer. The insistence on complete freedom of action blurs the line between allies and the uncommitted.12/

Relations with the Soviet Union were also in a confused state, as Nixon's concept of a pluralistic 'five-power world' both acknowledged and furthered. This will be discussed more fully in the following section. It is enough here to indicate the eclecticism of the Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy in the face of domestic upheaval and a changing international scene. As Hartley concludes,

Thus, although the Nixon administration succeeded in cutting down American commitments in the world, in extracting itself from Vietnam, in bringing off some brilliant diplomatic coups and in going some way to meet, and deal with, the changed international situation of the 1960s, it cannot be said that its alliance policy has been very successful, while the central dialogue with the Soviet Union either remains problematical as to its ultimate significance or could be ending in an impasse.

This verdict might be put another way. It is possible to distinguish two phases of the Nixon-Kissinger policy, although these overlap chronologically. The first consists of a recognition of new international facts and the abandonment of the vestiges of former American policy no longer appropriate to altered circumstances. This might be held to include such acts of policy as the exit from Vietnam, recognition of the People's Republic of China, non-intervention in Latin America, etc. Bringing American policy into line with

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the facts in this way is to the credit of Dr. Kissinger's eye for reality, but the diplomatic successes involved were, it must be confessed, easily gained in that they were simply the result of acceptance of the disintegration of a previous system. However, it would be more difficult to put something in that system's place, and so far the Nixon-Kissinger policy has had least success when it has tried to be most constructive. This, of course, is natural--construction being a harder task than the admission of failure--but it should be realized that much of the brilliant diplomacy which marked the Nixon administration has consisted of the acceptance of faits accomplis.<sup>13/</sup>

It would seem then that, in the wake of the Vietnam war, the last vestiges of the old foreign policy consensus have been removed, though no similarly comprehensive or popularly supported system has been or perhaps can be substituted. The confusion was still evident in 1976 when a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on foreign policy choices for the seventies and eighties concluded:

A vision of the U.S. role in the world has yet to be drawn. Secretary Kissinger spoke of the United States entering a new era in international affairs, redefining relationships with its allies and recognizing that it now shares responsibility for world economic leadership. Former Defense Secretary Schlesinger, however, placed greater emphasis on the role of the United States as the mainstay of a set of free nations. Only the United States has the power necessary to counter the military and political power of the Soviet Union, he said. George Meany and others such as New Orleans Mayor Moon Landrieu and Father Constantinides reflected that the United States has no foreign policy of its own--that it only reacts to the policies and actions of other governments. <sup>14/</sup>

Volumes could and have been written on post Vietnam foreign policy, but the single question here is, what specifically were the effects of Vietnam on this foreign policy? Of course the answer cannot be known with great certainty: history does not allow instant replays with one of the variables removed. Great caution must therefore be exercised before events which occurred after Vietnam are attributed solely or partially to it. We must now take a closer look at the factors which, along with Vietnam, shaped US post-Vietnam foreign policy.

D. MULTIPLICITY OF FACTORS AFFECTING AMERICAN POST-VIETNAM FOREIGN POLICY

The late Professor Alastair Buchan, one of the world's preeminent international relations scholars, has concluded that the importance of Vietnam in the shaping of the post-war world has often been overplayed, sometimes neglecting other important variables:

... if one sticks to the process of change on the world scene that has occurred over the past decade or so and assesses underlying causes as a historian might do, a strong case can be made that the effect of Vietnam upon the most basic elements of transformation has been either marginal or at most indirect. It is generally agreed that the greater pluralism of the international system in the mid-1970s by contrast with the mid-1960s has resulted from a convergence of two motive forces in particular: first, the Sino-Soviet conflict, which has made each of the mainland powers identify the other as its principal adversary, and thus move to make limited accommodations with the United States and other centers of power; second, the ending of American dominance within the non-Communist world, most particularly in its alliance systems--at every plane of power except the strategic--and a consequent redefinition of American interests. 15/

There has been a great deal of debate over the effects of Vietnam on the development of the Sino-Soviet split and hence on the development of a more pluralistic world order. After the Chinese leadership's fears generated by MacArthur's handling of the Korean War had ebbed, after it became clear that the presence of the US Seventh Fleet in the China Sea was not a prelude to an American invasion, the tensions inherent in the geopolitics of Sino-Soviet relations developed into a clearer ideological form.

Arguments can be made that events in Indochina slowed the development of this split, the first signs of which appeared as early as 1956. Wary that the American presence in Indochina might foreshadow--however unlikely--an invasion of China, Peking, not otherwise particularly warm to Hanoi and the latter's preference for Russian aid, was forced to maintain a decent working relationship with both Moscow and Hanoi, in the event that Russian assistance was needed.

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In addition, it is observed that the normalization of Chinese-American relations was hindered by American involvement in Vietnam, both by delaying the point at which China could safely approach the US and by maintaining, in the minds of some of those in the Administration, in Congress, and among the American public, an unnecessarily hostile image of China. However this argument loses much of its weight after 1966 when the Cultural Revolution directed most Chinese attention inwards, until Peking could again turn outwards in 1969.

Further, it has been argued that Vietnam prevented the beginning of serious negotiations between the US and the USSR on strategic arms limitation and detente, delayed discussions about European security and the situation in the Middle East, and held in abeyance a complete and necessary review of US policy towards the Third World. If true, this is a very significant consequence of US involvement in Vietnam: it was clear, as various analysts have observed, that during the later 1960s the Soviet Union was keenly interested in trade and technological collaboration and that a political price could perhaps have been exacted if the US had been in a better position to do so. It has been observed that President Johnson's subdued reaction to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia was one such consequence of LBJ's preoccupation with Vietnam.

However it must not therefore be concluded that, but for Vietnam, there would have been a more rapid thaw from cold war confrontation, a more rapid agreement on a SALT treaty, or no invasion of Czechoslovakia. As Professor Buchan has observed, the Glassboro summit in 1967 made clear that the Soviet leaders were not prepared for serious arms control until their armory was larger, nor for negotiations on the Middle East while it seemed that they had the whole radical Arab world in tow. Their approach to European security questions changed markedly after the Prague summer, and it was the reentry of China as a variable in the international equation, not the American frustration in Vietnam, that changed the nature of the game.

Vietnam may have had more of an impact on US rather than Soviet views on SALT. Though the continuing Southeast Asian intervention may have

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spurred the Soviets to continue their expensive strategic weapons programs, the effect was indirect; the Cuban missile crisis was much more a factor. In the US, rising congressional resistance to defense spending, a fairly direct consequence of Vietnam, may have had a much more direct effect on Congress's willingness to consider ways to control the cost of the arms race. However, as Buchan observes, there were also other factors in the SALT negotiations.

But what really gave the SALT negotiations their impetus was technological developments, the ABM itself and the multiple warhead, which had been under development for over a decade. Certainly Vietnam and the rapid increase of American defense costs from 1965 onward made the United States anxious to stabilize the strategic confrontation with the Soviet Union. But this was a political as much as a fiscal calculation, which went back to Robert McNamara's early days in the Defense Department before serious expenditure on Vietnam had started.16/

Even this brief review of some of the variables at work and their complex interaction indicates that we must be wary of oversimplification in any treatment of the American intervention in Vietnam on bi-, tri-, and multipolar relationships, for while the imprint of Vietnam can be detected in numerous areas, it by no means constitutes a direct line of tracks leading to specific consequences. As has been hinted at, the rapidly changing structure of the international scene in some ways made the continuing American presence in Vietnam--by the late 60s and early 70s at least--something of an anachronism, and it was this character, this limited relevance in the changing world order and the changing US attitude and posture, which thus limited the impact of Vietnam on other foreign policy questions. As Theodore Draper observed in 1968:

There is in the air a pervasive conviction or feeling that an era has come to an end. We are not so sure about the kind of era we are going into. But somehow there have taken place the retrenchment of American power, the retreat of Russian power, and the introversion of Chinese power. This threefold process has laid the basis of the era we are going into. As a result, we launched an action in one period but carried it out in another period, and that is where the persuasiveness of this war disappeared.17/

Concurrent with the widening of the Sino-Soviet split, though not closely linked to it, was the reduction and redefinition of the US role in the international arena. This change of scene and the evolution of the roles for the cast of characters were, it must be recalled, changes that the US itself helped to bring--with developmental aid and so on--and at least partially supported. The US did not control this evolution, however its input--including indirect input from the Vietnam situation--is evident. Hartley emphasizes the extent of the change:

If the style of American foreign policy was changed under the Nixon administration, the international environment into which that policy had to be inserted had also been transformed. Most of the factors making for change had been implicit in the evolution of world affairs over a number of years, and had even been observed and extensively discussed by officials and analysts. Others had only been brought to the attention of the public and politicians by some striking event. Taken together, however, they amounted to the erosion of an international system which had lasted since 1948 and a complete alteration of the conditions of American foreign policy. 18/

The most significant aspect of this change is perhaps not just the emergence of pluralism--of multiple centers of power--but more the emergence of more variegated centers of power, creating a complicated network of international relationships. There has been not only a diffusion of power, but a confusion: the US and the Soviet Union may remain militarily dominant, but other sorts of power must also be recognized, such as the economic muscle of Japan and Germany, the strength of China derived from her size and population, the oil wealth of the Persian Gulf states, and the economic and political clout of national and religious forces in the Third World. Of course the Soviet-American relationship remained critical, but no longer almost exclusively so.

It should be clear, given this complex and changing international environment, that changes in the content, scope, and style of US foreign policy should not automatically be attributed to US involvement in Vietnam, however visible and agonizing that involvement may have been. Certainly Vietnam tarnished the US image and therefore to some extent limited its



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influence in the international community. Clearly, in an environment already conducive to the devolution of world power and, concurrently, a shrinking US role and rising pluralistic global order, the simultaneous occurrence of the Vietnam war could not help but facilitate these changes.

ESSAY 2 ENDNOTES

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6. Anthony Hartley, "American Foreign Policy in The Nixon Era," Adephi Papers, No. 110 (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, Winter 1974-1975), p. 18.
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8. Henry Kissinger, in Intellect, Volume 106, No. 2394, March 1978, pp. 345-346.
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10. See Volume III, Chapter 1, pp. 1-27 - 1-40 on the Nixon Doctrine and its implications for US-Southeast Asia policy.
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THE BDM CORPORATION

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## ESSAY 3

### THE US DOMESTIC SCENE IN THE POST-VIETNAM ENVIRONMENT: CHANGES AND RESULTS

For nearly two centuries now, we Americans have prided ourselves on the ability of our system to reflect change through the orderly elective process. Yet I must report to you today that the changes now at our doorstep are so imminent and so sweeping in scope and magnitude as to literally put our system on trial. ...They [Americans] still want leaders who operate within the parameters of consent of the governed. But they also desperately want the leaders to know that the parameters of consent are changing drastically, radically, a barn-yard wide. Make no mistake about it, this electorate no longer wants to be governed by leaders wed to the old parameters of consent, nor by those who would try to soothe away their worries with false and easy promises, nor by those who would try to panic them by appeals to easy fear. The message I bring from the people is one of essential hope. ...95 out of 100 people in this country still want the system to work. ...But their central concern is this: Is anyone in authority still listening? Are there men and women with the common courage to ask the hard questions and to ask the people to share in meeting our common problems of survival and change?1/

Louis Harris, National Pollster,  
Remarks before National Conference  
of State Legislatures, 1976.

Talks with noted intellectuals in Cambridge and New York, in fact not only confirm that the mainstream of ideas has split into dozens of rivulets but that in some areas it has dried up altogether. ...Inflation and Vietnam, Watergate and Agnew, the persistence of slums, poverty, and crime - all have shaken consensus and certitude.2/

Bernard D. Nossiter, The Washington Post, May 1979.

A. INTRODUCTION

The outlook of a people towards its country's role and image in the international order, and towards its government's credibility and reliability on the whole, is shaped by that nation's successes and failures, both at home and abroad. It is also determined by the extent to which a nation and its people are capable of accepting and creatively integrating change, both positive and negative, into the day-to-day making of domestic and foreign policy. The ability to do so derives from a belief, both on the part of the people and their government leaders, in the fundamental strengths inherent in the country's fabric, and in the need to draw upon these strengths in resolving domestic and international problems, weaknesses, and crises.

For the United States' people and their leaders, Vietnam was a turbulent and troubling experience. The fact that it carried change in a broad range of areas -- internationally and domestically -- can not be disputed. What can be questioned, however, is how much change did this experience generate and to what degree was it responsible for shaping the American reaction to its own contemporary role in the world. The purpose of this essay is twofold: to provide an overview of the major perceptible changes that occurred during (but not necessarily solely because of) the years of our major involvement in Vietnam, and, second, to examine shifts in US public opinion over time toward a broad range of issues. Those to be explored include the US role in the international area, its cooperation with and attitude towards the United Nations, US foreign economic and military expenditures and commitments, and, in the domestic realm, the US government's credibility and image, and the priorities which the American populace attaches to domestic and international concerns.

However, in examining the possible effects of our protracted involvement in Vietnam on the people, society, and government of the United States, care must be taken to ensure that casual cause and effect relationships are not drawn too rapidly or indiscriminately. At best only

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a loose interrelationship between US participation in the war and concurrent changes in the US domestic scene can be drawn. By reviewing the opinions of scholars, journalists, and policy makers on this matter and examining public opinion surveys, it is possible to identify shifts in the US public's attitude and to speculate as to the reasons for these shifts. Consideration must be given to the overall environment in which these changes occurred. Moreover, in attempting such an assessment, it is well to recognize the difficulties in isolating the effects of our Vietnam experience from the numerous other domestic and international events of the period, and, thus, in developing a definitive link between domestic change -- in our society, our governmental institutions, and in American public opinion -- and the Vietnam War.

The decade of active US involvement in Vietnam spanned the activist period of the American civil rights movement, the emergence of a youth subculture, Watergate, the decline of the dollar, intensive space exploration, two Arab-Israeli wars, the beginning of detente, the rise of oil power, and the thaw in US-PRC hostilities. America faced a decade of domestic change: the relative calm and complacency of American life in the 1950s was disturbed by a number of rather basic social, economic, and political problems. The appearance of a national consensus was shattered as public dissent regarding the American social system was expressed through urban riots and massive antiwar demonstrations. Further, the Vietnam War coincided with radical societal and social changes, including increases in social mobility and affluence, a decline in the importance of family and community, the onset of the women's movement, black militancy, and upheavals within the American education system.

Various US governmental institutions (and the US public's attitude towards them) also changed during the course of US involvement in Vietnam. The sanctity and credibility of American government and its officials were called into question with the eruption of Watergate and the exposure of illegal CIA operations. In both cases, the US Congress served as the primary vehicle for probing and investigating these issues. Congress's gradual reassertion and redefinition of its role in both domestic and

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foreign policy matters was characteristic of the legislature's behavior in the late 1960s and particularly the early 1970s. Congressional-presidential relations ceased to share the bipartisan flavor of the 1950s. By the time of South Vietnam's collapse in 1975, Congress had "left a legacy of restrictions on various kinds of presidential activities. . . ." <sup>3/</sup> Harvey Zeidenstein, in his article "The Reassertion of Congressional Power: New Curbs on the President," comments that these restrictions came as a reaction to a gradual erosion of congressional checks and balances against presidents since 1930. With this perspective, congressional action was certainly catalyzed by American involvement in what had come to be known to some as the "president's war in Vietnam." To some members of Congress, the credibility gap became full-fledged when it was learned in 1968 that Congress had not been given full information on which to base its 1964 decision to pass the Southeast Asia Resolution.<sup>4/</sup>

On the international front, the world could no longer be classed in simple bipolar terms. China and the Third World required integration into the world's new calculus of power. Europe and Japan also deserved recognition as new power centers. In most cases (with the exception of China) the base of this new power was largely economic, and its most important manifestation was found in the 1973 Arab oil embargo. This action, taken against the US and selected European nations, demonstrated the use of oil power as leverage, in this case in retaliation for US support of Israel in the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. This show of strength by the Arab states was applauded throughout the Third World as a symbol of the rising power of the world's weaker and less developed countries. The Third World also made its slowly developing strength felt in the United Nations; one of its major successes was the creation of the New International Economic Order. Moreover, the Third World displayed its assertiveness in the UN by fashioning a solid voting bloc on issues relevant to LDCs.

Concurrent with these changes, the US no longer exhibited the economic power that it once had in the immediate post-World War II period. The West German and Japanese economies, once decimated, had come to challenge the

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economic strength of the United States. America's economic strength was further diminished by its reliance on imported oil, a drop in its labor productivity, the loss of the international reserve status of its dollar, and the loss of its dominant role in several key high technology areas.

### B. CHANGING PUBLIC OPINION

There has certainly always existed a critical link between US domestic and foreign affairs, the tenor of each having an appreciable, if not substantial, impact on the other. Particularly in the last two decades, statesmen have been concerned to keep abreast of the public's views on specific foreign and domestic policies and goals. In fact, in recent years, US foreign policy has come to be regarded as little more than an external projection of US national moods and concerns. It is true that public opinion polls and surveys provide a way by which an administration may gauge the public's level of support for a particular policy. And while most leaders strive to avoid being overly influenced by constantly fluctuating public opinion polls, these surveys -- like election results -- do give some indication of the public's mood.<sup>5/</sup> Therefore, in order to measure how and to what degree our Vietnam experience had an appreciable impact on the America domestic scene, it is useful to examine changes in US public opinion over time and to identify the areas in which these changes may be related, in part, to our involvement in Vietnam.

For the purposes of this essay, opinion surveys for two specific types of issues have been tapped: public attitudes toward the US domestic scene, and attitudes concerning foreign affairs and the United States' participation in them.<sup>6/</sup>

#### 1. Public Opinion and Domestic Affairs

In comparing public opinion surveys taken during the period 1964-1976, the most apparent and striking shift has been in the priority given by the US public to a variety of contemporary concerns, domestic and international. Both during the Cold War period and, more specifically, in 1964, just prior to the US troop commitment to Vietnam, Americans indicated



that international and defense-related matters were among their top-ranking concerns. In sharp contrast, by 1976, the public's ten leading concerns all dealt with domestic problems. "Keeping our military and defense force strong" ranked eleventh in the 1976 list of priorities. However, a closer study of the survey data reveals a significant increase in the level of concern regarding foreign policy in the period 1974-1976, despite the fact that domestic concerns were clearly the dominant issues. William Watts and Lloyd Free, in their study State of the Nation III, explain this heightened interest in foreign policy as a reaction to the fall of South Vietnam. "The final denouement in Vietnam certainly had its impact, as did the failed promise of detente. Americans were groping, it would seem, for an increased sense of security in an apparently more hostile international environment . . ."7/

Not only had public concern with foreign policy matters changed by the late 1960s, but so too had the US public's trust in the American political system. In a survey conducted over a four year period, 1972-1976, there was an appreciable dip in the US public's trust and confidence in the American system. Table 3-1 illustrates this trend. While on the whole shifts in percentages were slim, there were a few issues where significant change was registered. Those questions pertaining to trust and confidence in the federal legislative and executive branches, and in federal government as a whole, show a marked decline from 1972-1976. The 1974 drop in confidence in the federal executive more than likely reflects the effects of Watergate. Our throes in Vietnam from 1974-1976 also very likely figured in the public's low regard for the federal government's performance in the international arena. As for the executive branch's domestic performance, the public's declining confidence from 1972-1976 reflects, in part, its distress over the troubled US economic situation.

In another survey, conducted by the National Opinion Research Center of the University of Chicago, the US public's opinion of government declined steadily during the period 1964-1973, illustrating the growing cynicism of the American populus toward life in the sixties and early seventies -- to the war, domestic unrest, and soaring inflation -- to name

TABLE 3-1. THE US PUBLIC: TRUST AND CONFIDENCE 8/

	<u>1972</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1976</u>
	%	%	%
American System	n/a*	68	66
Mass Media	60	60	62
State Government	60	64	61
Federal Judiciary	60	62	59
Local Government	57	61	57
Politicians	58	58	57
Federal Legislature	62	59	55
Federal Executive	67	45	55
Federal Government (International)	66	67	53
Federal Government (Domestic)	61	52	50

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\*  
n/a not asked

a few of the era's turbulent manifestations. (See Table 3-2.) Moreover, as a subsequent poll indicates, the US public lost a great deal of faith in the meaning and efficacy of its election-time vote, a finding indicative of the public's frustration with and alienation toward government at most, if not all, levels, and of its own inability to effect any appreciable change in the workings of the nation's governmental machinery. 10/

American public opinion regarding government, society, and the American system underwent dramatic shifts in the 1960s and early 1970s. And to what extent the war can be held responsible for these changes is a question which has been (and more than likely will continue to be) debated at length by scholars and laymen alike for some time. Some analysts, such as the eminent British scholar Sir Robert Thompson, contend that the war caused serious damage to both American society and national self-confidence. 11/ Certainly self-doubt and self examination characterized the American psyche during the 1960s and 1970s. Furthermore, Thompson cites the war as responsible for the growing tendency among Americans to doubt the leadership abilities of their leaders.

Another view holds that Vietnam was only a catalyst, accelerating changes in the US political and social domestic scene. This view allows for the possibility of other influences. As Columnist Joseph Kraft notes, the war era also saw another change-inducing catalyst; a new group of political players - ethnic minorities, environmentalists, and consumer advocates - sought to improve and change significantly the quality and substance of US life. 12/ And their effects were, indeed, felt.

This group's self-assertion has also "withered the elements of presidential coalition-building." 13/ But Vietnam also had a substantial effect on the US executive's image and its effectiveness in coalition building. In fact, the Vietnam era saw the peak and collapse of the United States' "imperial presidency" and the US public's initial acceptance and subsequent rejection of this concept. The polarization between the American people and the government reached such extreme proportions during this era that the 1976 presidential election saw great emphasis on reversing this troubling trend. Indeed, with Vietnam and Watergate still fresh in

TABLE 3-2. THE US PUBLIC: TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

Statement	Percentage Who Agree			
	<u>1964</u> %	<u>1968</u> %	<u>1972</u> %	<u>1973</u> %
You cannot trust the government to do what is right.	22	37	45	66
Government is for the benefit of a few.	30	42	57	67
There are a lot of crooks in government.	30	27	38	57
Public officials don't care much what people like me think.	37	44	50	55

the minds of the electorate, Mr. Carter's promises of less secrecy and more accessibility were, at the time, indeed compelling.

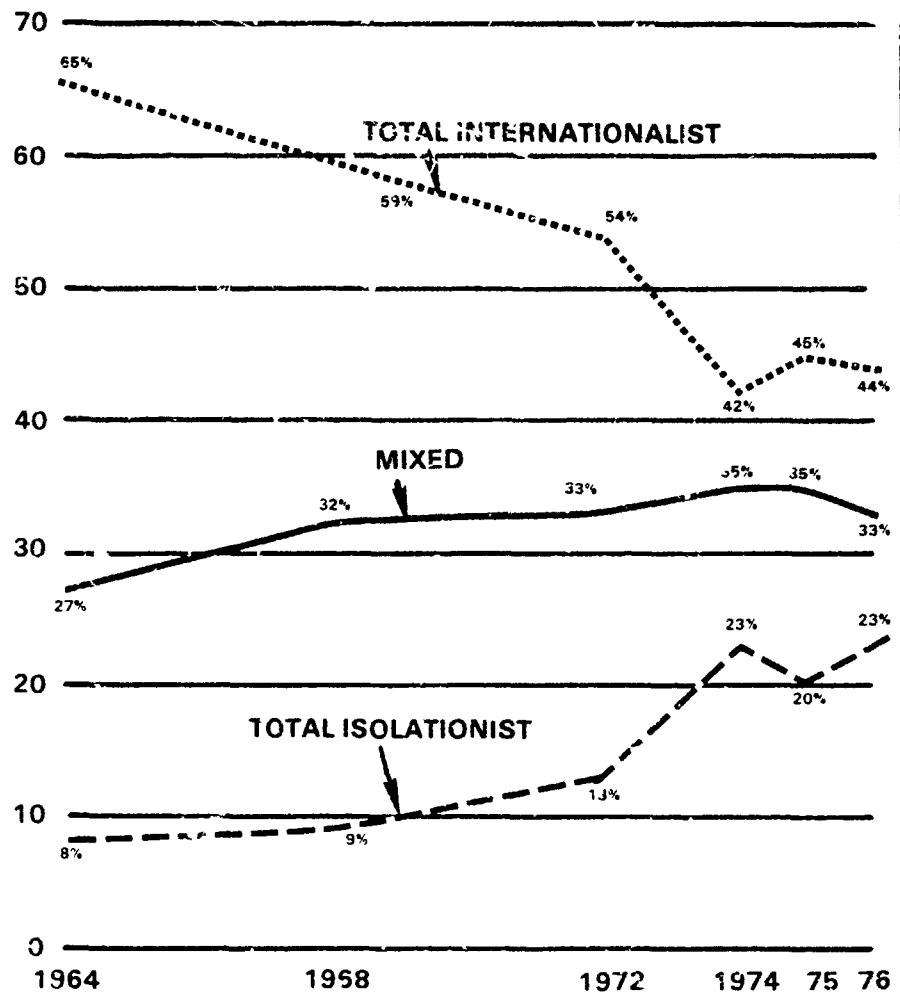
2. Public Opinion and International Issues

Not surprisingly, it is far easier to draw relationships between our involvement in Vietnam and public opinion concerning the American role in international affairs than it is to relate our domestic affairs to the war. Vietnam almost completely dominated the American consciousness as to US overseas activities from approximately 1965-1973. And while the era of our intensive involvement in Southeast Asia also marked the era of US rapprochement with China and the USSR, the sending of American troops to Vietnam had a far more tangible effect on the daily lives of Americans than did the diplomatic maneuvers between superpowers.

The "passing" of the Cold War mentality is the trend most readily observable in the public opinion polls and assessments on US-international relations taken during the sixties and early seventies. Bruce Russett, in his article "The Americans' Retreat from World Power," suggests that this phenomenon was, in fact, a natural outgrowth of the passing of the World War II generation and the subsequent infusion of a new "Vietnam" generation into US foreign policy making. 14/ Bruce Andrews, in his paper "Public Constraint and American Policy in Vietnam," suggests that the Munich and Cold War generations "grew up on appeals for preparedness;" this contrasts sharply with the modus operandi of the next generation which "grew up" on Vietnam. 15/

Public opinion regarding the US international role has changed considerably since the early 1960s. Figure 3-1, Internationalist/Isolationist Trends, 1964-1976, illustrates the trend toward reduced "total internationalism" and "total isolationism." The 1964 data illustrate the American public's high level of interest in preserving the United States' internationalist posture. Sixty-five percent of those polled in 1964 responded in favor of the US's assumption of an "internationalist" role in world affairs; only eight percent opted for a totally isolationist posture. Twenty-seven percent selected a mixed internationalist-isolationist posture as the most appropriate US role. From 1968 to 1974, the preference for a

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NOTE \*THE FIGURES FOR 1964 AND 1968 WERE DERIVED FROM RESPONSES TO FIVE STATEMENTS CONCERNING THE GENERAL POSTURE THE UNITED STATES SHOULD ASSUME IN WORLD AFFAIRS. THE FIGURES FOR 1972, 1974, 1975, AND 1976 REFLECT RESPONSES TO THE SAME SET OF FIVE STATEMENTS, AS WELL AS TWO NEW STATEMENTS REGARDING POSSIBLE U.S. MILITARY INTERVENTION IN DEFENSE OF ALLIES.

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Figure 3-1. Internationalist/Isolationist Trends, 1964-1976 16/

total internationalist posture declined significantly. In this period, most of the opinion changes were registered as increases in the preference for a total isolationist posture. In devising the internationalist-isolationist spectrum, Lloyd A. Free, its originator, specified the following: in order to qualify as "completely internationalist," a respondent had to agree that the United States should:

- cooperate with the United Nations;
- take into account the views of its allies;
- come to the defense of Western Europe and Japan;

while disagreeing that the United States should:

- go its own way;
- mind its own business; and,
- concentrate more on national problems.

To be classified as "completely isolationist," a respondent had to give precisely the opposite answers to these questions. <sup>17/</sup> Worsening US economic conditions may have also caused some to prefer that the US more amply concentrate on its domestic problems. Vietnam was undoubtedly on the public's mind in registering this preference because of the US's heavy military outlays to Vietnam and its neighbors. The 1972, 1974, 1975 and 1976 data also reflect public opinion on two other statements regarding "possible US military intervention in defense of allies." <sup>18/</sup> The purpose of these statements was to focus the respondents' thoughts on US foreign military involvements at the time: Vietnam was certainly foremost in the public's mind. And as the spectrum suggests, the 1973 Arab-Israeli war and concurrent oil embargo did not have the expected effect of raising the US public's preference for internationalism. Instead, the small rise in "internationalist" opinion (accompanied by a corresponding decline in "isolationist" views) is evident in 1975 -- a result, it would seem, of South Vietnam's fall in the same year.

Several other surveys demonstrate the opinion changes that the American public has made regarding the US's role and image in international affairs. Table 3-3 illustrates the public's high level of concern in 1964 for maintaining both a strong military defense and the world's respect for

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TABLE 3-3. US PUBLIC OPINION ON SEVERAL CRUCIAL INTERNATIONAL ISSUES 19/

	<u>1964</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1976</u>
	%	%	%
	(Composite scores)*		
Keeping our military and defense forces strong	83	74	81
Maintaining respect for the US in other countries	81	73	78
The danger of war	90	66	74
The threat of communism	86	69	74

\* NOTE: The answer, 'a great deal,' was scored at 100 points, 'a fair amount' at two-thirds of 100, 'not very much' at one-third of 100, and 'not at all' at 0.

	<u>1968</u>	<u>1972</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1976</u>
	%	%	%	%
The US should take all necessary steps including the use of armed forces, to prevent the spread of communism to any other parts of the free world				
Agree	57	46	45	44
Disagree	29	43	46	43
Don't Know	14	11	9	13



America. In the same year, concern over the "danger of war" registered at a very high level. By 1974, after the US had withdrawn its forces from Vietnam and finalized a cease fire agreement, the composite scores of public opinion reveal a significant drop in concern on all four issues polled. It is interesting to note, however, that in 1976, the scores for each issue increased, although not to the 1964 level. Watts and Free attribute this rise, in part, to the public's response to Saigon's collapse. "The humiliating debacle which closed the war in Vietnam seems to have increased public apprehension about the esteem in which the United States is held abroad, and the halcyon mood engendered by the Nixon-Kissinger initiatives toward China and the Soviet Union apparently had begun to wear off in 1976 as the limitations of detente and the realities of a more hostile international environment became increasingly apparent." 20/

The data found in Table 3-4 do not bear out the claim that the American public, disillusioned by Vietnam experience, was anxious to see a reduction in US expenditures on foreign economic and military assistance. Table 3-4, US Public Opinion on Foreign Aid Programs, illustrates only a slight opinion change regarding foreign assistance.

The American public's desire for the United States' continued strong profile in its post-Vietnam affairs is also manifest in the data appearing in Table 3-5, US Public Opinion on Defense Related Issues. For the year 1976, (see Table 3-5a.), ten percent of the public preferred an increase in the US presence abroad, a five percent rise from the 1972 and 1974 figures. Twenty-eight percent of the public also indicated a desire to increase the US defense budget, a figure significantly larger than the 1972 percentage of nine percent. The 1976 data on reducing both the defense budget and US bases abroad reveal a steady decline in the US public's sentiment for cut backs in these areas; one exception was made however. The 1974 figure for reductions of bases increased to forty-two percent, a four point increase over the 1972 figure. This rise, although slight, may reflect the American public's concern over possible US involvement in the Mid-East conflict or reinvolvement in Southeast Asia. The 1976 figure, however sees a significant decrease --to thirty-three percent. And

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TABLE 3-4. US PUBLIC OPINION ON FOREIGN AID PROGRAMS 21/

<u>Foreign Economic Aid</u>	<u>1972</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1976</u>
	%	%	%
Increased	7	9	10
Kept at present level	33	43	34
Reduced	42	33	40
Ended altogether	13	11	13
Don't know	5	4	3
<u>Foreign Military Aid</u>			
Increased	3	3	4
Kept at present level	32	32	34
Reduced	42	42	41
Ended altogether	16	15	16
Don't know	7	8	5

TABLE 3-5. US PUBLIC OPINION ON DEFENSE RELATED ISSUES 22/

a. US DEFENSE SPENDING AND BASES ABROAD SHOULD BE:

	<u>Defense Spending</u>			<u>Bases Abroad</u>		
	<u>1972</u> %	<u>1974</u> %	<u>1976</u> %	<u>1972</u> %	<u>1974</u> %	<u>1976</u> %
Increased	9	17	28	5	5	10
Kept at present level	40	40	43	45	37	44
Reduced	37	33	20	38	42	33
Ended altogether	5	4	4	8	11	8
Don't know	9	6	5	4	5	5

b. US Should Maintain Dominant Position As World's Most Powerful Nation, Even Going to the Very Brink of War, If Necessary

	<u>1964</u> %	<u>1968</u> %	<u>1972</u> %	<u>1974</u> %	<u>1976</u> %
Agree	56	50	39	42	52
Disagree	31	40	50	43	41
Don't know	13	10	11	15	7

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while caution must be taken in drawing direct cause-and-effect relationships, it is probable that the desire to see a reduction in US bases abroad can be linked, in part, to both the public's fear of 'repeating' Vietnam and to its initial, but cautious euphoria over US detente with both the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China.

Data on the US public's mood vis à vis America's protection and maintenance of its dominant position internationally (even to the extreme of war), appear in Table 3-5b., a poll covering a twelve year span, 1964-1976. As is evident, in 1964, a sizeable portion of the US public agreed that the US should preserve its place as the world's most powerful nation. The percentages then begin to decline, reaching a low of thirty-nine percent in 1972; concurrent with this drop, the number who disagreed with the statement increased almost proportionally for the same years under discussion. Data for 1974-1976, however, show an upswing in the 'agree' column and a respective, albeit less sizeable, downswing in the 'disagree' column. Several factors likely account for these shifts: the US policy of detente with the Soviet Union, a policy which seemed to lessen the imminence of the Soviet threat to the US; the US embroilment in Vietnam had drawn to a close; the US rapprochement with the PRC; and the more general acceptance of an interdependent world in which the US played an important, but not the most important role.

Concerning the American public's opinion of the United Nations, a 1974 opinion poll found that eighty-two percent of those Americans surveyed responded favorably to the statement that the "US role in founding the UN was a proud moment in US history." However, another survey for the years 1964-1976 indicated that the American public had grown less inclined to support the need for US cooperation with UN initiatives. Table 3-6, US Public Opinion and the United Nations, illustrates this trend. Whereas in 1964, seventy-two percent of the people were in agreement with the statement, "the US should cooperate fully with the United Nations," by 1976, that figure had dropped to forty-six percent. The year 1974 saw a slight increase in those favoring full cooperation; by 1975 however, that figure had declined precipitously. American disillusionment with the United

TABLE 3-6. US PUBLIC OPINION AND THE UNITED NATIONS 23/

<u>Contributions to the UN</u>			
	<u>1972</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1976</u>
	%	%	%
Increased	10	5	6
Kept at present level	46	44	37
Reduced	29	33	35
Ended altogether	9	6	13
Don't know	6	12	5

<u>Significance of UN</u>	
	<u>1974</u>
	%
US role in founding UN as a proud moment in US history	82
It is important for US to be world leader in international organizations, such as UN	53
Superpowers are more important than the UN in keeping other countries from going to war	60
US should conduct more of our foreign policy through such institutions	60

<u>Cooperation with the UN</u>						
(The US should cooperate fully with the UN)						
	<u>1964</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1972</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Agree	72	72	63	66	56	46
Disagree	16	21	28	20	30	41
Don't know	12	7	9	14	14	13

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Nations is likely due, in part, to the public's perception of the UN as an ineffective forum for resolving international crises. It may also be attributed to the United States' own resistance to diplomatic initiatives by the UN, given the highly visible and active diplomatic activities of the then Secretary of State. Further, the Third World's own rise within the ranks of the UN may have induced the US public's lukewarm reaction, particularly as the Arab portion of the Third World had, only a year or so earlier, dealt a decisive moral, if not economic, blow to Americans through its oil embargo. However, while the UN elicited the support of only half those polled in 1976, it may be conjectured that, were the poll conducted today in the midst of the 1979-1980 US-Iranian and USSR-Afghanistan crises, the US public would more fully support the need for well-orchestrated US-UN cooperation.

Finally, an evaluation of the "lessons learned" by the US public as a result of American involvement in Vietnam provides a basis for assessing the war's impact on the US domestic scene. In a survey sponsored by The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, the following conclusions were drawn:

The aversion to US combat involvement would appear, on the face of it, to have its roots in the Vietnam War experience. ...First, only 8% of the public think that the Vietnam War was a "proud moment" in American history; 72% think it was a "dark moment;" and 15% chose neither view. Within these categories, responses to "attacks on friendly countries" divide as follows: People who see the Vietnam War as a "proud moment" are substantially more likely to favor circumstances that might lead to its repetition elsewhere than were people who think of it as a "dark moment." Conversely, the latter are substantially more inclined to do nothing or to limit our response to economic aid than were the former - and they are less likely to be without an opinion on the matter. 24/

This survey was completed in December 1974 and, thus does not reflect the effects of Saigon's collapse on US public opinion.

Watts and Free provide data on American attitudes after the collapse of South Vietnam. The statements below present percentages of

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agreement for each statement. While almost a quarter of the respondents found that no lessons should be drawn from our Vietnam experience, nearly half of those polled felt the US should never have become involved in the war in the first place. The survey results are as follows: 25/

- Forty-seven percent felt we should not have gotten directly involved in a land war in Asia in the first place;
- Thirty-four percent indicated that we should have used more military force in order to win the war;
- Thirty-eight percent stated they felt there was no real national security interest of the United States at stake, so we should not have gone into Vietnam to begin with;
- Thirty-percent felt the final defeat was inevitable because the government in South Vietnam was corrupt and lacked the will to fight;
- Twenty-six percent opined that the US did the best it could in Vietnam, and we do not have to have feelings of guilt or regret;
- Twenty-seven percent stated that it should not be our business to interfere in civil conflicts in other countries, even if one side is supported by the communists; and
- Twenty-four percent counseled that Vietnam was always a special case, and we should not let the outcome there influence US foreign policy in the future.

While the US public's opinions on the war and its lesson encompass most of the dominant (and diverse) schools of thought on these issues, the data also point to one important trend. The experience has chastened, not comforted, and has counseled caution in the making of decisions based on an interventionist philosophy.

The public appears willing to and capable of bouncing back from this deeply troubling experience, but is, nevertheless, more suspicious of its leaders' abilities to define US security interests and develop appropriate strategies for their protection.

In the wake of Vietnam, it is, thus, not surprising there has been a perceptible "turning inward" on the part of the nation and its people. The need to recover and to initiate a period of national

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self-evaluation prompted this turn, as did the urgent need to "put one's house in order" after a decade or more of neglect. 26/

The Vietnam experience has not, however, resulted in a burgeoning desire for isolationism. The world is perhaps too interesting for such a sentiment to reach epidemic proportions. Self-preoccupation, it would seem, more aptly defines the contemporary national spirit. Consequently, Vietnam has exerted at least one appreciable and important effect on the US domestic scene: it has prompted the need and desire for serious dialogue and a reexamination of America's role, domestically and internationally. It is through this stage of growth and development that the US is now cautiously proceeding.



ESSAY 3 ENDNOTES

1. U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Hearings. Foreign Policy Choices for the Seventies and Eighties, Vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), citing Louis Harris, speech given before the National Conference of State Legislatures, p. 716.
2. Bernard D. Nossiter, "The Cupboard of Ideas is Bare," The Washington Post, B1, B5, May 20, 1979.
3. Harvey Ziedenstein, "The Reassertion of Congressional Power: New Curbs on the President," The Making of American Foreign and Domestic Policy (Farmingdale, New York: Dabor Social Science Publications, 1978), p. 126. See also Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Imperial Presidency (New York: Popular Library, 1974) in which the author chronicles the use of the presidency and the congressional response over this period of American history.
4. For a detailed description and assessment of the changes in American governmental institutions, key policy making roles, and centers of power, see Volume III, U.S. Foreign Policy and Vietnam 1945-1975, Chapter 3 "Washington and Vietnam: US National Level Policy Makers and the Policy Making Process"; see also Volume IV, US Domestic Factors Influencing Vietnam War Policy Making, Chapter 5, "Domestic Political Factors Influencing Vietnam War Decision Making."
5. Gabriel Almond, in his excellent work on American public opinion, entitled The American People and Foreign Policy (New York: Frederick Praeger, 1965), argues that American interest in foreign policy is extremely susceptible to changes of mood and that these fluctuations in opinion make more difficult national efforts to develop a stable foreign policy. See also John Mueller, War, Presidents and Public Opinion (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973), for an excellent treatment of American public opinion.
6. An invaluable source on the topics of US public opinion in the seventies and its changes over time can be found in William Watts and Lloyd A. Free, State of the Nation III (Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1973). This source is especially useful because it provides a compendium of recent data up through and including the year 1976; the majority of references on this topic include data only through 1973.
7. See Watts and Free, p. 11.
8. Table 3-1, "The U.S. Public: Trust and Confidence", is adapted from Watts and Free, p. 30.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

9. Table 3-2, "The U.S. Public: Trust in the Government", is adapted from Leonard Freedman, Power and Politics in America (North Scituate, Massachusetts: Duxbury Press, 1978), p. 53.
10. Freedman, p. 53.
11. Sir Robert Thompson, BDM Interview at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, September 17, 1979.
12. Joseph Kraft, "Presidency in Decline," The Washington Post (Outlook Section), August 12, 1979.
13. Ibid.
14. Bruce Russett, "The Americans' Retreat from World Power," The Making of American Foreign and Domestic Policy (New York: Dabor Social Science Publications, 1978), p. 233.
15. This opinion appears throughout the literature on post-Vietnam America. MacAlister Brown, in his paper for the Department of State entitled The Impact of the Indochina Involvement on American Political Institutions, writes that the war "undermined the operational code of the Cold War generation bureaucrats who conducted it."
16. Figure 3-1, "International/Isolationist Trends, 1964-1976," is adapted from Watts and Free, p. 133. It should be noted that the figures for 1964 and 1968 were derived from responses to five statements concerning the general posture the United States should assume in world affairs. The figures for 1972, 1974, 1975, and 1976 reflect responses to the same set of five statements, as well as two new statements regarding possible US military intervention in defense of allies.
17. Watts and Free, p. 132.
18. Ibid., p. 133.
19. Table 3-3, "US Public Opinion on Several Crucial International Issues," is adapted from Watts and Free, pp. 124, 135.
20. Ibid., pp. 124-125.
21. Table 3-4, "US Public Opinion on Foreign Aid Programs," is adapted from Watts and Free, p. 163.
22. Table 3-5, "US Public Opinion on Defense Related Issues," is adapted from Watts and Free, pp. 158, 163-165.
23. Table 3-6, "US Public Opinion and the United Nations," is adapted from Watts and Free, pp. 129, 163.

THE BDM CORPORATION

24. John E. Rielly, ed., American Public Opinion and US Foreign Policy 1975 (Chicago: Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 1975), pp. 17-18. See also, The Harris Survey Yearbook of Public Opinion. A Compendium of Current American Attitudes (New York: Louis Harris and Associates, Inc., 1976), p. 281 for February and April 1973 national poll results for the survey "U.S. Involvement in Vietnam War: A Mistake?" The survey data confirm the Chicago Council's findings. In the February 1973 nationwide poll, 72% regarded U.S. involvement a mistake.
25. Watts and Free, p. 122.
26. Klaus Knorr, "The United States: Social Change and Military Power," Europe and America in the 1970s: Society and Power. Adepfi Papers, No. 71. The Institute for Strategic Studies, November 1970, p. 5.

ESSAY 4

RESULTS FOR THE US MILITARY:  
THE IMPLICATIONS AND IMPACT OF VIETNAM

Once a society begins to downgrade its armed forces, a descending spiral seems to take hold. The less the military function is valued by the public, the fewer good men will join the military. The fewer good men there are in the military, the more derogatory the opinion of the public about the armed forces will become. . . . At some point, the . . . spiral will stop. The unanswerable question is whether the resulting armed force will be sufficient to support a society's foreign and defense policy. 1/

Col. Richard R. Rosser, US  
Air Force Academy, 1970.

Critical turning points in the histories of nations are difficult to recognize at the time. Usually they become clear only in retrospect. Nonetheless, the United States may well be at such a turning point today. We face a decision that we have been deferring for too long; we can defer it no longer. We must decide now whether we intend to remain the strongest nation in the world. Or we must accept now that we will let ourselves slip into inferiority, into a position of weakness in a harsh world where principles unsupported by power are victimized, and that we will become a nation with more of a past than a future. 2/

Secretary of Defense  
Harold Brown, Department  
of Defense Annual Report  
for FY 1981, 1980.

A. INTRODUCTION

Vietnam - today viewed as perhaps more of an experience than a geographic entity by most in US - has undeniably left its imprint on America's military. Virtually every facet of the defense establishment has felt, in varying degrees, the ripples of this prolonged and emotional involvement. The intent of this essay is to document and assess the results of Vietnam

## THE BDM CORPORATION

for the US military. By virtue of the topic's magnitude, a selective and general approach is undertaken: the discussion addresses those facets of the United States' defense establishment where the impact and implications of the Vietnam experience are either more readily identifiable or the most thought provoking and controversial. Moreover, as in the previous essays which discuss the results of Vietnam for the US domestically and internationally, it is wise to preface this discussion with one important qualifier: the Vietnam experience, no matter how unique or commonplace it is considered to have been, is only one of many that in the past two or so decades has exerted an influence on the nature, structure, operation, and image of the US military establishment. Hence, while Vietnam may be considered of extreme consequence for the military, the difficulties and limitations in establishing direct cause and effect relationships must, nonetheless, be recognized. Measurement of results and change - particularly for an experience as complex and intense as Vietnam - are generally quantifiably elusive and qualitatively subjective in orientation. It is with this in mind that the discussion proceeds.

### B. RESULTS FOR THE US MILITARY AT HOME: EFFECTS ON THE NATIONAL COMMAND STRUCTURE AND THE INSTITUTION AND IMAGE OF THE US ARMY

The years of the United States' protracted military activity in Southeast Asia, particularly during the 1965-1973 time frame in which US forces were committed to a combat role in the region, saw the emergence of a new, somewhat problematic approach to war-related decision making on the national level. The World War II precept of 'do what you must to achieve victory' was replaced by a set of political-military formulae for planning, waging, and ultimately, winning the war. The Johnson years, in particular, witnessed the Commander-in-Chief's extension of his decision-making authority in areas of war management, previously the realm of the nation's top-ranking military commanders and, on occasion, even of front-line or theater commanders. Lyndon Johnson's determination to scrutinize and exert final decision-making authority in the selection of air-war targets stands out as the most obvious example of this development. 3/ The dictates

## THE BDM CORPORATION

of a more complex international environment, the availability of highly developed technology for the transmission of Washington-Vietnam war-time communications, and the Commander-in-Chief's individual personality traits which caused him to seek intimate involvement in what were often considered routine matters of war-management, all figured prominently in the emergence of this arrangement. It is also equally true that the situation caused varying degrees of consternation among high-ranking US military personnel. Hence, while the constitutionally prescribed principle of civilian control over the military was never an issue, there was, nevertheless, a concern in some quarters that Washington was too intimately involved in a variety of wartime matters, an involvement, it was felt, that often undermined the military's place in the command structure and diluted the potential potency of US military capabilities and power in Vietnam.

Dissatisfaction with this arrangement aside, it is not likely that future crises will see a diminishing role for Washington (primarily for the executive) in crisis/war management by virtue of the continually increasing level of complexity and chaos in the international order. What has transpired, at least in part as a result of Vietnam, is that the roles of national-level decision makers and decision-making bodies in war/crisis management are presently being subjected to a period of redefinition and refinement. It is, for instance, clear that the McNamara approach to military decision making and war management, often begrudgingly accepted by the nation's military leaders during Vietnam (and often rightly so), has since been critically dissected and scrutinized for both its merits, and more frequently, for its short-comings. What has arisen is an unofficial, but crucial period of reassessment through which the national-level command is still wading. More importantly, while deficiencies, apparent during Vietnam, may have since been remedied, the demands of another, potentially dissimilar crisis may place new, unanticipated strains on the often fragile civilian-military command structure. And, just as important, is an appreciation that future crises may require a more rapid resolution of decision-making deficiencies. Owing to the protracted nature of Vietnam, a clarification of roles and rectification of command structure deficiencies were

## THE BDM CORPORATION

often dealt with gradually, cautiously, and, sometimes, not at all. 4/ Vietnam, therefore, served as a 'forum' during which certain command structure deficiencies became apparent; the post-Vietnam period provided and provides a peacetime respite for reviewing and rectifying some of these problems. Future crises will, thus, illuminate the effectiveness of ongoing adjustments and, perhaps more essential, will illustrate again how intimately entwined war/crisis management is with present and future political exigencies, causing what some may again regard as a 'hands-tied' approach to waging war or defusing crises.

Vietnam, or more precisely, the US domestic reaction to the experience, also resulted in the termination of the draft and the subsequent creation of the All-Volunteer Army (VOLAR). The effects of this political decision for the US armed forces are many and varied; its implications for national military preparedness, for the quality of the nation's military personnel, and for the military's professional image, are still being heatedly debated. Vietnam set the stage for the VOLAR concept and its subsequent implementation: The problems associated with VOLAR should not, however, necessarily be ascribed to the conflict itself. Some problems are, discernably, carry-overs from the war years; others are themselves a product of the VOLAR institution.

The Nixon administration's dismantling of the draft and creation of VOLAR was motivated by a need to deliver the US public from a war-weary, antimilitary, antiwar position to a less divisive, peacetime outlook. In essence, the institutionalization of VOLAR signaled the 'end' of Vietnam, and was seen as one way to heal the country's Vietnam-inflicted wounds.

The recruitment of manpower for VOLAR - an issue of paramount importance in a period marred by antimilitary sentiment and war weariness - was henceforth to be guided by 'market place conditions and monetary inducements.' Consequently, the armed forces found themselves vying for manpower in a competitive marketplace; the age-old inducements of duty, honor, and country were further enhanced by monetary incentives, promises of adventure, and attractive benefit packages. "Let the Army Join You," declared recruiters, albeit for only a short period.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

While the intent of this discussion is certainly not to argue for or against the VOLAR institution, for its elimination or continuation, it is desirable to note several of the consequences of VOLAR for the US military. On one hand, VOLAR's institutionalization has temporarily defused the contentious issue of the draft: no one is being drafted, hence no one is complaining. 5/

But for the nation's military leaders, who must daily deal with VOLAR, evaluate its performance and readiness, and live with the institution until such time as it is no longer considered viable and/or necessary, such a statement is of little interest or value. What the armed forces, and, particularly, the Army must contend with is a shift away from a higher-educated, middle-class, white representation in the services to a cohort composed vastly of blacks (and other minorities), lower class, and less-educated soldiers. 6/ Some analysts have even gone so far as to depict VOLAR as a mercenary fighting force. 7/ While this seems an overly harsh estimation of an institution which has numerous merits, the charge is motivated by several very fundamental and troubling aspects of the VOLAR institution. Simply, is it essential that the demographic make-up of the armed services (in this case the Army) reflect the realities of the nation's overall demographic composition? And, more important, what are the implications of this demographic imbalance in VOLAR for a nation founded on the principles of representative democracy? Moreover, from the point of military readiness, personnel quality, and overall training effectiveness, what are the consequences of a less-skilled, less-educated army in this day of highly advanced, technologically complex war materiel?

The national military leadership is today wrestling with these very questions, attempting to resolve them by a more selective approach to recruiting, remedial training for the less-skilled and educated, reemphasis on (and, it appears, a renewed popularity of) ROTC programs on the nation's campuses, and an on-going evaluation process of existing and recommended incentive and benefit packages.

The tendency to approach the services as 'just another job,' an outgrowth of both the VOLAR recruiting dilemma posed by market considerations



## THE BDM CORPORATION

and, on a more general plane, of peacetime manning in a time when America's youth is preoccupied by the competitiveness of a tight job-market, has been soundly condemned by many military career professionals. 8/ From a philosophical-theoretical standpoint, this is hardly surprising. The armed forces, which require a soldier to be 'faithful unto death,' must indeed depend on incentives over and above those inspired by financial and career considerations to attract and retain truly dedicated manpower, particularly for leadership positions. However, what is also apparent is that while the traditional values of duty, honor, and country are still implicitly unquestioned ideals of the military, in reality the services often seek to attract (and keep) personnel by offering promises of career opportunities, thereby generating an environment that "rewards relatively insignificant, short-term indicators of success, and disregard[s] or discourage[s] the growth of long-term qualities of moral and ethical strength on which the future of the Army depends." 9/ The implications of this tendency appear the most serious and frustrating for the junior-level officers attempting to make sense of this disharmony.

Vietnam is certainly not solely responsible for this dilemma, but the war and the stress it placed on US military personnel most definitely contributed to the present state of affairs. For instance, the junior officer, faced with reporting progress in a war where measurements of progress and success were very often elusive, 10/ found it often more expedient, at least from a career standpoint, to report non- or partial truths. The desire to please, to appear efficient, and, moreover, to report the 'positive,' in effect clouded these more traditional ideals. While this tendency seemed to smack of careerism, it was, in reality, a reflection of the junior officer's more 'human' side in our competitive, career- and success-oriented culture.

What is needed is a balance, a harmony between the all-important ethics and these other inducements. 11/ Vietnam saw, in varying degrees, the day-to-day conflict and resolution of these two often (but not necessarily) disharmonious forces. How (and if) these forces will be reconciled significantly depends on the direction which the US national military and

## THE BDM CORPORATION

political leadership selects for the armed forces in its effort to meet the nation's ever-complex and ever-changing defense requirements in an equally complex and volatile international environment.

### C. RESULTS FOR THE US APPROACH TO DEFENSE: IMPLICATIONS FOR US MILITARY ALLIANCES AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Hanoi's successful invasion of the South and subsequent reunification of Vietnam in 1975 had troubling implications for the United States, its allies, and potential allies: in essence, could US security agreements and alliance commitments be considered reliable and durable? It is certainly true that the fall of the GVN raised questions in the minds of many US allies, particularly those in Asia; <sup>12/</sup> it is also apparent that the US withdrawal from Vietnam provided a much-desired respite for the US and its European allies to upgrade and modernize NATO forces. In fact, if one questions whether the outcome in Vietnam eroded the international community's respect for the United States' sincerity in its defense commitments, it may also then be asked, how were US force and materiel reductions and the concurrent standstill in force and materiel modernization in Europe viewed by our NATO allies during the years of America's combat role in Vietnam? Undoubtedly, America's disengagement from the region was regarded, from the European perspective, with relief, signaling a return of the US focus to its 'rightful' place. <sup>13/</sup>

In the aftermath of Vietnam, the United States has indeed turned its attention to those alliances in which it is and has been the most 'comfortable'; this comfort derives from a number of factors, primarily from the sharing of similar traditions and ideals, and the relative 'simplicity' of threats posed to these more 'comfortable' alliances. Europe - and consequently NATO - and the ANZUS countries fit this definition, as does Japan. Asia, on the other hand, has posed and continues to pose a much greater degree of discomfort for the US, particularly in its attempts to fashion security arrangements. Threats to security in Asia (and, it may be added, in much of the Third World) are less readily delineated owing to the very nature of these threats -- subversion, terrorism, and other forms of

## THE BDM CORPORATION

insurgency -- and hence, less easily contained. Moreover, the structuring of alliances in Asia has been and continues to be more difficult because of the region's comparative diversity. As Leslie Brown, writing for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, notes:

The United States cannot treat Asia, as she might Europe, as a coherent, political, geographic or military entity. . . . Asia is geographic shorthand for a diverse collection of cultures, societies and politico-economic systems that cannot be combined logically into one unit. 14/

Hence, the grumblings of our concerned NATO allies aside, the Atlantic alliance appears to have withstood the strains of Vietnam and its aftermath. 15/ Can the same be said for the United States' Pacific allies and allies-to-be? With the fall of Saigon, the US sought to underscore its sincerity in upholding its Pacific alliances. Yet, it also seemingly turned, with discomfort, away from some of its smaller, less-familiar Asian allies, concentrating instead on refurbishing its 'steadier,' more familiar alliances with Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines. 16/ What has apparently developed is a desire on the part of the US to uphold, underscore and upgrade its longer-held security alliances, perhaps because the US leadership regards these allies as more important, more deserving, and too long ignored or mistreated during our years in Vietnam. This return to more comfortable alliances in Asia also avoids the issue of the 'other' Asia (with the obvious exception of the People's Republic of China).

Present developments in the international arena have once again turned the United States' attention to the need for establishing Asian alliances (i.e., in South Asia). The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has motivated this search, and the long-term implications of these Soviet actions make this search appear well-founded and rational. However, it also makes suspect, from the perspective of Pakistan and other potential allies in the 'other' Asia, the United States' long-term intentions in the area and overall sincerity in fashioning these new alliances. 17/

## THE BDM CORPORATION

For the US military, faced with the requirement of establishing viable and cohesive military assistance programs, particularly in Asia and the rest of the Third World, the implications of the United States' predominately European/Western focus are many. Aside from the obvious barriers of culture and language, which US forces confronted time and again in efforts to train and work with the RVNAF, the US military will be faced with establishing a working defense arrangement with peoples who are often unclear about or suspicious of US long-term intentions and objectives, and about whom the US leadership has only sketchy knowledge. Hence, one of this study's most important lessons -- "Know Your Ally," (and potential allies) -- may continue to elude the US, posing for US military forces involved in sensitive missions overseas, especially in Asia and the rest of the Third World, a myriad of frustrating (and perhaps all too familiar) problems.

### D. THE NEW TECHNOLOGY -- VIETNAM'S LEGACY?

In the aftermath of Vietnam, the US has directed a sizeable amount of its defense dollars and energies to the research and development of new, highly complex weapon systems, to the modernization of materiel and forces neglected during the years of the Vietnam war effort, and to the upgrading and enhancement of systems tried and tested during the conflict. 18/ While this development is hardly surprising, it has caused a great number of military leaders and defense analysts alike to question the nation's 'high-tech' approach to defense and its preoccupation with the performance (vs the manning) of sophisticated weaponry.

This trend, rooted as it is in America's Vietnam experience, gives pause to the many US military professionals who are daily responsible for the combat training and readiness of today's armed forces. Much of this concern is also intimately linked to and an outgrowth of the VOLAR institution. Their concern is multi-faceted. On the one hand, the educational level of today's soldier is substantially lower than that of the soldier who served during the Vietnam war. Hence, while our combat forces in Vietnam were more capable of assimilating new skills for the operation of

## THE BDM CORPORATION

the battlefield's new high technology (although one year tours did impact on competency and retention levels), today's soldier is much less well-equipped. Moreover, technology becomes progressively more, rather than less, complex. Thus, as Ralph Canter, of the US Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, notes:

With the massive deliveries of new equipment systems comes the entire process of developing and providing training. The technology for training is pressed very hard with each advance in complexity, level of sophistication, and increase in rate/speed of operation.

Comparably, demands on literacy increase because much greater technical process precision is required, and "engineered vocabularies" develop. Reducing reading grade level of material can help, but. . .only partly. Required knowledge, speed of comprehension, rapid coverage of large amounts of technical information --all place demands upon users and maintainers. 19/

Perhaps even more perplexing to the armed forces, faced with training manpower to man these new systems, is the concurrent 'brain-drain' of its more highly-skilled troops and technicians trained in the complexities of this high technology. Enticed by the more competitive salaries offered in the civilian sector, many specialized servicemen, often unhappily, find it an economic necessity to exit the services. Captain William R. Looney III, an Air Force Academy graduate, M.A. holder in management, and F-15 fighter pilot summarizes this dilemma:

It's not like we're saying poor Air Force officer, poor F-15 pilot. But the thing is that you see your friends outside the service making more money, and you know you're just as well equipped and capable, if not more so, to make as much money as they do. You see what they can provide for their families. It frustrates you. 20/

Assuming, then, that future conflicts will still require the deployment and effective fighting capacity of the United States' conventional armed forces, the problem of adapting high technology to the capabilities of our manpower is of serious consequence, one which requires adequate and

## THE BDM CORPORATION

immediate resolution in the near future if US military power is to remain an effective and credible deterrent in limited, conventional engagements of force. As for the 'brain-drain,' readjustments of salary may, at present, be the only viable option open to the services attempting to cope with the problem and stem the exodus.

Our experience in Vietnam (and battlefield requirements which grew out of this experience) gave greater impetus to the development of high technology in defense. While it is not necessary to 'pull the plug' on technology's march forward, it is certainly imperative that a compromise be reached between, on the one hand, the level of sophisticated technology available, and, on the other, the present day capabilities of our servicemen. From the perspective of the US Army, the capacity to reach such a compromise appears to exist. As LTC Harry G. Summers comments,

In the past, the US Army's flexibility has been a great strength, stemming from an appreciation of the art of war which is derived from the history of warfare (as opposed to the science of war which is the application of new technologies on the battlefield.) 21/ (Emphasis added.)

Flexibility is the key; our experience in Vietnam counsels the benefits of such an approach.

### E. AN APPRAISAL OF FUTURE THREATS, FUTURE WARS, AND THE APPROPRIATE US RESPONSE: QUESTIONS OF STRATEGY AND FLEXIBILITY IN TRAINING

The United States' experience in Vietnam has, in part, given rise to a debate centering on the question of US military readiness and capacity to respond to future threats in an international environment characterized increasingly by chaos, turbulence, and revolution. In fact, it is not implausible to regard Vietnam as a prologue to an entire chapter of global turbulence in the Third World, characteristic of and unique to international political development in the post-WWII era, and which is unfolding and will continue to unfold with greater rapidity (and, most likely, violence) for at least the next several decades.

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Implicit in this global scenario of turbulence is the question of US response -- shaped as it is by the United States' military-political experiences in Southeast Asia -- and the US military's capacity to train adequately to meet a variety of threats which may occur singly, successively, or simultaneously. Secretary Harold Brown, in his recent annual report, outlines this proposition in more concrete terms:

Largely for economic reasons, the United States has become heavily involved outside its traditional areas of concern in Europe, Latin America, and the Far East. Some of these other areas are now suffering increased turbulence from within as well as from the intervention of the Soviet Union.

Nowhere is this more the case than in the Middle East. The region has become a breeding ground for internal upheaval--as has already occurred in Iran--for war, terrorism, and subversion. Temporary disruptions or a more permanent decline in the supply of oil from the Persian Gulf could easily occur as a consequence. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, its footholds in South Yemen and the Horn of Africa, and the Soviet naval presence in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, only make a volatile situation potentially even more explosive.

Africa has become a major source of oil and other minerals for our economy. The main oil routes from the Persian Gulf to Europe and America run along its coasts. Yet internal strife wracks parts of the continent, and there is a continuing danger of more to come.

Cuba has already shown its willingness to exploit the forces of change in the Caribbean for its own ends. The grave dangers associated with further subversion should persuade Havana and Moscow that non-intervention is in order. But there is no certainty that they will see the virtues of restraint.

At the same time, we have to allow for the possibility that the tragic conflict between Communist states in Southeast Asia will spill over into Thailand. And we must still take precautions against the substantial expansion in the armed forces of North Korea that has been going on during the last decade.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

As a result of these developments, our defense establishment could be faced with an almost unprecedented number of demands. And some of those demands could arise more or less simultaneously. To meet them, we must solve a number of immediate and longer-term problems. 22/

It is, thus, not only desirable but imperative that the US armed forces be capable of responding to a 'worst case' scenario, one entailing a diversity of simultaneous threats.

Yet, aside from the US ability to enhance its strategic nuclear capabilities, particularly in Europe and at home, the question arises: are the US forces prepared to cope with threats of both a conventional and non-conventional, quasi-revolutionary nature? And, as a consequence of Vietnam, have the US armed forces, specifically the US Army, zealously over-trained for one type of conflict, to the exclusion of training-readiness for other forms of warfare possible in future, limited engagements?

The answers to these questions are intimately entwined with the United States' present perceptions of limited (non-nuclear) war, shaped (and, perhaps altered) as a result of Vietnam. Vietnam was a limited war from the perspective of the United States and, it may be added, from that of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. But, while Vietnam was a limited war, it is certainly not, nor should it be considered, a model for all limited wars. 23/ Vietnam saw the application of the limited war concept in concert with conventional tactics, counterinsurgency warfare, and, as a probable outgrowth of prior superpower confrontations, graduated, controlled escalation. 24/ Moreover, this multi-faceted strategy was wedded to the notions of low-risk acceptance and high-risk avoidance: hence, the decisions not to mobilize and the delineation between acceptable and non-acceptable military targets and actions. The military strategist consequently found himself operating within certain parameters which shifted concurrent with changes in the international and national arenas.

In the meantime, US servicemen in Southeast Asia faced the task of waging a quasi-conventional war with a quasi-conventional enemy who was ever-willing to exploit conventional tactics, terrorism and psychological



## THE BDM CORPORATION

warfare, and who was adept at combining all of the preceding concurrently and selectively. US definitions of 'victory' and its measurements, however, were not, for the majority of the war, adjusted to compensate for this. Effective means for the GVN to win the "hearts and minds" were instituted too late and were generally overridden by the tactics of attrition.

In fact, it has been argued that Vietnam saw the institutionalization of attrition, to the detriment of other measurements of progress and, ultimately, of victory. And while it is plausible that attrition is a function of "America's approach to war," 25/ the fact remains that, in Vietnam, attrition was frequently an unreliable gauge for measuring progress or victory. Brian Jenkins, writing in a 1970 RAND study, elucidates this point:

Our present concept of warfare has not been altered by four years of experience in Vietnam. War is regarded as a series of conventional battles between two armies in which one side will lose and, accepting this loss as decisive, will sue for peace. The losing side will be determined primarily by personnel losses. Essentially it is a strategy of attrition, and its principal criterion for success is the number of enemy soldiers killed in action. In Vietnam, instead of a series of large conventional battles, we have fought myriad little battles, but many still believe that the side that loses the most men must lose the war. . . . Our army is enemy-oriented and casualty-oriented. War, then, is assumed to be a battlefield where tactics rather than strategy are important; hence, good tacticians are necessary and are promoted. Good tactics are evidenced by a large number of enemy dead on the battlefield.

The defects that make this concept inoperable in Vietnam are obvious. Most importantly, it has been demonstrated statistically that the enemy initiates contact most of the time and avoids it when he desires. He thereby controls his own rate of casualties, negating any strategy based upon attrition. The enemy has been willing to suffer losses at a far greater rate than our own, but he has not accepted these losses as decisive and refuses to sue for peace. Instead, he prolongs the conflict, which nullifies our claim to victory. We ARE winning, but we must keep winning indefinitely. The

## THE BDM CORPORATION

most damaging indictment of our concept of warfare is that our military superiority and successes on the battlefield do not challenge the enemy's political control of the people, which he maintains by his promises of a better society and, when that fails, by intimidation and terror. Our military strategy may be . . . irrelevant to the situation. 26/

The point of this discussion, however is not to discount the merits of a strategy based on attrition. 27/ What is intended is an appreciation of arguments against employing such a strategy over a lengthy period of time without giving equal weight to other strategies which might prove more useful and beneficial, provided they are afforded the test of time. Moreover, whereas the merits of attrition in Vietnam may be questionable, it is indeed likely that future conflicts may find this same strategy operable. The key factor is, consequently, to avoid a 'mind-set' that dictates one, limited strategy for all limited wars. Vietnam has hopefully served one major purpose -- it has highlighted the often forgotten fact that the limited war concept not only has many applications, but that there must also be a broad range of strategies from which to select the one (or several) appropriate to each particular, unique engagement. Certainly the ever-present possibility of turbulence and aggression in the Third World underscores the vital necessity of such a flexible approach; it is the uncertainty of future crises that makes this imperative.

### F. MILITARY CAPABILITIES

#### 1. The Changing Balance of Power

During and after the conflict in Vietnam, the military balance of power shifted steadily and seriously towards the USSR in both the strategic and conventional areas. The US resources (fiscal, material, and human) consumed in Southeast Asia gave the USSR the opportunity to achieve what they lacked during the Cuban missile crisis, rough strategic equivalence, conventional superiority in a number of fields and locales, and a greatly enhanced capability to project military power on a global scale.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

During that period an increasing number of Third World countries acquired and assimilated sizeable amounts of modern weaponry; a number of them would be formidable opponents. For example, in no rational way could a conflict with Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam, or Iraq be considered a "half war." The slow, but apparently irresistible, spread of nuclear weapons further complicates the imbalance.

Until quite recently the US military forces have deteriorated, relatively, in both quantity and quality. Belated official acceptance of the significant build ups by North Korea and the Warsaw Pact, the humiliation in Iran, and the shock of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan have created the political climate in the US conducive to reversing the downward trend in useable military power. Correcting the many serious shortcomings, however, will require a long, costly, and risky effort.

In the interim, the Soviets, aided and abetted by their Cuban surrogates and the Vietnamese, have probed for, found, and exploited weak spots in the Third World. They read correctly the state of US military muscle and especially the lack of political will to use it.

The brief furor, uncalled for or not, over the Soviet "Combat Brigade" in Cuba starkly and embarrassingly demonstrated both the real and perceived changes in the balance of military power between 1962 and 1979.

The following sections briefly highlight some of the major areas in which US military capabilities have deteriorated over the past decade and a half. Although the cost of and the reaction to the war in Vietnam cannot be blamed for the totality of these problems, they certainly played a major - if unmeasurable - part in the degradations.

### 2. Mobilization Readiness

Mobilization depends on the ready availability of trained personnel who are properly equipped with modern, operable weapons/weapon systems and for whom sufficient amounts of ammunition and other necessary supplies are available. During the Vietnam War vast quantities of supplies, equipment and ammunition were expended at enormous expense. The then-existing inventories of all classes of supply were significantly depleted and,

except for Vietnam-related requirements, virtually no new systems or equipment were procured for the forces otherwise engaged or for the long-term needs of the services. Finally, during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War substantial stocks were drawn from the POMCUS (pre-positioned organizational materiel configured in unit sets) and the PWRS (pre-positioned war reserve stocks) for delivery to the Israeli forces. Rebuilding those stockpiles has consumed funds that otherwise might have contributed to modernizing and re-equipping the ground combat forces in the aftermath of Vietnam. Acute shortages of spare parts and other maintenance items continue to plague the services.

At present, there is a shortfall in war reserves in Europe.<sup>28/</sup> Because materiel placed overseas in POMCUS has heretofore not been additive to the Army authorization, it has had to come from CONUS-based units or war reserve stocks, thereby reducing the ability to train forces in and deploy them from CONUS.<sup>29/</sup>

The recent "NIFTY NUGGET" exercise revealed serious deficiencies in mobilization, ammunition production, deployment plans and capabilities, POMCUS, information management systems, and logistic reporting and management.<sup>30/</sup> At the annual AUSA meeting in the fall of 1979, the then-Deputy Commander of DARCOM, LTG Eugene D'Ambrosio, reported that there were not sufficient ammunition stockpiles in Europe for even the first 30 days of an intense conflict there.<sup>31/</sup> Again, the Vietnam War alone cannot be blamed for these serious shortfalls, but the strained US economy and flagging support in many quarters for the military services that resulted from that war must be considered contributory factors.

### 3. Recruitment/Retention Problem Areas

As pointed out in section B above, the draft was eliminated as a direct result of the Vietnam War. The impact on the services has been felt more in the area of sheer numbers than in the quality of personnel that enlisted, although the latter is a serious and continuing problem. The inequitable manner in which the draft had been operated placed a disproportionate levy on the poor strata, minorities, and less educated young

## THE BDM CORPORATION

men. Unfortunately, those same groups tend to be even more heavily represented in the All-Volunteer Army. With rising unemployment, minorities, under-educated, and poorer classes of young people are enlisting in the services in significant numbers. Additionally, the percentage of women in the service is increasing, and the number of military occupational specialties open to them has increased substantially.

Recruiting and retention problems suggest two probable results:

- A serious lowering of the level of education and associated reading and technical skills in the services at a time of increasing technology.
- Over-reliance on women to fill the ranks in combat support and combat service support fields, which could inhibit performance of these functions in wartime.

Retention of middle-grade personnel in the combat arms and technical services has been a continuing problem since US forces withdrew from Vietnam. Although not solely a result of the Vietnam War, this problem derives in part from pay and personnel policies that have been influenced by the costs and experiences of Vietnam.

The seriousness of the problem is illustrated by the sharp decrease in the percentage of reenlistments by those eligible to reenlist. In FY1976 some 76.3% of the eligible enlisted personnel in all Services reenlisted. In FY79 only 68.2% reenlisted. These retention problems seriously degrade combat readiness and exceed the ability of the services to replace losses with new recruits. 32/ Furthermore, the FY80 requirement is about 20% greater than in FY79, and the services face a continuing decline in the number of 17 to 21 year old males. 33/ It is difficult to see how the gross numbers of new recruits needed can be acquired without reducing the already suspect standards for enlistment.

The Reserve Component also suffers from an acute shortage of personnel and a sharp decline in the quality of accessions. 34/ Abolition of the draft eliminated the incentive for many non-prior-service young men to enlist in the Selected Reserves, causing recruiting and retention to fall dramatically since 1972. The total strength of the Reserve Component

## THE BDM CORPORATION

is only about 80% of the wartime requirement.<sup>35/</sup> The Reserve shortfall is all the more serious considering that seven months would elapse before a reactivated draft could deliver the first trained inductee.<sup>36/</sup>

#### 4. Attitude Problems

Fragging, combat refusals, and other cases of serious indiscipline occurred often enough in Vietnam during the period 1970-1972 to cause alarm. Another area of concern contributing to indiscipline was the obvious lack of professionalism and integrity among some of the officer and senior NCO corps. The US Army War College Study On Military Professionalism, conducted April-June '70, made several telling points, including these: <sup>37/</sup>

- Senior officers are a major source of the problem because they set standards which deviate from the ideal.
- That senior officers don't listen is one of the most prevalent complaints among juniors.
- Substandard officers were being retained.
- Deadwood at the O-6 level was mentioned repeatedly.
- Officers at the Advanced Courses complained they were not academically challenged.
- Stability in command assignments is essential to improve ethical behavior and technical competence.
- Expertise and integrity were perceived as being frequently less important in the eyes of promotion boards and rating officers than the ability to produce a flood of perfect statistics.

As should be expected return to a peacetime environment has eased the more flagrant combat-associated disciplinary problems and attention has been focused on the opportunistic "ticket punching" syndrome. To meet the Army's changing needs and to improve officer professionalism, the new Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS) was adopted in 1972, due in large measure to the Vietnam War and the Army War College Study On Military Professionalism. In 1979, more than 7,000 field grade Army officers responded to a survey conducted by the US Army Military Personnel Center (MILPERCEN). Among other findings the survey showed that in the

view of many of the respondents, the OPMS has accentuated rather than attenuated the careerist-oriented concept of "ticket-punching." 38/

The significance here is that the officers responding to the Army War College's professionalism survey in 1970 were students and faculty members of Advanced Courses, the USACGSC, and the Army members of the class of 1970 at the Army War College; those still in Service are now field grade or general officers. If the views reflected in the 1970 survey were representative of most of the officer corps, then it would seem that in the intervening decade little of substance has been accomplished in eradicating career-oriented "ticket-punching" -- either by the officer corps itself or the OPMS which was designed to improve professionalism.

Another "attitude problem" threatens to emerge. Middle class America is less and less attracted to military service. How much this attitude may relate to the Vietnam experience is pure conjecture, but the long-term impact can be severe. As the noted sociologist Charles Moskos pointed out, "As it is now run, the all-volunteer force effectively excludes participation by most of those who will be America's future leaders, whether in government, the mass media, or, most notably, in the intellectual and academic communities." 39/

##### 5. Training Readiness

Currently, several major factors adversely affect training. The complexity of modern weapon systems is increasing rapidly, requiring literate and motivated personnel to maintain and operate them effectively. At the same time, human qualifications of the rank and file are dropping. Many training and technical manuals are being rewritten to be usable by personnel with fifth to seventh-grade reading skills

The Commanding General of TRADOC referred to personnel turbulence as "the most abrasive element in the hostile training environment."40/ As of late 1979 he found that the turnover in battalions often reached 30 to 40 percent every quarter! The exodus of junior officers and NCOs further exacerbates the training problem. And finally, the costs of spare parts and ammunition are soaring. 42/ Author James Fallows pointed out that because of problems with the economy, inflation, high technology and rising

## THE BDM CORPORATION

costs, TOW and MAVERICK gunners can only fire one round a year. 43/ The deleterious impact on training is obvious.

Rising costs of fuel and training ordnance also seriously inhibit field maneuvers by armored and mechanized units and have similar impacts on Navy and Air Force training and operational deployments.

### 6. Force Structure

The Army in Vietnam was principally a light infantry force, liberally supported by helicopters. In the aftermath of that war, and undoubtedly stimulated by a strong distaste for the war and recognition that NATO had largely been ignored for several years, the Army refocused on Western Europe and the nature of combat that might be anticipated in that environment. As a consequence, a major restructuring has taken place emphasizing heavy divisions. It is likely that Congress would not have appropriated monies for any other purpose in the prevailing climate).

When the heavying-up process is completed, the Army will have attenuated its capability to fight in a counterinsurgency environment; which may or may not be for the better. Concomitantly, however, the ability to deploy rapidly to meet a serious conventional contingency will depend mainly on prepositioning major equipment in likely areas of conflict coupled with the capability to deploy troops, equipment, and supplies rapidly. That capability is now very limited. The C-5 and C-141 inventories and CRAF availability are about the same as they were during the Vietnam War, and only the C-5 can carry M-60 or XM-1 tanks. The new C-X intertheater transport has not even been designed yet and is several years away from being operational even if authorized and funded by Congress. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff FY81 Military Posture statement pointed out several deficiencies in the US's ability to project power. 44/

- Inadequate air and sea transport for decisive rapid response in Third World areas.
- Cutbacks in O&M programs due to budgetary constraints.
- Program shortfalls due to inflation.
- Cutbacks in flying, steaming, and training hours.



## THE BDM CORPORATION

- Deterioration of plant facilities.
- Delays in ship and aircraft repairs and overhauls.
- Insufficient equipment, supplies, and training.

It is difficult to assess how much of the Army's post-Vietnam War reorganization stemmed from that wartime experience. Failure to mobilize the Reserve Component impinged significantly on the Army's ability to execute a rapid buildup of forces in RVN, and that lesson seems to have been taken to heart. Mobilization will be necessary to meet any major contingencies in the future, particularly since 67% of all Army combat service support, 61% of all tactical airlift and 50% of the strategic airlift are provided by Reserve Components.<sup>45/</sup> Furthermore, four of the 16 active divisions include round-out brigades from the National Guard which would have to be mobilized or replaced by a substitute in the event of deployment.

There has been a variety of strong pressures to cut the Army's "tail" and build up the "teeth." As a result, as has happened between all wars in this century, the Army is overstructured, undermanned, and imbalanced. This calls into question the US capability to sustain heavy combat operations over a long period.

### G. AN EPILOGUE: THE UTILITY OF US MILITARY POWER IN THE POST-VIETNAM ERA

One of the most 'fashionable' lessons of Vietnam holds that the experience negates the utility of US military power, thereby foreclosing any future applications of military force in future, local crises and, thus, dictating an overly simplistic and anachronistic "No More Vietnams" approach to the formation of future US foreign policies. This contention merits general but pointed scrutiny.

First, one must consider the international environment in which the Vietnam war was waged and subsequently terminated, and, moreover, the changes in that environment which developed concurrent with this involvement. The United States made its initial commitments to Vietnam in a period of relative prosperity, characterized by rapid technological, industrial, and military development which surpassed that of any other global

## THE BDM CORPORATION

power; intervention had proven to be a moderately successful and comparatively risk-free solution for defusing local crises in the Third World and, except during these short-term crises, the less-developed nations generally remained on the periphery of global politics. Moreover, Vietnam unfolded during a time when (communist) aggression, no matter where it occurred, was considered by the US to be monolithically inspired, and, for a time, rightly so.

None of these developments or perceptions remained static as the Vietnam war progressed, and the Vietnam experience itself was only one factor which carried these changes. Meanwhile, the coming to office of a new administration at home, the rise in political and economic power of Third World nations, the desire on the part of the two major superpowers to limit the proliferation of nuclear arms, and the PRC's emergence from an intense period of turbulent, dogma-steeped isolationism all prompted new orientations toward and outlooks on international relations and the United States' role in them. The latter two developments, in particular, not only affected the nature and scope of US military (and political) involvement in Southeast Asia, but also made the utility of military power seem, not less, but more important in an era of arms negotiations and moves toward rapprochement. The efficacy of military power as a deterrent and peace-keeper supported and gave credence to these initiatives and, as a result, upgraded rather than diminished the utility of military power.

On another plane, Vietnam has indeed prejudiced the United States' desire to wage limited, local wars or engage in short-term conflicts; but it has not eroded our capacity to do so. 46/ And the exigencies of the present international political arena have already counseled the need for refurbishing our capacity to respond, with short-warning, to short-term local crises. 47/ The deciding factor for intervening, however, will depend greatly on projections of the conflict's anticipated duration and on the degree to which the interests in apparent jeopardy are regarded as 'vital.' The US leadership's concern to weigh carefully these dual considerations is directly attributable to our experience in Vietnam.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Therefore, while Vietnam was, indeed, a sobering experience for the US, it has not ultimately diminished the importance or utility of military power. What it has done is induced the US to revitalize its function, review its applicability, and raise the notion of limited, local war to perhaps a more sophisticated (and more political) level. These are extremely important, but oft overlooked, results of Vietnam.

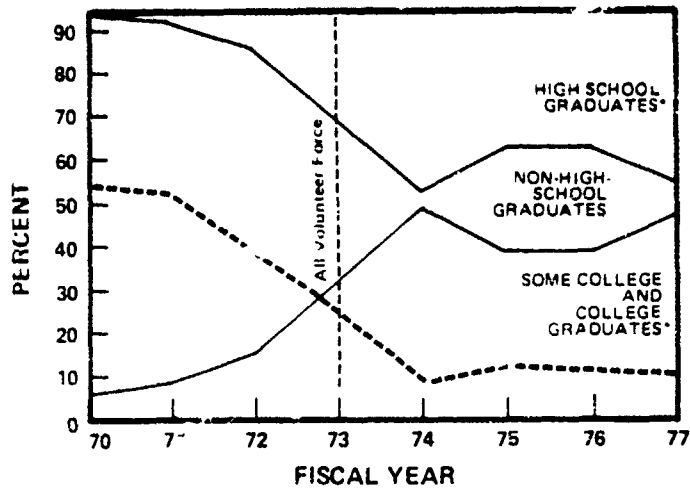
ESSAY 4 ENDNOTES

1. Col. Richard F. Rosser, "American Civil-Military Relations in the 1980s," in Richard G. Head and Ervin J. Rokke, eds. American Defense Policy. 3rd ed. (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 681.
2. Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, Department of Defense, Annual Report. Fiscal Year 1981 (Released January 29, 1980), p. 14.
3. Report to the Secretary of Defense on the National Military Command Structure (Washington, DC: July 1978), pp. 25-26.
4. Ibid. While this study contends that "good people" were the underlying reason that the command system "worked", despite the shortcomings during our involvement in Vietnam, it also stresses that "we should take little comfort in the fact that we were able to work with this jury-rigged command structure." Moreover, during Vietnam "we had lots of time and relatively low level of direct military threat under which to make adjustments."
5. During and after February, 1980, however, President Carter's call for registration has once again focused national attention on the potent and emotional issue of the draft.
6. The following studies provide useful information on the composition of the VOLAR, its demographic profile, educational levels, recruitment goals (and deficiencies), etc. See Charles C. Moskos, "The Enlisted Ranks in the All-Volunteer Army," Paper prepared for the Military in American Society study, White Burkett Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, January 1978; Moskos, "The All-Volunteer Force," The Wilson Quarterly, Spring 1979, pp. 131-142; US General Accounting Office Report to the Congress of the United States, Difficulties in Selected Army Reserves Recruiting Under the All-Volunteer Force. FPCD-79-71, August 20, 1979; and also Special Report. Mobilization Manpower. The Muscle of Our Deterrence, (Arlington, Virginia: The Association of the United States Army, June 25, 1979).

The following tables provide additional useful information on the educational attainment levels of US Army personnel for selected years. Note the shifts in attainment levels from pre-VOLAR days to present.

THE BDM CORPORATION

Educational Attainment of Selected Reserve Non-Prior-Service Recruits

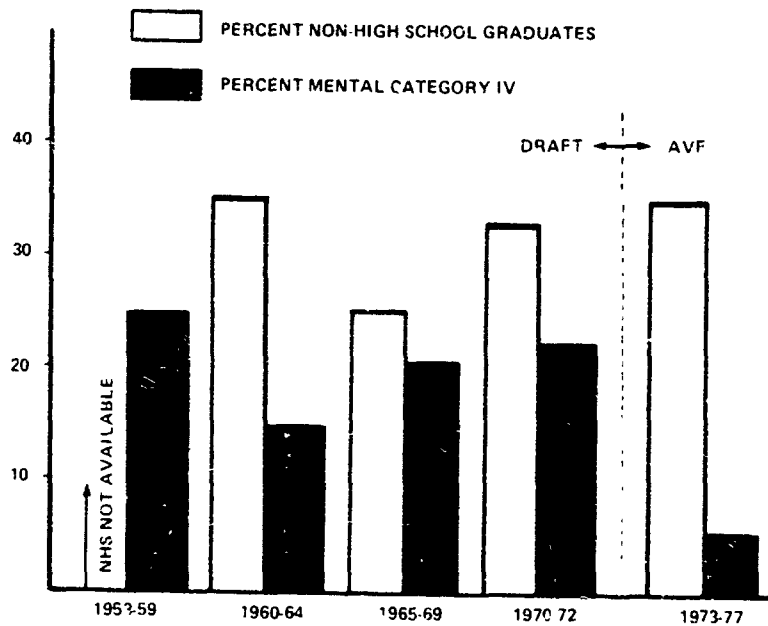


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\* HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE LINE INCLUDES THOSE WITH SOME COLLEGE AND COLLEGE GRADUATES

SOURCE: Comptroller General, Report to the Congress, "Difficulties in Selected Army Reserves Recruiting Under the All-Volunteer Force"

Enlistment Quality: Percent Non-High School Graduates and Percent Mental Category IV



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SOURCE: Cooper, "The All-Volunteer Force: Five Years Later," RAND, R-1450-ARPA, Sept. 1977

## THE BDM CORPORATION

7. Seth Cropsey, "Too Few Good Men," Harpers, December 1979, p. 16.
8. The 'Army as just another job' issue is a spin-off of another, equally controversial problem, i.e., overall Army management based on corporate management principles. For an interesting, useful, and general commentary on this topic, see Col. D.M. Malone and Donald D. Penner, "You Can't Run an Army Like a Corporation," Army, Vol. 30, No. 2 (February 1980), pp. 39-41.
9. Study on Military Professionalism (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: US Army War College, June 30, 1970), p. v.
10. For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see Volume VI, Conduct of the War, Book 2, Chapter 15 - "Measures of Progress or Keeping Score."
11. See, for instance, Gen. Donn A. Starry's recommendations for stemming disaffection in the services and enhancing leadership qualities. He calls for the Army's acknowledgement of the young soldier's individuality and unique growth process. Gen. Donn A. Starry, "Training Key to Success of Force Modernization," Army (1979 Green Book), pp. 30-34.
12. Robert L. Brown, Former Minister Counselor of the United States of America, Office of the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, INTAF, in a letter to BDM dated August 27, 1979. Also Dr. Henry J. Kenny, Special Assistant to Ambassador Mansfield, US Embassy, Tokyo, in discussions with BDM analysts, July 19, 1979 and August 10, 1979.
13. Jonathan D. Stoddart, Special Assistant to the CINC for International Security Affairs, Headquarters, Allied Forces Southern Europe, in a letter to BDM dated July 5, 1979.
14. Leslie H. Brown, American Security Policy in Asia. Adelphi Papers, No. 132 (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1977), p. 9.
15. This statement does not, however, imply that the Atlantic Alliance is without its strains and problems. James Fallows contends, in fact, that the US is presently carrying too much of the burden of this alliance and recommends what he feels is a more equitable course. See James Fallows, "Muscle-Bound Superpower. The State of America's Defense," The Atlantic, October 1979, p. 76. For a recent and somewhat provocative discussion of on-going problems confronting the NATO alliance, see Peter Jay, "Regionalism as Geopolitics," Foreign Affairs (America and the World 1979), Vol. 58, No. 3, pp. 485-514.
16. The US also continues to maintain good relations with Thailand and the collective defense provisions of the SEATO treaty remain in force.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

17. Pakistan's uncertainty and reservations about US objectives in establishing a security pact have been especially apparent in recent weeks (Feb-Mar. 1980); a trade-off of massive economic assistance for Pakistan's approval of US strategic access to the country has been called for by Pakistan's President Zia ul-Haq.
18. See Volume VI, Conduct of the War, Book 2, Chapter 16 - "Operational and Technical Innovations" for a detailed discussion of innovations developed during the course of US involvement in Vietnam. See also James Fallows, "Muscle-Bound Superpower," for an excellent, highly critical review of the US defense establishment's 'high-tech' orientation. For an open appraisal of Soviet lessons learned from the US (high-tech) approach to the Vietnam war, see Jack Anderson, "Soviet Coverters Reflect Vietnam Lesson," The Washington Post, Feb 21, 1980. Virginia Section p. 15.
19. Ralph R. Canter, "Organization Management and the Volunteer Force: Policy and Research Issues," Unpublished manuscript. (First draft.) US Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, Alexandria, Virginia. For a rather gloomy overview of the Army's ability to train its manpower in the use of sophisticated and complex materiel, see Fred Reed, "This Is the Army?," The Washington Post (Outlook), February 10, 1980, p. D-7.
20. Cited in George C. Wilson, "Pay Lid Squeezing Best Pilots Out of U.S. Warplane Cockpits," The Washington Post, February 17, 1980, pp. A-1 - A-15.
21. Lt. Col. Harry G. Summers, Jr., "What Did You Do In Vietnam, Grandpa?" Army, Vol. 28, No. 11 (November 1978): 16.
22. Secretary Harold Brown, p. 5. For a country-by-country overview of global turbulence, see also Special Report. The Challenge to Freedom. A Year-End Assessment 1979 (Arlington, Virginia: The Association of the United States Army, January 1980.)
23. Robert E. Osgood, "The Reappraisal of Limited War," in American Defense Policy, ed. Richard G. Head and Ervin J. Rokke (Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 160.
24. Ibid., p. 165. Osgood, noting that controlled escalation is a strategy which was developed principally to apply to direct or indirect confrontations between the US and USSR, also stresses that there are "special difficulties in applying to an underdeveloped country a strategy that presupposes a set of values and calculations found only in the most advanced countries." This is obviously not a question solely for the US military strategist to resolve, but one that deserves at least equal attention on the part of the US political leadership.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

25. This phrase, "The American Way of war," can be found in Earl C. Ravenal, Never Again. Learning From America's Foreign Policy Failures (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1978), p. 105. See also Ravenal, pp. 151-152, ff. 6, which provides a selected bibliography of sources also dealing with this notion of "the American way of war."
26. Brian M. Jenkins, The Unchangeable War, RM-6278-2-ARPA (Santa Monica, California: The RAND Corporation, November 1970), p. 4.
27. See, for example, Maj. Richard Hart Sinnreich, "Tactical Doctrine or Dogma?" Army, Vol. 29, No. 9, p. 17. Maj. Sinnreich points out that some argue the Israel; success in the October 1973 war confirmed the effectiveness of strategy based on attrition. It is also most interesting to note that Maj. Sinnreich omits any discussion of Vietnam in discussing attrition, tactics, and doctrine.
28. General David C. Jones, USAF, Chairman of The Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) United States Military Posture for FY 1981, p. 60.
29. Ibid., pp. 51, 60.
30. John J. Fialka, "The Grim Lessons of Nifty Nugget " Army. April 1980. pp. 14-18. Also Secretary of Defense Annual Report FY81 pp. 282-283.
31. "Front and Center," Army, March 1980.
32. CJCS, Military Posture FY81, p. 37.
33. Secretary of Defense, Annual Report FY81, p. 270.
34. Comptroller General of The United States. Difficulties in Selected Army Reserves Recruiting Under the All-Volunteer Force. Report to the Congress, FPCD-79-71 August 20, 1979, pp. ii-iii.
35. Ibid., p. 2 and Secretary of Defense, Annual Report FY81, p. 272.
36. LTJG Robert G. Yerks, "Our Ability to 'Fight Now' Depends on People," Army, October 1979, p. 58. General Yerks, DCSPER, describes the seven-month delay as unacceptable, and he cites the requirement for a reliable system to deliver up to 100,000 inductees within 30 days after mobilization.
37. Study on Military Professionalism, Figure V-1, pp. 46-52.
38. OPMS Status Report. Commanders Call, DA Pam 360-846, 15 May 1979. Text prepared by Officer Personnel Management Directorate (OPMD), of the US Army Military Personnel Center (MILPERCEN), p. i4.



## THE BDM CORPORATION

39. Moskos, "The All-Volunteer Force," p. 142.
40. Starry, "Training Key to Success of Force Modernization," p. 31.
41. Army Chief of Staff General E. C. Meyer expressed his concern over the loss of NCOs and junior officers and proposed a program of generous education benefits to attract and retain quality personnel. The Washington Post, 24 April 1980, p. A15.
42. William E. DePuy, Gen. US Army (Ret.). Comment made during a BDM interview 13 September 1978.
43. James Fallows, "Muscle-Bound Superpower, The State of America's Defense," The Atlantic. October 1979.
44. CJCS, Military Posture FY81, p. 28.
45. Ibid., p. 63.
46. See Earl Ravenal, p. 103, for a more detailed discussion of this point.
47. The United States' development of its Rapid Deployment Force and other fast-action, short-warning forces stand out as the most obvious examples of this

# THE BDM CORPORATION

## ESSAY 5

### REGIONAL RESULTS: THE NEW FACE OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

First of all one must speak about the victory the Vietnamese people have gained ... The victory of Vietnam has opened up fresh horizons before the whole of Southeast Asia. It will go down forever in the history of the people's struggle for liberty and independence. After Vietnam it was Laos and Cambodia who won their freedom. We, the Soviet people, send ardent and fraternal greetings to the communists, patriots, and all working people of these countries and wish them further successes in the struggle for peace, democracy, and social progress.<sup>1/</sup>

Leonid I. Brezhnev, General  
Secretary of Communist Party,  
of CPSU, 24 February 1976.

China could not tolerate the Cuba of the Orient to go swashbuckling in Laos, Kampuchea or even in the Chinese border areas.<sup>2/</sup>

Deng Xiaoping, Vice-Premier  
of PRC, February 1979.

#### A. INTRODUCTION

With the reunification of Vietnam in 1975, Western attention turned briefly away from Indochina. Yet over the past few years sweeping changes have occurred in the political and social texture of the Indochinese nations and, with these changes, the eyes of the world are once again focused on this region. Militarily, the reunified Vietnamese state now boasts the third largest standing force in the communist world (after the USSR and China). The Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) has spared no effort to bring Laos and Cambodia into its orbit, and now controls what amounts to an Indochinese federation of approximately 60 million people.

Despite the desire of many Americans to forget about Indochina, recent events have demonstrated that this region has by no means "exhausted its ability both to astonish and to involve the rest of the world - however reluctant it may be - in its continuing problems."<sup>3/</sup> Interest of the great powers in this region has been demonstrated by the USSR's continuing massive assistance to Hanoi, by Chinese fears of a buoyant, aggressive Vietnam

## THE BDM CORPORATION

on its southern doorstep, and by worldwide concern for the Indochinese refugees and disquiet over their unfortunate plight. The refugee problem demonstrates once again that, as in most armed conflicts, the real losers are usually the "little people" who have been caught in the middle.

Hanoi's ambitions have sobering implications for the future both for the immediate region and for the international community. There is serious concern that the new SRV regime may be looking beyond Indochina to project its revolutionary goals and armed forces.

### B. THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM. 1975 - PRESENT

#### 1. In the South

With Hanoi's military occupation of South Vietnam, old institutions were summarily abolished by decree. A step-by-step imposition of the new order began, marking the beginning of a social upheaval which continues to this day.

The first decrees abolished private property (albeit with some exceptions), and a new currency was created. This eliminated private holdings and bank accounts acquired under the old regime.<sup>4/</sup> From the outset it was apparent that Hanoi intended to impose a "Roman victory" in which conquerors impose any changes they desire.

Concurrent with these radical economic changes, media services were also discontinued. On 1 May 1975 the North Vietnamese banned all publications and withdrew all "printed matter already published without authorization."<sup>5/</sup> Publication of all 15 Vietnamese-language newspapers was curtailed in Saigon; these were replaced by three communist-line news-sheets. In addition, radio, television, and cinema were subjected to a change in management and direction compatible with communist dogma.

The next step was the destruction of "anti-revolutionary" books. In one day half a million "decadent books" were publicly burned. In a related move, all universities and technical schools were closed, to await reorganization.<sup>6/</sup> Thus, the old education system was quickly destroyed, to be reorganized according to the wishes of the Hanoi leadership.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Religious groups were singled out as particular targets for repression by the new regime. The full extent of the regime's anti-Buddhist policies was revealed in late 1977, when one of the country's highest-ranking Buddhist monks fled to Malaysia because of severe persecution. The official policy was aimed at "shattering religious communities, Roman Catholic as well as Buddhist."7/ South Vietnam's unique religious sects were also priority targets.

A comprehensive network of political controls was established under the aegis of the military and security police. The most important (and effective) of those controls was a refinement of the "block system" of surveillance in which a "revolutionary committee" is responsible for monitoring a segment of the local neighborhood. (This system was effectively employed in Eastern Europe after 1945 and in Cuba in the early 1960s.) David Rees, author of Vietnam Since Liberation, notes how the North Vietnamese imposed control by exploiting the country's internal chaos:

... in the early days of the North Vietnamese occupation, corruption and the black market flourished as senior North Vietnamese officers and Soviet bloc officials took over hotels in the Saigon area. There was a severe shortage of food and the entire commercial and industrial system of South Vietnam collapsed. It was out of this chaos that the Hanoi military and security officials imposed their control system, capitalizing on the psychological shock of the defeat and occupation of South Vietnam.8/

An extensive system of "re-education" (prison) camps has been the most striking and effective method used by the regime in imposing its rule. In 1977, it was estimated that some 200,000 to 300,000 Southern oppositionists had been interned in about 50 of these camps.9/ Information from refugees now indicates that these camps have become a permanent, institutionalized aspect of Hanoi's rule. Moreover, the so-called "new economic zones" in the countryside, originally established to ease overcrowding in the cities, "have become virtual concentration camps."10/

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Foreign observers had expected reunification to occur slowly after economic and social conditions in the South had been transformed, or at least modified, to a socialist model. But the process has, in fact, been rapid. Elections for a new national assembly returned 249 delegates from the North and 248 from the South in April 1976, and the assembly elected a national government in June. Reunification took place and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) was proclaimed on July 2, 1976.<sup>11/</sup> Delegates for the country's fledgling government were nominated by the Vietnam Workers' Party (VWP or Dang Lao Dong - DLD) and summarily elected. It was therefore not surprising that new leadership was composed of well-known Northern revolutionaries (See Figures 5-1 and 5-2).

Armed resistance to Hanoi's rule has apparently arisen since 1975, but more specific details of these incidents remain vague. Resistance has occurred among tribesmen in the Central Highlands, among members of the Hoa Hao sect in the Mekong Delta, and in the Tay Ninh region north of Saigon. <sup>14/</sup>

### 2. In the North

In addition to imposing its rule in the South, Hanoi was also faced with the huge task of national reconstruction, particularly in the Northern half of the country. A UN study mission, sent to North Vietnam in early 1976, found that bomb damage to property was far heavier there than in the South. The North Vietnamese transportation system was largely destroyed, including major roads, the railway systems, road and rail bridges, as well as a large number of trucks, locomotives, and boats. Industrial facilities also were seriously damaged or destroyed, including rolling-stock repair shops, electric generating stations, iron and steel plants, and numerous factories. About 1,000 villages were reported as "devastated;" practically all the provincial capitals (29 out of 30) were damaged and nine were completely destroyed. <sup>15/</sup>

International organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Health Organization (WHO) responded with substantial monetary aid. The task of rebuilding began and

### Political Bureau Members

(Fourth Party Congress ranking order)



Le Duan  
General Secretary

Truong Chinh

Pham Van Dong

Pham Hung

Le Duc Tho

Vo Nguyen Giap



Nguyen Duy Trinh

Le Thanh Nghi

Tran Quoc Huan

Van Tien Dung

Le Van Luong



Nguyen Van Linh

Vo Chi Cong

Chu Huy Man

### Alternate Members



To Huu

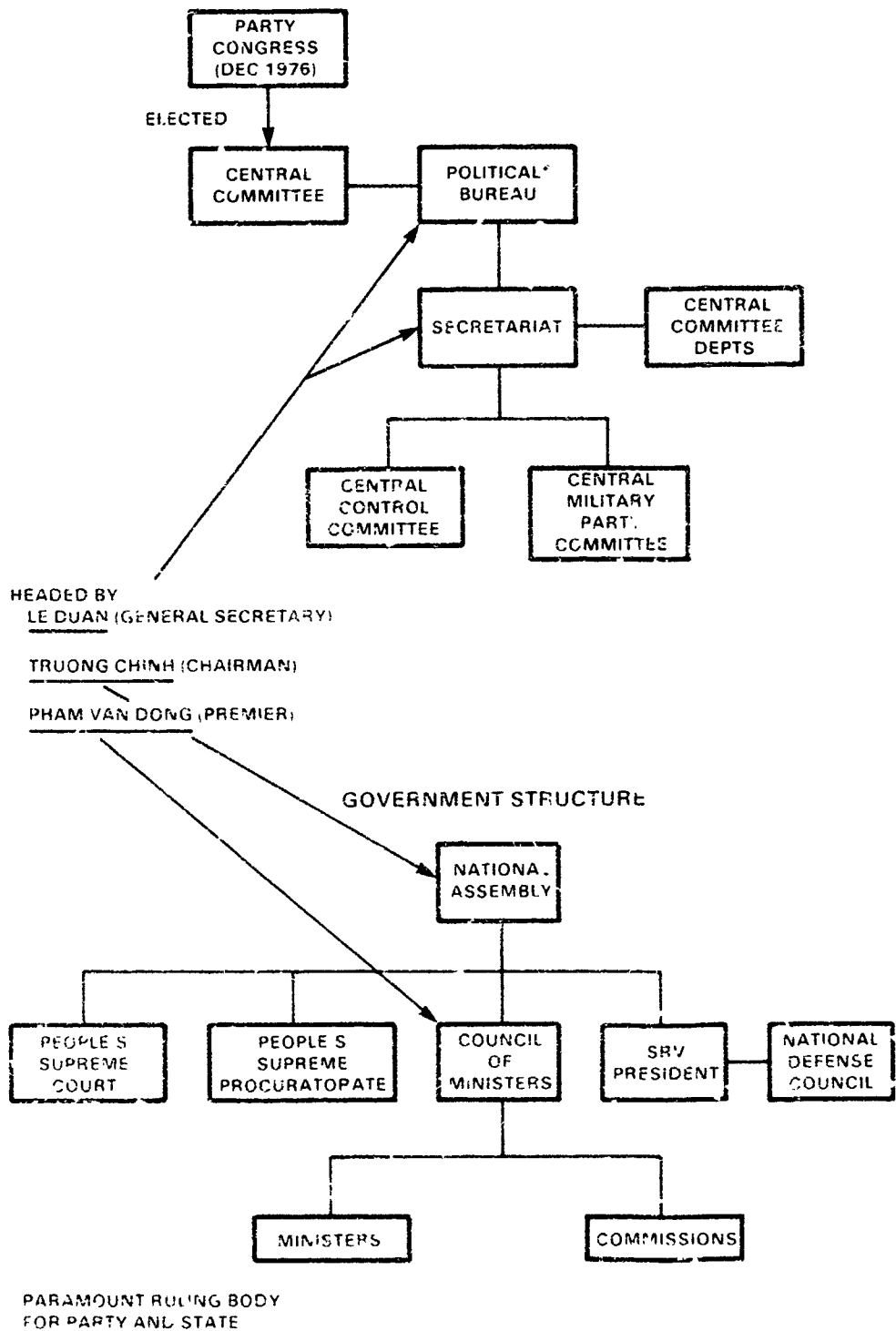
Vo Van Ket

Do Muo

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Figure 5-1. Key Vietnamese Leaders 12/

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Figure 5-2. Socialist Republic of Vietnam: Party Structure 13.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Hanoi's leaders used the time-tested method of population mobilization to achieve this goal.

Meanwhile, the North Vietnamese had earned a special place in the pantheon of international communist revolutionary heroes. The two visits of Le Duan to Moscow, in October 1975 and in February-March 1976 (see Table 3-1), had insured Vietnam the continued assistance and support of the USSR and other East European nations. In 1976, Moscow announced that its aid programs consisted of more than 40 construction projects in Vietnam. Western intelligence specialists now believe that Soviet aid to unified Vietnam amounts to approximately \$2 million a day. 17/

The Vietnamese Workers Party convened its watershed Fourth Party Congress in mid-December 1976, during which the national leadership indicated its intent to pursue actively the "socialist industrialization" of Vietnam. Besides the drastic domestic measures implicit in industrialization, the Congress also highlighted Hanoi's intention to play a major role in both regional and world affairs. As noted by David Rees, "Whatever the course of future events in Indo-China, no one can say that Hanoi has not made its intentions clear." 18/ (See the following subsections on Laos and Cambodia for the implications of Hanoi's stated regional policy.) The Fourth Congress also renamed the Party the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP).

Ambitious plans were also announced for the long-term development of the unified SRV, one facet of which was, of course, industrialization. To meet these goals, some 10 million people were to be relocated from their residences in the northern Red River Delta and Central Lowlands to the Central Highlands and Mekong Delta in the South. Even in the initial Five Year Plan (1976-1980), Hanoi's planners call for the "revolutionary transfer" of four million urban Vietnamese (mostly from the South) to underpopulated "new economic zones." In effect, Hanoi's overall long-term plan envisages the South as a primarily agricultural adjunct to the industrial North. 19/

Recent visitors to the North report that portions of the SRV are still in a shambles. The country is experiencing an intense economic



THE BDM CORPORATION

TABLE 5-1. MILESTONES OF INTEGRATION 1975-1979 16/

<u>Vietnam into Moscow's Orbit:</u>	<u>Indochina into Hanoi's Orbit:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Oct 75 - Le Duan in Moscow. Vietnam and USSR hold "completely identical views" on foreign policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 17 Apr 75 - Phnom Penh falls to communists</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Feb-Mar 76 - Le Duan in Moscow for 25th CPSU Congress, is treated on a par with East European leaders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 12 May 75 - Royal Lao government declares that war is over in Laos</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 4 Dec 77 - Friendship treaty between East Germany and SRV, both pledge "resolute assistance" to Third World</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Dec 75 - Laotian monarchy abolished</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Jan 78 - Moscow throws its support to SRV in Vietnamese-Cambodian border conflict</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 2 July 75 - North and South Vietnam reunified; new state renamed Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● June 78 - SRV becomes 10th full member of COMECON</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 14-20 Dec 76 - VCP sets goals for Indochina at 4th Party Congress</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 3 Nov 78 - USSR-SRV treaty of friendship and cooperation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 15 Jul 77 - Laos-SRV friendship treaty</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Feb-Mar 79 - Conflict with China pushes SRV closer to USSR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 24 Jul 77 - Laos and SRV agree on economic and military cooperation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mar-May 79 - Soviet navy begin use of Da Nang and Cam Ranh Bay</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 29 Dec 77 - Increased fighting between Cambodian and SRV forces</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Jul 79 - Soviet presence in Vietnam estimated at 4,000</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Jan 78 - Vietnamese General Van Tien Dung confers in Laos with Soviet Deputy Defense Minister General Pavlovsky</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Aug 79 - Soviet presence in Vietnam estimated at 5,000-8,000</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 4 Dec 78 - SRV announces formation of United Front for Cambodian National Salvation</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 7 Jan 79 - Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia results in SRV control of Phnom Penh.</li> </ul>

## THE BDM CORPORATION

crisis, and almost every type of consumer good is in short supply. According to correspondent Armand de Borchgrave, the average monthly salary in Vietnam is 45 dongs (\$19.80); a chicken from the marketplace costs \$13.10, and a bicycle sells for \$395.00. 20/ An East German correspondent stationed in Hanoi recently indicated that "There's no economy left... These people are flat on their backs." 21/

Soaring military costs have aggravated Vietnam's economic problems as the armed forces have expanded markedly, both to meet the SRV's defense needs and to police the rest of Hanoi's Indochinese empire. According to the London International Institute of Strategic Studies, the size of the Vietnamese army has grown from 600,000 to 1,000,000 during the last year. 22/ The current drift of the SRV's militaristic policies has been eloquently summarized by one Asian diplomat: "Ho Chi Minh's political testament of an Indochina under Hanoi's control has become a senile obsession for the Vietnamese Politburo and a nightmare for the people... The leaders don't care what it takes in human lives -- they are determined to carry out Ho's will before they die." 23/ In addition, the leadership's efforts to consolidate the Indochinese "empire" has tended to mask or downplay economic failures in the SRV.

Hanoi has received ample post-war assistance from the Soviet Union and East European countries in developing its military machine. In early 1977, Vietnamese Defense Minister Giap headed a military delegation to East Germany; Vietnamese officers engaged in a course of studies lasting several years aimed at furthering the existing military cooperation between the two countries. (These countries concluded an interesting friendship treaty in December 1977 which pledged that the two countries would "continue their resolute assistance to the peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, which have liberated themselves from imperialist and colonialist domination.") Giap also visited Hungary, where other Vietnamese officers are currently being trained. 24/ The Vietnamese have also been undergoing advanced training in the USSR since at least the mid-1960s. Meanwhile the number of Soviet personnel in Vietnam (both military and civilian) has grown from 2,700 in mid-1977 to about 5,000-8,000 in August 1979. 25/

## THE BDM CORPORATION

The unified Socialist Republic of Vietnam has now attained a far stronger military machine than it had before the fall of Saigon in April 1975 (See Table 5-2). Hanoi's forces have proven capable of consolidating power, shown by their "police action" in Laos, their lightning victory over Cambodia in January 1979, and their ability to check the advances of the massive Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) shortly thereafter. (See the following sections for an analysis of these specific campaigns.)

### C. THE DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF LAOS, 1975 - PRESENT

#### 1. Political Integration

With the fall of Saigon, the Royal Lao Government saw little chance of holding its own and thus declared the war in Laos to be over, capitulating on Hanoi's terms. In December, the Laotian monarchy was abolished and the Democratic People's Republic of Laos established. In a political transformation which passed with little notice in the West, a communist regime was installed under the direction of the Lao People's Revolutionary (Communist) Party led by Kaysone Phomvihane. The government structure was established by the rubber-stamp National Congress of People's Representatives in December 1975. Elections, scheduled to take place on April 1, 1976, have been "postponed" indefinitely. 27/

Hanoi has long had plans to dominate Laotian political events. In 1975, about 2,500 party cadres were purged for their anti-Vietnamese views and sent to "re-education camps;" another 200 were jailed. Similar purges -- though on a smaller scale -- had been carried out periodically before 1975, when the Pathet Lao leadership was headquartered in the limestone caves of Sam Neua. According to one senior Lao communist who recently defected, "Even then, the Vietnamese acted like they were the boss." 28/

During late 1975 and throughout 1976, Hanoi was generally preoccupied with absorbing and integrating South Vietnam, and did not make a concerted political effort to integrate Laos into the Indochinese "federation." The Laotian Communist government encountered obstacles in establishing its authority, and widespread royalist resistance was reported in

THE BDM CORPORATION

TABLE 5-2. VIETNAMESE FORCES AT A GLANCE 26/

MANPOWER				
	1,000,000		Army	
	3,000		Navy	
	20,000		Air Force	
	1,023,000		Active Forces	
	70,000		Border Guards	
	1,500,000		Militia Forces	
	1,570,000		Paramilitary Forces	
EQUIPMENT				
	Supplied	Plus	Captured *	Equals
	by USSR	+	From ARVN	=
				Total
Tanks:	1,450		550	2,000
APC:	1,000		800	1,800
Field Arty pieces:	1,400		800	2,200
Bombers	10		-	10
Grd-Atk A/C	200		105	305
Interceptor A/C	100		120	220
DEPLOYMENT				
Between Hanoi and PRC frontier		=	200,000	
In Laos:			50,000	
In Cambodia:			170,000 +	
Total "front-line" forces:			420,000 +	

\* About 40% of all arms captured in 1975 believed operational. This column represents equipment believed to be operational.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

the southern provinces of the "panhandle." Meanwhile, the continuing exodus of technicians, officials, and businessmen worried the new government, and in June 1976 Prime Minister Kaysone frankly acknowledged the country's severe economic problems. 29/

On July 15, 1977, the Laos-Vietnam friendship treaty was concluded, with far-reaching implications for both countries as well as for nearby Thailand. Article 2 of the pact pledges mutual support, assistance, and close cooperation "aimed at reinforcing the defense capacity, preserving the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity (of both countries), and defending the people's peaceful labor against all schemes and acts of sabotage by imperialism and foreign reactionary forces." 30/

The effects of this cooperation have only recently become apparent. According to the senior Laotian communist defector, Hanoi is tightening its grip on Laos despite the silent opposition of about 90 percent of the 23,000-member Lao People's Revolutionary Party. Under Prime Minister Kaysone and his seven-man Politburo, the foreign presence -- Soviet and Vietnamese -- has grown recently and continues to climb. The Laotian defector claimed that some 6,000 Vietnamese civilian officials are in Laos, including 1,000 attached to Vientiane ministries; up to 100,000 Vietnamese civilians have settled in eastern and southern Laos, and Laotian peasants have been pushed from their villages and herded farther inland; and, finally, some 800 Vietnamese secret police arrived in Laos in late 1978 to monitor the movement of foreigners, to identify dissidents in the Pathet Lao army and among the population, and to train the nucleus of a Laotian secret police force. 31/

Prime Minister Kaysone shows every indication of subservience to Hanoi. According to the Laotian defector, Kaysone flies to Hanoi twice a month to confer with Vietnamese leaders. He and other key members of the politburo live in a Vientiane compound guarded by a Vietnamese battalion. 32/

### 2. The Military Factor

A major by-product of the 1977 Laos-Vietnam treaty was an increase in the Vietnamese military presence in Laos. In late 1977, the

## THE EDM CONSPIRACY

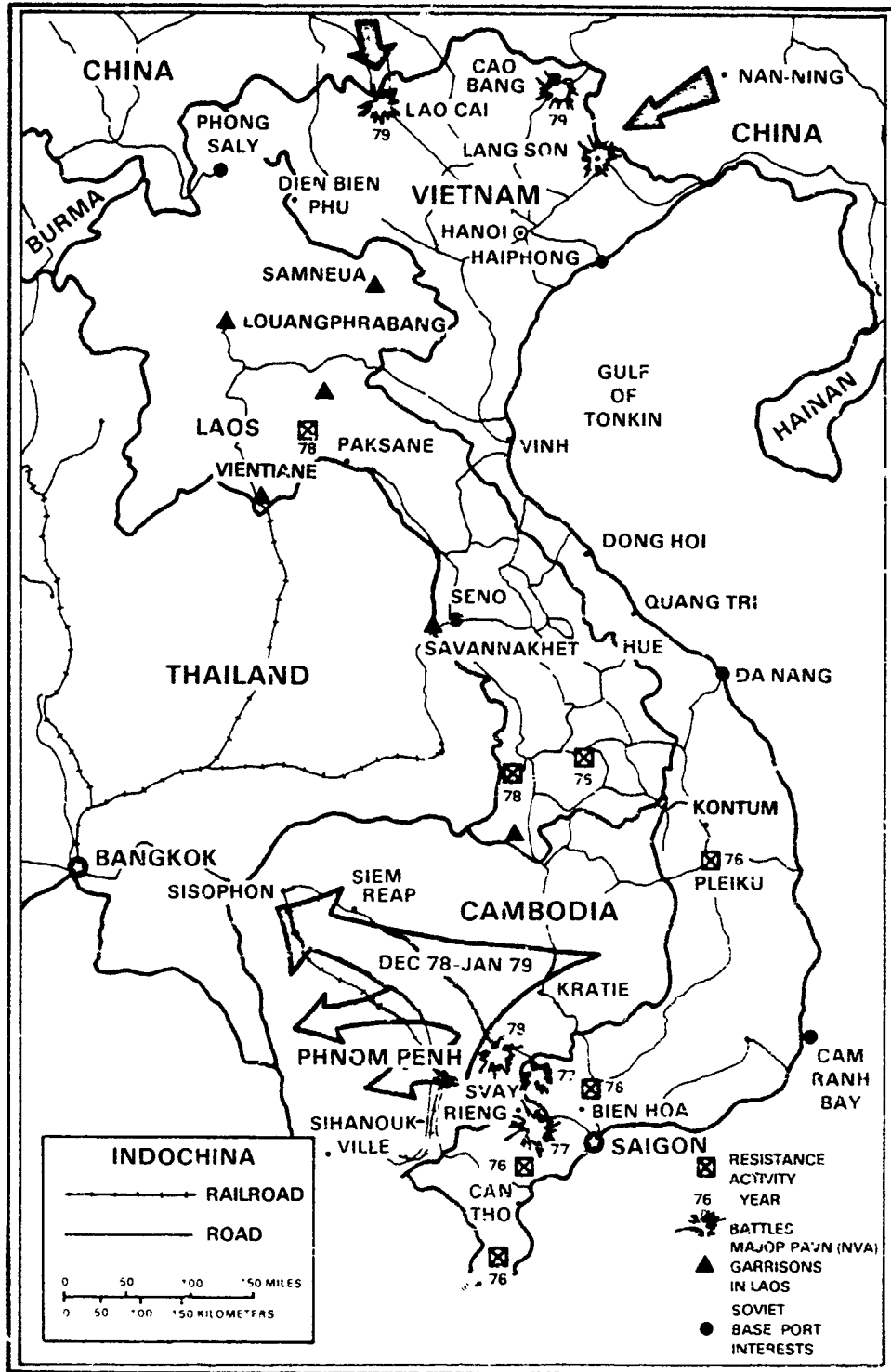
Vietnamese troop strength in Laos was estimated at 24,000-30,000 and now totals about 50,000 soldiers. 33/ (See Map 5-1 for the location of major Vietnamese garrisons.)

The Soviet presence has also increased to a level of about 1,000 military personnel. Of this number, 100 act as military advisers and another 100 are attached to the Lao Air Force. To date the USSR has delivered 20 MIG-21 fighters, with the first shipment (into Vientiane) in late 1977 and the second in early 1979. 35/

The Vietnamese and Soviets have been working together to police trouble spots in Laos. In January 1978, Soviet Deputy Defense Minister General Ivan G. Pavlovsky arrived in Vientiane and later inspected the troubled southern border area around Pakse and Champassak (See Map 5-1). Vietnamese General Van Tien Dung, who directed the "Great Spring Victory" in 1975 which toppled the Thieu regime, flew to Laos for secret talks with General Pavlovsky.

In late 1978, the US State Department revealed that the Vietnamese and Laotian communist forces had been conducting air-delivered chemical attacks on the Hmong mountain tribesmen (south of the Plaine des Jarres). 36/ American intelligence reports indicated that the USSR had supplied Hanoi with the poison gas and that Soviet officers in Laos had been "taking a direct interest" in its use. Most of the attacks over the past two years have been with lethal gas or so-called "area-denial" agents which destroy vegetation and poison water supplies. There is belief in some quarters that Laos is being used as a testing ground due to its remoteness and the difficulties involved in establishing proof regarding the use of such chemicals.

Laos will continue to be a pawn and staging area in the struggle for Southeast Asia. As described in subsection G, the Vietnamese have long been using Laotian territory to support the simmering insurgency in north-east Thailand.



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Map 5-1. Areas of Continuing Conflict, 1975-79 34/

## THE BDM CORPORATION

### D. DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA (CAMBODIA), 1975 - PRESENT

#### 1. The Legacy of War and the Pol Pot Regime

The problems of Laos are relatively minor in comparison with those in neighboring Cambodia (renamed Democratic Kampuchea in 1975). The tragedy of Cambodia is still being played out today, and is eloquently summarized by a letter from the US-based Federation of Cambodian Associations:

The Cambodian population which totaled 6.0 million in 1970 has been subjected to five years of war (1970-75) under the Cambodian republican regime; three years of genocidal rule (1975-78) under the Khmer Rouge regime which butchered hundreds of thousands; and today (1979), under the Vietnamese-backed communist regime of Heng Samrin, the less than 4.9 million remaining Cambodian people are not only caught between the Pol Pot and Vietnamese Heng Samrin antagonist forces but also millions are victims of disease and starvation.

37/

Political questions aside, the Cambodian population faced major reconstruction tasks in 1975. Major damage was reported to the country's transportation facilities: 45 percent of the roads were destroyed or damaged, 45 percent of all bridges were down, and half of the country's vehicles were out of commission. Moreover, a large segment of the Cambodian population was suffering from a virulent new strain of malaria in 1975-76. 38/

The post-war revolutionary regime, led by Pol Pot, assumed power on April 17, 1975 -- two weeks before Saigon fell. The forced evacuation of three million persons from Pnom Penh marked the starting point of a bloody campaign aimed at eliminating every trace of opposition to Pol Pot's ruling council - the Angkar ("Organization") which enjoyed the backing of Peking.

For three years the Pol Pot regime directed what probably has been the most radical and far-reaching revolution of the twentieth century. According to Francois Ponchaud, author of Cambodia - Year Zero, "Immobility and corruption have given way to a frenzy of production and a hysteria of



## THE BDM CORPORATION

purification. Individualism and chaotic license have been replaced by a radical collectivism and perpetual conditioning. Using class inequality and racial animosity as tools, a handful of ideologists have driven an army of peasants to bury their entire past. To learn a new art of living, many of the living have died." 39/

Most in the West still cannot comprehend the total scope of this revolution. According to Ponchaud, "Everything is organized: water, earth, rivers, animals, and men. All must be incorporated into the harmonious plan of the Angkar..." 40/ Radio Phnom Penh, monitored during these years by a few in the West, gave further details about life in Cambodia.

Before daybreak ... the neighborhood of the work site resounds with the joyful cries of the peasants on their way to work ... And they work with joy, the blood-red revolutionary flag whipping in the wind and urging them forward "with extraordinary revolutionary courage of a very high level." They work from dawn to dusk without a moment's thought of fatigue. The earth may be hard as stone and the sun may burn, but nothing can stop the ardent war of production which consumes like a flame. While they work, the children and young people sing revolutionary songs to encourage them. Every day goes by in a holiday atmosphere; songs and shouts of joy ring out on every side. 41/

Meanwhile, the Pol Pot regime was murdering its subjects by the hundreds of thousands, two of the most common methods being simple cudgeling and suffocation in an airtight plastic bag (apparently to conserve ammunition). Radio Phnom Penh thanked the Angkar "for the good it has done us, for freeing us from slavery." Everything in Cambodia was done "under the very intelligent, very enlightened, and very just leadership of the revolutionary Angkar." 42/

### 2. The Vietnamese Solution

The traditional and mutual mistrust between the Cambodians and Vietnamese has grown throughout the mid-1970s. The two countries fought over the Vietnamese-held island of Phu Quoc within days of Saigon's fall, and incidents along their common border have grown in scale and frequency.

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Major fighting began during 1977. On April 30, 1977, the Cambodians attacked Vietnam on the second anniversary of the fall of Saigon, a time when many Vietnamese units were on leave for the celebration of this event. The Cambodians pushed six miles into the SRV near Chau Doc and then withdrew. In late August, SRV troops attacked positions in Cambodia with artillery and air strikes. Cambodia mounted a much larger operation on September 24, 1977 (also a public holiday), and penetrated deep into Tay Ninh province. Many local residents fled, but Hanoi claimed that Cambodian troops massacred 2,000 Vietnamese civilians. A few weeks later, Cambodian units staged a third raid, supported by armored vehicles and aircraft; in the ensuing air action, some Vietnamese planes were downed by Chinese-manned antiaircraft guns. 43/

The Vietnamese, outraged by the Cambodian raids, seized the initiative. In late October 1977, SRV troops mounted a counteroffensive in the border areas, and staged a much larger incursion into Cambodia in late December. On December 31, 1977, Phnom Penh radio charged the Vietnamese with "large-scale unwarranted aggression." The conflict, which had generally passed unnoticed in the West, had by this time flared into heavy fighting involving tens of thousands of troops, heavy artillery, and armored units. 44/

SRV forces gained the upper hand in combat, and moved toward Phnom Penh in January 1978 before withdrawing back to Vietnam. In June 1978, Vietnamese troops supported by air strikes, moved into Cambodia again -- this time on an axis heading for Kompong Cham. And by this time, the fighting had become an embarrassment to the Chinese who had provided Cambodia with its only outside support.

Vietnam's long-term plans for Cambodia were made clear in December 1978, when Hanoi announced the formation of the United Front for Cambodian National Salvation. The pro-Hanoi Front was led by Heng Samrin, a former Khmer Rouge officer who broke with Pol Pot in mid-1978.

On December 25, 1978, Vietnamese and Cambodian Front forces mounted a massive sweep into Cambodia. Some 12 Vietnamese divisions took part, supported by artillery, tanks, and ground-attack aircraft. The Pol

## THE BDM CORPORATION

Pot regime collapsed in early January 1979, and Heng Samrin was placed in control of depopulated Phnom Penh. A week later, the Vietnamese units moved up to the Thai border, a move which largely consummated their victory. Pockets of resistance remained, however, and pro-Pol Pot Khmer Rouge forces vow they will continue to fight. 45/ From this local conflict the Chinese desire to "teach Vietnam a lesson" was readily apparent, as was evidenced in February 1979, when Chinese forces moved into northern Vietnam along their common border. (See subsection E).

It is against this dreary backdrop that the tragedy of the Cambodian people must be viewed. The continued fighting has largely ended the planting and cultivation of rice; in 1979 a minuscule five percent of the total area dedicated to wet rice cultivation was planted. 46/ In political terms, if the Vietnamese succeed in destroying the remnants of Pol Pot's guerrillas (as they have told their Soviet ally they will), China will be squeezed out of Indochina and pro-Soviet forces will dominate. In human terms, at least two million additional Cambodians are now subject to starvation as a result of the Vietnamese policy to destroy crops and deny food as a way to impose political control.

The popular image of the Vietnamese has changed as a result of the Cambodian venture. No longer is Vietnam pictured as brave little "David" struggling against Goliath. Instead, the Vietnamese are now portrayed by many as "expansionists," however unpopular this particular view was in the West in the 1960s. Assessing the Vietnamese policies of genocide in Cambodia, The Washington Post recently concluded that the Vietnamese "are cutting themselves off for years to come from association with people and nations that care about human life. They will end up with no foreigners to turn to except the Russians. They invite and deserve contempt." 47/

### E. THE CHINA-VIETNAM CONFLICT OF 1979

China's desire to teach Vietnam a "lesson" culminated in mid-February. After a growing number of border incidents, the CPR massed 17 divisions and

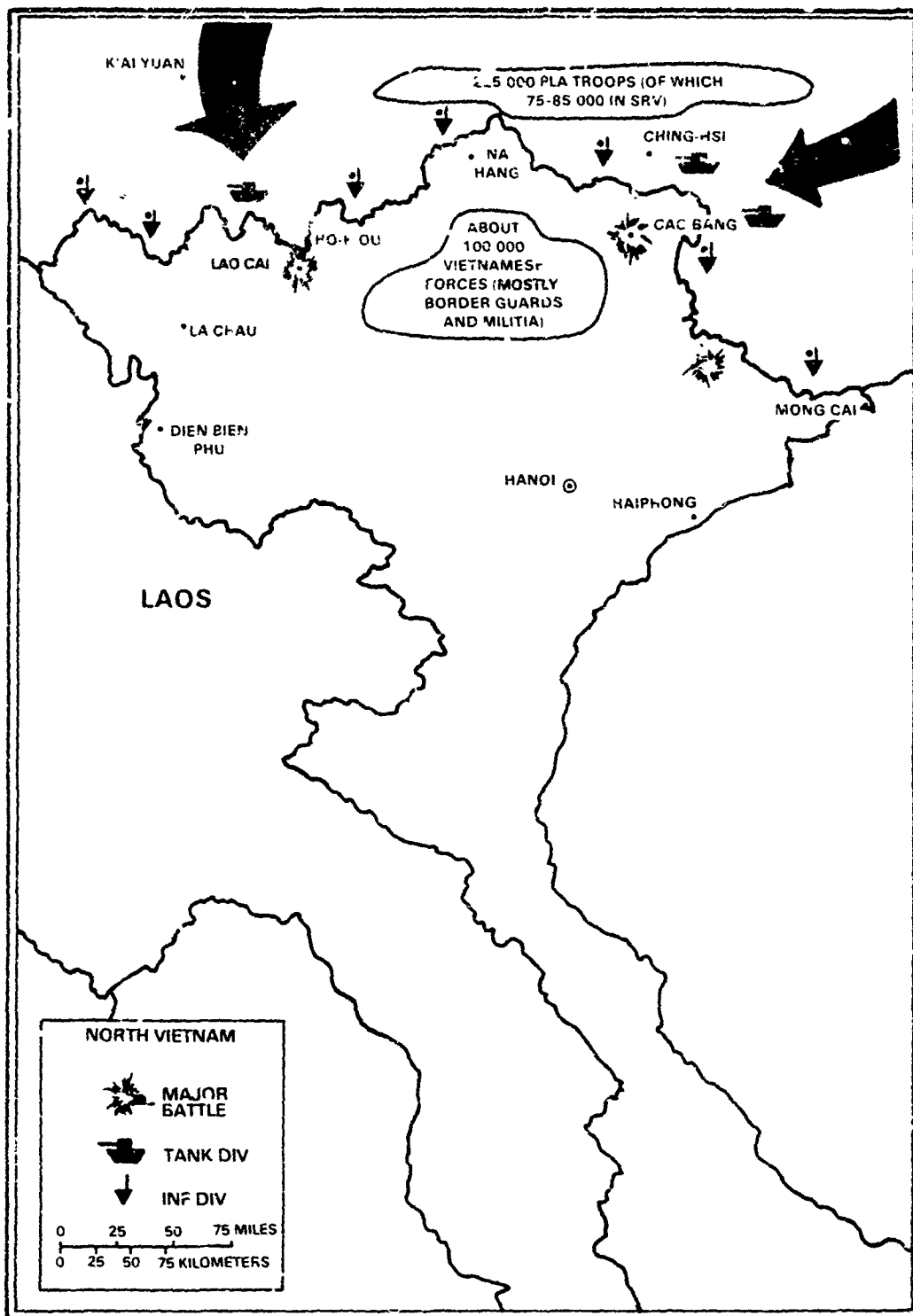
## THE BDM CORPORATION

1,000 aircraft along the China-VN border and sent 75,000 to 85,000 of its troops into Vietnam (See Map 5-2 and Table 5-3). Some observers viewed this campaign as a classic example of war as defined by Karl von Clausewitz -- a continuation of political relations by other means. 50/ Others concluded that, like many aspects of Chinese foreign policy, the campaign was just one more manifestation of the PRC's national strategy to confront the Soviet Union and its allies. 51/

Western analysts who monitored developments in the battlefield found little, if any, evidence that the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) had caused the Vietnamese army any significant injury or had taught Hanoi a "lesson." The Vietnamese generally did not commit their much-vaunted Main Force units, and refused to accept Chinese provocations to engage in set-piece battles. Instead, Hanoi mounted a defensive action with second-line militia forces and frontier guards. There was a growing feeling among Western journalists that "the frustrated Chinese military giant was suffering severely." 52/

Chinese objectives were not made clear throughout the brief campaign. Moreover, Peking continued to redefine its aims in accordance with the PLA's performance on the battlefield. When the invasion was launched, Peking initially emphasized that the operation was purely punitive in nature and "limited in time and space." This was taken to mean that the PLA's aim was to destroy Vietnam's military installations near the border and to consolidate Chinese territorial claims. But, in subsequent days, Deng Xiaoping said that China could not tolerate Vietnam's "swashbuckling" in Indochina, and stated the attack had shown that "the myth of the invincibility of Vietnam is no longer feasible," a hint of a wider conflict. 53/ Later, Deng hinted that the campaign might continue for at least one month. In fact, Chinese statements at the time suggested the Peking leadership was divided as to its war aims. Meanwhile, Hanoi enjoyed a propaganda field day, as the "David and Goliath" image was briefly resurrected against the PRC.

The Chinese campaign quickly attracted the attention of the Soviet Union, which stepped up its supplies to Vietnam and warned the PRC of



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Map 5-2. China-Vietnam Conflict in February-March 1979 48/

TABLE 5-3. CHINA-VIETNAM CONFLICT OF FEBRUARY-MARCH 1979 49/

<u>Date</u>	<u>Situation in Combat Theater</u>	<u>Related Events</u>
18 Feb	PRC announces that its PLA troops have struck into Vietnam	US calls on PRC to withdraw
19 Feb	SRV reportedly checks invasion 6 miles inside border	USSR tells PRC to stop "before it is too late"
20 Feb	Chinese PLA advances 10 miles along NW and NE rail lines	US requests UN Security Council debate on Chinese invasion
22 Feb	PLA renews advance after pause	Chinese leaders says China should be prepared for armed "invasion" by USSR
23 Feb	PLA pushes down Red River Valley from Lao Cai	USSR begins airlift of military supplies to Vietnam
24 Feb	Chinese increase pressure on Lang Son	US urges ceasefire; top Soviet military figures assail Chinese invasion
25 Feb	SRV moves fighters, SAMs to north	State Dept. meets with Soviet, PRC ambassadors
26 Feb	Battles at Lang Son, Cao Bang, Lao Cai (see Map 5-2 for locations)	Sec. Treas. Blumenthal delivers message from President Carter warning against "wider war"
27 Feb	SRV says PLA forces have advanced as much as 25 miles into its territory	PRC Deputy Prime Minister Deng Xiaoping says Chinese action will be short and limited
28 Feb	China claims that two small-scale Vietnamese attacks into PRC have been repulsed	President Carter warns PRC again; US aircraft carrier sent to monitor Soviet ships in South China Sea
1 Mar	Heavy fighting around Lang Son	SRV demands immediate, unconditional Chinese withdrawal
2 Mar	Lull in fighting	Per CBS News/NYT poll, 43% of those polled think fighting will lead to USSR-PRC war
3 Mar	PLA tightens grip around Lang Son, cutting major roads	USSR warns PRC of "severe retribution," steps up arms shipments and naval presence
4 Mar	PLA seizes Lang Son	Cuban official states that Cuba will assist Vietnam, send troops if necessary
5 Mar	PRC warns SRV it will open new offensive if Vietnamese units attack withdrawing PLA units	Consensus that UN Security Council has been unable to deal with conflict
6 Mar	PRC announces start of troop withdrawal from battle zone (completed by 16 Mar, per PRC media)	USSR disputes PRC claim of withdrawal

"severe retribution" if the conflict continued. Soviet military activity, the details of which thus far remain classified, probably had some deterrent effect on Peking. In sum, the conflict and its aftermath drove Hanoi more than ever into the Soviet bloc.

The Chinese and Vietnamese have since continued to exchange angry diatribes, and peace talks between the two countries have been deadlocked thus far. Hanoi's troop strength in Cambodia is larger now than ever before, (at least 170,000 and possibly 200,000), and the proxy war has continued. Thus, the potential for continued conflict between China and Vietnam remains very real. Should further hostilities erupt on the common border, the activities of Soviet forces on China's northern border and the growing Soviet contingent now in Vietnam would warrant especially close attention.

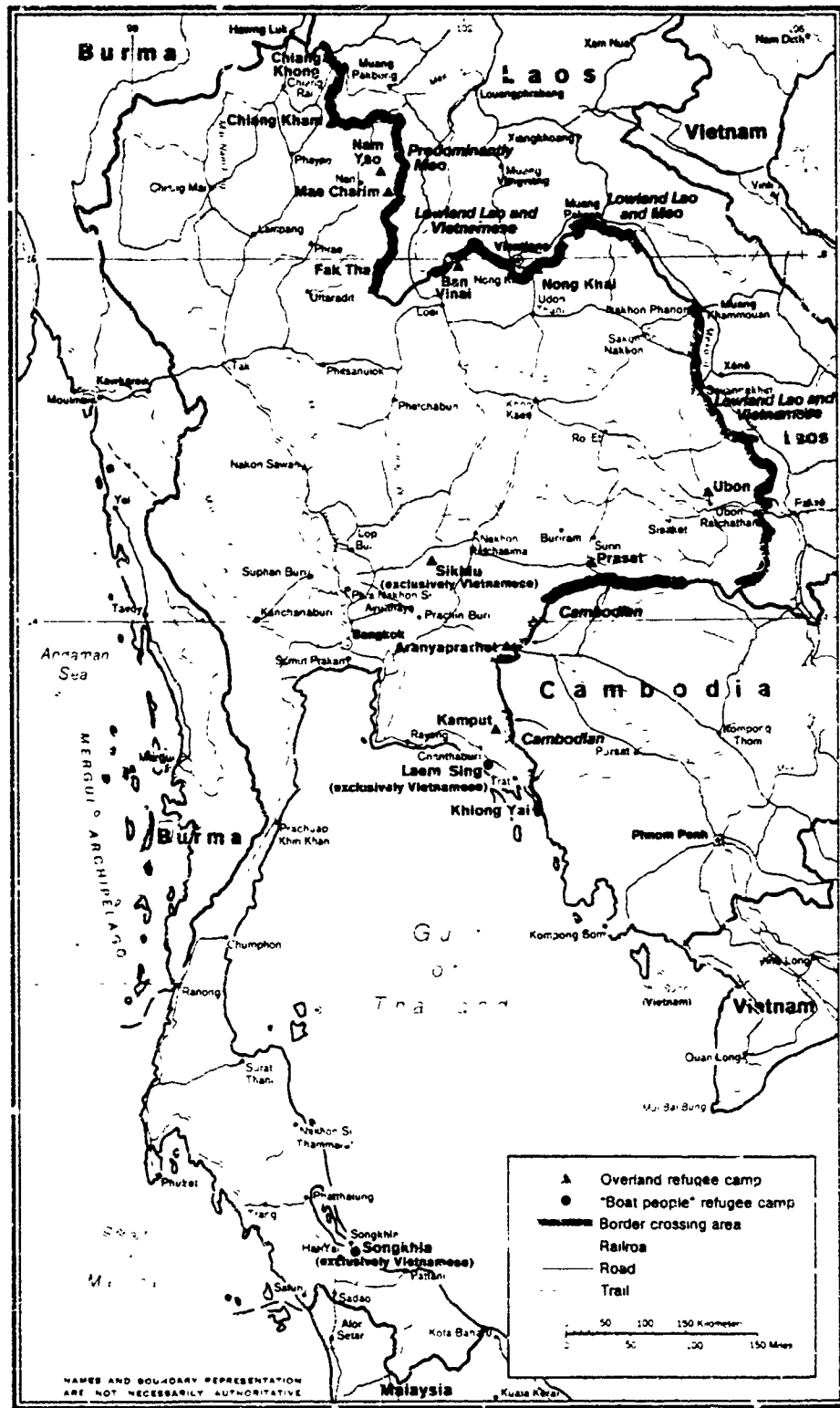
F. THE HUMAN COST

In response to the flow of refugees from Indochina, the US turned its attention once again to the area. In May 1978 the CIA published an incisive study on the refugee resettlement problem in Thailand. Principal findings of this research effort are summarized below. (See Map 5-3 which follows for the locations of refugee camps in Thailand.)

In two and a half years since the Communist takeovers in Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos, approximately 160,000 displaced Indochinese have sought refuge in Thailand. An estimated 100,000 of these refugees remain in the country.

Confronted with the prospect of a continuing influx of new refugees, the Thai Government has been reluctant officially to concede that large numbers will have to be permanently resettled in Thailand, believing that to do so would encourage a substantial increase in the influx of refugees.

Bangkok has just begun to formulate a long term refugee policy, and permanent resettlement of camp inhabitants is not an immediate prospect. Worrisome problems are



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Map 5-3. Indochina Refugee Camps in Thailand 54/



## THE BDM CORPORATION

associated with resettlement and the Thai Government has expressed a number of major concerns:

- The difficulties in locating an adequate number of suitable resettlement sites in the underdeveloped but politically sensitive North and Northeast regions.
- The perception that the refugees pose an increased security threat in areas already troubled with Communist insurgents.
- The fear that Thai peasants will resent any aid to the refugees.

Thailand will be unable to bear all the costs of major permanent resettlement programs alone. Senior Thai officials have made it clear that greater international recognition and financial and technical support for Thailand's role in absorbing the Indochinese refugees are expected. Bangkok will almost certainly look to the United States in particular for long term major financial and resettlement assistance, and at the least, Thai officials probably expect an increase in US funds already contributed through the UN High Commission for Refugees to help offset the costs of a resettlement program. 55/

Since the publication of that report, the refugee population has surged to new levels. In January 1979, refugee camps throughout Southeast Asia held some 200,000 people. It was estimated in mid-1979 that by January 1980 the refugee population would reach 700,000. 56/

The fundamental problem for refugees in Southeast Asia is that the countries to which they most often go are finding it difficult, at best, to absorb the flow. Thailand's particular problems are spelled out above, but in addition, Malaysia has turned back refugees by the thousands, and Indonesia has ordered its security forces to prevent the entry of refugees. 57/

### G. THAILAND -- ON HANOI'S "HIT LIST"?

The insurgency in north and northeast Thailand has long continued to concern the Thai leadership. From an estimated 3,000-3,400 rebels in 1972,

## THE BDM CORPORATION

the Thai insurgent movement grew to about 7,000 by 1974. The insurgency is supported by the hill tribes in the north and disaffected ethnic Thais in the northeast (See Map 5-1). 58/

As early as 1975, conclusive evidence was available to trace Hanoi's support of the Thai insurgency. A combined Pathet Lao/Vietnamese army command was siphoning men and supplies into northeast Thailand, the objective of which was the successful prosecution of the "national liberation struggle" in Thailand. In addition, a forward operational headquarters was established in northern Cambodia to train the Thai insurgents, and has been a vital factor in the maintenance of the insurgency. 59/

The structure and operations of the rebel movement in north and northeast Thailand parallel the early revolutionary movement in Vietnam: a hierarchical organization with party cells extending down to the local level. Thus, the Thais have had ample reason for concern especially in view of Hanoi's clear-cut support of the insurgents. The flow of refugees into Thailand has enhanced Thai concerns, for any number of trained guerrillas could be scattered among the refugees.

Over the past several years, the insurgency movement in Thailand has been overshadowed by the more visible "human interest" stories of the refugees as well as by the superpowers' interest in the outcome of the fighting in Cambodia. Yet, recently the US was sufficiently concerned about the Thai insurgency to speed up delivery of military equipment to Thailand. Nonetheless, the Thai army of 140,000 would be no match for the Vietnamese forces if Hanoi were to mount a conventional assault across the Mekong.

A concerted Vietnamese move into Thailand would present the US and its remaining allies with a dilemma of major proportions. According to former Under Secretary of State George Ball, "We could, therefore, find ourselves with the choice of either intervening or letting Thailand be overrun." 60/ And, regardless of the US response, such a scenario would sharply raise the potential for another round of Chinese-Vietnamese fighting. Although the Chinese have no great affinity for the Thais, Peking would certainly be

## THE BDM CORPORATION

tempted by another opportunity, or the perceived need, to counter Soviet and Vietnamese "hegemonism." Thus, just as tiny Serbia set off a world conflict in 1914, Vietnam likewise has the potential to do so in the 1980s.

ESSAY 5 ENDNOTES

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2. "Sowing the Seeds of a Bigger War," Far Eastern Economic Review, March 9, 1979, p. 14. (This periodical will be referred to here as FEER.)
3. David Miller, "The Continuing Conflict in Southeast Asia," in Raymonds, ed., The Vietnam War (New York: Crown Publishers, 1979), p. 245.
4. David Rees, The New Vietnam - Hanoi's Revolutionary Strategy. Conflict Studies No. 89 (Special Report) (London: Institute for the Study of Conflict, November 1977), p. 6.
5. Ibid., p. 7.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., pp. 7-8.
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9. Ibid., p. 11.
10. Arnaud de Borchgrave, "Inside Today's Vietnam," Newsweek (International Edition), 28 May 1979, p. 39.
11. International Institute for Strategic Studies, Strategic Survey 1976 (London: 1155, 1977), p. 98.
12. Figure 5-1, "Key Vietnamese Leaders," is based on CIA CR 78-16350, December 1978.
13. Figure 5-2, "Socialist Republic of Vietnam Party Structure," is based on CIA, CR 78-16350, December 1978.
14. Ibid., p. 98.
15. Indochina Resources Center, A Time to Heal (Washington, D.C.: IRC, 1976), pp. 8-9.
16. Table 5-1, "Milestones of Integration 1975 - 1979," is based on BDM analysis.

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17. de Borchgrave, p. 39.
18. Rees, The New Vietnam - Hanoi's Revolutionary Strategy, p. 12.
19. Ibid., p. 13.
20. de Borchgrave, p. 38.
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